Job Demands, Job Resources, and their Relationship with Mental Well-Being among Leaders of Fully Residential Schools in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

School leaders' mental well-being is increasingly recognised as an organisational concern, particularly where leadership involves sustained accountability, complex administrative responsibilities and demands extending beyond the conventional school day. Guided primarily by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model and complemented by the PERMA model of well-being, this study examined the relationships between job demands, job resources and mental well-being among principals of Malaysian Fully Residential Schools (Sekolah Berasrama Penuh, SBP), and explored how principals experienced and managed work-related challenges. A pragmatist paradigm and sequential explanatory mixed-methods design were adopted. The quantitative phase involved 82 principals representing the identified population of 82 SBPs nationwide. A 55-item questionnaire measured job demands (workload, emotional demands, administrative demands and role conflict), job resources (organisational support, autonomy, collegial support and professional development) and mental well-being through the five PERMA dimensions. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, Spearman correlation as a robustness check, and separate simple linear regression models in IBM SPSS Statistics. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with five principals, supported by non-participant observations and document analysis; the data were analysed thematically and integrated with the quantitative findings. Job demands were moderate ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.61$), whereas job resources ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.42$) and mental well-being ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.37$) were high. Job demands were negatively associated with mental well-being ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .225$), while job resources were positively associated with mental well-being ($r = .73$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .533$). Role conflict had the strongest negative association with overall PERMA well-being ($r = -.63$), while collegial support had the strongest positive association among the job-resource dimensions ($r = .73$). The qualitative findings identified six challenges: maintaining academic excellence, managing boarding-school operations, overlapping administrative demands, parent-related conflict, leadership accountability and adjustment to SBP work culture. Principals described strategies involving self-regulation, positive reframing, problem-solving, delegation, teamwork, family and spiritual support, self-care, work–life boundaries and adherence to standard operating procedures. The findings support the relevance of the JD-R framework in understanding principals' well-being and indicate that organisational resources, particularly collegial support, are important correlates of positive well-being. The study did not test the moderating effect of job resources; this remains an important avenue for further analysis and research.

Keywords: school principals; mental well-being; job demands–resources model; job demands; job resources; PERMA; fully residential schools; Malaysia; mixed methods

1. INTRODUCTION

School principals occupy a pivotal position in educational systems. They are expected to provide instructional leadership, manage personnel and resources, implement policy, maintain organisational performance and sustain relationships with teachers, students, parents and external authorities. These responsibilities have become increasingly complex as schools respond to accountability requirements, administrative reporting, educational change and the expectations of multiple stakeholders. The consequences are not limited to organisational performance: the conditions under which principals work are also relevant to their psychological health, professional sustainability and capacity to lead.Research on school leaders' well-being has gained

momentum, but the evidence base remains uneven across national and institutional contexts. A large longitudinal study of Australian principals demonstrated that job demands and resources are associated with subsequent well-being and work-related outcomes, with demands generally carrying adverse associations and resources offering benefits (Marsh et al., 2023). Research has also emphasised that principal well-being is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to a single indicator of stress or job satisfaction (Wang, 2024). Recent mixed-methods work further illustrates the value of examining principals' lived experiences alongside quantitative indicators of work stress and health (Su-Keene & DeMatthews, 2025).

The Malaysian Fully Residential School (Sekolah Berasrama Penuh, SBP) context provides a distinctive setting for examining these issues. In addition to conventional school leadership responsibilities, SBP principals oversee a residential environment in which student welfare, boarding operations, staff duty arrangements and safety responsibilities extend beyond ordinary instructional hours (KPM, 2023). They must also respond to academic performance expectations and administrative directives from multiple levels of the education system. Such features may intensify demands and complicate the boundary between professional and personal life. In this study, the leadership position examined is specifically that of the SBP principal; the findings should therefore not be interpreted as representing deputy principals or other school leadership personnel.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework is the primary theoretical foundation for explaining how working conditions relate to well-being. Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of work that require sustained effort and may carry psychological costs. In this study, job demands are operationalised through four indicators: workload, emotional demands, administrative demands and role conflict. Job resources refer to aspects of work that help achieve work goals, reduce demands or support learning, development and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The four job-resource indicators examined are organisational support, autonomy, collegial support and professional development opportunities. These dimensions provide a context-specific operationalisation of the JD-R constructs for principals working in fully residential schools.

