

Stress and the Psychological Well-Being of Organizational Leaders:
A Qualitative Inquiry Into the Coping Strategies Used by School Administrators

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Dedication

To my sweet angels up in heaven, my mom Elaine and my precious niece, Alexa. I dedicate this work in your memory. I know you were watching me all the way and guiding me through the hard times. When I graduated with my master's degree, my mom told me that patience would get me through life and that my hard work would one day pay off. Well Mom, I think you were right. Lexie, you taught me that nothing can stand in your way if you truly have the heart. You persevered through so much and became someone I admire and aspire to emulate. Thanks for living life and showing that nothing can get in your way if you want it bad enough. I love you both more than words can say and I miss you. I love you, Mom and Lexie.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Individuals in leadership positions face changing roles and responsibilities as increasing demands differ in appearance and capacity (Jago, 1982; Rothstein, 2001). These changes present compounding pressures to succeed and cause increases in personal stress (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). As leaders in the business world compete in a global economy, educational leaders face mounting pressures to educate all students. Leaders now operate with elevated job expectations among rigid accountability measures, and as their roles continue to change, so do the experiences that cause stress. Stress is the body's natural ability to cope with the experiences of everyday life (Doohan, 1982).

In today's society, a leader functions as a partner in leadership and leads by example (Van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, & Van Meurs, 2009). Winston and Patterson (2006) defined a leader as:

one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives. (p. 7)

To lead others, one must take charge, provide motivation (Eriksen, 2001), and establish and maintain the goals of the organization. This can be accomplished by using techniques that promote encouragement and motivation while maintaining and enforcing the expectations needed to succeed (Jago, 1982; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Changes result in an

increase in work-related stress, prompting the need for individuals to implement coping strategies that maintain longevity in their position.

School leaders in the education field (Kruger, van Eck, & Vermeulen, 2005) parallel the ever-changing role of leaders emerging in all facets of the business sector (Rothstein, 2001). Administrators in the 21st century have seen a drastic change in their role as school leaders. Each day, the school administrator experiences a variety of different expectations and demands (Sodoma & Else, 2009). These job responsibilities create a less attractive and more stressful role (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Aspirations to attain a school leader position are diminishing as the complexity of the job increases (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). Evolving responsibilities cause added stress and contribute to a nationwide shortage of qualified applicants (Kruger et al., 2005; Lazaridou, 2009).

In years past, the principal's main responsibility was to ensure that the school building ran without any problems (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). The principal was expected to develop school budgets and ensure the faculty complied with school and state expectations. Also, principals ordered materials and supplies, tended to nutritional issues, and ensured the school remained safe for faculty, staff, students, and parents. Managing transportation and contending with discipline were top priorities to ensure students got to and from school and acted in a safe and respectful manner. Finally, the principal would development and maintain a strong community-involvement program, and protect the reputation of the school.

Today's principal must be able to adapt to a set of new skills that differ from those required of the administrator years ago (Lazaridou, 2009). A principal should now possess skills beyond those required to manage a school building, forcing administrators to contend

with political involvement and interpersonal relationships. The principal attends to administrative issues that may present themselves as short- or long-term issues and must obtain skills to develop and implement a plan of action addressing issues at any level (Friedman, 1995).

The school administrator's first and most important priority is to be an effective instructional leader (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). The charge of the principal is ensuring students achieve success and that teachers improve teaching practices. Principals are required to be abreast of the latest and most current research-based teaching practices and pedagogical language, thereby equipping themselves with the tools to become experts in curriculum and content. Collecting and analyzing data to develop next steps for instruction, promoting the highest level of student achievement, is also becoming part of their everyday duties. Furthermore, creating and maintaining the school's vision and establishing a culture that supports the vision are vital to success (Hoff, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Finally, after meeting all academic needs, principals must manage the logistics of running the school building.

Due to significant changes in job requirements, current principals are beginning to express concerns that their jobs are too difficult to perform (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Added responsibilities and accountabilities are causing tension on the job and are becoming evident in the form of added stress. Administrators must identify the causes of stress and implement coping strategies to maintain their job.

Conceptual-Framework Narrative

The evolution of the role of a leader can be found in the literature review section of this dissertation. There, I describe leadership research explored by Kerr, Hill, and Broedling

(1986), Rothstein (2001), Jago (1982), Winston and Patterson (2006), Sosik and Godshalk (2000), Javidan and Waldman (2003), and Hoff (1999). As educational leaders see a change in job responsibilities, anxiety emerges, demonstrating a need to employ stress-coping strategies (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). This study sought to explore the perceptions and options of school leaders about work-related stress as well as how they experience and cope with stress in the workplace setting.

To understand how stress affects an individual, one must comprehend the concept of stress and its function and thereby understand how an individual can cope with the stress experience. Individuals require stress to deal with life's challenges (Doohan, 1982). Once an individual experiences a stressful situation, they may initiate a coping strategy (Selye, 1976) in the form of a cognitive, emotional, or behavioral strategy (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). A cognitive strategy is viewed as people's own ability to apply self-control and make their own decision about how to handle situations. The application of an emotional strategy occurs when a person demonstrates a passive approach and remains positive throughout the experience. Using a behavior strategy, an individual seeks the advice of others on how to handle the situation. No one strategy is right or wrong; individuals must use the strategy that works best to manage stress at the time it occurs. However, unmanaged stress may manifest and affect an individual on a physical or emotional level; if prolonged, stress may hold serious consequences (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988).

Consequences of stress on a physical level may appear in different ways (DeLongis et al., 1988). As minor health issues such as immune deficiencies occur, other health ailments such as muscle aches, fatigue, mood swings, and irritability may become evident. However,

physical ailments can become severe and seen as significant health issues, causing increased blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, or even death.

On an emotional level, unmanaged or prolonged stress may result in the extreme product of stress seen in the workforce: burnout (Scheufeli & Bakker, 2004). Burnout is a serious condition in which a person has unsuccessfully managed stress and has completely depleted their emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). An individual experiencing burnout will have no energy to face another day and may elect to self-terminate employment (Maslach, 2003).

Overall, the conceptual framework is designed to explore opinions and perceptions of school administrators related to stress and the coping strategies they use. This new set of responsibilities for school administrators is causing added stress and school principals are beginning to express that their job is too difficult to perform (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). This study is designed to identify stress factors and the coping strategies principals use to manage stress to maintain success and professional longevity. Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the conceptual framework of the study.

Statement of the Research Problem

The life of a principal has become hectic, and even the most organized principal will encounter frequent interruptions, insignificant annoyances, and unscheduled meetings every day (Brimm, 1983). Mounting accountability pressures have only exacerbated these aspects of the administrator's role. As accountability pressures have grown throughout the education profession, pressures on the school leader have mirrored this growth in variety and quantity. As signs of stress appear and leaders' attempts to cope with unpleasant situations remain

unsuccessful, administrators begin to claim their jobs are too stressful and too difficult to perform.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of school administrators and determine whether they experience workplace stress, what experiences cause stress, and what coping strategies they use to combat stress while maintaining psychological well-being. Ryff (1989) researched psychological well-being in humans and found it to be associated with a person's level of happiness (as cited in Colby, 1987). The purpose was determined by analyzing responses to the following research questions:

1. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?
2. Why are they considered stressful?
3. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being?
4. Why do they use those strategies?
5. Do administrators differ in their perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

Significance of the Research Problem

School leaders face a wide range of demands and expectations on a daily basis (Sodoma & Else, 2009). Their burgeoning responsibilities in recent years have made their roles more stressful and less appealing, causing less interest in becoming a school administrator (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). As different stressors influence the life of a leader today, the desire to become a school leader is steadily decreasing (Kruger et al., 2005).

A shortage of qualified personnel aspire to take on the role of the school principal across the United States (Kruger et al., 2005). This shortage is a result of the increasing complexity of the job and the diminishing attractiveness of the leadership role (Lazaridou, 2009). Although the researchers reviewed identified different causes of administrators' stress, the literature centers its focus on and before the 1980s. I found little research addressing the stressors administrators face in the 21st century. The articles cited in this dissertation identify stressors that may cause stress during the late 20th century, but today's society is different from years ago. In addition, the research addresses many different ways to cope with stress from an administrator's standpoint; however, no well-defined system has been proven to alleviate stress that exists on a dangerous level.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of this study, the following questions will be used for the study:

Research Questions 1 and 2. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)? Why are they considered stressful?

This question pertains to the different experiences the school principal and assistant principal face each day on the job. This question sought to address which experiences cause school administrators the most stress. By determining which experiences cause the most stress, district offices can effectively develop coping strategies that specifically address stress experienced by school administrators.

Research Questions 3 and 4. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being? Specifically why are they used?

As school administrators face the demands and expectations of today's educational landscape, finding ways to cope with stress to address the pressures of the job are imperative for success. School-district offices will be able to serve the needs of their administrators by knowing which coping strategies are used most. Once this is determined, school districts can develop a plan of action to assist school-level administrators before consequences that are more serious arise, such as burnout.

Research Question 5. Is there a difference in the perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

As individuals experience stress at different levels and rates, they also cope with stressful situations at different levels and rates (Swent, 1983). As individual coping techniques vary from one person to another, it would be helpful to examine those demographic variables that affect how individuals cope with stress (Swent, 1983).

Operational Definitions

Administrative responsibility stress. The everyday running of the school, including supervision and management of employees as well as having to evaluate employees and conduct negotiations with employees, staff, students, and parents (Brimm, 1983).

Burnout. A syndrome that (a) occurs at an individual level, (b) is an internal psychological experience involving feeling, attitudes, motives, and expectations, (c) is a negative individual experience that involves stress, discomfort, dysfunction, and negative consequences, and (d) is associated with emotional and physical exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Hamann, 1990, p. 31).

Coping. The process of thoughts and behaviors people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations they appraise as being stressful or exceeding their own

resources. Coping efforts seek to manage, master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize the demands of a stressful environment (Bartram & Gardner, 2008, p. 228).

Effective school leader:

A school leader must be able to demonstrate the following responsibilities: Shape a vision of academic success for all students based on high standards. Create a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail. Cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision. Improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost. Manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 2)

Leader:

A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives (Winston & Patterson, 2006, p.7).

Stress. The internal condition an individual experiences due to different tensions and anxiety, thereby establishing a condition that endangers the health of a normal individual (Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007).

Assumptions

I assumed all participants would answer all questions to the best of their abilities with honest and open minds. I collected data in the form of open-ended free-response survey

questions. Participation in this study was based on voluntary consent, and participants were able to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. I assumed all responses to the questions were reliable and valid, aligned with participants' perceptions.

Limitations

Due to the location and population of the study, the results cannot be generalized to the experiences of school administrators in other school districts. The results of the study pertain to school administrators based in a south Louisiana school district. In addition, the data collected in this study is limited to the expertise of the principals, associate principals, and assistant principals. Due to the nature of the study, an imbalance in participation of the different level of administrators may exist in the demographics of the study. I excluded from this study central-office staff, administrative assistants, master teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher coaches. Although they may all experience stress at different levels, their stress may vary from campus to campus due to the different interpretations of job responsibilities. I also excluded from the study school-campus in-school suspension providers; their responsibilities are managing discipline issues and procedures, and their experiences are limited to student-level behavioral issues. I studied coping strategies used to deal with workplace stress and determine the most commonly used strategies. While attempting to identify coping strategies, I sought to uncover strategies perceived as successful and unsuccessful by participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the issues of workplace stress and coping strategies used by school administrators. The purpose of this study was to explore opinions of school administrators and elicit their feelings on what causes stress and what attempted coping strategies lead to less stress. The role and responsibility of a leader has changed and

becoming more complicated (Brimm, 1983). The change in the school-leader role includes a dramatic increase in demands and expectations. Increased responsibilities and accountabilities exasperate the day-to-day functions of the school administrator; stress is becoming a serious issue. As unsuccessful attempts to manage stress levels leave school administrators vulnerable, principals now report their job is too difficult to perform.

The increase in stress significantly changes the way school leaders perform their job. The inability to reduce stress is beginning to cause issues for school districts around the nation (Kruger et al., 2005). As the administrator role loses its appeal, fewer people strive to become administrators, leaving school districts with fewer qualified applicants (Lazaridou, 2009). In addition, research found on stress and coping strategies relates to research conducted in the 1980s and prior. New findings and research will bring relevance of current issues and coping strategies used to adapt to today's educational issues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Leadership Characteristics

Attaining a leadership position represents upward movement, but with this movement comes a variety of additional complex responsibilities (Rothstein, 2001). The demands required of a leader have changed from the past (Rothstein, 2001). Early in the industrial age, the leader or manager of an organization was referenced as the foreman (Kerr et al., 1986). The foreman would typically hire the crew, supervise the efforts of the crew, and determine pay based on satisfaction with the crew's job performance. No one in the organization told the foreman what to do or how to do the job. However, as accountability for proficient job performance and product delivery increased, upper level managers began to oversee the responsibilities of the foreman. Organizations' upper level managers began to take control of decision making, as well as the training and selection of workers based on the organization's expectations and vision. This began a transition, as upper management roles became supervisory in nature, delineating between leaders (managers) and subordinates (the labor force).

As organizations moved to establish leaders in organizations, responsibilities were still managerial in nature (Kerr et al., 1986). Leaders as managers upheld a variety of responsibilities and functions. They planned schedules, kept current with documentation of records and reports, selected employees, maintained the safety and cleanliness of the organization, maintained external relationships, managed and evaluated worker performances, and established the job tasks of subordinates (Kerr et al., 1986; Rothstein, 2001).

The definition and responsibilities of a leader have changed dramatically (Jago, 1982). A leader or person in a leadership capacity may need not only particular characteristics or qualities, but may also need to know by whom and how a task is accomplished (Jago, 1982). Leaders are one or more people recruited by others, based on their abilities and characteristics that will promote success and further the organization's vision and mission statements (Winston & Patterson, 2006).

Today, organizational leaders are expected to create and maintain the vision and culture of the organization that is not only immediately attainable, but also attainable for the organization's success in future years (Hoff, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Leaders are expected to recruit followers to the organization and entice them to assist in creating mission statements, establish organizational goals, and create objectives to ensure the vision becomes a reality. Leaders are not expected to be forceful, dominating, or coercive in nature as in the past. However, the true leader of today is collaborative, and establishes and maintains the organization's goal by displaying motivation and encouragement while also establishing and enforcing expectations required for success (Jago, 1982; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000).

Along with establishing vision and mission for their organizations, leaders face a wide variety of challenges (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). First, leaders in any organization today face increasing economic shortfalls, thereby increasing the pressures placed on organizational leaders to become creative, innovative thinkers and problem solvers (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). Along with economic pressures, social and societal pressures require the leader to reform organizational and managerial practices to ensure no individual feels discrimination in the organization and maintains moral and professional fairness. Organizational leaders face global competition, public criticism, increased obligation for

client satisfaction, and increased standards for performance by employees, while contending with increasingly shrinking sources of revenue and a decrease in qualified applicants to fill positions. Leaders experience a wide range of expectations, accountability, and complex roles on a daily basis, causing increased personal stress (Sodoma & Else, 2009). Coping strategies are imperative and leaders must use them to manage stress.

