STRESS AND FAITH: AN INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL RELATIONSHIP?

MARION SHIELDS
Senior Lecturer in Education, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, Australia.

This research study investigated stress and coping amongst the principals of a small, national, Christian, independent school system. Using an approach combining questionnaires and in-depth interviews, school principals' stressors and their reactions to these stressors were examined. The study also explored the coping strategies they used to reduce or manage their stress.

Forty seven principals participated in the study and 23 nominated for in-depth interviews. This paper focuses on a small group of eight (17%) who emerged from the data by indicating a very low stress level combined with a very high level of job-satisfaction. This group's practices, beliefs and values together with their perceptions about their low stress levels coupled with high satisfaction levels were examined initially through survey and then discussed in depth through extensive phone interviews with the individual participants. This small group attributed their low stress levels to their Christian faith and perspectives which they incorporated into their daily professional lives.

Keywords: Administrative Stress Index (ASI), coping strategies, Christian faith, psychomotor illness, school principal, stress

AN UNDERSTANDING OF STRESS.

Stress is a common phenomenon today within educational administration; indeed the current dearth of qualified school administrators is significantly attributed to the work-related stress factor (Goodwin, Cunningham & Childress, 2003).

Stress is not a new concept however, and Hans Selye, as an endocrinological researcher at McGill University, Montreal in the 1930s, did more to bring the concept of stress to public attention, over a period of six decades, than anyone else in the field (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Selye (1976, 27) defined stress as: *the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it*. Some years later, Gold and Roth elaborated on this statement with:

> *a condition of disequilibrium within the intellectual, emotional and physical state of the individual; it is generated by one's perceptions of a situation, which result in physical and emotional reactions. It can be either positive or negative, depending on one's interpretations* (1993, p. 17).

Selye (1976) described the phenomenon from a physiological or biological perspective and proposed three stages of what he termed the

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General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). These were (a) an alarm stage, (b) stage of resistance, (c) stage of exhaustion. He believed that the body's stress levels were highest in the first stage (alarm) when they were alerted and activated to a demand or threat. It is during this stage that symptoms include increased blood pressure and gastrointestinal disturbance. During the second stage the body's defenses attempt to adapt and stress is reduced, and finally during the third stage, when the body's defenses towards stress become totally depleted, exhaustion occurs. It is during this stage that mental and physical breakdown occurs, illness develops and the individual's performance drops. It is this 'pathologization' of stress, the link between stress and ill health, which is Selye's most important contribution to the discourse on stress (Wainright & Calnan, 2002).

Selye also believed that meeting challenges such as competing in sports or being involved with a cause could produce 'good stress', which he termed eustress which produces an invigorating experience and is in fact beneficial (Selye, 1976). Demands that can cause stress should not always be viewed negatively, in as much as they can also have the capacity to provide motivation, excitement and invigoration rather than always causing damage. Stress can be productive (Chaplain, 2001).

The work of Walter Cannon contributed to an understanding of how stress occurs by identifying the flight or fight reactions to stressors and the concept of homeostasis. The flight or fight response describes a physiological and behavioural reaction to a stressor. Through the arousal of the sympathetic nervous system and the pituitary gland and the subsequent release of hormones into the bloodstream, the body is prepared for aggression or escape depending on the degree of threat perceived in the stressor. Cannon believed that through homeostasis the body regulated itself when encountering change in order to avert the threat or restore the normal (Cooper & Dewe, 2004, p. 15). Building on this work, Selye not only identified eustress and distress, but also hyperstress (overstress) and hypostress (understress) and like Cannon, emphasized the function of the body's regulatory system to keep these in balance (Cooper & Dewe, 2004, p. 28). However, Cannon also recognized the failure of medicine in his day, due to a dependence on the prevalent scientific methodologies, to accept that emotional factors have an important influence on the cause or course of disease. His writings on this topic, prepared the way for an understanding of the psychosomatic perspective.

Another early pioneer in the understanding of stress, Wolff, identified that the common denominator of psychosomatic illness was the perception of an event as threatening, followed by conscious or unconscious anxiety and a protective reaction pattern (Wolff, 1962).

Chaplain (2001) noted that physiological explanations alone, for the stress phenomenon, were perceived to be inadequate, as there was no recognition of individual differences in perception of stress or differences in coping strategies, the psycho-social factors.

