

An Exploration of Sources of Stress Among Band Directors in Georgia: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Band directors experience different work environments compared to those of their traditional teaching counterparts, having to manage, coach, and instruct an increased number of students and work in ever changing environments outside of normal school hours (Abril & Bannerman, 2014). Although music educators experience both school and school district level factors that impact music programs and experiences on the job, they often fail to grasp a broader understanding of individual stressors that they experienced in K-12 settings. Currently, studies examine burnout in conjunction with job satisfaction for educators in a traditional school format (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015). Bridging the gap in the literature to focus on specific stressors that can be experienced will help strengthen music programs and the educators of this educational subject.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher Stress, Teacher Burnout, Classroom Management, Band Director Stress

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated band directors' sources of stress that lead to burnout in the State of Georgia, namely in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Because many studies have been completed regarding the burnout experiences of educators working in traditional school settings, little research exists when examining band directors working within a K-12 school music program.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive research study was to investigate band directors' sources of stress that lead to burnout in the State of Georgia. Because many studies have appeared to focus solely on traditional school environments, it was imperative to focus on music educators/band directors due to a differing work environment that offers different challenges than those found in a traditional classroom setting.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do band directors' stressors differ throughout the different education levels in a K-12 school setting?

RQ2. How do band directors' stressors differ between band directors working in rural, urban, and suburban schools?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

To collect the quantitative data, the researcher utilized an instrumental survey, asking respondents to rate the 25 statements based on a five level Likert scale, as seen in Appendix B. The respondents were asked to qualify each statement on their own judgement (High Stress, Moderate Stress, Light Stress, Not a Problem, or Does Not Apply). The survey questions highlighted the statements to each of the participants, with the researcher allowing a final open-ended question to determine if there was any other information the participant wanted to provide while participating in the study. The statements in the survey reflected current sources of stress found in K-12 schools, which allowed the respondents to grade the statements based on a six-point Likert scale, as originally developed by Bechen (2000). The author had previously created a survey that investigated music educators' sources of stress that they encountered within the music profession. This survey acted as a model for the current study, as the instrument was only slightly altered to accommodate for demographic differences that occurred during participant selection.

The dependent variables are the 25 survey items related to the four stress domains highlighted in Bechen (2000): Personal Concerns, Program Management, Classroom Management, and Environmental Factors. Each survey response was coded according to the associated level of stress: "high stress" (4), "moderate stress" (3), "light stress" (2), and "not at all" (1). Responses labeled "did not apply" were coded as missing and excluded from analyses.

RESULTS

Survey data were downloaded from the Qualtrics website once collection was complete. The original dataset included 385 survey responses from band directors who currently work at a school as a band director in the State of Georgia. The Qualtrics data file was cleaned to remove incomplete survey responses. A survey response was considered incomplete if it did not contain data for all following key variables of the present study: gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, course(s) taught, school locale, and percentage of minority student population. Responses were also considered incomplete if the band director did not respond to all 25 questions related to the stress factors encountered in their work. Fifty-three survey responses were removed from the data set due to missing or incomplete information. As a result, the final data set included a total of 332 survey responses, which represents 86.2% of responses from the original dataset.

Table 3. School Demographic Characteristics

Table with 3 columns: Characteristic, n, %

Table 2. Band Director Demographic Characteristics

Table with 4 columns: Characteristic, n, %

Ranking of all 25 Survey Items by Relative Mean

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

Top 5 Stressors for Urban, Suburban, Rural, Middle and High School Band Directors

Urban Band Directors

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

Suburban Band Directors

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

Rural Band Directors

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

Middle School Band Directors

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

High School Band Directors

Table with 11 columns: Rank, Question, Category, Level of Stress (4, 3, 2, 1, N/A), Mean, Median, Mode

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive research study was to investigate band directors' sources of stress in the State of Georgia. The findings of this study indicated that band directors stress differed across grade levels and across different locales. High school directors reported the highest mean stress level for items related to environmental factors, personal concerns, and program management. Middle school directors reported the highest mean stress level for items related to classroom management. This chapter highlighted the different limitations that were experienced in this study as well as recommendations for future studies. The implications of this study could aid band directors, school administrators, and school districts in how they can reduce on-the-job stressors and spend more effective teaching time to their students.

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