Leadership Traits

Studies conducted on leadership traits have generated controversial viewpoints from researchers (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Fleenor (2006) defined leadership traits as unique characteristics that individuals acquire from birth and remain practically unchangeable over time. Zaccaro's (2007) definition of leadership traits takes a different approach, stating that individuals inherit their traits from birth; however, individual differences and experiences may alter a person's personal characteristics. Although leadership traits notably add to the success of leaders; traits alone are not enough for leaders to be successful. A successful leader will exhibit the ability to address a particular situation based on experiences in combination with their core traits (Fleenor, 2006). Therefore, performance influenced by traits may foster effective leadership among any organization or institution (Zaccaro, 2007).

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) distinguished leaders' traits from those of who are not leaders. They listed six traits essential to a leader: "drive, the desire to lead, honesty/integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability and knowledge of the business" (p. 49). Table 1 depicts leadership traits and the characteristics of the trait, according to Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991).

Others have identified traits relating to the success of a leader that are not considered to be essential leadership traits (Fleenor, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). These traits

correlate to a person’s personality, and the influences these traits have on a person’s actions to a particular situation. This list includes charisma, adaptability and flexibility, creativity, originality, task completion, physical stamina, and understanding the needs of their followers (Fleener, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Successful leaders need many other traits; the essential traits and other traits listed do not comprise all possible traits a leader may possess. In essence, a leader’s success is dependent on the relationship between the trait and the individual’s reaction to the situation itself (Fleener, 2006; Zaccaro, 2007).

Table 1

Leadership Traits

Trait	Characteristics
Drive	Motivation and a desire to achieve high levels of effort. Five aspects include “achievement motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity and initiative” (p. 49).
Desire to lead (leadership motivation)	Feeling the need to have power and influence over others. Willing to obtain responsibility, and dislikes being in the subordinate role.
Honesty and integrity	Is present in all individuals, however, leaders have a special connection with these two traits. Honesty is a person’s undeceitful or truthful side. Integrity refers to a person’s word or actions.
Self-confidence	Followers must be confident in the leader’s ability and be convinced to take action. Followers’ perceptions are key to their trust in the leader. Self-confidence is imperative in decision making.
Cognitive ability	Must have intelligence to solve problems, create and implement strategies, and make decisions based on the organization’s best interests.
Knowledge of the business	In-depth knowledge of the organization allows for better decision making and the understanding of those decisions based on the success or failure of the business.

Note. Adapted from Leadership: Do Traits Matter?, by S. A. Kirkpatrick & E. A. Locke, 1991, *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(2), 48–60, doi:10.5465/AME.1991.4274679

As the educational system evolves and becomes increasingly diverse, educational leaders must possess a wide array of personal traits and skills (Sharma, 2010). Teachers want a principal who possesses skills that are humanistic in nature. Humanistic skills include empathy and providing comfort for others, self-management, and effective communication.

These skills entice others to follow and want to work for a principal demonstrating these attributes (Sharma, 2010).

Effective principals possess other traits and characteristics that make them successful (McEwan, 2003). Successful principals conduct themselves in a manner that shows followers what they value. They lead by example and display traits such as empathy, flexibility, enthusiasm, respect, integrity, communication, and relationship building. Through these actions, followers may view their administrator as a visionary, culture builder, educator, facilitator, and contributor. Obtaining a leadership position does not guarantee the individual will be a successful leader (Sharma, Sun, & Kannan, 2012). The combination of inherited traits along with possessing a deep understanding and knowledge of leadership skills while implementing those skills effectively, makes a leader successful.

Stress in the Educational Community

Stress can affect any employee and can cause problems for workers in any profession, if improperly managed (Sodoma & Else, 2009). An individual experiences stress at work, their job performance decreases (Perrewe, Fernandez, & Morton, 1993). Workplace stress can appear in any individual in the private sector and in public organizations. Each educator copes with stress differently (Moody & Barrett, 2009). Moody and Barrett (2009) developed criteria and categorized educators by their coping methods, described below.

The first group developed by Moody and Barrett's (2009) study was the educator who is unwilling to address the pressures of their job and leaves the profession. These educators work for a period of time, feeling the stress and pressures of the job, and are unable to implement coping strategies. They eventually leave the job rather than address the stress. The second group includes educators who can experience high degrees of stress, yet are able to

withstand the pressure and complete the year by looking forward to weekends, vacations, or retirement. The third group includes those who are stressed, but able to continue performing their job responsibilities because they have learned to implement effective coping strategies. These educators may even thrive on the day-to-day stress experienced on the job. Every educator, administrator, central-office staff member, or superintendent will experience qualities to fit into one of these three categories at some point in their career. How well stress is processed and managed will determine where to categorize an individual (Moody & Barrett, 2009).

The Educational Leader

Prior to the 21st century, the principal of a school could possess building-manager skills and be viewed as an effective administrator (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). The expectation was that the principal would work on and develop school budgets, ensure that faculty members complied with curriculum expectations, order supplies, and maintain discipline. The principal ensured the school remained safe and attended to all transportation and nutritional needs.

However, principals of the 21st century have seen a drastic change in their job responsibilities and job expectations (Kruger et al., 2005). Due to the dramatic changes over the years, becoming a school administrator has a diminishing appeal (Kruger et al., 2005). Each day the school administrator balances a variety of expectations and demands (Sodoma & Else, 2009). Added responsibilities in recent times have created a role that is less attractive and more stressful than in the past (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). This stress contributes to an administrator shortage, and many locations around the country are experiencing a succession of school leaders (Lazaridou, 2009).

Varying responsibilities of the principal cause stress (Brimm, 1983). The greatest stress accrued from working to comply with state, federal, and organizational policies and rules (Tomic & Tomic, 2008). These principals found keeping current with accountability and to be their main source of stress. Having to evaluate staff members, maintain and increase test scores, address difficult and noncompliant teachers and staff, and resolve conflicts between the school and parents caused high stress and anxiety (Adams & Hambright, 2004). Tomic and Tomic (2008) found excessive workload, school leaders placing high expectations on themselves, lack of recognition, decreasing autonomy, and the lack of a reward system for successes to be causes of workplace stress. Junior high school and secondary high school principals expressed that after-school or weekend activities caused a significant amount of added stress. Secondary principals expressed concerns over the amount of paperwork and workload they could not complete during the normal workday; thus, they completed the work at home causing decreased time for their family in the evenings and on weekends, adding to personal stress.

As the educational system continues to evolve, and the job demands of school principals change, skills required to be effective change as well (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Principals in today's society must be experts in managerial skills as well as curriculum development and implementation to maintain high-performing schools (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Administrators prioritize effective instructional leadership and must know the latest research on the implementation of curriculum and instruction and be able to assist teachers in transferring that knowledge into classroom practices. Principals must be able to model collecting and analyzing data while supporting

teachers in doing the same on their own. This task ensures students are achieving, and teachers are proficient in their teaching practices.

Amid the changes seen in education, teachers must teach to a new set of standards and the principal must ensure teachers implement the standards properly (Gewertz, 2011). This new movement driving education is the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Common Core is a national set of standards implemented in U.S. schools to ensure all students graduate from high school with the skills to be ready for college and begin a career (Achieve, College Summit, National Association of Secondary School Principals, & National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). Principals are expressing concerns that they are not fully prepared to implement these standards, and are receiving little to no guidance on how to do so (Gewertz, 2011). They are expressing Common Core expectations are putting pressure to succeed at higher levels, and feelings of inadequacy are beginning to surface (Riddile, 2013).

The principal will be required to enlist a new culture of learning, thereby changing traditional classroom practices and moving students and teachers to a new set of teaching and learning skills (Riddile. 2013). Professional development can no longer use a uniform approach, and this shift places extra pressure on the principal (Noguera & Guastafarro, 2013). Easy tasks such as scheduling the school day are now becoming problems for principals. Providing time for collaboration and teamwork among teachers poses logistical issues. Determining individual schedules to allow teachers to have time to plan their lessons and collaborate with peers in and across grade levels is critical for invigorating teaching practices. Finding time during the school day and the personnel to accommodate the schedule is becoming burdensome. The principal role is becoming more complex, and with current

controversies over student learning, teacher expectations, Common Core Standard implementation, evaluation concerns, and job security, many principals face considerable amounts of stress.

The stress of working in an educational environment can become overwhelming at times, and the stability of the school may collapse when the leader is unable to perform their job as expected (Hamann, 1990). Workplace stress is becoming increasingly apparent as the role of the principal changes and is more difficult. As the school leader unsuccessfully copes with stress, it may manifest and cause emotional issues (Friedman, 1995). A principal who is experiencing unmanaged stress might begin to fall into one of four categories (Friedman, 1995): exhaustion, aloofness, self-dissatisfaction, and deprecation. A principal who is experiencing exhaustion becomes internally focused on feeling weary, and these feelings may come in the form of physical, emotional, or cognitive stress. Exhibiting aloofness, the principal may begin to reduce contact with staff, the community, and stakeholders, as well as becoming weary of their surroundings. The third category a principal may experience is self-dissatisfaction. When self-dissatisfaction occurs, a person focuses internally on feelings of discontent, perhaps displayed by acknowledging a disconnection with faculty and staff members. The principal may also no longer strive toward previous desires or aspirations. Finally, the feeling of deprecation is apparent when a person feels discontent externally and begins to believe they cannot effectively perform the job.

Conceptualization of Stress

Employees are facing chronic levels of stress that are damaging to their personal and professional lives (Employee-Assistance Program Workforce, 2008). However, understanding its function and concept is imperative. Sources of anxiety requiring attention

present on a personal and professional level (Shepell (2002). Causes of workplace tension increase as individuals face longer commutes to work, address economic challenges, care for young families or ailing parents, and adapt to an ever-changing world of technological advances. Stress is becoming prevalent in today's society and the workplace.

No one is immune to stress and all individuals require some in their lives (Doohan, 1982). Okoroma and Robert-Okah (2007) referred to stress as the internal condition of an individual who experiences failure because of tension and anxiety, thereby producing a condition endangering the health of a normal person. Selye (1976) found stress to be a general response to any demand placed on the body. Individuals may have life experiences that are either pleasant or unpleasant (Brimm, 1983; Selye, 1976). In addition, not all difficult situations may be perceived as negative (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). Although typically viewed as a negative force, positive stress is beneficial to the success of an individual, promoting pleasant or positive experiences referenced as eustress. The term eustress originated from the Greek term *eu*, meaning good as in "phonia or euphoria" (Selye, 1976, p. 74). Eustress is a necessary factor that allows or encourages an individual to perform better under any type of pressure (Brimm, 1983). An individual feeling eustress usually experiences a sense of encouragement and achievement, promoting positive thoughts and actions resulting in positive feelings.

Each individual has an optimum level of positive stress prior to the effects becoming negative (Doohan, 1982). As individuals go through excessive and prolonged events without using coping strategies, negative stress begins to occur. Just as eustress causes an individual to have positive experiences and promotes success, individuals experience negative stress as well. Distress is typically associated with negative terms such as anxiety, strain, frustration,

defense, and tension (Brimm, 1983; Lazarus, 1966). Distress originated from the Latin term *dis* meaning bad as in “dissonance, or disagreement” (Selye, 1976, p. 74). As individuals experience persistent distress, a person’s energy reserves will be depleted, thereby lessening an individual’s adaptation strategies to overcome distress (Sarros, 1988). Individuals who experience distress usually have feelings of helplessness, desperation, or insecurity, typically resulting in failure (Brimm, 1983). Whether an individual is experiencing eustress or distress, the individual experiencing the stimuli will determine the amount of adversity they feel, depending on the coping mechanisms they possess. For the purpose of this study, when mentioning stress, I am referencing distress.

Stress is a natural way of coping with challenges in one’s environment (Doohan, 1982). Individuals should be able to recognize the amount of pressure experienced, how long the pressure will occur, and the type of situations that will produce the appropriate levels of stress (Doohan, 1982). An individual’s environment and their ability to using coping skills properly might affect the degree of distress experienced (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Lazarus (2006) agreed with Montgomery and Rupp (2005) that stressors are connected to environmental sources; however, stressors are connected to an individual’s cognitions as well, and anxiety develops from a multitude of different experiences (Doohan, 1982). These experiences may be evident when one has excessive responsibilities, conflict with role expectations, constraints on time, as well as personality and inner-self clashes. Finally, demands placed on people and the inability to balance demands, rather than the actual demand itself, contribute to distress (Hiebert & Mendaglio, 1988).

Theories of Stress

As researchers conducted studies to explain the concept of stress, they developed three theories. Selye (1976) studied the stress process and developed the general adaptation syndrome. Lazarus (1966) developed the Lazarus theory, or the cognitive-appraisal theory. Finally, Ursin and Eriksen (2004) explored cognitive-activation theory (CAT) of stress.

General-adaptation syndrome. Selye (1976) identified general-adaptation syndrome as a three-stage process for responding to stress: the alarm-reaction stage, the resistance stage, and the exhaustion stage. The alarm reaction stage consists of an event or situation that requires an individual to respond to a specific experience. Selye found that no individual remains in the alarm-reaction stage for a sustained period without experiencing damaging consequences. Also, a follow-up or second stage was needed to account for adaptation or resistance to the experience or event. Therefore, if an individual is to survive, the alarm-reaction stage must be accompanied by a second stage, resistance. The resistance stage may be described as the person's ability to apply coping strategies and overcome the negative experience, thereby allowing the individual to return to normal functioning. The longer an individual stays in the resistance stage without a sustained adaptation; the more likely the adaptation would eventually diminish and stress will still be experienced. The last stage, exhaustion will occur after the individual exposes a person to a stressor without any adaptation to the experience. Selye stated that the amount of stress a person may experience depends on the individual's ability to react and adapt to the stress at each level.

The cognitive appraisal theory of stress. Lazarus (1966) created the cognitive-appraisal theory of stress. The process behind this theory is that an individual will assess a particular situation or environment and deem its relevance (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-

Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986). Lazarus divided the theory into two phases: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal (as cited in Folkman et al., 1986).

During the primary-appraisal phase, an individual determines if a certain experience causes harm, a threat, or puts them at risk (Folkman et al., 1986). As a person appraises a perceived threat, the individual will become concerned with the perception of the situation as well as the judgment (Lazarus, 1966). The judgment may be considered an inference in which the individual will process collected data, forming an opinion of the threat based on previous expectations and ideas. The individual determines if the experience will cause harm or if the risk will affect well-being, health, or loved ones (Folkman et al., 1986). As an individual experiences a situation and determines no harm or threat will ensue, that individual does not experience stress (Folkman et al., 1986). However, if the individual does perceive harm or threat, that individual will go onto the second phase of appraisal (Folkman et al., 1986).

In the secondary appraisal phase, an individual assesses the perceived threat of harm and contemplates coping options to overcome the threat (Folkman et al., 1986). The person may choose to alter the situation, accept the situation, or hold back from acting on the situation (Folkman et al., 1986). If the individual copes with the harm or threat, that individual experiences positive stress (Folkman et al., 1986). However, if the individual does not have the ability to cope with the experience, negative stress occurs (Folkman et al., 1986). The combination of the primary and secondary appraisal determines if the individual will regard the situation as threatening or nonthreatening. If the situation is perceived as threatening, that individual will be concerned with the possibility of loss or harm. The threat

can also be perceived as negative if it appears to be a challenging situation that requires the individual to have knowledge at a mastery level.

