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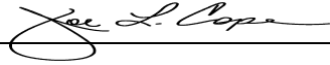
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This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the College of
Graduate and Professional Studies

Date: July 6, 2020

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Abilene Christian University
School of Educational Leadership

Increased Access to Information Communication Technologies and
Work-Life Balance With
K-12 Leaders

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Carolyn D. Washington

July 2020

Dedication

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my late parents John L. and Gearldine Manning-Malone, and Oscar Malone who tirelessly raised eight kids in an environment where families were thought hopeless. It is their teaching and love that shaped me into the person I am today along with my experiences in the city of Memphis. Earning my Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership is a testament to the relentless sacrifices that each of you made for both the immediate and extended family. While you are no longer here in the flesh, your legacy and spirit of resilience continues to live in the lives of your offspring. This body of scholarship is dedicated to each of you.

I would also like to extend this dedication to my brothers, sisters, and in-laws who have all played a role in my development, have kept me grounded, and have showed me the strength that flows in the Manning bloodline. Thank you for allowing me to rest on your shoulders—Jim and Pat, Pearline, Trent and Claire, Rex, Cynthia and Dennis, Angelia and Gerald, and Kathy—you are the wind beneath my wings.

Finally, I dedicate this to my wonderful nieces and nephews who became my children in the absence having my own. Life is going to be hard sometimes, but hard does not mean impossible. I love you and want you to always stretch yourself, don't stop when you are tired, stop when you are done!

Tammy, Patrice, Marklyn, Teri, April, Angelia, Crystal, Tiffany, Katrina
Rico, Marcus, Edmond, Troy, Tez, Jermell, Trey, Terry, Mike-Mike, Joseph, Matthew,
Tatyana, LaRico, Ashton, TJ, Cassidy, M'Chai, Byron, Bryan,
Lillie, Conner, Christopher, Phoenix

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” -Deuteronomy 31:8

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During data collection and writing (which also happened to be during COVID-19), I had the privilege to be in the home of my family, Trent and Claire Manning; your sacrifice of space afforded me the opportunity to focus without stress, interview, and write without interruption, and gave me what I needed to make it through the final months of such an arduous and at times

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To God be the glory for giving me the vision, tenacity and fortitude to endure.

I Corinthians 10:31

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Abstract

This qualitative study describes the lived experiences of kindergarten through 12th-grade leaders (K-12) relative to the increased accessibility of information communication technology (ICT) and work-life balance (WLB). Technology has evolved and become more accessible in the 21st century in individuals' personal and professional lives. Research has shown the impact of ICT in other high demanding professions, with little research available relative to the impact with K-12 leaders. However, the role of the K-12 leader is likewise considered highly demanding with extended work hours. The K-12 leader is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the principalship, being available after hours for meetings and other events, serving as instructional and curriculum leader, and in recent years has been called to take on the role of technology leader. Hence, the purpose of this research was to determine the impact, if any, of the increased access to ICT on K-12 leaders and WLB. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, the researcher describes experiences of K-12 principals and WLB relative to the increased access of ICT. K-12 principals describe the experience as one that is overwhelming, includes the role of technology leader, is perceived as both a help and hindrance, and is a position that may benefit from WLB policies. The researcher collected data using semistructured interviews in an online platform called Zoom. The sample consisted of eight K-12 principals from major suburban schools in Texas. The concluding chapter presents key conclusions and implications of this study's findings, insights, and recommendations.

Keywords: boundary theory, ICT, school principal or school leader, stress, WLB

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Information communication technologies (ICTs) have become increasingly accessible in a variety of formats and for a variety of uses (Koekemoer & De Wet, 2016). Starting with the early adoption of mobile devices, personal computers, and personal digital assistants, to more widespread, highly capable communication devices such as laptops and smartphones, individuals are now available 24 hours a day via email, text messaging, live-stream, Facetime, and other forms of social media. Not only are individuals using various forms of ICT in their personal lives, but they are also using such ICTs in their work lives (Koekemoer & De Wet, 2016; Networked Workers, 2008).

ICT, with devices such as smartphones and laptops, has become a cross-cultural societal norm (Radicati, 2014; Yelton, 2012). Additionally, many employers provide these technologies to employees or a stipend for employees to use their own devices, otherwise known as “bring your own device” (Guerin, 2017). There is no doubt that one can find many positive attributes of the access to ICTs; however, research findings also suggest that such an increase in access to ICTs has proven a disadvantage in work roles that are considered highly demanding or stressful (Chesley, 2014; Diaz et al., 2012; Sayah, 2013; Sungdoo, 2018).

Public school leadership in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) is demanding and stressful work. Literature reveals that principals deal with a great number of pressing and overwhelming challenges (Armstrong, 2015; Bryan, 2015; Burke et al., 2012; Krzemienski, 2012). These challenges can include time constraints, crises in the school, challenging policy demands, and overwhelming mandates (Sogunro, 2012). School leaders are more than just administrators; they are responsible for managing the daily affairs of the school, transforming schools through vision, routinely visiting classrooms (Harding, 2016), managing school budgets, and being physically present for meetings during the workday, after-hour board meetings,

evening functions, community functions, and sometimes functions on the weekend. Harding (2016) purported that such high demands cannot be met during the workday, evidencing the need for school leaders to make themselves available after traditional work hours.

Therefore, the sheer amount of administrative work requires that leaders do some of the work at home, in the evenings or weekends, and many use their personal time due to the amount of work required (Harding, 2016). Kossek (2016) purported it was becoming less common for individuals to disengage during off-work hours to focus on personal matters due to the demands of work required during the day. Consequently, the need to bring work home has blurred the lines between work and life and perhaps affected work-life balance (WLB), such that, researchers have found WLB as a contributing factor of stress, mental illness, and work-home conflict (Ďuranová & Ohly, 2016).

Work-life is defined as the seeking of balance or boundaries between the domain or sphere of work and life (Nam, 2014; Sayah, 2013), with balance being based on one's perceptions of the relationship between the two (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Nam, 2014). Such concepts of balance and boundaries grew out of the research of Ashforth et al. (2000) on boundary theory as they studied how individuals balanced work, home, and social domains. Additionally, current research has promoted the idea of work and life being fused as one domain and no longer operating as separate entities (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). Kossek (2016) would suggest the need for individuals to manage the boundaries between work and life, otherwise known as boundary management.

Boundaries between work and life are addressed in some company policies that allow for flexible work schedules or the opportunity to work from home; however, school leaders are required to be present at the job, often must get to their jobs early, and report working long hours. Likewise, many administrators have been provided ICTs such as smartphones and

computers to assist in managing emails and other work tasks. In a 2018 study, Drago-Severson et al. (2018) reported principals working 80 hours a week. Such high demands have led some principals to even consider leaving the profession due to the high expectations of the role (Sogunro, 2012).

Current literature has reported that school leaders use after-work time to respond to emails, complete observations, and complete reports (Oplatka, 2017). In some instances, school leaders were even asked to post on Facebook, build relationships through social media sites such as WhatsApp, and tweet about daily happenings in the schools (Capelluti & McCafferty, 2017). Given the high level of work demands, K-12 leaders struggle with WLB. Easy access to ICT or school district provided ICTs may compound WLB, leaving leaders to find themselves having to decide between time spent on social media and time spent with family.

In summary, WLB was seen as a significant challenge for K-12 leaders (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Sogunro, 2012) as was the use of ICTs, which “allow for flexibility around when and where individuals choose to work” (Fleck et al., 2015). Likewise, current literature suggested the use of ICT as a primary role of the K-12 leader (Oplatka, 2017). Consequently, one must consider whether the addition and access to ICTs have further impacted the challenge of WLB for K-12 leaders.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders in K-12 are experiencing demands at such a concerning rate that many are burned out, face significant health concerns, show lack of motivation for the role, and some even consider leaving the profession (Armstrong, 2015; Oplatka, 2017; Sogunro, 2012). The Learning Institute in collaboration with the Wallace Foundation reported that the average time that a principal stayed in a position was between four to six years, with 35% of principals in their schools for less than two years (Levin et al., 2019). Levin and Bradley (2019) noted that most

turnover occurred in schools with higher percentages of low-income families, low performing schools, and students of color, purporting that such schools are under higher accountability standards yet with poor resources, unfavorable working conditions, and less competitive salaries. One need only come face-to-face with a school leader from a K-12 public school to hear of the high demands of the role, pressures related to students' performance on statewide assessments, and excessive hours of work demanding more after-work hours to complete tasks.

Easy access to ICTs may compound K-12 school leaders' struggle to maintain WLB. Thus, school leaders are not only available during the workday for work-related tasks, they are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with just the click of a button. Home has become work and work has become home with leaders trying to seek balance somewhere in between (Adisa et al., 2018; Chen & Karahanna, 2014; Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Nam, 2014).

Current research has presented mixed results as to whether such access to ICT has created a double-edged sword for employees' WLB (Den-Nagy, 2014) or has served as an advantage on one hand and a disadvantage on the other. Although significant research has been done around technology and WLB in other sectors (Sayah, 2013) and also around school leaders and WLB (Wilk, 2016), there is a lack of research on the impact of increased access to ICT and the role that it plays relative to the WLB of K-12 leaders. Therefore, I saw a need to investigate the impact of increased access to ICTs on the WLB in K-12 leaders.

Purpose

I designed this study to investigate three areas concerning the increase in the access to ICTs and its impact on WLB for K-12 principals: (a) the stressors associated with the demands of the role of the K-12 principal, (b) boundaries between work and life in the role of the K-12 school principals, and (c) WLB policies in K-12 education specifically for school principals. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of K-12 school principals I

developed the following research questions.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and WLB of K-12 leaders?

RQ 2: How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technology in their roles as school principal?

RQ 3: In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?

RQ 4: In what ways, if any, do ISD WLB policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?

Definition of Key Terms

Boundary theory. Boundary theory focuses on how people transition between roles psychologically and physically, and how individuals tend to segment or integrate roles (Ashforth, et al., 2000). Research has developed in this area as researchers sought to address the question of WLB. Ashforth et al. (2000) set the theoretical foundation for WLB and caused researchers to study how individuals found balance between and/or among work, home, and social domains.

Information communication technology (ICTs). ICT has taken on many definitions over the years primarily based on industry, innovation, and economy (Bresnahan & Yin, 2017). In general terms, ICTs can be seen as (a) electronic-based for retrieval, storage, processing, and packaging (Ayode, 2002, as cited in Afolabi & Abidoye, 2011); (b) as hardware and software for data retrieval such as voice, audio, video, fax (Aluko, 2004, as cited in Afolabi & Abidoye, 2011); or (c) as any technology medium used to transmit information such as smartphones, PCs, or laptops (Nam, 2014). Afolabi & Abidoye (2011) provided a definition that encompasses prior research and one that was used for the purposes of this study—ICT refers to “the use of

electronic devices such as computers, telephones, internet, satellite system, to store, retrieve and disseminate information in the form of data, text image and others” (Afolabi and Abidoye, 2011).

School principal or school leader. A school leader is a “principal, assistant principal, or other individual who is an employee or officer of an elementary school or secondary school, local education agency, or other entity operating an elementary or secondary school, and responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in an elementary school or secondary school building” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, n.d.). To become a school principal in most states, individuals must have a higher education degree, experience as a school principal, and hold a principal certification. Specifically, in the state of Texas, educators seeking to become a school principal must meet the following requirements to obtain certification as a school principal:

- must hold a master’s degree from a university that is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB),
- hold a valid classroom teaching certificate,
- have two years of creditable teaching experience as a classroom teacher,
- successfully complete an approved principal educator preparation program, and
- successfully complete the required exam.

These criteria are set forth through the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the managing education agency for the state of Texas (TEA, n.d.).

Stress. Stress is defined by the American Association of Stress as “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension” or “a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. Likewise,

stress is viewed as “the level of tension people feel is placed on their minds and souls by the demands of their jobs, relationships, and responsibilities in their personal lives” (Seaward, 2017, p. 5). Francis et al. (2017) reported much research currently exists in the field of education around stress and its impact on educators, (e.g., stress, school culture, mental illness, and turnover). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, a combining of the definition from The American Association of Stress and Seaward (2017) is recommended—physical, mental or emotional strain or tension that people feel is placed on their minds and souls by the demands of their jobs, relationships, and responsibilities in their personal lives.

Work-life balance. WLB grew out of research by Ashforth et al. (2000) and Clark (2000) around work/family border theory. Prior to Clark, others had addressed WLB primarily in relation to emotional linkages; however, Clark added to previous researchers’ work around work/family border theory by addressing conflicts that might arise in the home due to the complexity of work. Recent research defines WLB and includes concepts such as segmentation and integration or flexibility or permeability, all seeking to understand the factors that influence WLB. The definitions that align for this study defined WLB as the seeking of balance or boundaries between the domain or sphere of work and life (Nam, 2014; Sayah, 2013), with balance being based on one’s perceptions of the relationship between the two (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Nam, 2014).

Summary

Chapter 1 focused on the demands and challenges of K-12 leadership and the increased access of ICT. Leaders are charged with tasks that demand their attention both during the workday and after work. Although many are provided technological tools with the likely intent to support their workload, one must question whether such access has come to help the K-12 leader or whether it has created an additional concern of WLB. Hence, the purpose of this study

was to determine the impact of increased access to ICTs on K-12 leaders and WLB. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature related to (a) the current demands on and stressors for K-12 principals, (b) the effect of the increased access to ICTs in roles considered highly demanding, and (c) an introduction to boundary theory and stress management.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of the increased access to ICT on the WLB of K-12 principals. Using extant literature, the foundation for this study was established to understand the impact of increased access to ICTs and the WLB of K-12 principals. The preliminary review of literature included the following terms: *school principals*, *ICT*, *boundary theory*, *K-12 leaders and WLB*, *technology and WLB*. Results of the preliminary review yielded the following themes: (a) demands and stressors associated with the role of K-12 principals, (b) the need for WLB with K-12 principals, (c) the increased access to ICTs, and (d) the impact of such access on concepts such as work-family conflict, WLB, work-family interference, and work-life boundary. Through this review of literature, I organized such themes along with the theoretical frameworks that support this research.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Several theories surface throughout literature related to the idea of WLB—spillover theory, boundary theory, and boundary management. Likewise, research addressing ICT use and WLB most frequently had its basis in work-family border theory (Leung & Zhang, 2016); work-life boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), and work-life boundary management (Cousins & Robey, 2015). Many theories related to WLB grew out of boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), which set the stage for primarily addressing the psychological transitions that occur between roles, or, as otherwise stated, how individuals engage and disengage psychologically from one role to the next.

Boundary Theory

Ashforth et al. (2000) designed a study around work boundaries and transitions centered on understanding how individuals engage in daily role transitions as part of their organizational life relative to three domains: work-home transitions, at work transitions, and transitions between

work and social domains. Ashforth et al. presented many of the key concepts—creating and crossing of boundaries, integration and segmentation preferences, flexibility and permeability of roles, and role identification. Such concepts began setting the foundation for future studies around WLB. Current research has continued to reference Ashforth et al.’s (2000) work on boundary theory and extended it. Clark (2000) pulled from boundary theory and developed what she referred to as work-family border theory (Cousins & Robey, 2015; Piszczek & Berg, 2014). Other researchers focused on work-life boundary management, centering their research on boundary management related to technology in the digital age (Adisa et al., 2018; Kossek, 2016).

Work Family Border Theory

Work family border theory “explains how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance” (Clark, 2000, p. 750). According to Clark, there is an interconnectedness that exists between work and family and that individuals can both enact and shape their environments to proactively address conflicts that might arise due to the complexity of work and life. Clark established the work/family border theory arguing that prior theories had only addressed what she termed “emotional linkages” (p. 749), yet failed to address the overall complexities of work and home. Clark presented four central concepts to border theory: the work and home domain, the borders between work and home, the border-crosser, and the border-keepers. Such balance, according to Clark (2000), was created as individuals identified borders for themselves, whereas at the organizational level, domains and borders could be altered to create work/family balance. A key component of this theory was that it not only described why conflict exists, but also provided a framework for individuals and organizations to encourage better balance between work and families.

Separate Domains or Fused Domains

Many will agree that home and work are separate domains and that concepts such as

integration and segmentation are important (Gadeyne et al., 2018; Koch & Binnewies, 2015; Piszczek & Berg, 2014). However, other researchers have suggested that there is a blending of the home and work domain as society has become more technologically advanced (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Sungdoo, 2018), and the workforce is seeing a shift in the millennial workers' perceptions of WLB (M. Johnson, 2015). Millennials have shifted from the ideological fixation on WLB to life-work balance. As they are a generation who adapted to ICTs as small children, they choose to believe that ICTs makes life easier and have fused the integration of ICTs in both their personal and work lives, not seeing a need to differentiate or create boundaries. Hence, flexible work time came about as millennials embraced ICTs as an avenue of getting work done at times convenient for them: late hours, early mornings, in bed, or on the go. As such, the opportunity to have flexible time also allowed millennials to decide when best to have leisure time, thereby keeping all things equal and creating a sense of balance between work and leisure. This equality between work and leisure is now referred to as *technology equilibrium*, the successful blending of life and work via technology (M. Johnson, 2015). It is an integral part of how millennials have found balance in work and life/leisure. Although this may be true, still others such as Kossek (2016) centered her work on work-life boundary management.

Work-Life Boundary Management

Work-life boundary management is more about a person's preference to separate work and nonwork roles or integrating work and nonwork roles, further suggesting that one's ability to effectively manage boundaries can lead to balance in one's personal life and can result in effective leadership. Concepts from boundary theory, work/family border theory (Adisa et al., 2018; Den-Nagy, 2014), and work-life boundary management (Derks et al., 2016; Kossek, 2016; Nam, 2014) were all seen in literature related to ICT use and work-life (Leung & Zhang, 2016).

Although the terms boundary and border seemed to be used interchangeably in much of the literature, the concepts originally derived from boundary theory.

In consideration of each of the theories above, I chose not to use Clark's (2000) work-family border theory as some individuals in the study were only a family of one and may not have had a need to navigate relationships with others. The use of border theory with an emphasis on boundary management seemed most aligned with this study because my research questions involved WLB with those in a leadership role and more specifically, the role of a school principal. Additionally, because stress has been found as a relative function of the principal's role, an additional concept to consider is that of stress-management.

Stress Management

Research has indicated that stress management is a critical area of concern with school principals. Seaward (2017) defined stress as "the level of tension people feel is placed on their minds and souls by the demands of their jobs, relationships, and responsibilities in their personal lives" (p. 5). Collie, Perry and Martin (as cited in McIntyre et al., 2017) operationalized educator stress as related to instructional workload, informational workload, and the working climate. Stress has long been a concern for society (Crandall & Perrewé, 1995) and has routinely shown up in literature related to educators' stress (Dicke et al., 2014; Roeser et al., 2013), job demands and burnout in suburban schools (Bottiani et al., 2019; Camacho et al., 2018), and for the purposes of this study, job stress specifically related to school principals.

Seaward (2017) further emphasized that today's society has been experiencing a phenomenon of stress that is rooted in change, uncertainty, and the lack of personal boundaries. Seaward (2017) proposed that one societal change—advances in technology—has impacted personal boundaries. As school principals engage in the day-to-day activities of the school and the advances in and the increased access to technology, it is no doubt that they, too, are impacted

by associated stressors.

In a previous study involving 52 high school principals, Songuro (2012) identified the following as causes of stress for school principals: (a) unpleasant relationships and people conflict, (b) time constraints, (c) crises, (d) policy demands, (e) budgetary constraints, (f) fear of failure, and (g) negative publicity with media. Likewise, Oplatka's (2017) study of 40 principals found the workload so demanding that principals were not setting clear boundaries between work and home. While it is clear that stress is a factor, the new phenomenon of access to ICTs has evolved, and one must consider along with current stressors, the 24/7 influence of access to smartphones, social media, Twitter, and other social media platforms and their impact on the WLB for school principals.

The demands of K-12 leadership have become daunting and the literature has revealed that principals deal with many pressing and overwhelming challenges (Armstrong, 2015; Bryan, 2015; Burke et al., 2012; Krzemienski, 2012). Such pressures lead them to feel stressed, overwhelmed, unsure, and fearful (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Oplatka, 2017). Additionally, Van der Merwe and Parsotam (2011) and Beusaert et al. (2015) argued that such stress can even lead principals to a feeling burnt out; or as suggested by Hult et al. (2016), principals are overwhelmed as they have become victims of external pressures, not to mention, additional stressors including the increased access to ICTs.

School principals are provided ICTs in the form of laptops, cell-phones, and iPads as additional tools to assist in supporting their administrative and managerial duties (Garcia et al., 2019; Naicker, 2013). And now in the 21st century, these tools are also used to connect with parents and the community through social media such as Facebook (Garcia et al., 2019) to highlight school events and show and celebrate accomplishments. With such access for administrative, managerial, and social media needs, many principals find themselves working

during nonwork hours (Capelluti & McCafferty, 2017) and perhaps feel more obligated to stay connected and responsive through the use of technological devices because the school district has both paid for and supplied the devices. The school principal's additional role as technology leader has become a requirement in leading organizational change in the 21st century (Pautz & Sadera, 2017).

With the current demands in the role of K-12 leadership, gaps still exist in the literature considering the role that the increased access to ICTs might have on the work-life of K-12 leaders. Researchers have included participants in other studies and the impact of ICT in roles considered high demand or stressful such as corporate law (Cavazotte et al., 2014), the IT sector (Sayah, 2013; Sungdoo, 2018), industry (Chesley, 2014; Ugheoke & Kamil, 2018; Karkoulian et al., 2016), and higher education (Wilk, 2016). Likewise, research has considered the impact of ICTs on work-family conflict, WLB, work-family interference, and work-life boundaries (Adisa et al., 2018; Ohly & Latour, 2014; Piszczek, 2014; Sayah, 2013); however, the literature has included few studies involving school leaders in a study relative to the increased access of ICTs and WLB in K-12 leaders.

Understanding the impact of the increased access of ICTs and WLB with K-12 principals might assist in (a) reducing stressors associated with the pressures experienced in the role K-12 principals, (b) identifying ways for the school principals to create boundaries between work-life and personal life, and (c) developing company norms and policies that support and encourage WLB. One example of a company that has created WLB policies addressing ICT use after work is Volkswagen (Peralta, 2011). The company has implemented what they term "shut down" periods from ICTs. Likewise, Gadeyne et al. (2018) suggested the need to limit the after-work use of ICTs.

