

**An Investigation of Perceived Principal Stress and Its Impact on Principals in Southwest
Georgia**

By
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the Degree of Doctor of Education
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(LEADERSHIP)

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those who supported me during this extraordinary experience. I would like to thank my husband, David, for continued encouragement as I completed this process. I appreciate the subtle words of reassurance when I felt like giving up.

I also dedicate this work to my family: my mother, sisters, brothers, and daughter. Thank you for understanding my absences from numerous family events because of my work. I appreciate you all for your understanding, support, and love.

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine to what extent southwest Georgia principals perceive they are stressed, identify principal stressors and how the stressors impact the principals' work. Principals are leaders of school building who are experiencing increased stress. Therefore; it is important to understand what causes principal stress as well as how the stressors impact principal work. Principals are expected to maintain building safety, student safety, student achievement, retention of quality teachers, as well as act as instructional leaders. The mixed method study of public elementary school principals was conducted in four southwest Georgia school districts. The researcher gathered demographic data as well as conducted a Perceived Stress Survey, Stressor Survey, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher used a three-round Delphi Method to analyze the Stressors Survey to develop a consensus of greatest stressors among participating principals. The major findings of the study indicated 67% of the southwest Georgia principals perceived they experienced medium to high levels of stress. The major causes of stress were workload, increased job demands, time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability, bureaucracy, discipline, and finance. The impact of the stressors were identified as accountability measures such as teacher evaluations were ineffective and timely, discipline and paperwork prevents principals from being instructional leaders, central office policies and procedures impact principals' time in their buildings, and workload and time constraints cause principals to work late or take work home thus impacting family time.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Educators, like many other fields of work, experienced an incredible amount of stress and in particular, school principals suggested stress levels are intensifying. Principals pointed out there were increased responsibilities for school operations and management as they faced demographic and societal changes struggling between stakeholders, accelerating responsibilities, and increasingly long hours, troublesome students, discouraging teachers and meeting the changing district, state, and federal mandates.

In a recent study of 2,500 adults in the United States, 49 percent expressed they experienced some form of major stress over the past year (American Institute of Stress, 2016). The annual Stress in America Survey concluded 65 percent of Americans identified work as a main source of stress and 37 percent of the participants did not utilize effective stress management techniques (American Psychological Association, 2016). Hans Selye introduced stress and the body's reaction to change as early as the 30s (Selye, 1936). The three stages of stress are alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. During each stage, the body reacts to a stressor (Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2011). In reaction to stress, the body begins to excrete the hormone cortisol and as heart rate and blood pressure increase, the body releases energy to assist in handling the threat (American Psychological Association, 2016). The release of cortisol impacts the cognitive processes of the brain (American Psychological Association, 2016).

Stress impacted adults mentally and physically (Bedu-Addo, 2013). As a result of stress, adults experienced cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and headaches. Stress was categorized as the human body's reaction when danger or a challenge was presented. Since stress caused health issues, stress accounted for 30 percent of the disability claims filed in the United States

(Smith, 2012). Acute stress was categorized as brief incidences such as studying for a test or preventing a car accident (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2011). More prolonged episodes were identified as chronic stress. Examples of chronic stress were financial trouble, bad relationships, and work overload (Robbins, et al., 2011).

Public school principals were inundated with increased student achievement. The report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) identified principals as managers. More recently, principals have taken on the role of instructional leaders focusing on curriculum and standards (Green, 2010; Steyn, 2008). The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and new Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 increased school level accountability (US Department of Education, 2016). The goal of NCLB was to ensure student achievement through state-mandated testing. NCLB highlighted federal government mandates on school systems. Increased accountability prompted principals to employ well-qualified teachers (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). In an effort to improve student performance on high stakes testing principals, principals were tasked to be instructional leaders who focused on curriculum and instruction (Fink & Silverman, 2014). In contrast, the Every Student Succeeds Act enacted by President Obama in 2015, transferred some powers back to state and local agencies (US Department of Education, 2016). The federal government wanted local and state governments to have more control over goal-setting for their school performance. Although Every Child Succeeds was designed to allow local and state entities more decision-making power, student testing remained a requirement.

The most recent job outlook statistics for public school principals indicated a 6 percent growth by the year 2024 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Financial crises and economic downturns jeopardized filling these future positions. Additionally, as student enrollment

increased, more school buildings and principals were needed, and financial constraints could hinder schools systems from employing the necessary amount of principals therefore; jeopardizing student success (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Hiring qualified candidates was a difficult task for superintendents. The shortage of quality principals put student achievement at risk (Ash, Hodge, & Connel, 2013). Principals were vital in setting the academic tone for schools and therefore; quality, effective leaders were important to student achievement.

Educators experienced an incredible amount of stress. The changing role of principals was related to the increased in stress levels (Boyland, 2011). Principals reported that increased job demands and accountability played a major role in stress levels. Principals worked after school activities and weekend events. Also, factors such as working after normal hours, paperwork, and decreased funding increases principal stress (Boyland, 2011). A number of research studies were conducted in reference to the causes of principal stress (Boyland, 2011; Abu-Nasser, 2011; Lyons & Algozzine, 2006; Uba-Mbibi, 2013; Kreysman, 2010; Wells & Flocko, 2015), however literature there was a gap in the research about how principal stress impacted the principal. The stressful aspects of administrative roles impacted the school in its entirety (Boyland, 2011). As principals continued to experience stress, how did the identified stressors impact principals?

Job-related stress was common among most of the working class in the United States. Those who experienced stress used coping mechanisms to manage stress. Research indicated school principals who experienced stress lack sufficient sleep (Sogunro, 2012). Lack of sleep had the potential to impact job performance such as inability to solve problems (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013). Stress management techniques were used to lessen stress levels. Principals used different techniques to manage stress. According to Fahey, et al. (2011), exercising, healthy

eating, and adequate sleep were beneficial ways to alleviate stress. Coping mechanisms included relaxation, gardening, aromatherapy, massage therapy and medication (Hurley, 2007). Coping mechanisms are used to decrease stress and limit its negative impact on the body.

In this era of accountability, the continued demands on principals by local, state, and federal policy complicated the hiring and retention of quality principals. The decrease in quality, effective principals and principal candidates had a negative impact on schools. Schools without effective leaders jeopardized student achievement. Principal shortages were a result of increased job responsibility, principals retiring, and accountability (Delisio, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

As principals' role changed, they were expected to act more as instructional leaders making their foremost concern student achievement; ensuring the curriculum was appropriately addressed by qualified teachers. Additionally, increased stress from the new Georgia Milestone testing, new teacher evaluation system, local boards of education, and lack of autonomy were additional stressors. Principals' perceived stress have increased over the years.

Increased stress impacted principals' health as well as that of the school. One research study indicated that 8.8 percent of elementary school principals experienced increased stress levels and were on the verge of job burnout. Principals sought other professions because of the high demands of the job. It was evident that principals experienced stress and identified a variety of stressors. However; how did the identified stressors impact principals?

Research Questions

1. To what extent did elementary principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive they are stressed?
2. What perceived stressors did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?

3. What was the perceived impact of stressors on principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary?

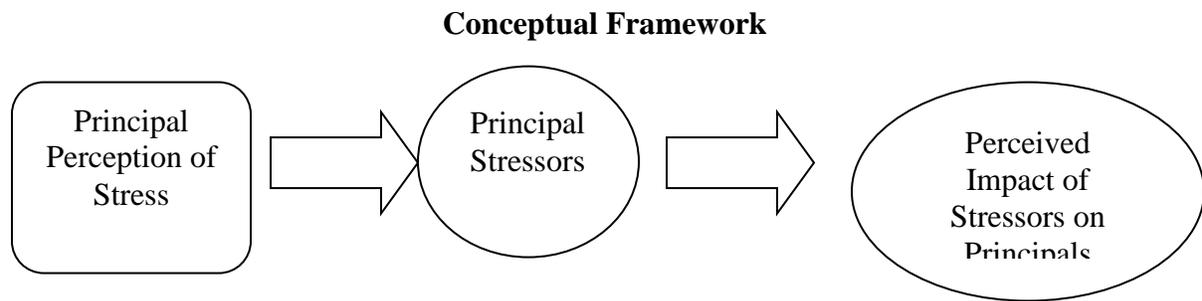


Figure 1. A conceptual framework of principal perception of stress, stressors, and the perceived impact of stressors on principals.

Importance of the Study

The study included principal perception of stress, stressors, and the perceived impact of stressors on principals. Principals considered leaving the field therefore; it was important for district, state, and national leaders to consider the factors that contribute to the loss of highly qualified school leaders. Principals continued to increase student achievement, it was imperative to understand how perceived stressors impact principals. The increased job stress among principals may eventually deter others from entering the field

Procedures

A mixed method Delphi study was conducted to determine the major stressors for principals, to determine principal perceived stress, stressors, and the impact of stress on job performance. Data was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed after conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews of nine elementary principals in Georgia public school systems. Elementary principals were selected due to their background knowledge and experience working with students in public education. All participants were currently employed and worked with elementary school aged students. Demographical data such as age, gender, education level, and years of service was also collected by the researcher.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation was the study was conducted in southwest Georgia public elementary schools.

Another limitation is the truthfulness and honesty of the participants' responses. The study was delimited to individuals currently serving as full time elementary principals in Georgia public elementary schools during the 2015-2016 school year. The delimitations were the accessibility to reliable and honest information. elementary public school principals in southwestern Georgia.

The participants in this study were provided reliable and honest information.

Definition of terms

Acute Stress – A type of stress that is frequent and short lived (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013).

Autonomy - The ability to be able to make more choices (Merriam-Webster, 2011).

Bureaucracy - A system marked by officials, red tape, and proliferation (Merriam-Webster, 2011).

Central Office/District Office staff - A group of employees whose main focus is professional learning, curriculum and instruction, and principal support (Deane-Williams, Nelms, & Robinson, 2015).

Chronic stress - Prolonged stress (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013).

Cities - Areas with a population of 250,000 or more (US Department of Education, 2016).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) - A law passed in 1975 to protect students with special needs (Jones, 2015).

English Language Learners (ELL) - Students who are not proficient in the English language (August, McCardle, Shanahan, & Burns, 2014).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – A law passed in 1965 that provided federal funding to public schools (US Department of Education, 2015).

Eustress – A type of positive stress that has positive outcomes (Selye, 1974).

Every Child Succeeds Act (ECSA) - A law passed to allow local and state education agencies more decision-making power including student testing and teacher and leader evaluations (US Department of Education, 2016).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - A learning plan of education developed by principals, teachers, and parents that provides an environment suitable for students with special needs (Jones, 2015).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - A federal law that protects students with special needs (US Department of Education, 2016).

Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) -The system used to evaluate public school principals in Georgia public schools (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - A law passed that increased school accountability and student achievement by mandating testing in public schools (US Department of Education, 2016).

Rural - An area defined by population and distance from larger urban areas (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016).

Stress –A bodily reaction to a nonspecific demand that has been placed upon it (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013; Seyle, 1976; Seyle, 1936).

Stressors - Situations or conditions that trigger physical or emotional reactions (Insel & Roth, 2012).

Suburban - Areas that are normally located on the outskirts of primary cities with a population of 250,000 or more (US Department of Education, 2016).

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) -The system used to evaluate public school teachers in Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

Summary

Stress was an issue for educators. Principals, who were responsible for most facets of education in a school day, report increasing amounts of stress. Additionally, principals were accountable for student and teacher performance. Predicated on their leadership and their performance evaluations, principals were expected to address student and teacher needs and work with community and parent stakeholders. Managing schools, handling long hours of curricular and co-curricular programs after school and on weekends rarely allowed principals to manage their stress levels. Principals suggested that stress was both intensifying and often unrelenting.

Historically, Hans Seyle (1936) defined stress as the body's response to a situation or demand that has been placed upon it. In support of Seyle's theory, Fahey, Insel, & Roth (2011), further explained stress caused the body to react in three stages alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The impact of stress as indicated by Bedu-Addo (2013), was mental and physical issues. Stress caused anxiety, depression, heart problems, and high blood pressure.

As principal leadership roles change, stress levels increased (Boyland, 2011). With principals experiencing an increased amount of stress and it was important to understand how stressors impact principals and their work. It was also important to comprehend the perceived stress of principals as well as what conditions attributed to principal stress. Ultimately, the goal was to determine the impact and find ways to assist principals in coping with stress.

A mixed method study to gather demographic data as well as survey and interview data was conducted to gather data about public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia perceived stress, stressors, and the impact of stressors on principals' work in their buildings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

High stress jobs have been considered to be: policemen, medical workers, and fire fighters. School principals also have high stress jobs and report pressure in their work was ever-increasing. Additionally, principals reported job demands included school operations and building management, as well as the mandates to include parents, community members, stakeholders, and students in the decision-making processes to increase student performance; demands on principals rarely stopped. Also, school principals faced longer work hours necessitated by school-sponsored activities after hours, weekends, holidays, and summer, while working with district, state, and federal demands for higher student achievement. While most adults faced stress in their home and work lives, stress for school leaders appeared to be both constant and chronic.

Job-related stress was related to feeling overwhelmed by workloads and feeling under-appreciated (Insel & Roth, 2012). Job stress was viewed as harmful physically and emotionally when job requirements did coincided with worker capabilities, resources or the needs of the worker (Bedu-Addo, 2013). Hans Selye, an endocrinologist, first introduced the idea of stress as a biological term in the 30s (Seyle, 1936). Previously, stress was associated with the psychological nature of human reactions causing unwanted tension in individuals. Known as the father of stress, Seyle's work introduced the three stages of stress: alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013; Seyle's, 1976).

Definition of Stress

When the body reacts to a nonspecific demand, it is identified as stress (American

Institute of Stress, 2016 Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013; Seyle 1976; Seyle; 1936;). The nonspecific response of the body refers to the body's ability to react to certain challenges and changes in the same way (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013). Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2011) defined stress as physical, chemical, or emotional factors that caused bodily or mental tension and was a factor in the cause of disease. The body naturally responded to any type of change or challenge (Robbins, et al., 2013). The change results from new, threatening, or exciting situations. Stress was categorized as acute and chronic. Although acute stress was extremely common, the impact was short term, a reaction to imminent danger such as avoiding a traffic accident or studying for a test. Acute stress occurred more frequently but passed rather quickly. On the other hand, chronic stress was continuous.

Chronic stress was prolonged, and individuals had to learn to cope with it or control it. Chronic stress was most common and sent the body into a constant state of inflammation. Stressors include relationships, financial concerns, job issues, college, insecurity, violence, and moving (Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2011). Chronic stress descriptors included workload, bad relationships, and poverty level living (Robbins). The non-specific response of the body was the same for those experiencing chronic or acute stress (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013).

Issues or stimuli created by stress were referred to as "stressors. Stressors are defined as things that are responded to by individuals (Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2011). Dealing with stress impacts health, the ability to control emotions, judgment, and sleep (Fahey, et al., 2011). Factors causing stress could be pleasant or unpleasant, real or imagined. Physical stressors include illness, injury, lack of sleep, noise, accidents, and raised temperature.

Stages of stress

When faced with stress, responses were physiological and affected the physical state of the individual (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013). Stress response was comprised of a three-stage process. The stages included fight or flight response (alarm reaction stage), stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion. During the fight or flight stage, in response to the stressor, increased heart rate occurred (Fahey et al. 2011). Responses to stressors were fast and powerful (Insel & Roth, 2012). The second stage of stress, resistance, involved the body's effort to manage the stress to regain normalcy. While experiencing the resistance response, illnesses are more likely to occur in the body (Robbins et al., 2013). As the body functions in the resistance stage, the third state of stage, exhaustion, was less likely to begin. At this point, the ability to adapt does not exist and the body enters the fight-or-flight stage again (Robbins et al., 2013). Once the body has reached the exhaustion stage, the body's immune system was compromised. Weakened immune systems impacted organ function in the body. Another impact of a weakened immune system was susceptibility diseases or even death. Illnesses such as high blood pressure, kidney disease, and heart disease were more likely to be exhibited in the exhaustion stage (Robbins et al., 2013).

As the intensity of a stressful situation increased, the length of time needed for individuals to adjust also increased. In Stage 1, the cycle of stress began when a demand was placed upon an individual. For school principals, this demand came in the form of a meeting, a telephone call, an upset parent, or a requested report. Stage 2 consisted of the individual's perception of the event that triggered the stress. If the person feels he was unable to meet the demand, it was perceived as a stressor. Consequently, some events may cause stress for one principal but may not cause stress for another. During stage 3, biochemical changes began to take place. Hormones were secreted as the individuals responded to the stress. Bodily changes

such as muscle tension, elevated heart rate, and release of adrenaline were indicators that the body was beginning to prepare to deal with the stress. The body handled the stress by fight or flight. The long-term impact of not being able to cope with job-related stress could ultimately lead to death. The increased harmful impact of stress could lead to illnesses, depression, anxiety, and inability to sleep (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013). Prolonged stress impacted the mind as well as the body. Depression, heart disease, premature aging, and diabetes were also the impact of stress (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013).

Personality Types

Personality type impacted stress levels as well (Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2013). Mary Friedman and Ray Rosenman's early research introduced Type A personalities (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974). According to Friedman and Rosenman, cardiologists researched individuals who exhibited Type A personality. Type A personalities struggled to deal with different stressors in the shortest amount of time. Type A personality characteristics included competitiveness, ambitiousness, impatience, and work-oriented. Type A personality behavior was strongly associated with high levels of stress (Robbins et al, 2013). Individuals who possess Type A personalities usually place high demands upon themselves, thus increasing stress. Type A personality individuals have limited involvement in leisure activities and they did not have time for friends. Stress was a constant issue for Type A behavior individuals because of the continuous pressure they experience and place upon themselves. The pressure of stress caused an increase in the release of stress hormones in the body. Cardiologists have also associated Type A personalities to increased heart disease; stress was a factor in heart related illness (Herbert, 2013). Friedman and Rosenman concluded Type A personalities were more likely to experience heart disease (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974).

Type B personalities exhibited a calmer, relaxed attitude. These individuals tended to deal more effectively with stress by exercising and communicating with friends. High levels of stress are usually not common in individuals with Type B personalities (Robbins, et al., 2013). According to a study by Moran (2014), stress levels increased for principals as the personality varied. Although the stress levels increased, the increase was not associated with personality type. Table 1 identified the definition of stress from different sources.

Table 1 Definition of Stress

<u>Author/Date</u>	<u>Article/Book/Study</u>	<u>Analaysis</u>
Robbins, G., Powell, D., Burgess, S., 2013	A Wellness Way of Life	Body's reaction to challenges
Nordqvist, C., 2009	What is stress? How to deal with stress	Definition of stress and how it impacts you
Seyle, H., 1936	A Syndrome Produced by Diverse Nocuous agent	General adaptation syndrome

Job-Related Stress

Job-related issues were the most common causes of stress in the lives of Americans. According to Insel and Roth (2012), 41 percent of working Americans experienced some form of job-related stress throughout the work day. Many workers indicated that little exercise and socializing cause them to feel more tense about their jobs. As workers were expected to follow tighter schedules and perform more overtime duties, stress levels tended to rise. Teachers, social workers, caregivers, and police officers often reported stress related to jobs. This stress could be feeling overwhelmed and under-appreciated (Insel & Roth, 2012). Job-related stress could be attributed to the fact that job requirements do not coincide with worker capabilities, resources, or the needs of the worker (Bedu-Addo, 2013).

Stress Management

Transactional stress theories suggested that the level and duration of the stress response an individual experienced was influenced by environmental factors and the person's ability to cope with the stressor (Cox & Griffiths, 2010). Transaction or interaction occurred between a person and the environment, thus creating some level of stress. Stress results from the imbalance between demands (pressure) and resources (ability to cope). Therefore, individuals became stressed when demands or pressures exceeded resources or ability to cope with situations. Information on the transactional model of stress originated with Lazarus, a social psychologist, in the early 60s to the mid 90s (Lazarus, 1966). Kurt Lewin (1936) also researched human behavior. Lewin concluded human behavior was an interaction between the individual and the environment. Lazarus' research proposed that stress was not the result of one incident, but was a transaction between a human and the environment (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Reaction to stressors was associated to primary and secondary appraisals (Roesch, Weiner, & Vaughn, 2012). A stressor was synthesized as a threat during primary appraisal. During primary appraisal, stressful situations were appraised as involving harm or loss, potential threats, and challenges. Primary appraisal was a person's judgment about the significance of an event as stressful, positive, controllable, challenging or irrelevant. Secondary appraisal involved the ability to handle circumstances and change undesirable conditions. During this state, an evaluation of internal and external resources was utilized to produce a more positive situation. Internal resources were linked to inner strength while external resources include seeking help from professionals or peers. The difference between primary and secondary appraisal would be that primary appraisal involved establishing the meaning of an event while secondary appraisal involved the judgment of the capability to establish the meaning of the event. Primary appraisal

was defined as the importance of the event, while secondary was defined by the coping mechanisms used to handle stress. (Roesch et al.).

Stress Management Techniques

Lazarus and Folkman's research (1984) introduced the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping as a framework for evaluating the processes of coping with stressful events. Stressful experiences were construed as person-environment transactions. These transactions depended on the impact of the external stressor. This was mediated by the person's appraisal of the stressor and secondly on the social and cultural resources at his or her disposal. Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo (2013) reported a variety of stress management techniques used to alleviate principal stress such as eating well-balanced meals, exercising, using prescription medication, enacting self control, practicing religion, prioritizing tasks, and receiving support from co-workers.

Stress reduction techniques could be used to alleviate short-term and long-term situations. Some stressful events occurred periodically, and others occurred on a more regular basis. The frequency of the stressful moments determined the type and length of the coping mechanism needed to reduce the stress. Short-term stress reduction techniques were used when individuals were not experiencing stress on regular intervals. For example, some principals chose to participate in physical activities to relieve stress (Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo). Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo also stated principals experienced stress if they did not learn to delegate tasks to others. The study conducted by Chaudhuri (2016) indicated elementary principals benefited from receiving district support as well as resources provided by the district to reduce stress.

School principals experienced difficulties with sleeping as a result of elevated stress levels (Sogunro, 2012). Principals indicated they sleep on average 5 to 6 hours per night (Sogunro). According to Insel & Roth (2012), 7 to 9 hours of sleep was recommended. Therefore, maintaining a healthy amount of sleep was essential for principals to work at full

potential. The inability to get enough sleep impacted job performance (Sogurno). It was very difficult to function and perform job duties if a body had not received a sufficient amount of sleep. Robbins, et al., stated insufficient sleep impacted the ability to problem-solve, speak, and write. Lack of sleep also increased tenseness and changes in mood (Robins, et al.) Robbins, Powers, and Burgess (2013) suggested various strategies for coping with stress. These strategies included exercise, relaxation techniques, lifestyle change, laughter, and humor. Boyland (2011), principals indicated stress relieving strategies helped with stress. Some of the strategies identified by Indiana principals in Boyland's 2011 study were: exercise, leaving work at work, taking time to eat, writing down thoughts, getting out of the office and mingling with students, networking with other colleagues, not taking issues personally, possessing a sense of humor, having organization, having a balance in their life, and not making quick decisions.

Another stress reliever was learning to say no to less important tasks such as: unplanned meetings and telephone calls, unnecessary e-mails, unrealistic expectations, decisions that required a large amount of time with incomplete information (Sogunro, 2012). Time management was a technique used by principals (Abu-Nasser, 2011). Principals conducted classroom visits to ensure student achievement and appropriate use of instructional time. Contrarily, research indicated that instructional time was not significantly related to student growth (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013). Time management techniques such as organizing goals and setting priorities allowed principals to focus on and complete important tasks (Abu-Nasser, 2011). Principals also managed time by learning to delegate tasks. By delegating, principals had more time to focus on the important duties of their jobs (Sogunro, 2012). Seaward (2006) suggested that in order for principals to maximize time management they should allow for personal time each day, use networking skills, be assertive, delegate tasks, maintain healthy sleep

habit and use technology. Setting limits allowed principals to focus on important tasks and to manage time more effectively. Principals spent approximately 30 percent of their time performing administrative duties and 20 percent dealing with organizational management (Hornig, Klaski, &Loeb, 2010). Change in principals’ schedules supported better teacher practices, more student engagement, increased parent involvement, and higher student achievement (Shellinger, 2012).

