

Stress and Its Impact on Principal Performance: An Overview of Education Management

Ulfiah¹, Anti Nurannisa², Fanida Firdausi³

Islamic Educational Management Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati,
Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Email : ulfiah@uinsgd.ac.id¹, antinurannisa29@gmail.com², fanidafirlan@gmail.com³

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the impact of stress felt by school principals at the elementary school level in Bandung Regency. The research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted in January 2022 for three weeks through in-depth interviews with three informants. The purposive sampling technique selected informants. Data analysis was carried out by content analysis and triangulation of sources and methods. The results show that an unhealthy work environment pressure from teachers can affect the performance of school principals regardless of gender. Stress that can be felt in headaches, body aches, and hypertension are the main symptoms felt. This research implies that the principal looks moody or often emotional because he feels stressed at work and feels symptoms of illness. It is recommended that principals hire competent employees to assist in administration, delegate tasks, hold regular meetings and counseling, reduce their stress and create a supportive environment for a more efficient school administration.

Keywords: *Stress, Principal, Performance, Emotion*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak stres yang dirasakan oleh kepala sekolah di tingkat Sekolah Dasar daerah Kabupaten Bandung. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Penelitian dilakukan pada bulan Januari 2022 selama tiga minggu melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 3 informan. Informan dipilih dengan teknik purposive sampling. Analisis data dilakukan dengan analisis isi dan triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja yang kurang sehat, tekanan dari guru dapat mempengaruhi kinerja kepala sekolah terlepas dari jenis kelamin. Stres yang dirasakan dapat berupa sakit kepala, nyeri tubuh dan hipertensi adalah gejala utama yang dirasakan. Implikasi pada penelitian ini terlihat di mana, kepala sekolah terlihat murung atau sering emosional karena merasa stres di tempat kerja dan merasakan gejala penyakit. Direkomendasikan bahwa kepala sekolah harus mempekerjakan karyawan yang kompeten untuk membantu dalam administrasi, mendelegasikan tugas, menyelenggarakan rapat secara berkala dan konseling antara lain untuk mengurangi stres mereka dan menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung untuk administrasi sekolah yang lebih

Kata Kunci: *Stres, Kepala Sekolah, Kinerja, Emosi*

INTRODUCTION

School principals are currently faced with various management problems that hinder the effectiveness of school administration (Astuti et al., 2020; Musliadi et al., 2021). For example, the principal as a school administrator took the initiative to organize and direct the activities of teaching staff and education staff as well as students towards achieving school goals and conditions to develop school and home relationships in offline and online education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rahman & Subiyantoro, 2021; Kalangi et al., 2021). Principals who participate in managing curriculum and teaching, services, improving discipline, assessment, resource allocation, costs, and community relations (Rahman & Subiyantoro, 2021).

At Elementary Schools in Bandung Regency, the focus of the researchers' attention is because the targeted school is a new pioneering school and has only 2 - 3 graduates, so the Principal needs a unique strategy to realize the school's target in order to meet the quota of students in the study group. Has been determined, coupled with the services and demands of parents on learning during the pandemic. The principal also needs to give several tasks to teachers or other education personnel so that the demands of parents regarding learning can be adequately resolved.

However, not all tasks given by the principal can be carried out properly by subordinates (educators and education staff) because each educator and education staff do their preparatory work first and override the duties of the principal. Principals are also required to be skilled in achieving school goals, including decision-making skills, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict management, and holding meetings (Okereke, 2008). These various dynamics and work responsibilities require school principals to maximize their work towards the school and make it stressful.

According to Slyers (2011) stress means a general response made by the human body to something to defend itself by producing the hormone adrenaline. Anxiety that is physical, psychological, physiological, and sociological may arise due to the non-fulfillment of specific demands in the workplace. Egbulem (2007) define stress as a process in which events or environments, called stressors, threaten the existence and well-being of organisms and how individuals respond to these threats. It can also be seen as a feeling that occurs when the conditions or circumstances of a person's work or life make demands beyond the individual's ability to handle physical or emotional situations.

Principals who are faced with various problems so that it is not uncommon for stressful conditions to approach leaders in educational institutions, this is, of course, fatal if left unchecked because it will interfere with the ongoing process of improving the quality of human resources, increasing the professionalism of teachers, employees and all related to schools under the auspices of the school principal.

Stress is a condition of physical, psychosocial, and psychological changes that arise when a person experiences a disturbance or threat to himself due to limited ability to resolve or overcome the causes of stress (Gaol, 2013; Harms et

al., 2017). Sogunro's research (2012) found seven causes of principal stress: problems with conflicted people and unpleasant relationships, time constraints and time-related issues, crises in schools, policy demands full of challenges and excessive demands, and financial constraints fear of failure. Moreover, maintain the image of the school.

