The Role of Educational Leadership in Supporting K–12 Teacher Well-Being and Reducing Teacher Burnout

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Abstract

Abstract

Teacher well-being is influenced by workplace conditions, leadership, and professional relationships. My capstone research paper examines how educational leaders can support K–12 teacher's well–being and reduce burnout. It argues that leaders can help by improving working conditions, strengthening teacher voice, encouraging collaboration, and building supportive school environments. The findings of my research highlight that meaningful support requires both effective leadership practices and attention to broader organizational challenges. Burnout also reflects broader organizational and systemic pressures. Therefore, more research is needed to understand teacher well-being in British Columbia.

Introduction

Theoretical Framework

- **Educational Leadership — Leithwood (2021):** Educational leadership shapes school conditions, professional relationships, and opportunities for teacher participation (Karakose et al., 2024).
- **Transformational Leadership — Burns (1978) and Bass (1985):** Transformational leadership emphasizes motivation, shared goals, and professional growth (Bărbînță et al., 2017).
- **Ethics of Care — Nel Noddings (2012):** Caring relationships, trust, and attention to teachers' needs are important in education (Mohajel, 2025).
- **Teacher Voice — Paulo Freire (2018):** Dialogue and participation support educators' voices and experiences in educational decisions (McKillican, 2020).

The Research Question

How can educational leaders support K–12 teacher well–being and reduce burnout?



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Thesis Statement

Educational leaders can support K–12 teacher well-being and reduce burnout by creating supportive, relational, collaborative, and sustainable working environments that address workplace and organizational conditions rather than treating burnout solely as an individual issue.

Research Positionalitv and Journev



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Literature Review

Five Themes

Teacher Stress and Burnout

- Burnout is influenced by workplace conditions, emotional demands, and organizational pressures (O'Farrell et al., 2026; Wilson et al., 2025).
- Negative environments, bullying, and marginalization harm well-being, while respect and mutual support can help (Sohail et al., 2023).

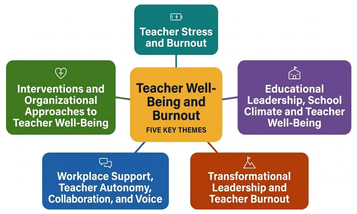


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Educational Leadership, School Climate and Teacher Well-Being

- Supportive school climates and meeting teachers' psychological needs are linked to better well-being (Harrison et al., 2025; Nizri et al., 2025).
- Leadership shapes school culture, relationships, and the conditions in which teachers work (İnceağaç & Ergün, 2026; Kılınç et al., 2026).
- BC research highlights relationships, reflection, time allocation, and workplace conditions (Harback et al., 2025

Transformational Leadership and Teacher Burnout

- Shared vision, professional growth, individualized support, and teacher participation can help create supportive school environments (Stewart, 2006).
- Transformational leadership may support teacher resilience and help manage the effects of workload (Karacabey et al., 2026; Kılınç et al., 2026).
- Leadership alone cannot eliminate burnout without attention to working conditions and systemic pressures (O'Farrell et al., 2026).

Workplace Support, Teacher Autonomy, Collaboration and Voice

- Teacher autonomy is associated with greater job satisfaction and lower burnout (Ha et al., 2025).
- Collaboration, trust, recognition, coaching, and mentorship provide professional and relational support (Ukskoski & Lerkkanen, 2024; Journell et al., 2025; Fensterstock et al., 2025).
- Caring relationships and meaningful work are important to teachers' workplace experiences (Noddings, 2012; Polatcan et al., 2026).

Interventions and Organizational Approaches to Teacher Well-Being

- Coaching, breathwork, and mind-body programs will help teachers manage stress and burnout (Abdallah, 2026; Hallez et al., 2026; Eyal et al., 2019).
- Digital tools will support socioemotional teacher development (Sáez-Delgado et al., 2025).
- Individual interventions must complement organizational improvements to workload, school culture, and working conditions (O'Farrell et al., 2026).

References

Recommendations And Conclusion

Recommendations

Strengthen Teacher Autonomy and Voice

- Include teachers in school decisions and respect their professional knowledge.
- Provide flexibility and opportunities for teachers to share concerns.
- Teacher autonomy is associated with job satisfaction and reduced burnout (Ha et al., 2025; Karaferye & Bellibas, 2025).

Address Workload and Working Conditions

- Reduce unnecessary administrative tasks and protect planning time.
- Review new initiatives before adding responsibilities.
- Heavy workloads and work intensification harms teacher well-being and contribute to time poverty (Creagh et al., 2025).

Build Supportive Relationships and Collaboration

- Encourage collaboration, mentorship, and meaningful professional development.
- Recognize teachers' contributions and respond to their needs.
- Positive relationships, supportive school climates, and professional collaboration will promote teacher well-being (Harrison et al., 2025; Sohail et al., 2023; Ukskoski & Lerkkanen, 2024).

Conclusion

Educational leaders must support teacher well-being by strengthening autonomy, addressing workload, and fostering supportive relationships. However, burnout must not be treated solely as an individual problem; organizational conditions also matter (Creagh et al., 2025; Karaferye & Bellibas, 2025; Sohail et al., 2023). More research in British Columbia is needed to identify effective approaches for local K–12 schools.

Gaps, Methodological Limitations, Future Research

Research Gaps

- Geographical: Limited Canadian and BC research compared with international evidence.
- Contextual: More research is needed on how leadership, individual support, and workplace conditions interact to influence burnout.

Methodological Limitations

- Different research designs make findings difficult to compare.
- Cross-sectional surveys and self-reported data limit conclusions about cause and effect.
- Qualitative studies offer detailed insights but often involve smaller samples.
- Intervention findings may not apply equally across schools and educational contexts.

Future Research

- Conduct more longitudinal and mixed-methods studies.
- Examine leadership and teacher well-being in Canadian and BC K–12 schools.
- Investigate how leadership support and organizational changes work together to reduce burnout.