The psychological perspective is a frequently used alternative theoretical approach, where cognitive appraisal, that is, our perception of the stress and what is happening, is the key factor. 'It is not the demand or the source of pressure itself that is the issue, it is the perception of that pressure' (Williams & Cooper, 1998, p. 306). Primary appraisal relates to the degree of threat the demand poses,

secondary appraisal relates to the perception of one's ability to cope with, or meet the demand successfully (Chaplain, 2001).

In summary, stress is the body's reaction to the mind's perception of an event that will affect the individual. To a great extent, the way an individual perceives the event's implications for him/herself, either positively or negatively, causes the body's reactions. Both primary appraisal and secondary appraisal are intrinsic to the issue of work-related stress within the role of the educational administrator, particularly at the school level.

STRESS AND THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Many studies have examined work-related stress in the principalship (Allison, 1997; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Green, Malcolm, Greenwood, Small & Murphy, 2001; Ripley, 1997; Thornton, 1996; Westman & Etzion, 1999). As society in the Western world has changed over the last thirty years, so has the role of the school administrator. The speed and frequency of change (which is often politically motivated), the phenomenal increase in the use of technology, a greater reliance on the school to provide support for children in dysfunctional families, increased parental expectations, increasing litigation and the devolution of financial, staffing and planning processes from central to school-based-management have all contributed to the pressure felt within school administration (Brock & Grady, 2002; Green et al., 2001). Lane (2000, p. 99) described it this way:

Principals have a mandate to improve student achievement, maintain a safe campus and keep pace with a constantly changing environment against a backdrop of violence in schools, technological revolution and increasing workloads.

Models and theories of stress within educational administration

Different aspects of the school administrator's role can trigger stress, these include:

Person-Environment Fit theory – whether there is a mismatch between the skills the person brings to the situation against the needs of the situation (Schneider, Smith, & Goldstein, 2000);

Job-Strain model – where there is a strain between the high demands of the role and the low control the individual has over much of it (Karasek, 1979);

Effort Reward Imbalance model – where the remuneration or reward is insufficient for the effort required in the role (Siegrist, 1990); this factor was the highest ranking item across the principal groups in 1998 in a survey conducted by the North American primary and secondary principals' associations (NAESP, 1998);

Role Conflict model relates to conflicting pressures for compliance within a role (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964);

Role Ambiguity model involves a lack of necessary information for an organizational position (Kahn et al., 1964);

Role Overload – simply insufficient time to address all the role's responsibilities (Kahn et al., 1964).

All of these different models directly relate to the role of the educational administrator, and while some might be more relevant than others for the particular individual, or in a particular location, there is nonetheless an overall link with each one for the school principal.

Effects of stress within educational administration

Lane (2000), noted that for stressed principals there was a negative correlation between stress and productivity, and that subjects experienced difficulty in using intellectual skills in management and in dealing with subordinates.

Stress in the principalship has wider implications beyond the health and well being of the individual principal. The resultant increase in stress-related sick leave for both the principal as well as affected staff members, premature resignations and subsequent training of new staff has contributed to an enormous rise in indirect financial costs associated with education (Brown et al., 2002). Research commissioned by Medibank (2008) found that stress costs in Australia amounted to $14.8billion annually.

Unfortunately schools with seriously stressed principals and affected staff are less likely to maintain high educational standards and achieve quality outcomes (Allison, 1997; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Jongeling & Lock, 1995; Lane, 2000). Further, some individuals appear to be more predisposed towards developing stress than others.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES THAT AFFECT THE ABILITY TO MANAGE WORK-RELATED STRESS.

There are a number of intrinsic factors that strongly influence an individual's ability to resist and/or cope with stress. These include

Negative affectivity – the tendency to view the world and events pessimistically (Sadri, 1997);

An external locus of control – the prevailing perception that matters beyond the individual are the controlling factors in the life (Hurrell & Murphy, 1991);

Self efficacy – a sense of one's own professional competence and ability to complete the required work tasks; and

Type A behaviour - characterized by ambition, aggressive competitiveness and 'eagerness to get things done on time' (Wainright & Calnan, 2002, p. 61).

In addition, the **coping strategies** that individuals chose are also extremely important in determining their ability to cope with stress.

