

Title

Principals' Wellness: Linking Sleep, Nutrition, and Leadership Sustainability

Abstract (299 words)

The overall goal of this research was to investigate how the nature of principals' work in three Canadian provinces influenced their sleeping and eating habits and, by extension, their occupational wellness and leadership practices. While effective school leadership is central to the success of public education systems (Leithwood et al., 2017), principals are experiencing unprecedented work intensification (Pollock & Wang, 2020). Intensified workloads, if unmanaged, can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and maladaptive coping strategies (Swapp & Osmond-Johnson, 2023). Although sleep and nutrition are cornerstones of professional performance (Maki et al., 2022), growing evidence suggests that the structure and intensity of principals' work directly undermines these habits, compromising their wellness and ability to lead (Pollock, forthcoming).

This study represents the first multi-provincial, stakeholder-driven Canadian investigation into how occupational demands influence principals' personal health behaviors and leadership practices. Supported by professional associations in Nova Scotia (PSAANS), Quebec (AAESQ), and Ontario (OPC), 177 principals completed a Demographics Questionnaire, Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, Eating Habits Screener, Bergen Burnout Inventory, and Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale. Findings show that poor sleep and nutrition, directly linked to work intensification, negatively affect principals' capacity for effective leadership, echoing Ray et al.'s (2020) finding that compromised self-care reduces "cognitive functioning" (p. 447).

The presentation will highlight both the research evidence and its practical significance. In collaboration with PSAANS, AAESQ, and OPC, the findings are being translated into research-informed leadership and self-care practices, mobilized through professional associations' knowledge channels. Attendees will learn why *wellness is integral to leadership effectiveness*, how sleep and nutrition are *essential wellness resources for sustaining leadership*, and what strategies can help principals strengthen their health while managing complex professional demands. By framing wellness as foundational to leadership practice, this research contributes a new and original perspective to international conversations on sustaining school leadership.

Keywords

- Principal wellness
- School leadership
- Work intensification
- Sleep and nutrition
- Occupational health
- Knowledge mobilization