Education Advisors' Experiences of Stress and Coping in the Virtual Working Environment

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ABSTRACT

Background: During the CoVID-19 pandemic, most educational advisors were forced to work from home. Continuous stress may lay negative impacts on educators' work performance and psychological state (Hughes et al., 2019). However, there are no studies on stress whilst working virtually for educational advisors during the CoVID-19. Therefore, understanding stress in the lockdown environment is important to support them to cope.

Methods: A qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was conducted. Following snowball sampling, 12 interviews were conducted (Male=7, Female=5, M_{age}=31.74) from the UK and China. The six phases of thematic analysis were employed to analyze the data.

Results: The interviews identified the sources of educational advisors' stress from colleagues, clients, families and personal environment that laid negative consequences on their work and life, such as ineffective work, anxiety and low mood, tiredness and powerlessness, etc. A series of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies such as boundary management were raised for them to cope.

Conclusions: Underpinned by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) *Transactional Model of Stress and Coping*, the findings highlighted the educational advisors' stress experiences and raised practical coping strategies at personal, organizational and family level to defend against their stresses whilst working virtually.

Key words: stress coping, transactional model, thematic analysis, work performance, pandemic