COPING STRATEGIES

Researchers have investigated coping methods used to manage work-related stress as people under stress attempt to cope in a variety of ways. These studies have tended to divide coping strategies into two categories: proactive and reactive; variously termed: stress reducers and stress managers (Allison, 1997), approach and avoidance oriented (Soderstrom, Dolbier, Leiferman & Steinhardt, 2000), primary and secondary (Sadri, 1997). Proactive coping strategies involve recognition of the particular stressor and the choice of a strategy to reduce its demands, while reactive strategies focus on finding ways of managing the impact of the stress reaction. The work of Richard Lazarus has greatly increased understanding about coping. In fact Lazarus himself felt that stress itself paled in significance as a concept compared with coping and that his process-view of coping was one of his most important contributions to stress research (Cooper & Dewe, 2004, p. 79). Lazarus's concept of coping was that it changed over the period of time that an individual needed to deal with a stressor, and that the ongoing inter-relationship between the stressor and the individual's thoughts and actions were critical to understanding the 'process' of coping (Cooper & Dewe, 2004, p. 83).

Religion and spiritual development as a coping strategy

For some individuals, religion and/or spirituality serve as important coping strategies. Certain aspects of religiousness such as public religious involvement and intrinsic religious motivation may be inversely related to depressive symptoms (Smith, McCullough & Poll, 2003). In particular, *Religiously involved people may have resources for appraising negative life events that reduce the perceived stressfulness of those events* (Pargament, 1997, 67). While Turton & Francis (2007, 64) comment:

> *empirical evidence suggests that people who pray enjoy a range of psychological benefits, including a greater sense of purpose in life, a higher level of satisfaction with life, and better psychological well-being.*

When people believe that there is a higher power that oversees their lives, or that there is a purpose for events in their lives, even the negative events, or that life events are opportunities for spiritual growth, they may perceive negative events as less stressful (Smith et al., 2003). Schnittker (2001) examined religious salience, spiritual help-seeking and frequency of service attendance, concluding that religious involvement is positively related to psychological well-being. Schnittker found that the stress-buffering effect of spiritual help-seeking in particular was most evident for quantity of stressful events rather than a single event or a particular type of stress. However studies that have examined the link between faith and the ability to cope with stress are sometimes contradictory. Plante, Saucedo & Rice (2001) examined strength of religious faith and the ability to cope with daily stress within a Catholic liberal arts university over a seven day period, for 68 students and 64 faculty members, and suggested that religious faith was not associated with coping with daily stress. By contrast a study of religious faith and psychological functioning by Plante, Yancey, Sherman & Guerin (2000) found strength of religious faith is associated with several positive mental health benefits for college students. These, at times, contradictory results, may reflect the specific interpretation of religion/faith used in the various studies.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Overview

The current investigation used a phased, mixed methods, research design incorporating a questionnaire-survey followed by an in-depth phenomenological interview. The survey was used to gather data to describe the degree to which the principals perceived themselves to be experiencing work related stress, the source of the stress and which stressors they perceived to provide the greatest difficulty. Information was also gathered about which coping mechanisms were perceived by the principals to be most effective.

Survey Instrument

The Administrative Stress Index (Gmelch & Swent, 1982) was the survey instrument chosen to examine stress as it was originally designed to measure stress specifically with school administrators. The original Administrative Stress Index (ASI) was developed in 1977 by Gmelch & Swent, who are perhaps the most widely recognized authorities on job stress among school administrators (Brown, 1996). Gmelch & Torelli (1994) re-examined the validity and reliability of the original stress factors with loadings ranging from .80 to .42 on their respective factors. The reliability of the ASI has been established. An item reliability assessment conducted by test-retest reliability with a two week interval produced a mean item coefficient of .83 using the Pearson correlation method (Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986).

That the stressors listed in the ASI are still relevant has been substantiated by other studies (Allison, 1997, Green, Malcolm, Greenwood, Small & Murphy, 2001), and also by the comments made by the principals during their interviews in this study. Further, there were few optional additional extra stressors which the principals were able to add to those already in the booklet, beyond the emerging field of litigation and those with a very specific local application.

In the current study the ASI was adapted slightly by adding an additional three items to examine perceptions about the relative stress of aspects of the particular structure of PSA. These were: No 25 – *Complying with organisational requirements at Conference level*; No 32 – *Complying with organisational requirements above Conference level*; No 38 - *Managing issues related to the wider community.* In addition, No 24 *Being involved in the collective bargaining process* was changed to *Addressing wage or leave issues* to reflect the PSA situation which does not have a collective bargaining process but instead has a central Wages and Allocations Committee.

