

Unveiling The Ripple Effect: How Offensive Behaviours Impact School Leaders' Productivity

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Unveiling the Ripple Effect:

Insights on How Offensive Behaviours Impact School Leaders' Productivity

“

Offensive behaviour whether in the last 12 months or over the course of my professional journey has impacted on me. You question your worth, you question the processes and structures that are designed to be helpful and supportive. It is draining and can pull you away from other educational imperatives. Hopefully reflection, experience and over time an individual becomes more resilient but it doesn't mean it is easy to deal with and journey through.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

”

Offensive Behaviours in Schools

This research explored Australian school leaders' experiences of offensive behaviours and how these experiences affect their productivity. By understanding the challenges, resources, and outcomes involved, this research aims to identify ways to improve school leaders' wellbeing and work environments.

Offensive Behaviour Impact

94%

Experienced offensive behaviours



Offensive behaviours reduce school leader productivity



Offensive behaviours linked to reduced wellbeing



Estimated annual productivity loss costing at least **\$206 million** to the education sector

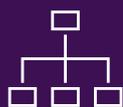
Four Phased Approach

1. Systematic review of existing research on offensive behaviours in schools
2. Anonymous online Ripple Effect survey administered to 616 participants March-May 2025
3. In-depth interviews with 20 participants in online individual sessions
4. Targeted secondary data collection of 1724 participants in the Annual survey

Participants called for greater systemic support and targeted professional learning to address offensive behaviours.



Offensive behaviour response framework



Formalise professional supervision

REAL ACTION NEEDED



Dedicated response and wellbeing roles



National 'Respect for Education' program

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Introduction

School principals and leaders are crucial to the success and functioning of a school^[1]. School leaders have a strong influence on school culture and wellbeing, student performance, and managing operational demands^[1-6]. Therefore, sustaining principal effectiveness and productivity is essential for overall school performance.

Moreover, school leaders are ultimately responsible for addressing incidents of exposure to offensive behaviours within their schools^[7]. They are often the first point of contact for resolving conflicts, supporting affected staff and students, and implementing strategies to assist in maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment^[7]. As a result, school leaders face an increased risk of exposure to offensive behaviours.

Violence and Offensive Behaviour in the Workplace

Violence in the workplace is a growing concern especially in caring professions such as healthcare and education^[8, 9]. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2012) defines workplace violence as any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening behaviour that occurs at the work site. In Australia, the healthcare sector has implemented measures to mitigate workplace violence, including enhanced security and redesigned waiting areas^[10, 11]. By contrast, in the education sector, workplace violence is less frequently discussed, and preventative strategies are less consistently implemented or formalised.

This report covers behaviours intended to cause harm and distress and ultimately disrupt work sites. In this report, these are taken from the COPSQ-III^[12, 13] and are referred to as offensive behaviours, which involve sexual harassment, threats of violence, physical violence, bullying, unpleasant teasing, conflicts and quarrels, gossip and slander, and cyber bullying^[14, 15].

In the education sector, the most recent Annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey report has demonstrated that school leaders are increasingly reporting experiences of offensive behaviours in comparison to previous years^[16]. Offensive behaviours often come from staff, parents, or students^[8, 16, 17].



School Leader Wellbeing and Productivity

Although there is no universally accepted definition of productivity for school leaders, productivity is often linked to a leader's ability to achieve key educational outcomes efficiently and within the constraints of time and resources - including efforts to enhance student achievement, manage school operations, allocate resources strategically, foster a positive school climate, and implement reforms that drive overall school improvement^[18]. Importantly, productivity is shaped by context, and experiences of offensive behaviours often do not occur in isolation. Such behaviours can heighten emotional and workload demands, which have been positively related to burnout and negatively related to job satisfaction^[19]. These pressures create conditions that may directly undermine a leader's ability to remain productive and to maintain their wellbeing.

Given these challenges, it is not surprising that school leader wellbeing is closely intertwined with productivity and overall effectiveness. When wellbeing is compromised, a principal's capacity to make sound decisions, support staff, and manage daily operations is diminished^[20]. This can result in leadership difficulties, staff disengagement, and negative ripple effects across the school community. This is among other negative impacts already associated with reduced school leader wellbeing^[20, 21]. Understanding the intersection of offensive behaviours, leader wellbeing, and productivity is therefore crucial for maintaining effective school leadership.

The Relationship Between Offensive Behaviours and Productivity for School Leaders

Experiencing offensive behaviours can disrupt tasks and negatively impact mental health^[22, 23], as well as diminish productivity and an individual's quality of work^[24].

