

Hearing early childhood educators' voices about their well-being

Tamara Cumming, Charles Sturt University, Australia (tcumming@csu.edu.au)

Sandie Wong, Macquarie University, Australia (sandie.wong@csu.edu.au)

Helen Logan, Charles Sturt University, Australia (hlogan@csu.edu.au)

Background: Early childhood educators' well-being is receiving increasing attention from researchers. Existing research frequently uses standardised tools for measuring aspects of psychological well-being, including: job satisfaction, burnout, perceived stress and self-esteem. Asking educators how they understand well-being in relation to their roles, reveals a wider range of information that can be used to better tailor efforts to improve educators' well-being.

Aim: To learn how educators understand well-being in relation to their roles.

Method: A survey on educators' well-being was completed by 73 educators working in long-day care services in QLD, NSW, ACT and WA. The survey sought educators' measures of their work climate, psychological well-being and health, using validated self-report scales and sub-scales, and some researcher-created questions. The question "How do you understand early childhood educators' well-being?" was included as part of survey. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data.

Results: Participants understood that: well-being is multi-faceted; responsibility for well-being goes beyond themselves; job satisfaction is an important part of well-being to educators; educators' well-being has impacts on their practice; and, work-related well-being has impacts on personal life.

Conclusions: Participants had a reasonably holistic understanding of well-being, though still focused mostly on individual factors rather than connections to work or regulatory environment. Efforts to better support educators' well-being need to include dialogue with educators on understanding well-being as having individual, organisational and social-political dimensions.

Implications for children: Educators love working with you, and doing their very best so you have a great time at early education. They work very hard to make it great, so remember to tell them when you like what they are doing, and help out when you can.

Implications for families: Educators enjoy their work, and are very committed to children having great experiences and outcomes. But, the work can be stressful, educators frequently work outside the hours they are paid for, and can tend to put themselves last. Remember to appreciate all they do, and the professionalism they show.

Implications for practitioners: For children to have great experiences and outcomes from early childhood education, educators need to be well. This is a shared responsibility – it's not all up to you as an individual!

Key words: professionals' voices, workforce issues, well-being, qualitative methods

This presentation relates to the following [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#):

- [SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being](#)
- [SDG 4: Quality Education](#)
- [SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth](#)