The PERMA model complements the JD-R framework by conceptualising well-being through five dimensions: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). The PERMA-Profiler provides a multidimensional measure of flourishing and well-being (Butler & Kern, 2016). Combining JD-R and PERMA makes it possible to examine both the work conditions associated with leaders' well-being and the positive dimensions through which well-being is experienced. Although international research has advanced understanding of principal well-being, there remains a need for context-sensitive evidence on leaders working in residential school systems. In particular, statistical relationships alone cannot explain how principals interpret demanding work, mobilise organisational resources or manage the practical challenges of residential schooling. This study addresses that need through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design in which qualitative findings are used to explain and extend quantitative results.

The study aimed to examine the relationships between job demands, job resources and mental well-being among Malaysian SBP leaders and to explore the challenges and strategies involved in managing well-being. It addressed the following questions:

RQ1. What are the levels of job demands, job resources and mental well-being among principals of Fully Residential Schools in Malaysia?

RQ2. What is the relationship between job demands and mental well-being?

RQ3. What is the relationship between job resources and mental well-being?

RQ4. What challenges do SBP principals experience in managing their mental well-being?

RQ5. What strategies do SBP principals use to manage their mental well-being in the face of these challenges?

RQ6. How can the quantitative and qualitative findings be integrated to develop a context-sensitive understanding of mental well-being among SBP principals?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

2.1 Job demands, resources and principal well-being

The JD-R framework proposes two broad processes. The health-impairment process explains how sustained or excessive demands consume energy and may contribute to strain. The motivational process explains how resources support goal attainment, learning, engagement and positive work outcomes. The framework is flexible because demands and resources can vary across occupations and organisational settings (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). For school principals, demands may include workload, emotional labour, administrative reporting, accountability and role conflict. Resources may include professional autonomy, support from senior authorities, collegial relationships and access to professional learning (Hashim & Yusof, 2024; Schaufeli, 2021, Rahman et al., 2023). Evidence from school leadership research supports the relevance of this framework. Using longitudinal data from 3,683 Australian principals, Marsh et al. (2023) found that prior demands and resources were associated with later outcomes, with adverse effects of demands and beneficial effects of resources. This evidence is important because it moves beyond a purely individual explanation of principal well-being and directs attention to the organisation of work. A recent study of Swiss principals also used the JD-R framework to examine workload, self-efficacy and commitment, further demonstrating the continuing relevance of work demands and resources in leadership research (Schmitz & Tulowitzki, 2025). In addition to their separate associations with well-being, JD-R theory provides a basis for considering whether resources can buffer the adverse association between demands and well-being. For example, collegial support, autonomy and organisational support may help principals manage high workload, emotional pressure and competing role expectations. This buffering proposition is theoretically relevant to the present setting; however, the analyses reported in this study examined the separate associations of job demands and job resources with well-being and did not estimate a demands-by-resources interaction. Accordingly, no empirical moderation conclusion is drawn from the present results.

2.2 PERMA and multidimensional well-being

The PERMA model conceptualises well-being as more than the absence of distress. Positive emotion concerns experiences such as happiness and contentment; engagement concerns deep involvement in activities; relationships concern supportive and meaningful connections; meaning concerns a sense of purpose; and accomplishment concerns progress and achievement (Seligman, 2011). Butler and Kern (2016) operationalised these dimensions in the PERMA-Profiler. In this study, mental well-being is operationalised as the combined PERMA construct and its five indicators: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. In school leadership, well-being may therefore be reflected in principals' positive emotional experiences, engagement with leadership work, relationships with school communities, sense of educational purpose and satisfaction with organisational or student achievement (Aziz et al.,2021; Zulkifli et al.,2022 ; Noraini et al., 2024).