While item 27 in the original ASI addressed issues relating to government policies and levels of Administration (state and federal) as would be expected for a state school system, the governance issues of an independent system, in this case the PSA, were not addressed. The new items 25 and 32 were inserted to explore the aspect of any issues relating to governance within an independent school system, both at local (conference) and national (above conference) levels.

Further, schools today have increasing involvement with their local communities (Caldwell, 1992) and for independent schools who hope to attract families to their establishments, issues related to the wider community are important considerations. Therefore item number 38, 'managing issues related to the wider community' was inserted. The final adjusted ASI contained 38 items which could be rated on a 5 point Likert scale of: 'Rarely' or 'Never bothers me' (1 and 2); 'Occasionally bothers me' (3 and 4) and 'Frequently bothers me' (5). In addition, two extra spaces were allowed (with the 5 point ratings) for the principals to supply any additional stressors and/or coping strategies, as well as a large blank space for further items or comments (Additional to the ASI and Coping Preference Scale (CPS) - see Appendix 1 for details of both).

Participants

The 54 principals of PSA schools (PSA is an acronym used here to provide anonymity for this particular school system) were sent a booklet explaining the research project, asking them to rate 38 stressors (ASI), and 26 coping strategies (CPS). They were also asked to provide demographic information about themselves and their schools, and list additional concerns and solutions to work-related stress. The respondents were located in all states of Australia, with a variety of state legislative differences as well as minor variations in system administration. Forty seven of the principals (87%) returned their booklets and 23 (49% of booklet returns, and 42% of the total number of principals) also nominated to be interviewed to provide further information through a telephone interview of approximately 30 minutes or longer (the length of time by their own choice).

Phase two consisted of in-depth interviews of all 23 willing to be interviewed, beginning with an invitation for the interviewee to talk about

their personal perspectives and to comment on their stress levels. Following this information sharing, the researcher explored their comments and perceptions in greater depth. This paper addresses the perceptions of the particular group that had reported very low stress coupled with very high satisfaction:

1. If the individual's questionnaire responses regarding stress had been predominantly low, what did they feel was the cause (or causes) of this?
2. Did they feel this low stress score was linked to their particular personality?
3. Had they used a particular strategy to achieve this low score?

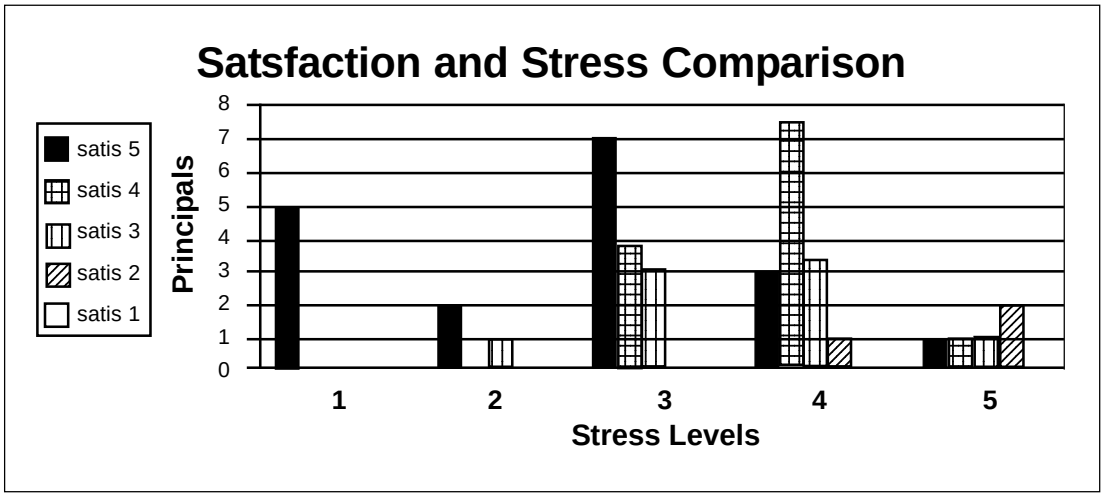
While there have been studies in recent times on the importance of prayer and other expressions of faith in maintaining the ability to cope with adversity (Thayne 1997) as well as its beneficial effects on mental and physical health (Levine 1996), there is a lack of research on the relation between work stress of educational administrators and faith.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the PSA principals involved in this study, it was found that there was a particular group who scored very low for stress and very high for job satisfaction. The scores were obtained from their reported scores on the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). While self-assessment on stress and satisfaction may be seen to be subjective, it must be remembered that for the individual involved it is real and is his/her perception of the situation.