Pressures of K-12 Principals

School principals have been under a great deal of work-related pressures: (a) pressures to move the needle forward on student achievement, (b) completing classroom observations, (c) being a part of curriculum and instruction, and (d) routinely conducting data analysis are just a few of the many pressures that school principals face (Hult et al., 2016). These burdens coupled with the burgeoning pressures for students to increase performance on statewide assessments and for principals to attend evening board meetings and community meetings after working long days have led to school principals feeling stressed, inundated, unsure, fearful (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Oplatka, 2017), and many principals resorting to leaving the profession (L.A. Johnson, 2005). In a review by Lavigne et al. (2019), findings suggested that turnover was an issue across the United States, reporting that 35% of principals were at their schools less than two years, and approximately 18% were no longer in the same position one year later (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Wanting to further examine such turnover, L. A. Johnson (2005) addressed the question of why principals have been leaving the profession and found that two of the many reasons were heavy workloads and the need to find ways to reduce the workload.

Sogunro (2012), in a study on stress in school administration, identified major stress factors with K-12 leaders:

- unpleasant relationships,
- conflicts with people,
- time constraints,
- crises in the school,
- challenging policy demands,
- overwhelming mandates,
- budgetary constraints,

- fear of failure,
- negative publicity, and
- media coverage.

Additionally, and of great concern according to Harding (2016), is that these overwhelming demands cannot be met during the workday. Sogunro (2012) further noted that due to the high levels of stress, many principals think of quitting or seek early retirement. In fact, in a recent report, Levin et al. (2019) termed principal turnover as a “serious issue across the country” (p. 3).

Although stressors were found to vary in schools based on campus size, socioeconomic status, and whether teachers were highly qualified, research has been clear that the challenges in urban schools are much more prevalent than in rural schools (Lynch, 2011). Such challenges in urban schools were found to be related to low socioeconomics often resulting in students experiencing feelings of hopelessness, stress due to limited resources, neighborhoods associated with poverty and violence, and low achievement on state-mandated assessments. Lynch also found that students from urban schools in large cities had higher incidents involving physical fights, suicide attempts, exposure to crime and delinquency, and mental health concerns. With such factors, school principals working in urban schools experienced greater levels of stress.

This section elaborates on the pressures currently found in the literature around the role of the K-12 principal: (a) job demands, (b) school operations, (c) instructional leadership and school accountability, (d) creating a safe and secure environment, (e) ICT leader, and (f) boundaries around work and life. Previous research has identified these areas as factors that impact K-12 principals' WLB. In addition to these pressures, I address other concerns, such as setting boundaries between work and life and the necessity of creating policies around WLB.

Job Demands

The role of the school principal is one wrought with many job-demands. Sebastian et al. (2018), in their examination of how school principals in urban schools spent their time, collected data from 52 schools in an urban school district where staffing had been consistent for at least five years. Principals from elementary, middle, and high schools logged time spent in the areas of building operations, finances, community or parent relations, school district functions, student affairs, personnel issues, planning and setting goals, instructional leadership, and professional growth. Sebastian et al. noted that principals worked an average of at least 50 hours a week attending to these responsibilities, further noting that school context—location, school size, student body—was not a factor in how school principals used their time. On the other hand, findings suggested that the school level is a predictor of how principals allocate their time and daily practices, with significant differences seen only at the elementary level when compared to all other levels. Additionally, Sebastian et al. found the following:

- Principals who worked in high achieving schools spent less time on instructional leadership and more time on finance, community, and parents as compared to principals in low achieving schools.
- Principals in elementary schools spent more time, beginning mid-morning, on instructional leadership.
- Principals in schools with high enrollments spent a great portion of their day on building operations.

School Operations

School operations included building maintenance, human resource matters, budgeting and safety (Sebastian et al., 2018). Likewise, in the Sebastian et al. study, principals reported working on building operations before school, student affairs and leadership during the school

day, professional growth at the end of the day, and parent and community relationships at the beginning of the school day or after the school day. Hence, the role of the school principal brings great responsibility as principals navigate the many nuances of running a building and even greater responsibilities toward school accountability.

Building Operations

School building operations included such tasks as scheduling, building maintenance, dealing with vendors (Sebastian et al., 2018), along with the overall management of the school relative to human resource matters, budgeting, and safety. Whereas, such tasks for some principals were considered a necessary evil, both burdensome and time-consuming (Hochbein, 2019), such tasks were still a very relevant part of the day and the life of the school principal.

In their study of 50 urban school principals, Sebastian et al. (2018) found that principals worked on average 50 hours a week, spending less time on building operations than other functions throughout the day. Sebastian et al. noted, however, that one participant in the study spent at least 200 minutes a day working on building operations in one day. Noticeably, building operations took up a substantial part of a school principal's work day along with a multitude of other leadership responsibilities.

Although building operations have been an expected duty when one becomes a school principal, some school principals have seen the task of building operations as interfering with instructional leadership, finding it difficult to manage both school operations and leading classroom instruction (Hochbein, 2019). However, Hochbein argued that building operations served to support teachers and students and should be viewed as an integral part of instructional leadership. Whereas Hochbein's observations may be valued, one cannot negate the fact that principals were likewise required to visit classrooms, complete paperwork, deal with discipline, manage buses, train teachers, attend professional development, participate in meetings with

parents, attend board meetings, and even participate in community meetings (Niño et al., 2017). Therefore, it was not surprising that principals were challenged with finding a balance between building operations and instructional leadership.

Meetings

The school principal has been seen as the primary leader in the building (Meador, 2019) or has otherwise been seen as “the face of the school.” In other words, it has been expected that the principal be visible and nurture relationships with students, teachers, parents, and community members. As such, the presence of the school principal at PTA meetings, school programs, school board meetings, and community meetings has simply been a requirement of the role, not to mention the many day-to-day meetings held with parents, staff, and students relative to instructional planning, events and functions, and discipline.

To substantiate this thought, Niño et al. (2018), in their study with Latina and Latino school principals, found that Latina/o school principals spent 16% of their time in meetings, further suggesting that this percentage of time in meetings serves as a barrier to school leadership. In yet another study with 100 urban principals around effective instructional time use for leaders, Grissom et al. (2013) found that principals spent 12.6% of their visible time on instructional leadership completing walkthroughs, conducting formal evaluations, and coaching teachers. Surprisingly, the research also found that time spent on some instructional functions, when spent broadly on tasks such as walkthroughs, had no impact on instructional gains with students.

Instructional Leadership and School Accountability

The Wallace Foundation presented a publication that focused on ideas that would guide schools to better teaching and learning (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Many factors influenced the need for states to focus on school principals. Factors included the effect that principals have on

student learning, the need for flexibility in ESSA, national standards, and available support from organizations that focus on school leadership. The foundation presented principles that focused on the role of school principal as leader and identified five key practices of an effective instructional leader:

- shape a vision of academic success for all students,
- create a climate hospitable to education,
- cultivate leadership in others,
- improve instruction and managing people, and
- manage data and processes to foster school improvement.

Prior to this publication, The School Administration Project was conducted to address the conditions in schools that were interfering with principals spending more time on instructional leadership (Turnbull et al., 2009). Likewise, with school reform and school improvement at the center of concern in the 21st century due to significantly high numbers of schools underperforming and the impact that school principals have on student learning, it is of little surprise that The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) supported each state in discussions around ways to strengthen school leadership (Riley & Meredith, 2017).

Findings from the CCSSO report suggested trends in approaches and needs relative to school leadership. The CCSSO report noted that one of the top state priorities for school leadership was improving principal support and professional development. Additionally, other areas of focus were noted as key priorities: improving principal supervisor practices, integrating principal work with school improvement planning, and determining the impact of district context, size, and needs.

It is likewise important to note, that the report did not mention or address any concerns around the use of ICTs, the increase in access to ICTs, trends and development in ICTs that

might be useful for school leaders, professional development needs of principals, and most importantly any impact that principals might report they are experiencing as a result of such increase. It may be important to determine whether ICTs are an area that states might need to consider in future meetings relative to school leadership.

Teacher Observations, Evaluations and Feedback

A substantial part of the school principal's workday responsibilities as an instructional leader included formal teacher observations and evaluations, walkthroughs and coaching (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Grissom et al., 2013; Neumerski et al., 2018). Grissom et al. (2013) found that 12.6% of the principal's day was spent in instructional leadership inclusive of teacher observations and walkthroughs. Likewise, Neumerski et al. (2018) noted that building operations had taken a backseat to the principal's level of engagement with teaching and learning through data collection around observation and providing coaching and feedback. Neumerski et al. (2018) interviewed 60 principals of six urban schools and found that they were asked to use multiple measures relative to teacher observations (i.e., collecting evidence of performance, providing formative feedback, and providing follow-up support to teachers). Neumerski et al. suggested that such expectations were interfering with other responsibilities required of the principal during the school day purporting that such demands may be leading to principal stress and burnout.

These expectations around teacher observations, evaluations, and feedback were evident in books and tools authored by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo such as *Leverage Leadership* and *Driven by Data*, and in Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. In some urban and suburban Texas school districts, locally developed teacher evaluation systems, based on Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* and student growth measures, are used to differentiate teacher performance and maximize teacher professional growth.

Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) focused on how principals should spend their time, how to use time more efficiently on what matters, and how to make data-driven decisions. Using seven levers, Bambrick-Santoyo laid the groundwork for a principal and how they should focus on how they spend their time. Relative to evaluations, Bambrick-Santoyo emphasized the importance not of filling out rubrics and paperwork, but of providing adequate feedback and coaching that leads to teacher effectiveness.

The district developed evaluation systems focused on teacher effectiveness, teacher retention, and student performance and were based on the Danielson Framework. The framework includes hours of training for the school principal and hours of training for teachers around the four domains. There are multiple forms to complete before and after teacher observations by both the teachers and principals (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Danielson, 2014).

As noted, teacher observations, walkthroughs, evaluations, and feedback are a critical part of the process. Whereas some argued that there was no relationship between evaluations and student achievement (Grissom et al., 2013), others argued that there was much effectiveness in considering multiple measures when evaluating teachers (Neumerski et al., 2018). Regardless of the stance that has been taken in the literature around teacher observations, walkthroughs, and feedback, it is the school principal who has to assume the responsibility of school accountability and student performance.

As such, in the state of Texas, teachers are appraised either using the state developed recommended assessment system known as Texas Teacher Evaluation & Support System (T-TESS); or a locally developed assessment that aligns with the criterion set forth by the TEA. The T-TESS requires that teachers have one annual formal evaluation and that evaluations consist of multiple informal observations or walkthroughs and additional formal observations. The observations are supported by preconferences and postconferences by the teachers and appraisers

along with observations by the administrator(s) of the campus. The T-TESS consists of three components: goal setting and professional development plan, the evaluation cycle, and student growth. The integrated system is designed to help teachers with student growth and professional development (TEA, 2016).

School Accountability and Student Performance

For many years prior to 2002, school accountability was established at the district or state level (Jacob, 2017). However, in 2002, President George Bush implemented the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which affected both educational policy and practices at the federal, state and district levels (Jacob, 2017; Klein, 2015). The primary goal of NCLB was to hold schools accountable for student performance. In so doing, districts were required to make sure that highly qualified teachers were in place, that standardized tests were administered, and scores were reported annually per school (Jacob, 2017; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Other critical components of NCLB included parent choice of schools if their child was at a low performing school, more emphasis on reading at the elementary level, and providing local education agencies autonomy on how to use federal funds. With these new levels of accountability, additional work trickled down to the state and local levels to ensure that adequate yearly progress (AYP) was made, as provisions in the law indicated that any campus not meeting their annual goals for two consecutive years would be subject to sanctions (Klein, 2015).

Sanctions could include the following:

- students being able to transfer to other schools of choice,
- schools having to provide tutoring, state-based interventions, and
- schools having to set aside 10% of their Title I budget.

After many years of NCLB review and attempts at reauthorizations, it was determined that NCLB, as it stood in its original implementation, had failed, and thus under President

Obama's administration, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB (Klein, 2015). ESSA attempted to release schools from the federal mandates of NCLB, primarily those that sanctioned schools for not meeting adequate yearly progress (Heise, 2017; Ujifus et al., 2019).

Under ESSA, districts applied for waivers to release them from some of the mandates of NCLB. ESSA also gave districts and states authority over school improvement, teacher evaluation, and funding (Ujifus et al., 2019) and prepared students for higher education or the workforce by implementing common core standards or having standards certified through state higher education institutions (Klein, 2015). Additionally, ESSA allowed states to develop their own standards or to adopt common core standards that were approved by the federal government under NCLB (Heise, 2017).

Hence, with a focus on both high-stakes test-based accountability practices and college readiness, it was not surprising to find significant stress among teachers, principals, the work environment, and even students (Saeki et al., 2018; Welton & Williams, 2015). To further substantiate this, Welton and Williams (2015) found that the stressors of state accountability were so profound in one Texas high school that the instructional focus was primarily on passing the exit test, such that participants in the study reflected that the stress of passing the test led to them having a negative experience about going to college. Koretz (2017), professor of Education at Harvard, shared in a recent article the detriment of the pressures on students to perform. These included, but were not limited to the following:

- students being issued color-coded ID cards based on performance,
- students becoming physically and emotionally ill during testing,
- score inflation offering a positive illusion of progress, and
- false reporting resulting in schools receiving incentives or rewards for erroneous information.

Whether Grade 3–8 standards or college readiness standards, the expectations of both NCLB and ESSA have led to extreme and unnecessary levels of stress in the school environment, amongst teachers and students, and have undoubtedly led to a tremendous amount of stress for the school principal. Whereas state accountability and student performance has been a top priority of the federal government, school safety has not lagged far behind.

Creating a Safe and Secure Environment

The need to create a safe and secure environment in schools has become a key concern across the United States. Gone are the days of parents and school leaders being concerned about a fistfight, name-calling, or someone not wanting to be a child's friend. No, today parents and leaders alike must be concerned as to whether kids will make it through the school day alive due to school violence. In November of 2019, CNN reported that in 46 weeks of school there had been 45 school shootings (Wolfe & Walker, 2019), and from 1999 until 2018 there were 193 school shootings reported. Not surprisingly, Rogers (2019) noted that the United States has experienced more school shootings than the rest of the world combined.

School Shootings

With such high numbers of school shootings, it is not surprising that principals are reporting that students, parents, and the community are expressing concern about student safety at school, particularly related to gun violence (Rogers, 2019). It is alarming to see that students' concerns have moved from not liking their uniforms or school lunches to their overall safety. Wick (as cited in Rogers, 2019) shared observations of students showing anxiety when returning to school after seeing media coverage around school shootings. Likewise, other principals reported that gun violence in schools has become the number one concern, not only for students, parents, and the community but also for themselves as school principals, with one principal reporting that it is the first thing he thinks of every morning (Rogers, 2019).

The role of the principal related to keeping a school safe is a top priority. Unfortunately, many principals have not been trained to deal with such matters, and even if trained, it poses a great sense of emotional distress when faced with a gun-related situation in a school (Rogers, 2019). Therefore, principals are left with having to create the safest and most secure environment that they can by doing the following:

- providing active shooter training for teachers and students,
- adding metal detectors,
- conducting lockdown drills,
- adding cameras,
- installing electronic doors,
- securing windows, and
- limiting entries and exits.

Whereas many principals implement such strategies, others are also incorporating public health approaches that encourage students to respect themselves and others, and an approach that emphasizes the use of mental health professionals to support the overall counseling and mental health needs of students (Rogers, 2019). School counseling can be a critical deterrent to school violence and many other behavioral concerns in schools.

Other Safety Concerns

School violence was not the only concern that principals have related for creating a safe and secure environment; principals still have to manage day-to-day discipline matters, such as office referrals and student fights (Wilhelm, 2017), along with other concerns such as sexual harassment and bullying (Miller & Mondschein, 2017), and even safety around weather and natural conditions such as hurricanes. Wilhelm (2017) said it best, “without a safe, secure learning environment, teaching and learning cannot possibly thrive, and if the principal’s time

and energy are devoured by operational and student discipline issues, there is little left for acting and serving as the learning leader” (Wilhelm, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, the school principals must be vigilant in securing their campuses against intruders, situations around bullying, students who attempt suicide, and many other situations. The educational climate demands a school principal is willing to do everything necessary to create a safe and secure environment. Rogers (2019) argued there is a need for strong mental health and counseling staff on campuses. Their presence is critical to matters of safety and security. Campuses would do well to have proactive and intervention-based approaches embedded in their school culture.

Information Communication Technology Leaders

School principals were previously known as managers, supervisors, and those responsible for having a solid background in curriculum and instruction; however, school principals are also now seen as technological instructional leaders ensuring innovative, ethical practices around ICT use (Garland, 2009), and encouraging and supporting ICT implementation in classrooms (Garcia et al., 2019). School principals in the 21st century have been charged with an awareness of emerging technologies, assurance that educators are proficient in the use of ICTs, and accountability that ICTs are integrated into the classroom (Naicker, 2013). Additionally, many school principals are now expected to post information about their schools on social media and text or tweet about their schools routinely (Denton, 2019). As such, the increased access to information communication technologies has surfaced as an everyday part of the life of the school principal.

Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies resulting from wireless devices have created opportunities for some and a digital divide for others, leaving school principals the stress of advocating for their campus’ needs around advanced ICTs to support instruction (Garland, 2009). To further validate

the need to close the digital divide, the Office of Educational Technology (2014), under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Education, issued a call to superintendents around the United States in 2014 to sign a pledge to become Future Ready. This pledge along with the most recent update in 2017 can be found on the Office of Educational Technology website. The pledge established the platform for school districts to set a vision for digital learning, to empower educators through personalized professional learning, and to mentor other district leaders in their own transition to digital learning (Office of Educational Technology, 2014).

Although school principals' coursework has been embedded in school leadership and sometimes included school management, many are left to engage in professional growth (Sebastian et al., 2018) and to learn of emerging technologies either on their own time (Garcia et al., 2019) or in training provided by their school district. So it is of little surprise that in a recent study, Garcia et al. (2019), addressing ICTs and how principals learn and use hardware and software, found that the use of technologies by principals both daily and weekly was more for administrative purposes than instructional purposes.

Whereas the fact exists that many principals lack instructional skills using ICTs, the fact likewise exists that recent years of professional development have focused primarily on training for teachers versus that of administrators (Garcia et al., 2019). Of greater importance, Garcia et al. found that schools were more likely to show progress with ICT integration if the school's principal had received ICT integration training; Garland (2009) argued that school leaders must be aware of all students needs including that of language, disability, and race when promoting ICT access for all students. Whereas there are several technologies used to support instruction, there is likewise the need for school principals to have awareness of digital platforms in addition to email that supports teachers' workloads. Technologies such as Google Classroom, GroupMe,

RemindMe apps, WeChat, and others are currently used to support teachers academically and to enhance and provide timely communication for teachers.

School principals' awareness of new ICTs is pertinent in the 21st century because new technologies are emerging constantly to support instructional needs, the need for the school principal to become aware of emerging technologies is essential. Whereas many of these emerging technologies may prove effective in streamlining communication (Denton, 2019), one must question whether the need to stay connected has created additional work for the school principal. So when does a school principal have time to research emerging technologies that support instruction, staff and parent communication, and social media needs? Once aware, when does the school principal have time to learn how to use such technologies? And most importantly, when is there time in a principal's schedule to ensure that students and staff have access to ICTs to support instructional needs?

Email Communication

Another area of ICTs that demands time from principals is that of email communication. Some principals reported experiencing pressure to respond to emails during nonwork hours due to supervisory expectations and company norms (Daantje et al., 2018; Wilk, 2016). Such expectations and norms resulted in employees feeling pressured to respond to emails when they were officially no longer at work. Along this same line and to further establish this thought, Cavazotte et al. (2014) conducted a study and participants reported being reprimanded for not being readily available to respond to emails.

In another study, participants reported feeling pressured to check and respond to emails even on sick days (Wilk, 2016). And in a prior study conducted by Chen and Karahanna (2014), findings indicated work-to-nonwork interruptions had negative outcomes on personal life. This implied a need for companies and organizations to create work to nonwork policies that support

employee recovery time, specifically for those who work in high-paced fragmented roles, as in the case of school leaders. As if principals do not already have enough work on their hands, in addition to emails, school principals are now asked to post on social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and or other platforms.

Social Media

Whereas social media has become a part of almost every human's personal life, it is evident that social media has made its way into the professional life of many as well.

Notwithstanding, school principals are faced with legal and policy implications around social media (Armistead, 2010), regulating student use around social media (Smale & Hill, 2016), and some even using Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram to highlight positive happenings in their schools and to keep families informed (Cappeluti & McCafferty, 2017; Denton, 2019).

Legal and Policy Implications for Schools

In 2010, 306 principals met together for a summer leadership institute with Education Partners Inc., and much of the discussion ensued around the implementation of social media in the curriculum and the legal and policy implications for schools (Armistead, 2010). During the meeting the following legal implications were presented:

- disciplining students for inappropriate use during school hours,
- cyberbullying and sexting,
- training for students and families on the safe and appropriate use of social media, and
- clear legal guidelines about how schools can respond to the inappropriate use of social media.

In 2019, many of the concerns are still front and center for school principals, such as cyberbullying, sexting, and inappropriate contact with strangers. Hence, some states have proposed or passed legislation for courses to be offered on digital literacy to help students

become more conscious of appropriate use and to be more responsible for how they engage in social media.

Gleason (2019), in research on digital literacy with social media, found that one way to engage students appropriately is through digital citizenship (i.e., research projects, public service announcements, or engaging in political agendas by connecting with public officials). In other words, because students were engaged in ICTs anyway, educators could integrate what they were already using and engage students in worthy societal causes and other areas of influence.

Regulating Student Use

Another task of the school principals has been making sure that skills were provided for students, parents, and teachers around the safe use of digital technologies (Smale & Hill, 2016). Earlier information was presented around the principal's role in creating a safe and secure environment. As such, regulating students' use of computers and securing computers so that students are not privy to inappropriate information is likewise an important role of the school principal. Most students today can carry their personal cell phones and laptops to school, other campuses provide students with laptops. Regardless of how the ICT is obtained, systems must be in place to assure that students are not targets of the misuse of social media.

Many schools provide training for students, parents, and teachers and discuss what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. But with students using smartphones at home and school for social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and others, it has been difficult for administrators to manage all that occurs; hence, some students become subjects of cyberbullying and some even commit suicide (Smale & Hill, 2016). The importance of the school principal educating all stakeholders on acceptable behavior around social media is pertinent to the safety of the campus.