2.3 Integrating JD-R and PERMA in residential schooling

The present study brings the two frameworks together. JD-R provides an account of the occupational conditions associated with well-being, while PERMA provides a multidimensional account of the well-being outcome. The SBP context adds a further layer: the residential nature of schooling creates responsibilities relating to boarding operations, student welfare and staff duties that may not be as prominent in day-school settings. The qualitative phase is therefore important for identifying how these contextual demands are experienced and how principals use available resources and personal strategies to manage them. The study does not assume that individual coping strategies can substitute for organisational responsibility. Rather, it treats self-management, collegial support and organisational arrangements as interacting elements. This distinction matters because a focus on resilience alone can unintentionally shift responsibility for structurally generated pressures onto individual leaders.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a pragmatist paradigm and a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative

data were collected and analysed first; the subsequent qualitative phase was designed to explain, contextualise and extend the quantitative findings. Integration occurred by connecting the phases, building the interview focus from the quantitative results, and merging findings through a joint display to develop meta-inferences. The quantitative target population comprised principals of Malaysian Fully Residential Schools. The study identified 82 SBPs as the defined national population and reports 82 quantitative participants; a census approach was used, with all members of this defined population invited to participate. Thus, the geographical coverage was national rather than limited to a single state or zone. The available study information does not provide a state-by-state breakdown of participating schools, and no more specific regional distribution is claimed. The leadership position represented in the quantitative phase was SBP principal. The qualitative phase involved five SBP principals selected purposively from the quantitative respondents. Selection criteria included current SBP principalship, participation in the survey, at least three years of principal experience and voluntary agreement to be interviewed. The selection strategy sought variation in reported well-being levels and professional experience.

The questionnaire contained 55 items across three constructs. Job demands were measured using 20 items covering workload, emotional demands, administrative demands and role conflict. Job resources were measured using 20 items covering organisational support, autonomy, collegial support and professional development opportunities. Mental well-being was measured using 15 items across the five PERMA dimensions, informed by the PERMA-Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016). Thus, the instrument operationalised job demands and job resources through the study's specified dimensions and assessed well-being through the five PERMA indicators. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall alpha coefficients were .938 for job demands, .946 for job resources and .922 for PERMA well-being. Subscale coefficients ranged from .758 to .939, indicating acceptable to strong internal consistency in this sample. The PERMA-Profiler provides the published measurement basis for the well-being dimensions; the questionnaire used in this study was informed by that instrument. The reported reliability coefficients demonstrate internal consistency in the present sample, but should not, by themselves, be taken as evidence of full construct validity. The manuscript does not report a separate factor-validation procedure or the details of expert content validation for the job-demand and job-resource items.

The qualitative phase used semi-structured interviews with five principals. The interview protocol was informed by the quantitative results and focused on leadership challenges, experiences of well-being, strategies for managing demands, organisational and social resources, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed. The thesis also reports 15 non-participant observation sessions across five SBP settings and the use of organisational documents, including strategic and operational plans, meeting minutes, school performance records, circulars and professional development documents. Observation and documentary evidence were used to support and triangulate the interview analysis. Quantitative data were analysed in IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used to summarise construct and dimension scores. Pearson correlation was used to examine bivariate relationships, with Spearman correlation reported as a robustness check. Separate simple linear regression models were used to estimate the proportion of variance in PERMA well-being explained by job demands and job resources. Because the models were estimated separately, their R^2 values should not be interpreted as unique or independent contributions after controlling for the other predictor. The analyses did not include a multiple regression model with both predictors entered simultaneously or an interaction term to test whether job resources moderated the relationship between job demands and well-being. A moderation test would require a hierarchical regression model including centred job demands and job resources scores, followed by their product (interaction) term, with the change in explained variance and interaction coefficient reported. Since no such model is included in the available results, moderation is treated as a theoretical proposition for future analysis rather than a finding of this study. Qualitative data were analysed thematically. Interview transcripts, observation notes and documentary material were read repeatedly, coded and organised into themes concerning challenges and management strategies. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then compared through a joint display. The integrated interpretation focused on convergence, complementarity and the contextual explanation of statistical patterns. Triangulation across interviews, observations and documents, member checking, peer debriefing, an audit trail and reflexive records were used to strengthen

qualitative trustworthiness. The institutional and relevant education-authority permissions were obtained. Informed consent and confidentiality procedures were followed.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive findings