Vittoria's research states that the protracted COVID-19 pandemic worldwide requires decisive action to correct the unhealthy lifestyles that have developed in the last few months that have caused stress, mainly due to quarantine and an unhealthy lifestyle (Mattioli et al., 2021).

Research focusing on the stress of principals when managing educational institutions has received severe and widespread attention in various countries, such as Switzerland (Denecker, 2019), Malaysia (Tahir et al., 2019), Japan (Deguchi et al., 2018), Australia (Beausaert et al., 2016), United States (Grissom et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2019; Kaufman, 2019) and Germany (Hancock et al., 2019). However, the stressful experiences of principals are still being ignored, and few have studied them Tahir et al., (2019) comprehensively, including the stress experienced by principals in Indonesia. Based on the search results for scientific works from publications about stress, Indonesian school principals are still very minimal. This could be due to the limited literature related to principal stress in Indonesia. Therefore, this research position is one of the literature that can be used as a focus and attention on stress management for educational institution leaders so that it can be presented more deeply both from a leading clinical perspective and stress management that occurs significantly in reviewing the "what," "why," and "how."

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used qualitative research methods. Data sources are three principals of elementary schools in the Bandung Regency area and their opinions about the boredom or stress often felt while being a school principal. Data was obtained within three weeks through 4x meetings with the Principal in January 2022. The type of research used in this research is qualitative research with phenomenological methods, which examines a phenomenon and its meaning for an individual by interviewing individuals based on philosophical principles or teachings on existing phenomena. This research was conducted in 3 Elementary Schools in Bandung Regency, consisting of 3 Sub-districts, namely Cicalengka, Rancaekek, and Nagreg, Bandung Regency. The time of this research is three weeks in January 2022 through 4 meetings with informants.

The informant determination technique used in this research is purposive sampling, with the consideration that the informant can be trusted and competent as a source of data about the object of research, the informant knows the problem more broadly and deeply in connection with the object of research and the informant in this study is the principal. The data collection technique in this study was carried out by in-depth interviews with three informants, namely by referring to the interview guide prepared. Everything that has been collected is analyzed using an analytical approach, which consists

of three streams of activities that co-occur, namely: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevention in stress management is a principle that uses unique methods to improve health and prevent personal stress. This philosophy is based on five guiding principles to motivate stress management prevention and provides a framework for health organizations and leaders. These include: 1) Individual and organizational health are interdependent; 2) Leaders have responsibility for the health of individuals and organizations; 3) Individual and organizational difficulties are unavoidable, 4) Each individual and organization reacts uniquely to stress; 5) Organizations are constantly changing and dynamic entities (Quick & Nelson, 2004).

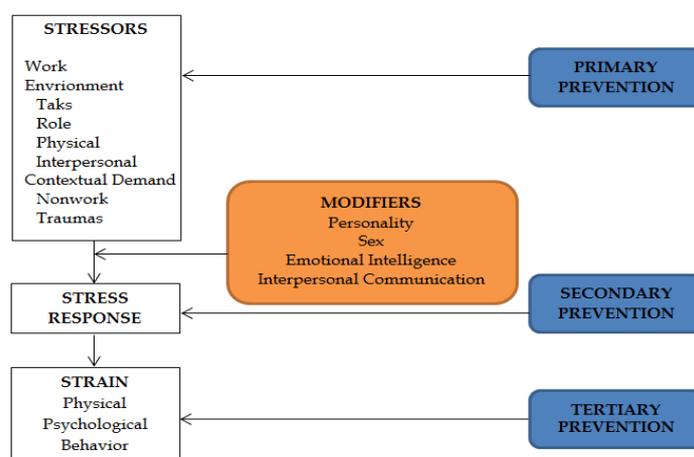


Figure 1: Preventive management model for job stress

In the encyclopedia on stress management, chronic diseases can arise and develop due to stress in the workplace. Most diseases arise because individuals who choose a sedentary lifestyle or choose to smoke are susceptible to coronary artery disease and several other diseases. When these and other risk factors lead to the development of atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries to the heart, the individual is at an early stage of disease or preclinical disease.

