

Teacher Work Related Stress in Early Childhood Education: Some Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT This paper employed a multiple case study design to establish the coping strategies used by early childhood development (ECD) teachers to cope with work-related stress. Unstructured in-depth interviews were used to obtain data from eighteen participants. Data were analysed qualitatively. Findings revealed that teachers draw from different coping mechanisms for sustenance and support in the events of stress. The teachers resorted to improvisation in order to acquire resources; relied on divine intervention from God; drew from external support systems such as the family and the church; and applied physical exertion such as gardening and strolling along the beach as ways to avert and manage stress. It was also found that some teachers resigned themselves to their fate and allowed stress to dominate with little or no alternatives on how to cope or manage stress. It is therefore suggestive that there are evidence-based training and development needs for ECD teachers that will enable them deal with numerous inevitable stress incidences. On the basis of these findings, a number of recommendations have been made.