Job demands were moderate overall (M = 3.58, SD = 0.61). Workload was the highest-rated demand dimension (M = 4.06, SD = 0.53), followed by emotional demands (M = 3.68, SD = 0.63). Administrative demands (M = 3.47, SD = 0.81) and role conflict (M = 3.13, SD = 0.91) were moderate as shown in **Table 1**. Job resources were high overall (M = 4.33, SD = 0.42). Collegial support had the highest mean (M = 4.63, SD = 0.41), followed by organisational support (M = 4.43, SD = 0.48), professional development (M = 4.21, SD = 0.53) and autonomy (M = 4.05, SD = 0.51). PERMA well-being was also high (M = 4.46, SD = 0.37). Meaning (M = 4.68, SD = 0.43) and relationships (M = 4.67, SD = 0.42) were the highest dimensions. 80 of 82 respondents (97.6%) were classified as having high well-being. This high overall score should be interpreted alongside the demanding work conditions and the qualitative accounts, rather than as evidence that principals were free from strain.

Table 1: Descriptive Findings

Construct/dimension	Mean	SD	Level
Job demands	3.58	0.61	Moderate
Workload	4.06	0.53	High
Emotional demands	3.68	0.63	High
Administrative demands	3.47	0.81	Moderate
Role conflict	3.13	0.91	Moderate
Job resources	4.33	0.42	High
Organisational support	4.43	0.48	High
Autonomy	4.05	0.51	High
Collegial support	4.63	0.41	High
Professional development	4.21	0.53	High
PERMA well-being	4.46	0.37	High
Positive emotion	4.35	0.6	High
Engagement	4.32	0.32	High
Relationships	4.67	0.42	High
Meaning	4.68	0.43	High
Accomplishment	4.29	0.51	High

4.2 Relationships between job demands and well-being

Job demands were moderately and negatively associated with PERMA well-being ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.63, −.29]). The Spearman correlation was similar ($\rho = -.49$, $p < .001$). In the simple linear regression model, job demands explained 22.5% of the variance in well-being ($R^2 = .225$; adjusted $R^2 = .216$), $F(1, 80) = 23.27$, $p < .001$. The standardised coefficient was $\beta = -.475$ ($B = -.285$, $SE = .059$, $t = -4.82$, $p < .001$). These results indicate a negative statistical association; the cross-sectional design does not establish causality. At the dimension level, role conflict had the strongest negative association with overall PERMA well-being ($r = -.63$). Emotional demands were also negatively associated with PERMA ($r = -.44$), as were administrative demands ($r = -.37$). Workload was not significantly associated with overall PERMA ($r = -.03$, $p = .785$), despite having the highest mean among the job-demand dimensions. This distinction suggests that the subjective or relational consequences of role conflict and emotional demands may be more closely related to reported well-being than workload level alone.

4.3 Relationships between job resources and well-being

Job resources were strongly and positively associated with PERMA well-being ($r = .73$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.61,.82]). The Spearman coefficient was $\rho = .76$ ($p < .001$). In the separate simple regression model, job resources explained 53.3% of the variance in well-being ($R^2 = .533$), $F(1, 80) = 91.35$, $p < .001$, with a standardised coefficient of $\beta = .730$ ($B = .634$). The result indicates a substantial association in this sample, but it should not be interpreted as a causal effect or as the unique contribution of resources after controlling for demands. Collegial support had the strongest association with overall PERMA well-being among the resource dimensions ($r = .73$), followed by organisational support ($r = .66$), professional development ($r = .64$) and autonomy ($r = .58$). Job resources were most strongly associated with positive emotion ($r = .75$) and accomplishment ($r = .69$), while the association with engagement was comparatively modest ($r = .25$) as shown in **Table 2.**

Table 2 : Findings for Relationships between job resources, job demands and well-being

Predictor	Pearson r with PERMA	p	95% CI	Simple regression R^2
Job demands	−.47	< .001	[−.63, −.29]	0.225
Job resources	0.73	< .001	[.61, .82]	0.533

4.4 Qualitative findings: challenges experienced by principals

Six themes captured the challenges principals experienced in the SBP context as shown in **Table 3.** The residential character of SBP was particularly visible in accounts of boarding-school responsibilities. One principal explained: *"Bukan mudah untuk urus asrama… selalunya guru baharu terpaksa menjadi warden bergilir pada waktu malam" (*"It is not easy to manage a boarding school… newly appointed teachers often have to take turns serving as dormitory wardens during the night.") *(P1*). Another described the school as operating around the clock, with teachers undertaking scheduled night duties (P2). These accounts illustrate how residential operations extend the temporal and emotional demands of school leadership.