Communication with Stakeholders

Communication with families and stakeholders has been noted in the literature as an important component in campus success. In many school districts, parent involvement has taken center stage and has been directly tied to funding with districts that receive Title 1 funds. One example of this is in the state of Texas: Texas campuses that received Title 1 funds must provide evidence at the district and school level of a parent involvement policy. Hence, the state of Texas has developed a comprehensive guide to implementing an effective Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement Program (TEA, 2017) in which a section of the handbook references communication inclusive of the use of website announcements as a means of documenting communication.

Using social media by some Title I campuses has been a way to offer an additional method of communication as some parents may not have a cell phone. Denton (2019) surmised that the use of social media was also an opportunity to highlight the positive things that were occurring on campus amid the often negative attention that has been portrayed so often in the media. Denton (2019) further pointed out that social media, such as school webpages and student information systems, is an inexpensive way to share often, keep families connected and parents informed.

Boundaries Between Work and Life

Another effect of the increased access to ICTs on WLB has been that principals tend to work after hours completing work assignments, responding and initiating emails, completing observations, and even texting and tweeting about their schools (Cappeluti & McCafferty, 2017). Many school principals reported working more than 60 hours a week and taking work home, others reported chronic work overload, 83% of principals in a study by Krzemienski (2012) reported working while they are sick, and one in three reported work interfering with personal

time. With such high percentages, there clearly exists a need for WLB in the life of the school principal.

With the many demands of the principalship, many found themselves completing tasks after work with the use of work-provided ICTs. Unfortunately, the use of ICTs for work and after work has been found to blur the boundaries between work and life leaving employees in a state of asking, “When am I really off work?” and often leading to work-life conflict (Yun et al., 2012), specifically for those in high demanding roles (Armstrong, 2015; Chesley, 2014; Mushaandja, 2013). It has been well-known that leaders in high demand roles have been known to work well beyond a 40-hour week, with much of this time spent after work on work-related tasks like completing projects and sending and replying to emails (Wilk, 2016).

In a national study conducted by the Education Development Center, Inc., school principals were found to work an average of 59 hours a week, with those in high poverty areas working even longer hours. High school principals reported spending 3.3–4.7 more hours per week than primary principals (Lavigne et al., 2016). Although Lavigne et al. did not address how much time was spent working on tasks after work hours, the 40-hour workweek was inadequate to meet the job-related and administrative tasks associated with the role of the school principal. As such, many principals found themselves completing tasks after hours using company-issued laptops and cell phones. Whereas having access to personal and company-issued ICTs may provide the flexibility of always knowing what is going on and completing necessary work tasks, such access also takes time away from family and leisure activities and can create more work.

Consequently, such demands in the principalship create an imbalance in work-life as seen in leaders in various sectors throughout the United States (Karkouljian et al., 2016; McCloskey, 2016) and with school principals (Hult et al., 2016; Mushaandja, 2013; Wilk, 2016). Research has found that the increase in access to ICTs has created advantages for some leaders in

flexibility and autonomy (Cavazotte et al. 2014). However, such constant availability has come with the disadvantages of longer work hours (Adisa et al., 2018; Villadsen, 2017) and work-family conflict (Cavazotte et al., 2014).

Establishing Policies Around Work-Life Balance

Last, a profound effect of the increase in access to ICTs on WLB has been that some principals may lack the skills needed to shape boundaries or simply may not have time to establish boundaries between work and life due to the demands and expectations of the job. Whereas some argued that the employee should assume responsibility for setting self-boundaries (Sayah, 2013) or take responsibility for their level of conscious engagement (Cavazotte et al., 2014), others have argued that it was the employers' responsibility to create policies and provide training that supports WLB (Sungdoo & Hollensbe, 2018; Ugheoke & Kamil, 2018).

Relevant to the role of the principalship, the idea of setting boundaries by establishing policies around WLB seem to be absent in literature. There were relevant thoughts presented in the literature around the concepts of flexibility and permeability (McCloskey, 2016; Nam, 2014; Sayah, 2013), and integration and segmentation (Piszczek, 2014; Sungdoo, 2018). However, as employees were challenged with setting boundaries between work and life in industry, again such research seems to be lacking relative to the principalship.

Even employees with flexible work schedules tend to have challenges with setting boundaries. Imagine the challenges associated with those who work in roles such as the principalship where schedules are more fixed and permeable. Of importance in the literature were those who choose to integrate work and life (Derks et al., 2016). Participants in a recent study were found to have lower work-to-home conflict when there was high integration (Derks et al., 2016).

Though some generations are challenged with setting boundaries, others such as millennials have found a way to fuse ICT into the workday by blending work and life simultaneously (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Sungdoo, 2018). They seem to find more balance or as otherwise presented by Haeger and Lingham (2014), millennials tend to manage work and life concurrently, focusing more on balancing life as opposed to that of work. This research was important, as it projected that 46% of workers in the U.S. will be millennials by 2020 as a flood of baby boomers move toward retirement (Cornerstone on Demand, 2015). With a large percentage of millennial workers, it seems reasonable to surmise that as school leaders from the millennial generation increase, the integration of ICT may be met with increased ease. Hence, Ehmke (2015) suggested the need for organizations to begin preparing millennials for leadership roles such as the principalship.

Summary

The school principalship is a role that comes with many responsibilities and duties. Since many principals worked more than 40 hours per week, some even reported working more than 60 hours a week; and even when working after work hours, there never seems to be enough hours to meet the demands of the principalship. From building operations, meetings, school accountability, and student performance, not to mention writing reports, responding to emails, attending after school events, community events and board meetings, and even providing a safe and secure environment, the school principal has been called to navigate the nuances of ICTs managerially, administratively, and instructionally. In other words, the work of the school principal demands that they are always available, always visible, and now always technologically connected.

As ICTs have emerged over the last century and have created a sense of availability 24 hours a day in people's personal lives, such perception of availability seems to have likewise

entered professional lives. As such, school districts now provide some form of ICT device for principals to be more efficient in their work and to have the access to the tools needed so that they are always available. Hence, the idea of separating work from nonwork time appears to be obsolete with work and nonwork time fusing together.

Therefore, one can see that the current demands of K-12 leadership are quite overwhelming and considered both highly demanding and stressful (Sogunro, 2012; Winkler, 2010), and are likewise found to affect WLB (Oplatka, 2017; Roush, 2016). With the increased access to ICTs for both instructional concerns and such access making school principals available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it is important to include such participants as K-12 school principals in a study that addresses increased access of ICTs and WLB in K-12 leaders, because little research exists on the effect of ICTs on the WLB of this population.

This study looked at three areas concerning the increase in the access to ICTs and its impact on the WLB of K-12 principals: (a) the stressors associated with the demands of the role of the K-12 principal, (b) boundaries between work and life in the role of the K-12 school principals, and (c) WLB policies in K-12 education specifically for school principals.

In Chapter 2, I presented the literature that supported the need for this study, identified and discussed the relevant themes, and identified the theoretical framework for the study. The focus of Chapter 3 is the qualitative methodology for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

To more fully understand K-12 leaders' perceptions, feelings, and views around the increased access to ICTS and WLB, I developed the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and WLB of K-12 leaders?

RQ 2: How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technology in their roles as school principal?

RQ 3: In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?

RQ 4: In what ways, if any, do ISD WLB policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add, or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact, if any, of the increased access to ICTs on K-12 leaders and WLB. Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the design and methodology, followed by an overview of the participants for the study. Next, there is discussion on data collection and analysis. Afterward, a discussion on establishing trustworthiness is brought forward, along with assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter 3 closes with a discussion on ethics and an overall summary.

Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research is rooted in both an interpretive and constructivist paradigm, with an emphasis on how people construct and make meanings of daily interactions (Patton, 2015).

Through such activities, like interviews, people can share how they feel about a certain phenomenon, including their opinions, feelings, and knowledge based on their own personal experiences (Patton, 2015). Likewise, the theory of phenomenology focuses on an individual's

thoughts and language about their experiences and their social constructs around their perceived reality of said experiences (Smith et al., 2012).

The phenomenological paradigm suggests that meanings are constructed by individuals based on their day-to-day interactions and how they choose to assign meaning or significance to such interactions (Smith et al., 2012). Such data in phenomenological research typically involves interviews, and the culmination of such interviews is the source by which the researcher comes to understand the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). More specifically, Smith et al. suggested that interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) “focuses on how people make sense of their major life experiences” (p. 1) or as otherwise stated, their perceptions or views of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, it is the IPA approach that aligns more effectively with this research study.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA research centers on engaging in the reflections that individuals make of their experiences (Smith et al., 2012). As such, IPA is rooted in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographic psychology, emphasizing the exploration of experiences, the interpretation of such experiences, and the focus on individuals’ perceptions rather than generalizability (Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, my goal in this study was to engage participants in an interview during which they shared their experiences related to the increased access to technologies and their perception relative to its impact on WLB. Such shared experiences by administrators allowed them an opportunity to reflect and engage in deep thinking around the impact of such phenomenon and allowed me to interpret and assign meaning to such reflections (Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, it seemed most appropriate to conduct this qualitative study using the specific methodology of IPA with encompassing interviews and rooted in analysis reflective of deep interpretation (Smith et al., 2012).

Study Design

I based the design of this study on purposeful sampling using a semistructured interview as suggested for an IPA study (Noon, 2018; Smith et al., 2012). Semistructured interview questions are designed to solicit specific information, as such, I developed a set of predetermined questions for this study. Whereas it is useful to have predetermined questions, it was important to allow the participant flexibility to deviate from the questions and to expound on their answers (Smith et al., 2012).

Patton (2015) also suggested that purposeful sampling be used to study information-rich cases that lead to a deeper understanding of the study questions, or as otherwise emphasized by Creswell (2014), to select participants that “best help the researcher understand the problem and research question” (p. 189). Smith et al. (2012) suggested that the researcher utilize an interview schedule whereby rapport is established, not to focus specifically on the questions but to probe areas of interest presented by the participant and follow the lead of the participants’ interest and concern.

Through this study, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the increased access to ICTs on the WLB of K-12 principals. Past research has shown that school principals experience many stressors and that school principals at every grade level report challenges with WLB, with many reporting they work more than 60 hours a week (Sogunro, 2012). Hence, it is important to determine if the increased access to ICTs has impacted, if at all, the WLB of K-12 principals. With that said, the most meaningful way to grasp this information was to hear principals’ personal reflections and perceptions relative to the increase in ICT and how it has impacted, if at all, the WLB in their lives.

Population

The population for this study consisted of eight K-12 school principals from major suburban school districts in Houston, Texas. The only criterion for participation was that the participant was a principal in a suburban school in Houston, Texas. The TEA (2019), in an annual report identifying district types, identified 14 major suburban schools in large districts in and around Houston, Texas (TEA, 2019). Only principals that worked in these schools participated in this study.

Setting

The interviews for this study took place via the internet. Because of a pandemic in the U.S. at the time of the study, it was necessary to interview each participant individually using an online platform. The use of virtual connectivity has been used in counseling (Osborn et al., 2015) and other professions and has been explored using the Zoom platform with 16 nurses who viewed the use of Zoom with high satisfaction compared to other methods of interviewing, such as face-to-face, telephones, or other video-conferencing platforms (Archibald et al., 2019). In addition, Zoom was recommended by Archibald et al. (2019) as a viable tool for collecting qualitative data because of its cost-effectiveness, ease of use, data management, and security measures. Hence, I chose to use Zoom as the virtual video-conferencing platform for this research study.

Zoom offers three components that proved useful for conducting online interviews: participants can log in and see each other (visual), participants can hear each other (auditory), and interviews can be recorded (video recording). The infrastructure for Zoom was considered safe and secure offering firewall compatibility. I considered other platforms such as WeChat and Facebook live, but Zoom offered additional components to ensure security, and data were available to support the use of Zoom.

Sampling Method

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling so that the study was relevant and specific to individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon (Noon, 2018; Smith et al., 2012). In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on the specific phenomenon under investigation (Noon, 2018). In this case, the specific phenomena were the increased access to ICTs with K-12 leaders and WLB; hence, K-12 principals who worked in major suburban districts, as defined by the TEA, and served as participants, as these campuses met the same relative criteria set forth by the TEA. I contacted participants via email, provided an overview of the study, and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. If the participant agreed, I sent an overview of the study along with a consent form for their review and signature, and set a time for the interview.

Sample Size

The relative recommended sample size for a qualitative study varies by researcher (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015) and by one's interpretation (Terrell, 2016). Although there are many recommendations in research for sample size, the recommended number of participants for a phenomenological study falls between three and 10 (Creswell, 2014). Smith et al. (2012) suggested a more "concentrated effort focused on a small number of cases" (p. 51). Likewise, Englander (2019), in his claims toward qualitative research rooted in phenomenological theory, emphasized the understanding was not in studying what can be generalized from the population; but what can be generalized from the phenomenon. A small sampling of eight participants was selected for this study.

Through purposive sampling of participants who were active principals in Houston, Texas at the time of the study, I selected a representative group. These individuals represented the perspective of principals working in major suburban schools in Houston, Texas. Smith et al.

(2012) suggested the use of a representative sample when concerned with understanding a specific phenomenon. Hence, these principals working in major suburban schools in Houston, Texas provided their perspectives which provided insight around the perspective of how the increased access to ICTs had impacted, if at all, their WLB. I pre-identified 12 candidates as potential participants in two different school districts in Houston, Texas. The names of the districts are not mentioned in the study to maintain anonymity. I pre-identified all principals from school districts that had been identified as major urban or suburban districts through the TEA.

Materials and Instruments

For this study, I used an interview guide to conduct one interview per individual participant (see Appendix A). I interviewed participants online through a Zoom session that I recorded to ensure accuracy. Zoom has features embedded in the technology that allow for video and audio recording and transcribing. Interviews have been found to be valid methods for data collection for qualitative studies (Terrell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Smith et al., 2012). Prior to beginning the interview, I asked participants were to complete a consent form, sign it, and return the form to me via email prior to starting the interview.

I designed the interview format with the purpose of gathering data relative to the research questions. Smith et al. (2012) suggested that interview questions should facilitate discussion in such a way that the researcher can answer the questions through analysis of participant feedback. Although it is important to create an interview schedule, it is equally important to allow participants as much leeway and time as needed to provide detailed accounts of their experiences.

Interview questions for this research study were primarily open-ended and included prompts. Smith et al. (2012) suggested that interviews with adults include approximately six to

10 questions, allowing for an interview to last between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview instrument consisted of 10 questions with the first question designed to create comfort and to ease the participant into the interview. I designed additional questions to facilitate further discussion and further probing to elicit additional feedback from participants.

Data Collection

For an interpretative phenomenological analysis, the preferred data collection method is semistructured interviews (Noon, 2016; Smith et al., 2012). As such, I used a one-on-one interview to allow the participants an opportunity to tell their story from their own perspective. To assist in the interview process, I used open-ended questions to assist with pacing. Although the pacing of the interview was important, it was likewise important to allow participants the necessary time to share their perceptions around each question (Smith et al., 2012). Likewise, a key element in data collection was my ability to listen attentively with the intent of understanding, while having the ability to construct appropriate questions when unclear, allowing for an exploration of responses. A district-level superintendent from an urban or major suburban school district in Houston, Texas reviewed the interview questions. I also asked the superintendent to participate in a mock interview (see Appendix B).

To ensure anonymity, I asked participants to sign a consent form prior to beginning the interview. Once participants agreed, I began the interview with an informal social conversation to create a sense of comfort for the participant (Moustakas, 1994) and to create a sense of connectivity. Because the interview was conducted online, there was a possibility that it would take additional time to develop a sense of comfort communicating on the online platform. When I perceived that the participant was comfortable and prepared to move forward, I provided an overview of the study, asked the participant if there were any questions, and reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

For this study, I used an in-depth interview that encompassed inductive questions that were structured and semistructured (Smith et al., 2012); participants had an opportunity to determine the length of their responses for some questions. On the other hand, it was important that participants were asked the same questions, thus it was appropriate to establish an interview guide. Additionally, I recorded the interview using Zoom as this platform offered videoconferencing, recording, and transcribing and had security measures embedded, helping to ensure ethical and professional standards. Likewise, I informed participants that they could withdraw at any time during data collection; however, this study incorporated a time-limited withdrawal as suggested by Smith et al. (2012), whereby I provided participants a specific-time to withdraw after I had reviewed individual transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this phenomenological study relied heavily on engagement and interpretation of text (Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. provided a step-by-step approach to an IPA analysis: (a) look for themes in the transcripts by reading each transcript over and over again, (b) make notes in the left column of what appears interesting or significant, (c) document emerging themes in the right column, (d) look for connections between themes and try to make sense of such connections, (e) produce a table of themes, (f) continue to analyze themes noticing differences and similarities, and last, (g) translate themes into a narrative so that I could clearly distinguish between what the participants said and what I interpreted.

The researcher must be skillful in analysis of data. I used in vivo coding, a tool that allows the researcher to key in on specific phrases and words spoken by the participants (Leavy, 2017). It can assist the researcher in the organization of themes. Coding allows the researcher to interpret and assign meaning and interpretation to data (Saldana, 2015). Using transcripts from participants, I coded data by looking for themes, patterns, and my interpretations to note

examples, patterns, and key ideas that surfaced through the lens of the participant (Saldana, 2015). When coding, I arranged information systematically in order to categorize and organize; the process of routinely reorganizing and reclassifying is known as codifying. Codifying is a process that allows for data to be separated, grouped, regrouped, and organized in such a way that meanings are combined and merged, leading to explanation (Saldana, 2015).

More specifically, Smith et al. (2012) recommended a six-step process for immersion in the data and to effectively analyze participant interviews by:

1. Read and reread the transcripts and listen to the audio recordings.
2. Make initial notes noting key thoughts, descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments.
3. Develop emergent themes.
4. Search for connections across emergent themes.
5. Move to the next case, treating each case individually.
6. Look for patterns across cases.

Smith et al. (2012) suggested that effective coding was done by using a hard copy of the transcript, leaving a wide margin, and using one side of the margin to capture initial comments and the other margin to capture emergent themes. Smith et al. (2012) suggested that while these initial steps were timely and detailed, it moved the researcher to examining content and language on an exploratory level. During coding, I focused on key words, phrases, explanations, language, repetition, tone, and even metaphors that might produce a rich set of notes. Most importantly, I developed comprehensive notes that led to the identification of emerging themes as I engaged more with the lived experiences of the participants. My role as researcher was then to look for connections across themes and to chart or map how the themes connected.

Additional strategies, such as bracketing, helped me to keep an open mind when analyzing data as the focus was only on the participants' words and was not contaminated with my personal opinions or preconceptions (Smith & Pietkiewicz, 2014; Terrell, 2016). I used the bracketing process, followed by a review of transcripts, and identification of themes and key phrases to synthesize all materials. Therefore, I used three areas for triangulation: (a) participant interviews, (b) an analysis of documents from transcriptions, and (c) coding of emerging themes.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key component in a qualitative study as it sets the foundation for whether a study is valid and credible. Whereas the term validity is often used in the context of quantitative studies, the term trustworthiness is favored for qualitative studies (Roberts, 2010). Terrell (2016) suggested four factors that influence trustworthiness in a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Although all factors are important in establishing trustworthiness, they are not all needed to establish trustworthiness.

My previous role as school principal established some initial credibility as the participants and I have experienced some common occurrences; however, because of such positionality it was important to remain unbiased and open-minded to the feedback presented by the participants. Additionally, as an IPA researcher, a great responsibility lies in the ability of the researcher to employ hermeneutics, the ability to effectively interpret what the participant is saying to gain understanding (Smith et al., 2012); as such, the ability to do so lends to credibility with participants.

I established trustworthiness by having participants view transcripts of their discussion, asking if the participants find the transcript representative of the discussion and the researchers ability to engage in what Smith et al. (2012) referred to as double hermeneutics, the ability of the researcher to make sense of what the participant shared and the ability to adequately interpret

participants' feedback. In so doing, this established that the feedback received from participants was both accurate and true according to the understanding of the participants. I triangulated the responses from the participants using participant interviews and feedback once I established the accuracy of the interviews along with interpretative data I formulated and the document analysis established through effective coding.

Ethical Considerations and Summary

Ethics was initially established in this study by obtaining approval from the ACU Institutional Review Board. According to the ACU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, all research involving humans must be approved. Ethical standards cover a wide array of concerns including, but not limited to, professional standards. For this study, maintaining principal confidentiality was very important as the role of the school principal has been considered a public and sometimes even high-profile position; therefore, I used alias names to de-identify principals at their request, so that any information presented would not cause harm or hurt to the principals in any manner.

Data were kept confidential to the extent possible; however, because I conducted the interviews via webcam through an online service called Zoom, there was no way to ensure complete confidentiality. Hence, included in the informed consent was information that only I have access to, including the interviewee's actual names, the school name, interviews, and transcripts. I kept interviewees' real names and the name of the campus in a secure file to assure anonymity.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

My assumption was that the identified K-12 school principals wanted to participate in the study and were open with their feedback and open to participating virtually. Additionally, I

assumed that many of the K-12 principals perceived that the increase in the access to ICTs has had a negative impact on them related to WLB.

Limitations

For this study, limitations included (a) narrow selection criteria for participants, (b) availability of time for principals to participate in the interview session, (c) internet connectivity, (d) ease in use of the Zoom platform, and (e) the unexpected factor of a pandemic at the time of the study.

Principals came only from major suburban school districts in the Houston, Texas, as identified through the TEA. I did not consider location, campus size, the number of students, staff or other demographic information. Because many stressors for school principals were directly related to other factors such as the size of campus, the location of the campus or campus demographics, this was limited to only a few schools in the Houston, Texas.

Due to my physical location, I conducted all interviews online, as such, if technological problems presented it could have affected the fluidity of the interview, the participant might have grown frustrated, and the overall rhythm or dynamic of the interview could have been affected. Smith et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of developing a positive rhythm and dynamic as part of the interviewing processes as it creates an environment where the participant can relax and disclose details that are more specific in nature.

Also, this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when K-12 leaders were asked to use technology perhaps in ways that they had not done before. However, COVID-19 was not considered as a study limitation in the traditional sense.