Project Research Aims



This research aims to explore the broader implications of offensive behaviours, particularly their impact on school leader performance and productivity. It will do so by synthesising existing literature, analysing wellbeing impacts, and engaging with school leaders about their experiences. This project seeks to answer the following research questions:

Project Research Questions



1. How can the lost productivity due to offensive behaviours be measured, in terms of time, cost, leadership quality and other factors?
2. What is the role of the broader school environment in the experience of offensive behaviours?
3. What are the potential benefits of implementing strategies to reduce offensive behaviours, in terms of protecting wellbeing and maintaining productivity?

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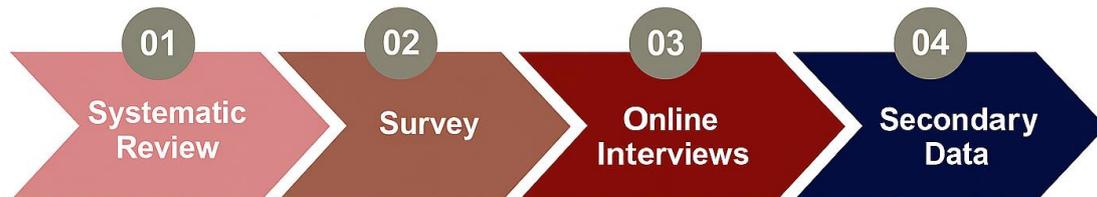
Offensive behaviours and aggression are increasing. The unreasonable expectations of many parents and staff is ever growing as is the constant building of more and more principal load.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

”

Method

This project consisted of four phases: (1) A systematic review, (2) an online Unveiling the Ripple Effect¹ survey, (3) online interviews, and (4) secondary data collection in the established Annual School Leader Health and Wellbeing survey². The combination of methods was chosen to gather both quantitative data from a broad sample of Australian school leaders and lived experience from school leaders. This mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of school leaders' experiences of offensive behaviours. This research project received ethics approval from the Australian Catholic University Ethics Committee (2024-3956H).



The systematic review looked at past research on offensive behaviours and how such behaviours affect Australian school leaders and their productivity. Using clear guidelines, the review gathered and checked studies to make sure the information was reliable and relevant. The findings helped guide the rest of the project and answer key questions about the impact on school leaders.

The Ripple Effect survey examined wellbeing and productivity impacts of offensive behaviours among school leaders using recognised psychosocial measures. The online interviews also looked at these impacts through discussions with school leaders utilising qualitative data. The final phase of the secondary data collection focused on the productivity and monetary impacts of offensive behaviours within an established survey population of school leaders (the Annual survey). These are explained in further detail below.

Participants and Ethics

Online Survey

A total of 616 Australian school leaders, including principals, deputy principals, and other senior leadership roles, completed the Ripple Effect survey. School leaders were sent a link to the Qualtrics survey via email. Participants were recruited through emails sent from principal organisations. Participants were informed about the study and provided consent through an online process. The Ripple Effect survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

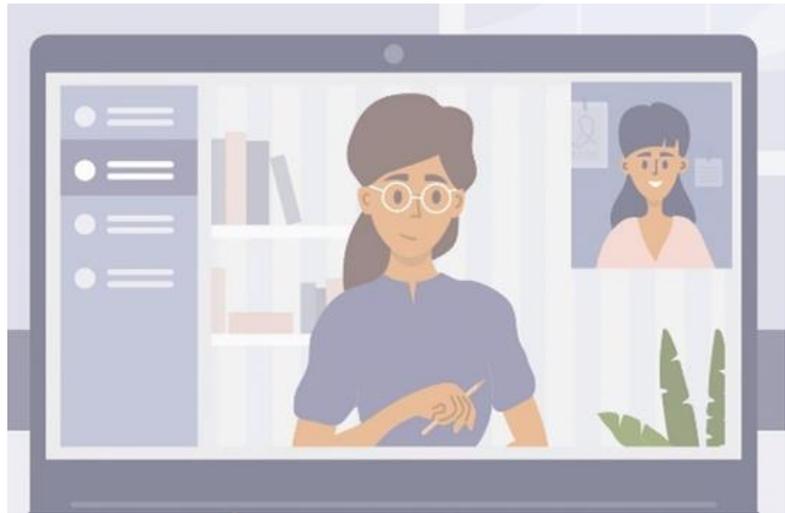
Additional data from 1,724 participants of the Annual survey were used. School leaders in this survey consisted of both returning and new participants. While there may have been some overlap between the surveys in terms of participants, the populations are distinct enough that the validity of the results should not be impacted.