Table 3: Theme and evidence in challenges experienced by principals

Theme	Summary of qualitative evidence
Maintaining academic excellence and school performance	Pressure to sustain academic indicators and performance expectations, including KPI and school grade targets.
Boarding-school management and round-the-clock responsibilities	Residential operations, student welfare and rotating night-duty arrangements extended the scope of school responsibilities.
Overlapping administrative tasks and multi-level directives	Concurrent reporting, audits, assessments and programmes, sometimes accompanied by short-notice instructions.
Parent-related conflict and complaint management	Principals had to explain school rules and decisions while managing disagreements and complaints from parents.
Decision-making responsibility and leadership accountability	High-stakes decisions concerning student discipline, safety and school operations required careful judgement and procedural compliance.
Adjustment to SBP work culture	Staff transferred from day schools and newly appointed teachers had to adapt to the residential-school environment and its expectations.

Administrative overlap was another prominent challenge. A principal described the pressure created when instructions were issued in the morning and expected to be completed by the afternoon, despite existing teaching and operational commitments (P1). Parent-related conflict also emerged in the interviews. One participant stated: *"Pelajar lapor kepada mak bapak; mak bapak tak tahu hujung pangkal, dipersalahkan sekolah"(*"Students report the matter to their parents, who do not know the full story, yet the school is held responsible.") *(P2).* Together, these accounts show that the demands experienced by SBP principals are not limited to workload volume; they also involve time pressure, relational tensions and accountability for decisions.

4.5 Qualitative findings: Strategies for managing well-being

Principals described self-regulation as a way to recognise limits and avoid allowing work pressures to overwhelm health and family responsibilities. One participant explained: *"Saya mengawal diri dan menyesuaikan dengan keadaan semasa mengikut kemampuan"(* "I exercise self-control and adapt to the current circumstances according to my capabilities") *(P1).* Positive reframing was also evident: another principal described treating pressure as a professional challenge rather than a burden (P2). Delegation and teamwork were especially prominent. One principal stated: *"Kita bukan superman… kita boleh delegasi" ("*We are not superman… we can delegate*") (P2),* while another explained that effective leadership required working as a team rather than attempting to manage every task individually (P3). Participants also described spiritual practices, family support and recreational activities as important ways of restoring emotional balance. Finally, adherence to SOPs was viewed as a means of reducing uncertainty and ensuring that sensitive matters, particularly discipline and student safety, were handled through appropriate procedures. **Table 4** shows the strategies for managing well-being among selected SBP principals.

Table 4: Strategies for managing well-being among SBP Principals

Strategy	Description
Self-regulation and adjustment	Recognising personal limits, regulating emotional responses and adapting leadership approaches to changing circumstances.
Positive reframing and problem-solving	Interpreting difficulties as professional challenges and focusing on workable solutions.
Delegation and teamwork	Distributing responsibilities, seeking colleagues' input and building collective capacity.
Family and emotional support	Drawing on family relationships and trusted social support.
Spiritual practices	Prayer, reflection and reliance on spiritual beliefs as sources of comfort and meaning.
Recreation and self-care	Exercise, gardening, outdoor activities and time with family.
Work–life boundaries and prioritisation	Separating work from personal life, identifying priorities and postponing or delegating less urgent tasks.
SOP compliance and procedural management	Using formal procedures, documentation and reporting channels when handling sensitive or high-risk matters.

4.6 Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings

The integrated findings support a four-part conceptual account: (1) job demands, including workload, emotional demands, administrative demands and role conflict; (2) job resources, including organisational support, autonomy, collegial support and professional development; (3) management strategies, including self-regulation, positive reframing, problem-solving, delegation, social and spiritual support, self-care, boundaries and procedural management; and (4) mental well-being represented through the PERMA dimensions. The findings suggest that these components should be understood as interacting elements rather than as a simple one-way causal sequence. **Table 5** shows the integration of quantitative findings, qualitative findings and the integration interpretation.

Table 5: Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings

Quantitative pattern	Qualitative explanation	Integrated interpretation
Job demands were moderate overall; workload and emotional demands were high.	Boarding-school duties, performance pressure, administrative overlap and parent complaints.	The SBP context generates several forms of demand, including temporal, emotional, administrative and relational pressures.
Role conflict had the strongest negative association with PERMA (r = −.63).	Principals had to reconcile expectations from students, parents, teachers, authorities and	Conflicting expectations and accountability pressures are particularly relevant to leaders'

	organisational targets.	reported well-being.
Job resources were high; collegial support had the highest mean and strongest resource–PERMA association (r = .73).	Principals described delegation, teamwork, assistance from school staff and support from wider networks.	Relational and organisational resources are central features of how principals manage demanding work.
PERMA meaning and relationships had the highest means.	Principals referred to educational purpose, student development, supportive relationships and the satisfaction of school achievements.	Well-being is connected not only to positive feelings but also to professional meaning and relationships.
Resources were strongly associated with PERMA (r = .73).	Principals mobilised teamwork, family support, spiritual practices, recreation and work–life boundaries.	Well-being management combines workplace resources with personal and social strategies; individual coping should complement, not replace, organisational action.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The coexistence of high demands and high reported well-being

A notable finding is the coexistence of moderate overall job demands, high job resources and high PERMA well-being. The high mean for workload and emotional demands indicates that some aspects of principals' work remain intensive even when the overall demand score is moderate. At the same time, high scores for meaning and relationships suggest that principals may derive substantial purpose and interpersonal fulfilment from their roles. The qualitative accounts help explain this apparent coexistence: principals described the value of student development, teamwork and professional contribution while also acknowledging the pressure associated with residential operations and administrative responsibilities. This pattern is consistent with a multidimensional understanding of well-being. High positive functioning does not necessarily imply the absence of stressors. Rather, principals may experience meaningful and satisfying aspects of leadership alongside demanding conditions. The result supports the value of examining both work conditions and multiple dimensions of well-being instead of treating well-being as the inverse of stress alone.

5.2 Role conflict as a salient demand

Role conflict showed the strongest negative association with overall PERMA well-being among the demand dimensions. This is an important contribution because workload, although high in mean terms, was not significantly associated with overall PERMA in the reported analysis. In contrast, role conflict was associated with lower positive emotion, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. The qualitative evidence offers a contextual explanation: SBP principals navigate expectations from education authorities, teachers, students, parents and the school organisation, while also managing the distinctive requirements of a residential institution. The finding suggests that reducing the number of tasks alone may not be sufficient. Clearer role expectations, more coherent administrative instructions, realistic deadlines and stronger coordination across administrative levels may be needed to reduce competing demands.

5.3 Collegial support and organisational resources

The strongest quantitative association was between job resources and PERMA well-being. Collegial support had the highest mean among resource dimensions and the strongest association with overall PERMA. The qualitative findings reinforce this result through principals' accounts of delegation, teamwork, shared problem-solving and assistance from school staff. These findings are consistent with JD-R theory, which positions resources as factors that support goal attainment and positive work functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), and with longitudinal evidence showing beneficial associations between resources and principals' later outcomes (Marsh et al., 2023). The results also suggest that support should be understood as an enacted organisational practice, not merely a resource listed in policy documents. Support becomes meaningful when

colleagues share responsibility, provide timely assistance, offer constructive feedback and help principals manage complex situations. The positive association observed in this study is consistent with the possibility that resources may help leaders sustain well-being under demanding conditions. Nevertheless, because no interaction term was tested, the present findings do not establish that job resources statistically moderate or buffer the relationship between job demands and well-being. Leadership development programmes should therefore strengthen distributed responsibility, peer networks and collaborative problem-solving, alongside individual leadership competencies.

5.4 Personal strategies and the limits of individual coping

The qualitative findings identified a broad repertoire of strategies, including self-regulation, positive reframing, problem-solving, delegation, family support, spirituality, recreation, work–life boundaries and SOP compliance. These strategies demonstrate principals' agency in managing work demands. The emphasis on meaning and relationships in the PERMA results also suggests that professional purpose and supportive connections may be important aspects of their well-being. However, an important implication is that individual coping should not become a substitute for organisational responsibility. Encouraging principals to think positively or practise self-care will have limited value if role conflict, unnecessary administrative duplication, unrealistic deadlines or inadequate staffing remain unaddressed. A sustainable approach requires both individual-level strategies and structural improvements to the organisation of school leadership work.

5.5 Theoretical contribution

The study contributes to educational leadership research by applying the JD-R Model as the principal explanatory framework for understanding work-related conditions associated with SBP principals' mental well-being, while using PERMA to operationalise the multidimensional well-being outcome. JD-R explains the health-impairment relevance of job demands and the motivational value of job resources; PERMA captures positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. The qualitative phase adds contextual detail by showing how residential duties, multi-level instructions, parent relationships and accountability pressures are experienced in practice. It also identifies the ways principals mobilise relational, personal and procedural resources. The proposed four-component framework is empirically informed, but further research is required to test its structure, pathways and applicability beyond SBP principals in Malaysia. In particular, the potential buffering role of job resources should be examined through an explicit interaction analysis using an adequately powered sample.

5.6 Practical and policy implications

1. Review overlapping reporting requirements and short-notice administrative instructions to reduce avoidable role conflict and time pressure.
2. Strengthen collegial support through structured principal peer networks, mentoring, collaborative problem-solving and clear delegation arrangements.
3. Review the distribution of boarding-school responsibilities, including staff duty arrangements and the support available for student welfare and safety.
4. Provide confidential and accessible psychosocial support for principals, alongside professional development in emotional regulation, conflict management and boundary-setting.
5. Include leadership well-being in school leadership development and organisational monitoring, rather than evaluating principals solely through performance and compliance indicators.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the quantitative phase involved 82 SBP principals within a specific national and institutional context. Although the study used a census approach to the identified population of 82 SBPs nationwide, the findings should not be generalised automatically to all Malaysian school leaders, deputy principals or other education systems. The available dataset and manuscript do not pro-

vide a state-by-state distribution of participating schools, which limits assessment of geographical representation within the national coverage. Second, the cross-sectional survey and bivariate analyses do not establish causal relationships. Third, the regression models were estimated separately and did not test the unique contribution of job demands and job resources simultaneously. More importantly, the study did not test whether job resources moderate the relationship between job demands and mental well-being. Future analysis should use hierarchical multiple regression with an interaction term, provided that the raw data are available and the sample size and measurement properties are adequate. A larger and more diverse sample could also support more comprehensive modelling, subject to appropriate sample-size considerations. Fourth, the questionnaire showed acceptable to strong internal consistency in this sample; however, reliability does not establish construct validity. Future studies should report the adaptation process, expert review or content-validity evidence, and factor-analytic evidence for the job-demand and job-resource measures, as appropriate. Fifth, the qualitative phase involved five principals. Although the thesis reports information sufficiency, further studies could examine variation across school locations, leadership tenure, school size and gender, and could include deputy principals, teachers and relevant system-level stakeholders. Sixth, the high overall PERMA scores may involve ceiling effects or social desirability; future research should inspect score distributions, measurement properties and alternative indicators of distress and burnout. Finally, the proposed framework requires further validation through replication, longitudinal research or a formal expert-validation process.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined job demands, job resources and mental well-being among principals of Malaysian Fully Residential Schools through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Guided by the JD-R Model and operationalising mental well-being through PERMA, the study found that job demands were negatively associated with well-being, whereas job resources showed a stronger positive association. Role conflict emerged as the most salient negatively associated demand dimension, while collegial support was the most prominent resource. The qualitative findings showed how academic performance expectations, residential operations, administrative overlap, parent-related conflict and leadership accountability shape principals' work, and how principals respond through self-regulation, teamwork, support networks, spirituality, self-care, work–life boundaries and procedural management. The findings demonstrate the relevance of examining both the demands placed on principals and the resources available to them. Although the JD-R framework suggests that resources may buffer the adverse effects of demands, this study did not statistically test that moderating relationship. The central conclusion is that the well-being of school leaders is not solely an individual matter. It is shaped by the interaction between the demands embedded in leadership work, the resources made available by organisations and the strategies leaders can mobilise. Supporting principals therefore requires more than promoting personal resilience: it requires creating working conditions in which responsibilities are clear, resources are accessible and collegial support is embedded in everyday school practice.

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