Delimitations

This study was limited in scope to eight school principals in Houston, Texas who worked in large schools identified as major suburban school districts as defined by the TEA. Whereas

this might provide perspective around this group of principals, the study did not provide a well-rounded view of principals in nonurban districts, rural districts, or districts in other states or locales. Likewise, a mixed-methods study might have been considered to access data from more participants, and through the collection of additional data from surveys. However, because the need to establish rapport and credibility were important, and thus, were better attained through interviews, I determined that a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the design and methodology for research used to establish the impact, if any, of the increased access to technology and the WLB of K-12 principals. I continued with a discussion related to the chosen population and how I established the sample size. Then I presented the role of the researcher in establishing trustworthiness, assumptions, limitations and delimitations. Also, I included a discussion around materials, data collection, analytical process, and last, ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I present results from the study followed by Chapter 5 where I present discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I present the accounts of eight K-12 school principals, from districts in Houston, Texas and how they made meaning of the increased accessibility of ICTs and their WLB. I provide insight and reflections into the experiences of these K-12 leaders and their work in major suburban schools. First, I present the context of the study, then a profile of each participant, followed by an analysis of emerging themes and concepts. Of great importance is the analysis of the research questions, which support how I validated the data. I conclude this section with a discussion of key findings from the study.

Context of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used an interpretative phenomenological analysis methodological approach to explore how K-12 principals made sense of the increased accessibility of ICT and its impact, if any, on WLB. Patton (2015) purported that the phenomenologist is committed to understanding the perspective from the participants' point of view. Therefore, I took a qualitative phenomenological approach to provide detailed accounts from the perspective of eight school principals. Additionally, qualitative data, specifically the use of in-depth interviews, allowed me to capture information that was both rich and detailed from personal perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2015). More specifically, the interpretative phenomenological approach emphasized the need for participants to have an "opportunity to tell their stories, speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns in length" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 56).

The lived experiences explored in this study were those of K-12 principals in major suburban school districts in Houston, Texas. Collecting data on the lived experiences of these K-12 leaders contributed to understanding how the increased accessibility to ICT has impacted the WLB for these leaders. I analyzed participant accounts using the approach to analysis as

presented in Chapter 2 (Smith et al. 2012). More specifically, I analyzed the participant's accounts as part of a process that explored (a) roles, (b) responsibilities, (c) WLB, and (d) access to ICT. Eight participants were interviewed; participants provided a detailed account of their lived experiences as K-12 principals.

This study occurred in an online context, using a platform called Zoom. I chose Zoom initially as the platform of choice due to the physical location of the researcher; later the choice to use Zoom became more paramount as the U.S. was placed in lockdown as a result of COVID-19. I selected principals working in major suburban schools as defined by the TEA, the overseeing education agency for Texas. Research suggested that the expectations and demands at suburban schools are shown to lead to principal stress and burnout just as in major urban schools (Wepner & Gomez, 2017). Likewise, Hannon (2016) purported that urban schools showed higher needs based on various contextual and demographic factors. Hannon, in his review of the literature of professional development needs of urban school counselors, presented several challenges associated with urban schools: (a) poverty, (b) high population density, (c) high concentration of people of color or immigrants, (d) high rates of reported crime and violence, and (e) inequitable access to healthcare, all of which were noted as barriers to educational success. Chapter 2 provided a detailed overview of the job demands and pressures of the K-12 principal along with the challenges associated with setting boundaries between work and nonwork time.

I used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the qualitative methodology of choice. IPA was an appropriate approach because the emphasis of IPA is rooted in the examination of understanding how people make sense of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2012). Hence, my primary goal in this study was to understand how K-12 principals made sense of their experiences as a K-12 principals, their roles and responsibilities, WLB and the increased

accessibility of ICT.

Study Participants

The participants in this study shared their lived experiences in major urban schools relative to their role as school principal, WLB and policies, and technology. I changed all participants' names for confidentiality and the names presented are pseudonyms. Eight administrators participated in the study. I invited 16 participants to participate, some did not respond, two resigned prior to IRB approval, and one retired. All participants involved in this study were K-12 school principals in major suburban schools in Houston, Texas, and had served in this role from two years to 13 years. The age of the participants ranged from mid-30s to late 50s. There were three males and five females. Further, the demographics of the participants included three African-American women, two African-American men, one Hispanic woman, one Caucasian man, and one Caucasian woman. Participants were purposefully selected from those I already knew who worked as K-12 principals in major suburban schools. Demographic information with years of experience about each participant is represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants

Name	Age	Grade Level	Years Working as School Principal
Blare	40-50	Elementary	3
Harper	40-50	Elementary	1
Kennedy	30-40	Elementary	7
Morgan	50-60	Elementary	3
Stacy	50-60	Elementary	14
Casey	40-50	Middle	8
Ian	50-60	Middle/High	2
Sky	40-50	High	2

Participant Descriptions

Participant Blare, Elementary School Principal

Blare has been a school principal at the elementary level for three years. He previously worked in another district as teacher and coach. He served as a middle school assistant principal and principal for over 10 years. Now at the elementary school, Blare was learning more because of the limited number of staff in administration. Blare has only one assistant principal. Blare was married at the time of the study.

Participant Harper, Elementary School Principal

Harper has been in education for seven years working as an assistant principal before moving into her new role as first-year principal. Harper served at the same campus as assistant principal and when the previous principal left, she saw a need and wanted to stay at the campus because she understood the culture of the campus and didn't want the culture and climate disrupted. Harper had extensive experience as an assistant principal and oozed with excitement as she looked forward to incorporating new practices and ideas. Harper was married at the time of the study.

Participant Kennedy, Elementary School Principal

Kennedy has worked as a school principal for seven years at the same school. Prior to becoming school principal, Kennedy worked as an assistant principal for three years in the same school district. Through volunteer work, Kennedy developed a passion for second language learners leading him into his journey in education, moving from classroom teacher to school administration. Kennedy's story was both touching and captivating as he admitted his naïveté in his early years as school principal and his desire to have had a coach or mentor. He has decided to leave the school district at the end of this school year, take some time for himself for about six months, and perhaps move out of the country. Kennedy was single at the time of the study.

Participant Morgan, Elementary School Principal

Morgan was a school principal who had been in education for eight years. Before becoming a principal at the current campus, she served at the same school as assistant principal, substitute teacher, and paraprofessional. Morgan saw herself as successful and self-driven, noting that she became a full-time educator when a teacher on the campus where she worked as a paraprofessional assisting in classrooms noticed her drive and encouraged her to become a certified teacher. Morgan rose to campus principal and has served in this role for four years. She highlighted that moving into the principal role was not a great challenge for her because she had worked at the same campus for many years, had served as assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide, and was already familiar with the staff, parents, and students. Morgan was married at the time of the study.

Participant Stacy, Elementary School Principal

Stacy was a fourteen-year educator, who moved into the school principal seat when her previous principal left and encouraged her to move into the role. She found her path in education through encouragement from others and others noticing her work. Stacy has passionately worked as classroom teacher, skill specialist, instructional specialist, and assistant principal. She has committed to a career in education. Stacy was a pillar in the community in which she served as principal and was committed to serving students, parents, and community. In addition to her role as school principal, she served on the district task force. Stacy was married at the time of the study.

Participant Casey, Middle School Principal

Casey was an accomplished leader who has been a principal for eight years after serving as an assistant principal for three years. Casey received a push of encouragement to apply for the position of school principal, and also, had a desire to be a principal as one of her long-term goals,

but it happened sooner than she expected. Casey was full of smiles and energy as she shared her story of being a school principal; she engaged in the interview while at the same time maneuvering about through her home using a stand-up desk. Casey was not in a relationship at the time of the study.

Participant Ian, Middle-High School Principal

Ian was a second-year principal who previously served as an assistant principal and coach in a different district. Ian said that his aspiration for becoming a principal was spurred through his observations of other principals while he was as a student in an inner-city school as child. Ian said he always thought that he could be someone like them one day, so he later pursued coaching and school administration. Ian was married at the time of the study.

Participant Sky, Alternative High School Principal

Sky was a second-year principal at an alternative campus whose story was embedded in providing successful opportunities to students. Prior to her work as school principal, she served at the same campus as an assistant principal and also as school counselor for seven years. Sky worked collaboratively in curriculum and instruction with her skill specialist. She defined her school's student body as challenging because of the alternative nature of the school and students' ages ranging from 16–22 years. Because of this, Sky stated that she helped the students find balance between what was going on in their personal lives and academics. Sky was married at the time of the study.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to describe three areas concerning the increase in the access to ICTs and its impact on WLB for K-12 principals: (a) the stressors associated with the demands of the role of the K-12 principal, (b) boundaries between work and life in the role of the K-12 school principals, and (c) WLB policies in K-12 education specifically for school

principals. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of K-12 school principals the following research questions were developed.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and WLB of K-12 leaders?

RQ 2: How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technology in their roles as school principal?

RQ 3: In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?

RQ 4: In what ways, if any, do ISD WLB policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add, or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?

Semistructured Interview

Each semistructured interview began with a principal responding to the question of why they became a school principal. I designed this question to allow for comfortability and to ease the participant into talking about their experiences. The conversation then shifted to open-ended questions that allowed the participants to talk at length, further expounding on their experience as a K-12 principal. I informed participants in the recruitment letter that in an IPA study the participants did most of the talking and that I served primarily as the listener. I conducted each interview using the online platform called Zoom. Using IPA as the qualitative methodology, I designed a 10-question semistructured interview to explore the phenomena. Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed them using a transcription service called Scribie. I reviewed each transcription for accuracy, emailed it to the participants to review for accuracy, and informed participants that they could make any necessary changes or revisions. I asked the participants to return their approval of the transcription for use in the study by email. A sample of the interview

can be found in Appendix B.

I conducted an analysis of the transcripts multiple times to identify emerging themes and concepts using guidelines for analysis (Smith et al., 2012) as outlined in the data analysis section of Chapter 3. The next section discusses coding, concepts, and themes that emerged through the data analysis.

Coding

Once participants responded that they approved of the transcriptions, I reviewed the Zoom recordings and transcriptions multiple times (a) to organize participant responses, (b) to generate codes, and (c) to identify recurring themes. I disaggregated the data by hand, as I believed it would allow me a greater opportunity to immerse and engage more closely with the data and to connect highly with the participant's story. Following the recommendations of Smith et al. (2012), the initial step of coding involved multiple readings of each interview and multiple viewings of the Zoom video. This initial cycle of in vivo coding allowed me to focus on participant's words and to attend to the details. This occurred through a process of analyzing each line of the transcript and interpreting what each line meant from the participant's perspective. To help organize my thoughts, I printed out each transcript, wrote initial thoughts in the right margin, and saved the left margin to write themes (Smith et al., 2012).

After the initial coding, I used descriptive coding to focus on key words, phrases, and explanations; this part of the process seemed particularly noteworthy as I listened to what truly mattered to the participants. Then, I made another reading of the transcript with simultaneous viewing of the Zoom video while I focused on linguistic comments, words, body language, tone, laughter, and changes in pace of the speaker. Last, I reviewed the transcript more closely for conceptual comments. This proved to be a bit more challenging as the goal of this step was to move toward interpretation and sense-making of the participants' experiences. While coding, I

reflected on the research questions to make sure that I addressed the overall goals of the study. Reflecting at each step allowed me to feel an active presence to the participant's world and perspective, while staying focused on the research questions.

Emergent Themes and Subcategories

The next step in the process focused on developing emerging themes by analyzing the data and all exploratory comments. As suggested by Smith et al. (2012), I reviewed each interview separately looking at exploratory notes in chunks, turning each set of notes into a theme based on my interpretation of the participant's words and thoughts. After I analyzed each transcript and identified emergent themes from each individual interview, I then had to decide how to chart or map my thinking around how the themes fit together. The goal of this step later served in helping me to see interrelationships, connections, and patterns, with each theme becoming an eventual part of the whole analysis.

In the next section, I highlighted the major concepts as emerging themes and subcategories along with relevant text highlighted from the eight study participants associated with each research question (see Table 2). In addition, many of the school principals included information related to their current work at home due to a pandemic called COVID-19. I presented a brief section with information from participants sharing their experiences during this international pandemic (see section in this chapter titled COVID-19: The School Principal Works From Home).

Table 2*Corresponding Research Questions, Emerging Themes, and Subcategories*

Associated Research Question	Emerging Theme	Subcategories
RQ 1. What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and WLB?	Feeling overwhelmed	a. Job demand b. Never unplugged c. Relationship or health concerns
RQ 2. How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technologies?	Technology leader	a. Instructional needs b. Management and collaboration needs c. Social media needs
RQ 3. In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?	Help or hindrance	a. Inclusive or intrusive b. Communication accessibility c. Task completion
RQ 4. In what ways, if any do ISD WLB policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add, or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?	WLB policies and practices	a. Reflective practices b. Protocols and boundaries c. Principal morale and leader effectiveness

Note. WLB = work-life balance; ISD = Independent School District.

Theme 1: Sense of Being Overwhelmed

During the interviews it was ever present that the idea of being available all the time and having insurmountable responsibilities was at the forefront of each participant's thoughts. All of the participants discussed the challenges, demands, and the many tasks that must be done in the role of the school principal. Principals, likewise, expounded on the role that technology played in

their experience as school principals and never being unplugged. Many of them also discussed relational and physical challenges that have created a sense of being overwhelmed. The relevant text from participants supporting each theme follows.

Job Demands

The first subcategory for Theme 1, job demands, involved principals sharing the many responsibilities they have. Some described the demands as more than they expected, while others described it as highly stressful. Job demands, such as managing staff, students, curriculum, providing professional development, attending meetings, and learning new technologies, all impacted the principals and contributed to long hours.

Elementary School Principal: Blare. Blare described the demands as more than he expected:

On an average, I get there no later than 7:00 a.m. on an average. Kids can start coming inside the building at 7:30 a.m. So, I get there by 7:00 and I leave probably about 6:00 every day. The stresses are higher than what I thought it would be. As an assistant principal, you do have the stress of the school, because you are responsible, you're on the leadership team, but as the building principal, I just feel more stressed as far as, and not necessarily in a negative way, making sure that everything is running smoothly. Of course, test scores, things like that, having to go to different meetings and talk about the data and things like that.

It's just more stressors in that realm than I really thought coming in. But I mean, again, it's not necessarily in a negative way, but you're just always trying to make sure that you're doing everything to put your school in a position to be the best that we could be. And then, like I said, coming from a middle school to an elementary school, that I think it was the best thing for me 'cause it exposes me to so much more now and I'm

learning some things that I didn't know as a middle school principal, because it just wasn't my job responsibilities, but now as like I said, we don't have as many staff on the leadership team. For example, on the middle school level, you may have four assistant principals, where on the elementary level, I only have one assistant principal. So, I'm just learning a lot more or have learned a lot more. Then the fact that you almost must have your hand in every area, every department, every piece. So that has been an eye opener as well.

Elementary School Principal: Harper. Harper said that she was under a great deal of stress as a previous assistant principal, and she really wanted to share that experience. I allowed the interview to take its course because it spoke to her decisions in how she is managing her role as a principal. Harper showed great emotions around the stress she endured during her years as assistant principal.

I felt that it was unfair that I had all those other responsibilities. And I had actually made my mind up, I told my husband, "If I don't get a job as principal, I am not coming back to this school because I could not continue with all of the LPAC mandates that had to be met by myself." They took away the LEP clerks when they did reconfiguration so, we didn't have funding. So, all of the spreadsheets, all of documentation, all of the filing, on top of any time a new student comes in, I'm having to schedule students, I'm running grades and progress reports and failure reports, and then attending all of the ARDs and all of the RTI meetings. So, it was very overwhelming.

So, this year, with this being my first year, I swore I would not put that type of responsibility on another person. And as a principal, yes, I do have some additional responsibilities, but I knew how I felt. So, for me, morning announcements start at 7:00 a.m., 7:30 a.m. We try to have them done by 7:35 a.m. We don't waste a whole lot of

time because instruction for us starts at 7:35 a.m. So, announcements are sent out. We do the pledge over the intercom where I do it with the kids in the mornings, and that starts our day. Generally, around 8 o'clock, 8:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m., 8:30-ish, I do a quick meeting with my leadership team. We look at our schedules. We talk about who is going to do an observation. Not a 15-minute observation where they have to go in and document it on the district form, but we have our own little campus walkthroughs that we do, just to make sure that we're touching base with every single teacher. At least 10 people per day, that's our goal. And so, once we look at our schedules and make sure that an ARD hasn't been called or someone is gonna be off campus, for a different meeting, we go about our day with who we're going to see.

After that, we do our observations [but] if I get a parent call on the phone, I stop what I'm doing because I need to go and address that. And, of course, they always pop up and I try my best not to be an inconvenience to them, even though I feel like sometimes they inconvenience me and they don't worry about what I have to do. But I still make sure I do make that time, even if it's just going in and say, "Hey, I'm really busy right now. Can you schedule something and come back and see me later today or tomorrow? Can I call you?" So, I always do that. I go into classrooms, not to even observe the teacher, but sometimes I do a lesson with the kids. I have a tutoring group that I'm responsible for in the fifth-grade reading class because that was our area of deficit. So, I do my tutoring group, and that was done every day at 1:00 p.m.

Every other day at around 2:30 p.m., I open up our Shine store and students who have earned money for good behavior or improvement, they get to come down to the store and they can purchase school supplies or uniforms with the money that they've earned from the campus. At 2:55 p.m., I start with the afternoon announcements. We call

for our walkers and car riders and then our bus riders. And about 3:30 p.m., I make the announcement that we are all clear. From 3:30 p.m. until 4:00 p.m., I meet with my AP to see if there's anything we need to start our day with the next day, if there was something pressing that we had not addressed. And I make my to-do list for the next day. And that's generally it. I normally leave the school around 5 o'clock.

Elementary School Principal: Kennedy. Kennedy found the role of the school principal as quite overwhelming and one that he would have wanted a mentor for early in his career:

When you're a principal, you're responsible for everything going well, and you're managing all these high, sometimes high-performance professionals that are reporting to you with egos, or with this, or with agendas, and you're trying to manage them and empower them, while at the same time, getting their respect. So, it's a different dynamic, yeah. One thing that I realized, that the level of micro-management that was necessary on my part, was something that I didn't realize. And I didn't realize everything that was going on behind the scenes.

As I got into the role of principal, where I'm in charge of everybody, the number of systems I'm responsible for monitoring, the actions that I'm responsible for ensuring takes place, all these different pieces. And the amount of intervention that was required with so many people, that you have to step in, and intervene, and push, and provide, and support. There was much more to that than I realized, and I caught on a little later than I would have liked.

Whenever my campus was not successful and we had gone into IR, we were an improvement required campus at one point, which means that the state had determined that our campus was in need of serious intervention. The amount of hours that I was required to work that year were a lot. I was required to attend a lot of professional

development. I would go attend all of the professional developments my teachers attended.

The one thing I would do over again is my first couple of years as principal, I needed a mentor, like a real mentor to sit, to really come in on a regular basis. Even if I could've paid for that out of my discretionary funds, I would have had a mentor come and provide executive coaching because I needed somebody that had experience to guide me, and push me, and show me so that I could learn real quick 'cause that learning curve is real quick.

Elementary School Principal: Morgan. Morgan spoke at length about the job demands, emphasizing the need to have knowledge about every aspect of the job:

I'm very involved with everything. I'm very involved with every project in the school. From parent communication, the student curriculum, teaching practices, policies and procedures, everything. But principals need to be aware of everything going on in the building. Because this is like our home away from home. Little things like the marquee, what are we posting this week, something wrong with the sidewalk, if the grass is long. And at the same time, the lesson delivery, it's so many things. So, we need to be involved, without being the experts on everything, at least we need to be knowledgeable about everything.

I try to get in the building before 7 o'clock. I would say that it can be between 6:30, 6:45 because I like to be there before the students arrive. I get in my office, turn on the computer, check emails, it's seven o'clock, we open the building at 7:05, be in the hallway to say good morning to the students in the hallway, go to the cafeteria. Sometimes I bring the Chromebook to the cafeteria, so I'm still checking emails while being in the cafeteria. Especially with the walkthroughs and the observations we have to

do, I need to schedule those as well. My day, literally, just flies by. And then my lunch time, it can be sometimes at 1:00, 1:30. I'm usually the last one who has lunch. My lunch is very quiet. Everybody is done. And then, I'm telling you, every day is different because you never know when the parents are gonna come, and they wanna meet with you.

Elementary School Principal: Stacy. Stacy focused on the change in which the role of the school principal has taken along with the need to become more involved technologically:

The role has changed in that we are being challenged more because of technology, of just making sure students have more exposure to global networking and to other things outside of the realm of their immediate urban area. The role has changed where we have to make sure that they are getting the standards. It's like I remember having to teach this in second grade, what we're asking our second grade teachers to teach, so things have changed because I think it's more demanding on the kids, the lessons and what we are expecting them to do we have of course, technology is playing a big role, but technology is also allowing them to go global, it's not ... And even right now, technology is allowing us to talk across the city so our role is to prepare the kids for the future.

Well I'm not saying it's not challenging; it is. I'm of the mindset that, if I expect my teachers to know how to do certain things like hold a Zoom meeting, Google, Hangout and figure out how to do those different programs and how to look at the lessons and interact with the kids, and I am going to expect them to do that, I have to know something about it, or they won't respect my feedback.

Middle School Principal: Casey. Casey expressed that she has many job demands that must be met and her focus is on making sure she has the right people in the right position and providing support for her leadership team. She emphasized that the role has changed over the years as a result of technology; therefore, she must learn new technologies so more adequately

support her team:

I'm typically at work around 6:30, 6:45, usually the latest. I roll in at 7:00 on a Friday because you know I figure I earn it. I'm the lead learner, so I'm the one who organizes, in layers, the leadership team, make sure that we're staffed in such a way that I have all of the individuals in the right places, that I'm providing support to my leadership team so that they, in turn, can properly, not just motivate the individuals with whom they work, but also provide the necessary professional development for the teachers as well. So, keeping open lines of communication with my leadership team so that I can develop some improvement plan that includes our professional development is important as well. Essentially, it's my job to know a little about a whole lot, to have my specialty be leading and developing individuals, whether it's the leadership team members, the teachers themselves, or the students themselves.