Figure 1 displays three aspects of the results: numbers of principals (vertical columns), stress levels (horizontal groups) and satisfaction levels (pattern). Five principals scored a level 1 (lowest) for stress and a level 5 (highest) satisfaction (darkest) and an additional three scored a level 2 for stress (2 shaded darkest for level 5 satisfaction and 1 shaded medium for level 3 satisfaction). Of these the first five were all male, and of those who scored level 2 stress, two were female and one was male. Seven of the total eight rated their satisfaction level at the highest score of five, and one rated satisfaction at the mid score.

Figure 1. Satisfaction and Stress Comparison of Participants.



The important factor that emerged in this study was that although the principals' ages, years of experience, size of school and location covered a broad range in each category, this small group all reported low stress and high satisfaction. Thus their interview comments were of great interest in understanding their apparently calm perspective on a role which the majority of their colleagues found quite stressful. Further, in-depth, even intense, questioning sought to determine a common factor that contributed to these results.

During the interviews they were asked if they were just very placid people, by nature. Several explained that they had come close to having a breakdown at some stage in their career and had made a conscious decision to never repeat that experience. For these, a spiritual renewal had also accompanied that decision, as some of these comments indicate:

By stepping back from the treadmill, and reconsidering my situation and my relationship with God…there is such a need to get a balance in your life, and I don't believe that balance can be achieved until you make God absolutely first in your life. And then actually work at planning your life to make sure that you keep it in perspective. (Principal 2, male)

I've felt that God has had His hand over everything. That this is God's place. We've had miracles happen with funding and so on. (Principal 18, female)

A strong sense that I am doing what God wants me to do. So I do sense that I can come in, do my best and be satisfied with what I've done. I make a conscious effort not to get stressed, I try to leave the school at a reasonable time, I try not to take work home with me. (Principal 14, male)

I mean I find that I don't worry 'cause I have this absolutely unbreakable faith that God is ultimately leading the school. And it's just a daily walk with Him and I'm just I suppose very confident, yeah, it's going to be hard, and you've got to do things that are unpleasant in dealing with parents, or kids, or dare I say even staff, but bottom line I just have such a strong belief that why would I worry about it. Things that I can't achieve, God gives direction and strength and it's so simple for Him, where me I could fluff around for days and it not happen. (Principal 10, male)

There's only one way I can explain it and that's the grace of God. I believe that the grace of God helps me deal with the stresses of those jobs, because one of the things that I do to release that stress is to pray, and I do, I surrender all of those concerns to Him, and I say Lord, this is your school and I'm here to serve you and so therefore I don't need to carry all of the baggage that goes with it. You feel at times that you're carrying all of that stress, and there've been times that have been quite stressful but in spite of that, serving God and through the grace of God being able to cope with the job means that I get a great deal of satisfaction from doing it.

When God wants you to be in a place, all of a sudden all of those things don't matter, it puts it into perspective. And that's why if you're doing the job as your ministry to serve God it doesn't matter how stressful it gets, really in a way, because you're doing it because He wants you there, its not for personal glory or personal gain. It's really just about serving God and that really helps…. (Principal 5, male)

Prayer – asking God for His wisdom to prioritise my juggling of home, school, social and spiritual. Extremely important to keep a close relationship with God. (Principal 36, female)

Clearly, a conscious decision not to let their admittedly stressful role overwhelm their lives was extremely important for these eight principals and for them it was totally linked with their faith and Christian world view. During the interviews not one of them agreed, under intense questioning by the researcher, that they were 'placid by nature' but instead spoke of the deliberate decision to

control their perspectives on their role and its potential for stress. For some this decision came after an extremely stressful period in their lives. For most this decision was directly linked to their relationship with God and their commitment of their lives and their schools to Him.

A particular theme was repeated in several of the comments about a deliberate relinquishment of the sense of final responsibility for the school and its issues to a higher authority – God.

