



AUT SPORTS PERFORMANCE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE NEW ZEALAND



Action Learning Action Research Association

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World Congress**

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Putting Global Collaboration at the Heart of Action Research

PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Molineux, J (2025) Stories from teachers and school leaders about their experiences of secondary trauma and strategies to mitigate its impact

The paper reports on a large inter-disciplinary mixed methods study on secondary trauma. The research emerged through an action research collaboration of a private consultant with Deakin University. The design process took around 12 months and resulted in a mixed methods study of educators in Australia to find out the extent of secondary trauma in educators and what strategies are used to mitigate the impact of exposure to trauma.

The agreed methods were to: (1) conduct a survey of educators including free text to tell their stories about secondary trauma and to invite survey participants to be interviewed by a researcher about their experiences; and (2) to conduct explanatory interviews to discover the ways in which educators mitigate the potential impacts of exposure to trauma. A total of 2258 teachers and school leaders from all states in Australia completed the survey, with over 1000 contributing free text stories about their experiences. A total 107 people later participated in an interview with the principal researcher.

Results from the survey indicated that exposure to trauma varied significantly between individual educators depending on their role and context. For those experiencing high levels of exposure, a minority only experienced a low level of secondary traumatic stress, and these people had engaged in a range of support processes, psychological coping skills and recovery activities to mitigate secondary trauma. Interviews then explored stories behind these relationships.

Although trauma in schools is quite high, we have discovered that there are significant mitigating activities that individual educators, school leaders and schools can undertake, which are embedded in recommendations. Future work we hope to undertake includes pilot action research and action learning intervention studies.

To be presented: In person in Auckland and in Sydney