Maintaining healthy working relationships with all stakeholders was important to managing stress (Sogunro, 2012). Working with parents, students, and staff, and community leaders usually reduced stress for principals. Principals who collaborated with others involved in the school gained the support of others (Sogunro, 2012). Principals who were knowledgeable, modest, compassionate, and open-minded were more likely to earn the respect and support of others (Sogunro, 2012). In Table 2 studies by Boyland (2011) indicated more district supportive measures alleviated stress. Table 2, included studies related to principals’ coping skills with stress (Sogunro, 2012).

Table 2 Studies Related to Coping with Stress

<u>Author/Date</u>	<u>Article/Book/Study</u>	<u>Analaysis</u>
Boyland, L. 2011	Job stress and coping strategies of elementary school principals: A statewide study	Supportive measures needed to assist principals with stress

Sogunro, 2012	Stress in school administration: Coping Tips for principals	Most principals lack coping skills, but coping skills are essential for school and principal stress
Uba-Mbibi, F. Nwamuo, R. 2013	Principals' perception of stress and stress management strategies by the junior secondary principals in Abia State	Principal stressors and stress management strategies

School Stress

School principals were responsible for budgets, teacher evaluations, parent relationships, school safety, teacher professional development scheduling, and student discipline (Strauss, 2013). Principals were expected to cope with these responsibilities and many others while maintaining intelligence and charisma (Strauss). Many principals were stressed because they are ultimately responsible for what happened in their schools (Parker, 2013). The job of a principal was time-consuming and changed from day to day. Principals dealt with a variety of factors as they worked within the building (Kimbrough & Buckett, 1990). The most common stressors for school principals are implementing the Common Core State Standards, evaluating teacher effectiveness, and maintaining an academically rigorous learning environment (Parker). In historical studies, diverse role expectations and staff reduction were considered stressors for principals (Gable, Dedrick, & Hawkes, 1984). A study by Kreysman (2010) principals identified time, paperwork, reports, meetings, and staff as major stressor in their jobs as principals.

Principals were the leaders in the school building and had to create an atmosphere of collaboration and respect. The principals had a plethora of job responsibilities and had to learn to delegate some aspects of the duties. Although this position was perceived as a highly stressful job, female principals perceived their occupation as more stressful than male counterparts (Uba-

Mbibi & Nwamuo, 2013). Female principals felt that the combination of domestic responsibilities and job duties increased their levels of stress.

According to Boyland (2011), principals perceived their level of stress have increased over the years. In this study, 70 percent of principals reported more stress than in years past. This increase of stress was attributed to an expansion of job duties and accountability measures. The level of paperwork and reports caused difficulty for principals in meeting the needs of students and parents. Most of the principals in this study felt that they were spread too thin. As a result of increased stress, principals felt that it impacted their health in a negative manner. Of the principals in this study, 68 percent felt that job stress had affected their overall health and wellness. Specifically, elementary principals in Indiana experienced moderate to high levels of job stress. The increase in job stress among principals might eventually deter others from entering the field. In a study conducted by Moran (2014), principals 94.44% of the principals surveyed perceived their stress as medium to high level.

Swent and Gmelch (1977) also conducted research on what causes principal stress. The study concluded that Oregon principals' stressors were identified as administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal relations, and role expectations (Swent & Gmelch, 1977). Identified administrative constraints were meetings, work load, and complying with policies (Swent & Gmelch, 1977). Principals also responded that supervision, evaluations, discipline, budgets, and conflict resolution attributed to excessive stress (Moran, 2014). Principals also found it difficult to be leaders and managers of the building while adhering to stringent financial policies (Boyland, 2011). Principals' jobs required working with all stakeholders in the community while maintaining student achievement (Boyland). In the Sogunro's study (2012) of Connecticut principals, all participants indicated being a principal was

stressful. Ninety-six percent of the principals in the Connecticut study indicated work stress impacted their job performance. Table 3 lists studies by Boyland (2011), Moran (2014), and Sogunro (2012) as principals indicated they experienced more stress on the job.

Table 3 Studies Related to Perceived Stress

<u>Author/Date</u>	<u>Article/Book/Study</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Boyland, L. 2011	Job stress and coping strategies of elementary school principals: A statewide study	Principals experienced moderate to high job stress
Moran, D. 2014	Principal stress perceptions in Louisiana public schools, job demands and individual differences and how to lessen principal stress	All respondents experienced some level of perceived stress impacted by high job demands, more district support and professional development may decrease principal stress
Sogunro, O. 2012	Stress in school administration: Coping Tips for principals	Most principals lack coping skills, but coping skills are essential for school and principal stress

Principal Stressors

Sogunro's study of principals in Connecticut revealed that 96 percent of the principals experienced work-related stress levels. The participants believed this stress was affected their mental and physical health, work habits, and productivity. Seven major causes of stress were identified in this study: (1) unpleasant relationships and people conflicts; (2) time constraints and related issues; (3) crises in the school; (4) challenging policy demands and overwhelming mandates from governments; (5) budgetary constraints and related issues; (6) fear of failure; and (7) negative publicity and dealing with media (Sogunro, 2012). This study also included stress coping tips for school principals. The coping skills were presented in five main categories: (1)

behavioral modification cues; (2) physical exercise; (3) relaxation techniques; (4) professional help; and (5) medical care.

Stressors were situations that trigger physical or emotional reaction (Insel & Roth, 2012). Stressors for school principals vary from time constraints to dealing with student issues. A person's reaction to stressors depends upon how the stressor was perceived. Some stressors occurred suddenly. A bus accident or a fire were immediate stressors. Since these stressors were immediate, the impact did not last long. Other stressors such as air pollution, financial issues, or an adverse relationship had a more long term impact (Insel & Roth). Memories of a stressor lead to stress as well. A person's response to a stressor varied in many ways. Reactions to stressors caused emotional, physical, and behavior changes. Brimm, Munnely, and Vanderpool's research in the 70s, 80s, and 90s outlined issues that were still stressful in 2015 and 2016. These issues were compounded by increased accountability, policy changes, increased testing, and legislature such as No Child Left Behind of 2002 and Every Child Succeeds Act of 2016. Stress among principals was evident in many research studies. Wells and Klocko conducted a study in 2015 of 907 principals; all participants experienced some level of stress. The main focus was to determine what caused principal stress. Principals outlined many different causes of stress. Principals identified the following as stressors (Uba-Mbibi, 2013; Wells & Klocko, 2015):

1. Student discipline;
2. Workload;
3. Inadequate teaching facility; and
4. Class size

In another study conducted by Sogunro in 2012 of 52 principals in Connecticut, 96 percent of the participants identified the major causes of stress:

1. Conflict with people;
2. Time constraints;
3. School crises;
4. Policy;
5. Budgets;
6. Fear of failure; and
7. Negativity

Principals used a variety of coping mechanisms to lessen their levels of stress. When faced with stress, response was physiological and affected the physical state (Nordqvist, 2009). At this point, fight or flight response began. Therefore, principals used several stress management coping skills. The following were ways school principals dealt with stress: prioritizing projects, reacting appropriately, opening up to communicate, mentioning progress, investigating the needs, speaking up and asking for help, and evaluating and taking care of yourself (Harris, 2006). Dealing with stress and continued changes in education played a major role in school principals' day-to-day functions. Supportive structures helped assist principals with job related (Boyland, 2011). Some principals indicated that employing teacher leaders decreased stress levels (Wells & Klocko, 2015).

Bureaucracy

As defined by Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2011), bureaucracy was defined as a system marked by officials, red tape, and proliferation. Public school systems were forced to develop and implement non-funded policies and change as directed by state and federal government officials. The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 required all

public schools to administer a state required testing mandate. As tests were implemented, student promotion and retention were at risk (U. S. Department of Education, 2015).

It was also necessary for public schools to attempt to meet state-mandated goals. The idea of focusing on many goals at the same time created an opportunity for goal conflict. Public schools worked to achieve local, state, and federal goals. Principals were charged with the task of making decisions concerning goal attainment (Resh & Pitts, 2013). Difficulty in meeting goals in public schools usually derived from mandates centering on students, goals that were often complex and numerous, and were insufficient resources (Resh & Pitts, 2013). Principals were required to adhere to mandates for accountability, discipline, athletics, and graduation rate. All public schools are faced with achieving mandated goals while the task was not equal between schools. While all schools were mandated to achieve the same goals, differences in demographics and socioeconomic status created challenges.

Central Office/District Support

Central office/district office staff's main focus was professional learning, curriculum and instruction, and principal support (Deane-Williams, Nelms, & Robinson, 2015). Supervisors at the district level provided feedback and mentoring to principals (Syed, 2014). Principal supervisors supported principals by assisting them in implementing the district's goals and vision for the schools and the students (Syed, 2014). District staff members expressed the visions and goals of the system. School board members as well as superintendents were a part of the district team. As the district personnel developed strategic plans, goals, vision, and mission of the district, principals were tasked to implement the goals into the school.

Principals faced challenges when central office failed to provide the appropriate, essential professional development, when central office did not have a full understanding of the job duties

of a principal, and when principals were not allowed enough time to address teaching and learning with faculty members (Fink & Silverman, 2014).

Local School Board Members

Local board of education members for public schools were elected by the people of the community for a term of two to five years (Weiler, 2015) Local boards of education usually consisted of five to seven members (Weiler). Board members were elected officials who were charged with making decisions and policies relevant to increased student achievement (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Often times, board of education had personal agendas. In the United States, 15,000 local public school boards existed with approximately 95,000 representatives (Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014). School boards have been criticized and even disbanded because of conflict and the perception of ineffectiveness (Delagardelle & Alsbury). There were very few research studies that support the effectiveness of local school boards. Many opinion-based reports suggested the role of the board impacted student achievement and effective leadership (Delagardelle & Alsbury).

Richardson (2009) concluded effective local school boards can make an impact on local schools. Local board members were held accountable in the local communities (Sell, 2006). As long as members hold positions, their decision making was scrutinized by the people. One advantage of local school board was to serve as a connection between parents and students of the school district (Sell, 2006). Another positive aspect of local school board members was that members take into account their constituents, parents and students, and school personnel in order to make effective decisions (Sell, 2006). Lastly, school board members supported the idea of a democracy. The members were elected by the people to serve the people (Sell, 2006).

Despite the positive aspects of local school boards, negative issues existed as well. Because the position was strictly voluntary, and at the same time difficult, criticisms usually

arose (Maeroff, 2010). According to Maeroff (2010) most board members possessed a small amount of knowledge or experience in the education field. The lack of knowledge or experience in education limited the members' ability to understand the educational process. This lack of knowledge impacted leadership's effectiveness. If board members lacked background knowledge about education, it was difficult for the members to understand the goals of the leaders in the system. It was imperative that members who lacked the knowledge of education field become more familiar with it (Sell, 2006). Local board members were also viewed as being a hindrance to the district. The lack of knowledge of the system by board members negatively impacted the ability of experienced, knowledgeable educators in the system. Finally, critics indicated politics plays a crucial role in local board members' decision making. For principals, politics can be detrimental to their tenure in the system. Since principals were normally hired through a year to year contract subject to approval of the local board of education, bad relationships with board members impacted job security for principals. Bad relationships or miscommunications with board members literally impacted a principal's employment.

Although critics emphasized positive and negative implications of local school board members, certain behaviors were expected. In a study conducted by Delagardelle & Alsbury in 2014, Iowa local board members reported the following behaviors should be exhibited by them to improve student success. These were hiring competent and strong principals, faculty, developing long term goals for the district, and discussing student achievement.

Working conditions

Increased accountability in schools has led to principals' desire to increase student achievement. In an effort to increase student achievement, teachers were held at a higher standard. Principals sometimes inadvertently caused morale to decrease (Stewart-Banks, Kuofie, Hakim, & Branch, 2015). The school environment changed because of the demands being placed

on teachers to increase student test scores. Principals were under undue stress to produce successful school; therefore the leadership might change. The change in leadership style might impact the atmosphere and desires of faculty and staff. In a study conducted by Stewart-Banks (2015), there was a significant relationship between principal leadership style and work performance and staff.

Principals were often given the task of performing a many duties. Principals indicated the difficulty of working with the bureaucratic system in order to perform job duties.

Responsibilities such as hiring new employees, attending meetings, maintaining budgets, and ordering supplies kept principals from performing more important tasks (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014). These tasks usually prevented principals from focusing on more important issues such as improving student achievement, disaggregating test data, and assisting faculty members.

The culture of the district also impacted principals' working conditions. New principals entered a system with a defined culture and had to attempt to adapt to it. The creation of an improved culture was difficult to do. The support of other leaders and personnel was necessary to create an atmosphere conducive to student achievement (Ikemoto, et al., 2014). When working conditions designed for success, principals were more likely to be successful (Ikemoto, et al., 2014). The following working conditions were essential in the success of principals and students:

1. All faculty and staff working toward the school's goals;
2. Continued learning and improvement;
3. Clear, attainable job responsibilities; and
4. Principals' ability to strategically assign staff and faculty members.

Large school districts such as Gwinnett County, Georgia, employ principal supervisors. Principal supervisors oversee principals of local schools. The system is comprised of 134 schools across 437 square miles (Syed, 2014). At one point, principal supervisors were assigned to approximately 26 schools, a challenging task due to the number of school each principal supervisor was in charge of visiting.

Another district in Denver, Colorado, employed six principal supervisors to evaluate, coach, and supervise as many 180 principals. In order to improve working conditions, the district hired more principal supervisors. The reduction in work load and improvement in working conditions allowed principal supervisors to be more available to help principals in the district (Gill, 2013). Principal success depended upon his or her ability to perform the assigned duties while improving student achievement. It was imperative for school leaders to be able to perform their job duties.

District Size (Rural, Urban, & Suburban)

Rural areas were identified by the population and distance from a larger urban area (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Remote rural areas were located more than 25 miles from an urbanized city (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Principals in rural areas of Georgia have a significantly different experience than principals in the urban areas of Georgia. Therefore, new principals in rural areas might face a plethora of challenges (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). As of 2012, there were 2,388 public schools in Georgia. Rural schools made up 39 percent (943) of the total public schools in Georgia (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Schools in rural areas are often isolated with a declining student body (Duncan & Stock, 2010). Rural principals also dealt with a different set of stress factors because of their location and the size of the school. As state, federal and local mandates increased, the workload and financial

obligation of principals in small, rural schools became more intense (Canales, Tejada-Delgado, & Slate, 2008). Most rural leaders do not have the luxury of a large administrative staff; new responsibilities belong to the principal.

Rural leaders had many responsibilities such as planning schedules and calendars, federal, state, and local accountability, school performance on state-mandated tests, monitoring school and student progress, and reporting data (Clarke, & Wildly, 2006). Small, rural leaders were also responsible for handling student misbehavior and developing relationships in the community while representing the entire school (Clarke & Wildly.). These conditions were perceived as stressful by new leaders. Ashton & Duncan (2012) suggested new high school principals seek assistance for dealing with isolation as a new leader, learning the community, and being familiar with management skills.

To deal with isolation, it was suggested that new, rural leaders obtain a mentor. According to Duncan & Stock (2010), the most beneficial areas of mentoring were decision making based on a data, communicating with difficult students and parents, legal aspect of being a leader, and working with finance. Being the only principal in a building could be stressful and may cause the culture of the school to change.

Becoming familiar with the community, new, rural principals took time to master. Communicating with all stakeholders was vital in establishing a strong relationship in a small community. New principals had the responsibility of convincing the community that progress was the goal (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). It was the responsibility of the new principal to build relationships and keep all stakeholders informed about the progress of the school. Building good relationships was a key component of any successful school.

Building strong management skills as a new, rural principal involved sharing the school's vision (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Leaders who encouraged employees by using affective tones to communicate build teams were more proactive (Wu & Wang, 2015). A study conducted by Wu & Wang (2015) concluded that as leaders who emphasized the importance of pro-activity and the use of top-down and bottom-up processes, yielded a positive working environment. Strong management skills involved the principal ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of the school's goals for learning and growing. Time management was also an essential element for building strong management skills (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Prioritizing and planning daily tasks built strong management skills for new principals.

Cities were classified as large, midsize, and small. Areas with a population of 250,000 or more were classified as large cities. Midsize cities were located in urban areas with a population less than 250,000 but greater than or equal 100,000. Populations of less than 100,000 were categorized as small cities (US Department of Education, 2016). In 2012-2013, 15.7 percent of the Georgia's students attended city schools and there are 2, 264 schools in Georgia. The growth of city schools has increased over years into schools with more low socioeconomic and minority students (O'Brine & Kritsonis, 2008). City schools principals may have to address gang violence, drugs, as well as student misconduct (Boutte, 2012); principals are required to handle discipline issues in an effort to maintain a safe school. An increase in poverty may decrease parent involvement, lowers test scores, and eventually low morale among the teachers (Boutte, 2012). City schools may deal with difficulties attaining resources and retaining quality teachers (Boutte, 2012). Increased parent involvement in city schools resulted improvement in grades, attendance, behavior, as well as expectations (Wohlsteller & Smith, 2009); issues that made principals' jobs more difficult to maintain safety and increase student achievement.

Suburban areas were normally located on the outskirts of a primary city. Large suburban areas were inside a city with a population of 250,000 or more people. Midsize suburban areas were areas that consisted of a population less than 250,000 but greater than or equal to 100,000. Small suburban areas consisted of a population of less than 100,000 (US Department of Education, 2016). According to data from the US Department of Education (2016), in the 2012-2103 school year, 45.9 percent of Georgia's students attended a suburban school. For the most part, suburban schools consist of mostly White, middle class students; schools reported to be located in good neighborhoods. Leaders in such suburban schools were unaware of cultural diversity and found it difficult to relate to minority students (Urschel, Tornquist, Miron, & Mathis, 2010). The facilities in these schools also may be of better quality (O'Brine & Kritsonis, 2008). Since students in suburban schools come from more affluent families, principals were not as burdened with low test scores, decreased parent involvement, and behavior issues. A study conducted of three suburban high schools concluded that students from city schools were perceived to be more of a discipline problem and have less parent involvement (Batts, 2012).

Principals in rural, urban, and suburban areas dealt with a different set of issues. Principals in rural areas were required to perform many duties. Since most rural schools were small, principals held many positions. Rural area schools did not usually have the tax basis to handle state and federal job cuts, thus financial issues were prevalent. Principals of urban schools not only deal with low quality resources and buildings with issues; they also experienced behavior issues, drugs, and gang violence. Suburban areas with of mostly affluent; non-minority students did not usually experience gang violence and financial issues (Batts, 2012).

Community Support and Parent Involvement

Schools acted as the cornerstone of communities. The school and the parents were responsible for parental involvement. Parental involvement at home involved parents being

involved with homework and making sure students attended school. Schools were responsible for making sure parents were able to visit the school, to allow parents opportunities to volunteer and including parents in decision-making. (Wohlstetter & Smith, 2009). Therefore, principals played a major role in connecting schools with parents and communities. Positive, effective relationships between schools and communities were imperative in building student achievement (Sailor & McCart, 2014). In a study conducted in 2015, 58 family members in a community were interviewed and discussed the partnerships between families and schools (Haines, Gross, Blue-Banning, Francis, & Turnbull, 2015). Participants noted that schools with positive cultures in turn produced more concerned employees. Families were more likely to have a sense of trust when schools exhibited an atmosphere of care and respect. Effective principals also increased positive relationships between schools and communities. Parents who felt principals cared and held high expectations had increased trust in the school. The availability of parent and family involvement activities also played a major role in community support. Opportunities to visit the school, volunteer, and attend programs at the school created positive relationships for schools and communities as well as for families.

Schools categorized as city schools normally experienced less parental and community involvement than suburban schools (Boutte, 2012). Principals who led in suburban schools experienced more involvement from parents. Often times, these parents are White and middle class (Wohlsteller & Smith, 2009).

Communication within the community was also important. Parents reported that effective communication was beneficial to connecting parents with the school (Haines et al., 2015). Another study conducted in 2014, concluded that rural area parent involvement differed. Since the demographics of rural areas were changing so quickly, principals and school leaders needed

to show sensitivity to changing cultures. There has been an increase in rural areas of migrant families (Lin, Isernhagen, Scherz, & Denner, 2014). Principals were concerned about schools safety and were more aware of individuals who enter the school.

Parent involvement was a vital to the success of students and schools. Parent involvement has been considered a parent responsibility for many years. Parents were held solely responsible for helping students with homework and monitoring their improvement academically (Jeynes, 2010). In order to maintain student achievement, educators needed to assist in the increase of parent involvement by engaging parents, students, and the community in the school (National Network of Partnership School, 2014).

Types of students

A diverse group of students were educated in public schools. Gifted students were determined by performance on ability and achievement tests. Principals monitored gifted teachers to ensure the students are challenged and served in gifted programs. On the other end of the spectrum, school districts also served special needs students. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was enacted (Jones, 2015). This law was amended and was known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law was passed to ensure the equal treatment of students who suffered from handicaps. Students with disabilities were required to receive a free and appropriate public education. Special needs students received appropriate modifications and accommodations provided by district teachers. These needs were discussed and reviewed during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Principals, teachers, and parents worked collaboratively to design a plan of education most beneficial for the student (Jones, 2015). School districts also served students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from low poverty backgrounds qualified for free and reduced meals at

school (Huang, Barnidge, & Kim, 2015). School districts identified students using the income guidelines through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

According to Huang et al., (2015) 20 percent of households with children in the United States did not have sufficient food for children to eat. Students who attended school hungry suffered from poor nutrition, behavior issues, and low achievement. School districts provided meal assistance to students during the school year as well as during the summer. One study found that students who qualified for free and reduced meal during the school year, did not have sufficient food allowances during summer vacation (Huang et al., 2015). As a result, some school districts offered a Summer Food Service Program for low-income students in the summer. Healthy students were more equipped to learn.

Students who exhibited limited English proficiency were also served in school districts. Students classified as English language learners (ELL) increased by 32 percent over past few years in the United States (August, McCardle, Shanahan, & Burns, 2014). Schools were required to provide students with limited English proficiency a quality education in reading instruction. In order to identify students requiring services, students were assessed for English language proficiency. Once students were identified, it was the responsibility of the school to provide differentiated instruction in the area of reading instruction to ensure these students received an appropriate education.

Complexity of tasks and increased job demands

A principal's job involved a vast amount of paper work. Principals signed off on budgets; created reports and, reviewed attendance, cafeteria reimbursements, bus maintenance and schedules, student and teacher schedules, as well as school board reports. The U.S. Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook (2016) indicated there were 240,000 jobs held by elementary, middle, and high school principals. Principals' job responsibilities included stress factors of

stress. For instance, principals usually worked year round with no time off. During the summer, principals prepared for the upcoming school year by making class schedules, supervising maintenance on the building, and hiring faculty and staff as needed.

Principals also maintained discipline records and notes in reference to meetings with parents and students. Brimm's early research on principal stress reported that the cause of stress for principals was directly related to the excessive amount of paper work required (Brimm, 1981). Principals were required to complete a variety of reports for local boards of education as well as for state and federal Departments of Education. Principals expressed that the amount of work expected cannot be completed in one day and excessive work hours were needed to complete all tasks. Early research conducted by Swent and Gmelch (1981), attributed high stress levels among principals. Furthermore, the study attributed the increase in stress levels to high job demands, long work hours, and school activities beyond the normal work day. In a more recent study, 98 percent of school principals surveyed by Sogunro in 2012 identified unrealistic deadlines. Principals' job demands influenced stress perception (Moran, 2014). Each day brought different issues and problems with which principals must deal resolve. Although issues arose, principals were still required to perform all other duties. Seventy percent of principals reported that they were faced with unrealistic deadlines imposed by the superintendent and government policies (Sogunro, 2012). School principals worked evenings and often times, weekends chaperoning sports events, school performances, as well as community activities (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2016). According to Moran (2014), stress levels were elevated when excessive time expectations were place upon principals.

Lack of autonomy

Autonomy is the ability of self-directing freedom (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Local school systems were governed by local policies, state law, and federal law. Principals were also

governed at the district level by superintendents as well as local boards of education. Principals were normally afforded the ability to handle personnel issues, teacher evaluations, student discipline, and limited budget decisions (Eck & Goodwin, 2010). When superintendents governed more, student achievement increased. On the other hand, when principals were given more autonomy there was a decrease in student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). In order to continue to increase student achievement, superintendents need to establish clear goals for building-level principals to follow. Implementing a plan to execute goals to increase student achievement was the responsibility of the principal. Principals were provided with limited powers and adhere to the authority of the superintendent and local boards of education.