Within the whole cohort (n=47), the item: *Engage in activities that support spiritual growth* was ranked eight out of 26 potential coping strategies. In addition to this item as part of the survey, principals were given the option of indicating the extent to which aspects of their Christian beliefs assisted them in managing stress. Three principals did not provide a response. Five aspects were provided: *Christian beliefs and world view* (192), *Prayer* (192), *Bible reading* (169), *Other Christian books or music* (167) and *Church Life* (141). The figures in brackets indicate the sum of scores each gained on the 1-5 Likert Scale, the maximum possible score (if every principal had scored it at the maximum of 5) was 220. These results indicate that for the majority of the respondents their Christian faith and perspective as well as their prayer life were perceived as very valuable in helping them cope with stress. However their church life was perceived as not being of comparable benefit, and this may be due to expectations of school leaders by some church communities at small, rural schools.

CONCLUSION

It is well established that being a school principal is a very stressful role. This study examined the stress levels and coping strategies of 47 principals from a small national, Christian, independent school system. All of the principals indicated they were practising Christians and 'ticked the boxes' for prayer, Christian reading, Christian music etc. on the questionnaire. The majority indicated a high degree of job satisfaction, but many also indicated a fairly high level of stress.

However, from the data a small group emerged who reported high levels of satisfaction coupled with very low stress levels. These principals voluntarily wrote in the space on the questionnaires and articulated during the interviews, their total reliance on God in leading their schools to a far greater extent than did their colleagues. The results of this thinking were significant as demonstrated by the low levels of reported work-stress for this particular group. The consistent incorporation of their faith into daily practice helped these principals to perceive stress from a perspective that allowed them to work through issues without becoming overly stressed. Even through quite intense questioning and the discussion of difficulties in their role, they retained a positive although realistic perception of their work and the total importance of their experiential relationship with God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the original participants received a full copy of the study; a follow up study is needed to investigate the more highly stressed members of the original cohort to determine whether the information from the study and increased experience influenced their stress levels in any way.

It is critically important to incorporate stress reduction techniques into the practice of beginning principals. Further, induction of principals into PSA schools should include information about stress, the principal's role and the faith application concepts highlighted in this study.

Marion Shields may be contacted at
<marion.shields@avondale.edu.au>

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE (ADAPTED ADMINISTRATIVE STRESS INDEX)

Items 25, 32 & 38 are the adapted items.

School administrators have identified a number of work related situations as sources of concern. It's possible that some of these situations bother you more than others. How much are you bothered by each of the situations listed below? Please circle the appropriate response.

	Not Applicable	Rarely or Never Bothers Me		Occasionally Bothers Me	Frequently Bothers Me	
1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls	NA	1	2	3	4	5
2. Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people	NA	1	2	3	4	5
3. Feeling staff members don't understand my goals and expectations	NA	1	2	3	4	5
4. Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job	NA	1	2	3	4	5
5. Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly	NA	1	2	3	4	5
6. Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflict-demands of those who have authority over me	NA	1	2	3	4	5
7. Trying to resolve differences between/among superiors	NA	1	2	3	4	5
8. Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors	NA	1	2	3	4	5
9. Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk	NA	1	2	3	4	5
10. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself	NA	1	2	3	4	5
11. Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable	NA	1	2	3	4	5
12. Writing memos, letters and other communications	NA	1	2	3	4	5
13. Trying to resolve differences with my superiors	NA	1	2	3	4	5
14. Speaking in front of groups	NA	1	2	3	4	5
15. Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
16. Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me, or how he/she evaluates my performance	NA	1	2	3	4	5

17. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
18. Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time	NA	1	2	3	4	5
19. Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my supervisor	NA	1	2	3	4	5
20. Trying to resolve parent/school conflicts	NA	1	2	3	4	5
21. Preparing and allocating budget resources	NA	1	2	3	4	5
22. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me	NA	1	2	3	4	5
23. Handling student discipline problems	NA	1	2	3	4	5
24. Addressing wage or leave issues	NA	1	2	3	4	5
25. Complying with organizational requirements at Conference level	NA	1	2	3	4	5
26. Evaluating staff members' performance	NA	1	2	3	4	5
27. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day	NA	1	2	3	4	5
28. Complying with state, federal rules and policies	NA	1	2	3	4	5
29. Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be	NA	1	2	3	4	5
30. Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
31. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are	NA	1	2	3	4	5
32. Complying with organizational requirements above Conference level	NA	1	2	3	4	5
33. Feeling that meetings take up too much time	NA	1	2	3	4	5
34. Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time	NA	1	2	3	4	5
35. Trying to resolve differences between/among staff member	NA	1	2	3	4	5
36. Trying to influence my immediate supervisor's actions and decisions that affect me	NA	1	2	3	4	5
37. Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs	NA	1	2	3	4	5

38. Managing issues related to the wider community	NA	1	2	3	4	5
39. Other	NA	1	2	3	4	5
40. Other	NA	1	2	3	4	5

Any other additional features of your work that cause you serious stress:

Coping Strategies: Here are some of the ways that people deal with job pressures. Please circle the appropriate response for you.