The results showed that the principal is the primary key that determines the school's success. However, principals are very vulnerable to stress due to their roles and functions. Therefore, leadership and stress are interrelated (Harms et al., 2017). For example, school leadership is a challenging job-it leads to high levels of stress experienced by principals due to psychological exhaustion (Tikkanen et al., 2017). When the stress of the principal experience, the response to the source of stress is the emergence of unpleasant feelings, such as feelings of guilt, injustice, loneliness, disappointment, and the emergence of depression (Mahfouz, 2020). Therefore, as a leader, the principal cannot be avoided experiencing stress because various causes trigger stress. Based on these conditions, there are five causes of principal stress, namely: principal sources of stress consist of poor interaction with school members (Kelly et al., 2007; Sogunro, 2012), inadequate school resources (Okoroma &

Robert-Okah, 2007; Sogunro, 2012), role complexity and workload (Oplatka, 2017; Sogunro, 2012), challenges related to education policy (Mitani, 2018; Sogunro, 2012), and poor time management skills (Grissom et al., 2016; Sogunro, 2012).

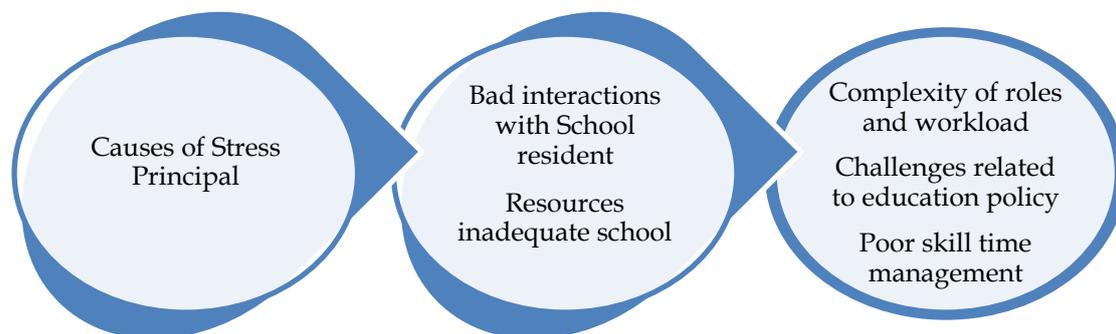


Figure 2: Causes of Stress Principal

Principals generally most often deal with educators, education staff, students, and parents in schools. Harmful interactions can trigger stress and interfere with the effectiveness of the principal's performance, impacting the educational process. The existence of problems due to unfavorable interactions from school residents is the initial trigger for the birth of stress so that a work environment is less comfortable and affects various physical and psychological conditions of all school residents. Teachers who do not obey the rules, lack discipline, problem students, and uncooperative parents are some of the effects of stress experienced by principals.

Furthermore, the pressure from teachers obtained by the principal can also be a source of stress. Education staff who are not cooperative in completing or assisting the principal in handling administrative matters can trigger emotional discomfort for the principal (Sogunro, 2012). As a result, the workload becomes increasingly piled up, and the principal must complete his work. The attitude and behavior of unprofessional education personnel trigger anger and impact the emotions of the principal. Thus, the emotional state of the perpetrator tends to lead to suffering.

As the leader of an educational institution, the principal is fully responsible for school resources. The principal is responsible for administrative, financial, and legal responsibility for all problems [including school resources] that arise in the school. School resources include human resources and non-human resources. Human resources in education include educators and education staff who work by involving their knowledge and skills. Non-human aspects include objects, such as books, copiers, printers, laptops, tables, chairs, and others.

Lack of resources in schools is a cause of stress for principals (Bedi & Kukemelk, 2018). Inadequate school funds can be a stressor for school principals. Various school activities must be well organized, but the problem is that the principal must find funds for these activities. Inadequate funding is a source of stress for the principal. This is very rational; when funds are not

directly sufficient, various school programs will not be implemented, and school achievements will fail. So that in such conditions, the principal can experience depression due to excessive stress.

The duties and roles of school principals are very complex in the educational institutions they manage. Apart from being an administrator, the principal also monitors learning in schools, namely student learning and methods, competency development, graduate profiles, and evaluation (Beusaert et al., 2016). As a leader, the principal is also responsible for formulating the school's long-term vision and goals about what will be achieved, designing strategies to achieve various goals, and inspiring and motivating teachers to accept and work towards school goals. Furthermore, four aspects are related to the principal's workload: the many and varied tasks, limited time, limited work, and various actions that are not important. The excess workload of the principal impacts fatigue due to excessive work responsibilities, which causes the principal to become stressed because of the large number of jobs that must be completed properly.

Deguchi et al., (2018) research in Japan revealed that too much workload and ambiguous roles were related to the stress level of principals. This can happen when the principal cannot complete all the work; there are always distractions, the amount of work related to various files, work adjustment to life, communication via email, WhatsApp and loss of personal time, job demands, teacher evaluations, and feeling burdened by demands work (Wells & Klocko, 2015). In addition, school principals must establish intense contact with the education bureaucracy, receive regular supervision from school supervisors, relate to other supporting services outside the school, and the role that must be carried out in implementing various innovations (Beusaert et al., 2016).

Education decentralization policies make principals more vulnerable to stress. Increased independence in managing schools hurts the mental health of school principals (Beusaert et al., 2016). The results of Claessens et al., (2004) research on 50 large companies in the world located in sixteen countries show a relationship between workload and time control. For example, planning behaviors lead to a more remarkable ability to control time so that they are less stressed, more satisfied, and more productive than those who do not have planning behaviors. Vice versa, unexpected behavior towards time will be more stressful, less satisfied, and less productive at work. Time for the principal is significant. However, little research still examines how managers manage time (Talebi et al., 2019), including principals as managers of the educational organizations they lead. The research results by Grissom et al., (2016) reveal that principals who manage time well are associated with their job stress – that is, the better the principal's time management, the lower the stress level experienced by the principal. This can happen because the principal manages time well to direct time control.

Sources or triggers for stress in working as a school principal, including work-related. From the interview results, the informant stated that the source of stress he experienced was related to work, such as the school's physical

environment, roles, and tasks that were too heavy, which caused the principal to become stressed.

informant A	"...I struggle with a lot of work and workloads every day, plus limited time and facilities that require me to think continuously so that the institution's targets can be met"
informant B	"I want to make school a second home where I work, but the office space is not comfortable and the environment is inadequate sometimes makes me complicated and the lack of internet access makes it difficult for me to mobilize work remotely"
informant C	"I've spent more of my time at school and doing my job properly, it's just that the employees I have lack a sense of belonging to the Institute and complete work as they please which causes me to become stressed because work is hampered and it's impossible for me to reprimand continuously because I I also have to think about how employees can do their job on time and responsibly, that's what makes me stressed."

From the interview results, it is known that the symptoms that arise due to stress experienced by the principal are complaints such as dizziness, headaches, body aches, sometimes shortness of breath, and the mind feeling tired.

informant A	"I often feel dizzy and don't feel comfortable and sound when sleeping"
informant B	"I regularly check every month to check blood sugar and high blood pressure because I often suffer from shortness of breath, headaches and fatigue"
informant C	"I feel more and more complaints and pain in my body, even though I regularly take vitamins and exercise"

Controlling or controlling time is very important for being a leader. If the principal does not have good time management, then the principal tends not to be able to control or use time effectively to complete his work, and vice versa. Wells & Klocko's (2015) research found a source of renewal for principals who experience stress at work, namely the practice of meditation (mindfulness) that can help leaders thrive in the workplace. *Mindfulness* is a meditation practice where focus or attention is used as a stress-management intervention.

Stress management is essential because it is how we deal with and deal with stress effectively to improve the quality of life for the better. The principal's profession is certainly a lot of demands or workloads that can cause stress levels to increase. Informants A, B, and C concluded that getting together and just having a moment of laughter with the employees and holding regular events that build togetherness can help the principal establish good interactions so that workloads and challenges can be overcome little by little. Stress management managed by these school principals includes routinely managing schedules, taking care of themselves by exercising or massaging their limbs, and social support from fellow principals and families as individual core supporters.

This study indicates that stress management is one factor that determines the principal's performance. There are poor interactions with school members, inadequate school resources, the complexity of roles and workloads, challenges associated with education policy, and poor time management skills. In addition, this study also reports two critical approaches that can be used to deal with significant stressors, namely internal and external approaches. This internal approach is stress resolution by involving individual aspects, such as meditation, self-regulation, and self-care. At the same time, the external approach is a strategy to deal with stress by involving parties outside the principal principle, namely the existence of social support, support from educational stakeholders, and assistance from medical or professional personnel.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, it was concluded as follows that principals are depressed by the rhythm of work in schools due to poor interaction between school members, inadequate or inadequate school facilities, social problems, and insufficient school funds for effective administration. Symptoms of stress include generalized body aches, persistent headaches, and hypertension, among others, which affect their performance. Stress management by the principal is hiring competent employees to assist in administration, delegating tasks, and performing routine exercises, among others. Counseling with fellow principals or school supervisors also helps reduce their stress and creates a supportive environment for better school administration. Meeting with the principal can help relieve fatigue or stress as they work together to improve the quality of education and performance. Moreover, increase the interaction of school residents with activities that build togetherness to help strengthen the school team.

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