So, it's my job to essentially center everything around the students but, in doing so, I have to know that I have the people in the right place. So, my primary focus is going to be making sure that the people who are in place, whether it's leadership or teachers, that they're the best and highest quality. And when we do have individuals who may struggle in certain areas, to provide the support that they need. But it all comes down to making sure that staffing is under control and that you have the right people in the right place. But of course, you have budgeting, and you have to make sure that you are working with your finances appropriately, whether it's federal funding, state funding, local funding, ensuring that that's tied to our campus improvement plan that we are constantly analyzing whether or not the strategies that we have in place are effective. And if they're not, re-examining, re-evaluating, and putting new strategies and plans in place to address the needs of our kids. Again, it goes through them. It goes through that leader,

so we have to make sure that our teachers are getting what they need to be successful in order for our students to be successful. And yeah, making sure that I'm documenting things properly. So, there's a lot of documentation.

Middle-High School Principal: Ian. Ian characterized the job demands as one of wearing many hats and a feeling of having the entire school in his hands, even feeling like he is a father figure and counselor to the students:

With technology and the change of the world, years ago as a principal it was a 9 to 5 type of job, but now it never ends. It's a continuation day in, day out. It's so many different facets that you have to cover. You used to be authoritative, but now you gotta be instructional and authoritative, but then you gotta be compassionate, and then have to have sympathy. It's like wearing a lot of different hats at the same time in order to further your school along, I guess I would say.

I expected it to be instructional and authoritative, but I didn't expect to be a father figure to students. I really didn't expect to be the counselor to families where there's a new role that I'm taking on. I thought I can listen to them and I can direct them somewhere, but now it's like you as a principal have become the person. And as well as all staff, where you thought that you just led some of them, the job has changed where it's like you have the entire school in your hand and you have to make sure that it's going the right way and it's functioning. Yeah, I mean those are just some of the things that are done on a daily basis.

High School Principal: Sky. Sky described her role as one that is “always on” with a lot to manage while at the same time trying to maintain the vision of both the campus and district.

My day is typically 7 to 5 o'clock work, and then I'm also involved in a redesign for my campus for next year, so there's training that I have to attend, there are deliverables and

assignments and readings, that I have to do, so I'm kind of always on just always, always on for students if there's something going on. Whatever the case may be, if my staff needs me, I'm always available. So even if I say work is from 7 to 5, that doesn't mean that it stops right at five. No, that never happens. Keeping everybody on the same path, keeping the staff together, following directions, directives, the vision of the district, the vision of the campus keeping that all going float and managing students too, it's a lot, it's fun, it's rewarding I wouldn't change it for the world but it is a lot to manage that and to keep everybody up-beat the morale.

We have a challenging student body since we're an alternative school, of choice, so from day to day, just the kids, and whatever they're dealing with before they get to us and still remembering this is what we're trying to take care of while we're here.

Never Unplugged

The second subcategory in Theme 1—never unplugged—involved how principals describe their experiences of the use of ICTs. Each study participant shared how they use various ICTs and platforms to communicate with staff and complete tasks. Some felt a sense to stay plugged in because the district had provided resources such as laptops and cell-phones, one participant pointed out that the GroupMe platform is required by the district for communication, and at least two of the participants found themselves unable to disconnect from the use of ICTs, feeling compelled to respond or reply to staff.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare expressed that he uses technology for various tasks:

So, I use Google Calendar. So, pretty much when I receive invites and things like that.

We oversee Schoology, but I have been in the conference like with students and with the teacher just being a part of the classroom and things like that. We're having to oversee it

of course, so we're monitoring our students, turn it in great, turning in assignments, teachers grading the assignments, giving feedback. We're monitoring the grade book. Again, I visit different classrooms, via the conference in Schoology, so I do that. We have different meetings on Schoology as well in different professional developments that we can attend as professionals, so, that's the way I used that platform as of now.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper expressed that her laptop is always with here, even when she is working with kids:

I take my laptop with me everywhere I go. So, even if I'm sitting on the carpet with a group of kids, I still have my laptop. Because if an email pops in, then I wanna respond to it then. So, I try not to stay in my office. I wanna be out. Even if I'm sitting in the courtyard, I'm out because I wanna be seen.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy shared that he is required to have and use communication apps and technology regularly:

We are required to have as principals GroupMe, we have two going. So, we have one that includes the entire district leadership. We have a second GroupMe group that's just my particular principal group and our supervisor. And so, we pretty regularly communicate through there, through that app. So, that, yeah, that's required means of communication. Well, they give us a district phone so that at all times, they can ... we can be reached by text. And really, that's it. And of course, they'll provide a device if you need a device. In other words, like a Chromebook or a laptop; that's also provided if you need it. But yeah, the primary means of communication are email, text, and GroupMe; those are the three that the district uses to communicate directly with the leadership.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan explained how she is unable to disconnect mentally from her ICT even during times when she is eating:

Well, for instance, when the cell phone is ringing or is beeping and I know that it's an email and we're eating, so we're having let's say a meal together, either a dinner, and so I put the phone on silent mode because I know he doesn't like that. I know that even though I'm eating and I'm trying to be aware of what's going on, in the back of my head, I'm thinking about the phone which is ringing or is leaving an email. And I wonder, "Is it something important?" So, those kinds of situations. That's real life. And I shared with you, prior to this interview, yesterday, I was working at the conference until 9 o'clock. That's why, today, I said let's have this conversation earlier because I know that I already got in trouble last night.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy described her experience as one in which she is “never unplugged”, “always on-call”, and in constant communication:

It's a learning environment, I'm on call 24/7 is because what we carry in our hands, which is a little walking computer, so they make life easier, because I can answer quickly and go back to doing what I was doing. I don't have to log on every time, we are constantly in communication. I can pull out my emails right now for our school and for my job and a personal email when you have three sets. Ah yeah, years ago, this wasn't even an option of communicating so many ways. I have three different emails that I check almost daily, and two of them are loaded on my phone. Technology has its good but it can also be overwhelming because you're never ... you're never unplugged.

And it's a 24-hour job, so my role is to make sure as I follow the state expectations and the district's expectations and then my staff members are following the same, so my students can make sure that they meet all of those expectations to be prepared for the next grade level. So, I mean, I could go on and on about the roles and responsibilities. My role is to engage the staff right now, my role is to make sure my

culture is thriving, that I'm making sure that everybody's taking care of my role is to make sure my climate is where it should be, to make sure that it's a good environment.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey's shared her experience with ICT use as one that carries over into the evening, primarily because of the school-day demands:

I get home at 7:30, 8 o'clock. I change, and sit on the couch, and take a nap, email until I go to bed. There are times when I feel I make it almost a whole week with doing very minimal work at home but it tends to coincide with staffing issues I'm currently having, that I can't maintain the paperwork during the school day or I don't want to because it takes away from other things. Or is this Title 1 document due or the Plan for Learning update due. It just kind of depends. But then there are other times when I can say it's pretty consistently throughout the week, I come home, get comfortable, eat, and then I'll put my laptop on my lap and I'll watch TV and I'll work at the same time. But like I said, it ebbs and it flows. I wouldn't say I do that every day by any stretch of the imagination, but it's a bit.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian described his experience as constant and for various uses, and that he is "constantly monitoring". Some needs were more instructional, others managerial:

I'm constantly on the laptop at wee hours in the night...sending Skype [and] Zooming in and out is huge right now. Those are my major platforms, the major things that I'm using. The district provides us, of course, our email which is our essential way to talk to one another. We have Schoology, which is our virtual world that we're dealing with right now because of what's going on, and that's the platform that we use. It's kind of like the central hub where students can access work from teachers. So, we're constantly checking and monitoring the usage as principals. We have the Blackboard where, that is where we do

the dial outs and call outs for families, and we have a way to text and send newsletters and try to send information to families. We have [district evaluation system] training, where we're doing the professional etiquette for teachers and a development through [district evaluation system]. So, we have several different platforms that we use that meet the needs of the teacher versus the parents versus the students across the board.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky felt that she should always be available to her staff.

While she seeks to respect her staff's time, she exclaimed that it is a leader's role to "always be on":

If I didn't get to all my emails and I'll do that from home; if I have a question for a staff member or something I'm gonna text them within reasonable hours 'cause I try not, although I'm always on. I know I need to respect the time of others, so I do have balance and boundaries with them, because if I bring home paperwork, I typically don't look at it, but if I can just pop up in the computer and it's right there, then yeah, I'll do it. 9:00 p.m. is the latest I'll send an email, even over the weekend. If it's something that I come up with, I've gotten to a point where I schedule it to where they'll get it during the work day.

I think it's because I know how I am, I try to protect them because if it's gonna go off on my phone, I don't cut my emails off or any of that, so I'm gonna get an alert on my watch. or something and I'm gonna wanna know, Well, what is it? And I can't just see who it's from or see the subject and say, Oh I'll check it later. I'm gonna look at it. I may not respond, I may hit unread but I try to protect them, to not do that to them in the event they're like, me, because now I've kinda invaded your family time and I try not to do that. I think as part of the role if you are the leader, then you should always be on.

Relationship or Health Concerns

Relationship or health concerns, the third subcategory of Theme 1, involved school principal's descriptions of their experiences with ICTs and the impact on their relationships and/or their physical and mental health. Relationships with family were seen to occur due to the long hours in which principals are away from home, while many of the physical ramifications were perceived as due to stress or unhealthy choices around eating and exercise. All principals expressed either relationship or other health concerns. Six of the eight of principals expressed both relationship and other health concerns.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare described his relationship with his spouse as positive, noting that he previously worked long hours as a football coach and that his spouse has always been understanding. Blare still struggles with balancing family and vacation time, but attempts to finish his work during the school day, so he will not have to work when he arrives home:

My wife was very understanding. Before I became an assistant principal, I was a football coach on the high school level, and we worked pretty much seven days a week, or definitely six days a week in a high school football coach so my work schedule has always been what it basically is now. And she's always been very understanding of that. So, it hasn't put any strain, but the strain sometimes comes family-wise in the summer when you can't travel or you can't do the different things that you wanna do because we're locked in to a certain part of the summer that we were supposed to take our vacation and things like that.

That would be the only piece, is just trying to . . . making sure you balance the family time and the work time. And so that's why I try to . . . well, I do stay late pretty much every day just to finish up and wrap up things that I have to do so I don't have to do

as much work when I get home. I never finish. I mean, you know, you never finish but you gotta get to a point to where you can stop for that day, and then pick it up the next day. I try to finish everything up while at work. So, when I do come home, I don't always have to work every night. So, we can spend quality family time. Sometimes there is strain when it comes to planning vacations, I try to strategically block my time off to make sure I'm here for the family as well.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper detailed some strain on her family relationship because she must leave home early and doesn't arrive back home until late evening, still with work to complete. However, Harper doesn't do work on the weekend and reserves this as what she terms "protected time" for her family:

Family has definitely been impacted because with me having my daughter at school with me, well, if I have to go early, she has to go early. If I have to stay late, she has to stay late. And so, I do find at times that she resented me actually having the position because it affects her. She can't sleep late. She doesn't like that when we get to school, the cafeteria isn't open, and she can't go and get breakfast. So, I generally have to stop every single morning and buy her breakfast because if I cook breakfast at home, then we're gonna be late leaving and I don't wanna get up any earlier. So, there's definitely an impact there.

When I come home, I can't immediately sit down and start talking to my husband 'cause I have to finish my work; so that definitely is an impact. That's why I said my weekend, that's my reserve, my protected time. That is all family time, no schoolwork, but that's my protected time.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy described the emotional impact of depression, unhealthy living, and feelings of inadequacy he felt and experienced when his school

was in a status referred to as “Improvement Required”:

That year when I was in IR, I really was probably putting in more like 12 hours a day on a consistent basis. While the work was enjoyable, it impacted my health for sure that year, I think it was the idea that I was failing. In my case at least, I don't have children and I'm not currently in a relationship. So, I have to admit that because other people deal with more at home than I was [but] my relationship with my friends and family is important to me as anybody else.

But it wasn't the number of hours. I'm putting in all these hours and am I being successful? Am I adequate to the job? And when I was doing all that and feeling unsuccessful, it was like two years where I felt very unsuccessful, and I was unsuccessful. I went into depression and unhealthy living and yeah, that was not good, and that was very work-related. But I would say, it wasn't so much the number of hours, as the feeling that I wasn't adequate to the task.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan detailed her experience as one in which she dealt with a number of stressors, which led to allergies, gall bladder concerns, a cyst, and even surgeries. Morgan attributes these concerns to stress and acknowledges that she downplayed many of the symptoms:

When my cell phone is ringing or beeping, I put it on silent mode, because I know that my husband does not like that, but in the back of my head I want to know what's going on. Last year something happened with my health, which I always praise myself to be healthy. I think I have good genes, my family's healthy, and I don't have, for instance, diabetes or any issues like that. But last year while being at work, it was after one of the meetings, it was in February by the way, suddenly I started having ... It was an allergic reaction, but I didn't know what I was. But I always knew that it was due to the stress. I

was dealing with a lot of stress on that week and people manage stress in different ways. I always try to keep it to myself. I have that personality, I guess. Everybody handles it different ways.

Some people like to vent it, some people like to yell. I smile and I laugh and I'm like, "Nothing is happening," but that's bad. And I know that that's not the best way to do it. So, I had a bad episode last year. So, I ended up having a surgery. I ended up having other things with the gall bladder, and there was a cyst. It was like a combination of several things. I don't know if it's related to the stress, but I always knew that I was neglecting some areas of my personal health.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy detailed prior experiences that she had related to spending too much time away from her family because she was working late resulting in family problems and physical health issues from not taking breaks at work:

So, I would say about five, maybe six years ago maybe even before that, 'cause I've been a principal for several years now, I was spending too much time away from my family; I was staying at the school until seven o'clock. It could be 8 o'clock. And not for programs, we have programs throughout the year for the kids after school, performances. You expect to stay until about seven 'cause the parents don't leave until after the performance is over. But I was staying two and three times a week, after six or seven o'clock.

Well, it was impacting my family because both my kids were still in school, one was in high school, and one was in middle school, or elementary, I can't remember, and my husband works nights so by the time I would get home, of course I have a great husband, so it's not that I was always cooking and I had to run around when I get on, I would get home, but it was 'cause he and I kinda helped each other a lot, but then I was finding that I was missing the time with the kids to just sit and listen to them or

sometimes just to sit and watch TV together, and we don't have to talk about a lot of serious things.

By the time I would get home he was ready to take his little preliminary nap before I would go to work at night. We're kind of crisscrossing and I was like, this is not working, this is not working. And I would make the time to go to the events. So, when they were in band and gymnastics and all this other stuff, I would make sure . . . No, I gotta carve out that time because I learned early on, that's what children remember so I remember when my parents showed up and I remember when they didn't, so I didn't want them to think about that later on. So I would carve-out that time even though I was just bone tired, sometimes I get off more on a Friday and go straight to the football game because my son was in the band, just something like that, and then I finally, I'm like I have to figure something to help, this is wearing on me physically, emotionally. I love my job, I love my family, so I gotta figure something out.”

And then I've always had a bad habit of not stopping in the middle of the day. Things have to get done. I had to check on. I would not stop' cause I wanted to make sure everything was what it needed to be. I had meetings or parents would call I wanted to make sure everything was okay, with them, students. The needs came up and so . . . And I'm gonna share this but I know it's being recorded. Part of the physical ramifications of it, I would get bladder infections, because I wasn't taking care of my needs.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey revealed that she has successfully maintained relationship with friends and has chosen to remain single at this time, implying that the choice of being single is related to the demands of her job:

When I became a principal, I was a single woman, and it remains thus because it's just, when I come home, I'm like, ugh, I don't wanna deal with anyone else's problem, so I'm

just gonna keep it this way for now. But as far as you know friendships and things like that, I always make time for friends, and that part of my life has remained always very steady. So, it's been good but, yeah, no, outside interest. My world shifted, personally and professionally, at the same time, so there was a little adjustment time, and ended up just saying, this is easier for now.

I've gained a significant amount of weight because I used to go to the gym at 5 o'clock in the evening, and I'd work out until 6:30. And now, I get home at 7:30, 8:00. I change, and sit on the couch, and take a nap until I go to bed. Email until I go to bed.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian expressed that his family time has suffered as well as his personal health:

Personal health goes out the window. Family time, because you're gone so often from your own kids, you don't get an opportunity to just spend enough time with them because you're getting home at 6:00 or 7:00 and you've been gone since 6:00 in the morning, you got just a small window about 7:00 to 9:00, and then they're preparing for sleeping, you're hoping to get a little time spent with your significant other, which is hardly. So that little three-hour window, you're trying to get it all done.

I've seen it often and we all talk about it; principals and relationships suffer because of the impact of time. Because you put so much on that side, and you lose the balance of dealing with home. So, it's like all the attention is drawn toward work, especially during the year. And that makes it hard. And if your family's not real understanding of your position, it's a constant battle. Everybody wants time and that's the thing that you don't have.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky shared that she has experienced challenges both with friends and family relationships:

My family, they have a good understanding, my husband and my mother and so they know, work comes first, they're first, but work, they know when I'm about business and I'm working, I'm working, and if we're talking about what we're gonna eat for dinner that waits until I'm not working anymore. Yeah, that's been good. Friends, sometimes is a challenge because it's not the same as it used to be, and they want me to be available as soon as they call even if it's in the middle of the day and I don't typically do personal calls while I'm at work, because I'm always on and if there's a radio call, or student, I hear a student yelling in the hallway, I've gotta be able to hear them and be able to respond to them, so I typically don't do a lot of personal interaction while I'm at school. That's with my mom too and actually she does get upset, with me because it ends up being later in the day before I end up talking to her, and that is kind of nerve-wracking for her 'cause she lives by herself.

Theme 2: Technology Leader

The principals in this study spoke openly about using their role as technology leader, and the use of ICTs, programs, and apps that support instructional needs, management, collaboration needs, and social media. Principals discussed hardware, software, social media, and apps that are used to support their roles. High school principal Sky called herself a “techie” embracing, utilizing, and engaging technology at a superior level. Both elementary principals rated themselves as average and needing more training, with Kennedy explaining that he sees the importance and value of technology and wants to get better at it, since he is not naturally inclined to the use of technology. All other principals in the study self-rated as proficient and included that they could use additional trainings with technology.

Instructional Needs

The first subcategory in Theme 2, instructional needs, entailed principal's descriptions of how they use ICTs to support instructional needs. Participants elaborate on their use of ICTs in this area to assist in data collection and disaggregation, lesson plans, parent communication, and the Google suite to support collaboration around instruction.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare shared his use of ICTs for instruction as a tool to collect data:

I keep my calendar, as far as technology, I mean, on my calendar on the computer. But that's pretty much it for me other than my daily emails and things like that and using it as a data piece to collect data, 'cause I use a lot of data and things like that, and spreadsheets which drive the instruction.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper detailed her instructional use of ICTs to communicate with parents through the Home Access Center platform and also as a tool for lesson plans:

I encourage all of our teachers to reach out to the parents because I wanted them to have access to the Home Access Center, which is the district's platform where our parents can log in, log on and have access to the grade books and assignments and they can set parameters. If their child's grade reaches below a 70, so they get those alerts. So, that was a big push on our campus, to make sure that all of our parents had access, immediate access. So, if a parent ever called me and said, "Hey, I wanna talk about my kid's grade," my first question was always, "Have you signed up for HAC, our Home Access Center? You have immediate access." And so, I pushed the parents to do that.

Lesson plans . . . everything was done electronically. I even borrowed Education Galaxy because that was a program that many of our teachers were paying for on their

own so, I did a technology survey on our campus. What programs would you like for us to have? What do you think would be more beneficial to our students? Based on that survey, I was able to purchase Education Galaxy because that was the overwhelming one thing that was very consistent across our campus. Also, I did surveys for our parents. Even though, I sent out a paper copy, I also used our emailing system and call out system to let them know that, Hey, I've attached this link to your email. If you go into your email, then please complete the survey for us and send us back . . . send it back.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy emphasized the use of Google Suites to support instruction, emphasizing the value that is added with Google Docs to work collaboratively:

The whole Google Suite is phenomenal. So, we use the Google Suite, in other words, like all the Google Docs, Google apps; that has been integrated fully into the work that we do. . . You don't have to do all the attachments and all this and that. There's . . . with those editable files that you can share out, that makes life much easier and it's much more efficient. And the teachers have become adept at it. So, if they're on a committee, and they're in the committee chair, instead of having to shoot things out or carrying paper around, they just create a Google file and pull all that in. Google Sheets, you can create all kinds of spreadsheets that are a living document out there and people just import information. You don't have to have all these attached spreadsheets, Excel going all over the place. So, the whole Google set of applications is . . . It's become essential. Like, if I go . . . When I go . . . [chuckle]. When and if I go somewhere else and they don't have that, it's gonna take me time to adjust.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan described her use of various ICTs to assist her instructional needs:

Well, first, I have a Chromebook, which is like a laptop, a desktop, cell phone. I have a tablet, too. Regarding hardware, I think that's it. Now, we talk about software, then we have . . . Now, we upgraded from there with Zoom. But we do have Google Hangouts, GroupMe, Facebook, social media, you name it, everything, Twitter. I can't recall, I can't think. But of course, at the school we do have the intercom system, which is the AP system. What other technology do we have? Basically, the computers. Basically, it's the Chromebook and wherever we go, we need to bring our Chromebook.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy centered her attention on the use of Schoology for instructional needs and how she is also learning this new technology:

Schoology is not new to our district, it's been around, but as a whole, we weren't using it to the fullest at all, I wasn't . . . But now that the demand is there and that is the platform. I have learned everything I can so far about it, and I'm learning, even more as we go by as the days go by, how to look at how to do everything I'm asking the teachers to do I'm learning how to do that and I'll sit in the PLCs and learn while the skill specials are showing them how to load the folders. And while we're talking about content, I'm learning the technology.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey shared how she has shifted to a more paperless environment and how she is using ICTs to collaborate with her leadership team, storing documents for ease of access for her faculty:

My life and technology have changed relatively drastically. So, we have access to our Google Drive which has the shared documents, et cetera. I have shifted in a much more grand way to a paperless environment for the most part. We have collaborative documents like our agendas. You know, back in the day, you had to script minutes and it had to be handwritten or it didn't happen. Now, everything is online. I have everything . .

. My life and the campus life are really organized and accessible to my leadership team, and then there's a folder that's accessible to my faculty, so they can access those documents.