	Not Applicable	Rarely or Never		Sometimes		Almost always
1. Set realistic goals (recognize job limitations)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
2. Delegate responsibility	NA	1	2	3	4	5
3. Maintain a sense of humour	NA	1	2	3	4	5
4. Withdraw physically (leave the office or school for a time)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
5. Engage in active non-work or play (boating, gardening, golf, music, painting, etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
6. Practise good human relations skills with staff, students, parents	NA	1	2	3	4	5
7. Work harder (including evenings & weekends)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
8. Engage in activities that support spiritual growth	NA	1	2	3	4	5
9. Maintain good health habits (weight control, healthy food, reduce caffeine etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
10. Prioritise and use time management techniques	NA	1	2	3	4	5
11. Talk with family or close friends	NA	1	2	3	4	5
12. Engage in less active non-work or play(dine out, TV, cultural events, read, listen to music etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
13. Maintain regular sleep habits	NA	1	2	3	4	5
14. Break from daily routine to less stressful task,	NA	1	2	3	4	5
15. Talk to Ed Director or other Principals	NA	1	2	3	4	5
16. Community involvement (coaching, volunteering etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
17. Approach problems optimistically and objectively	NA	1	2	3	4	5
18. Regular physical exercise (aerobics, fitness club, walking etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
19. Relaxation and stress management techniques (yoga etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5

20. Compartmentalize work and non-work life	NA	1	2	3	4	5
21. Establish office procedures so that unplanned interruptions are limited	NA	1	2	3	4	5
22. Create more positive mental sets (positive self talk)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
23. Take mini vacations (weekend away)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
24. Seek solitude, slow down work pace, take time to reflect	NA	1	2	3	4	5
25. Socializing (lunch with others etc)	NA	1	2	3	4	5
26. Utilize professional development to increase management & communication skills	NA	1	2	3	4	5

Recognizing that yours is a demanding profession, do you have any additional coping techniques that you personally have used in handling the tensions and pressures of your job?

How stressed do you believe you are, on a scale of 1 to 5? (where 0 is none and 5 is extremely stressed)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Despite the stress, how satisfying do you find your job, on a scale of 0-5? (where 0 is totally unsatisfying and 5 is extremely satisfying)	0	1	2	3	4	5

DEMOGRAPHICS. *Please circle where appropriate*

Gender Male Female

Age 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

School Primary only Secondary only
K-10 / K-12

Enrolment Less than 100 100-199 200- 349 350+

No of years as a Principal 5 years or less 6-10 11-15 16+

Years in current position 5 years or less 6-10 11-15 16+

Qualifications Highest level of tertiary ducation?.....

Do you have administrative qualifications? Yes No

If yes, which?.....

Do you have a Deputy Principal? Yes No

Do you have a full time secretary? Yes No

Teaching load Do you have a teaching load? Yes No.
Percentage?.....

Staff Responsibility Number of full time teaching staff .....

Number of part-time teaching staff .....

Total number of support staff .....

(office/cleaning/grounds/buses. etc) .....

Do you have any other comments/suggestions about work related stress you would like to make?

.....

What support do you feel you need/or/should be given, to principals from the PSA system?

.....

OPTIONAL: The extent to which your Christian beliefs assist you to avoid/ manage stress						
Christian beliefs and world view	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Bible reading, particular texts or passages	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Other Christian books or music	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Prayer	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Church life	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Other?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Optional Comments:						

OPTIONAL: Yes I am willing to be interviewed for further information

Name…… School…….

Email address……

Preferred contact phone…….

PLEASE REMEMBER, THIS MATERIAL IS TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL, AND IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATING AND REDUCING STRESS IN PSA PRINCIPALS.

Thank you,

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