Salary and Benefits

In 2014, the national average income for elementary, middle, and high school principals was \$89,540 annually. Nationally, the lowest quartile of principals earned less than \$59,200 per year and the highest quartile earned more than \$129,300 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The median salary for principals in Georgia was approximately \$86,540 per year. There were a total of 240,000 principal positions in the United States in 2014. As a result of student growth, employment in this area was expected to grow 6 percent by 2024 to a need for 254,000 principal positions (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Student growth was expected to increase therefore, requiring more schools and principals. Budgetary restrictions might delay the increase of new building thus; not allowing the hiring of new principals (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

As of June 2015, there were 2,387 schools within 218 school districts in Georgia. In Georgia schools, the principal to student ration was one principal per every 280 students. The national average was one principal to every 295 students (US Department of Education, 2016). Most public school principals were offered health insurance, teacher's retirement, sick leave,

disability insurance, as well as other supplemental insurances. Principal duties differed depending on the district and the size of the district. Larger districts had other personnel to handle issues such as instruction, curriculum, hiring, data analysis, and professional development. Smaller schools were at more of a disadvantage and principals sometimes performed these duties (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Principals also worked longer hours chaperoning sports events, field trips, and attending meetings.

Accountability

Principals were held accountable for the performance of students on state mandated tests as well as many other indicators such as attendance. Accountability encompassed a school's performance on state mandated assessments. Georgia designed a new system of testing called Georgia Milestone tests. Students in grades 3-12 participated in these annual tests. The Georgia Milestone tests were comprehensive summative tests that measured how well a student has mastered the state curriculum (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Students were tested in social studies, math, science, and language arts. The tests were newly designed and contained open-ended questions.

Subject areas that did not require a state mandated Georgia Milestone test were assigned Student Learning Objectives (SLO). Student learning objectives were district created standards that measured a student's knowledge and progress by administering a pre and post test. These test results as well as other indicators were formulated to develop a school's college and career readiness performance index score (CCRPI). Principals were responsible for the achievement of the entire school. Their decisions impacted students, parents, and staff as well as the community. The fear of failure caused principals to have doubts about decision-making and achieving goals. Principals referenced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and its demands as stressors (Sogunro, 2012). The NCLB Act of 2001 set the stage for state-mandated tests.

Principals did not want to see their school on a failing school list. Therefore, principals felt more obligated to ensure that student learning was taking place and that test scores were high.

Principals worked to maintain student learning to ensure acceptable CCRPI scores for schools and districts. In a study conducted by Lyons & Algozzine in 2006, accountability increased a principal's leadership role in the area of:

1. Hiring qualified teachers;
2. Assigning teacher instruction levels or grade level;
3. Designing schedules for the school;
4. Dealing with parents, students, and teacher stress;
5. Examining student success and teacher instruction;
6. Ensuring that the curriculum aligned with state testing;
7. Addressing the needs of low achieving students;
8. Purchasing instructional material to meet the needs of students
9. Improving professional development for teachers; and
10. Affording students the opportunity for tutoring.

Instructional Leadership

Principals' roles in schools changed over the years (Boyland, 2011). Changes in the economy and political issue impacted the shift in principals' roles in most public schools (Boyland, 2011). Student learning and achievement was the main focus of principals (Marzano, 2012). As more emphasis was placed on student achievement, principal became more familiar with the standards and assessment expectations in the classroom. Teacher and principal accountability forced principals to become more engaged in curriculum, teaching strategies, and standardized testing (Fink & Silverman, 2014).

The lack of professional development and time impaired the inability to interact with teachers and prohibited principals from being actively involved instructional leaders. Principals in 39 school districts in several different cities received assistance from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to set goals that support principals as instructional leaders (Fink & Silverman, 2014). This program emphasized assisting principals to become more effective instructional leaders (Fink & Silverman).

Three action goals were developed as a result of this study (Fink & Silverman, 2014). The first goal involved creating a shared vision of principals as instructional leaders. By streamlining the principals' job description, more emphasis could be placed on specific tasks. The purpose of this goal was to allow schools to create and share the idea that principals were at the forefront of instructional leadership. A set of leadership power standards was created to emphasize common practices (Fink & Silverman, 2014). Principal leadership was pivotal in the success of teachers and students. The next goal in this program was created to allow schools in this district to develop a support system for principals that would allow them to become instructional leaders. This goal involved providing principals with the necessary professional development to be successful instructional leaders. New positions were created to support principals in becoming better instructional leaders (Fink & Silverman, 2014). School leaders were held accountable for teachers providing quality instruction therefore, districts were held accountable for ensuring principals are knowledgeable. Lastly, it was necessary for principals to be afforded time to become effective instructional leaders (Fink & Silverman, 2014). A district in Hillsborough, Florida developed a leadership team. The goals of the leadership team were to provide the system with instructional coaches and teacher leaders to support the principals. Principals had more time and support to focus on curriculum and instructional practices (Fink &

Silverman, 2014). By providing principals with support and professional development, principals were able to become more effective instructional leaders.

The new teacher evaluation system in Georgia, Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), also added to the workload of public school principals. This new evaluation system was implemented in Georgia as a result of Georgia's Race to the Top grants (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). As the new system of teacher evaluation was implemented, the U.S. Department of Education discussed concerns about the effectiveness of the new measures (Klein, 2014). The management of the new teacher and leader evaluation systems was a concern. The implementation of the new evaluation systems was developed although unpleasant concerns were voiced. Fifty percent of teacher effectiveness was determined by student growth on state-mandated assessments. All Georgia public school systems were then required to evaluate teachers using TKES. Principal visits into teacher classroom increased tremendously. A study conducted in Tacoma, Washington indicted elementary principals experienced more stress because of the new teacher evaluation system, The Teacher Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP) passed by legislators in 2010. TPEP created a more in-depth and timely evaluation of teachers in Washington (Chaudhuri, 2016) with the following processes held each year (Georgia Department of Education, 2016):

1. Orientation;
2. Familiarization;
3. Teacher Self Assessment;
4. Pre-Evaluation Conference;
5. Formative Assessment Process to include two cycles of: two 10-minute walkthroughs and one 30 minute formative;

6. Mid-Year conference; and
7. Summative Conference.

It was the responsibility of the principal to evaluate teachers using the outlined standards in Georgia. The increase in classroom visits and documentation of evaluations increased principal workloads across the state. This teacher evaluation process along with student surveys and student achievement and growth determined teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

School leaders, principals and superintendents, were required to evaluate other leaders. The Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) added another evaluation process. This system involved the following protocol each academic year (Georgia Department of Education, 2016):

1. Orientation;
2. Familiarization;
3. Leader Self-Assessment;
4. Performance Goal Setting;
5. Pre-Evaluation Conference;
6. Formative Assessment;
7. Mid Year Conference;
8. Summative Performance Evaluation; and
9. Summative Conference.

These activities in addition to school climate surveys, student attendance, and retention of effective teachers determined principals' success as leaders. The new evaluation system placed an increased emphasis on student achievement as part of the principal evaluation process. In Georgia, 70 percent of a principal's evaluation was determined by student performance on state-mandated assessments and student growth (Superville, 2014).

Finances

Budgets for school systems were defined as the monies and revenue received from local, state, and federal funds to be used for operating and maintaining the school system. School budgets included expenses and proposed expenses within local, state, and federal guidelines. School budgets were the catalyst for ensuring students and faculty members were successful. The United States Constitution left the responsibility of public education, K-12, in the hands of the state government (US Department of Education, 2015). Principals supervised the fiscal operations of the school system in a manner that addressed instructional needs as well as student achievement (Marzano, Carbaugh, Grego, & Toth, 2012). According to Petrick (n.d.), principals' budget responsibilities included:

1. Creating and maintaining school budgets;
2. Managing school fundraisers;
3. Keeping account of how school revenue is expended;
4. Ensuring teacher salary is accurate and earmarked; and
5. Spending funds as outlined by local, state, and federal guidelines.

Public schools received funding at the local, state, and federal levels. This three-tiered system included numerous guidelines. Federal funding provided to public schools was initiated in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Federal funds were used to assist schools and provide supplemental funding (US Department of Education, 2015). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was reauthorized to increase student achievement and to decrease the achievement gap. Most federal funding was linked to student achievement through state-mandated tests. Additionally, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act. This act was developed in an effort to decrease the federal government's involvement in

curriculum, testing, and standards, and teacher evaluation systems that ultimately impacted budgets (US Department of Education, 2015).

Public school received funds from state education department for teacher salaries as well as per pupil funding. Schools received Quality Basic Education (QBE) funds using a state formula based on data received from the local schools' student enrollment. This data determined how much money was allocated to each school system. These funds were allocated into specific areas of use by the use. The principal as well as other key personnel were responsible for adhering to state guidelines to expend funds (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). School also received local funds and allocated those funds appropriately as well. Local sources of income for public schools were collected through local property taxes as well as fundraising. Since the recession of 2008, state-funding for public schools has decreased (Rich, 2014). Subsequently, local systems turned to increased fundraising to supplement the loss of funds. A school district in California asked parents to contribute money through the use of an annual auction and telethon (Rich, 2014). The district used these funds to finance cultural and sports related courses for students. Other sources of fundraising include: bake sales, programs and games for an admission fee, magazine sales, and donut sales. Other sources of fundraising for schools include Donors Choose, Adopt-a-Classroom, and Digital Wish (Bock, 2012). These digital sources of fundraising allowed potential donors to view proposed classes or projects and opt to donate funds (Bock, 2012). Other systems utilized their local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to organize fundraising efforts (Bock, 2012).

Budgetary complaints appeared to be a common stressor for all principals. Principals were also concerned that lack of funds would require teacher layoffs (Sogunro, 2012). Principals attempted to offset budgetary deficits by applying for grants. During the most recent economic

downturn, budgetary cuts impacted public schools tremendously. A study conducted by Boyland in 2011 identified funding difficulties as a cause of stress for principals. Principals were forced to apply for grants to assist in the loss of federal and state funds. Grants for such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), teacher-induction programs, and applied learning programs were being sought to substitute for the loss of other funds in public schools (Klein, 2014). In a study of school leaders in 2012 by Sogunro (2012), 85 percent principals surveyed identified budget issues as stressful. Misuse of government funds carried serious consequences. Principals were responsible for ensuring all funds were allocated appropriately.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal proposed a new school funding formula to cut \$460 million from Georgia school districts. The proposed new may also decrease Georgia public school transportation funding by \$180 million. This decrease in funding places a strain on local systems who must make up the difference. Small, rural districts with low millage rates were at the greatest risk. In a study conducted by Sogunro (2012), principals reported that approximately 85 percent of budgetary issues impacted their stress levels.

Public relations

Public relations were defined as the process to encourage the public to develop an understanding for or good will toward a person, firm, or institutions (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2011), and may be interpreted as positive or negative. Negative public relations involved acceptance or not being accepted by the local community. Negative public relations were defined as issues that make the school appear to be negligent or at fault. Often times, principals were the center of negativity from the media. Media outlets misconstrue information and over reacted to situations at school (Sogunro, 2012). These acts negatively impact the school as well as the principal. After a negative media incident, principals dealt with the aftermath. Sixty percent of principals in this study indicated that dealing with negativity in

the media caused elevated stress levels (Sogunro, 2012). The news media industry was quick to announce negative issues such as school violence, teacher misconduct, and failing schools.

Dealing with negative public relations in rural areas was especially unique. In 2011, approximately 31 percent of the schools in the United States of America were in rural areas (US Department of Education, 2011). In small towns, the principal were usually a catalyst to the community and scrutinized. Administrative staff was small and the support system was small. With the introduction of social media, negative incidents were public instantaneously.

Social stressors involved prejudice and discrimination. This type of exposure enticed individuals to succumb to certain pressures. Those who used social media expect others to quickly respond and their voice can always be heard or seen. Social media such as Facebook, twitter, and Instagram are breeding grounds for negative issues to be discussed. The creation of technology may negativity impact schools. Camera phones were used continuously to record school fights or disruptions. Media reports on these issues without knowledge of the entire event having a negative impact on schools. Principals were left to defend themselves and the schools against the negative communications.

Parent and teacher conflict

Conflict with parents can be defined from many aspects. The definition of conflict according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2011) was to fight or battle or an antagonistic state or action. Conflict was to be anticipated in any situation. Successful management of conflict in schools included collaboration, compromise, and accommodating (Ghaffar, 2010). Conflict in schools required quick, effective managerial skills from leaders. Poor management of conflict in schools impacted productivity, negatively lowered morale, increases continued conflict, and created a foundation for inappropriate conduct (Ghaffar, 2010).

Often times, parents did not agree with school policies and student punishment as it related to students. For example, some schools do not allow students to possess cell phones and parents came irate when cell phones were confiscated. Principals were obligated to follow school policy and principals had to deal with angry and upset parents.

In a study conducted by Sogunro in 2012, unpleasant relationships and people conflict was the greatest source of principal stress. Since principals worked with parents, students, and faculty, chances were increased that they would encounter a negative experience with someone. One-hundred percent of the participants of this study of Connecticut principals stated they have experienced at least one unpleasant relationship. Principals were involved in external and internal relationships. Ninety-two percent of the principals were also concerned about personal conflict among teachers and between teacher and principals (Sogunro, 2012). Principals also expressed concern that adults did not get over conflicts as easily as children got over conflicts. This made it hard for all relationships.

Principals dealt with conflict when students were disciplined as well. This conflict was usually with the parents of the student. Parents often sought compromise while principals enforced the discipline code. Fifty percent of the principals stated that parents of special needs students were most troublesome (Sogunro, 2012). These particular parents tended to threaten to sue schools and principals. Lareau and Munoz (2012) reported that parent involvement increased conflict. The study identified the following causes of parent and principal conflict:

1. Different levels of priorities;
2. Parents wanted a warm, sociable environment; and principals preferred a more organized, non-hazard, bureaucratic atmosphere;
3. Authority; and

4. Lack of communication.

Teacher and principal conflict often arose when teachers felt decisions have been made that are not in their best interest. Teachers also became upset if they disagreed with evaluation ratings. Principals were also expected to deal with teachers who resisted change (Knight, 2009). In an effort to maintain good relationships, teacher input was considered by principals (Moran, 2014). Teachers and principals who valued relationships through collaboration decreased unwanted conflict (Flannery, 2011). Principals could reprimand and remove teachers who were not performing at a satisfactory level. Superintendents also developed unpleasant relationships with principals. Because principals lack authority over the district, they sometimes disagreed with the superintendent's decisions. Early research conducted by Munnely's in the 70s identified varying perceptions of duties, different values, curriculum, grading, and academic freedom. These areas of conflict were still present in schools. Principals' decisions impacted teachers directly and therefore; conflict was inevitable (Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012). In a study conducted in 2012 by Salleh & Adulpakdee, principals identified unclear define job duties as the main source of conflict between principals and teachers. The participants in this study also agreed that different working styles rarely caused principals and teachers to disagree. However, in this same study, teachers agreed that different perceptions were the major cause of conflict between principals and teachers. Communication was rated the lowest cause of conflict by teachers. The study concluded conflict was present between principals and teachers when there were different perceptions at a meetings, form of job dissatisfaction, and misunderstandings in communication (Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012).

A principal's job required development of relationships with teachers, parents, students, community members, as well with other principals in the district. Developing effective

relationships was a vital aspect of a principals' job description. Principals identified unpleasant relationships and conflicts with people as a major cause of their stress (Sogunro, 2012). Dealing with conflict was a difficult task for principals. Resolving conflict required time and a consideration from all stakeholders. In a study conducted on 52 principals in Connecticut, 92 percent of the interviewed principals identified people conflict as a leading cause of their stress (Sogunro, 2012). Relationships and conflict between teachers and principals as well as between teachers and parents were also identified in this study as stressful. Principals normally dealt with student misbehavior and contacted parents in reference to student punishment. On occasion, teachers were not satisfied with student punishment and conflict arose with administration. Parents often times became infuriated with the principal's decisions about punishment, dress codes, and schedules. Ninety percent of the principals shared experiences in relation to unsatisfied, furious parents (Sogunro, 2012).

Discipline

School discipline has been defined as a two-tier process by Bear (2010). The two-tier process included approaching school discipline as managing student behavior and developing student self-discipline (Bear, 2010). Managing student behavior through the use of a disciplinary code of conduct impacted how students behave. The use of punishment through a code of conduct and consequences was essential to maintain student behavior and order. Maintaining school discipline was important to ensuring the safety of students and teachers (Mayworm & Sharkey, 2014). Research conducted by Predy, McIntosh, Frank, & Fritchcock in 2014 identified the following as reasons for office discipline referrals:

1. Defiance/disrespect;
2. Disruption;
3. Fighting;

4. Inappropriate language;
5. Being tardy;
6. Bullying;
7. Dress code violation;
8. Theft;
9. Technology (cell phones); and
10. Property damage.

Student behavior impacted the school climate. Negative student behavior impacted the classroom environment because the teacher was unable to teach. Students who misbehaved impeded the functionality of the classroom and others rights to learn. Effective disciplinary practices were essential to promote learning and to have an orderly classroom (Mayworm & Sharkey, 2014). Teachers spent a vast amount of time attempting to diffuse misbehavior and student learning was in jeopardy.

Teachers were required to inform principals of the misbehavior by sending the disruptive students to the office. Principals were responsible for investigating the event and assigning the punishment for the offense. After students were punished, principals usually notified parents. Parents did not always agree with the assigned punishment. Therefore, principals were subject to unpleasant news from parents. In an effort to clarify the situation, principals explained the situation and ultimately defended the decision that had been made. These events added stress to the principal's job. In a study conducted by Uba-Mbibi and Nwamuo in 2013, principals identified student discipline as the number one cause of principal stress.

Safe schools

Safe schools are thought to be institutions that encourage continual learning, appropriate behavior, and safety from physical, mental, or verbal abuse. Safe schools held high behavior

expectations as well as strong academic achievement from its students. Positive relationships were developed between student, parents, teachers, principals, and the community. In an effort to keep schools safe, the strong parent and student commitment and involvement was required. Principals were charged with making sure all stakeholders perceived the school environment as safe (Marzano, Carbaugh, Greg, & Toth, 2012). Maring & Koblinsky (2013) commented that schools needed to do the following to develop safer schools:

1. Establish clear expectations for student behavior;
2. Consistently enforce school code of conduct;
3. Promote safety;
4. Implement peer mediation programs; and
5. Provide professional counselors when needed.

School crises were not predictable and principals were required to act quickly. Events such as fire, violence among students, bomb threats, and students in possession of drugs or firearms, and fatal accidents were just a few incidents that contributed to principal stress. Principals need to be prepared during a time of crisis. It was not beneficial for a principal to panic during such times (Sogunro, 2012). Inner city schools experienced gang violence at school as well as in the community where the schools are located. Violence in communities led to violence in schools (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). The violence in the streets and communities found its way into the schools. Schools became victims of fights, gun violence, and bullying. In most cases, these acts of violence stemmed from activities in the community. In wake of all of the school shootings, principals across the nation were concerned about violence erupting within schools. Principals were held responsible for student safety during all school-related events. The responsibility of keeping students safe applies to principals during the school day as well as

sporting events, parent conferences/meeting, school plays, and other school-sponsored events. Therefore, principals were held responsible for keeping schools and students safe on the way to school on the buses, once they were on school property, and as students travel to and from school sponsored activities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) outlined the following acts that threaten school safety:

1. Bullying;
2. Any form of physical fighting or harm;
3. Gang violence and fights;
4. Use of electronic devices in an aggressive manner; and
5. Use of weapons (guns, knives, etc).

School violence impacted all stakeholders (students, teachers, principals, parents, and the community) as well as the entire learning process (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The latest educational statistics in reference to public school across the United States of America indicated the following:

1. 88 percent of public schools were compelled to control access to the building by locking the doors during school
2. More public school than private school teachers reported that they were victims of physical threats
3. 39 schools imposed at least one serious disciplinary action against a student
4. The rate of violent victimizations at school (37 per 1000) was much greater than the rate of violent victimization away from schools for students (33 per1000);

5. There were 1,420,900 nonfatal victimizations at school among students 12 to 18 years old and 966,000 violent victimizations in 2014
6. Sixteen percent of the public schools reported gang activity at school and 2 percent reported that there was some cult activity as well
7. Twenty-three percent of the public school indicated that students experienced some form of bullying dialing or weekly
8. Teachers indicated that student discipline interrupted their teaching
9. Twenty-five percent of students in grades 9-12 had been involved in a physical fight

In an effort to ensure student achievement, principals faced a wide range of stressful events. Principals were also impacted by the stressfulness of the occupation and different studies have outlined what factors cause principals stress. Table 4 indicates Brimm’s historical study in 1981 that identified the top 10 stressors of principals. Table 4 also includes a study by Krzemienski (2012) and Sogunro (2012) that highlighted the mental and physical impacts of stress on elementary school principals. Wells & Klocko (2015) indicated the impact of teacher leadership in the reduction of principal stress.

Table 4 Studies Related Causes of Principal Stress and Impact

<u>Author/Date</u>	<u>Article/Book/Study</u>	<u>Analaysis</u>
Brimm, J. 1981	Stress demands	Top 10 stressors of principals in Tennessee
Krzemienski, J. 2012	The impact of stress on elementary school principals and their effective coping mechanisms	Examined the perceived mental and physical impact of work-related stress elementary principals
Sogunro, O. 2012	Stress in school administration: Coping tips for principals	Mental and physical impact stress; Causes of stress for principals
Wells, C.	Can teacher leadership reduce	Causes of principal stress

Klocko, B. 2015 principal stress

Stress in Other Occupations

According to Adams (2013), enlisted military personnel and military generals were among the most stressful occupations of 2013. Military jobs were more stressful because of the frequency of travel and public scrutiny; military personnel had very little control over how they spent their time away from work. Soldiers endured a high level of physical requirements in boot camp and performed during times of war. Because military occupations required soldiers to risk their own lives, it was the most stressful job of 2013. A study conducted in Brazil indicated that 35.8 percent of the 53 military police officers surveyed experienced some level of stress (Santana, Gomes, De Marchi, Girondoli, de Lima Rosado, Rosado, & Andrade, 2012). Officers with higher rankings such as corporals experienced even higher levels of stress. Those in this study who experienced stress also suffered from health conditions such as: overweight, chronic diseases, as well as fat accumulation. Other stressful jobs of 2013 were: firefighter, airline pilot, police officer, corporate executive, public relations, and taxi cab driver (Adams). The least stressful job of 2014 was audiologist (Adams, 2014). An audiologist diagnosed and treated hearing problems. The second least stressful job is hair stylist. These jobs were less stressful because these professionals were able to own their own business and made their own work schedules (Smith, 2014). Other professions highlighted in 2014 as involving less stress were tenured professors at universities, jeweler, and seamstress/tailor.

In a study conducted by Bedu-Addo in 2013, the effect of work stress on family interactions of bankers did depend on gender. The findings of this study indicated that both work stress and age impacted married bankers' interactions at home with their families. Stressors such as increased workloads and dealing with traffic as well as age impacted bankers' behavior at

home. The researcher suggested that banks should make special allowances for married bankers. By closing on time, workers did not work late thus decreasing stress.

In a study conducted by Page and Jacobs (2011), police officers identified factors such as organization structure, work environment, court system, local government, and personal matters as stressors. Officers identified supervisors and shift work as some of the stressors on the job. Job performance rated as the number one cause of stress for police officers. Rural officers tended to experience different levels of stress as compared to urban police officers. Police officers in the rural areas of the country identified the following issues as most stressful: lack of funds, insufficient training, and out-dated equipment and technology, lack of proper resources, and fewer colleagues (Page & Jacobs). Rural officers experienced a variety of levels of job-related stress and according to the study; the officers use a variety of mechanisms to cope. Officers tend to talk to other officers about stress levels (Page & Jacobs). Many officers tended to keep stressful issues to themselves when they were off-duty. The study concluded that many officers in rural areas desired to meet with a therapist to discuss stress related issues. The officers also indicated that there was a need for more counseling services in the areas in which they worked and lived. Because counseling services were limited, the researcher recommended that rural police stations should create a system of peer support as an option for officers.