And although on the faculty documents, they can't necessarily edit, they have access at any time, online handbook. An online handbook, that they have accessible to them. And I think the way that that's changed things is I feel like there was a period of time where paper just disappeared and I have found in my current life right now, you can embed the links. If there's a video to which I'm referring, if on my agenda, there's a document that I want to discuss or that I discussed during the faculty meeting, they can go back to that, they can access it. And what I found is that I'm getting a lot of questions for people who are really learning the process even more so as we go. I say, if you could open up the shared folder, look in the previous we have a campus resource document, so every document I share, I add it to that Google Doc, so that no matter what agenda it is, every item that I share goes there, and it's just a running list of them.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian highlighted the use of the platform Schoology, where students can access work from teachers:

The district provides us, of course, our email which is our essential way to talk to one another. We have Schoology, which is our virtual world that we're dealing with right now because of what's going on, and that's the platform that we use. It's kind of like the central hub where students can access work from teachers and we're constantly checking and monitoring. Well, the emails and the computer, it hasn't changed, and the phone.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky highlighted the use of Google docs and forms to show activities that are done throughout the week:

Email regularly, Google, we use everything in Google, Google Docs, we collect

information through Google Form. So, our staff meetings, it's a PowerPoint presentation, it's a slide, it shows pictures of activities that we've done throughout the week. Nothing is just plain black and white; I don't believe in that.

Management and Collaboration

The second subcategory in Theme 2, management and collaboration, entailed principal's descriptions of how they use ICTs to support management and collaboration needs. These two components are highlighted by each principal as essential to their roles primarily with teacher observations, a managerial and leadership tasks, and with collaboration with staff. ICTs are an integral part of support for the management and collaboration needs of principals as highlighted by the participants in this study.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare discussed his use of ICTs to support his work with teacher observation and feedback:

Technology is a piece of our observations and feedbacks, feedback information that we give. We do have laptops. I try to go in and scribe as I do my observations and things like that, and it kinda helps me give immediate feedback to the teacher so I use my technology more on that. When instead of writing it out and things like that, I try to go and use my laptop, type it up immediately.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper detailed her use of ICTs to support campus communication:

So, prior to this pandemic, our teachers were required to incorporate technology into their lessons. I did away with all paper documents so, I didn't do what our previous administration had done with printing out newsletters and printing out packets and flyers of all of these different things because we wasted a lot of paper. We would find the flyers in the trash or on the floor, it was just a waste of money to me. And so, I started using

Smore to send out our newsletter every week, and I got a lot of pushback, "Well, the old principal would have put it, put the newsletter in our mailbox every Friday." Well, I'm not the old principal. If you don't read your email, then you won't get the newsletter.

We're going away from the paper things.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy shared his use of ICTs to support collaboration with staff and colleagues:

Well, a couple of years ago, I jumped on the bandwagon . . . which was very necessary, with Remind, which is one very simple thing that we started doing. And so, all of my staff would download that app. And so, I could very quickly send out mass messages through to . . . directly to their phone, which I do sparingly. I do it a little bit more now that we're in quarantine. Both are great. The reason it helps a lot in terms of my colleagues, my principal colleagues, we communicate directly with our supervisor. So, if we have questions, we just shoot it, you shoot it out there and then she'll respond or one of the other principals will respond, or they'll put a link, or they'll put information there that we need. So, I frequently use that, it helps to facilitate my work.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan shared her use of ICTs with her communication and collaboration around instruction:

Oh boy. I try to get in the building before 7 o'clock. I would say that it can be between 6:30, 6:45 because I like to be there before the students arrive. I get in my office, turn on the computer, check emails, it's 7 o'clock, we open the building at 7:05, be in the hallway to say good morning to the students in the hallway, go to the cafeteria. Sometimes I bring the Chromebook to the cafeteria, so I'm still checking emails while being in the cafeteria.

What we're dealing with right now is now the curriculum needs to be . . . The instruction needs to be delivered through using technology. I was used to doing, as I said,

presentations, PowerPoints, videos, I love doing videos for the staff. But from there to now designing the curriculum, and delivering the curriculum using a computer has been a challenge. Not only because we were not ready, but also the students weren't ready.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy spoke extensively about her use of ICTS for classroom walkthroughs, teacher evaluation, and documentation:

We've been using laptops and computers and tablets and apps to go into the classroom and do walkthroughs for years, I haven't done a paper walk through in years and I don't even think I'll be comfortable just doing a paper walk through anymore, because I can capture so many more things using technology when I walk in, even to the point we've been pushing for the last few years having teachers to record themselves and sending it through the cloud, so we can use that as a learning tool if they wanna share it with us.

They share their videos with us, then we can have a deeper conversation about what we see, 'cause it helps with evaluation if they agree to it, and some who have used it. Actually, it's hard to see yourself and your teaching, but it actually helps them grow. So, using some of those tools to communicate for improvement that has truly been helpful. Oh, my goodness, like walkthroughs to do our evaluations, even to the point to where we have moved away from even signing the final paperwork, we don't do that with paper and pen, anymore, it's all electronic.

And I like it for several reasons because you know in our world is all about documentation; we have to keep the documentation. So, it's a time stamp, it's under her login and I'm under my log in, we're communicating, and so it actually saves a lot of steps. So, I like the forms of communication because we get more done in a timeframe that we can handle, 'cause by the time I'm done doing a walk through, and when I get back to my office, I'm thinking about it in my head. It's a click of a button here, and a

there, just filling in the information there, and then it allows us to have quicker feedback.

I don't have to worry about my handwriting because my handwriting you won't be able to read it anyway, but I can actually communicate with the teachers easily. Even some of our meetings we were holding not to this extent, but we were using a lot of videos for our meetings and just chiming in sometimes.

Participant Casey, Elementary School Principal. Casey emphasized the use of ICTs to manage organization, documentation for PLCs, and online collaboration:

So, it's a matter of being able to easily locate and access information, right? So that is one of the biggest changes within the last few years of my life. I've been able to organize in that fashion. We also have our PLCs. All of our PLCs have a separate folder, so for ELA, for ELAR, they have a folder that they can link activities and also professional developments. We do a lot of online professional development as well, and we can provide growth. For people who need growth, we have assignments, for lack of a better term. We have online collaboration, so they're maybe given a video that they need to or that they're asked to watch and provide feedback. We also utilize videos where they record each other's or their own classroom and then they can collaborate with one another using those online tools.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian shared his use of various platforms to meet teacher and parent's needs:

We have [district evaluation system] training, where we are doing the professional etiquette for teachers and development through [the district evaluation system]. So, we have several different platforms that we use that meet the teacher's needs versus the parents versus the students across the board.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky described her use of ICTs for collaboration with staff

teacher evaluations:

I use Smore to do newsletters for my staff. I haven't done that since we've been remote learning but every Monday, I would send out a Smore and it would just give the week's activities, what's coming up during that week I would use that, but use it in a newsletter format, and put pictures in there. So, it wasn't just your standard email throughout the week if things came up, it would be a standard email, but the beginning of the week was always that Smore.

When we're doing evaluations of the teachers, that's typically done using the computer, if we're compiling lists of students or testing or whatever it's gonna be on the computer, we're gonna share it with others. There are some instances where we use paper, but for the most part, everything is through the computer.

Social Media Needs

The third subcategory in Theme 2, social media needs, included principal's descriptions of how they use ICTs in the form of social media to support their work as technology leaders. Principals in this study primarily used social media in two primary ways: to highlight positive things going on at their campuses and to communicate with parents. One principal, Sky, also used sites that focused on graphic design to make her communication documents more appealing.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare shared his use of social media to highlight positive things going on at his campus:

A big push in our district was Twitter and social media and getting the wonderful things that we've done on your campus out to the public and to the community. So, we do now have a Twitter page. We try to put more information on our campus website page just to keep everybody informed of what's going on the campus. But, again, because I'm

personally not a big social media person then I have, honestly, like my counselor, she runs the Twitter account.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper highlighted the importance of have social media presence through platforms such as Twitter and Facebook:

I started our campus Twitter page and our Facebook page to be updated so that our names coincided, because I want us to have a presence on Facebook. And so, I made sure that we had a viable social media presence. So, I encouraged all of our teachers to have a Facebook page and a Twitter page that was appropriate for our students or parents if they went on. Because they're gonna look you up, whether you accept their friend request or not, they're gonna Google you and find you on Facebook. So, just encouraging them to have that presence, even more so with Twitter because it's a little friendlier for our students to view those. To view that. And so, I encouraged them to have that.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy pointed out that social media presence highlights positive things on campus:

With Twitter, we do a lot of celebrations, which is a part of building campus culture and keeping a positive climate. We do a lot of sharing on Twitter; teachers share, I share, we promote different events through the district or through . . . that our campus is doing, and I go in and comment and like things. And then, the district as well, does a lot of that Twitter, so we kind of all are connected through that. And it's . . . I'll be honest, it's more about our professional growth and celebration, than it is about parents and kids because not a lot of our families . . . not a lot of our families, I think, are on Twitter. So, it is good because we're showcasing to our school.

We're learning from our colleagues; what work are they doing. And another way that it contributes to my work, too, is it builds . . . It's a repository of all that we do. So,

like when I'm hiring, or when I'm trying to showcase my campus, I can pull up my Twitter page and they can look at years of activities and it's a good showcase of all the work that we had done.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan shared the platforms that she accesses for social media: “. . . but we do have Google Hangouts, GroupMe, Facebook, social media, you name it, everything, Twitter.”

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy indicated the primary use as parent communication:

We were already using Twitter and updating our website but not to this level, we weren't like I said, we were already using Schoology, but not at this level and all, so we have used a lot of different communication tools to get the word out for several things. . . throughout the years to communicate with our parents.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey voiced the positive outcome of using the platform Blackboard and the campus website to communicate with parents:

We use Blackboard to communicate with parents. The thing I like about that tool is we found that we don't have a high number of parents who have email, so it sends it to individual's emails, but we've also figured out a way, through Blackboard, to send a link via text. They can press that link, they open up the link, and then they've got their . . . whatever information you're wanting to share at their fingertips, which is great. We've got that available to them, and it also, of course, still does the phone calls. Problem is they don't answer the phone calls because they don't know the number. So, the text piece has been valuable.

We also communicate via Twitter with parents, well, with everyone. We try to . . . We're not great because I'm in charge of that and I am Twitter developing, so I have to set

reminders to say, Hey, have you tweeted lately? But we do share a lot of information there as well. Our website, we keep up-to-date and have a lot of links on our website also, for learning tools for parents and students at home, so we utilize that. I'm trying to think of what else. Those are the technology tools, I think, that we primarily use with to communicate with our parents.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky shared her creativity with technology and applications that help her design graphics:

I use Canva or Poster my Wall . . . that's just different websites that I go to it, but it still using technology to design graphics, so you can post on our website, Twitter, things of that nature. I use Smore to do newsletters for my staff. I haven't done that since we've been remote learning but every Monday, I would send out a Smore and it would just give the weeks activities, what's coming up during that week I would use that, but use it in a newsletter format, and put pictures in there. I'm constantly on the laptop at wee hours in the night trying to make sure the phones, sending Skype, well, Zooming in and out is huge right now. Those are my major platforms, the major things that I'm using.

Theme 3: Help or Hindrance

The participants in this study perceived that the increased accessibility to ICT has come to either help and hinder their ability to balance work and life. Participants' feelings ranged from the sense of inclusivity that can be felt by bringing ICTs home to finish at home and having a sense of family presence, to the feeling of still being connected mentally by having available technology at their fingertips. Some participants pointed out how ICTs help with factors such as immediacy in communication. Yet, others felt compelled to respond when they received a text message, email, or phone call, creating some sense of what I termed *ICT mental intrusiveness* or the inability to disconnect mentally from ICT.

Inclusive or Intrusive

Inclusive or Intrusive, the first subcategory of Theme 3, details the participants' perceptions of how technology can serve as inclusive or intrusive in their ability to balance work and life. Having ICTs created balance for at least one participant, because she created a home office. One used the strategy of silencing her phone, and Casey appreciated having access to a VPN so that she could continue to work at home. On the contrary, one participant pointed out that his school district provided and required school principals to be available at "all times," while others pointed out that ICTs impacted their ability to spend time with family; they had to stay up late hours, and were unable to disconnect mentally when they heard a ring, beep, or alert; in other words they felt compelled to respond.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper described her challenges with balancing work and family:

When I come home, I can't immediately sit down and start talking to my husband 'cause I have to finish my work; so that definitely is an impact. That's why I said my weekend, that's my reserve, my protected time. That is all family time, no schoolwork, but that's my protected time.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy pointed out the effect of having a district-provided cell phone:

They [the district] do require it. Well, they give us a district phone, so that at all times they can . . . we can be reached by text. And of course, they'll provide a device if you need a device. In other words, like a Chromebook or a laptop; that's also provided if you need it. But yeah, the primary means of communication are email, text, and GroupMe; those are the three that the district uses to communicate directly with the leadership.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan described the challenges of

disconnecting mentally from her work and the impact on family:

And then when I come home, I get into the computer, keep checking emails, keep working on something that I have to do, and a day is gone. When the cell phone is ringing or is beeping and I know that it's an email and we're eating, so we're having let's say a meal together, either a dinner, and so I put the phone on silent mode because I know he doesn't like that. I know that even though I'm eating and I'm trying to be aware of what's going on, in the back of my head, I'm thinking about the phone which is ringing or is leaving an email. And I wonder, is it something important?

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy revealed the challenges that she had balancing work and life and how setting up a home office helped her find balance:

Help me figure out how I can spend more time with you guys and still get my work done because it's important, so my daughter said one day, and I remember 'cause we were in a different house. She's like, "You know, it's not that, we don't mind you working, Mom, but can't you work over here?" I was like, Oh, yeah, so we set up; at that time we didn't have an office, we set up the formal living room that we weren't using any way and we bought a desk and we set it up as an office.

From that conversation we made the arrangement that instead of me staying at the school if I had something to do, I could leave and it forced me to use technology, because I would then have to come home and finish stuff up, but it was different just like this, like right now, this time through COVID-19 I can go downstairs and talk to them for a few minutes and come back up. It's like I'm at work, but I'm still right there if they need me, if I need to turn my camera off and say, "Hold on as I need to take a little quick break," I can go do things with them. If I have a question about homework from the kids, if I have a question about anything, they can just walk into where you are working, you can pause,

and we can still talk. Whereas, if I'm in the building, I'm disconnected.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey emphasized the use of having a virtual private network to work with at home:

I have VPN, so I can access E-school, and the tools that we use, from home. The virtual private network, so I utilize that from time to time, but also a lot of the programs we use for our observation protocol is Invest. We use Front Line. It's my learning plan in Front Line, so I find myself on that a lot at home. I do not score evaluations when I'm at work, so I utilized that program. It's not super fancy technology, it is technology and we do use it.

Plan4Learning is utilized for our budget and I'm kind of a go-to person for a lot of these tools, so other principals will contact me and just say, "How do you do this? I remember you talking about this." Those types of things, again, I have pretty good knowledge of, and I also utilize them at home. We've got BFK, the Tel4Kids; we utilized that program. I have a pretty firm grasp on that one as well. Any program that we use at school, I have access at home.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian described how his time is spent in the evening and late hours in the night:

I'm constantly on the laptop at wee hours in the night trying to make sure the phones, sending Skype, well, Zooming in and out is huge right now. Those are my major platforms, the major things that I'm using.

You run dead into the emails that you missed for the day that you gotta answer questions, so the emails continue. Similar to this status right now, the Zoom meetings continue even past the hour of the work, the time of the work. I'm trying to get to the point where I don't look at emails very long on Saturday, maybe an hour or two at the

most. But Sunday I block off from 3:00 to 5:00 is when I pick up on emails to start to get my agenda together for the next week.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky described her need to respond she gets an alert on her phone:

I don't cut my emails off or any of that, so I'm gonna get an alert on my watch or something, and I'm gonna wanna know, well, what is it? And I can't just see who is from or see the subject and say, "Oh I'll check it later." Now I'm gonna look at it. I may not respond, I may hit unread, but I try to protect them, to not do that to them in the event they're like me, because now I've kinda invaded your family time and I try not to do that.

Communication Accessibility

Communication accessibility, the second subcategory of Theme 3, details the participants' feedback on how ICTs assist with communication. Feedback suggest that ICTs can assist with WLB because the tools assist with completing observations, data management, staff trainings, and providing information to parents. These tasks can be considered quite time-consuming without the use of ICTs. While the primary thought presented is that information can be gathered quickly, one participant shared her observation of delayed responses as a result of currently working from home during the COVID19 pandemic.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare described the immediate feedback that he can provide to teachers:

Technology is a piece of our observations and feedbacks, feedback information that we give. We do have laptops. I try to go in and scribe as I do my observations and things like that, and it kinda helps me give immediate feedback to the teacher so I use my technology more on that.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper described how analytic reports are used

to communicate with teachers:

I run the Usage Analytic Report, and I share it with the teachers. This is where we are, this is how many students you have all logging into this online platform. I need you to call some parents and see what's going on. Do they need a Chromebook? What do they need? And so, now, we do see that the technology piece is going to be our new norm and they're finally getting on board.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy expressed how fast he communicates with staff using an app:

All of my staff would download that app, Remind. And so, I could very quickly send out mass messages directly to their phone, which I do sparingly. I do it a little bit more now that we're in quarantine. But with texts and with Remind apps and stuff like that, and we're all required to have them.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan described how she relies on trainings and google to help here with trainings to help with communication tools:

And they (the school district) do provide trainings. I always request for them to come and train the staff, and when they do that, I receive training as well. They do webinars; they do different kind of trainings. We use Schoology. Everything is done through Schoology, where they upload the trainings, and then we have access to those videos or trainings. But being quite honest, what helped me, I Google everything.

If I don't know what to do, I just go to Google or YouTube and say, "How do I create a PowerPoint? And how can I add voice, or music, or audio? How to upload a video into a PowerPoint?" You can find everything now just googling it. Regardless of the training, and we do receive training in the district, but we need to request it, . . . they offer it, but we have to request it. And when I did that, I requested it for the campus, not

just for me.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy emphasized that she is constantly in communication:

But here's another part about the technology piece though. I think on the flip side of that, technology has opened up the doors and done a lot for us, but it has also added to this burden to the issues because we're constantly on call 24/7 is because what we carry in our hands, which is a little walking computer, so they make life easier . . . because I can answer quickly and go back to doing what I was doing. I don't have to log on every time, but it also, we are constantly in communication I can pull out right now my emails for our school and for my job and a personal email when you have three sets.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey described her access to VPN and other tools to support work such as observations that must be communicated with staff:

Yes, I have access to everything, for the most part. I have VPN, so I can access E-school, and the tools that we use from home. The virtual private network . . . so I utilize that from time to time, but also a lot of the programs we use for our observation protocol is [the district evaluation system]. Strangely, I think we have accessibility to all of those trainings or any training that we would need.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian explained how he is in constant communication with families:

We're constantly checking and monitoring the usage as principals. We have the Blackboard where . . . that is where we do the dial outs and call outs for families, and we have a way to text and send newsletters and try to send information to families.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky described that communication can sometimes be delayed:

But where before COVID-19 if you had a thought, you could run upstairs to where the room was where the skills specialists were, you could ask your question and be done with it, come back down to the office, but now it's either you got a text and wait to see if they're gonna respond or you gotta try to balance each other's schedules to find out when can we arrange to meet, and that's different than I find.

Task Completion

The third subcategory of Theme 3, task completion, details the participants' feedback on how ICTs and their ability to complete tasks. As principals have many tasks to complete, it is important that they can do so in a timely and efficient manner. Using ICTs to assist seemed an important part of the feedback gained from these participants.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare discussed programs that he uses for data and to make projections:

So, we have different programs that we can put in data to see, okay, where we are now, what are the projections? It kinda breaks down the approaches meets masters and things like that and the different kids. So, we use technology for data.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper described the importance of knowing Excel to complete tasks to save time:

I think all school principals also need to be very knowledgeable about how to maneuver through Excel. It's one thing to have the documents, but when you create a survey or you create a questionnaire or any type of tool through Excel, you're able to get the data; it will send it to an Excel sheet for you. But being able to utilize pivot tables to pull specific information out, I think, is very viable to all principals, just to know how to manipulate that data so that you get exactly what you need to save you some time. Otherwise, you're gonna sit there and have to hand code all that information. But having a tool that will help

you and alleviate some of that additional time, I think, is definitely needed. And many of our principals are not savvy with how to utilize the pivot table option in Excel.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy described how she uses ICTs to respond to staff:

If we wanna count how many times I have to check my emails at 9:00 at night and answer and respond to make sure things are running in the morning, or how many times I get a text message from the staff member because I'm not gonna ignore that person, because I care, I know about them, that they're asking me a question at 8:00 o'clock at night and sometimes, most of the time I'll answer it or I'll go check my emails. Even on Sunday, sometimes they're like "What are you doing?" I'm just answering this email I have to do this before so I can get ready for Monday, and I'm like, I feel like I'm on call 24/7, so it never turns off.

But I would feel too guilty if I would not respond 'cause I'm thinking, like, okay, I know I can't save the world, but maybe just when I need somebody, I don't want them to ignore me, so I try not to do that to them.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey described how she uses programs to assist with completing tasks:

We use Front Line. It's my learning plan in Front Line, so I find myself on that a lot at home. I do not score evaluations when I'm at work, so I utilized that program. It's not super fancy technology, but you have to . . . It is technology and we do use it.

Plan4Learning is utilized for our budget and I'm kind of a go-to person for a lot of these tools, so other principals will contact me and just say, "How do you do this? I remember you talking about this." Those types of things, again, I have pretty good knowledge of, and I also utilize them at home. We've got BFK, the Tel4Kids; we utilized that program. I

have a pretty firm grasp on that one as well. Any program that we use at school, I have access at home.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian described how he works during the night to complete tasks, “I'm constantly on the laptop at wee hours in the night trying to make sure the phones, sending Skype, well, Zooming in and out is huge right now.”

High School Principal, Sky. Sky shared that her tasks are completed using ICT to respond to email, “Okay, 'cause if I didn't get to all my emails and I'll do that from home.”

Theme 4: Work-Life Balance Policies and Practices

Participants were not aware of any WLB policies in their district, though every participant believed some type of supports needed to be in place for school principals. Some were not sure a WLB policy would be possible for school administrators or if such supports would be considered a policy. However, all participants thought it necessary to have practices or protocols in place to support school principals.

Reflective Practices

The first subcategory of Theme 4—reflective practices—details the participants ideas about self-reflective practices that contribute positively to WLB. Participants presented concepts such as organization, mindfulness, SEL activities, and deep thinking.

