

**Role factors, leadership styles and stress among Catholic primary school executives**

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### Abstract

The aim of the current research was to address the relationship between role conflict and role overload, leadership style, and stress, among those holding leadership positions within the Catholic primary education system in Queensland. Little research exists in any country on the roles and stresses of leadership in religious school systems. Yet many stresses are faced. What leadership styles are used is not well documented and related issues exist about which little is known. This thesis has aimed to extend information in this area. Questionnaires used included the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, and a demographic questionnaire on age, gender, position held at the relevant primary school (Principal, Assistant Principal, Assistant Principal Administration, and Assistant Principal Religious Education), years of service in current position and prior leadership training. A sample of 136 principals and executive staff members from Catholic Education primary schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese, Queensland completed the surveys. Using bi-variate correlation analyses, ANOVAs and regression equations, relationships and differences among the variables were examined. Differences were found between transformational and transactional leadership styles with transformational leadership style being associated with personal resources of social support and self-care, and negatively associated with role conflict (high on transformational leadership; low on perceived role conflict). The transactional leadership style was also negatively related to role conflict but positively related to the personal resource of rational cognitive coping. No significant differences were found among the different senior administration staff positions in terms of stress experienced; and staff executives who had received formal leadership training were equally as stressed as those without leadership training experience. Age, gender, and years of service also seemed unrelated to stress levels experienced. Reasons for the limited differences found between the leadership styles are suggested. Further research investigating factors contributing to stress is necessary to establish an understanding of preferred leadership styles in the Catholic Education system.

### Declaration

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Arts by Research. The thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.

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