School Leaders Under Pressure: The Link Between Well-being, Coping, and Leadership Effectiveness

Secondary Education   Principals/Superintendents

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RESEARCHER   Ashlyen Singh
                       Teacher Education Department
                       University of the Fraser Valley
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OBJECTIVE

Literature about stress and leadership suggests that school leaders are stressed, their perception of job demands is playing a role, their well-being and effectiveness are impacted, many are not coping successfully, and certain coping styles are more effective than others. The purpose of this study was to understand school leaders' stress management in relation to their leadership effectiveness. The guiding research question is: how do the coping behaviors of school leaders relate to their perceptions of leadership effectiveness?

METHODOLOGY

Ten principals and vice-principals from a school district the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada were selected to participate in this phenomenological study through convenience sampling. Participants' experiences were captured through semi-structured interviews and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI Self) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

KEY FINDINGS

Analyses of their questionnaire responses and interviews led to four key findings: (a) a leader's appraisal of stressors mediates their impact; (b) stress impacts well-being and sense of effectiveness similarly; (c) coping strategies need to align with the problem; and (d) district leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating or preventing coping. The findings of this study contribute to the literature on school leadership, stress, well-being, effectiveness, and coping. These results offer insight into the reasons why principals and vice-principals' (PVP) well-being and leadership are impacted by stress, how organizations can intervene, and how individual school leaders can effectively cope with the demands of their job.