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare emphasized the use of a calendar for organization:

I think organization is very, very important, and having a calendar, having your dates written out, or an agenda or a plan for the day. I think that's very, very important. But just in our field as you know, everything just doesn't go on that schedule because . . . when we're dealing with kids, anything could happen at any point of time.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy pointed out that her district is

engaging principals in mindfulness and reflection activities:

Now, we have a chief of schools, and the school superintendents report to her. Well, one thing that she focuses on a lot is mindfulness. So, she spends a lot of time, and really at every meeting that we have. They call them instructional leadership team meetings now, what were previously referred to as vertical or horizontal meetings. So, we had the entire district leadership team there. On the agenda, every time, she takes a moment to discuss mindfulness. We actually do mindfulness activities sometimes, just reflection. I've noticed a real intentionality on the part of my boss about checking in, "Okay, how are you doing? Are you feeling okay?" And that's new.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan had an "aha" moment and began reflecting on balance:

Well, you really got me thinking about the balancing, you got me thinking about, "Is it hard to do it because I'm requested to do it, or is it because I wanna do it?" And that's hard to tell. I don't know if it's because they made us think, how can I explain? I think they made us think that if the school doesn't perform, it's because of the principal, or if it's us the ones who are taking that responsibility as our own. I believe in teamwork. I know that a principal is not the reason why the school has a high performance.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy discussed the importance of delegating and deep thinking:

Oh, giving principals ideas on how to effectively delegate, because there's people say, well, just delegate. There is an art to delegating, because if you don't delegate right, you don't set the check-ins to make sure things are happening, you're still gonna wind up being right in the middle of it and trying to figure out how to fix it. So, there's an art to that. So, giving principals suggestions on how to get things done and then maybe making

principals think deeper as to why are you spending so much time on this particular part?

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey described the shift that the new superintendent has brought and the incorporation of SEL activities:

Well, I do know that with the addition of our new superintendent, she and the executive team have shifted and started talking about social-emotional learning for students, and I am seeing that bleed over a little bit into our ILT meetings and such where they'll have us do activities that are designed, I think, to put us in touch with what's going on socially and emotionally. But at the same time, they're the ones that are assigning the work that I can't get done during the days. [laughter] Breathe all you want, but I'm gonna be breathing while I'm doing this work.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian expressed the need to stop emails at a reasonable time:

We have to, as administrators across the board, be able to stop the emails. Because if we look at 20 years ago, there wasn't email, there wasn't cellphones. It was a time where you did have nothing but time for your family and somewhere we've lost that, because the emailing, or the extra call, or the extra assignment, or the extra writing, or the extra this. And now we, somewhere in this WLB, have to say, "Hey man, does it stop at six o'clock? We can stop the day from 6:00 to the next day just so you spend with your family." We gotta have a set time because if you don't, everybody is gonna continue to push for more time. So, trying to find a timeframe where we do certain things would be ideal.

This world we live in, this fast-paced, technological, everything now. I always talk about the phrase, "We're like fast food chains. We want it now and we want it to continue now." And that has prompted everybody to continue to work. What's the

difference between having it at six o'clock this evening versus having it at eight o'clock in the morning? We lost the guidelines somewhere.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky described how the district is implementing SEL activities for leadership:

Our district is in a movement through SEL, making sure our SEL needs are met, and it's mostly for students making sure we're aware of what's going on with students, but we're using it with ourselves as well. So even in our leadership meetings where we have all the principals from the district, we typically open in some type of mindfulness. She just calls it mindfulness activity or something. Just to get us to breathe, take a break, it's gonna be okay, before we get into the business. We do it for our staff we're always mindful of things that we need to do to keep our staff motivated, but there's probably not that much for leaders. So that should probably be a focus.

Protocols and Boundaries

The second subcategory of Theme 4, protocols and boundaries, details the participants' perceptions of practices that impact WLB (WLB) and the non-existent WLB policies. None of the participants were aware of any policies or practices that were in place in their school district, but almost all participants voiced the need for boundaries that could influence WLB.

Elementary School Principal, Blaire. Blaire expressed the difficulties that might exist around having a policy, but shared that a limit should be put on the number of hours worked each week:

Wow, I think that would be really tough because you really can't put a timeframe or limits on what we do and what really the staff does. I mean you really can't. It would be very, very difficult, in my opinion, to put time restraints and things like that on the principal. But if there would be one, and I would say that, . . . I'm just trying to think, I'm

just trying to think. If 40 hours a week was a regular work week, then I would say, if there were something that I would put in place, I would say that the principal cannot work more than 50, I would say 55 hours. That's about 15 extra hours throughout the week, and that's including weekends. If it were something like that.

But again, I just think that would be very difficult because, for example, I choose to go up on the weekends because it's quiet. I'm by myself. I can get a lot of things done. There's no interruptions, things like that. But if I chose to, I could stay longer during the week and then not have to go up on a Saturday, but it's like I choose because that's just personal time, quiet time, reflection time. So that's why it would be very difficult, in my opinion, to put times on that, because different principals like to do things different ways, and be in the building at different times and things like that.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper emphasized the need to have a mandate in place so that principals would have time for themselves:

I would say putting a mandate on the number of hours worked because some people don't know how to say enough is enough. You need time for yourself. Just like we have with our paraprofessionals, they can't work over a certain number of hours. I would say, definitely putting something in place for our principals stating that, Hey, once you hit 60 hours, that's enough.

Elementary School Principal, Kennedy. Kennedy suggested implementing a cut off time for messages to contribute to WLB:

Not sending the text, or the reminds, or those messages between certain hours. I think as a practical matter, I think that that would be useful and could contribute to more WLB. That communication is where the stress comes from initially. It's when you're finding out the next task or your next bit of feedback, or, why didn't you do this?

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan expressed her openness to WLB training:

Yeah. I don't have training on that (WLB), so that would be good to have a training on that. This is the thing. They can give me a training, it's up to me to do it. I see videos, I talk about social-emotional learning, I see ideas, I see people talking about what they're doing now at home with the kids, and that they have more time to watch all movies, or they have more time to play games. So, I know that it's me, the one who needs to try to make an effort on balancing all that.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy expressed the idea of principals having an opportunity to reflect and think about how they are spending their time.

Sometimes when we have suggestions of, we know that if you're working 50 hours or more, then you need to rethink what you're doing and be given some suggestions, or maybe ask questions if you're working 50 hours or more. Are you doing this, this, this, and this has some suggestions just to kinda get people thinking as to what can they adjust. What can they change to make it a better balance? It's like I said earlier, sometimes you just don't know what you don't know, you haven't thought; you're like, oh, I didn't think about a lot of that.

Middle School Principal, Casey: Casey suggested that principals might not actually pay attention to the policies, preferring a limit on the hours worked.

It's tough to say because I think a lot of us go into this type of position knowing that we would probably not pay attention to that anyway and we would still work and it would be nice to know that there was a limit to the number of hours we put in, and I'm not talking 40 because that's never gonna be our lives, but maybe a limit . . . Just setting a limit to the number of hours that can be required of us.

Principal Morale and Effectiveness

The last subcategory of Theme 4, principal morale, details the participants' feedback on WLB policies, or lack thereof, that impact principal moral and leader effectiveness. Participants suggested ideas for trainings that focus on prioritizing, time-management, and delegating.

Elementary School Principal, Harper: Harper emphasized trainings that focus on prioritizing:

Training about how to prioritize your schedule and how to divide responsibilities. I think all school principals also need to be very knowledgeable about how to maneuver through Excel. It's one thing to have the documents, but when you create a survey or you create a questionnaire or any type of tool through Excel, you're able to get the data, it will send it to an Excel sheet for you. But being able to utilize pivot tables to pull specific information out, I think, is very viable to all principals, just to know how to manipulate that data so that you get exactly what you need to save you some time. Otherwise, you're gonna sit there and have to hand code all that information. But having a tool that will help you and alleviate some of that additional time, I think, is definitely needed. And many of our principals are not savvy with how to utilize the pivot table option in Excel.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan expounded on ideas, such as a gym for staff members, and ways to support employee morale and effectiveness:

What about if we do have, not a gym per se, but a facility, and if not on each campus maybe on . . . not one for a whole district, but we have like in the West area, and the South area, and the East area where we have a facility where the staff members with their families, kinda like a YMCA. A YMCA for the staff members with their families. I never thought about it, just now that you're asking me, but that's something that we could do. I think that we really, as a district, need to stop and maybe be a little bit more laid back.

I'm gonna give you an example with the dress code. A very good friend of mine, she moved to another district, and when I asked her, "How are you doing?" the first thing that she told me was, "I'm able to wear sandals." And I was like, "Ah." So, she didn't tell me about the workload. She didn't tell me about the students. The first thing that came up to her mind was, "Now I'm able to wear sandals." So that was something important for her. And I was wondering . . . She was a very, very good staff member, professional, and it's sad that we lost such a very good staff member for something as easy as to allow her to wear sandals when she wanted to wear sandals.

And that can represent a health issue for some people. There are people that, for instance, they need to wear tennis shoes. For us to be allowed to wear tennis shoes, we need to provide a doctor's note. But nobody goes to the doctor for things like that. We don't go to the doctor all the time. Sometimes we just try to handle things our own way. So, if we were maybe more, I don't wanna say laid-back, but if we had more flexibility regarding dress code, or even allowing more time for the people or for the staff to be with their families. But I have seen throughout my, well, 10 years as an administrator, a lot of principals leaving. Either leaving the district and going to other districts, or just deciding to do something else, start different businesses, or becoming consultants.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Stacy recommended ideas around how to effectively delegate:

Oh, giving principals ideas on how to effectively delegate, because there's people say well just delegate. There is an art to delegating, because if you don't delegate right, you don't set the check-ins to make sure things are happening, you're still gonna wind up being right in the middle of it and trying to figure out how to fix it.

So, there's an art to that. So, giving principals suggestions on how to get things

done and then maybe making principals think deeper as to why, why are you [they] spending so much time on this particular part?

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey posited the idea of having a designee attend some of the required functions.

We have a lot of required Saturdays and such, and if there's an event, it's just us principals expected to be there and not a designee. Sometimes I was like, wow, I've been every Saturday and I want to go typically; but there are times when I'm thinking I can send a designee to this one.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky reflected on the importance of effective time management and productivity:

Work-life balance would be good, time management, that kind of goes along with it, but time management, 'cause someone said it a couple of weeks ago, we've been really busy and we've made this transition through COVID-19. We're really busy, but are we being productive? So, I think any kind of trainings on being productive . . . that would be beneficial.

COVID-19: The School Principal Works from Home

In November 2019, a viral infection called COVID-19, a severe acute respiratory syndrome that is known to be transmitted from human to human (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019) surfaced that would impact the world in such a way that it would be termed a international pandemic. While COVID-19 was not a direct part of this study, I included this section as an abundance of information was shared from principals as to how things have changed in their roles as school principals, and technologically as a result of COVID-19. Hence, the following question surfaced during the study as a result of the participants' feedback: Are

there new technologies that you are using more or now since COVID-19 that you weren't using prior?

Elementary School Principal, Blare. Blare discussed the increased use of Zoom:

And now with the COVID, of course, we're all using Zoom, but this wasn't something that we used before, before COVID-19, but whenever I did have a meeting or someone requested to do some, I would ask them, "Can you send me a calendar invite?" So, it'd be on my calendar so I can definitely make sure that I was ready for the appointment and prepared and didn't miss it and things like. It's been very well. I really enjoy it now. You just couldn't imagine what's going on and how would you still communicate with your staff and have different meetings and things like that, because we pretty much still have our meetings every single day.

So, it's been going well. We use Zoom and Google Hangouts and so both of them have been going very well, especially being the fact that we are still reaching out to our kids as well via Google Hangouts. So, I think it's going very well. Because previous to that, I had never used Zoom or Google Hangouts.

Elementary School Principal, Harper. Harper emphasized the prevalence of technology because of COVID-19:

Well, now that the pandemic is here, technology is even more prevalent than ever. So, our teachers had no choice. Those teachers that fought me at the beginning, well, I don't want my kids on this particular program, they don't know how to get in. Well, now they don't have a choice. And so, you see them slowly getting into that groove and those who can't get into the groove, I sent out an interest survey, Hey, what are your intents for next year? Are you gonna retire, resign, transfer? And I've gotten some resignations and some retirements from those who just can't get onto this technology piece. I've explained to

them, this is not going away. Even when we return to school, when we're able to return, this is gonna be our new normal. I want our students to be able to access their schoolwork electronically. Whether we're in school or whether they're doing virtual from their homes like we are now, I want this to be a presence on our campus, and now it's here.

Elementary School Principal, Morgan. Morgan reflected on the increased instructional and curriculum needs:

What we're dealing with right now is now the curriculum. The instruction needs to be delivered through using technology. I was used to doing, as I said, presentations, PowerPoints, videos; I love doing videos for the staff. But from there to now design the curriculum, and deliver the curriculum using a computer has been a challenge. Not only because we were not ready, but also the students weren't ready. So, of course we need more training on how to deliver instruction using technology, and how to explain to the students and the parents how to log into these programs and help the students at home. So, I would say that I need training on how to train the parents.

Elementary School Principal, Stacy. Early in the interview, as Stacy talked about the demands of being a school principal, she quickly interjected comments about COVID-19 and the demands and what others think might be going on while principals are working from home:

So, the demands, the demands are high, and people might think, oh, everybody's sitting at home right now with this COVID-19. But let me tell you, I'm tired every day, I've been walking that building. Because I'm constantly interacting through video conferencing with the leadership team, with the district team, being on a district task team making some decisions at the district level and then then we go back to, after I have to meet with the instructional specialist to make sure that the lessons are aligned and interactive, and then we have to make sure they are actually meeting the needs of how it's being

transmitted.

And that the kids are at home, so we have to take all of that into account. So, the demands are high . . . But I'm actually having fun with it learning . . . I am, I'm pushing it because I'm not the youngest thing in the bunch, but I like that all those things are at our fingertips, and I think the more I do it, the more I wanna push others to figure it out. I'm not the fastest person with technology; I don't think if a computer crashed you would call me.

Middle School Principal, Casey. Casey said,

The biggest change is that we hold a great deal more virtual meetings, so I guess when all is said and done, I guess that is the part that has changed the most instead of having face-to-face meetings.

Middle-High School Principal, Ian. Ian expressed awareness of new technologies:

The Zoom in with COVID has created a new virtual [way of] having conversations. I'm familiar with all of the Google Classrooms now. I come from the Microsoft Suites, so I kinda know those things, but the district uses this platform Zoom for the one-to-one meetings.

High School Principal, Sky. Sky elaborated on a shift in strategies for communicating and connecting:

I know through COVID-19, now that we're doing the remote learning, I've noticed a shift . . . and I think it's throughout Leadership but I know in our high school admin meetings, it's been a lot during this transition. It's every day something new; it changes by the end of the day; it's been a lot. So, my school assistant superintendent has asked me to actually start off each of our meetings with some type of activity. Because our meetings get so heavy so we do just little simple things, but it's just really simple stuff, but it's a bonding

activity too, for us 'cause I noticed that we're smiling more, we're laughing. And typically, with high school principals, you don't see that. We're always about the business. What's next, what's next, it gives us a breath of fresh air for a change.

We weren't doing Zoom meetings. I think I'd only been on one Google Hangout meeting with other leaders in the building, but we weren't using that. And it's great now, but it's like we Zoom all day. It's scary because I think we could have more of them if we do Zoom rather than trying to coordinate schedules to meet in one location. But we still get to see each other's faces. You get to know a little bit about their personal life 'cause you see where they set up every day, those that do share the video, but those that don't, it's okay.

Summary and Preview of Next Chapter

In Chapter 4, I presented the emerging themes and participant responses that support the overall findings for this IPA focused on the increased accessibility of ICT and WLB for K-12 leaders. In review of all participants responses, it is clear that school principals feel overwhelmed, see themselves as technology leaders, believe that the increased accessibility to ICT both helps and hinders them as leaders, and that there is a need for practices and policies that support WLB for K-12 leaders.

It is my hope that these findings will encourage school district leaders to develop and incorporate policies and practices which support WLB, provide training and development to support school principals' learning needs as technology leaders of the 21st century, and create an environment that encourages and support school principal morale. Chapter 5 provides an overall summary, a discussion of findings in previous literature, limitations, recommendations, implications for future research, and an overall conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

K-12 school principals are overcome with many responsibilities both during the workday and after work hours (Adisa et al., 2018). With the increased access to technology and principals having the added responsibility in the 21st century of functioning in the role of technology leader, responsible for implementing ICTs in the classroom, and having an awareness of emerging technology and creating a school that is Future Ready (Denton, 2019; Garcia et al., 2019; Garland, 2009; Office of Educational Technology, 2014), the role of the school principal has extended far beyond the current definition presented by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological study was to describe the impact of the increased access to ICT on WLB for K-12 principals. I conducted semistructured interviews with eight K-12 principals using an online platform called Zoom. School principals described their experiences related to the use of ICT, WLB, and thoughts around WLB policies. I conducted the research with K-12 principals who worked in major suburban schools in Houston, Texas. Four research questions guided the study from which four themes emerged. An additional theme of the COVID-19 pandemic became relevant due to the impact it had on the participants during the time of the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study with discussions of relevant themes, limitations, recommendations for application, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Themes in Relation to Past Literature

School principals are inundated with many responsibilities and expectations (Armstrong, 2015; Bryan, 2015). Many K-12 principals struggle with navigating the nuances of the principalship (Hult et al., 2016). School leaders are not only available during the workday for work-related tasks, they are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with just the click of a button. Hence, home has become work and work has become home with leaders trying to seek

balance somewhere in between (Adisa et al., 2018; Chen & Karahanna, 2014; Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Nam, 2014). In addition, ICTs have become increasingly accessible in a variety of formats and for a variety of uses (Koekemoer & De Wet, 2016). School principals are now called to be technology leaders in the 21st century as they use various ICTs to support their role as school leaders (Garland, 2009).

Boundary theory with an emphasis on boundary management was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Boundary theory focuses on how one transitions between roles psychologically and physically and how individuals tend to segment or integrate roles (Ashforth, et al., 2000). Boundary management, while rooted in boundary theory, highlights an individual's preference to separate work with nonwork roles, which can lead to balance in one's personal life and can result in effective leadership (Kossek, 2016). In addition, stress management is considered due to the highly demanding role of the principalship (Seaward, 2017). Using an IPA lens grounded in hermeneutics, I was able to listen to K-12 principals describe their lived experiences to gain a better understanding and insight relative to the use of ICTs and its impact on WLB and their perceptions around WLB policies for K-12 school principals. Following the completion of this study, four relevant themes surfaced. One major theme emerged from each research question.

RQ 1: What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and work-life balance of K-12 leaders?

RQ 2: How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technology in their roles as school principal?

RQ 3: In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?

RQ 4: In what ways, if any, do ISD work-life balance policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add, or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?

Theme 1: Sense of Being Overwhelmed

In response to Research Question 1, each school principal shared their experiences as K-12 leaders in relationship to ICT and WLB. Each participant eagerly engaged in sharing and it was almost as if the participants had finally found a safe space to truly share their feelings, emotions, and experiences. As participants spoke of the many demands of the role, the reality of being plugged in 24 hours a day and seven days a week, and even the relationship and health concerns they had endured, it was evident that there is a need for school principals to set boundaries and to establish WLB. WLB is seen as a significant challenge for K-12 leaders (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Sogunro, 2012), and now with the added demands of technology, it has become more important than ever to assist K-12 leaders in establishing better boundaries between work and life. Previous studies have shown principals work between 50 and 80 hours in a week (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Sebastian et al., 2016); the principals in this study shared similar results of working between 50 and 60 hours during the week with additional work on weekends. I present an overview of participants' overall feedback related to each subcategory in this theme below:

Job Demands. The first subcategory of Theme 1, job demands, revealed that all eight principals shared the experience of extensive job demands, long hours, and excessive responsibilities. Job demands—managing staff, students, curriculum, providing professional development, attending meetings, and learning new technologies—all impacted the principals and contributed to long hours (see Table 3). Gender, relationship status, grade level or years of experience seemed to show no difference in terms of hours worked or a sense of feeling overwhelmed. It is clear from the participants' feedback that they are highly stressed due to the

demands and responsibilities of the job and the long hours that they work. In addition, technology has also created an added challenge for some participants as they learn to navigate technology for instructional and managerial purposes. Likewise, middle-high school principal Ian expressed that he is not only the instructional leader, but that he finds himself wearing the hat of father and counselor. Sky said it this way: “It’s a lot to manage” and an elementary principal described the job demands as “more than he expected.” Regardless of the grade level or gender, all principals expressed that the demands of the school principal were never-ending. Elementary, middle, and high school principals all expressed levels of stress related to numerous demands of the job and a feeling of being responsible for everything.

Table 3

Self-Report Work Time From K-12 principals

Name	Average Hours Worked Daily	Grade Level	Work on Weekends
Blare	11	Elementary	Yes
Harper	11	Elementary	No
Kennedy	11	Elementary	Yes
Morgan	12	Elementary	Yes
Stacy	12	Elementary	Yes
Casey	10	Middle	Yes
Ian	12	Middle/High	Yes
Sky	10	High	Yes

Never Unplugged. The second subcategory in Theme 1, never unplugged, showed that the study participants are using various types of ICTs and platforms to communicate with staff and complete tasks. With some school districts providing resources such as laptops and cell phones, this could lead to school principals feeling some sense of pressure to respond and reply to emails and phone calls at any time. Also, by having school principals become part of platforms like GroupMe, which allows for up-to-the-minute conversations, school principals are faced with routinely checking the platform for information and may feel a sense of obligation to

respond. While one participant preferred to use her laptop for work in the evening, this seemed primarily due to the demands of the school day that would interfere with her completion of tasks. Of additional importance is the inability of some principals to mentally disconnect from responding to text messages, emails, or phone calls from staff or district after hours. One principal perceived that it is the school leader's responsibility "to always be connected."

Relationship or Health Concerns. The third subcategory of Theme 1, relationship or health concerns, involved school principal's descriptions of their experiences with ICTs and the impact on their relationships and/or their physical and mental health. All eight principals expressed either relationship or other health concerns. Six of eight principals expressed both relationship and other health concerns, while the other two participants focused more on the impact of their relationship. It was clear that stress and working long hours were primary factors that led to the concerns presented: (a) relationship with spouse, (b) relationship with children, (c) choice to not be involved in a relationship, (d) bladder infection, (e) gall stones, (f) weight concerns, (g) lack of exercise, (h) unhealthy eating habits, and (i) depression.