Judges within the judicial system also experienced stress. Stress was related to dealing with lawyers. Judges indicated that working with attorneys and maintaining legal order within the courtroom caused some level of stress. The judges pointed out that regular exercise, sufficient sleep, control of the docket, avoiding guilt, and keeping current in the law were mechanisms to use to manage job-related stress in the judicial arena. In a study conducted by Tsai and Chan in 2011, after the financial crisis of 2008, financial workers experienced higher

levels of stress because of the fear of layoffs, increased experiences of undesirable change, and fear of making mistakes. On the other hand, lawyers indicated a higher expectation of rewards and less exhaustion. The impact of the financial crisis caused lawyers' personal burnout to decrease with the increase of reward, and their work-related burnout decreased with the decrease in psychological demand (Tsai & Chan).

Nurses and health care professionals signified job demands, social support, effort, over-commitment, rewards, and ways of coping as occupational stressors (Mark & Smith, 2011). Nurses had higher rates of physical illness, mortality, psychiatric admissions, and suicide occurrences. A study conducted in Uganda indicated that nurses who worked for public or private facilities experienced stress in different ways (Nabirye, Brown, Pryor, and Maples, 2011). Nurses were also exposed to many other stressors such as: conflict with doctors, discrimination, high workload, dealing with death, patients and their families. This study indicated that 45 percent of nurses believed that stress directly influenced their health.

Teachers also experienced a tremendous amount of stress. Increased teacher stress was been identified as the underlying cause of public school teacher turnover (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013). High levels of stress ultimately impacted teacher performance. Teachers were exposed to a variety of stressors including: increased accountability, behavior issues, and parent conflicts. In the study conducted by Flook et. al, in 2013, teachers perceived the following as sources of stress: work load, misbehaving students, time issues, and internal job-related issues. It was common for teachers' stress levels to be influenced by environmental activities and their perceptions of these events (Hanif, Tariq, & Nadeem, 2011).

Principal Evaluation Systems

In August of 2010, the state of Georgia won a \$33 million dollar Race to the Top grant awarded by the federal government (Klein, 2014). With the acceptance of this grant, the State of

Georgia was required to implement a new evaluation system for its leaders and teachers. This new system was based on leader performance, student test data, student attendance and other variables. Many key political positions changed shortly after this. Georgia elected a new governor, Nathan Deal as well as a new State School Superintendent, John Barge. Georgia was also prompted to change its curriculum standards from Georgia Performance Standards to Common Core Standards. The state was also required to amend its state-mandated assessments. The new evaluation systems, Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) for leaders and Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) were introduced to all of Georgia's public school principals by the end of the 2013-2014 school term.

This new evaluation system linked principals to student achievement by embedding student performance into its system (Superville, 2014). In Georgia, 50 percent of a principal's evaluation score was derived from student performance and the other 50 percent was linked to their job performance based on a set of standards. As principal roles changed, this model was not proven to be effective (Superville, 2014). Principals were required to meet with parents, attended a variety of meeting, acted as instructional leaders for teachers and monitored the day-to-day functions of the school. This model proven ineffective because the evaluators had not been trained appropriately; the process was burdensome and difficult to comprehend (Superville, 2014). In other areas and cities such as, Miami-Dade County, it was suggested that other variables such as: school visits, opinions of others who worked with the principal and surveys should be included in the principal's evaluation (Superville, 2014). A study conducted in the Metro-Atlanta area in 2015 concluded that principals were effective with or without LKES (Thomas, 2015). Principals within 83 schools in the Metro-Atlanta area indicated that LKES was

ineffective in increasing their professional growth. Principals who participated in this study perceived the new leader evaluation aligned with their daily job duties.

Positive Stress

Cora (2010) concluded stress is not always caused by negativity. Positive stress is usually required to enhance performance under pressure (Yang, 2010). Positive stress was known as eustress (Awan, 2011). Historical research, Selye (1974) described eustress as stress not categorized as bad. This form of stress eventually led to positive outcomes. The body naturally adapted to eustress and increased the ability to be effective. Responses to stress can be triggered by positive events such as a principal's school earning high test scores or the principal has to figuring out how to continue the improvement or receiving unexpected money and having to determine how to spend it.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was based on Seyle's initial introduction stress in the 1930s. Seyle's general adaptation syndrome theory defined stress as the reactions that caused undesired pressures or strains on humans (Seyle, 1936). His research suggested different types of stimuli or stressors caused stress on individuals. The response based theory was the basis of Seyle's research. Seyle also concluded that stress was essentially presented in three stages: alarm reaction, resistance, and exhaustion. In the alarm stage, the body initiated a response to the stressor (Seyle). During the resistance stage, the body reacted and adapted to the stress (Seyle). The final stage, exhaustion stage, transpired when the body experienced the stressor for an extended amount of time (Seyle). Seyle's also highlighted learning to adapt to the stressors was very similar to coping with stress.

Principals were leaders in the building who deal with a variety of factors that required a large amount of time (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Principals were also expected to handle

unforeseen issues as they arose throughout the day (Kimbrough & Burkett). Kimbrough and Burkett discussed the job of principals as being instruction and curriculum leaders, managing students, maintaining community relations, personnel, the overall organization of the school, and the maintenance of the buildings. Over the years, the role of principals has changed and become more rigorous (Boyland, 2011). Changes in the economy and political issues also impacted the shift in principals' roles in most public school systems (Boyland). Public school systems were constantly impacted by budget cuts as well as federal, local, and state mandates and policies. According to Lyons & Algozzine (2006), principals' roles included hiring teachers, designing schedules, communicating with parents, teachers, and students, curriculum alignment, student success, being financial leaders, and providing professional development for teachers. In addition, school principals' responsibility included maintaining budgets, communicating with parents, preserving school safety, handling student disciplinary issues as well as conducting teacher evaluations and providing professional development (Strauss, 2013). The role of principal changed and principals were expected to act as instructional leaders in their buildings (Blaydes, 2004). Instead of acting as managers, principals were responsible for knowing and understanding the curriculum (Smith, 2013).

The Managerial Stress Cycle developed by Gmelch in 1989 included four stages. The first stage was the demand or stressors placed on the individuals. The second stage involved the perception of the stress. The third stage included the response as psychological or physiological. Lastly, the Managerial Stress Cycle involved the consequences or impact of stress and stressors. In a study of principals in Connecticut, principal stress was more prevalent and many factors attributed to the stress (Sogunro, 2012). Ninety-six percent of the 52 Connecticut principals reported experiencing stress related to work (Sogunro). Principals experienced stress because of

the many duties they were expected to conduct on a daily basis (Sogunro). According to Brimm (2001), principals' stress was a part of day to day life for school principals. Brimm conducted a study in 1981 and reported complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and politics, decision making, parent and school conflict resolution, evaluating the performance of staff members, interruptions by telephone calls, completing paperwork on time, public approval and financial support, working outside of normal school hours, not making progress at work, and excessive work load as major stressors for principals in Tennessee. A study of Oregon principals by Swent and Gmelch (1977) indicated administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, making decisions that conflicted with personal beliefs and massive expectations as major sources of stress for principals. A study of Connecticut principals identified the major causes of stress for these principals as unpleasant relationships, time constraints, crises at school, policy/mandates, budgetary constraints, fear of failure based on accountability, and negative publicity/media (Sogunro).

Stress impacted principals socially, physically, and mentally (Sogunro, 2012). The severity of the impact of the stress led principals to change professions, retire early, or experience health issues (Sogunro, 2012). Principals' jobs influenced stress in their lives. Principals' job duties in Boyland's study in 2011, reported job related stress among elementary school principals in Indiana. Seventy-nine percent of the 193 Indiana principals within 79 Indiana districts reported they were experiencing more stress than in other years (Boyland). Sixty-nine percent of the participants in the Indiana study indicated a negative impact from the increased job stress specifically health issues (Boyland). The Indiana principals also indicated the job stress prevented them from having time to exercise. Because job responsibilities were so time consuming, Indiana principals indicated feeling overwhelmed, a lack of time to be

instructional leaders of the building, working more hours, and health issues, The majority (92.1%) of the participants the Indiana study experienced medium to high levels of stress on the job (Boyland, 2011). In Indiana 7.8% of principals reported perceived low job stress, 53.6% reported moderate job stress; and 38.5% reported high job stress. Boyland's study of Indiana principals also indicated as principals continue to experience higher levels of stress physical and mental abilities may also be impacted (Boyland). Principals in the study conducted by Sogunro in Connecticut identified the impact of stress as feeling tired and not being in control of what happens during the day. The Connecticut principals also indicated lack of sleep, health issues, worrying, depression, and resigning from the position.

The success and safety of the school depended upon the principal (Kimbrough, & Burkett, 1990). Principals were held responsible for all aspects of the school including finance, personnel, transportation, meals, as well as retaining qualified personnel (Kimbrough & Burkett). Principals were expected to manage and maintain the school building as well as evaluate teachers, manage budgets, handle personnel issues, communicate with parents, teachers, students, and the community as well as serve as instructional leaders (Leone, Warnimont, Zimmerman, 2009; Smith, 2013; &). The job duties and variety of role expectations created stress for principals and ultimately impacted the climate of the school (Boyland, 2011). Principals were managers and instructional leaders who performed a variety of job duties and the increase in job demands as well as accountability caused stress. Principal stress impacted the principals mentally, socially, and physically. Principals who are stressed deal with depression, health problems, are overworked, incapable of performing duties as instructional leaders, retire early, and leave the field of education.

Summary

Principals have high stress jobs as do policemen, medical workers, fire fighters, and soldiers. Principal responsibilities included school operations and building management as well as building student achievement; demands on principals rarely stop. Principals had long work hours with school sponsored-activities after hours, weekends, holidays, and summer. Stress for school leaders was constant and chronic. A majority of the research has shown principals experienced some level of stress, usually unavoidable in the arena of public education. While experiencing high level of stress, principals concluded stress was just a part of the job.

The literature review presented an overview of principal stress. The literature also addressed the various causes of principal stress, stress management, as well as coping mechanisms. Additionally the literature included information on stressors particular to school principals as well as outcomes of stress.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The researcher collected data about principal perceived stress and principal perceived stressors in Georgia public elementary schools and to investigated the relationship between perceived stressors and the impact on principals. Stress was a concern for principals as they attempted to keep schools safe and increase student achievement. The researcher investigated the causes of principal stress and determined the impact of these stressors on principals. In a study conducted by Moran (2014), all of the participating principals indicated they experienced some level of perceived stress.

According to Robbins, Powers, and Burgess (2013), stress was described as brief or prolonged. Overtime stress caused physical as well as emotionally issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety. Changes in local, state, and federal policies had an impact on principal job responsibilities. Constant government mandates, accountability, discipline, and financial constraints were also determined factors of principal stress. Moran's 2014 study of perceived principal stress in southeast Louisiana reported the negative implications of stress as depression, burnout, as well as anxiety.

Research Questions

Principals experienced stress on a daily basis as they continued to make efforts to increase student achievement. In an effort to determine the relationship of perceived principal stress and its impact on principals, the following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent did elementary principals in Georgia public schools perceive stress?
2. What were the perceived stressors of elementary principals in Georgia public schools?

3. What were the perceived impacts of stressors on elementary principals in Georgia public schools?

Research Design

The researcher employed a mixed method approach. The quantitative component was comparative and the qualitative was descriptive. The researcher analyzed principals' perceived stress, identified principals' stressors, and determined the impact of these stressors on principals. Pioneers such as Blaise Pascal introduced the idea of probability in the late 1600s. His research along with Karl Pearson and William Sealy Gossett designed the foundations for quantitative research (Lomax & Hahs-Vaugh, 2012). Quantitative research involved numerical data analyzed mathematically using a pre-determined method and is used to discuss an aspect of interest (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). In quantitative research, variables were characteristics that were observed and analyzed (Lomax & Hahs-Vaugh, 2012). The comparative relationships between these variables were researched and analyzed (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative researchers supported a positivist paradigm and focus on control setting that ensured internal validity (Clark & Creswell, 2008).

Quantitative research allowed the researcher to use data to quantify variables such as behaviors and attitudes through surveys and observations. Quantitative researchers controlled factors that impeded upon the study and felt the phenomena was not connected to the participants in the study. There was limited personal contact with participants and the studies were usually generalized to a population (Gay, et al., 2006). The researcher in a quantitative study was usually impartial and objective (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative researchers explored deductive logic and reasoning usually focused on a particular theory or conceptual framework (Teddlie & Tashkkori, 2009).

On the other hand, qualitative research was more about actions and not necessarily about behavior (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The data collected during qualitative research was usually through artifacts, observations, documents, and interviews. The data collected was analyzed and presented in narrative form. Qualitative researchers usually followed the constructivism point of view and focused on external validity by highlighting natural settings (Clark & Creswell, 2008). Constructivists support the idea that the researcher determined the meaning of the research on an individual and group basis (Teddlie & Tashkkori, 2009). Constructivism involved the idea that human intelligence played an integral role in understanding an idea or theory (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Teddlie & Tshkkori 2009). Data collected was transcribed and documented to create themes to summarize the results of the study.

Qualitative data was collected through interviews, observations, and focus groups. Qualitative researchers were able to make connections with the phenomenon being investigated. According to Yilmaz (2013) qualitative research determines relationships in a setting while involving the researcher's own predispositions. Inductive logic was used during qualitative research studies (Teddlie & Tashkkori, 2009). Researchers used inductive analysis to develop themes and patterns from the collected research (Teddlie & Tashkkori, 2009). A major strength of qualitative research focused on events that occur naturally in ordinary settings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

A mixed method approach involved the combination of quantitative and quality methods (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Teddlie & Tshkkori 2009). Researchers who conducted mixed method studies focused on the narrative and numeric aspects of the research (Teddlie & Tshkkori 2009). Mixed methodologists employed the pragmatic approach by supporting the idea of using the research method that is most appropriate for the study (Clark & Creswell, 2008).

The use of the mixed method approach provided the researcher the opportunity to gather data in a variety of forms. The researcher was able to acquire concrete quantitative data as well as exploratory data through the use of qualitative data (Teddlie & Tashkkori, 2009). The mixed methods approach provided a variety of views and ensured stronger conclusions.

The researcher used a mixed method design during this study. A mixed method approach allowed the researcher to gather numeric and narrative data to identify perceived stressors and its impact on principals. The use of a demographic survey provided the researcher with personal data and about job experience of elementary principals in Georgia public schools. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain more in-depth narrative data to identify how stressors impact principals. The numerical data was also analyzed to determine perceived stress as well as well as identified relationships. A perceived stress survey and identification of stressors survey was analyzed to that determined perceived principal stress and major stressors. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data provided the researcher with a rich knowledge and understanding about principal stress, stressors, and the impact on principals in Georgia elementary principals.

Population

The population of the study included currently certified, employed public elementary principals in 4 southwest Georgia counties. Each district superintendent was sent a letter via US mail asking for permission to contact principals in their school district (Appendix A). Superintendents were allowed one week to mail the superintendent response letter (Appendix B) to researcher via US mail using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. After one week, a superintendent's follow up letter was mailed via US mail (Appendix C). Upon approval from the superintendent, principals were contacted by mail to participate in the study.

A letter inviting candidates to participate in the study was sent via US mail to public elementary school principals in the selected 4 southwest Georgia counties. Prospective participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary. A brief explanation of the purpose and process of the study was also provided in the principal participation letter (Appendix D). The return of the informed consent form was an indication of the participants' willingness to participate in the study. The participants included one white male, 2 white females, and 6 black female Georgia public elementary schools.

Participants and Sampling

A stratified sampling method was used in this study consisting nine of public elementary principals in Georgia. A stratified sample was used when the researcher identified a specific group of individuals or population based on a specific purpose (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The participants in this study were selected to represent gender and race in an effort to gather diverse data. School populations range from 420 students to 781 students. The counties involved in the study consisted of county populations classified as rural to mid-size city. Populations demographics ranged from 4,962 to 189,885.

Qualitative samples usually evolved as the researcher conducts the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The participants included one white male, 2 white females, and 6 black female Georgia public elementary schools. These participants were represented a variation in gender and ethnicity. Gender and ethnicity were vital in the study as it provides a balanced insight from the participants about stress.

The data collected allowed principals to identify major stressors and they discussed the impact of these stressors. By understanding the stressors and impact, principals were able to identify what factors were causing stress. Each district superintendent was mailed a letter via US mail asking for permission to contact principals in their school district (Appendix A).

Superintendents were allowed one week to mail the superintendent response letter (Appendix B) to researcher via US mail using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. After one week, a superintendent's follow up letter was mailed via US mail (Appendix C). Upon approval from the superintendent, principals were contacted by mail to participate in the study.

The principal participant letters (Appendix D) along with an informed consent letter (Appendix F) was mailed to the principals. The informed consent letter and principal participation letter indicated that participation in study was strictly voluntary and information about the study was provided. Upon receiving the signed informed consent forms, Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (Appendix H), the Stressors Survey (Appendix I, J, K), and a demographic survey (Appendix G) were sent to all participants.

Next, individual interviews were scheduled via telephone calls and email with each principal who elected to participate in the study. The interviews were held over the telephone and in person depending upon the availability and schedule of the principals. Principals were informed their participation was strictly voluntary and they were able to opt out of the process at any time. The data during these interviews were recorded on a device with an access code only accessible to the researcher. The interviews were transcribed and coded. Participants were sent a transcript of the interviews for member checking for final approval prior to publication or usage in the study.

Instrumentation

Initially, principals were asked to complete a Perceived Stress Scale which indicated their perceived stress. The Perceived Stress Scale was an instrument that allowed participants to rate their thoughts and feelings in reference to 10 factors to determine their perceived stress (Appendix H). The Perceived Stress Scale was analyzed by the researcher indicating the perceived stress level of principals. A copy of Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale had a Cronbach's

reliability rating of .85 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). In correlation to similar measures, the validity of the Perceived Stress Scale ranged from .52 to .76 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The Perceived Stress Scale was a self-reported measure of how an individual perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The scale included 10 items and 5 possible responses: never =0, almost never=1, sometimes=2, fairly often=3 or very often =4 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The response numbers were reversed and added in the scoring process. A score of 13 was considered an average score while a score of 20 or higher represented higher stress levels (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

The Delphi method was used to understand a phenomenon on a higher level (Brady, 2015). The Delphi method has been used by other researchers in public policy research (Alexander, 2014). The Delphi method has been used by educators and policy makers in determining the impact of charter schools on public education, as well as, improving technology services for government and military entities (Alexander, 2004).

The Delphi method is a data ranking technique that consists of multiple in more than one round and begins with a data from the literature (Alexander, 2004). Open-ended and semi-open questions were used during the data collection (Birdsall, 2004). The researcher mailed a list of major stressors derived from the literature and the participants indicated their major stressors and the researcher narrowed the choices using the Delphi method. The Delphi method was initially introduced by Dalkey and Helmer of the RAND Corporation during the 1950s (Dalkey, 1963). The Delphi method is known for the unification of expert opinions about interested topics (Hsu & Stanford, 2007). This method solicits information based on group expert opinion to make predictions and forecast. The use of the Delphi method was introduced originally by the United State Air Force for defense strategies (Romano, 2010). The advantages of the Delphi method

included: expert opinion and anonymity. Since the method was time-consuming, continued response rate was a concern for most researchers.

From a list of 25 stressors identified during the literature review, the researcher asked the participants to identify their top 20 stressors. The Delphi method was used to gather data from principals in reference to their major stressors. From a list of identified 20 stressors, a narrower list of 15 stressors was constructed. The list of 15 stressors was emailed back to the participants to then identify the top 10 stressors. Next, the top 10 stressors were emailed back to principals to identify their top 5 stressors.

After the Perceived Stress Survey was completed, major stressors were identified, demographic survey was received, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants to discuss the major stressors and how their impact.

Data Collection

A copy of Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (inventory was mailed to principals to indicate their level of perceived stress. Secondly, a list of major stressors was developed by the researcher from the literature and mailed to the participants to identify their top stressors. The stressors were narrowed down to the top identified stressors using the Delphi method and the list was mailed once more for participants to identify their top stressors. Therefore; the researcher was not predisposed to the identified stressors before the interviews. Interviews were scheduled individually, and the data was transcribed, coded, and analyzed to answer the research questions and make conclusions.

Response Rate

A total of five school district superintendents were mailed superintendent participation letters (Appendix A). Four superintendents responded and were willing to allow candidates to

participate. One system after numerous attempts via US mail, email, and telephone phones did not return the superintendent's letter. The response rate for participating school districts was 80%. A total of 50 principal participation letters (Appendix D) were mailed via US mail to elementary principals in four different school districts along with informed consent forms (Appendix F). A total of nine principals from four of the selected districts responded and were willing to participate. A response rate of 18% of the solicited principals was willing to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

The Perceived Stress Scale was analyzed by the researcher to indicate the perceived stress level of principals. A copy of Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale had a Cronbach's reliability rating of .85 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). In correlation to similar measures, the validity of the Perceived Stress Scale ranged from .52 to .76 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The Perceived Stress Scale was a self-reported measure of how an individual perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The scale included 10 items and 5 possible responses: never =0, almost never=1, sometimes=2, fairly often=3 or very often =4 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The response numbers were reversed and added in the scoring process. A score of 13 was considered an average score while a score of 20 or higher represented higher stress levels (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

Major stressors identified by principals using the Delphi method. The researcher gathered 25 stressors from the literature review and asked the principals to identify the top 20 stressors in their work. This data was analyzed and a list of 20 major stressors was sent to principals to rank the top 10 stressors in their work. After receiving this data from principals, a list of 10 stressors were identified and principals were asked to identify their top five stressors experienced in their

work. By using the Delphi method to achieve a consensus, the top five stressors were identified by the public elementary principals in southwest Georgia.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person and by telephone. The interviews were recorded using a computer tablet with a secure password known only to the researcher. The interview data was transcribed by hand by the researcher. The data was typed on a laptop that was password protected and only accessible by the researcher. The printed files were locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office file cabinet and to be kept for one year. The participants were offered a copy of the transcription of their interview to check for accuracy.

The researcher read, reread, and read again the transcriptions. After the third reading of the transcription, notes were made, coded, and a coding log of frequent responses was recorded. The participating districts were assigned numbers: District One, District Two, District Three, and District Four.

Reporting the Data

The data reported was analyzed to answer the research questions proposed in this study. The demographic survey data and the perceived stress survey data were reported using both text and table format. The interviews were analyzed to answer the research questions.

Table 5 Item Analysis

Descriptive Data Quantitative Item Analysis

Item	Research	Research Question
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1. Sex	Sogunro, 2012; Chaudhri 2016	3
2. Age	Chaudhri 2016	3
3. Ethnicity	Kreysman, 2010	3
4. Student enrollment	Kreysman, 2010; Boyland, 2011	3
5. Type of school/Principal	Moran, 2014	3
6. Title I	Kreysman, 2010	3
7. Free and reduced lunch	Fink & Silverman, 2014; Chaudhri 2016	3
8. CCRPI	Georgia Department of Education, 2016	3
9. Years of service as teacher	Boyland, 2011; Chaudhri, 2016; Sogunro, 2012	3
10. Years of service as principal	Boyland, 2011	3
11. Employment length	Chaudhri, 2016	3
12. Education	Boyland, 2011; Kreysman, 2010	3
13. Hours worked per week	Boyland, 2011; U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2016; Kreysman, 2010	3

Table 6 Qualitative Item Analysis

<u>Item</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Interview Question</u>	<u>Research Question</u>
1. Definition of stress	Seyle, 1936	1	1

2. Perceived Stress level	Moran, 2014; Boyland, 2011	2	3
3. Perceived Greatest stressor	Brimm, 1981 Sogunro, 2012 Swent & Gmelch, 1977	3	2
4. Removal of stressors	Sogunro, 2012	4	3
5. Stress at the end of the day	Sogunro, 2012	5	1
6. Job and life stress	Sogunro, 2012	6	1, 3
7. Coping Mechanisms	Hurley, 2007 Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo, 2013	7	3
8. Job expectations	Moran, 2014	8	3
9. Changes to your job	Delisio, 2008	9	3
10. _Impact of stress	Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo, 2013 Boyland, 2011	10	3

Summary

The study was conducted using demographic surveys, perceived stress surveys, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher solicited participation from 5 southwest Georgia public school districts superintendents. Once the researcher obtained the superintendents' permission, principals in each district were mailed a principal participation letter and an informed consent form. Next, participating principals were sent a demographic survey and perceived stress survey. Then principals were sent a major stressors survey. Using the Delphi method, the major stressors survey was used to identify a consensus of major stressors. Finally, individual semi-structured interviews were scheduled with each participating principal. The data was recorded on a device with an access code only accessible to the researcher.

Ethics

Columbus State University Institutional Review Board approved the study prior to any data collection. The “Protecting Human Research Participants” training sponsored by The National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research was successfully completed by the researcher in March of 2015 (Appendix L). The researcher assigned a unique identification code to each participant to maintain participant confidentiality. The interviews were conducted individually and in private. The data was recorded on a device with an access code only accessible to the researcher. All confidential survey and interview data was stored to be maintained for one year after the completion of the study as outlined in the Columbus State University IRB guidelines.

CHAPTER IV REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to collect data concerning to principal stress and stressors in public elementary schools in Georgia. As the roles of principals changed, the study investigated perceived major stressors and the impact perceived in the work of principals, the perceived stress of principals, and the impact of stress on principals and their work. The researcher created a demographic survey. The data collected from demographic survey included items such as participants' sex, age, ethnicity, student enrollment, CCRPI scores, and years of experiences as a teacher and principal. The data was tabulated and presented in charts and tables. The researcher also used Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale.

The Perceived Stress Survey was an instrument used to measure principal perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The Perceived Stress Scale was emailed to participating principals of the selected Georgia public elementary schools. The data from this survey was analyzed quantitatively. The survey included 10 items and 5 possible responses: never =0, almost never=1, sometimes=2, fairly often=3 or very often =4 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The response numbers were tallied for the scoring process. A score of 13 was considered an average score while a score of 20 or higher represented higher stress levels (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

The researcher compiled a list of 25 major stressors from the literature. The researcher also used a Stressor Survey that allowed participants to identify major stressors in their work. A three-round Delphi method was used to develop a consensus of the major stressors in elementary school principals' work (Dalkey, 1963). Lastly, confidential semi-structured interviews were

conducted, recorded, and transcribed to gather data about the impact of stress on principals' work.

Research Questions

The research findings were correlated to the following research questions:

4. To what extent did elementary principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive they are stressed?
5. What perceived stressors did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?
6. What was the perceived impact of stressors on principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary?

Research Design

The researcher used surveys and interviews to collect elementary school principal data. Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale had a Cronbach's reliability rating of .85 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). Instruments with a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or more are classified as having sufficient reliability (Morera & Stokes, 2016). Reliability is described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) as the dependability of the researcher's methods. In correlation to similar measures, the validity of the Perceived Stress Survey ranged from .52 to .76 (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein). Validity is defined as the credibility of the instrument used (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana). Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey was used by researcher because it was the most effective tool to use to identify the participants' perceived level of stress. According to Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, the Perceived Stress Survey is frequently used to measure perceived stress. As described by Cohen (1983), the Perceived Stress Survey was designed to measure how significant individuals view situations as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck, &

Mermelstein). Along with the Perceived Stress Survey a demographic survey was used to collect demographic data.

The Delphi Method was used to narrow the major stressors survey down to the top stressors in principals' work. The Delphi method was initially introduced by the RAND Corporation during the 1950s (Dalkey, 1963). The Delphi method was known for the unification of expert opinions about interested topics (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). This method solicits information based on group expert opinion to make predictions and forecast (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). The use of the Delphi method was introduced originally by the United State Air Force for defense strategies (Romano, 2010). The advantages of the Delphi method included expert opinion and anonymity (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Although the use of the Delphi method was time consuming method, the expert consensus data was beneficial because it eliminated group conformity among the participants (Ludwig, 1994). The intent of the Delphi method was to include survey items developed from information collected through the literature (Brady, 2015). Through multiple rounds, the Delphi method provided the researcher with a consensus of the major stressors in public elementary school principals' work in southwest Georgia. This method provided the researcher with a more defined understanding of what actually causes stress for elementary school principals.

The semi- structured interviews were used to determine the impact of stress on the work of elementary school principals. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to develop a set of interview questions while having the ability to ask probing questions suggested by the interviewees' responses (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were most effective because interviews allowed the researcher to ask the respondents to elaborate during the interview process in an effort to gain more knowledge and understanding of stress and its impact

on the work of the participants (Cohen & Crabtree). Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to be more prepared for the interview and collected more reliable data (Cohen & Crabtree). The researcher asked other respondents to answer the interview questions prior to the study to determine the reliability of the instrument. Validity threats were monitored through the use of member checking and journaling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each participant received a copy of the interview transcription for inspection prior to usage in the study. The researcher also maintained a research journal throughout the research study.

Procedure

A stratified sampling method was used to target public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia school districts. A stratified sample was used to select a specific group of individuals (Tashakkori& Teddlie, 2003). The school districts were selected based on availability of public elementary schools principals in southwest Georgia. After IRB approval, letters were mailed to the superintendents of the selected districts explaining the study and approval to speak with the principals. The letter also included a statement of confidentiality for the principals and the districts. Superintendents mailed the superintendents permission letters back to the researcher in a self-addressed stamped envelope. After receiving permission from the superintendents, principal participation letters were mailed to be returned in a self-addressed stamped envelope. The principal permission letters included an informed consent letter and explanation of the study. It was also explained that all data was confidential and participation was strictly voluntary with no monetary award. After three days, if no response from principals, a principal follow up letter was mailed and telephone contact was made. Contact information for the researcher was included in the superintendent permission letters as well as the principal participation letters.

Each principal received a Perceived Stress Survey and demographic survey to complete and return via email to the researcher. Each principal was assigned a confidential code using three and four digit number combinations to be used by the researcher when analyzing the data. Additional emails were sent to remind participants to complete and return the surveys. The researcher created folders using the confidential sequence of numbers to file all data received from each participant.

The next phase of the study involved emailing the identified stressors survey developed from the literature to the participants. Each participant was emailed an initial list of 25 stressors and was asked to identify the top 20 stressors. This list was returned back to the researcher for tabulation. The researcher tabulated the data using the Delphi Method to narrow down this list of stressors to the top 15 stressors. The list of 15 stressors was emailed to each participant to identify their top 10 stressors and return to the researcher. The researcher again tabulated the data using the Delphi Method to narrow the stressors down to the top 10 stressors and returned the survey back to the participants to identify the top five stressors. All lists were returned to the researcher during each cycle. At this point, the data was tabulated and a consensus list of the top 5 stressors was identified from the stressors survey. In an effort to triangulate the data, the results of the stressors surveys were compared to the participants' responses to interview question 3 (What is your greatest stressor?).

Lastly, the researcher used telephone and email communication to schedule individual interviews with each participant. Depending upon the availability and schedules of the participants, interviews were scheduled via telephone and in person. Interviews with participant numbers 411 and 181 were conducted in person at their respective schools. Participants 747, 2362, 6100, 625, 294, 1853, and 1362 were conducted via telephone. All interviews were

confidential and recorded on a device that had an access code only available to the researcher. Principals were reminded that the interviews were recorded and confidential. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews that allowed for probing questions to gain more knowledge and understanding.

After the interviews were conducted, the recorded interviews were transcribed electronically. Member checking was used to ensure validity of the interviews. The transcripts of the interviews were made available to all participants to check for accuracy. The researcher conducted a first read of the transcribed interviews. Next, the researcher re-read the transcribed interviews and coded and identified common and uncommon themes. The researcher used an In Vivo-like coding method to determine themes.

In Vivo-like coding involved the identification of phrases from the participants' interviews to determine themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The researcher identified phrases from the verbiage used by the participant during the interview (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana). Next the researcher used second cycle pattern codes. This method allowed the researcher to summarize the data and identify similar themes/categories and combine the data for analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana). The researcher maintained a research journal to document each step of the research process

Respondents

A principal participation letter (Appendix D) was mailed to 50 Georgia public elementary school principals in 4 different school districts in southwest Georgia. After one week, non-responding principals were mailed a follow up letter. If no response, the researcher contacted the principals by telephone and email. Nine public elementary school principals returned the signed informed consent form and were willing to participate in the study. The participating districts

were assigned numbers: District One, District Two, District Three, and District Four. There was an 18% participant rate of return.

Self-reported demographic data was collected through the use of demographic surveys (Appendix G). The researcher tabulated the demographic data and it is displayed in tables. The study included nine public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia. As indicated in Table 7, the nine participants in the study were all employed in a public elementary school in southwest Georgia as elementary school principals.

Table 7 Principals

<u>Principals</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>%</u>
Elementary	9	100
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

As shown in Table 8, the participants in the study consisted of one male principal and eight female principals. One hundred percent of the participants in District One, Two, and Four were female. In District Four 100% of the district’s elementary school principals participated in the study, and they were all female. Therefore, all elementary school principals in District Four were female. The principal in District Three was the only male elementary school principal in the district.

Table 8 Sex

<u>Sex Category</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>%</u>
Male	1	11
<u>Female</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>89</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

The ethnicity of the participants indicated in Table 9 concluded 67% of the respondents were black and 33% were white. All participants in District One were black. District Four

participants consisted of 60% black and 40% white. District Three was 100% white and 100% of District Two was black.

Table 9 Ethnicity

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>%</u>
White	3	33
Black	6	67
Total	9	100

The age ranges of the participants indicated in Table 10 indicated that 88% of the participants were between the ages of 41 and 60. Only one participants' age was in the 31-40 age range. One-hundred percent of the participants in District One were in the age range 41-50 as well as District Three.

Table 10 Ages

<u>Age Category</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u>%</u>
31-40	1	12
41-50	4	44
51-60	4	44
Total	9	100

Eighty-nine percent of the participants were married as indicated in Table 11. None of the participants were single and only one participant was divorced. The one divorced participant was a black female who was between the age of 51-60. This participant also scored a low level perceived stress score on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). One-hundred percent of the participants in Districts One, Three, and Four were married.

Table 11 Marital Status

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Married	8	89
Divorced	1	11
<u>Single</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

As specified in Table 12, 12% of the participants had served between 14 -16 years as principal. The other 66% had served between 2 to 10 years and only 22% had served one year or less as principal. One participant in District Four had one or less years of experience as a principal. Only one participant in District One had one or less years of experience as a principal.

Table 12 Years as principal

<u>Years</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
One or less	2	22
2-4	2	22
5-7	2	22
8-10	2	22
11-13	0	0
<u>14-16</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

As indicated in Table 13, 100% versus 66 % of the principals had served as a classroom teacher between 5 to 16 years before moving into another role. The number of years

Table 16 indicated 100% of principals worked over 46 hours per week. Forty-four percent worked between 46 and 50 hours, 12% work between 51 and 55 hours per week, and 44% indicated they work 56 or more hours per week. Eighty percent of the participants in District Four indicated they worked 56 hours or more per week.

Table 16 Hours worked per week

<u>Hours</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
20-25	0	0
26-30	0	0
36-40	0	0
41-45	0	0
46-50	4	44
51-55	1	12
<u>56+</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

As indicated in Table 17, student enrollment ranged from a high 781 students to a low 420 students. Student enrollment is displayed by participant ID as well as district number. One-hundred percent of the Districts had over 400 students enrolled in their school.

Table 17 Student enrollment by participant and district

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Student Enrollment</u>	<u>District</u>
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1362	781	2
747	710	4
294	645	3
411	620	4
181	600	4
625	527	4
2362	449	1
6100	440	4
<u>1853</u>	<u>420</u>	<u>1</u>

As indicated in Table 18, 88% of the schools received Title I funds from the federal government. Participant 6100 (from District Four) was the only school that did not receive Title I funds.

Table 18 Title I status

Title I Status	n	%
Yes	8	88
No	1	12
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

The free and reduced lunch rates ranged from 100% to 39% As indicated in Table 19. Four of the nine schools had a 100% free and reduced lunch rate. Three of these four 100% free and reduced lunch rate districts were in the same county (District Four).

Table 19 Free and reduced lunch rate by participant and district

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Free and reduced lunch rate</u>	<u>District Number</u>
2362	100%	1
181	100%	4
411	100%	4
747	100%	4
1362	100%	2
1853	98%	1
625	83%	4
294	60%	3
6100	39%	4

Table 20 indicates each school’s performance score on the CCRPI accountability index. CCRPI scores are measured using a 0 to 100 scoring scale system as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). During the 2014-2015 reporting year, the average elementary score was 76. Five of the schools scored below the state average score of 76 and two schools scored above the state average. One school was a first year school (District Four) and therefore; did not receive a score. Only one participant in District Four scored above the average state score.

Table 20 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Score

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>CCRPI Score</u>	<u>District Number</u>
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747	83.3	4
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Data Analysis

The research data were represented through the use of text and tables. The researcher collected data from multiple sources to ensure the credibility of the data. Data were collected through the use of stressor surveys, perceived stress surveys, and semi-structured interview questions. The data from each instrument was correlated by comparing the tabulated results in an effort to identify outcomes and findings. Data were collected through the use of stressor surveys, perceived stress surveys, and semi-structured interview questions. The researcher tabulated the stressors surveys using the Delphi method. The researcher conducted a multiple round Delphi method that yielded a consensus of the greatest stressors in the principals' work. This data were correlated with the reported greatest stressors during the interview process.

Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey was tabulated by the researcher using the prescribed scoring method as outlined by Cohen, Karmarck, & Memelstein (1983). A perceived stress survey score was tabulated for each participant. The interview data was recorded, transcribed, and coded. During the first cycle coding the researcher coded the data using the IN Vivo like coding method to develop themes using the language of the participants during the interview (Miles, Huberman, & Memelstein). A second cycle coding was used by the researcher. Through the use of pattern coding the researcher summarized and constructed further themes from interview data (Miles, Huberman, & Memelstein). The Perceived Stress Survey was used to correlate relationships to interview data as well as demographic data.

As indicated in Table 21, the level of perceived stress among the participants was evenly distributed. The Perceived Stress Survey results indicated all three participants who scored a medium stress level score were black females who worked 46 hours or more per week. One hundred percent of the participants who scored a high level of stress on the Perceived Stress

Survey worked 46 hours or more per week, was classified as working in a Title I school, and also indicated in interview question 2 (Table 26) their stress levels were increasing.

Table 21 Perceived Stress Survey Results

<u>Perceived Stress</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Low	3	33
Medium	3	33
<u>High</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>100</u>

Cohen’s Perceived Stress Survey was an instrument used to determine the participants’ perceived stress level. The data was tabulated by the researcher and calculated to find perceived stress score. Table 22 indicated the perceived stress levels of each participant and categorized by high, medium and low. District Four had participants who scored at the high, medium, and low level. Participants 625, 411, 181, 6100, and 747 scores ranged in each category.

Table 22 Perceived Stress Survey Results by Participant

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Perceived Stress Score</u>	<u>Stress Level</u>	<u>District</u>
294	26	High	3
625	23	High	4
1853	20	High	1
411	19	Medium	4
181	18	Medium	4
2362	17	Medium	1
6100	10	Low	4
747	8	Low	4
<u>1362</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>2</u>

The researcher tabulated the following descriptive data mean, median, mode, and range of the scores. Table 23 below indicated the mean Perceived Stress Survey for the participants was 16.22. According to Cohen’s Perceived Stress Survey this score was a medium level of perceived stress. Scores of 20 or above were considered high level. Any score below 13 was considered low level. None of the respondents duplicated a score therefore, there was not a mode. The range of the scores was 21. The range is the difference between the largest score and the smallest score of a data set (Lomax & Hahs-Vaugh, 2012). The lowest score on the Perceived Stress Survey was 5 and the highest score was 26. Because there was a big difference in scores the range was impacted. This significant difference in scores is one of the disadvantages of calculating range (Lomax & Hahs-Vaugh, 2012). Although the mean score was within the medium level of perceived stress, the range score of 21 falls within the high level of perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey.

Table 23 Descriptive Data from Cohen’s Perceived Stress Survey

<u>Descriptor</u>	<u>Score</u>
Mean	16.22
Median	18
Mode	No Mode
<u>Range</u>	<u>21</u>

The results of the Stressors Survey constructed by the researcher from the literature review were concluded in Table 24. Through the use of the Delphi method, the data were tabulated and a consensus of greatest stressors was concluded. The participants identified the following top stressors in their work workload, increased job demands, time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability and bureaucracy tied as a major stressor. In comparison to the greatest stressors identified in the interview question 3 in Table 27, participants identified

paperwork, accountability, bureaucracy, and time constraints greatest stressors on both instruments. Therefore; there was a correlation between the greatest stressors.

Table 24 Stressors Survey

<u>Stressor</u>	<u>Reponses</u>
Workload	8
Increased job demands	7
Time constraints	5
Paperwork/reports	5
Accountability	5
<u>Bureaucracy</u>	<u>5</u>

The researcher also conducted confidential, semi-structured interview questions with each participant. The researcher coded the data using a first round cycle method of IN Vivo-like coding to identify words and phrases from the language of the participate. Next, during the second cycle coding, pattern coding was used to narrow, group, and summarize categories. Table 25 indicated how each participant defined stress. Two participants indicated that “not being control” defined stress. Two Participants also identified their reactions a part of what stress means to them. External factors were also mentioned by two participants.

Table 25 Interview Question 1: How do you define stress?

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Responses</u>
747	External factors that put you under stress.
411	Things I can’t control. Situation unfixable
181	Things that cause discomfort and worry.
2362	Lot on my plate, short time to get things done.
6100	Not being in control, more to do than time

625	My reaction/response to external factors.
294	Anything that causes anxiety.
1853	Reaction to something
<u>1362</u>	<u>Overwhelmed, too much going on</u>

In table 26, participants indicated an increase or decrease in stress levels. Sixty-seven percent of the participants (411, 625, 1362, 294, 1853, and 181) clearly indicated that their stress levels at work were increasing. Participant 294, 625, and 1853 scored high levels of perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). Only one participant (1362) who indicated stress levels were increasing scored low level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). On the other hand, 67% of these participants (747, 411, 181, 6100. 625, and 1853) indicated in Table 35, they would not change professions if given the opportunity. A participant from each district indicated there was increasing stress on the job. One hundred percent of the participants in District Two and Three stated their stress level was increasing. Participant number 1362 stated (line number 16 and 17), “Right now I think it is increasing because there are a lot of changes there are going on and it is hard to know what exactly is expected because of so many changes.” Participant 294 stated (line numbers 15 and 16), “I think it is increasing. The main reason I say that is because with your job, you are dealing with a lot of different elements. But, I think the reason there is so much stress lately because there has been so much change.” Participant 1853 state (line number 18) added, “And, being principal of a low performing school.” The participant also stated (line number 19 and 20), “So a lot of stress increased, like my scores just came out and my scores are low. I’m stressed because of what happens to low performing schools...they look at the principal.” Participant 625 stated (line number 43), “This year, I think, we found after post-planning, like a week and a half after post-planning, that we

were going to be reconfiguring again.” The participant also stated (line numbers 51, 52 and 53), “So, I’ve had to stop what I was doing this summer which you know is school improvement planning, leadership team retreat, and things like that. Okay, let’s move the school. So, I had to work out all of the logistics of the move.”

Participants 181 and 2362 indicated their stress levels varied depending upon the situations. Participant 181 (line numbers 8 and 9) stated, “I mean there are some days that are pretty stress free and then some days where I feel like I could pull my hair out.” Participant 236 (line numbers 9 and 10) stated, “Uh, it varies. It depends on what is going on. Uh, some days it decreases, some days it’s more. Uh, today it had an increase because I just read about the new things coming from CCRPI and SB 364.” Both participants indicated the hiring of a new assistant principal helped their stress levels.

Table 26 Interview Question 2: Is your stress increasing or decreasing?

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Responses</u>
411	Increasing
625	Increasing
1362	Increasing
294	Increasing
1853	Increasing
181	Increasing
6100	Decreasing
747	Varies
<u>2362</u>	<u>Varies</u>

In response to interview question 3: What is your greatest stressor?, As indicated in Tables 27, time, accountability, bureaucracy, and paperwork were identified as major stressors in

the participants' work. In both the Stressors Survey and Interview Question 3, there was a correlation of the following greatest stressors: paperwork, accountability, bureaucracy, and time constraints.

It is evident these four stressors were common among participants. Thirty-three percent of the participants identified time as the greatest stressor in their work. Twenty-two percent identified accountability as their greatest stressor. Eleven percent each identified bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations, discipline and finance as their greatest stressors in their work. Participant number 6100 indicated that finance was a great stressor. The participant stated (line numbers 64 and 65, "It's just constantly trying to figure out how the needs of the teachers regarding resources can be met and at the same time being sure we stay healthy financially." Within District Four, all five participants (747, 411, 181, 6100, and 625) indicated a different factor as a greatest stressor. Participant 747 identified discipline, participant 411 identified time, participant 181 identified accountability, participant 6100 identified finance, and participant 625 identified bureaucracy as major stressors.

Table 27 Greatest stressors Interview question 3

<u>Stressor</u>	<u>n</u>
Time	3
Accountability	2
Bureaucracy	1
Paperwork/Job expectations	1
Discipline	1
<u>Finance</u>	<u>1</u>

in some capacity at the end of the day scored across the board on the Perceived Stress Survey. As indicated in Table 21, Participants 747 and 1362 scored low, participants 411 and 2362 scored medium, and participant 625 and 294 scored high. Two participants (181 and 1853) indicated they used the time at the end of the day to wind down or reflect. Participant 1853 scored high stress level and participant 181 scored medium stress level on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). Participant 747 indicated a feeling tired and being an insomniac. Participant 747 stated (Line number 39 and 40), “It can take a toll on our body. For one thing, I have hypertension. I can’t say it is solely from that, but I had hopes in the past of getting off my high blood pressure medicine, but I see that I won’t be getting off of it until I’m retired.” One participant (6100) indicated that retirement is near and stress was not bad and this participant also scored a low level stress score on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21).

Table 29 Interview Question 5: Describe your stress at the end of the day.

<u>Response Interview Question 5</u>	<u>Participant ID Number</u>
Tired and easy to fall asleep.	747
I have no tolerance for people.	411
I use this time reflect.	181
Stress is high. I don’t want to talk to anyone.	2362
It’s not bad because I know I can retire soon.	6100
I am exhausted. Sometimes I can’t cook supper.	625
It’s high because I am thinking about what I have to do the next day.	294
This is my time to wind down and think, plan, and prioritize.	1853
<u>I have enough brain left to get home</u>	<u>1362</u>

Table 30, indicated the participants’ response to interview question 6: What is the relationship between your professional stress and your personal life? The participants either

indicated that the two do not impact each other because they do not talk about work at home or the relationship was negative. Sixty-seven percent of the participants indicated a negative relationship between their professional and personal life. One-hundred percent of the participants indicated they use coping mechanisms on and off the job to relieve stress (Tables 30 and 31). Participant number 625(line numbers 201), “There is never a time I am not a principal.”

Table 30 Participant Response to Interview Question 6

<u>Response</u>	<u>Participants ID</u>
Do not talk about it at home	411, 2362, 1362
Negative impact	747, 181, 6100, 625, 294, 1853

Table 31 included responses to interview question 7a; the participants indicated most frequently laughing was the most used coping mechanism at work. Six of the nine participants indicated that laughing was used as a coping mechanism. Using data from the demographic survey, 67% of the respondents (2362, 181, 625, 1362, 411, & 294) who indicated they used laughing as a coping mechanism, were female and 33% were male. The participants (747, 6100, 625, and 1853) who stated going into the classrooms as a coping mechanisms were 100% female and 50% of them scored a high level of stress on the perceived stress survey. The least used coping mechanism was building good relationships (participant 411) and this participant scored a medium level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). The participant (1362) who indicated keeping emotions out of it as a coping mechanism, scored a low level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey. This participant was also the only divorced participant in the study. Contrarily, this participant also indicated that stress was increasing.

Table 31 Coping mechanisms on the job Interview question 7a

Coping Mechanisms	Occurrences
Laughing	6
Plan and attend events for staff and students	5
Go to classrooms	4
Talk to other colleagues	3
Walk around the building	2
Leave my office	2
Build good relationships	1
<u>Keep emotions out of it</u>	<u>1</u>

Table 32, indicated that the most frequent used coping mechanism off the job was participating in hobbies. Participant 2362, 6100, 625, 294, 1853, and 1362 indicated they participate in a variety of hobbies off the job to relieve stress. The participants who indicated hobbies as an off the job coping mechanism ranged (low, medium, and high) on the Perceived Stress Survey. Participant numbers 6100 and 1362 scored low perceives stress on the Perceived Stress Survey, participant 2362 scored medium perceived stress, and participants 625, 294, and 1853 all scored high perceived stress. Participant 294 stated (line number 181 and 182), “If I can get away from here and get on the tractor and get away from here and to a ballgame or if I can get away from here and go hunting...those are my things.” Those who indicated prayer or

church as a coping mechanism, 75% of those participants (181, 2362, 747) scored a medium level of stress on the Perceived Stress Survey and 25% (participant 1362) scored a low level perceived stress. Participant 181 stated (line number 210 and 211), “I walk through here and pray. Sometimes I pray for them specifically by name.” Participants (625, 2362, and 411) who indicated shopping as an off the job coping mechanism, were 100% female. Participant 411 stated (line number 162, 167), “I love shopping. It relaxes me. It takes me away.” Thirty-three percent of the participants (747, 6100, and 625) indicated participating in coping mechanisms off the job took their minds off their work. The one participant (411) used social media as coping mechanism off the job stated (line number 161 and 162), “At home, if I come home and have time I’ll check Facebook and see what my cousins are up to.” Spending time with family was only mentioned by three participants (181, 2362, and 1853). Participant 1853 stated (line number 128 and 129), “I have a large family and I spend time with them.” The participant also stated (line number 127), “I’m always planning something with my family.”

Table 32 Coping mechanisms off the job Interview question 7b

Coping Mechanisms	Occurrences
-------------------	-------------

Hobbies (garden, quilt, paint, hunt, cook, puzzles, watch tv)	7
Pray/church	4
Exercise/walk	4
Shop	3
Vacations/getaways	3
Spend time with family	3
Hair/nails done	2
Read	2
Sleep	1
Social media	1
Confide in my spouse	1
<u>Go out with friends</u>	<u>1</u>

One-hundred percent of the participants indicated there were differences in their job expectations. Table 33 indicated the job expectation differences among the participants. Although, the job expectations were different, only 33% of the participants indicated they would change occupations if they had the opportunity. The stress levels for the participants were evenly distributed with an equal number who scored high, medium, and low perceived stress levels. Only one participant indicated job expectations as the greatest stressor was indicated Table 27 and these participants scored in the high level on the Perceived Stress Survey as indicated in Table 21.

[Table 33 Differences in job expectation comments Interview question 8](#)

Reponses	Participant ID number
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I expected more parent support and participation.	747
I didn't expect to have to micromanage.	411
I had to learn to delegate.	181
The pay is not enough.	2362
You inherit issues from previous administrators.	6100
The responsibility level and success of school.	625
Expansiveness of job duties	294
You own everything that happens in your building.	1853
Accountable for things you have no control over.	1362

Table 34 indicated the impact of the differences in job expectation in the participants work. Thirty-three percent of the participants indicated delegating and getting others to help as an impact. One hundred percent of the participants described how their job differed from what was expected (Table 33). Yet, 67% indicated they would not change professions if given the opportunity (Table 35). The remaining 33% of the participants (2362, 294, and 1362) who indicated they would change professions if given the opportunity, described the impact of the differences in job expectations as pay, impacts family, and having to ask other to do more and maintain low teacher turnover respectively. Participant 747 indicated the need to search for strategies to improve parent involvement. Participant 747 also indicated discipline as a major stressor (Table 27) because of the lack of parental support when consequences are enforced. Participant 747 also indicated lack of parent support as an additional stressor on the job. At the same time, this participant scored low level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21). Participant 181 stated (line 187), “What have I gotten myself into.”

Table 34 Impact of differences in job expectations

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Participant ID</u>
Look for strategies to improve parent involvement.	747
I feel bad because I am trying to do the work of others.	411
I had to learn to delegate.	181
The pay does not impact my work.	2362
I felt like I was failing the school.	6100
I need to delegate more and support teachers.	625
You have to make it up as you go and it impacts family.	294
Do not take it personal and work harder to improve test scores.	1853
<u>I have to ask others to do more. Maintain low teacher turnover.</u>	<u>1362</u>

In Table 35, in response to interview question 9 (If you were able to change professions, would you change?), 67% of the participants (747, 411, 181, 6100, 625, and 1853) indicated if given the opportunity, they would not change professions. One-hundred percent of the participants in District 4 (747, 411, 181, 6100, and 625) indicated they would not change professions. Participant 6100 stated (line numbers 146-148), “It’s been harder particularly since I got out of the classroom; it’s been harder than I’ve ever dreamed it would be, but absolutely the most rewarding career that I can imagine.” Participant 747 stated (line number 62), “Because this is what I love doing. Education is in my blood.” Participant 1853 stated (line number 331), “It’s about just helping people, my students, and my children.” Participant 181 stated (line number 200), “And then, I think, because it is so rewarding.” Participant 181 went on to say (line number 205 – 206), “You get to shape teachers and their thinking and you kinda get to, you know, love them and support them and then still have those hard conversations with them.”

The participants who scored high level perceived stress level (Table 21) on the Perceived Stress Level two of the three (participant 625 and 1853) indicated they would not change professions. Those who scored medium level perceived stress level on the Perceived Stress Level two of the three indicated they would not change professions (411 and 181). Participants who scored low level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Level two of the three (6100 and 747) indicated they would not change professions. Participant numbers 294, 2362, and 1362 indicated they would change professions. On the Perceived Stress Level Survey (Table 21), participant 294 scored high, participant 2362 scored medium, and participant 1362 scored low. The participants who indicated they would change professions also discussed what other professions they were interested in. Participant numbers 2362, 294, and 1362 indicated if given the opportunity, they would explore different careers. Participant number 2362 indicated an interest in working with adults and maybe teaching at the collegiate level. A career as a mediator was indicated by participant number 1362. Lastly, participant 294 was interested in being a peanut farmer because it involved more team work than the principal position.

Table 35 Interview Question 9 If you were able to change professions, would you change?

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Response</u>
747	No
411	No
181	No
2362	Yes
6100	No
625	No
294	Yes
1853	No

Table 36 indicated, what additional information participants told the researcher about their stress. Twenty-two percent of the participants indicated that knowing retirement was near relieved their stress. Thirty-three percent indicated learning to delegate was a necessity. The three participants who indicated that delegation was a necessity scored in the low, medium, and high perceived stress level on the Perceived Stress Survey. All three participants were females from the same school district.

According to the Demographic Survey, 100% of these three participants have Doctorate degrees, work more than 46 hours per week, have student enrollment over 500 students, and have between one and four years of experience as a principal. Participant number 625 stated (Line number 291-294), “I had to re-evaluate priorities because of my illness and look at, ok this is causing stress, this is causing stress. I have to look at things differently and handle this differently; I need to start delegating.” Participant 625 also concluded (Line number 313 and 314), I just had physical manifestations of my stress level. I think all of that stuff just made my medical issues worse.”

Table 36 Interview Question 10 What else would you like to tell me about your stress?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Participant ID</u>
I'm learning to delegate.	747
I have difficulty delegating.	411
I could do this job without my faith.	181
The best relief is laughter.	2362
Knowing I can retire helps.	6100
I need to start delegating.	625
I am looking forward to retirement.	294

I have to prioritize. 1853

I do not allow people to define me. 1362

The participants in this study had held various positions before becoming elementary school principals. One-hundred percent of the participants had served as classroom teachers and assistant principals. Table 37, indicated the different positions each participant had held. Of participants who held positions outside of education, participant 2362 was a factory worker and participant 1853 was a social worker and in the military all were from District One. Three participants (411, 6100 & 294) held only two different positions (teacher and assistant principal) before acquiring a principal’s position. Other participants held various other positions out of the classroom such as counselor, academic coach, reading specialist, math coach, gifted liaison, and testing as well as teacher and assistant principal.

Table 37 Different Positions Held

Participant ID	Prior Positions
747	Teacher, reading specialist, academic coach, assistant principal
411	Teacher, assistant principal
181	Teacher, counselor, assistant principal
2362	Teacher, assistant principal, factory worker
6100	Teacher, assistant principal
625	Teacher, gifted liaison, testing, assistant principal
294	Teacher, assistant principal
1853	Social worker, military, teacher, math coach, graduation coach, assistant principal

Table 38 indicates the most stressful positions held by the participants. Seventy-eight percent of the participants indicated the principal position was the most stressful position held in their careers. One participant indicated the position of academic coach was the most stressful while one participant indicated academic coach was the most stressful. This participant indicated it was difficult to introduce new strategies to teachers who were not receptive to change. The participant also indicated that at all times full support for the principal had to be exhibited. Participant 1362 indicated academic coach as most stressful because it was difficult to please the teachers and the principal. One hundred percent of participants in District One indicated the position of principal was the most stressful job in their career. Only one principal in District 4 indicated assistant principal as the most stressful job.

Table 38 Most stressful position held

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Position</u>
747	Principal
411	Assistant Principal
181	Principal
2362	Principal
6100	Principal
625	Principal
294	Principal
1853	Principal
<u>1362</u>	<u>Academic Coach</u>

The Perceived Stress Survey (Table 21) indicated the participants' perceived stress was distributed evenly across each level with three (33%) participants scoring high level, three (33%)

participants scoring medium level, and three (33%) participants scoring low level. Contrarily in Table 26, six (67%) participants indicated in the interview process (interview question two) that their stress levels were increasing. Only one (11%) of the participants definitively indicated that stress levels were decreasing. This participant scored low level perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey. The other 22% (two) participants who indicated their stress varied from day to day scored in the medium and low perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey. There was a correlation between the greatest stressors identified on the Stressors Survey (Table 21) and the greatest stressors identified in the interview process (Table 27). Results from both instruments identified paperwork, accountability, bureaucracy, and time constraints.

Research Question 1

To what extent do elementary principals in Georgia public schools perceive they are stressed? Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey was used to determine the participants' perceived stress. According to Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983), Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey had a Cronbach's reliability score of .84 to .86. Cronbach's alpha measures the reliability or dependability of items on an instrument (Morera & Stokes, 2016). Instruments with a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or more are classified as having sufficient reliability (Morera & Stokes, 2016). Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey also had a correlation of validity to other similar measures of .52 - .76. Validity measures the trustworthiness of the instrument (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 1983). Using a scale of 0 to four with occurrences of never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, and very often to identify their level of stress, participants rated 10 items. The score ranges of Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey are 0 to 40. Scores averaging around 13 are considered average stress and scores of 20 or higher are considered high stress.

Participant numbers 2362, 411, 181, 625, 294, and 1853 scored between 17 and 26 on the Perceives Stress Survey (Table 21). Therefore, 67% of the participants' perceived stress is medium to high as indicated in Table 21. Thirty-three percent of the participants (participant numbers 1362, 747, and 6100) scored in the low stress range between 5 and 10. Across the four districts, participants scored in the low, medium, and high ranges (Table 21). District four's participants 747 and 6100 scored in the low range, participants 411 and 181 scored in the medium range, and participant number 625 scored in high range. Therefore, district four participants' stress levels ranged across all levels.

As indicated in Table 39, two black females and one white female scored in the low perceived stress range. Those scoring in the medium range of perceived stress were three black females. The participants who scored a high level of perceived stress were one white female, one black female, and one white male. Those scoring in the high range displayed the most diversity in ethnicity. As indicated in Table 23, the mean score of the participants' perceived stress level was 16.22. According to the Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey, this is medium level perceived stress. The data in Table 39 represented the perceived stress of the participants in relation to ethnicity and gender.

Table 39 Perceived Stress by Gender and Ethnicity

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Perceived Stress Score</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>
294	26	Male	White
625	23	Female	White
1853	20	Female	Black
411	19	Female	Black
181	18	Female	Black
2362	17	Female	Black

6100	10	Female	White
747	8	Female	Black
1362	5	Female	Black

Research Question 2

What are the stressors? Participants identified the major stressors in their work through the use of a stressor survey. The researcher conducted a stressor survey and used a multiple cycle that identified the top 5 stressors. The researcher tabulated the results to compile a consensus of the identified stressors. In an effort to maintain validity, a list of 25 major stressors was constructed from reviewing the literature. During the first round of surveys, participants identified their top 20 stressors. The list was then tabulated by the researcher and narrowed down to the top 20 stressors identified by the participants. The participants then narrowed down their top 15 stressors. The researcher tabulated the data and identified the top 10 stressors. Lastly, a list of 10 identified stressors was constructed and participants identified the top 5 five stressors in their work.

As indicated in Table 24, participants identified the following as major stressors in their work: workload, increased job demands, time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability and bureaucracy. Participants also indicated during the interview process (Table 27) the following as greatest stressors: time, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations discipline, and finance. As represented in Tables 24 and 27, the following stressors were identified on the stressors survey as well as in interview question 3 time, accountability, bureaucracy, and paperwork. Participants also identified other factors in their work that caused stress. These stressors are indicated in Table 40.

Table 40 Other Stressors

Responses	Occurences
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Lack of parental support	4
Dealing with negative people	2
Changes in district	1
Discipline	1
Teachers not performing	1
<u>Student learning</u>	<u>1</u>

Research Question 3

What is the perceived impact of stressors on principals' work? Semi-structured interview questions were used to determine the impact of stressors on principals' work. In response to interview question 1 (Table 25), the participants defined stress as: being under pressure, uncontrollable things, a lot on my plate, more to do than time, involuntary responses, anything that causes anxiety, a reaction to something, and being overwhelmed. The participants discussed the perceived impact of stressors on principals. Open-ended interview questions reinforced the top stressors identified by the participants. As indicated in Table 26, time, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations, discipline, and finance were identified by the participants as their greatest stressors. Time was identified as a major stressor by participants 411, 2362, and 1362, participant numbers 181 and 294 identified accountability, participant number 625 identified bureaucracy, participant number 1853 identified paperwork and job expectations, participant 747 identified discipline and participant 6100 identified finance as a major stressor during the interview process.

Participants' numbers 411, 2362, and 1362 indicated that time was a great stressor in their work and also indicated that lack of time made it difficult to balance work and family.

These same participants indicated organization as a key element. Participants numbers 411, 2362, and 1362 also indicated that the impact of lack of time prevented them from being instructional leaders and having time to visit classrooms and teachers. Participant number 1362 also indicated a tremendous amount of time was spent on trying to prioritize tasks. Participant 1362 (line number 69) stated, ‘It’s just that so much happens at the same time and it’s like which one am I going to do first.’ Participant number 2362 indicated that being called away for meetings impeded upon time spent in the building.

Participant numbers 181 and 294 pointed out that accountability was a great stressor and impacted their work a great deal. Accountability such as teacher evaluations was mentioned by participant number, testing, school safety, and curriculum implementation were highlighted during the interviews. Participants focused on the fact that often the accountability measures such as teacher evaluations prevented them from being an instructional leader. Participant number 411 indicated that accountability of teacher evaluations has been a major stressor because student test scores are 70% of leaders’ evaluation. Participant 411 stated (line number 47), “It is hard to make sure students are motivated to do their best and that they take the test seriously.” They noted that the evaluations are so lengthy and time consuming it is difficult to be effective and truly evaluate teachers as an instructional leader should. Participant 294 indicated that focusing on accountability also is time consuming. The participant also expressed concerns about ensuring that the best teachers were teaching in the right areas for students to be successful. In reference to accountability, participant number 294 (line number 38) stated, “I feel that we have had a lot of things change within the last 10 years.”

Bureaucracy was identified as major stressors by participant number 625. The participant stated that it very difficult to meet all of the needs of central office while attempting to manage

an entire school. Participant 625 (line number 71) stated, “This is probably my biggest source of stress.” The participant also indicated that attempting to follow all of the budget rules and regulations as well as meeting deadlines impacts work. The stress of lack of parental supports impacted participant number 625’s work because the participant worried about student learning.

Paperwork and job expectations were also identified as major stressors in the work of the participant number 1853. The participant stated that because there is such an abundance of paperwork that often working late is the only option. The participant also discussed the abundance of paperwork impacted home life. There were many occasions where the work was completed at home. Participant number 1853 (line 132) stated, “Sometimes I have to stay and do it after school.” This particular participant had recently had surgery, but was still working at home. The participant stated (line 132), “I do it right here in my bed.” This participant was compelled to put the work email on the personal cell phone so that emails would be able to be answered at home and away from work. Participant number 1853 also indicated that other stressors were negative teachers and teachers not performing their job duties. The impact of negative teachers created a negative atmosphere for the building. This participant also reported that negative teachers do not show up for work on time. Then as principal the participant had to address the issue. More paperwork was added when the teacher had to be written up. The participant also indicated more meetings and paperwork had to be completed and sent to the deputy superintendent.

Discipline issues were also identified as a major stressor by participant number 747. The participant stated that discipline impacted her ability and time to be an instructional leader. The more time that spent on discipline equated to less time that spent in the classrooms. The participant stated that if discipline could be removed as a stressor, more time would be available

for classroom visits. The participant stated (line numbers 14 and 15), “I would be able to get into classrooms more and be more visible in a sense and be seen more as an instructional leader instead of a disciplinarian.” Other stressors identified by the participant were a lack of parental support. The participant also noted that the lack of parental support makes it difficult when dealing with discipline issues. The participant stated (line number 17), “I don’t have the support from parents that I need with those discipline problems.” Therefore, discipline continued to be an issue and the only consequences available are in-school suspension or out of school suspension.

Participant number 6100 identified finance as a great stressor. This participant expressed great concern of ensuring teachers had all the necessary resources to be effective in their classrooms. The participant pointed out that there is constant effort being made to make sure teachers are equipped with all necessary items. Participant 6100 (line numbers 64 and 65) said, “It’s just constantly trying to figure out how the needs of the teachers, regarding resources can be met and at the same time, being sure we stay healthy financially.” The participant also specified that there is a continuous attempt to make teachers feel validated and appreciated. This participant also indicated that another stressor that impacted work was moving to a new facility and adding a 9th grade level to the school. The participant indicated the move impacted work because of a feeling of inadequacy and not knowing very much about high school requirements.

Participants 747, 2362, 625, and 294 indicated other stressors in their work were related directly to parents and lack of parental support. These participants represented three of the four participating counties. The only district that did not identify parents as another stressor (participant 1362) identified everything a stressor. Participant 2362 indicated that parents were unable to help students academically. The inability of parents to help students at home impacted the school and student performance. The participant stated (Line Numbers 67 and 68), “Now I’m

being held accountable for what I need to do. Who is going to hold the parents accountable for what they need to do.”

As represented in Table 41, participants noted stressors such as building and district changes, summer school, changing plans for next year, assessment changes, teacher evaluations, job security, low performing students, multitasking, and accountability impacted their work by causing their stress levels to increase. In response to interview question 2 (Table 26) participant numbers 411, 625, 1362, 294, 1853, and 181 clearly indicated that their stress levels at work were increasing. These participants represent all four districts participating in the study. Therefore, 67% of participants indicated that their stress was increasing. Participant numbers 747 and 2362 indicated their stress levels vary depending on the situations. Participant 747 (lines 8 and 9) said, “I mean there are some days that are pretty stress free and then some days where I feel like I could pull my hair out.” Participant number 2362 (line numbers 9 and 10) stated, “Uh, it varies. It depends on what is going on. Uh, some days it decreases, some days it’s more. Uh, today it had an increase because I just read the new things coming from CCRPI and SB 364.” Participant 2362 (District One) also indicated that a new assistant principal was hired and the stress levels decreased. Participant number 6100 (District Four) clearly indicated that stress levels were decreasing because an assistant principal was hired. The position was vacant and had been filled.

Table 41 Stressors That Cause Principal Stress to Increase

<u>Stressors that cause stress to increase</u>	<u>Participant ID</u>
Changing to a new building, summer school	411
Last minute district changes	625
Lots of changes, no control over accountability issues	1362
Assessment changes	294

Job security, low performing students, multitasking	1853
<u>Reconfiguring district, plans changed for next year</u>	<u>181</u>

In response to interview question 4 (If there was one thing you could remove as a stressor in your work, what would it be and how would it impact your work?), participant numbers 747 and 181 said that removing discipline as a stressor would impact their work by allowing them more time to be instructional leaders in their buildings. The removal of the central office as a stressor was selected by participant numbers 411, 625, and 1362. These participants also stated removing this stressor would add more time for them to be in their buildings and classrooms. Participant number 6100 indicated the removal of the teacher evaluation systems would again allow more time for effective classroom visits. Finally, participant numbers 294 and 1853 indicated the impact of the removal of stress on teachers would decrease discipline as well as increase teacher performance thus increasing student performance. Participant number 1853 indicated the removal of negative teachers would impact work by creating a more positive school climate and other teachers may be more willing to accept change.

In Table 42, participants identified mornings, lunchtime, and dismissal as the most stressful times of the day. Participants identified mornings were stressful because parents came in to meet about issues; teachers were calling in sick, trying to locate substitute teachers, dealing with misbehavior from the bus, and unexpected issues. Participant numbers 625 (District Four) and 1362 (District Two) stated that dismissal was the most stressful. The impact of this stressor on work was because of the anxiety of ensuring a large number of students arrive at home safely. Participant 625 had a school enrollment of 527 students and participant number 1362 had an enrollment of 781 students. Participant 625 indicated dismissal impacts work because sometimes parents are not home and students have to come back to the school. Participant 625

stated (line number 83), “Parents are not home to receive their children when the buses take them home.” Lunchtime was identified as stressful by participant number 181 because students are moving and that was when discipline issues occur. This stressful time impacted participant 181 at work because discipline issues increased during this time. The final five participants (747, 2362, 6100, 294, and 1853) indicated that mornings were their most stressful time of the day. This impacted their work because they were spending time in the mornings finding substitute teachers, dealing with bus issues and upset parents instead of maintaining the building.

Table 42 Most stressful time of the day

<u>Participant ID</u>	<u>Time of the day</u>
747	No response
411	Mornings
2362	Mornings
6100	Mornings
294	Mornings
1853	Mornings
181	Lunchtime
1362	Dismissal

Summary

This study included nine participants in four different school districts. School enrollment ranged from 420 students to 781 students. Of the nine schools, eight schools received Title I funds from the federal government. The free and reduced lunch rates ranged from 39% to 100% of students qualifying.

As a result of the Perceived Stress Survey, 33% of the participants scored high level, 33% scored medium level and 33% scored low level perceived stress. The major stressors identified

through a stressor survey were workload, increased job demands, time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability, and bureaucracy. During the interview process, participants identified their major stressors as time, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations, discipline, and finance. The participants indicated these stressors impacted them in the following ways not having enough time to complete tasks made it difficult to balance work and family life, prevented them from being instructional leaders, and lack of time required prioritizing. Those who reported accountability as a major stressor stated the impact on their work was they were less likely to be effective instructional leaders. Time consuming accountability tasks such as teacher evaluations, testing, school safety, and curriculum impacted their ability to be effective.

Participants also indicated that dealing with bureaucracy was a major stressor. The task of attempting to meet the needs of central office, local boards, state laws, as well as federal laws, contributed to their stress levels. Paper work was another major issue and often times, participants worked late or worked at home to complete reports. Discipline issues were also identified as having an impact on participants' work. Dealing with discipline issues was very time consuming. The lack of parent support while dealing with discipline issues also added to the stress. Lastly, maintaining financial support was a major stressor. The participants wanted to ensure teachers were equipped with all of the necessary resources to be effective. Therefore, worrying about financial regulations impacted their ability to ensure teachers had all necessary supplies.

It was evident that the professional stress and the personal stress of the participants overlapped. Only 33% participants indicated that the two did not interfere with each other. The remaining 67% indicated that there was a negative relationship between the two. The participants also indicated they use a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the stress on and

off the job. To cope with stress on the job participants indicated they laugh, visit classrooms, walk around the building, leave the office, plan activities for staff and students, build good relationships, talk to colleagues, and try to keep personal emotions out of it. Coping mechanisms used at home included sleeping, shopping, praying, getting hair and nails done, taking vacations, using social media, confiding in a spouse, participating in hobbies, spending time with family, and going out with friends. Participants found that participating in these coping mechanisms brought them comfort, gave them balance, made them feel better emotionally, gave their brains a break, and made them feel refreshed when they returned to work.

Overall during the interview process 67% participants felt their stress was increasing for various reasons. Participants attributed their increase in stress to relocating to new buildings, accountability changes, teacher evaluations, assessment changes, personnel issues, job security, the need to multi-task, and low performance by students on state mandated tests. Although 67% of the participants stated their stress levels were increasing, 67% of the participants also stated they would not change professions.

As the participants learned to cope with the stress, they realized there were some issues they did not expect to experience as they entered the profession. They identified the following as unexpected issues: lack of parent support, having to micromanage, delegating, low pay, amount of paperwork, responsibility for the whole school, and being accountable for issues for which you have no control over. The participants indicated they use a plethora of coping skills on and off the job to manage the stress. The participants engaged in the following to cope with stress on the job, laughed, went into classrooms, talked to colleagues, walked around the building, built good relationships, kept their emotions out of it, and planned events for staff and students. In an effort to cope with stress from the job at home, the participants participated in

hobbies, prayed, went to church, exercised, took vacations, spent time with family, got their hair and nails done, read, slept, used social media, and confided in their spouse.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Many adults in the United States have reported experiencing stress (American Institute of Stress, 2016). As a result of the annual Stress in America Survey, 65% of Americans identified work as a major stressor (American Psychological Association, 2016). The participants in the annual Stress in America Survey also indicated coping mechanisms were not incorporated in managing stress (American Psychological Association). In the early 30s, Hans Seyle identified stress as how the body reacts to demands or stressors (Seyle, 1936).

The role and responsibility of principals in public schools have changed (De Leon, 2006). Principals are working more hours, managing budgets, and acting as instructional leaders for accountability (Combs, Edmonson, & Jackson, 2009). Boyland's 2011 study of principals in Indiana indicted the increase of job responsibility increased the stress levels of principals.

Since principal roles and job responsibilities have drastically changed over time, principal stress is increasing (Boyland, 2011). Increased stress levels impacts principals mentally, physically and socially (Boyland). The researcher identified the research questions as (1) To what extent did public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia public schools perceive stress; (2) What were the perceived stressors of public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia; and (3) What were the perceived impact of stressors on public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia schools principals' work? The literature indicated principals were experiencing medium to high levels of job stress (Boyland, 2011). As a result of the principals experiencing job stress, physical and mental capabilities were impacted (Boyland). Another study conducted by Uba-Mbibi (2013) identified student discipline, workload, and class

size as stressors for principals. Time management was also identified as a major stressor for principals (Abu-Nasser, 2011).

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine how principals perceived their stress, what were the perceived stressors, and the impact of stressors on work. The researcher used Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey to analyze principal perceived stress. Next, a stressors survey was analyzed using the Delphi method to derive a consensus of principal stressors. Lastly, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to gain insight about the impact of the stressor on principals' work. The researcher also gathered demographically data. The participants were public elementary school principals in four southwest Georgia school districts. Nine participants were included in the study. The data from the demographic surveys, perceived stress surveys, stressor surveys, and semi-structured interviews were analyzed and tabulated by the researcher.

Analysis of Research Findings

The study included eight female principals and one male principal. Three principals were white and six were black. One hundred percent of the black principals were female. Eighty percent of the participants were between the ages of 41-60. Eighty-nine percent of the principals were married. Eighty-eight percent of the principals had 10 years or less of experience as principals. One hundred percent of the principals worked more than 46 hours per week. There were 88% of the principals' schools received Title I funds and 67% of the principals' schools had a free and reduced lunch rate of 98% to 100%. Only 33% of the schools scored above the state average of 76 on the CCRPI report.

The principals defined stress as reactions to external factors, being overwhelmed, uncontrollable situations as wells reactions to some factors. The results of the Perceived Stress Survey included 33% of the principals in the study indicated experiencing a perceive stress at a

low level and 33% indicated medium perceived stress, as well as 33% indicated high perceived stress. One district's principals were represented in all three ranges (low, medium, and high perceived stress). Principals who scored medium perceived stress were all black females who worked over 46 hours per week. One hundred percent of the principals, who scored high stress on the Perceived Stress Survey worked over 46 hours, received Title I funds, and indicated their stress levels were increasing. Although, 67% of the participants indicated stress levels were increasing, the mean score of perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Survey was 16.22 which is medium level stress. Principals attributed the increase in stress to systems reconfiguring buildings, accountability changes, teacher evaluations, assessment changes, personnel issues, job security, increased job demands, and low performing schools. Sixty-seven percent of the principals indicated some level of stress was perceived at the end of the day. Examples of perceived stress were being tired, no tolerance for people, high stress, not wanting to talk to anyone, being exhausted, thinking about what I have to do the next day, and having enough brain left to get home.

Principals indicated identified a consensus of stressors on the Stressors Survey. The major stressors for principals in their work were workload, increased job demands, time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability, and bureaucracy. In comparison, the interview data, reported major stressors were time, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations, discipline, and finance. Principals also identified other stressors in their work as lack of parental support, dealing with negative people, changes in the district, discipline, teachers not performing, and student learning. Forty-four percent of the principals indicated the removal of the central office meeting would be most beneficial. Principals stated removing this stressor would allow them to spend more time in their buildings.

The principals indicated the stressors certainly impact their work. The principals also indicated the teacher evaluations were timely and lengthy. The principals also stated it was difficult to use the instrument to evaluate teachers effectively. Accountability impacts the principals' evaluations. Student performance on test scores account for 70% of the principals' evaluation score. The enormous amount of paper work causes some principals to work late or take work home thus impacting family life. Addressing discipline issues impacted principals' time to visit and effectively serve as instructional leaders. The lack of parental support on discipline issues added to the stress.

Sixty-seven percent of the principals perceived there was a negative relationship between professional stress and personal stress. One-hundred percent of the principals participate in on and off the job coping mechanisms. On the job the most frequent coping mechanisms was laughing, planning and attending events for staff and students, and going into classrooms. Principals indicated off the job they participate mostly in hobbies, prayer/church, and exercising/walking to cope with the stress. Although, 100% of the participants indicated the job as principals was different than expected and 67% stated their stress levels were increasing, 67% indicated they would not change positions if they were given the opportunity. One hundred percent of the participants had held positions as teacher and assistant principals and 78% of the principals indicated the most stressful position held was principal.

Even though principals identified coping mechanisms to deal with stress, unexpected factors such as being held accountable for issues not within their control, little parental support, micromanaging employees, held accountable for the school in its entirety, difficulty delegating duties and responsibilities, unsatisfactory compensation, and the vast amount of paper were other stressors that impacted their work. Fifty-six percent of the principals indicated mornings

are the most stressful time of the day for them. During this time, parent and bus issues arise, teachers are calling in sick and substitute teachers are being called in to supervise classes. Thirty-three percent of the principals informed the researcher that delegating was a necessity and needed to be implemented more often in their leadership.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Principals in this study defined stress using terms such as external factors, not in control, reactions, response, and overwhelmed. These terms were similar to the definition of stress as noted by Hans Seyle (1936). Seyle defined stress as the body's reaction to challenges. Seyle also identified these challenges as stressors. Similarly to principal responses, Robbins, Powers, & Burgess (2013) also related stress as how the body reacts to different events. The principals' definitions were also similar to Nordqvist's study in 2009 where stress was defined as having physiological effects on the body. Principals also indicated impacted them by causing anxiety, discomfort, and worry.

Table 5 – Descriptive Data Quantitative Item Analysis

Sex (Table 8)

A study conducted by Sogunro in 2012 included 52 principals in Connecticut. The principals in the Connecticut study included 40 males (77%) and 12 females (23%). In comparison, the southwest Georgia study included 8 females (89%) and 1 male (11%). Chaudhuri(2016) study of 60 principals in Tacoma, Washington included 36 (60%) women and 24 (40%) men.

Age (Table 10)

Chaudhuri conducted a study in 2016 of 60 elementary school principals in Tacoma, Washington and the ages of the principals were 5(80%) between the age of 25 – 30, 21 (35%) were between

the age of 36 – 45, 22 (37%) were between the age of 46 – 54, and 12 (20%) were 55 years old and older. The southwest Georgia study included principals of the following ages 1 (12%) were between the age of 31 – 40, 4(44%) were between the age of 41-50, and 4 (44%) were between the age of 51-60.

Ethnicity (Table 9)

Kreysman conducted a study of principals in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2010 and the study included 4 (1.9%) American Indian/Alaskan Native, 6 (2.3%) Asian/Pacific Islander, 8(3.1%) Black, 9 (3.5%) Hispanic, 228(89.1%) white, and 1 (.4%) Other. The southwest Georgia study was less diverse. The southwest Georgia study included 3 (33%) white and 6(67%) black participants.

Student Enrollment (Table 17)

A study conducted in Indiana by Boyland in 2011 included 193 elementary principals. Seventy-one of the schools had a student enrollment of 400 (36.8%). Eighty-nine (46.1%) schools had student enrollment of 401-600 students. Thirty-two (16.6%) of the schools had an enrollment of more than 600 students and one (.5%) participant did not indicate the student enrollment.

Kreysman's student of Nevada principals in 2010 included 89 (34.8%) schools with 0 -600 students, 123 (48.0%) with enrollment of 601-1200, 30 (11.7%) had a student enrollment of 1201-1800, and 14 (5.5%) had a student enrollment of 1801 or more students. In comparison to the southwest Georgia study, 3 (33%) had a student enrollment of 400 -450, 2 (22%) had a student enrollment of 451-600, 3 (33%) had a student enrollment of 601-750, and 1 (11%) had a student enrollment of 750 or more students.

Type of School/Principal (Table 7)

The southwest Georgia study included 9 (100%) public elementary schools in Georgia. Moran conducted a study of 64 public school principals. The Moran study (2010) included 15 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, and 4 high schools.

Title I (Table 18)

Kreysman's study of Nevada principals in 2010 included 111 (43.4%) Title I schools and 145 (56.6) school that were not Title I schools. The southwest Georgia study included 8 (88%) Title I schools and 1 (12%) that was not a Title I school.

Free and Reduced Lunch (Table 19)

The schools in the southwest Georgia study included five (56%) of schools with a free and reduced lunch rate of 100%. Two schools in the southwest Georgia study had a free and reduced lunch rate of more than 83% and 1 (11%) had a free and reduced lunch rate of 39%. Contrarily, the study conducted by Fink and Silverman in 2014 of Seattle, Washington principals where the majority of the 39 schools in the study had a free and reduced lunch rate of 88% or more. The study of conducted by Chaudhuri (2016) included 0-40% free and reduced lunch rate, 41-65% free and reduced lunch rate and 66-100% free and reduced lunch rate.

CCRPI (Table 20)

As indicated by the Georgia Department of Education (2016), CCRPI scores are measured using a scale score of 0 to 100. The average CCRPI score for public schools in Georgia in 2014-2015 was 76. Three (33%) schools in the southwest Georgia study scored above the state average CCRPI score of 76 during the 2014-2015 school year. Five (56%) scored below the state average CCRPI score in the southwest Georgia study and 1 (11%) did not receive a CCRPI score during the 2014-2015 school year.

Years of Experience as a teacher (Table 13)

The Chaudhuri (2016) study of Tacoma, Washington principals indicated 44(73%) of principals had prior teaching experience of 9 or more years, 6 (10%) of the principals had 3-9 years of teaching experience, and 6 (10%) had 6 -8 years of teaching experience prior to principalship. The southwest Georgia study include 3 (33%) principals with 5-7 years of teaching experience, 3

(33%) had 8-10 years of teaching experience, 2 (22%) had 11-13 years of teaching experience, and 1 (12%) had 14-16 years of teaching experience.

Years of Experience as a principal (Table 12)

Fifty-one (26.4%) of principals in the Boyland study (2011) of Indiana principals had five years or less of principal, 52 (26.9%) had 6-10 years of principal experience, 33(17.1%) had 11-15 years of principal experience, 45 (23.3%) of the principals had 16-25 years of experience, and 12 (6.2%) had 25 years or more of principal experience. The Connecticut study by Sogunro in 2012 principals' years of experience included 21 (40.4%) had 5 years or less experience as a principal, 20 (38.5%) had 10-20 years of principal experience, and 11 (21.2%) had 20 years or more of experience as a principal. The southwest Georgia study included 2 (22%) of principals with one year or less of experience, 2 (22%) with 2-4 years of experience as principal, 2(22%) with 5-7 years of experience, 2(22%) with 8-10 years of experience and 1 (12%) with 14-16 years of experience.

Years Employed at Current School (Table 14)

The Chaudhuri (2016) study of Tacoma, Washington principals included 15 principals (25%) who were in their first year of principalship. Twenty-five (42%) had 2-3 years of experience as principal in their current school, 16 (27%) had been principal in their school for 4-10 years, and 4 (7%) had 11 or more years of experience as principal in their current school. The southwest Georgia study included 3 (33%) of principals who were employed in their current school for one year or less, 1 (11%) with 2-4 years of experience in the current school, 3 (33%) with 8-10 years of experience in the current school, 1 (11%) with 14-16 years of experience in the current school, and 1 (11%) who had 26 years or more in the current school.

Highest Level of Education (Table 15)

The southwest Georgia study included 4(44%) of principals with Specialist's degrees and 5(56%) with Doctorate degrees. The Kreysman study of Nevada principals included 191 (74.6%) with Master's degrees, 20(7.8%) with Specialist's degrees, 38(14.8%) with Doctorate degrees, and 7 (2.7%) who indicated other degrees. The Boyland study in 2011 of Indiana principals included 155 (80.3%) with Master's degrees and 38 (19.6%) with Specialist's or Doctorate degrees.

Hours Worked Per Week (Table 16)

According to the U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics (2016) principals normally work extended hours by chaperoning sports activities and other school functions. The southwest Georgia study indicated 4 (44%) of the principals worked 46-50 hours per week, 1 (12%) worked 51-55 hours per week, and 4 (44%) worked 56 hours or more per week. Kreysman's study of Nevada principals indicated 46 (18%) worked 40-49 hours per week, 147 (57.4%) worked 50-59 hours per week and 63(24.6%) worked 60 or more hours per week.

Table 6

Interview Question 1 Definition of Stress (Table 24)

Historically, Seyle(1936) defined stress as the body's reaction to demands. The southwest Georgia study principals defined stress as not being in control, reactions, external factors, being overwhelmed, things that cannot be controlled and anxiety.

Perceived Stress Level (Table 21)

The study conducted by Moran in 2014 in Louisiana public schools indicated 94.44% of the principals indicated they experienced medium to high stress. Boyland's 2011 study of Indiana principals indicated 92.1% of the 193 principals indicated a medium to high level of perceived

stress. The southwest Georgia study indicated 67% of principals' perceived medium to high stress.

Perceived Greatest Stressors (Table 24 and 27)

According to the Sogunro (2012) study, the greatest stressors indicated by principals in unpleasant relationships, time constraints, school crises, policy demands, budgets, fear of failure, and negative publicity. In 1977, Swent and Gmelch conducted a study of Oregon principals and principals indicated administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, making decisions that conflicted with personal beliefs and massive expectations their greatest stressors.

Another historical study conducted by Brimm 1981 of Tennessee principals indicated major stressors as state, federal, local policies, making decisions that impact others, parent conflicts, evaluating staff members, interruptions, completing paperwork and reports, school activities outside of school hours, public approval and financial support, lack of progress of job performance, heavy workload. The southwest Georgia study indicated major stressors as time constraints, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/reports, workload, increased job demands, finance, and discipline.

Interview Question 4 Removal of Stressors (Table 28)

Principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated the removal of central office meetings, discipline, stressed teachers, and teacher evaluations would relieve their stress. The study conducted by Sogunro in 2012 70% of Connecticut principals indicated the central office caused most of their stress.

Interview Question 5 Stress at the end of the day (Table 29)

Principals in the southwest Georgia study 6 (67%) indicated they feel some form of stress at the end of the day. Sogunro's study in 2012 of Connecticut principals indicated that 90% of principals feel some form of stress because of work.

Interview Question 6 Professional and Personal Stress (Table 30)

Sogunro's study (2012) indicated the negative impact of work related stress impacted job efficiency as well as their personal lives. Ninety-six percent of the principals in Sogunro's 2012 study indicated the stress impacted their ability to perform their jobs, their health, and their personal lives. Only 77% of the principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated there was a negative relationship between their professional and personal lives.

Interview Questions 7a and 7 b Coping Mechanisms (Tables 31 and 32)

According to Hurley (2007) coping mechanisms may include massage therapy, relaxation techniques, and medication. Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo (2013) indicated principals use the following to cope with work related stress medication, prioritizing, religion, self control, support from colleagues, exercise, and eating healthy. The principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated using the following coping mechanisms similar to those indicated in the Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo's study religion, exercise, and talking with others in the education field. Participants in the southwest Georgia study also indicated laughing, trips, hobbies, and visiting classrooms as coping mechanisms.

Interview Question 8 Job Expectations (Table 33)

In the study conducted by Moran in Louisiana in 2014, six participants indicated job expectations would decrease their stress levels. The principals in the Louisiana study indicated having clear job expectations would assist and removing too many changes in state policies. The southwest Georgia study principals indicated more parent support, learning to delegate, and not being accountable for uncontrollable events would decrease their stress levels.

Interview Question 9 Changing jobs (Table 35)

According to Delisio (2008), the high job expectations are causing principals to question how much longer they can perform the duties. Delisio feared no one will be available to replace the principals who burn out. On the other hand, 67% of the principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated although their stress is increasing, they would not change jobs. One participant in the southwest Georgia study indicated early retirement was an option because of the increasing stress.

Impact of stress

The impact of stress on principals in the 2013 study by Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo was due to not managing time to meet deadlines, inadequate job performance, working at home, unsatisfied with job, not interested in job, negative thoughts, aggressiveness, a high level of frustration, and not going to work. Boyland's 2011 study of Indiana principals indicated stress on the job impacted principals' health as well as the function of the school. The southwest Georgia study indicated that principals indicated inadequate time was available as instructional leaders because they are unable to visit classrooms due to discipline and time constraints. In an effort to meet the needs of teachers and students, principals also indicated bureaucracy and dealing with the central office made this difficult. The impact of time constraints and increased paperwork led to interference of home lives. Principals worked longer hours or took work home with them in the southwest Georgia study.

Research Question 1 – To what extent does principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive they are stressed?

Boyland (2011), Sogunro (2012), and, Moran (2014), conducted significant studies on stress (See Tables 3). The perceived stress of principals in this study indicated 67% of the principals' perceived stress was medium and 33% of perceived stress was low. These results are

significantly different in comparison with a study conducted by Boyland in 2011. Boyland's study of principals in Indiana indicated 92% of the principals' perceived stress was medium to high levels of stress and 8% was low. Sogunro (2012) reported 90% of the participants in a study of Connecticut principals indicated internal and external factors impacted their stress.

In comparison to other studies, the perceived stress of principals in southwest Georgia school districts was low. Sixty-seven percent of the principals the southwest Georgia public elementary study indicated stress levels were increasing. These results are similar to the study Boyland conducted in 2011. Seventy percent of the principals in Boyland's study indicated they were experiencing more stress than ever. The principals in the Boyland study attributed the increase to increased job demand and accountability. Public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia also indicated accountability change and increased job demands to the increase in their stress. The public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia also added refiguring buildings, teacher evaluations, assessment changes, personnel issues, job security, and low performing schools as factors that led to increased stress. Moran's study of principals in Louisiana indicated 94.44% of principals perceived medium to high stress.

Research Question 2 What perceived stressors did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?

Brimm (1981), Krzemienski (2012), Sogunro(2012), & Wells & Flacko (2015) conducted studies about the perceived causes of principal stress (See Table 4). For the purpose of this study, the researcher analyzed the causes of stress for principals by using a Stressors Survey and interview questions. Principals identified on both instruments the following causes of principal stress: time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability and bureaucracy. The principals also indicated discipline and finance as stressors.

Historically, Brimm's (1981) study of Tennessee principals' stressors indicated state, federal, local policies, making decisions that impact others, parent conflicts, evaluating staff members, interruptions, completing paperwork and reports, school activities outside of school hours, public approval and financial support, lack of progress of job performance, heavy workload. Principals in southwest Georgia public elementary schools identified the same stressors as principals in Brimm's 1981 study of Tennessee principals: evaluating staff members, completing reports and paperwork, and finance. In comparison to the Wells and Klocko study in 2015 in a Midwestern state, diminished revenue (finance), not enough time (time), and amount of paperwork were also identified as stressors for principals.

Budgetary and time constraints were the only common stressors between Sogunro's (2012) study of principals in Connecticut and public elementary school principals in Georgia. Principals in Connecticut also identified people conflicts, school crises, changing policy, fear of failure, and negative publicity as stressors. Forty-four percent of southwest Georgia public elementary school principals indicated the removal of central office would alleviate their stress. In Sogunro's study 70% of the principals indicated the central office meetings caused most of their stress. Although principals in southwest Georgia public elementary schools identified mornings as their most stressful time of the day, none of the other studies indicated a specific time of day that was most stressful for principals. Krzemienski in 2015 studied 142 elementary schools in Florida; the principals in the Florida study indicated principals identified increased accountability and policy mandates as major stressors.

Research Question 3 What is the perceived impact of stressors on principals' work in southwest Georgia elementary school principals?

Brimm (1981), Krzemienski (2012), Sogunro (2012), Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo (2013) Kreysman (2010), and Wells and Klocko (2015) and Boyland (2011) conducted studies on stressors and the impact of stressors (See tables 2 and 4).

The impact of stressors on principals in southwest Georgia public elementary schools was directed more to job impact. The southwest Georgia principals indicated time consuming teacher evaluations: prevented them from being effective instructional leaders. The southwest Georgia principals also indicated accountability heavily impacts their evaluations, completing paperwork requires them to stay late or take work home thus impacting home life. Discipline issues for principals in southwest Georgia disrupted classroom visits and being instructional leaders.

Contrarily, principals in Florida highlighted the mental and physical impact of the stress (Krzemienski, 2012). The Florida principals indicated experiencing headaches, heart attacks, and eye issues. The Florida principals also indicated mental exhaustion and a sense of lethargy. The Florida principals also indicated similarly to southwest Georgia principals that accountability requirements and amount of work impacted stress. Principals in a Nevada study identified time, paperwork, reports, meetings, and staff as major task-based stressors (Kreysman, 2010). Also Sogunro's study in 2012, indicated that job stress impacted their lives professionally and personally. Ninety-six percent of the principals in Sogunro's study indicated because of work related stress, their social life, mental health, and productivity at work were impacted.

The study of southwest Georgia public elementary school principals indicated principals were experiencing difficulty delegating, but one of Sogunro's coping tips was to learn to say no to certain tasks and delegate more to relieve stress. The study conducted by Wells and Flocko in 2015 of 3,084 principals in a Midwestern state of the United States indicated more teacher

leadership may reduce principal stress. Principals in the Wells and Flocko (2015) study identified finance as a major stressor for principals. Principals in the Wells and Flocko (2015) study indicated the impact of stress on principals may be decreased if teachers would handle classroom level issues, use tests data to improve student learning, mentor reluctant teachers, participate more in chaperoning after school activities, assisting with reports, and participating in peer evaluations. Brimm's historical study in 1981 of Tennessee principals the elementary principals indicated the stressors of the job caused them to inflict even higher job expectations for themselves.

One hundred percent of the southwest Georgia public elementary school principals stated they participated in coping mechanism. Boyland (2011) Indiana principals shared 20 strategies used to manage job stress. In comparison to southwest Georgia public elementary school principals' coping mechanisms on and off the job, the two studies had the following similar coping mechanisms: exercise, get out of the office, network with other or talk to colleagues, don't take it personally or keep emotions out of it, sense of humor or laughing, have a balance by spending time with family and friends and participating in hobbies, and doing things you enjoy like such as getting your hair and nails done, walk in the woods, or massages. Principals in southwest Georgia identified exercise and relaxation as coping mechanism;, Sogunro also recommended these coping mechanisms as well for principals. Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo's study in 2013 indicated the following similar coping mechanisms as the study of southwest Georgia public elementary school principals' exercise, religion, sharing your problems. Principals in southwest Georgia shared their problems with colleagues and spouses as a way to cope with stress. Medication was mentioned as a coping mechanism in Sogunro's and Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo's study but was not indicated as a coping mechanism in the southwest Georgia study.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study of public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia was to explore the perceived stress of principals, identify the major stressors of principals in southwest Georgia public elementary schools, and examine the impact of these stressors on principals' work through the following research questions (1) To what extent do elementary school principals in Georgia public schools perceive they are stressed; (2) What are the perceived stressors for public elementary school principals in southwest Georgia; and (3) What is the perceived impact of stressor on principals' work in southwest Georgia elementary schools?

Research Question 1 To what extent do elementary school principals in Georgia public schools perceive they are stressed?

The principals in this study indicated perceived stress levels by completing Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey. The results of the Perceived Stress Survey indicated that 33% of principals' perceived stress as low, 33% perceived stress as medium, and 33% perceived stress as high. In comparison, a study conducted by Boyland (2011) indicated 8% of principals experienced perceived stress was low, 54% medium, and 39% high. Although the perceived stress was evenly distributed across the spectrum as low, medium and high for southwest Georgia principals, 67% of the participants were indicated they experienced some form of stress at the end of the day (Table 29). Also, 67% of southwest Georgia principals indicated stress levels were increasing (Table 26). Eighty-three percent of the southwest Georgia principals who indicated stress was increasing also indicated "changes" were the cause of the increased stress.

As the role of principalship is changing and job demands are increasing (Wells & Klocko, 2015; Boyland, 2011), the low percentage of principals who indicated a high perceived stress level was surprising since principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated stress was increasing. The responses indicated principals were experiencing stress, but they may not fully

disclosed their true perceptions of stress. The responses indicated that principal positions have changed and the job has become more demanding, yet respondents indicated that only 33% of the southwest Georgia participants' perceived stress levels are low with 100% of the participants indicated that they participated in coping mechanisms on and off the job, (Table 31 and 32), participants may not have disclosed their feeling. The responses support that 78% of the southwest Georgia principals stated being a principal was their most stressful position held (Table 42).

Research Question 2 What perceived stressors did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?

Principals in the southwest Georgia study identified perceived stressors through the use of a Stressors Survey (Table 24) and interview questions (Table 27). The following stressors were indicated on both the Stressors Survey and the interview question (What is your greatest stressor): time, paperwork, accountability, and bureaucracy. Although the principals indicated these factors as their greatest stressors, when asked if they could remove one thing as a stressor at work the southwest Georgia principals identified discipline, central office meetings, teacher evaluations, stressed teachers, and negative teachers (Table 28). Discipline was the only stressor listed on both instruments as a greatest stressor and on the removal list. Therefore; principals were able to identify the greatest stressor at work, but identified different stressors to be removed from their work. However, lack of parent support, dealing with negative people, changes, discipline, teachers not performing, and student learning were also identified as other stressors in southwest Georgia principals' work (Table 40).

These results indicated to the researcher that principals may not thoroughly analyze themselves or realize which stressors are actually the greatest stressors in their work. These

responses also indicated that principals experience a plethora of stressors in their work. Historical research conducted by Brimm (1981) highlighted similar stressors of accountability, evaluating staff members, paperwork, and workload. The researcher agreed the same issues are major stressors for principals in southwest Georgia. Other stressors identified in Brimm's study, but not mentioned in the southwest Georgia study are relevant: such as making decisions, parent-school conflict, after school activities, interruptions, and public approval. Sogunro (2012) also included stressors that are relevant, but not mentioned by southwest Georgia principals such as school crises and fear of failure. Principals experience a variety of different stressors is indicated in responses concerning the greatest stressors and the removal of a stressor.

Research Question 3 What was the perceived impact of stressors on principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools?

Southwest Georgia principals identified major stressors such as time, accountability, bureaucracy, paperwork/job expectations, discipline, and finance as stressors that impact their work. The southwest Georgia principals also identified other stressors as lack of parent support, negative people, district changes, non-performing teachers, and student learning. The impact of these stressors on southwest Georgia principals focus on not being able to be instructional leaders because of paperwork, teacher evaluations, meetings, central office meetings, and teacher evaluations. The southwest Georgia principals also indicated they did not have time to complete the amount of paperwork required. Therefore, work was taken home or principals stayed late to complete the assignments. The southwest Georgia principals stated working at home and staying late limited the time they were able to spend with their families. Only two southwest Georgia principals indicated during the interview process that stress impacted their health.

As indicated Robbins, Powers, and Burgess (2013) reported during the exhaustion stage of stress, individuals are more susceptible to illnesses such as hypertension and heart disease. Sogunro's study in 2012 indicated principals' sleep and average of 5 to 6 hours per night. Boyland's 2011 study also indicated stress impacted their health. In the study conducted by Boyland, 69% of the principals perceived the stress they experienced at work impacted their health in a negative manner.

Because Georgia principals were inundated with so many changes, they did not focus the fact that health issues caused by stress may impact their health. The researcher continued and constant job stress impacts health which ultimately will impact job performance. While the southwest Georgia principals indicated they experienced stress and stress was increasing, 33% indicated the need to learn to delegate. Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo (2013) discussed that more stress is caused when principals fail to delegate. Lack of delegation also appeared to impact stress.

Relationship to the Research

Research Question 1 To what extent did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive they were stressed?

Sixty-seven percent of the principals indicated a medium to high level of perceived stress on Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey and 33% indicated low perceived stress. In comparison to Boyland's 2011 study of Indiana principals, 92.1% of the principals surveyed indicated a moderate to high level of perceived stress and 7.8% indicated a low level of stress. There was a considerable difference in the perception of stress by principals in these two studies. Boyland's study also indicated 70% of principals reported stress levels were increasing. Similarly, 67% of the principals in the southwest Georgia study reported stress levels were increasing. In contrast

to the southwest Georgia study, Moran's study conducted in 2014 in southeastern Louisiana indicated 94.44% of principals perceived stress levels as medium to high range.

Research Question 2 What perceived stressors did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?

The results of the southwest Georgia study indicated the greatest stressors were time constraints, paperwork/reports, accountability, finance, discipline and bureaucracy. In comparison with Brimm's (1981) historical study of Tennessee principals indicated the following similar stressors paperwork/reports and financial support. On the other hand, Brimm's study included the following major stressors not mentioned by southwest Georgia principals: policies, decisions that impact others, parent conflicts, evaluating staff members, interruptions, working outside of normal school hours, public approval, lack of progress in job performance, and heavy workload. Principals in a study conducted by Wells and Klocko (2015) of principals in a Midwestern state in the United States of America indicated principals indicated similar perceived major stressors as financial constraints, time, and paperwork. Contrarily, principals in the Wells and Klocko study also mentioned major stressors not included in the southwest Georgia study: personal management, constant interruptions, managing emails, balancing work and personal life, loss of personal time. Connecticut principals indicted major stressors as people conflict, time constraints, school crises, policy demands, budgetary constraints, fear of failing, and negativity from the public and media outlets (Sogunro, 2012). In comparison to the southwest Georgia study and the Connecticut studies, the similar stressors were budgetary issues and time constraints. While 44% of principals in the southwest Georgia study indicated the removal of the central office meetings would decrease stress levels, 70% of the principals in the Connecticut study indicated that unrealistic deadlines from central office decrease stress levels.

Swent and Gmelch's study of Oregon principals in 1977 indicated administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, making decisions that conflicted with personal beliefs and massive expectations as major sources of stress for principals.

Research Question 3 What was the perceived impact of stressors on principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools?

Principals in the southwest Georgia indicated the impact discipline as preventing time to be instructional leaders and accountability impacts teacher or principal evaluations heavily. The southwest Georgia Principals also indicated time constraints prevented the completion of required paperwork/reports. The southwest Georgia principals also mentioned in order to complete the massive amount of paperwork/report, work assignments had to be completed at home or they had to work late which and caused an unbalance in their personal lives. Additionally, the study conducted in 2013 by Uba-Mbibi & Nwamuo indicated more stress impacts a principal's ability to delegate thus impacting his work. In the southwest Georgia study 22% of principals also mentioned the impact of job stress caused health issues as well.

Implications

Research Question 1 To what extent did principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary school principals perceive they were stressed?

Implication 1

Principals are stressed and the stress is increasing. Short term goals may include district leaders determining ways locally to decrease perceived stress of principals such as limiting frequent district changes. Since 67% of principals in the southwest Georgia study, indicated stress is increasing and 67% also indicated they would change professions if possible; principals

are considering retiring early and leaving the field. In an effort to decrease principal stress, incorporating stress coping mechanism professional development would be beneficial to principals' stress level. Principal candidates may also gain a full understanding of the field by shadowing a principal as a requirement by post-secondary schools.

Implication 2

Principals who scored in the medium to high perceived stress level worked over 46 hours per week. Schools need to provide principals with professional development to learn strategies about effective time management.

Research Question 2 What perceived stressors do principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools perceive influenced their work?

Implications 1

Principals highlighted a variety of stressors in their work. Many felt that constant change caused their stress to increase the most. Local, state, and district personnel may evaluate the accountability measures to evenly distribute the impact of student success on the principals, teachers, parents, and students. Post-secondary institutions need to better prepare teacher and administrative students for job. By increasing college students' knowledge of the field, the students may not feel overwhelmed once they enter the field.

Research Question 3 What were the perceived impact of stressors on principals in Southwest Georgia public elementary schools?

Implication 1

The impact of the stressors on principals are causing health issues, principals working late, principals taking work home, and negative impact on family life. Local systems may consider implementing strategies to help principals cope with stress. By helping principals cope with stress, they may feel more compelled to remain in the field. Systems may also assign a

mentor principal to new principals to help accumulate principals to the job. Long term, systems may need to hire more assistant principals help share in the work load.

Implication 2

The participants indicated the role of principal was their most stressful position. Because principals view their role as stressful, principals need to be recognized more for their efforts.

Recommendations

Recommendations for implementing the results of the study

1. The perceived stress of principals was equal across low, medium, and high. Additional research may be needed using a different instrument to measure principal perceived stress. The researcher also recommends the stress survey is conducted at a different time in the school year for more reliable data results.

Rationale:

Because the principals scored equally across the spectrum, but indicated stress was increasing, the researcher suggests using a different instrument in an effort to capture a more accurate perception of principal perceived stress. The perceived surveys were administered during the summer and the results may have been different if the study was conducted during the middle of the school year when things are busy and students are on campus.

2. The Stressors Survey indicated similar stressors from the interview questions and therefore; the indicated stressors may be used as a basis for principal stressors.

Rationale:

Two instruments, a Stressors Survey and an interview question, were used for principals to indicate their stress levels. The data correlated and very similar stressors emerged from

the results of the instruments. The researcher recommends these stressors as a basis for the participants' greatest stressors.

3. Local systems may consider reviewing the results of the greatest stressors and how stress impacts principals' job and develop ways to assist principals in coping with stress.

Rationale:

As the research indicates, southwest Georgia principals are stressed and stress increasing. Some are considering retiring early and if they had the opportunity they would change professions. Health issues have become a problem for some principals also.

In an effort to prevent principal stress levels from impacting student achievement, teacher morale, and principal retention, it will behoove local systems to understand why principals are stressed and create programs and policy changes to retain principals and decrease stress levels.

4. Local systems may use these results to help develop more concise job descriptions so principals have a clearer understanding of what is expected as principal.
Principals indicated they are overwhelmed and have to deal with a variety of issues throughout the day. Principals indicated they are not sure what is expected. A more concise and specific list of duties will help principals under their roles and expectations as a principal.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. The research study may be conducted with a larger population including a more diverse group of participants in relation to sex and ethnicity.

Rationale:

Further research can be conducted to include participants from more ethnic backgrounds especially black males. A larger population will provide more insight and the researcher will be able to gather more data.

2. The study may also be conducted over a longer period of time to give participants more time to carefully complete instruments.

Rationale:

The study was conducted over a period of approximately four months. The researcher suggests maybe conducting this study over a period of at least 1 year to gather data during various times of the school year.

3. The study may also be conducted at a different time of the school year. The results may be different.

Rationale:

This study was conducted during the summer and no students and very few teachers were in the building. The summer is a little more relaxed for principals and conducting the study in October or farther into the school year may have yielded more concise results especially the perceived stress levels.

4. The study may include elementary principals from other areas in Georgia or maybe in a different region of the United States.

This will allow for the inclusion of more urban schools and the stressors and impact they experience. By reaching out beyond southwest Georgia, more insight may be gained from other areas and schools who deal with different issues and cultures.

5. A future study may also be conducted to include observations of principals while on the job so the researcher may gain more insight about the day to day duties of a principal.

Rationale:

Observations of the principals' normal school day may provide the researcher with a richer understanding of their duties, stressors, and impact of the stressors.

Summary

Principal stress is increasing and the demands of the job are increasing as well. In an effort to prepare principals for their roles, post-secondary schools need to prepare principals. Providing principal candidates with mentors and internships will allow principals to experience the role of principals. Also, increasing the rigor of programs will help principal candidates become more prepared for the field. To strengthen the study, future studies should in principal observations. The research clearly indicated the stress levels of southwest Georgia Elementary principals were increasing. Broadening the geographic region of study will provide a larger perspective of principal stress.

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APPENDIX A

Superintendent Letter

Superintendent Letter

Date

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXXXX:

I am currently a doctoral student at Columbus State University pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I plan to conduct a research study to collect data about principal perceived stress, major causes of stress, and the impact of stress on Georgia public school principals.

I am respectfully requesting your permission to mail surveys through the XXXXXXXX County School District and conduct interviews with elementary school principals during the spring and summer of 2016. Participants will complete a perceived stress survey and a demographic survey. They will also identify major stressors through the use of the Delphi method. The Delphi method is a data ranking technique that will involve participants identifying major stressors in at least two cycles. The interview portion of this study will be conducted after work hours for approximately 30 to 45 minutes and the surveys will only take 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

The survey results may be published in my dissertation or future publications. Neither your district's name nor principal names will be used at any time during this study. All data collected in this study will remain confidential and kept one year after the completion and publication of the study. After one year, all data collected will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me at 229-942-1522 or email me via crimes_dorothy@columbusstate.edu. **Please complete the enclosed letter and return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by: Wednesday, May 18, 2016.** If you should have any questions in reference to the rights of the participants in this study, you can contact the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.
Sincerely,

Dorothy Y. Crimes, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Doctoral Student
Columbus State University

APPENDIX B

Superintendent Response Letter

Superintendent Response Letter

Please check your response below, sign, and date. Please mail response in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Dorothy Y. Crimes
Post Office Box 331
Preston, Georgia 31824

_____ As Superintendent of XXXXXX County School District, I consent for the elementary principals in my district to participate in a research student consisting of surveys and interviews to gather information for a dissertation about stress perception, causes of stress, and the impact of stress on principals. I understand that the district identity and all data collected by the researcher will be confidential.

_____ No, I do not consent to my district's participation in this study.

Name (Please print or type): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Superintendent Follow-up Letter

Superintendent Follow-up Letter

Date

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXXXXXX:

This a follow-up letter in reference to the letter that was sent to you last week. If you have not taken the time to complete and return the permission letter, I am resending the letter. Again, please complete, sign, and date the form and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Dorothy Y. Crimes
Post Office Box 331
Preston, Georgia 31824

Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please email me at crimes_dorothy@columbsstate.edu or give me a call at 229-942-1522.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Y. Crimes, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Doctoral Student
Columbus State University

APPENDIX D

Principal Participation Letter

Principal Participation Letter

Date:

XXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXXXXX:

I am currently a doctoral student at Columbus State University pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I plan to conduct a research study to collect data about principal perceived stress, major causes of stress, and the impact of stress on Georgia public school principals.

To complete my study, I am asking for your expert opinion and knowledge through the use of surveys and interviews. The instruments that I plan to use are a survey asking participants to identify their level of perceived stress, demographic survey, and through the use of the Delphi method, asking participants to rate stressors that impact their stress levels the most. The Delphi method is a data ranking technique and will involve each participant identifying major stressors in two rounds. It will only take 15 to 20 minutes of your time to complete each survey. Please mail the surveys to: Dorothy Y. Crimes, Post Office Box 331, Preston, Georgia 31824. A self-addressed stamped envelope will be provided for you. The final phase of the process will include a 30 to 45 minute telephone interview. The interview will be recorded and held in confidence by the use of a recording device with a pass code only known to the researcher. A copy of the transcription of the interview will be provided to you.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Please be assured that your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses and school districts are guaranteed. You may choose to remove yourself and no longer participate in the study even after the study has started.

The survey results may be published in my dissertation or future publications. Please be sure neither district names nor principal names will be used at any time during this study. All data collected in this study will remain confidential and kept one year after the completion and publication of the study. After one year, all data collected will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me at 229-942-1522 or email me via crimes_dorothy@columbusstate.edu. If you should have any questions in reference to the rights of the participants in this study, you can contact the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,
Dorothy Y. Crimes, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Doctoral Student
Columbus State University

APPENDIX E
Principal Follow-up Letter

Principal Follow-up Letter

Date:

XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXXXXX:

This is a follow-up letter in reference to the letter that was sent to you last week. If you have not taken the time to complete and return the survey(s), I am resending the survey(s) in this letter. Please complete the survey(s) and return them in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Dorothy Y. Crimes
Post Office Box 331
Preston, Georgia 31824

Sincerely,

Dorothy Y. Crimes, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Doctoral Student
Columbus State University

APPENDICES F

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Dorothy Ingram, a doctoral student the College of Education and Health Profession at Columbus State University. Advised by Dr. Pamela Lemoine, Assistant Professor, Columbus State University

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to investigate the perceived stress levels, causes of stress, and how stress impacts elementary school principals in Georgia public schools.

II. Procedures:

The researcher will gain permission from superintendents of each system via mailing a letter. The researcher will explain the research process in the letter. Superintendents will have three (3) days to sign and return the participation agreement. A follow-up letter will be mailed if no response by the deadline. Self-addressed stamped envelopes will be included in the letters. Next, the researcher will gather contact information from the school and/or school website for principals. A principal participation letter and informed consent letter will be sent to principals along with a self-addressed envelope for return to researcher within three (3) days.

During the first phase of the study, principals will be mailed a “Perceived Stress Survey” to complete along with a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return to the researcher. Principals will identify major stressors and complete a demographic survey to be used in the second phase of the study.

The stressors will be narrowed down to the top stressors using the Delphi method. The Delphi method is a data ranking technique using at least 2 cycles. This will involve participants identifying their major 20 stressors from a list of 25 stressors identified from the literature. The researcher will narrow those 20 stressors down to the top 15, and the list will be sent out again for participants to identify their top 10 stressors. At this point, the researcher will narrow the stressors down to the top 5 major stressors. During each cycle of identifying stressors, a self-addressed stamped envelope will be included for return to the researcher.

During the third phase, the researcher will schedule individual interviews with principals at each school district or via telephone. Principals will be interviewed using semi-structured interview questions with probing questions to follow. Participants will be reminded that the interview is recorded and confidential. This data will be recorded, transcribed, read and re-read, coded and identification of common and uncommon themes.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

There are no or little possible risks to the participants during this study. Surveys and interview data will be confidential, and all interviews will be held in private with only the researcher and the interviewee having access.

IV. Potential Benefits:

The benefits of this study include identifying factors that cause stress by principals. By identifying the stress factors and the impact on principals, leadership ability may improve for principals. This data may also guide districts into consideration of decreasing stress factors and assisting principals in dealing with stress. By doing this, all stakeholders benefit from more efficient, effective principals. This study will assist all stakeholders in understanding the stress that principals experience and may also influence future training and intervention for principals in the future.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There is no compensation for any of the participants in this study. The participants in this study will not receive any form of payment for participating in this study.

VI. Confidentiality:

All data collected will be kept under lock and key in the researcher’s home office with the researcher being the only person who has access. The recording of the interviews will be stored on a computer tablet with a password only known to the researcher. The data will remain stored for a period of one year and will then be destroyed or deleted by the researcher.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dorothy Young Ingram at 229-942-1522 or crimes_dorothy@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDICES G
Principal Demographic Survey

Principal Demographic Survey

Georgia Principal Stress

Created: March 23, 2016

Last Modified: May 17, 2016

1. School Name: Participant ID # _____

2. What is your sex?
 - Male
 - Female

3. What is your age?
 - Younger than 24
 - 24 - 30
 - 31 - 40
 - 41 - 50
 - 51 - 60
 - 61 or older

4. Which ethnic group do you most identify yourself with?
 - White
 - Black
 - Hispanic
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Other, please specify _____

5. What is your marital status?
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Separated

6. How many students are enrolled in your school as _____?

7. Is your school unique in the programs offered?
 - Magnet
 - Charter
 - Alternative
 - Career Academy
 - IB/International Baccalaureate
 - Other, please specify _____

8. Does your school qualify and receive Title I funds?
- Yes
 - No
9. What is your school's free and reduced lunch percentage rate? _____
10. What is your 2015 CCRPI score? _____
11. How many years have you served in the capacity of principal?
- One year or less
 - 2 - 4 years
 - 5 - 7 years
 - 8 - 10 years
 - 11 - 13 years
 - 14 - 16 years
 - 17 - 19 years
 - 20 - 22 years
 - 23 - 25 years
 - 26 or more years
12. How many years were you a classroom teacher?
- never
 - One year or less
 - 2 - 4 years
 - 5 - 7 years
 - 8 - 10 years
 - 11 - 13 years
 - 14 - 16 years
 - 17 - 19 years
 - 20 - 22 years
 - 23 - 25 years
 - 26 or more years
13. How long have you been employed in your current school?
- One year or less
 - 2 - 4 years
 - 5 - 7 years
 - 8 - 10 years
 - 11 - 13 years
 - 14 - 16 years
 - 17 - 19 years
 - 20 - 22 years
 - 23 - 25 years
 - 26 or more years

14. What is your highest level of education?
- Bachelor's
 - Master's
 - Educational Specialist
 - Doctorate
 - Other, please specify _____
15. During an average week, how hours do you work?
- 20 to 25
 - 26 to 30
 - 31 to 35
 - 36 to 40
 - 41 to 45
 - 46 to 50
 - 51 to 55
 - 56 +

APPENDIX H

Cohen's Perceived Stress Survey

Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling how often you feel or thought a certain way.

Name _____

Date _____

Age _____ Gender(Circle): M F Other _____

0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

1. How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. How often have you felt nervous and stressed?	0	1	2	3	4
4. How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle our personal problem?	0	1	2	3	4
5. How often have you felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
6. How often have you found that you could not cope with things that you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7. How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
8. How often have you felt that you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
9. How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your concern?	0	1	2	3	4
10. How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

Please feel free to use the *Perceived Stress Scale* for your research.

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References

The PSS Scale is reprinted with permission of the American Sociological Association, from Cohen, S., Karmarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24, 386-396.

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Spacapan, S. and Oskamp, S. (Eds.) *The Social Psychology of Health*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage,
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APPENDIX I

Stressors Survey #1

Stressors Survey #1

Participant Number: _____

Please identify from the list below the top 20 stressors of your work. Please clearly place a line underneath the top 20 stressors from the 25 listed below of your work. Please use an ink pen.

1. Policy
2. Student discipline
3. Workload
4. Inadequate teaching facilities
5. Conflict with teachers
6. Conflict with parents
7. Time constraints
8. School crisis/Safe schools
9. Fear of failure
10. Negativity from community
11. Bureaucracy
12. Central Office staff
13. Local school boards
14. Working conditions
15. Parental Involvement
16. Maintaining academic rigor
17. Increased job demands
18. Lack of autonomy
19. Complexity of the job
20. Paperwork/reports
21. Accountability
22. Role as instructional leader
23. Finances/Budgets
24. Teacher evaluations
25. Public relations

APPENDIX J

Stressors Survey #2

Stressors Survey #2

Participant Number: _____

Please identify from the list below the top 10 stressors of your work. You may circle the number or underline the stressor.

1. Student discipline
2. Workload
3. Conflict with teachers
4. Time constraints
5. Central Office staff
6. Maintaining academic rigor
7. Increased job demands
8. Complexity of the job
9. Teacher evaluations
10. Policy
11. Conflict with parents
12. Bureaucracy
13. Paperwork/reports
14. Role as instructional leader
15. Accountability

APPENDIX K
Stressors Survey #3

Stressors Survey #3

Participant Number: _____

Please identify from the list below the top 5 stressors of your work. You may circle, highlight, or underline your choices.

1. Workload
2. Time Constraints
3. Increased job demands
4. Paperwork/reports
5. Accountability
6. Role as instructional leader
7. Bureaucracy
8. Policy
9. Teacher evaluations
10. Central Office staff

APPENDIX L

Human Studies Certification

Human Studies Certificate

APPENDIX M
Approved IRB From

Approved IRB From