The cognitive-activation theory of stress. Ursin and Eriksen (2004) researched cognitive-activation theory and noted that stress can be measured in four different ways: experiencing stress stimuli, the experience, responding to stress, and feedback from the stress response. The stress one experiences will depend on the outcome of the stimuli.

The stress stimuli. When examining the stress stimuli, a threatening or pleasant situation may be based on the individual's appraisal of each situation (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). Once a situation is appraised, the type of stimulus can be determined by drawing on experiences and expectations. Whether the stimuli are perceived as negative or positive will depend on the individual's previous experiences with the stimuli. The perception of the stimuli may also be dependent on an individual's previous learning as well as the setting of the experience.

The stress experience. Ursin and Eriksen (2004) found once a person perceives or appraises a stimulus as negative or threatening, that stimulus will be conceived as stressful. They found it to be easy to measure stress among humans because humans can express feeling by simply answering questions or through conversations. Animals are unable to report stress, as they cope with stress by avoiding situations (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004).

The stress response and feedback from the stress. The stress response to specific stimulus can be viewed as a general alarm (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). By responding to a specific alarm, the human brain becomes aroused, causing an individual's body to increase in wakefulness. As a result, the body responds to the stimulus and will cope with the cause for alarm.

The feedback from the stress response. The final stage in cognitive-activation theory is the feedback transmitted from the brain to the individual (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). The feedback allows the individual to react to the stress in a particular way. The reaction may alter the situation of the stimulus, allowing the individual to store the response for future expected outcomes. Table 2 illustrates the different theories of stress.

Table 2

Theories of Stress

Theories	Stages	Reaction
General adaptation syndrome; <i>Selye, 1976</i>	Alarm reaction stage	Event or situation that will require a response.
	Resistance stage	Person's ability to apply a coping strategy to address the stressful event or situation. The longer an individual is in this stage, the harder it will be to diminish the stressful event.
	Exhaustion stage	If the stressful event is not successfully addressed in the resistance stage, the individual will experience the exhaustion stage.
Cognitive appraisal theory of stress; <i>Lazarus, 1966</i>	Primary-appraisal phase	An individual will determine if the situation will require a response by determining if the event will cause harm, threat, or risk.
	Secondary-appraisal phase	The individual will assess the perceived harm, threat, or risk and determine what type of coping strategy will be used to address the situation.
Cognitive activation theory of stress; <i>Ursin & Eriksen, 2004</i>	The stress stimuli	Assessing a situation and determining if the stimuli will cause stress may determine if it will cause stress based on previous life experiences.
	The stress experience	Experiencing the event or stressful situation.
	The stress response and feedback from the stress	The brain will respond to the stress and send a signal on how to respond.
	The feedback from the stress response	The body's natural response to stress and results based on the response.

Coping Strategies

Regardless of the person or organization of employment, the implementation of coping strategies to manage stress successfully is imperative (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

Coping is

the process of thoughts and behaviors that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations they appraise as being stressful or exceeding their own resources. Coping efforts seek to manage, master, tolerate, reduce or minimize the demands of a stressful environment. (Bartram & Gardner, 2008, p. 228)

Of the techniques to cope with stress, one strategy is to address the problem that is causing distress, also known as problem-focused coping (Bartram & Gardner, 2008). Another way to address stress is to reduce the negative feelings pertaining to the problem, also called emotion-focused coping. In general, directly addressing the issue will result in a long-term solution and therefore is preferable. Avoiding the problem or neglecting to confront the issue may cause short-term relief; however, this may ultimately lead to a higher level of distress when the situation recurs (Bartram & Gardner, 2008).

Viewing a situation as changeable or unchangeable determines the coping strategy needed (Bartram & Gardner, 2008). Individuals use a problem-focused coping strategy when they apply actions and thoughts that target the specific stressor and attempt to change the situation, if it can be changed. Coping using emotion-focused techniques requires one's actions and thoughts to address their emotional reactions to a particular situation. Individuals commonly apply this strategy when the situation cannot be changed; however, some type of strategy is needed to feel positive emotions.

Problem-focused coping is confronting the stressor and applying a strategy that will change the situation (Bartram & Gardner, 2008; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). When executing this technique, an individual will assess the problem and determine a plan of action to eliminate or reduce the amount of stress experienced. An individual using this method controls the situation and may ask for “additional help with tasks, apply time- management skills, make constructive changes to the situation, concentrate on next steps or use a systematic approach to dealing with the problem” (Bartram & Gardner, 2008, p. 229).

Using an emotion-focused approach allows the individual to reduce the stressful situation, but is only useful for short periods of time (Bartram & Gardner, 2008; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). By using this technique, individuals divert stressful situations to feel emotional relief. A person using this process attempts to change the meaning of the situation by allowing the individual to experience positive emotions on a psychological level. When applying this strategy, a person may “accept the situation, seek emotional support, divert attention by working on another task, or turn the problem over to a higher power” (Bartram & Gardner, 2008, p. 229).

Coping with stress begins by using stress-management strategies (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). A person may use cognitive strategies determined by a person’s ability to show self-control, change perspectives, and intentionally put distance between themselves and others. When using this strategy, individuals are responsible for making their own decisions to change the environment or exhibit self-control when addressing stressors, ultimately being responsible for themselves. Using this technique may include seeking advice from supervisors or colleagues, making jokes, or thinking about an alternative response. The second technique an individual may choose to use is an emotional or physiological strategy.

Someone who displays a positive outlook and has the ability to remain calm uses emotional strategies. These individuals take a passive approach to cope with stress and possibly do so by applying relaxation techniques, drinking, smoking, resigning from their jobs, or avoiding the stress altogether. By applying an emotional coping strategy, an individual may experience emotions such as happiness and joy. By not applying this strategy, individuals may experience depression, frustration, or anxiety.

Finally, an individual may use a behavioral strategy (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Individuals using behavioral strategies to cope with stress look for advice from others, set limits while at work, and take an active role in finding exercises that promote relaxation. An important behavioral strategy is the use of the organization’s employee-assistance program (EAP). An individual can seek advice from EAP specialists to find ways to cope with the stress they may be experiencing. As illustrated in Table 3, an individual may use three different coping strategies to combat stress.

Table 3

Coping Strategies to Address Stress and Burnout

Type of strategy	Description	Attributes
Cognitive strategies; <i>Montgomery & Rupp, 2005</i>	People’s ability to show self-control and responsibility for making their own decisions. They are ultimately responsible for themselves.	The person can change their perspectives, intentionally put distance between themselves and others, change their environment, and exhibit self-control.
Emotional strategies; <i>Montgomery & Rupp, 2005</i>	Someone who is seen as positive and maintains the ability to remain calm in a stressful situation.	This person may take on a passive approach to handling stress by drinking, eating, resigning from the job, or avoiding the stress altogether. Emotional strategies are either positive or negative and the individual will experience such feelings as joy and happiness or depression and additional anxiety.
Behavioral strategies; <i>Montgomery & Rupp, 2005</i>	Individuals may choose to use the expertise of others and seek advice from other people or organizations.	The individual may use the advice from professional counseling or therapy, employee assistance programs, or other professional organizations that may provide advice.

School Administrators Coping Techniques

For school administrators to cope with stress and minimize its effects, they must be better equipped to handle the pressures felt on the job (Gmelch & Swent, 1981). A set of prescribed coping techniques will not address all the different stressors administrators experience, so coping with stress is an individual endeavor (Feitler & Tokar, 1986).

Principals use coping strategies that warrant the best results for their own interests. However, they do not use some strategies (Lindle & Miller, 1988). Administrators often elect not to use strategies that encompass social support from those in the school district. The use of social support would be to gain support from colleagues on the same administrative level. These support systems are not used primarily because the principal has no other individual in the same building with the same job title. Often, principals elect not to use social support for fear of being viewed as incompetent or unable to perform their job. This lack of professional networking leaves the school principal unaware of how other administrators may address the same or similar issues.

As school administrators experience similar issues, researchers found they cope with different situations based on individual experiences and build on past successes or mistakes (Gmelch & Swent 1981; Juneja, 2004; Tung & Koch, 1980). Researchers developed seven categories identifying coping techniques used by school administrators (Gmelch, 1988; Gmelch & Swent, 1981; Tung & Koch, 1980): “social, physical, intellectual, entertainment, personal, managerial, and attitudinal” (Juneja, 2004, p. 48). Using the social method means engaging in activities on a social level such as playing cards, talking on the phone, or shopping. The physical technique includes using physical activities such as baseball, jogging, or working out at the gym to relieve stress. Individuals using an intellectual strategy may

participate in professional development, attending cultural events, or conducting research. Some individuals engage in entertainment activities such as attending a concert, going to the movies, or watching television. Implementing techniques such as time management, delegation, and having a plan of action encompass the managerial coping style. Using the final coping category, an attitudinal strategy, includes crying, laughing, or accepting the situation. The chosen technique is dependent on the administrator's personal preference.

Studies conducted on elementary school principals found their primary way of coping was to face the situation directly (Lutton, 1988). Elementary administrators will face the problem themselves rather than delegating tasks that will overload others. Lutton (1988) studied elementary principals and categorized their coping strategies into areas such as mentally and physically challenging activities, participating in activities unrelated to work, and attempting to alter or change the stressful situation. High school principals studied reported different coping strategies from those elementary principals used (Robertson & Matthews, 1988; Zwick, 1992). High school principals used such techniques as maintaining priority of tasks to complete, having a good or funny sense of humor, and delegating assignments or tasks to others. Other coping strategies identified by high school principals were setting realistic goals, participating in activities of personal interest, and obtaining good health practices, whether it is good eating habits, sleeping habits, or physical activities (Iuzzolino, 1986). No single coping strategy works for every individual, so coping successfully with stress depends on the individual administrator. Administrators based their decision about which coping strategy to use on the situation at hand (Gmelch & Swent, 1981).

Manifestations of Stress

The situation for individuals who experience stress and do not use a technique to cope with the stress will manifest in different forms (DeLongis et al., 1988): physical, emotional, and vocational. DeLongis et al. (1988) found that physical stress can manifest as chronic health symptoms. DeLongis et al. conducted research to determine whether stress can be measured by life's everyday negative experiences, life events, or long-term health status. They found that as daily negative experiences increased, a person's health and mood suffered. Stress has been linked to many different conditions but the most frequently occurring condition is the reduction of the immune system's ability to stay healthy (Davidsdottir, 2007). Individuals who experience chronic stress experience symptoms that are unpleasant and harmful (Maslach, 2003). Minor physical conditions such as tense muscles and an upset stomach, as well as headaches, fatigue, and insomnia become problematic (Maslach, 2003). Serious physical effects of stress on humans can result in increased heart rate and increasing blood pressure (McEwen, 2008). Over time, a person with chronic-blood-pressure issues and increased heart rate can experience harmful effects on the person's overall cardiovascular health. Eventually the increased harmful effects may lead to severe health issues such as strokes, heart attacks, or death.

An individual may also experience stress on an emotional level (DeLongis et al., 1988). People who have low self-esteem and low emotional support have higher stress levels (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). These higher stress levels may cause physical symptoms that may cause a person's health to deteriorate. As an individual experiences episodes of acute emotional stress, the person can also experience adverse effects on their body, especially on the heart (Ziegelstein, 2007). Controlling emotional stress is vital to the physical well-being

of an individual because resulting heart abnormalities can eventually turn into serious conditions that can ultimately become life threatening.

The third way stress will affect an individual is on a vocational level (DeLongis et al., 1988). Every individual working for an organization will experience stress at one time or another (Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007). Stress is a common phenomenon of every staff member in an organization. Park (2007) conducted research on stress but focused the research on finding out what stress people experience while at work. Job strain was the major component of job stress. Job strain is the pressures and demands placed on workers related to different aspects of the job. Job aspects are skills required for the job, the intensity and pace of the job, and the internal conflict to keep up with colleagues. Stressed workers are likely to suffer negative consequences. Consequences may appear as lack of motivation, less productivity, or physical or mental lack of health (Park, 2007). As stress continues without proper coping strategies, a more serious consequence of stress may evolve in the form of burnout (Leiter, 1991).

Stress Into Burnout

As an individual experiences repeated stress, and it becomes a chronic occurrence, consequences may arise; the most serious result of chronic stress develops in the form of burnout (Leiter, 1991). As strategies to address stress go unmanaged and unchecked, the stress may evolve into burnout (Doohan, 1982; Hamann, 1990.). Those individuals who provide a particular service to others experience burnout at a faster rate than other professionals (Tomic & Tomic, 2008). Densten (2001) viewed this phenomenon as a special form of reaction to an individual's work and attributed it to organizational pressures.

Researchers found that the most productive, dedicated, and committed individuals will be most affected by burnout (Doohan, 1982, Densten 2001).

Researchers did not conduct systemic studies on burnout until the 1970s and 1980s (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). As research continued throughout these years, the term burnout was clearly conceptualized and defined. Although Hamann (1990) acknowledged many definitions of burnout in the literature, the scholar offered this definition:

Burnout is often described as a syndrome that (a) occurs at an individual level, (b) is an internal psychological experience involving feeling, attitudes, and motives and expectations, (c) is a negative individual experience that involved stress, discomfort, dysfunction, and negative consequences, and (d) is associate with emotional and physical exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. (p. 31)

Consequences of Burnout

As an individual's negative stress increases and burnout begins to occur, serious consequences on clients, staff members, and the entire organization in which the individual is employed may develop (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). If stress and burnout are not managed properly, consequences will arise (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Tomic & Tomic, 2008). These consequences may come in the form of health issues, inadequate job performances, problems with employees and even death. One consequence an individual with burnout may display is withdrawal (Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler, 1986). Withdrawal may come in two different forms and may be experienced by an individual physically or mentally. When people are physically not present or physically remove themselves from others, they are physically withdrawn. Mental or psychological withdrawal occur when a person is present physically, yet elsewhere mentally. A mentally withdrawn individual may be viewed as

daydreaming or not paying attention to other people or the task. Individuals who experience withdrawal reactions, whether physical or mental, will distance themselves from work, will spend less time at work, and will take frequent and longer breaks (Schwab et al., 1986).

Another consequence of burnout impacts a person's quality of work (Schwab et al., 1986). As study participants began feel stress leading to burnout, they would leave their job with various problems such as feeling anxious, angry, or upset; complaining about their job; or feeling tense and extremely stressed. These participants preferred to be left at home alone and not spend time with their families. Finally, these participants developed the first dimension of burnout called depersonalization. Depersonalization is when a person experiences negativity toward anyone with whom they interact on a regular basis and retains very few close friends (Schwab et al., 1986). Researchers found that burnout leads to thoughts about leaving the job, erratic behaviors on the job, and ultimately actually leaving the job as a final measure (Cherniss, 1992). Considerable research on burnout relates to immediate consequences. However, research on the effects of burnout and its long-term consequences is still lacking (Cherniss, 1992).

Consequences of burnout could take many different forms, with health issues being a main concern (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Individuals may experience health problems when stress is unmanaged (Hamann, 1990). If stress continues without applying a coping strategy, burnout may occur causing health concerns such as weight gain or loss, inability to fight off colds, or high-cholesterol levels. Additional concerns may result in chronic fatigue, fluctuation in blood pressure, migraines, and more (Hamann, 1990). Burnout could also be associated with physical exhaustion, drug and alcohol use, insomnia, family and marital issues, and experience with personal distress (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). These factors may

contribute to serious health consequences, showing the urgent need to manage stress appropriately.

Chapter Summary

The totality of the literature in this review detailed leadership roles, the conceptualization of stress, stress-coping strategies, and the effects of stress on school administrators. As individuals obtain leadership roles, complex and stressful responsibilities come with the job (Rothstein, 2001). The term leader has evolved in practice and definition, now defined as the qualities one possesses, as well as how they fulfill their job requirements (Jago, 1982). A leader in 2014 must acquire skills that are managerial and influential in nature, thereby adding stress to their personal and professional lives.

Understanding the concept of stress and its functions is essential to identifying sources of stressful experiences (EAP Workforce, 2002). Stress is a natural feeling and is nature's way of coping with challenges (Doohan, 1982). All individuals experience stress; thus, no one is absolved from it. There are two types of stress, negative (distress) or positive (eustress). Both types play a valuable role in the success or failure of individuals (Brimm, 1983; Lazarus, 1966). Individuals must be able to recognize what causes them stress, how much stress they can handle, and how long they will endure the stress prior to coping with or changing the situation.

To address stress, one must implement a coping strategy (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Depending on the situation causing stress, a person will decide what type of strategy to use. Selecting a strategy may come in the form of a problem-focused or emotion-focused coping strategy (Bartram & Gardner, 2008). People apply problem-focused strategies when seeking to target the specific problem and alter or change the situation to reduce stress.

Emotion-focused strategies focus on short-term relief but do not change or alter the problem; therefore, people will still feel the stress after implementing the emotion-focused strategy.

School administrators implement both types of strategies. The strategy selected is dependent on the individual based on individual preferences (Feitlar & Tokar, 1986). For administrators to sustain their jobs for long periods, they must be equipped with the proper coping strategies to manage stress before it becomes severe and results in serious consequences. Contending with added responsibilities, accountabilities, and economic and societal pressures, the leadership role is becoming increasingly stressful and difficult to perform (Javidan & Waldman, 2003).

In this ever-changing world, along with added educational issues, pressure from society, and global competition, school leaders face unprecedented accountability and responsibility (Javidan & Waldman, 2003; Tomic & Tomic). School leaders must identify stressors and apply appropriate coping strategies to maintain prolonged employment in the education system (Gmelch & Swent, 1981).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of school administrators about workplace stress, identify causes of stress, and discern what coping strategies they use to combat stress. The phenomenon explored was coping strategies employed by school administrators to handle workplace stress. A qualitative study employed a free response, open-ended survey to answer the following research questions:

1. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?
2. Why are they considered stressful?
3. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being?
4. Specifically why are they used?
5. Is there a difference in the perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

This chapter outlines the overall research design as well as the rationale for selecting the design. Also, I include a discussion on the population and sample selection, data-collection method and procedure, data analysis, and reliability and validity considerations.

Design

To understand the perspectives of school administrators on the research topic, I selected a qualitative design. A qualitative research approach will “seek to delve deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceived them” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian,

2006, p. 14). The most important reason to choose a qualitative design is to enter and embrace the world of each participant, and view their world based on their own perspective (Corbin and Strauss (2008). As a result, obtaining knowledge based on their personal experiences and individual background would lead to a better understanding of individual responses. In qualitative research, researchers collect, analyze, and interpret data using visual and narrative approaches to understand the phenomenon of interest (Gay et al., 2006). Qualitative researchers inductively analyze data to find common themes or patterns, thereby enabling them to organize and categorize the data based on the synthesis of the narrative, interview, or observation collected (Berg, 2004; Gay et al., 2006). The use of a qualitative method for this study determined what experiences caused stress, why they caused stress, and which coping strategies participants chose (Berg, 2004). Employing a free-response, open-ended question method, I investigated the thinking of the participants about the research phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The study took place in two phases: a pilot study and the final study. The use of a pilot study afforded me time to become familiar with the research topic as it relates to the population in its own reality (Sampson, 2004). The advantages of conducting a pilot study were as follows (Glesne, 1998, Seidman, 2006):

1. Testing the language used and allowing for reflection about changes in terminology and clarification of operational definitions.
2. Reflecting on question design, times allotted for survey completion, and revisions of the survey questions as they pertain to the objective of the study.
3. Affording the opportunity to revise the objectives, research questions, and research design, if needed.

4. Assisting in better preparation for the final study.

The pilot study was designed in the same manner as the final study. I gave the survey to participants to test questions for clarity and determine whether the questions were easily understood as well as answered clearly by the participants.

The second phase consisted of a survey with free-response open-ended questions that I created and disseminated to school administrators (Gay et al., 2006). Designing free-response questions offered participants time to answer the questions based on their own viewpoints, experiences, and perceptions on stress and coping strategies (Gay et al., 2006; Seidman, 2006). The analysis of survey results identified stressors, coping strategies, and the reasons for answering the questions in the chosen manner without guidance from an interviewer.

Population

For this study, the selected population was school administrators from a school district in south Louisiana. This district has 29 schools and 68 school administrators including principals, associate principals, and assistant principals. I selected participants for the study using a purposive-criterion sampling method (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007), choosing those with similar “experiences, perspectives and outlooks” (p. 115) on stress and coping strategies. I set the criteria prior to the study. The criteria required that all participants must be school administrators during the time of the study. School administrators invited to take part in this study included principals, associate principals, and assistant principals. Those electing to participate did so voluntarily. Those choosing not to participate did not take part in the survey.

Data-Collection Method

To collect data for the study, I created and disseminated a free-response, open-ended survey. The survey questions specifically explored school administrators' perceptions of their stress-inducing experiences and determined what coping strategies, if any, they used to reduce stress. The 15-item survey was divided into three sections: demographics, stress and coping, and suggestions (see Appendix A). Section 1 had eight questions addressing demographic information in a multiple-choice format. The next four questions comprised section 2 and were open-ended, free-response questions asking participants to identify and give supporting details regarding stress factors and coping strategies. The final section was devoted to suggestions for district support and additional comments the participants wanted to include.

Data-Collection Procedures

I sent a letter to the superintendent of the selected school district seeking permission to allow school-level administrators to take part in the study (see Appendices B & C). I also submitted a completed application to the University of Louisiana-Lafayette's Institutional Review Board to obtain permission to collect data for this study. Once they granted approval, data collection began.

I collected the data analyzed for this study anonymously through SurveyMonkey, an online survey and data-collection service. I sent all school administrators an e-mail requesting participation in the study. I sent a brief description of the purpose of the study, an explanation of consent to volunteer, as well as a link to the survey to each school administrator (see Appendix D). Participants granted consent by taking the survey. The survey was open for a 2-week period. I sent a reminder e-mail 1 week after the initial

e-mail. I sent the follow-up e-mail to encourage administrators to participate in the survey if they had not already done so. Once the 2-week window was complete, the survey was closed, and the data analysis phase of the study began.

Confidentiality of each participant was ensured in different ways. The first way was to keep participant's identifiable information private. No question on the demographic section of the survey asked for any identifying information. In addition, no participant was required to submit names along with the survey. Second, I kept all notes, summaries, graphs, and other texts, including data in a secure location, locked in my privately owned file cabinet. I immediately printed and deleted any e-mail correspondence. I conducted e-mails communication on a private computer that was password protected.

Data Analysis

I initiated the process of data analysis using a constant-comparison method. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) described this method as the coding and analyzing of data to develop concepts. When using this method, I compared the data, identified and refined concepts as they related to one another, and thereby developed an explanation for the phenomenon of study. Coding began once I received all the data. Creswell (2009) explained coding as the process of collecting and segmenting data. This process continues by putting data into categories, referring to the text, based on responses from the survey (Gay et al., 2006). By beginning with open coding, I had no predetermined titles or categories; interpretation of the data influenced designated titles and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I did not use a computer-based program to analyze and code the data. I manually read the responses to document themes and trends. Once I completed open coding, I performed axial coding by creating a narrative to discuss the themes or trends that emerged (Creswell, 2009). I created a

variety of visuals, including tables, figures, and other types of materials to highlight and display the findings from the analysis. Finally, I discussed lessons learned, the meanings of the themes and patterns, and the development of a plan for further research.

Validity

When determining whether data are trustworthy, the data must be credible, dependable, and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); in essence, to what degree can the research be trusted? In this study, I determined validity in two ways. The first way was to use the pilot study as a measure to determine if I wrote the questions such that participants could easily answer the questions. Feedback from the pilot study determined that the questions were clearly understood, needed no explanation, and the responses to the questions did measure and support the purpose of the study. The second way to assure validity was to use a content-validity method (Gall et al., 2007). I submitted the survey to a committee that analyzed and determined that the questions did cover the content to be measured. Central-office administrators from the selected district comprised the committee. The committee agreed the questions were appropriate, thereby determining that the survey would have content validity.

Reliability

To determine the reliability of the survey instrument and determine if the responses were accurate in nature, I used the process of member checking. Member checks allow participants to elaborate on their perspectives and opinions, ruling out misinterpretations of the data (Glesne, 1998; Richards, 2005), as well as reviewing responses for accuracy or identifying any discrepancies in answers. Member checks occurred once participants completed the surveys and the window to participate had expired. Once the survey closed, I

sent an e-mail to all administrators asking participants to volunteer for the member-check portion of the study. I selected volunteers and had a brief conversation with each participant. Volunteers consisted of one primary principal, one middle school principal, one primary assistant principal, and one middle school assistant principal. I asked them questions from the survey again and recorded and analyzed the answers to ensure consistency among responses to the survey.

Another way to determine reliability was to conduct a peer review of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the use of peer reviewing by a researcher who is familiar with qualitative methods can help reduce bias. A peer reviewer promoted constructive feedback and improved the rigor of the data-analysis process. The selected peer reviewer recently defended a doctoral dissertation and was familiar with qualitative research methods. The peer reviewer was given a review of the analysis along with notes explaining how I identified the ideas, themes, and concepts. I gave A copy of the survey questions and requested feedback on the data analysis. Once the peer reviewer completed the overview of the data, I scheduled a face-to-face meeting to discuss findings.

Chapter Summary

Data collected from this qualitative study allowed for an understanding of the perceptions and opinion of participants. The survey allowed participants to report how they feel about work-related stress and expound on the coping strategies used to combat stress. Principals and assistant principals had the option to take the survey on a voluntary basis, thereby granting permission to take part in the study.

The survey demographic questions allowed responses relating to varying levels of experience, different numbers of students and faculty to supervise, as well as different

academic levels such as high, middle, and primary schools. The aim of the qualitative data was to provide input from school administrators from their personal perspectives about stress and coping strategies.

Data analysis took place using a constant comparison method. This method allowed categories to emerge; I then combined them to create themes based on the individual responses. Through the data analysis, I hoped to bring new concerns about stress to light and gain a better understanding of how school leaders address stress. Table 4 illustrates the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and type of methodology.

Table 4

Summary of Problem, Purpose, Research Questions, and Methodology

Problem statement	Purpose statement	Research questions	Methodology	Items used
Organizational leaders are experiencing added responsibilities and accountability. As signs of stress, and leaders' attempts to cope with the situation remain unsuccessful, administrators are beginning to claim their job is too stressful and too difficult to perform.	The purpose of this study is to explore:	What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?	Qualitative—survey	Survey Question 9
	1. Primary stress factors of school-level administrators (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals) and why they are identified as stressors.	Why are they considered stressful?	Qualitative—survey	Survey Question 10
	2. Primary coping strategies used by school-level administrators and why they are selected.	What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being? Why do they use those strategies?	Qualitative—survey	Survey Question 11 Survey Question 12
	3. Determine if demographic factors influence stress factors and coping strategies used.	Do administrators differ in their perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?	Qualitative—survey	Survey Question 14

Chapter 4: Results

This study sought to explore the perceptions and opinions of school administrators as they experience workplace stress and identify its causes as well as which coping techniques they implement to address work-related stress. This chapter contains the data-analysis procedures and results. I collected data from participants by using a researcher-developed survey with open-ended questions. Literature reviewed related to stress, school-administrator responsibilities, and coping techniques assisted in the development of the 15-item survey. Analysis of the results supported answering the following research questions:

1. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?
2. Why are they considered stressful?
3. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being?
4. Why do they use those strategies?
5. Do administrators differ in their perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

I sent an invitation to participate in the survey to 68 school-level administrators, and received a 75% response rate of 51 participants. Participants answered the survey voluntarily through SurveyMonkey. Each participant taking part in the study answered eight demographic questions pertaining to their own personal and workplace dynamics. The demographic questions related to the respondents' gender, current school-level position, academic level of their current school, how many students they supervise, how many

faculty/staff members they supervise, years in their current administrative position, years total as an administrator, and years in the education profession.

Demographic Results

Table 5 displays the finding of the demographic section of the survey. Women disproportionately comprised the survey sample (78%). The target population was school administrators: principals (45%) and assistant principals (53%) responded to the survey. The majority of administrators responding to the survey came from the elementary/primary level (55%). When asked how many students and faculty/staff they currently supervised, responses generally indicated they supervised 401–800 students (62%) and 76–100 faculty/staff (47%). Additionally, participants reported on the number of years in their current administrative positions as well as their total years as administrators. The answer choice most often selected for both questions was 0–5 years, with 67% selecting this option for years in current position, and 41% selecting that option for total number of years as an administrator. The final demographic question asked respondents to report the total number of years in the education profession. The highest portion of participants reported working in the education system for 21 or more years (41%).

The second part of the survey contained seven open-ended questions and respondents answered the questions based on their personal experiences. Participants identified work experiences that caused them stress and ask them to explain why they experienced stress. Two questions addressed the type of coping techniques used to address workplace stress and sought to identify why they selected to use such techniques. Three additional questions pertained to suggestions for district personnel to minimize stress, to determine whether

demographics play a role in perceived stress and coping techniques; the final question requested additional comments.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Variable	Attribute	Administrators responding	
		Number	%
Gender	Female	40	78
	Male	11	22
	Total	51	100
Current school level position	Principal	22	45
	Associate principal	0	0
	Assistant principal	27	53
	Other	1	1
	Total	51	100
Current school academic level	High school	7	14
	Middle school	11	22
	Elementary/primary	28	55
	Other	4	7
	Total	50	98
Number of students supervised	0–400	4	8
	401–800	32	62
	801–1,200	11	22
	1,201 and more	3	6
	Total	50	98
Number of faculty/staff supervised	0–50	8	16
	51–75	13	25
	76–100	24	47
	101 and more	5	10
	Total	50	98

Table continues

Variable	Attribute	Administrators responding	
		Number	%
Years in current position	0–5	34	67
	6–10	13	25
	11–15	2	4
	16 and more	0	0
	Total	49	96
Years as administrator	0–5	21	41
	6–10	18	35
	11–15	10	20
	16 and more	2	4
	Total	51	100
Years in education profession	0–10	7	13
	11–15	14	27
	16–20	9	18
	21 and more	21	41
	Total	51	100

Data-Analysis Procedures and Survey Questions

The analysis of the seven open-ended questions began with a constant-comparison method. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) described coding data as a way to analyze data and develop concepts. To organize the data for interpretation, I arranged all responses on an Excel spreadsheet divided into three areas: unit, category, and theme. Table 6 illustrates the operational definitions for the three areas. The term unit refers to the individual responses to the open-ended questions. Categories are the classification of the units, ideas, or concepts (Gay et al., 2006) based on similar responses. The term theme pertains to the overall pattern determined by combining like categories. Each unit was coded into a category based on my interpretation of the responses. I conducted member checks with two principals and two assistant principals concerning the established categories. The member checks ensured

accuracy and alignment to other member checks. After the member checks took place, I clustered categories into themes. I followed this process for all seven open-ended questions. A peer review took place once I completed all member checks and established themes. I conducted a meeting discussing the rationale for theme development and answered any questions or concerns from the peer reviewer based on the analysis of the data. The process used for data analysis is depicted in Figure 2.

Table 6

Operational Definitions

Variable	Operational definition
Unit	The individual responses to the open-ended survey questions.
Category	The classification of the units, ideas, or concepts based on similar wording in the responses.
Theme	The overall pattern determined from combining categories.

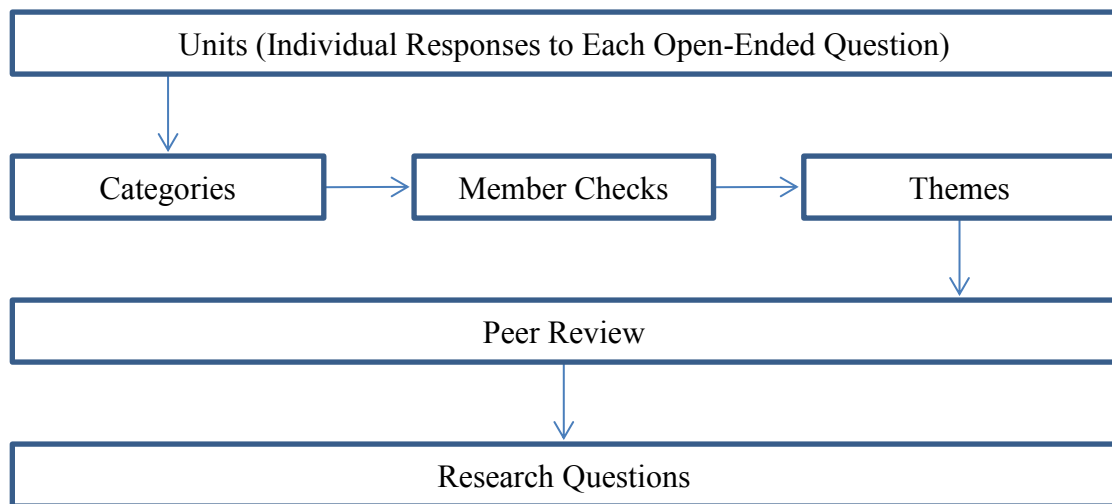


Figure 2. Data-analysis flowchart.

Open-Ended Question Results

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 1. Participants answered seven open-ended questions based on their personal experiences and opinions. The first question read as follows:

List the top three work experiences/issues that cause you stress at work. If you do not have three, please list the ones you do experience.

My goal for this question was to identify primary stress factors administrators face at work. The survey included one question seeking to identify stress-related experiences and I received 84 individual responses. When coding the responses, 26 categories emerged from the data interpretation. Amid reviewing the categories, connections surfaced, prompting clustering of categories into seven themes: accountability, district and school culture, difficult employees, disciplinary issues, stakeholder concerns, time management, and transportation. Direct quotations from participants provided evidence that supported theme development. Table 7 displays a description of the theme titles, theme categories, direct quotations, and response rate for the question addressing work-rated stress.

Three themes emerged representing the majority of responses (68%): time management, accountability, and district and school culture. Responses pertaining to managing time during a workday assisted in establishing the time-management theme. Quotations connecting to activities such as managing daily activities and workload supported theme development. Administrator responses included “time constraints,” “managing time to complete paperwork,” “not enough time to complete all I do,” “work load too much,” “number of responsibilities,” and “meeting deadlines on time.” Additional evidence included “organizing/structuring time,” “work overload,” “effective time management,” and “ways to balance time in my work day and time constraints.” Responses from principals and assistant principals supported time management issues and concerns as having the greatest impact on the stress felt by school administrators.

Table 7

Stressor Themes Developed From Individual Responses

Theme answered	Categories	Direct quotations	%
Time management	Everyday tasks, job responsibilities, managing the day, e-mail, time management, professional development, and workload	Managing the role of educator and cheerleader, effective time management, ways to balance time of the workday, lack of time to do all that is expected, organizing and structuring time, managing time, time constraints, number of responsibilities, deadlines, keeping up with everything the job entails, managing time to complete paperwork, work load and work over load	24
Accountability	District expectations, evaluations/ observations, everyday tasks, professional development, substitute issues, and state accountability	Conducting observations, conducting evaluations, data analysis for making a PowerPoint for the district, new teacher observation tool, everyday responsibilities of the job, not knowing how to grow low students, presenting new academic information to teachers, maintaining the school performance score when it is already high, state testing, additional expectations, and mandates from the state and district	23
District and school culture	Academic leader, culture, district expectations, expectations/demands, lack of respect, school expectations, and teacher issues	Being an academic leader, managing professional learning communities, demographics, constant need for improvement, demographics that affect student learning, lack of consistent instruction, getting teacher to buy in to initiatives, teachers not acting professional, staff attendance, and strong instructional practices.	21
Difficult employees	Teacher/staff issues	Employees having their own agenda, uncoachable people, teacher unwilling to change, resistant teachers, confrontational teachers, teacher complaining about their workload and teacher and staff issues.	11
Stakeholder concerns	Difficult parent and parental complaints	Parents overreacting to classroom issues, complaints by parents, disgruntle parents, irrational parents, confrontational parents, parent concerns and parent issues.	11
Transportation	Bus problems and bus complaints	Buses, transportation issues, bus complaints, and buses—emergency routes.	6
Disciplinary issues	Student issues	Discipline issues, disrespect for authority, profanity by students and aggressive students.	5

Combining responses pertaining to tasks and experiences that hold administrators accountable to others assisted in developing the theme entitled accountability. Principals and assistant principals reported that responsibilities such as conducting evaluation/observations, and meeting district and state expectations elevate their daily levels of stress. When asked to report on what experiences or issues cause workplace stress, administrators responded in the

following manner: “conducting observations/evaluations,” “maintaining the school performance score when it is already high,” “state testing,” “additional expectations,” and “mandates from the state and district.” Administrators also reported that experiences relating to professional development added stress and answered as follows: “presenting new academic information to teachers,” and “lack of experience and learning a new job.” Administrator concerns addressing accountability issues make this theme second in causing work-related stress.

Creating the theme of district and school culture consisted of combining categories addressing responses related to district and school culture. District and school culture are interactions, activities, experiences, and behaviors that become part of everyday expectations of the school or district. Direct quotations concerning addressing teachers who do not adhere to cultural activities supported theme development. Responses were “teachers not acting in a professional manner,” “lack of consistent instruction,” and “getting teachers to buy in to district initiatives.” Another area of concern for administrators pertaining to cultural expectations was maintaining their role as the school’s academic leader. Responses addressing this issue were “failure to implement distributive leadership,” “being an effective academic leader,” “managing professional learning communities,” and “ensuring consistent instruction.” Administrators’ responses for this theme represented a response rate of 21%, making district and school culture the third highest stress factor.

I developed four additional themes addressing factors that cause stress, based on principal and assistant-principal responses. The remaining themes were difficult employee, disciplinary issues, stakeholder concerns, and transportation. To obtain more information on the remaining themes, refer to Table 7.

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 2. Participants selecting to answer the next open-ended question expressed why certain experiences and issues cause them workplace stress. This item read as follows:

Briefly describe what makes the experience/issues you mentioned in Question 9 stressful.

The rationale for this question was to gain a better understating of why certain experiences cause administrators stress. I included one question on the survey to obtain the opinions and explanations from participants. This question yielded 67 individual responses. Analyzing the responses created 15 categories that consolidated into eight themes: accountability, district and school culture, difficult employee, stakeholder concerns, student discipline, time management, transportation and miscellaneous. Direct quotations aided in category and theme development. Table 8 displays a description of all eight themes including theme title, categories for each theme, direct quotations, and the response rate for each theme. The three areas emerging with the highest response rates were time management, accountability, and district and school culture. Participants' responses that expressed concerns with managing time supported the development of the theme entitled time management. Principals and assistant principals included explanations pertaining to everyday time-management concerns as the highest stress-causing experiences. Their explanations were "there is no time to supervise [professional-learning communities] to keep them productive mainly due to the amount of time required to do walk throughs and observations of staff," "observations—it takes a long time," "not enough time to ever complete anything adequately," and "time has to be managed and structured."

Table 8

Stressor-Explanation Themes Developed From Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
Time management	Academic leader, district expectation, job responsibilities, observations, time issues	There is no time to supervise [professional-learning communities] to keep them productive mainly due to the amount of time required to do walk-throughs and observations of staff. Trying to balance quality of observations. ... Not enough time to ever complete anything adequately. Time has to managed and structured. Too much time spent on paperwork EVERY weekend means too much time away from family...! Not enough hours in a day to get everything done.	27
Accountability	Academic leader, district expectations, job responsibilities, observations, teacher issues	Successful implementation of the new information related to curriculum, assessment and instruction requires professional development for teachers ... I feel that I personally am responsible ... even though I am not in the classroom teaching, I feel that as instructional leader ... so, between [individualized education programs, professional-learning communities and information and learning technology] meetings, fulfilling the different roles.	22
District and school culture	Academic leader, district expectations, teacher issues	Trying to get teachers on board with the PLC process is stressful. I feel that follow up with others is what substantiates changes. Trying to push others and create a sense of urgency, district/state demands ... evaluating teachers at the same time in which you are guiding them in their instruction can be challenging.	16
Difficult employees	Teacher issues	Teachers that humiliate students Dealing with teachers that are not open to change. When teachers are unwilling to change instructional practices ... students need a consistent person in the classroom, when teacher attendance is low, ... when teachers don't do what they are supposed to do ... having to mediate ... feel like I have to convince or beg people to do their job.	10
Stakeholder concerns	Disgruntle parents, parent expectations, parent issues	Disgruntled parents are unwilling to support school wide practices ... trying to reason with irrational people is difficult. We strive for parents to feel satisfied ... parent concerns—having parents scream and accuse me of not doing the right thing ... parents do not understand the dynamics of a classroom, curriculum, and assessments. Parents bashing teachers when they have not spoken to the teacher to get the true story.	10

Table continues

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
Transportation	Bus, emergency routes	There are not enough bus substitutes when drivers are out ... emergency routes, parent complaints, bus drivers arguing. Making sure that all of the students get on the correct bus ... sometimes office personnel/teachers make mistakes in putting students on the wrong bus as well as drivers bringing students to the incorrect location.	4
Student discipline	Student issues	Students that are physically abusive to staff members. Students doesn't seem to care about others students feelings.	3

Administrators also included responses pertaining to balancing their time and being able to get all tasks completed. Direct quotations included “there is no time to complete the reports,” “data analysis,” “teacher evaluations, etc. during the course of a school day,” and “not enough hours in a day to get everything done.” Issues with time management emerged to be the biggest issue causing work-related stress.

Responses referring to job responsibilities and experiences that hold administrators accountable to others supported the category titled accountability. Administrators expressed their concerns on how accountability caused them stress in the following direct quotations: “Successful implementation of the new information related to curriculum and instruction,” and “testing is stressful for me during the actual days of testing due to the pressure of not wanting to have any miscues that would result in testing violations.” Some principals and assistant principals became stressed when they felt personally responsible for maintaining accountability on their campus. Responses were “I feel personally responsible for school growth,” “I feel as the instructional leader I have to deliver a certain amount of growth,” and “I feel like am I doing enough for the school score, what if it doesn't show.”

The theme of district and school culture emerged by clustering responses related to expectations set at the district and school levels. Administrators expressed concerns about

dealing with difficult teachers. Quotations supported this theme in the following manner: “trying to get teachers on board with the [professional-learning-community] process is stressful,” “trying to push others and create a sense of urgency regarding needed improvements,” and “reminding adults of basic expectations is stressful in an annoying way.” Other explanations addressed issues such as district and state demands. Principals and assistant principals responded in this manner: “district/state demands,” “I feel there is always something additional we need to do,” “it causes added stress,” “I feel like what we do is never enough and trying to get teachers on board with the [professional-learning-community] process is stressful.” The administrators answering this question reported enough evidence to create five additional themes. The remaining themes were disciplinary issues, stakeholder concerns, difficult employee, transportation, and miscellaneous. Additional information on the remaining themes can be found in Table 8.

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 3. Respondents answered the following question by reporting what type of coping strategies they used to deal with workplace stress. The coping strategy item read as follows:

List the top three stress coping practices (ways you deal with stress) you currently use to reduce stress. If you do not have three, please list the ones you do utilize.

I included one question addressing coping strategies on the survey. Participants selecting to answer this question listed strategies or techniques used to cope with experiences or issues that caused them workplace stress. Respondents gave 90 individual responses and the analysis of the direct quotations created 20 categories. Upon further analysis, categories merged, establishing seven themes: attitudinal, emotional, intellectual, managerial, physical, social, and miscellaneous. Designated themes were based on research from Gmelch (1988),

Gmelch and Swent (1981), Tung and Koch (1980), and Juneja (2004). Table 9 offers a detailed description of the theme titles, categories, respondents' direct quotations, and theme response rate.

Table 9

Coping Themes Developed from Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
Emotional	Drink, eat, medication, therapy, prayer, read, rest	Drink alcohol, wine, eat, overeating, unhealthy eating and snacking, medication, counseling, pray, pray/meditate, prayer, reflection and meditation, rest, sleep, sleep/lounge.	32
Social	Advice from friends, family time, activities unrelated to work, social	Talk to peers (friends), talk with friends, family fun, family time, relaxing with family, spend time with family, talk with spouse/family, no school activities, no work on weekends, one day/week no school business, separate self from work and home, brain break, do something enjoyable.	22
Managerial	Delegate, plan, time away from work	Delegate, delegate task when necessary, make choices, finish deadlines ahead of time, make lists, plan ahead, planning a "to do" list one thing per night, prioritize, prioritize duties, prioritize schedule, take one issue at a time, no email from 5:30 until 8:30 pm.	14
Intellectual	Ask staff for help, read	Ask staff for help, collaborative communication, trust in colleagues, consult my work peers in ways to handle situations, consult with leadership team, talk with [advanced placement, in-school suspension], school counselor, talk with coworkers, talk with the principal, reading a professional piece of literature.	12
Physical	Exercise, relaxation techniques	Exercise, ride bike and walk, work out, listen to music that is relaxing, relaxation techniques, relaxation techniques, take deep breathes.	12
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Go first to model expectations, look at data for next steps, suspend students, work all the time with no breaks.	4
Attitudinal	Reflection time, wait time	Step away from the situation, think before reacting.	2

The following themes represented the majority of the coping strategy portion of the survey: emotional, social, and managerial. Principal and assistant-principal responses related to strategies that promote emotional support such as drinking alcohol and eating. Responses in the form of direct quotations were "drinking alcohol," "overeating," "unhealthy eating,"

“snacking,” and “wine.” Additional categories supporting the emotional-strategies theme included taking medication, rest, and prayer. Administrators reported responses such as “taking medication,” “pray,” “pray/meditate,” “prayer,” “reflection and meditation,” “rest,” “sleep,” and “lounging.” The strategies reported in the emotional theme emerged as the techniques most frequently used to cope with work-related stress.

The second theme most used to cope with stress is social. Theme development was based on responses relating to activities that involve spending time with family, talking with family members, or enjoying activities unrelated to work on a social level. Administrators’ replies clustered around evidence supporting taking advice from friends, family time, activities unrelated to work, and social activities. Principals and assistant principals provided quotations in the following manner: “talk with friends,” “family fun,” “family time,” “relaxing with family,” “spend time with family,” “talk with spouse/family,” “no school activities,” “no work on weekends,” “one day/week no school business,” and “do something enjoyable.” With 22% of the total responses, social techniques support the second highest strategy employed to deal with work place stress.

Those responses relating to individuals managing time, planning, and delegating supported theme development of the managerial-coping strategy. Administrators reported the following evidence in form of direct quotations: “delegate task when necessary,” “make choices,” “finish deadlines ahead of time,” “make lists,” “plan ahead,” “planning a ‘to do’ list” and “doing one thing per night.” Principals and assistant principals reported additional responses supporting the managerial strategy in the following manner: “prioritize duties,” “prioritize schedule,” “take one issue at a time,” and “no email from 5:30 until 8:30 pm.” Managerial strategies emerged as the third highest technique used to address work-related

stress. Details on the four remaining themes can be found in Table 9. The remaining themes are attitudinal, intellectual, physical, and miscellaneous.

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 4. Participants answering this question expressed opinions about why they select certain coping techniques to manage their work stress. The item read in the following manner:

Briefly describe each stress coping practice you currently use, and how it is helpful in reducing work related stress.

I included one survey question pertaining to the explanation of why participants elected to use certain coping techniques. Individuals responding to this question listed 49 individual responses creating 12 categories. Combining the 12 categories created six themes: attitudinal, emotional, intellectual, managerial, physical, and social. Table 10 displays a detailed description of all theme titles, categories, direct quotations, and response rates. Three themes emerged with the highest response rates. Individuals expressed their opinion about why they selected to use the social strategy. Principals and assistant principals answered the question with quotations that support spending time with family and friends: “Family fun time helps me to remember they come before work,” “time with family helps me,” “unwind,” “enjoy my husband and family,” and “relaxing with family helps me to get my mind off of work.” Additional responses that justify using social strategies included “talking with family and friends helps,” “I get ideas to help cope or change things,” “outside activities involve people who are not ‘school’ people,” and “I try to make time with family all about being with them—no school talk.”

Participants also reported justifications for using emotional strategies. Respondents explained how using techniques such as taking medication, praying, and eating helps reduce

work stress. Direct quotations were “medication—prescription helps with anxiety,” “eating makes me feel good for a moment,” and “prayer keeps me grounded spiritually and comforts me in knowing that I have someone to help me through the difficult times.” Principals and assistant principals reported that relaxation strategies such as rest helped them remain focused and alert: “getting a full night’s sleep (6 hours) helps me stay alert, focused, and hopefully not too grouchy,” and “napping relaxes and helps to rejuvenate.”

Participants expressed their reasoning for selecting physical activities to reduce work stress. Justification for using physical activity and relaxation techniques appeared in the following manner: “exercise helps me to feel better about myself, both mentally and physically,” and “riding and walking gives me a chance to just think about nothing and just enjoy the fresh air & scenery.” Additional responses also support using physical strategies to reduce stress: “working out,” “because it helps me to release my stress and feel good about myself,” “exercising gives me time to think about issues I am facing at work,” “exercising help to separate work and home and allows me time to relax,” and “take a deep breath.” Additional information on these themes can be found in Table 10.: attitudinal, intellectual, and managerial.

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 5. I included one survey question to elicit ideas and opinions on how district-level administrators can provide support to school administrators addressing their ability to cope with stress. The question read as follows:

What suggestion(s) would you make to district leaders that would either minimize stress for one of the stressors or assist in coping with one of the stressors mentioned in question nine?

Table 10

Coping Explanation Themes Developed from Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
Social	Family time, nonworking activities, time with friends, miscellaneous	Family fun time helps me to remember they come before work. Time with family helps me unwind ... Relaxing with family helps me to get my mind off of work. Balancing family and work helps to ... Spending time outside of work, having a well-balanced life. Outside activities involve people who are not “school” people ... I try to make my time with my family all about being with them. Talking with close friends helps me to get my mind off of work.	26
Emotional	Eating, medication, prayer, reading, relaxation techniques	Prayer keeps me grounded spiritually and comforts me in knowing that ... Prescription of meds to help with anxiety. Getting a full night’s sleep (6 hours) helps me stay alert, focused, and hopefully, not too grouchy. Reading helps me take my mind off what is stressing me. Medication helps retain attention span/focus/reduces irritation.	22
Physical	Exercise, relaxation techniques	Exercise helps me to feel better about myself, both mentally and physically. Riding and walking gives me a chance to just think about nothing ... Working out, because it helps me to release my stress ... Exercise helps me deal with stress in general. Napping relaxes and helps to rejuvenate the mental, take a deep breath.	18
Managerial	Prioritize, delegation	Prioritize, helps me find solutions and prioritize issues. Prioritizing allows me to narrow my focus and commit to the most pressing obligations. Knowing what is ahead and planning, compartmentalize—see each issue/incident is one small piece of a much larger picture, prioritize—take care of most urgent matters first.	16
Intellectual	Consult with coworkers	Talking to colleagues. Talking about the situation allows me to get it off my chest and hear other people’s perspective on the situation. Discuss the issue with a co-worker to create a plan to resolve the problem or to get a different perspective.	12
Attitudinal	Reflection time, miscellaneous	Stepping away allows me to cool down and approach it later more rationally. At times, I need to step away from schoolwork. It works at times, but other times, when I am away, I think of how much more needs to be done	4

This question yielded 31 individual responses creating six categories. Further analysis of the direct quotations combined the categories into four themes: district expectations, district support, no suggestions, and professional development. Table 11 depicts theme name, categories, direct quotations, and response rate. Those selecting to respond to this question reported district-level support to be the greatest help in reducing or coping with stress.

Replies supporting their thinking are as follows: “create a department to deal with bus issues to give more time for administrators to be instructional leaders,” “allow teachers to voice his/her opinion, agree or disagree and offer suggestions,” “minimize the number of new initiatives,” and “I truly feel that if there was a designee (teacher level) that was appointed to work full time on the procedural aspects of the school, it would be beneficial.”

Table 11

District Suggestion Themes Developed from Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
District support	Assistance with buses, respect for administration position, district expectations and initiatives, help with parents	Create a department to deal with bus issues ... trust and openness, allow teacher to voice his/her opinion, agree or disagree and offer suggestions, minimize the number of new initiatives—provide additional teacher training and collaboration time with other schools, I truly feel that if there was a designee (teacher level) that was appointed ... Give us more support when talking with parents about their child behavior, In some cases with irate parents, I would appreciate my director offering to call and talk to them...	32
No suggestions	None	I’m not sure what can be done. The mandates are coming from the state, I have no suggestions due to the fact that the stress factors I listed are present for administrators because they are a basic part of our job, think the district leaders are doing what they can to minimize our stress and help us cope with the issues we all face in our roles as school administrators, have none at this time.	26
District expectations	Respect for administration position, District expectations and initiatives	District leaders should acknowledge the stressors and give school-level admin. the opportunity to vent without feeling weak, Honestly, I feel that there isn’t something that they can take away from us ... it’s just the nature of the beast. I do not think our compensation is equal to our workload as principal. Don’t think it is anything they can do, be understanding and respectful. Eval[uation]s are non-negotiable, prioritize with the needs of each campus in mind, when bringing new learning...	23
Professional development	Professional development retreats	Have more work related exercise program or retreats for faculty on how to cope with stress, continued training on coaching, allow administrators to participate in professional conversations about the day to day experiences at school and not always just academics, district leaders should acknowledge the stressors and give school-level administrators the opportunity to vent without feeling weak.	19

Principals and assistant principals also made suggestions pertaining to help with parental concerns. Their responses were “give us more support when talking with parents about their child’s behavior, and in some cases with irate parents,” and “I would appreciate my director offering to call and talk to them. This has never been offered as a solution.” Administrators’ responses justify their thinking that providing additional support from district administrators would assist in reducing work-related stress.

Administrators also provided responses expressing that district-level administrators can offer no assistance in reducing stress or ways to cope with stress. Direct quotations support that “stress is part of the job and no amount of support will assist in reducing or coping with stress.” Principals and assistant principals replied in the following manner: “I have no suggestions due to the fact that the stress factors I listed are present for administrators because they are a basic part of our job,” “none,” “I have none at this time,” “I think stress comes with an administrative job when academic achievement and student accountability are truly top priority,” “not sure what can be done.” District expectations and professional development also emerged as suggestions. Additional details on these themes can be found in Table 11.

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 6. To elicit the opinions of administrators on whether personal demographics affect how principals and assistant principals experience and cope with stress appropriately, I included the following question.

Do you feel your years of experienced, size of your school or current position influence the types of stressors you experiences as well as what type of coping mechanism you use? If so, please explain.

Individuals selecting to answer this question reported 32 individual responses. Table 12 illustrates the details of theme titles, categories, direct quotations, and response rates for this question. Five categories emerged creating four themes: experience, position, demographics, and not a factor. Individuals proffered that years of experience was their main factor in stress as well as assisting in the type of coping strategy used to address stress. Responses supporting their opinions are “even though I have been in an administrative position for a number of years, I find there are always new situations to deal with. Experience is helpful; I don’t think there is just one answer/way to deal with problems.”

Emerging categories and themes: Open-Ended Question 7. The final question sought additional comments from participants pertaining to their opinions or experiences dealing with stress and using coping strategies. The question read as follows:

Are there any additional comments you would like to express regarding workplace stress factors and coping strategies you listed in this survey?

Table 13 illustrates theme titles, categories, direct quotations, and response rates to this question. Administrators reported 17 individual responses creating 10 categories and seven themes. Principals and assistant principals responded to this question and reported a variety of comments. Of the responses, 35% were devoted to no additional comments to the survey. Six individuals responded with the word “none.” Of responses, 18% addressed that stress causes negative effects to a person’s work and home life. Evidence supporting their comments are “The stress does interfere with marriages and family time. More and more teachers are having to go to counseling because of the time spent at school and at home doing school work.” Other comments included “Keeping a balance of home and work separate,” “Not allowing home stress to impact work stress and vice versa,” “families are falling apart,”

and “work isn’t getting done, because dealing with stress at home interferes at work ... vicious cycle!”

Table 12

Demographic Themes Developed From Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
Experience	Years of experience	Yes, as years of experience has helped me to cope differently with the pressures of work and ... Years of experience, have experienced most of these stressful situations in my career. Having over 7 years as a school administrator has lessened my stress ... I think that my years of experience have definitely helped to shape my coping mechanisms. I feel that I have developed the sense of strategically organizing my day (and night) over my last 6 years in administration. In the beginning, I did not know when to “turn it off”. I have learned not to sweat the small stuff and ... Issues that once stressed me no longer do because of my years of experience as an administrator.	41
Combination of demographics	School size, and socioeconomic status, yes a factor	I feel the size of my school contributes to the stress, along with the position I have, as I am ultimately responsible for and liable for over 900 people in a day. Maintain the legacy of excellence the school has ... Yes, I think the size and demographic of school greatly contributes to stresses. I do, more students, parents and teachers(community - stakeholders) many different personalities, different learning styles, morals and beliefs.	25
Position	Administrative position	Yes, having many different positions over the past 23 years has given me different views and means of coping with stress. Yes, being in an administrative position you have so many responsibilities that you are expected to make right. Being an administrator, you are faced with lots of challenges. You have to decide on what smallest change can make the biggest impact, and implement that well.	22
Not a factor	No factor	No, because I feel that those stress factors would be present no matter what. No I don’t. I just think stress comes with the job. No. I feel these stressors are a part of any school/work environment.	12

Table 13

Additional Comments by Themes Developed From Individual Responses

Theme	Categories	Direct quotations	% answered
No comment	Nothing to add	None.	35
Negativity	Increases stress, negative life effects	The stress does interfere with marriages and family time. More and more teachers are having to go to counseling because of the time spent at school and at home doing school work. In other words, not allowing home stress to impact work stress and vice versa. Families are falling apart, because of work requirements and work isn't getting done, because of dealing with stress at home that interferes at work ... vicious cycle!	18
Coping	Learning to cope	No matter the workplace, stress will occur, maybe not as often for some but at some point. The person will have to do some research or have experienced it and develop some coping mechanisms to deal with it. What I can't control are the things that cause stress. When I look at stress in that way I am able to deal with it.	12
Support	District support, support for teachers	Recently, a huge stress has been lifted off of my shoulders. This is because I reached out and asked for support. I feel supported when I am heard. I think that our teachers are currently working very hard and it is our job to support them as well as hold them accountable.	12
Sustainability	Able to sustain position, workload	Coping by constantly working and never having time off to relax and enjoy family is causing burnout among employees which ultimately hurts our students. In order to create an atmosphere of learning with a positive school culture, workloads for administrators and teachers must become more manageable.	12
Emotional	Prayer	Pray and meditate.	6
Love of Job	Loving job	I love my job and my employer! I do love my job.	6

Chapter Summary

The data collected for this study was primarily qualitative in nature; however, demographic questions used a quantitative measure. Data collection consisted of a survey with open-ended questions prompting participants to express their opinions on stress and coping strategies. Survey completion obtained a 75% response rate with 51 of 68 administrators take part in the study. The participants were principals and assistant principals from a school district in south Louisiana.

Participants responded to a variety of demographics questions such gender, position, academic level, number of students/faculty supervised, years in administration, years in current position, and total years in the education system. Seven open-ended questions prompted participants to express their perspectives on stress and coping strategies they currently used to address stress. I used a constant-comparison method to analyze the data, thereby creating themes for each question.

I intended to identify stress factors, why they were consider stressful, what coping strategies were used, and why they elected to use them. I also expected to determine if demographics played a role in stress and which coping strategy would be used. The qualitative data showed that time management, accountability, and maintaining school and district culture had the greatest influence in producing high levels of stress. The coping strategies most used were emotional, social, and managerial strategies. Participants credited a person's years of experience with the greatest influence on work-related stress felt and on what coping strategy they used to mitigate stress.

Additional questions on the survey encouraged participants to suggest ways for district-level employees to provide help, as well as provide any additional comments. Participants reported they can use additional help from the district and provided examples such as personnel to manage the day-to-day running of the school, assistance with irate parents, and assistance with transportation. However, some participants reported that no additional help would be needed to decrease stress, as they felt stress is part of the job. Final comments proffered that the role of the school administrator is stressful and that the job now has an increasingly negative impact on the lives of school administrators and their families.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

This chapter includes an explanation of the study's purpose, a description of the data-collection procedures, results, and major findings linked to previous research. Additionally, I offer recommendations for future research, implications for education practitioners, and connections to theory.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of school administrators surrounding workplace stress, its causes, and the coping strategies selected to combat stress. Literature reviewed dated to the 1980s and earlier, thereby indicating a need to explore current trends in the context of standards-based reform and accountability culture shifts affecting schools. To analyze current data, I employed a qualitative study implementing a free-response, open-ended survey to answer the following research questions:

1. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?
2. Why are they considered stressful?
3. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being?
4. Why do they use those strategies?
5. Do administrators differ in their perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

Summary of Study Methods and Finding

I invited 68 school administrators including principals, associate principals, and assistant principals to participate in the study. To recruit participants, I used a purposive-criterion sampling method and required respondents to be a school administrator at the time of the study.

Each respondent granted consent by voluntarily answering a survey containing eight demographic questions and seven open-ended questions. I analyzed data using a constant-comparison method. Coding individual responses allowed for clustering responses, thereby creating themes for each open-ended question. Once I developed themes, I engaged in member checks to ensure accuracy of my interpretations. To conclude the data analysis, a peer review assisted in assuring accurate data interpretation and finalizing the results.

Research Questions

I created five questions to guide the study in gaining an understanding of school administrators' perceptions of stress and selected coping strategies. The research questions included:

Research Question 1. What stress factors do school administrators experience (principals, associate principals, and assistant principals)?

The results of the open-end survey revealed that participating administrators reported a variety of stress factors. However, the three main workplace experiences or issues pertained to time-management issues, responsibilities addressing accountability, and activities that create or maintain district and school culture. Principals and assistant principals reported such tasks as conducting observations and evaluations, maintaining professional-learning

communities, and managing everyday responsibilities to be the most stressful workplace events.

Research Question 2. Why are they considered stressful?

When completing the survey, administrators revealed their opinion on why workplace experiences and issues cause stress. Three themes emerged from principal and assistant-principal responses: time management, accountability, and culture. Respondents reported they had no time to run meetings, observe faculty, or conduct walk-through observations during the workday. Other evidence supported accountability and cultural concerns, such as feeling personally responsible for school growth, and the constant need for a consistent person in the classroom. Administrators also felt that state testing causes anxiety throughout the testing process.

Research Question 3. What coping strategies do school administrators use to maintain psychological well-being?

Principals and assistant principals reported the types of stress coping strategies they used to combat workplace stress. The strategies most often used were those pertaining to emotional needs. Administrators reported that drinking alcohol, eating, taking medication, and praying provided relief from workplace stress. Additional techniques selected were participating in activities on a social level and implementing managerial strategies. Those administrators who used social techniques enjoyed spending time with family and friends while taking part in non-school activities. Principals and assistant principals implementing managerial techniques prioritized duties, finished work ahead of deadlines, and delegated assigned tasks.

Research Question 4. Why do they use those strategies?

Participating administrators reported many justifications for choosing certain strategies to deal with workplace stress. The majority of the responses related to social, emotional, and physical techniques. Administrators provided evidence of ways to reduce stress such as that spending time with family was more important than the work itself, and being able to vent to a significant other who can help to keep them positive and motivated. Other responses indicated that administrators often begin medicinal treatment to prevent anxiety and panic attacks, thereby allowing them to continue their normal work day. Additional comments by participants pertained to physical exercise and prioritizing daily tasks. Physical activity allowed the respondents to relax and feel better about themselves. Prioritizing tasks allowed for less confusion on duties to complete in a work day and helped administrators feel prepared, thereby alleviating additional stress.

Research Question 5. Do administrators differ in their perceptions of stress factors and coping strategies used in relation to the demographic variables selected for the study?

Principals and assistant principals stated opinions on whether demographics have an effect on the level of stress experienced and the type of coping strategy selected to address stress. Three areas disproportionately comprised participants' responses. Principals and assistant principals reported that experience has the greatest influence on the stress felt and on the coping techniques selected. Administrators reported that as they gain experience as administrators, they are better able to predict what may happen during a school day and have learned to address situations that warrant more attention than others. One administrator reported learning "not to sweat the small stuff."

Additional responses supported that the administrative position affects stress and the reaction to stress. Some principals reported additional stress because they are ultimately responsible for all that happens on their campuses, whereas assistant principals reported that being accountable to another administrator relieves certain instances of stress.

Relationship to Previous Research

The literature reported in Chapter 2 explored different causes of stress as well as different coping strategies used by administrators to combat stress. The appeal to become a school administrator is diminishing as job responsibilities are drastically changing (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Kruger et al., 2005) and many districts around the country are experiencing a shortage in qualified applicants to fill vacant positions (Lazaridou, 2009).

Brimm (1983) identified that the main stress factor for school administrators was accountability issues. Administrators reported complying with state and federal mandates to be their main source of stress (Tomic & Tomic, 2008). However, the perceptions and opinions of the individuals participating in this study had similar and different outcomes to those in previous literature. Although Brimm (1983) reported accountability as the main source of stress for school administrators, accountability was not the main source of stress in this study for participating administrators and ranked second behind time-management issues.

For principals to remain effective, they must remain abreast of the latest teaching strategies to ensure teachers are providing a high level of instruction to every student. They must also implement new ways of learning into their school buildings (Riddile, 2013). Professional development for teachers is individualized and is part of daily conversations between teachers and principals (Noguera & Guastafarro, 2013). Planning time and

collaboration are nonnegotiable and expected as part of the school's culture. In contrast, respondents agreed with Riddile (2013), reporting that cultural issues cause additional stress for principals and assistant principals. Cultural concerns reported by administrators pertained to ensuring strong instructional practices, teacher efficacy, administrators being the academic leader, and success or failure to implement distributive leadership.

Changes to the administrators' role bring on logistical challenges and present time-management concerns (Riddile, 2013). Tasks that once took little time and added no additional pressures are now becoming burdensome for principals (Noguera & Guastaferrro, 2013). Scheduling daily activities, duty schedules, instructional schedules, meetings, observations, evaluations, and time to meet with parents and teachers are becoming impossible tasks. Determining time for collaboration and teamwork between teachers is creating increased pressures. Participants in this study reported that managing time and the limited time to do all that is expected during a workday is the main source of stress. In addition, finding ways to organize and structure time is causing high stress in respondents. Participant responses align with the previous literature that time-management concerns impose stress; however, participants in this study reported these issues to cause higher levels of stress than was reported in previous literature, which named accountability.

The changing role of the principal and the revisions of their job responsibilities prompt additional stress, thereby initiating a need for effective stress-coping strategies (Friedman, 1995; Hamann, 1990). Feitlar and Tokar (1986) found that no two administrators would cope with stress in the same manner; stating that coping with stress is an endeavor unique to each individual. Each principal implements a stress-coping strategy that would warrant results best for that individual (Lindle & Miller, 1988).

Lutton (1988) discovered that one way of coping with stress was to face the issue directly. Principals in Lutton's study did not like to delegate tasks and preferred to handle their own issues and participate in activities unrelated to work outside of school. Other studies found that administrators cope with stress by delegating tasks, prioritizing tasks, and establishing healthy living habits such as eating right, exercising, and getting plenty of rest (Robertson & Matthews, 1988; Zwick, 1992). Furthermore, no single coping strategy will work in every situation; thus, the coping strategy selected is based on the individual situation (Gmelch & Swent, 1981).

Participants in this study included their perceptions and opinions on the different coping strategies used to address stress. Individual responses varied, thereby supporting or disagreeing with previous literature. Participating administrators reported emotional strategies as the main way of addressing stress. The emotional strategies used were drinking alcohol, taking medication, and praying. Previous literature supports using emotional strategies as a way of coping with stress; however, it was not reported as the main way of coping in this study. Lutton (1998) found that principals did not like to delegate task, but administrators responding in this study reported managerial techniques such as delegating to be in the top three coping strategies used. However, respondents here reported other strategies such as exercising, relaxation techniques, and social activities unrelated to work, and these responses aligned with previous literature on coping strategies.

Major Findings and Discussion

Major Finding 1. Administrators in this study reported that experiences and or issues pertaining to time management cause the most work-related stress.

Administrators experience stress as a normal part of the job, and reported a variety of different factors. However, this study revealed that managing the work day and being able to complete all tasks in a timely manner are burdensome for administrators. Such tasks as managing time for paperwork, balancing tasks of the day, and meeting deadlines had the greatest impact on administrator stress.

Major Finding 2. School administrators reported emotional strategies as the most used technique to combat stress.

Administrators have experienced stress over the years and used strategies that work best for the individual situation. Although principals reported many different strategies, using such techniques as drinking alcohol, eating, and praying satisfy the immediate need for stress reduction. As administrators experience success or failure when selecting a strategy, they will be able to predict what type of strategy to use for the best results in the future.

Major Finding 3. The demographic factor with the most influence on stress and the type of coping strategy used is years of experience.

Principals followed the ranks, seeking promotion to higher levels of administration, and as they moved to different positions, they gained experience in handling different situations. The principals in this study found that as they gained experience as an administrator, they were better able to reduce stress and implement strategies based on previous successes or mistakes. Administrators felt that as they gained experience, they were able to disaggregate minor issues from major issues and learn to address priority concerns first.

Discussion. This study sought to offer a better understanding of the perceptions and opinions of school administrators as they viewed stress factors and used coping strategies to

address stress. Previous studies reported on the impact of stress on administrators as well as on how the administrators role has changed. I presented coping strategies in this dissertation. This study investigated stress factors and coping strategies for school administrators, producing new information as well as confirming previous literature.

The exploration of stress factors produced a wide array of responses. The most often-reported responses pertained to issues of time management. Administrators felt rushed and under pressure to get all tasks done, having insufficient time to complete all that is required. Additionally, administrators reported on coping techniques used to address workplace stress. Although principals reported many different opinions, the most used technique pertained to emotional strategies. These strategies gained more individual responses than any other coping-strategy theme.

As principals strive to obtain higher administrative positions, each position has its own set of expectations and stressors. Administrators in this study reported that the more years a person is in a position, the more experience they gain. With more experience comes more knowledge and a better understanding of what will cause stress and how to cope with the stress.

Implications for Theory, Practitioners, and Future Studies

Implications for theory. Literature reviewed supported the use of two coping techniques that require different actions (Bartram & Gardner, 2008; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Individuals use problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping; however, they differ in implementation. When implementing problem-focused coping the individual may use techniques such as asking for help, using time-management skills, develop next steps, or try to change the situation. Individuals who use emotion-focused coping may use techniques

that will help with coping but only for a short period of time. Techniques include accepting the situation, praying, or working on a different task. This study relates to the theory by the type of coping strategies selected by administrators. Administrators in this study reported to use both problem-focused and emotion-focused techniques, thereby supporting coping techniques found in previous literature.

Implications for practitioners. Administrators are beginning to see drastic changes in their roles (Kruger et al., 2005). Administrators balance expectations of the school day as well as demands from outside entities (Sodoma & Else, 2009), and as daily pressures and expectations increase, they experience additional stress (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). To handle the additional pressures, anxiety, and stress of running a school, it is imperative that administrators cope with work-related stress (Gmelch & Swent, 1981). Stress they feel and the coping strategies they use are unique to the individual, as there is no set way to address stress (Feitlar & Tokar, 1986).

Research on stress and coping strategies can be beneficial to the education profession. By identifying stress concerns, principals can receive support to cope with their stress. To meet the needs of school principals, districts must first identify the experiences or issues causing an increase in stress. Once those factors are known, districts can implement a plan of action to assist in reducing work-related stress. Furthermore, research on the coping strategies used by administrators will benefit the education profession by allowing districts to understand the strategies current administrators are using to address stress.

Participants in this study reported a variety of stress factors and coping styles. The results imply that school principals are feeling an array of stress factors and are implementing strategies to reduce stress. The analysis of the data showed that time-management issues

caused administrators in this study the most stress. The first recommendation is for district-level staff to provide professional development on time management. This professional-development opportunity could focus on ways to manage time in an efficient manner while providing administrators specific models on how to manage time. Additionally, providing administrators with real-life examples and scenarios will give administrators the opportunity to network with others, and brainstorm ideas on how to handle a situation, thereby hoping to create ways to manage time efficiently. The professional development may be in the form of a one-day meeting, multiple meetings, a book study, or a retreat where administrators can be in a relaxed environment without the pressures of academic issues to discuss.

Districts can also benefit by having professional-development opportunities on how to cope with stress. Most coping strategies reported in this study centered around applying emotional techniques. These techniques provide stress relief for a short period; however, the experience causing the stress is still present. One recommendation is for district-level staff to employ a professional-development opportunity educating administrators on how to implement coping strategies. The goal could be to educate and select problem-focused techniques to change the situation, rather than short-term relief such as emotional techniques. Implementation can appear as a one-time meeting, or through the district's wellness program. Wellness facilitators can suggest problem-focused activities and administrators could take part in applying suggested techniques.

When districts educate administrators on stress and coping strategies, they can attempt to make better choices and address stress in a healthy manner. This may cause principals to have better time-management skills, use healthy coping techniques, and

promote a positive outlook on the administrator role; thereby promoting a positive school climate, positively affecting test scores, and creating an environment conducive to learning.

Implications for future studies. The literature reviewed indicated a lack of current research on stress factors and coping strategies used by school administrators. The majority of literature dated back 3 decades, placing it outside the context of current environments characterized by the effects of the standards and accountability movement. Current literature supported that the school principal's job is ever changing and in a constant state of evolution. As the education system addresses new challenges, new sources of stress emerge. By identifying what causes workplace stress and how administrators are addressing the stress, district leaders can assist principals in techniques to increase longevity of the position.

To understand the perceptions and opinions of administrators in the education workforce, future studies can seek to find additional insights into the feelings of current administrators. Conducting a qualitative study encompassing interviews with administrators would allow for a deeper understanding of the actual experiences that cause stress, and delve into why administrators select certain ways to cope with stress. Future studies in the form of focus groups might allow dialogue among administrators to promote conversations that may lead to additional coping mechanisms and may impose a sense of relief, knowing that others feel stress in the same manner.

In addition, studies might seek to discover whether administrators experience different stressors in a school implementing the Teacher Advancement Program than in schools not participating. Furthermore, additional studies can explore the stress factors of administrators in charge of charter schools, recovery district schools, and private schools, thereby discovering if there is a difference in perceived stress. This research can assist school

districts in determining the level of support each type of school setting may need to reduce stress felt by administrators.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 embodied a summary of the study's overall findings. The analysis of the results allowed me to answer all five research questions as well as identify three major findings. I discussed implications for theory, practice, and future studies in detail. The three major findings answered the research questions.

Through analysis of the data, I concluded that the major findings for the study included the following:

1. School administrators experience stress due to time-management issues
2. They selected emotional strategies most often to cope with stress, and
3. The demographic factor of years of experience does play a role in perceived stress and selected coping techniques.

The findings supported that school administrators use problem-focused and emotion-focused coping techniques. Implications for practitioners based on the study's findings are that district-level staff should provide professional-development opportunities to school administrators. The focus of the professional-development opportunities can be how to manage time better and how to select coping strategies that will alter or change the experience causing stress. These opportunities may be one-time professional-development days, a book study, or a retreat, or incorporate them into district wellness initiatives.

Future studies may benefit from conducting face-to-face interviews or focus groups to delve more deeply into the thinking of participants. In addition, conducting studies on administrators who are leaders of schools with different types of structures can bring new

perspectives to light. Different structures such as Teacher Advancement Program schools, charter schools, private schools, or recovery-district school can be studied. Different school environments may produce a different set of stressors. This new knowledge may allow administrators to have a better understanding of what experiences cause stress in all educational environments, and allow for better choices when selecting coping strategies.

Dissertation Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of school administrators as they relate to workplace stress factors and the type of coping strategies selected to handle stress. Literature reviewed showed that individuals experience stress at different rates and levels. In addition, coping with stress is an individual endeavor and decisions on how to cope with stress are unique to an individual. The majority of the research found dated back many years and current data was difficult to find.

To obtain new data, I created five research questions to delve into the minds of school principals. This qualitative study included school administrators who responded to a survey containing demographic and open-ended questions. Once the survey closed, I began coding the data and themes emerged identifying major findings.

The major findings follow:

1. Administrators in this study reported that experiences or issues pertaining to time management cause the most work related stress;
2. School administrators selected emotional strategies as the most often used techniques to combat stress;
3. The demographic factor with the most influence on stress and the type of coping strategy used is years of experience.

Based on the major findings from the study, implications became evident for theory, practitioners, and future research. As the role of the school administrator continues to evolve, previous and new stimuli will emerge, causing stress in the work setting. Developing coping strategies to reduce or eliminate symptoms of stress are nonnegotiable for administrators to remain in the profession for a number of years. If administrators expect to sustain a career spanning decades, coping mechanisms become imperative to reduce stress and maintain longevity as a school leader.

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Appendix A

Administrator Stress and Coping Strategy Survey

This survey is designed to determine school level administrators' perceptions and opinions regarding factors experienced while at work and which cause negative stress and the coping practices utilized to successfully reduce negative stress.

When taking this survey, the term stress will be referred to as negative stress or distress. This stress causes negativity in your life and may add negative feelings to your workday.

For the demographic section of this survey, please check the appropriate answer for questions 1–8.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

(Male—female—No answer)

2. What is your current school level position?

(Principal—Associate Principal—Assistant Principal)

3. What is the academic level of your current school?

(High School—Middle School—Elementary/Primary School—Other)

4. How many students do you currently supervise?

(0–400—401–800—801–1200—1201 and more)

5. How many faculty/staff members do you currently supervise?

(0–50—51–75—76–100—101 and more)

6. How many years have you been in your current administrative position including this current school year?

(0–5 years—6–10 years—11–15 years—16 and more)

7. How many total numbers of years have you been an administrator, including your current administrative position as well as any other administrative positions you may have held in the past?

(0–5 years—6–10 years—11–15 years—16 and more)

8. How many years have you been in the education profession?

(0–10—11–15—16–20—21 and more)

Questions 9-12 will ask you to list your top three stress factors experienced at work, as well as your top three stress reducing practices you use to successfully decrease negative stress. You will also be asked to briefly describe each stress factor and each stress coping practice. Please be brief but as clear as possible.

9. List the top three work experiences/issues that cause you stress. If you do not have three, please list the ones you do experience.

10. Briefly describe what makes the experience/issues you mentioned in question 9 stressful.

11. List the top three stress coping practices (ways you deal with stress) you currently use to reduce stress. If you do not have three, please list the ones you do utilize.

13. What suggestion(s) would you make to district leaders that would either minimize stress for one of the stressors or assist in coping with one of the stressors mentioned in question 9?

14. Do you feel your years of experienced, size of your school or current position influence the types of stressors you experiences as well as what type of coping mechanism you use? If so, please explain.

15. Are there any additional comments you would like to express regarding workplace stress factors and coping strategies you listed in this survey?

Appendix B

Request for Superintendent's Consent to Conduct Research

Dr. XXXXX,

I am part of a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at the University of Louisiana – Lafayette in Lafayette, LA. I am studying the types of stressors school administrators face and what type of coping strategies are used to handle stress. My study is under the supervision of Dr. Jeffry White. The goal of my study is to gather data on stressors and coping strategies to identify sources of anxiety and coping techniques as it relates to the perceptions and opinions of school administrators.

As the superintendent of schools for XXXXX school district, I am requesting your permission to contact all school level administrators. I am seeking to gain voluntary participation from all school level administrators in your district in order to take part in my research project. School principals, associate principals and assistant principals are under no obligation to participate in this study. At any time, the participants may elect to withdraw from the study without any penalty for choosing not to participate or withdrawing from the study. Participation will remain completely anonymous.

The results of this study will be available for district office leaders to review. My results will serve as a reference for future studies as well as professional development for school leaders and for a better understanding of stress and coping strategies related to the job of a school administrator. The results may also be published in an academic journal, or be presented at a conference. Only aggregate data would be reported.

If you agree for your school level administrators to participate, please see the superintendent consent form for approval. Administrators wishing to participate may click the following link to take part via Survey Monkey. Completing the survey will take about 10 minutes: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RRMULL>

Any consideration and favorable consent is greatly appreciated. I look for to the opportunity to work with the administrators in your district as they provide a better insight on stress and coping strategies relating to the school administrator position. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me directly at 225-268-5585 or rrm7305@Louisiana.edu, should you have any questions about me, Dr. Jeffry White, Supervising Professor at 337-428-1010 or the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Nicole Muller at 337-482-6489 or email: irb@louisiana.edu.

Sincerely,

Roddy R. Melancon

Appendix C

Permission and Consent from Superintendent

As requested, I, the Superintendent of Schools for the XXXXX School District, grant permission and allow consent for my school administrators to participate in the research study conducted by Roddy R. Melancon entitled: Stress and the Psychological Well-Being of Organizational Leaders: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Coping Strategies Utilized by School Administrators. I am aware that the study is under the supervision of Dr. Jeffrey White, Professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The researcher is allowed to contact the school level administrators to request their individual participation.

By granting permission, I understand:

- The school administrator is the focus of the study
- The data collected will be used for a dissertation as part of a study conducted for a doctoral program in Educational Leadership.
- All data collected remains confidential as well as the identity of the participants
- Participation is on a voluntary basis and no risk of penalty is issued to any administrator choosing not to participate or withdraw from the study
- A survey will be sent to school administrators to collect data on stress and coping strategies
- Participants may experience minimal loss of time to complete the survey; therefore, encountering minimal risk of inconvenience
- If I have concerns or questions about the study, I can contact Roddy R. Melancon, doctoral student at 225-268-5585 or rrm7305@louisiana.edu, Dr. Jeffrey White, Supervising Professor at 337-482-1010, or University of Louisiana at Lafayette Intuition Review Board Chair, Dr. Nicole Muller at 337-482-6489 or email: irb@louisiana.edu

I understand the purpose of the study and I grant my approval for the XXX parish school administrators to participate.

Approved—Superintendent's Signature

Date

Appendix D

School Level Administrator Informational Letter

XXXXX School Administrator,

My name is Roddy R. Melancon and I am part of a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at the University of Louisiana – Lafayette in Lafayette, LA. I am studying the types of stressors school administrators face and what type of coping strategies are used to handle the stress. My study is under the supervision of Dr. Jeffrey White, Professor.

In order to gather data, I am seeking your consent to participate my study. My goal is to have school level administrators from the XXX parish school district complete a survey designed to gain the perceptions and opinions of school administrators on stress and coping practices. The survey questions will focus on what work place experiences cause stress and what coping strategies are utilized to appropriately deal with these experiences.

Your participation is confidential and strictly voluntary. You may choose not to participate at your own will. If you choose to participate and elect to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without any penalty.

If you agree to participate, please select the link below and you will be directed to the survey instrument to be completed. The survey takes less than 10 minutes to fill out. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed and reported solely for the purposes of my dissertation. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RRMULL>

Thank you in advance for your willingness to assist in the data collection portion of my dissertation. If you have any questions about the survey questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 225-268-5585 or rrm7305@louisiana.edu, Dr. Jeffrey White, Supervising Professor, 337-482-1010 or University of Louisiana at Lafayette Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Nicole Muller at 337-482-6409 or email: irb@louisiana.edu.

Sincerely,

Roddy R. Melancon
Doctoral Student
University of Louisiana - Lafayette

Appendix E

IRB Approval Form

Proposal Number: SP14-12 EDFL

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette Institutional Review Board APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

	RESPONSIBLE FACULTY OR STAFF SUPERVISOR / INVESTIGATOR	NAME OF INVESTIGATOR(S)
Name	Dr. Jeffry White	Roddy R. Melancon
Department	EDFL	EDFL
Campus Address	200 Devalcourt St. 262 Picard Ctr. Lafayette, LA 70506	430 Pecan Drive St. Gabriel, LA 70776
Phone	337-482-1010	225-268-5585
email	jwhite1@Louisiana.edu	rrm7305@Louisiana.edu

This Application is for a:

- Thesis
 Dissertation
 Research Project

TITLE OF PROPOSAL/PROJECT: Stress and the Psychological Well-Being of the School Leader: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Coping Strategies Utilized by School Administrators

In making this application, I certify that I have read and understood the guidelines and procedures developed by The University of Louisiana at Lafayette for the protection of human subjects and that I will comply with both the letter and the spirit of the university's policies. I further acknowledge my responsibility to report any significant changes in the protocol involving human subjects and to obtain written approval from the Institutional Review Board for these changes prior to making these changes. I understand that IRB approval extends for one year, and if the project continues beyond the date of approval, then I will notify the IRB and request a renewal.

By checking this box, I, Roddy Richard Melancon, am hereby signing my name. Date: 2/4/2014

I certify that as faculty advisor I have read and approve of the research described in this application and will provide guidance and support to the student as needed.

By checking this box, I, Dr. Jeffry White, am hereby signing my name. Date: 2/4/2014

I certify that as Graduate School Dean I have been provided an opportunity to review the research proposed in this application and I approve the research described in this application, as acceptable for graduate student research.

By checking this box, I, Dr. Mary Farmer-Kaiser, am hereby signing my name. Date: _____

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by The University of Louisiana Lafayette Institutional Review Board for compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, Protection of Human Subjects and as amended.

By checking this box, I, Dr. Nicole Müller, IRB Chair, am hereby signing my name. Date: February 5th, 2014

Appendix F

Survey from Survey Monkey

[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Stress and Coping Strategies Survey - Internet Explorer

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION& SurveyMonkey, Inc [US] Pandora Internet Radio - Listen ... SurveyMonkey Survey Summar... [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] S... X

Stress and Coping Strategies

Demographic Section

This survey is designed to determine school administrator's perceptions and opinions regarding experiences at work that cause stress and determine the coping strategies utilized to reduce stress.

When taking this survey, stress will be referred to as experiences which cause negativity in your life and may add negative feelings to your work day.

For the questions 1-8, please check the most appropriate answer that relates to your current demographics.

1. What is your gender?

Female

Male

2. What is your current school level position?

Principal

Associate Principal

Assistant Principal

Other

3. What is the academic level of your current school?

High School

Middle School

Elementary/Primary School

Other

4. How many students do you currently supervise?

0-400

401-800

801-1200

1201 and more

5. How many faculty/staff members do you currently supervise?

0-50

51-75

76-100

101 and more

6. How many years have you been in your current administrative position?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16 year and more

7. How many total years have you been an administrator, including your current position as well as any other administrative positions you may have held in the past?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16 years and more

8. How many years have you been in the education profession?

0-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21 years and more

Start | 4:08 PM 9/24/2014

Stress and Coping Strategies

Questions 9-12 will ask you to list your top stress factors experienced at work, as well as, your top stress reducing strategies used to decrease stress. You will also be asked to briefly describe each stress causing experience and each stress coping strategy. Please be brief but as clear as possible.

9. List the top three work experiences/issues that cause you stress at work. If you do not have three, please list the ones you do experience.

10. Briefly describe what makes the experience(s)/issue(s) you mentioned in number 9 a stressful experience/issue.

11. List the top three stress coping strategies (ways you deal with stress) you currently use to reduce stress. If you do not have three, please list the ones that you do utilize.

12. Briefly describe each stress coping practice you currently use and how it is helpful in reducing work related stress.

Prev Next

Powered by SurveyMonkey
Check out our [survey tools](#) and create your own now!

Stress and Coping Strategies

Opinion Questions

Please express your opinion for questions 13-15.

13. What suggestion(s) would you make to district leaders that would either minimize stress or cope with one of the experiences you mentioned in question number 9?

14. Do you feel your years of experience, size of your school, or current position influenced the types of stressful experiences you have at work, as well as, the coping mechanism you utilized? If so, please explain.

15. Are there any additional comments you would like to express regarding workplace stress factors and coping strategies you listed in this survey?

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Melancon, Roddy R. Bachelor of Arts, Nicholls State University, Fall, 1997; Master of Arts, Nicholls State University, Fall, 2001; Doctor of Education, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Fall, 2014

Major: Educational Leadership

Title of Dissertation: Stress and the Psychological Well-Being of Organizational Leaders: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Coping Strategies Used by School Administrators

Dissertation Director: Dr. Jeffrey L. White

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of school administrators surrounding workplace stress, its causes, and coping strategies selected to combat stress. This study was designed to elicit responses pertaining to why and how individual administrators experienced and coped with stress factors in the work setting. The study's major findings included: (a) Administrators reported that experiences and or issues pertaining to time management cause the most work related stress, (b) School administrators reported emotional strategies as the most utilized technique to combat stress, and (c) The demographic factor with the most influence on stress and the type of coping strategy utilized is years of experience. The major findings produced implications for current administrative practices as well as future research. Current trends related to stress implies a need for additional professional development, and education on how to cope with stress in a healthy manner for administrators to maintain longevity in the school administrator role.

Biographical Sketch

Roddy Richard Melancon is a resident of St. Gabriel, Louisiana and the son of Linton “Tickie” Melancon and the late Elaine Griffin Melancon. Roddy is married to Giselle Cherie and is the proud father of three sons, Sebastian Richard, Griffin Harris, and Colton Joseph Melancon. Roddy earned both a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education (1997) and a Masters of Arts in Administration and Supervision (2001) from Nicholls State University. Roddy has worked in education for 18 years. Currently, Roddy works for Ascension Parish Schools as an Assistant Principal. Roddy obtained a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in Fall 2014.