With many of them mentioning that they are using multiple forms of technology to complete tasks during work and nonwork time, it follows that such use is having an indirect effect on relationships and health concerns.

Theme 2: Technology Leader

Participants answered Research Question 2, sharing their experiences with the use of ICTs in their role as school principals. ICT-use for the school principal is seen as a significant part of their role (Naicker, 2013), and is also an expectation of school districts as they emerge as ICT leaders in the 21st century (Office of Educational Technology, 2014). The interview results showed that participants are using technology in several ways for instructional needs, management needs, collaboration with teachers and administrative colleagues, and social media

needs. Participants shared that they are using the following ICTs to support their roles as school principals. ICT hardware is generally provided by the school district; it is unknown as to whether software or other ICTs are paid for by the school district or by the K-12 principal. Table 4 shows hardware, software, and social media discussed in the interviews.

Table 4

Self-Reported Technology Tools Used by K-12 Principals

Hardware	Software/Programs	Social Media/Apps
Chromebook	Zoom	Facebook
Laptop	Google Applications	Twitter
Desktop	PowerPoint /Excel	GroupMe
Cell Phone	Schoology	Blackboard
Intercom System	Education Galaxy	Smore
Email	FrontLine	NearPod
Video	Canva / Poster my Wall	Remind

All participants were required to have and use ICTs as part of their roles as K-12 principals. They used ICTs to create trainings, communicate with staff, parents, and community, and complete managerial tasks, such as observations. With that said, it seemed important that participants were trained in the use of such ICTs. Participants reported that they learned the use of ICTs using YouTube videos, by self-training, or contacting district staff for training. Even so, almost all participants reported they needed additional training in some area of technology. One participant rated her ability to use technology as superior, four participants rated themselves as proficient, one rated it as somewhere between average and proficient, and one rated it as average. I present below an overview of participants' overall feedback related to each subcategory in this theme.

Instructional Needs. The first subcategory in Theme 2, instructional needs, entailed principal's descriptions of how they use ICTs to support instructional needs. Google Suites was the primary tool used to manage emails, documents, and staff collaboration. One elementary

principal and the middle high school principal mentioned the use of Schoology as the primary platform for instructional needs during this pandemic. Overall, ICTs supported the school principals' instructional needs with the following: (a) testing, (b) instructional programming, (c) lesson planning, (d) professional development, (e) professional learning communities, and (f) parent communication.

Management and Collaboration Needs. The second subcategory in Theme 2, management and collaboration, entailed principals' descriptions of how they use ICTs to support management and collaboration needs. Part of being a school principal is inclusive of both leadership and managerial duties. Likewise, it is well known that principals who collaborate with their staff have greater buy-in from staff than those who do not collaborate. All principals in this study relied heavily on technology and spoke positively about the use of ICTs to support their needs. For example, Kennedy found that it helped to facilitate his work. Morgan expressed a joy for designing videos and PowerPoints for the staff, and Stacy found the use of ICTs helped with classroom observations, because she could get more done in a shorter amount of time. Overall, the principals found the use of ICTs as a necessary and viable tool. Principals shared the following ways in which ICTs served to support their management and collaboration needs: (a) professional learning communities, (b) classroom observations and feedback, (c) campus communication and collaboration, (d) collaboration around instructional needs, (e) meetings with colleagues and supervisors, and (f) work with administrative teams.

Social Media Needs. The third subcategory in Theme 2, social media needs, included principal's descriptions of how they use ICTs in the form of social media to support their work as technology leaders. All the principals used Twitter, a social media platform, as a means of highlighting positive things going on at their campuses and to communicate with parents. However, Kennedy pointed out that this was a big push in his district, even though he didn't

think a lot of his families were even on Twitter. Harper and Morgan also mentioned having a Facebook page for their campuses. What has led to this is likely the news and media reports over the years of school shootings, inappropriate relationships of teachers with students, poor test scores, and a multitude of other negative situations. These reports have likely left parents distrustful and have forced school districts to be intentional about portraying the positive things that are happening in schools. Overall, the primary reason these participants gave for their visibility on social media was to promote the image of their campus and to keep parents informed.

Theme 3: Help or Hindrance

Participants' responses to Research Question 3 revealed that K-12 leaders' perception of the impact of ICTs on their ability to balance work and life as one that has been both a help and hindrance. Previous research around WLB and the creation of boundaries has presented ideas such as integration or segmentation, flexibility or permeability, and the idea of separating or fusing domains (Ashforth et al., 2000; Gadeyne et al., 2018; Koch & Binnewies, 2015; Piszczek & Berg, 2014; Sungdoo, 2018). It is clear from this study that the increased access and availability of ICTs and their use in the home environment is really a matter of preference and decision to blend or not blend technology in the home environment.

Likewise, such accessibility to ICTs creates for K-12 principals' immediate access to information, availability to staff, and the ability to complete tasks at times in which the K-12 leader prefers is most optimal for them. For example, Kennedy used Remind to send out quick messages to staff and Casey has added a virtual private network (VPN) that allows her to have access to work tools at home. Sky felt that it was at times faster to get information face-to-face than having to wait on someone to respond. In addition, Stacy chooses to check and respond to emails until about 9:00 p.m. expressing that she would feel guilty if she didn't respond, Kennedy

chooses to get to work about an hour early to check emails and prepare for the day. In either case, it appears that the perception of K-12 principals is that the access to ICTs both helps and hinders the K-12 school principal. I now present an overview of participants' overall feedback related to each subcategory in this theme.

Inclusive or Intrusive. The first subcategory of Theme 3, inclusive or intrusive, details the participants' perceptions of how technology can serve as inclusive or intrusive in their ability to balance work and life. For example, Stacy, a veteran teacher, found that being able to have a computer at home and set up an office space created a sense of presence for her family, creating an opportunity for her to engage on some level with her family while still working. However, others such as Harper, Morgan, and Ian perceived ICTs as intruding on family time. Morgan and Sky shared their difficulties in disconnecting mentally, perceiving that whenever they receive an alert of phone ringing, they want to know who it is and what is going on. I believe this inability to disconnect is creating some sense of what I am now calling ICT mental intrusiveness, or the inability to disconnect mentally from ICT.

Communication Accessibility. The second subcategory of Theme 3, communication accessibility, details the participant's feedback on how the access to communication can both help and hinder. Feedback suggests that ICTs helped principals with getting tasks completed in a timely manner. All the participants focused on various tasks that supported communication accessibility: completing observations, data management, staff trainings, and parent communication. One participant perceived emails as a hindrance, as at times it delayed responses that she could have gotten faster by walking to someone's office. On another note, the access to communication has led to the perceived feeling of having to respond in a timely manner and at times feelings of guilt if not responding.

Task Completion. The last subcategory of Theme 3, task completion, details the

participants' feedback on ICTs and their ability to complete tasks. Principals have many tasks to complete, and if completed in a timely manner can serve to assist with WLB. Participants described the use of ICTs to complete tasks, such as observations, communication with staff, data collection. What seems most important is the need for principals to have high levels of self-efficacy to adequately use various ICTs. As noted earlier, only one participant, Sky, ranked herself as superior, four participants rated themselves as proficient, one rated as somewhere between average and proficient, and one rated as average. If principals are going to be more effective in their roles and find better WLB, it is important that they receive training to assist them with various tasks.

Theme 4: Work-Life Balance Policies and Practices

Participants' responses to Research Question 4 revealed a need for WLB policies and practices. WLB is seen as the seeking of balance or boundaries between the domain or sphere of work and life (Nam, 2014; Sayah, 2013), with balance based on one's perceptions of the relationship between the two (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Nam, 2014). WLB policies are implemented in companies to help employees balance their work and family lives (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011). However, little research is available relative to ELB policies or practices for K-12 leaders.

All participants shared that they were not aware of any WLB policy in their school district, but all thought it necessary to have practices, protocols, or policies in place that would support the K-12 school principal. Three of the participants shared that their district is incorporating SEL or mindfulness activities in leadership meetings, one participant seemed to have an aha moment around why she is working so hard, presenting the question, "Is it hard to do it because I'm requested to or because I wanna do it?" Of great importance is the information that was presented earlier in Research Question 1, five out of eight participants indicated

significant physical health issues primarily related to stress or the demands of the role (a) reoccurring bladder infections, (b) health issues resulting from neglecting personal health, (c) surgery, (d) depression, and (e) weight gain.

In addition, seven out of eight of the participants noted relationship concerns with a spouse or other family member, challenges with friends, choosing to stay single due to the demands of the role, and navigating family time. All participants shared the need for practices or policies for WLB that could support their roles as school leaders. I present an overview of participants' overall feedback related to each subcategory in this theme below.

Reflective Practices. The first subcategory of Theme 4, reflective practices, details the participants' ideas around being self-reflective. It seemed that practices such as organization, mindfulness, SEL activities, and even the art of delegation would be useful for principals in assisting them in better managing WLB.

Protocols and Boundaries. The second subcategory of Theme 4, protocols and boundaries, details the participants' perceptions of protocols and practices. There is a lack of policies and practices in districts to support the role of school principals. The role is seen as one in which there are no boundaries as to the amount of time a principal works, nor the balance between work and life. With school districts providing ICTs to principals, a culture is created whereby principals perceive the expectation or have been told to be available "at all times."

All principals felt that some guidelines needed to be put in place, many also expressed the difficulty in doing so. Sky, a high school principal, expressed that as the leader she must always be available. Only one out of the eight principals shared that she does not do work on weekends and chooses to have this as protected time for her family. With principals working 50 to 60 hours a week at minimum, additional time after work and on the weekends using ICTs. It is imperative that practices and policies are implemented to change the culture around excessive work time

and to encourage WLB.

Principal Morale and Leader Effectiveness. The last subcategory of Theme 4, principal morale, details the participants' feedback on WLB policies, or lack thereof, that impact principal morale and leader effectiveness. Participants at every level pointed out that trainings would help them become more effective at their jobs. Specifically, trainings around prioritizing, time management, and delegating.

Likewise, additional feedback from Morgan really came across as relevant—Morgan's idea of a gym for staff and families. This could help families spend more time together and assist school principals with physical and mental health along with WLB. I am aware of many corporations that provide exercise facilities for their employees, but I am not aware of any school districts in the Houston, Texas area that provide such a facility. Morgan also expounded on the idea of employee morale and the need for district policies to become more “laid-back” by providing more flexibility around dress codes, pointing out her knowledge that good principals left one district to go to another because of the dress code. I agree with Morgan that some flexibility could be granted.

For example, I previously served in a school district where the superintendent wanted the ladies to wear pantyhose and the men to wear neckties every day. While this may present a look of professionalism, it is both unnecessary and unrealistic to ask employees to dress like this in 100-degree weather. Additionally, many companies outside of education have moved to business casual dress, which I believe is something school districts should consider. Business casual may save principals time and money and allow for the comfort they need to be more effective. This is a small change that could assist with employee morale and effectiveness.

Casey also pointed out an idea of great importance—allowing principals to delegate others to attend some of the functions that have been designated “required to attend” for

principals. School principals are required to attend many events on weekends, sometimes corporate events, neighborhood events, and other community events. I agree with Casey that many of these events could be designated to other staff members who could represent the school in a positive and professional manner. Likewise, these could serve as great opportunities for potential administrators or others who desire leadership roles.

COVID-19: The School Principal Works from Home

During this study, an additional theme surfaced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 national pandemic resulted in school closures beginning March 2020 and lasted the remainder of the school year. The pandemic led to students having to receive instruction using online platforms, and principals serving as K-12 leaders in an online environment. As such, school principals acknowledged that they are now using ICT resources that they had access to but previously didn't have a need to use. Likewise, K-12 principals are becoming more familiar with online platforms such as Zoom to navigate meetings and collaborate with coworkers. ICTs, such as Schoology, are in place to provide academic instruction for students. With this newly added experience that has surfaced as a result of COVID-19, perhaps school districts could consider some periodic flex time in the future for school principals who are likely more equipped to navigate the nuances of the role via ICTs since they have had this experience during COVID-19.

Limitations

While the study offers insight into the experiences of K-12 leaders in Houston, Texas and those working in major suburban districts, additional limitations are associated with this study:

- The study creates contextual limitations that cannot be transferred to another context.
- Many of the participants knew of my prior work in the school district as school principal and district-level employee; this could have interfered with their overall

level of transparency or it might have influenced how they responded to certain questions.

- I conducted the study while COVID-19 was raging, thereby creating much more stress for principals.
- As a qualitative study, the study lacks significant statistical links to the research question of the increased accessibility to technology and WLB.

Recommendations

After studying the phenomenon of the increased accessibility of ICT and the WLB of K-12 leaders using an IPA and analysis of individual participant interviews of K-12 principals, it is my recommendation that school district leadership (i.e., superintendents and school boards):

- Routinely evaluate the needs of K-12 leaders and take a serious look at the stressors associated with the role of the K-12 principal.
- Provide trainings for school principals that will further their skills with ICTs.
- Research, develop, and implement WLB policies and provide support as needed.
- Provide executive coaching to principals in the first three years of the principalship.
- Provide intensive training to support K-12 principals with the tasks associated with this role.
- Create an environment that fosters and supports flexible work hours and attire, while at the same time maintaining leader presence and professionalism.
- Implement no-text, no-email after a designated hour so that K-12 principals can unplug and not feel compelled to be available 24/7.
- Create opportunities for school leaders to engage in activities that promote physical, mental, and relationship health, such as building a district gym for both employees

- and families, providing a nutritionist or health coach, and provide ongoing reflection activities for school principals to stay attuned to their mental health.
- Consider activities that are appropriate for school designees to attend instead of the school principal.
 - Be aware of supervisory actions, whether overtly or covertly, that send a message that K-12 leaders must be available 24 hours a day through district provided ICTs.
 - District level leadership should research ideas implemented in corporate entities around WLB, business-casual attire, flexible scheduling, cut-off times for text messages and emails, and additional ideas around balancing work and life in a highly technical age.

Additional Trainings to Consider

Interviews from this study reveal several recommended trainings that could support K-12 principals. Participants expressed a need for trainings addressing WLB, technology, coaching, and job tasks. Table 5 below presents information provided from participants relevant to training needs. Most of the participants mentioned the need for more WLB and expounded on trainings that could support them in this area. Relative to technology, most participants rated themselves as proficient in the use of technology, yet almost all participants verbalized the need for additional training. Some principals discussed coaching needs that might have assisted them in their early years of the principalship, and others expressed the need for additional trainings to support job-related tasks. Of importance, principals expressed that technology has become a daily part of their work and the use of ICTs transcends beyond the school day.

Table 5*Participant Views of Training Needs*

Work-life balance	Technology	Coaching	Job-Related Tasks
Time management (Sky)	Technology training for parents to assist students (Morgan)	An accountability partner (Kennedy)	Observations and feedback (Blare)
Remaining productive during business (Stacy)	Zoom (Stacy, Blare)	Follow up systems (Morgan)	Analyzing data (Blare)
Prioritizing (Harper)	Google Hangout (Stacy)	Mentor (Kennedy)	Delegating (Stacy, Blare, Ian)
How to divide responsibilities (Harper)	Footgrid/NearPod (Stacy)	Executive coaching (Kennedy)	Designing and developing curriculum (Morgan)
Effective calendar organization (Blare)	Schoology (Casey, Ian)	Mindfulness activities (Sky)	Data management through EXCEL (Harper)

Future Research

To address the limitations of this study, it is my recommendation that other researchers replicate the study with a different context or multiple contexts to determine transferability and validity of data, such as a different area of the country, schools of varying sizes or demographics, or principals of varying demographics. I also recommend that researchers replicate a similar study under more normal circumstances and/or use a mixed methods or quantitative design to gather a more comprehensive view of the problem.

Conclusions

In this qualitative study, I used an IPA with K-12 leaders from major suburban school districts in Houston, Texas to gain insight into the phenomenon of the increased access to ICT

and the WLB of K-12 principals. Previous research has shed light on the demands of the role of principalship and the impact on WLB, but the research was limited in the area of ICTs and K-12 leaders. This study now draws attention to the role of ICTs and the lived experiences of K-12 school principals.

What clearly emerges from the data is that the increased accessibility to ICTs has further impacted WLB for K-12 leaders. An analysis of the data shows that school principals are overwhelmed in their roles, are now seen as technology leaders, and that ICTs serve to help them in their roles as school leaders, but at times also hinder their ability to get information quickly or to spend time with their families. There is a clear need for trainings to support the role of the K-12 principal as campus leader, instructional leader, manager, and now technology leader.

There would be significant value in school district leaders surveying school principals around this phenomenon to gain a better understanding of how school principals are currently making sense of the demands that are placed on them relative to the use of ICTs. It would likewise be valuable for district leaders to have this information in order to sustain school principals and provide necessary training and support to address the overall needs of the K-12 principals in this ever-evolving technological age.

Of great importance was the revelation about the absence of a WLB policy for the represented school districts, yet the participants shared the need for policies or practices that would nurture WLB for the principalship. Principals in this study reported working at minimum 50 to 60 hours a week with additional work in the evenings and on weekends. Several of the principals also reported significant health and relationship concerns either around work hours or stress. Districts would be wise to immediately consider the following:

- immediate implementation of policies or practices that support WLB;

- consideration of a time in which all emails, text messages, and other communications entailing ICTs should cease;
- implementation of policies or practices that restrict school principals from working more than X number of hours a week;
- executive coaching for principals in the first three years of the principalship; and
- allowing principal designees to attend some events or activities where the principal has been traditionally required to attend.

What has been gained from this IPA study is a greater understanding of the impact that ICTs have on WLB for K-12 leaders. Being able to describe this phenomenon from the lived experience of these leaders has laid the groundwork for additional studies around the use of ICTs with K-12 principals and has possibly set a starting point for school districts to more closely examine the needs of K-12 principals regarding the increased access to ICTs.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. A few months ago, we discussed the possibility of you participating in a research study as part of my doctoral study with Abilene Christian University. My study is on the Increased Access of ICT (information communication technology) and Work-Life Balance (WLB) with K-12 Leaders. The type of study that I am conducting is referred to as “Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis” (IPA), therefore, it is important for you to know that I will likely do more listening than talking as my goal is to hear about your experiences and impact, if any, that the increase in ICTs has had on your work-life balance as a K-12 administrator.

One interview will be conducted for this study and will take place via the online platform Zoom. The interview will last approximately 45 to 90 minutes. Because this is a video interview in an online platform it is important for the researcher and the interviewee to plan in advance and find a quiet uninterrupted location, without distractions, or interruptions so that all information can be gathered with clarity and in a timely manner.

In order to participate in this study, you must be in the position of school principal at a major suburban school identified as a large district in Houston, Texas and have access to the video-conferencing tool Zoom. To protect your privacy and that of your school you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for your name and the name of your campus, or I may choose one for you. If you are still interested in participating in the study, please inform me by contacting me direct at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by emailing my university email address: xxxxx@xxx.xxx with the header **(Interested in participating in the ICT/WLB study)**. When I receive your verification of interest, I will send you a consent form and more information about the interview. You will be able to sign the consent form digitally using a site called Hello Sign.

Thank you-

Carolyn Washington

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for signing and returning your consent form. You were selected for this interview because you are a principal in a large major suburban school in or around Houston, Texas. Again, the purpose of my research is to determine the impact, if any, that the increase in ICT has had on the work-life balance of K-12 administrators. As a reminder, one interview session will be held for this study and will last from 45 to 90 minutes. The interview will consist of 10 questions. The interview will be held through videoconferencing using a platform called Zoom.

All information collected during the video-conferencing interview will be treated with confidentiality. To protect your identity, I would like to suggest that a pseudonym be used for you and your school for anonymity. You may choose one of your own, or I may choose one for you. Which would you prefer? As you are aware the confidentiality form details how the data will be used and who will have access to it. After the interview, I will transcribe or use a transcription device to assist and will provide you a copy of the transcript for review so that you might adjust or make changes as needed.

I would like to remind you that this interview is about the increase in access to ICTs and its impact, if any, on the work-life balance of K-12 leaders. Are you ok with talking about this?

Voluntary Participation: I would also like to remind you at this time that if at any point you have questions, need clarification or would like to stop the interview you may do so at any time without explaining why. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your data or add to your information at any time without explaining why.

Do you have any questions, or is there anything you need me to review before we begin the interview? May we begin?

This study uses an approach called interpretative phenomenological analysis, as such data is collected using a semi-structured interview. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of K-12 school principals related to information communication technologies and work-life balance, the following research question was developed.

RQ 1: What are the experiences of K-12 leaders related to information communication technologies and work-life balance of K-12 leaders?

RQ 2: How do K-12 principals describe their experiences with the use of information communication technology in their roles as school principal?

RQ 3: In what ways, if any, do K-12 leaders perceive that information communication technology has impacted their ability to balance work and life?

RQ 4: In what ways, if any, do ISD work-life balance policies influence K-12 leaders' perception of how such policies add, or could add value to their role as K-12 leaders?

Are you ready to begin the interview?

Guide for Interview Questions - Interview (10 questions)

Role as School Principal During Work Hours:

- Why did you become a school principal?
- Tell me about your roles and responsibilities as a school principal in a major urban school.
- How is the role you described similar or different than what you expected before becoming a school principal?

Work-Life Balance and Policies

- Describe your typical workday as a school principal including both during work hours and after work time?
- How has the number of hours you work inclusive of work and after work hours impacted family or friend relationships and/or your personal health?
- Discuss any policies that you are aware of in your district related to work-life balance?
- Share with me any idea(s) you have for work-life balance policies that could support K-12 leaders.

Technology

- In what ways are you currently using information communication technologies during work and nonwork hours to support your work as school principal? Possible prompts: (filling out paperwork, completing documents for walkthroughs or formal observations, responding to emails, responding to text messages, posting on any form of social media (i.e., Twitter, Facetime, Instagram, meetings with teachers, students or parents as a result of COVID-19)
- Describe your level of proficiency with using technology to accomplish your work as school principal? Superior, Proficient, Average, or Below

- Tell me what training(s), you currently need that will assist you in being more proficient with your work as school principal.

Appendix C: Abilene Christian University IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



April 14, 2020

Carolyn Washington
Department of Education
Abilene Christian University

Dear Carolyn,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Increased Access of Information Communication Technology and Work-Life Balance with K12 Leaders",

(IRB# 20-042) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs