

Chapter 10

Transformational and Andragogical Leadership and Its Impact on Resilience and Workplace Stress

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ABSTRACT

There has been a 36.5% rise in reported cases of work-related stress between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to over 822,000 individual cases. Marcatto et al. found that in Europe stress-related absence was second only to musculoskeletal disorders while the EU-OSHA estimated that work-related stress cost European companies 20 billion euros per year and accounted for nearly 60% of lost working days. This chapter focuses on the under-researched area of stress amongst middle leaders in education. While it is widely reported that teachers face high levels of stress, as a result of organisational pressures, there is a paucity of research on middle leaders. This chapter considers whether there will be a significant negative relationship between self-reported levels of resilience and self-reported levels of stress amongst middle leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Transformational and andragogical leaders involve their staff in planning, assessing, formulating goals, carrying out activities, and evaluating results. They value their staff and trust that they are going to do a good job. However, leaders need to be confident in their own ability if they are to trust their staff. Often, leaders struggle to 'let go' to distribute meaningful activities to their staff. However, the distribution of tasks and the involvement of staff in leadership decision-making in an already busy environment have the potential to increase the amount of workplace stress that individuals experience. Grummell et al. (2015) argue that education, is already greedy of an individual's time, therefore expecting further engagement has the potential to cause increases in workplace stress and, work-life conflict. Often resilience is posited as the panacea that will solve the issues of workplace stress but this is an oversimplification. There is a

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complex interaction among an individual's perceived levels of workplace stress, the role of resilience in moderating the impact of workplace stress and the role that the leader.

The importance of addressing workplace stress cannot be understated. The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that in 2019 there were 17.9 million days lost to stress within the UK alone (HSE, 2022). Individuals reporting work-related stress have continued to rise since 2001 and now stand at over 800,000 in the year from April 2019 to the end of March 2020 which is now a major issue for both individuals and their employers. Occupations such as healthcare and education are particularly prone to higher levels of work-related stress. Stress-related absence is now the second highest cause of work absence, after musculoskeletal disorders (Marcatto et al., 2021). Furthermore, a report from the European Union (EU-OSHA, 2014) stated that work-related stress cost European companies an estimated 20 billion euros per year and accounted for nearly 60% of lost working days. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development's (CIPD) (2022) report found that heavy workload was a significant contributory factor in work-related stress, resulting in record levels of *presenteeism* (working when unwell) and *leavism* (using holiday allowances to work). What isn't clear from any of these reports is whether is a result of increased prevalence or a willingness to report stress to employers.

Understanding work-related stress is not as simple as a relationship between the phenomenon causing the stress (the stressor) and the associated response to it. Instead, as Copper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001) propose that work-related stress should be viewed as an ongoing relationship between the individual and their working environment. This approach implies that the factor causing the stress and the subsequent response to it is dynamic and not merely a static one that will always cause the same response when an individual encounter the same factor causing the stress.

In addition to the perceived levels of workplace stress, it is important to explore how resilience interacts with stress. Resilience is often seen as the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and perhaps even grow in the face of adverse life experiences. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2014) states that resilience is focused on developing and maintaining a healthy mental state. Yet often we see resilience as the solution which enables us to cope with the challenges life throws at us. Resilience is more nuanced than that. Indeed, overall resilience has a limited impact on work-related stress. Yet when we delve deeper into the elements which make up resilience we find that there are three aspects which are particularly important when it comes to the workplace. These include an individual's perception of their future, and whether they consider it optimistically.

In addition, the ability to interact socially, whether formally or informally is important to how we navigate the workplace relationships that we have with those around us. Given that education is a people-focused profession, this is particularly important, and this has been echoed by the section on relationships from the H&S survey. Finally, and linked to this, is the support we receive, both from family and colleagues and our ability to seek solace from them.

In this chapter, the author/s explore the role of workplace stress, resilience, and the role that leaders have in mitigating the impact of stress.

The chapter, which is based on a study conducted in in 2022, starts discussing workplace stress both the positives of stress and also the negative impact of stress. Before moving to a discussion around resilience and how resilience is often misconstrued as the means to mitigating stress. We then look in detail at the relationship between the two, based on some empirical data that we have collected to demonstrate that the role that leaders have has a direct relationship to the levels of perceived workplace stress. In addition, we explore what leaders can do, as transformational and or andragogical leaders to better support staff so that they can flourish in their roles.

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