¹ Hereafter referred to as Ripple Effect survey

² Hereafter referred to as the Annual survey

Online Interviews

A total of 20 Australian school leaders voluntarily participated in the qualitative stage of this research between June and August 2025. Interviews were conducted online by a member of the research team. At the start of the online interview, participants were informed about the study and given a consent form. The online interview took approximately 1 hour, followed by a debrief.



Measures

Surveys

The Ripple Effect survey started with demographic questions, followed by questions about participants' experiences of offensive behaviours. The Ripple Effect survey also asked about the impact of offensive behaviours on work productivity and activity^[25, 26]. Productivity was measured in part through the Stanford Presenteeism scale (SPS-6), which was modified to look at the impact of offensive behaviours^[27], and through self-reporting of the impact offensive behaviours had on productivity^[25, 26]. This included reported hours per week and self-reported extent of productivity loss in work and daily life.

The Ripple Effect survey also included the Impact of Event Scale^[28, 29], which has three dimensions: Intrusion (e.g., thoughts about the incident keep encroaching), Avoidance (e.g., trying not to talk about the incident), and Hyper-Arousal (e.g., feeling watchful or on-guard). The extent of emotional labour of participants, defined as the act of displaying appropriate emotions and the effort required to do so, was also measured using a validated scale^[30]. Emotional labour in the Ripple Effect survey covered two domains of Genuine Acting (sincere or natural behaviour/expression), and Surface Acting (pretending to feel emotions to conform to expectations). The participants' resilience was assessed using the Brief Resilience Scale^[31]. There were also questions about principal turnover and intention to quit.

The Ripple Effect survey included five open-ended questions, giving participants the opportunity to share how offensive behaviours affected them and to provide additional comments or insights throughout the survey. These were coded according to a framework of the main themes present in the responses by two coders. Discrepancies between the two coders were resolved internally.

Secondary data collection through the Annual survey asked the same questions around experiences of offensive behaviours, productivity impact, Presenteeism, and resilience, but also assessed salary bands and relevant occupational wellbeing constructs.

Online Interviews

The facilitator in the online interviews used both semi-structured and open-ended questions to facilitate discussion. These questions aligned with the research questions. Example questions included: "Can you describe any significant instances of offensive behaviours you have experienced?", "How did this impact you?", and "What kinds of supports did you have to manage any offensive behaviours you have experienced?"

Analysis

In this study, a mixed-methods approach was used. Quantitative data, collected through both surveys, was analysed using R Version 4.5.0^[32]. Descriptive analyses of means, statistical comparisons of means, and correlation analyses between measures and scales were completed.

For the qualitative data from the online interviews, thematic analysis was used^[33]. Initially, the transcripts were reviewed. Subsequently, a researcher independently coded the data using Excel to ensure consistency and reliability in the coding process. Excel was used to provide an organised and systematic way to manage and categorise the data, allowing the researcher to apply codes to significant pieces of information across the transcripts. These initial codes were then reviewed and compared to establish a set of preliminary themes. The researchers engaged in discussions to refine and consolidate these themes, resulting in a final thematic framework.



Systematic Review: Offensive Behaviours

Research Questions

This review aimed to bring together both quantitative and qualitative research concerning school leaders' encounters with offensive behaviours and the subsequent effects on their productivity. By integrating findings from existing studies, the review shed light on the extent to which these experiences had been examined and highlighted any prevailing hypotheses in the current literature. To achieve this, the review was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do different types of offensive behaviour impact school leaders' productivity?
2. Which types of offensive behaviour most impact school leaders' productivity?

Hypothesis

1. Exposure to offensive behaviours will be negatively associated with school leaders' productivity.

Potential Influential Factors (Moderators)

- **Type of offensive behaviour** (e.g., threats, physical violence, bullying, harassment)
- **Frequency of exposure** (occasional vs. repeated incidents)
- **Source of offensive behaviour** (students, parents, colleagues, administrators)
- **School type** (public vs. private, primary vs. secondary/high school)
- **School location** (urban vs. rural)
- **Gender** (male vs. female)
- **Job experience** (early-career leader vs. experienced school leader)

Systematic Review

Study Design

The systematic review aimed to synthesise the existing body of research examining the relationship between offensive behaviours and school leader productivity. The purpose of this review was to bring together and assess existing research in this area, providing a clear overview of what is currently known.

The entire review process was conducted and reported in accordance with PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria followed the SPIDER framework (see below).

Inclusion Criteria

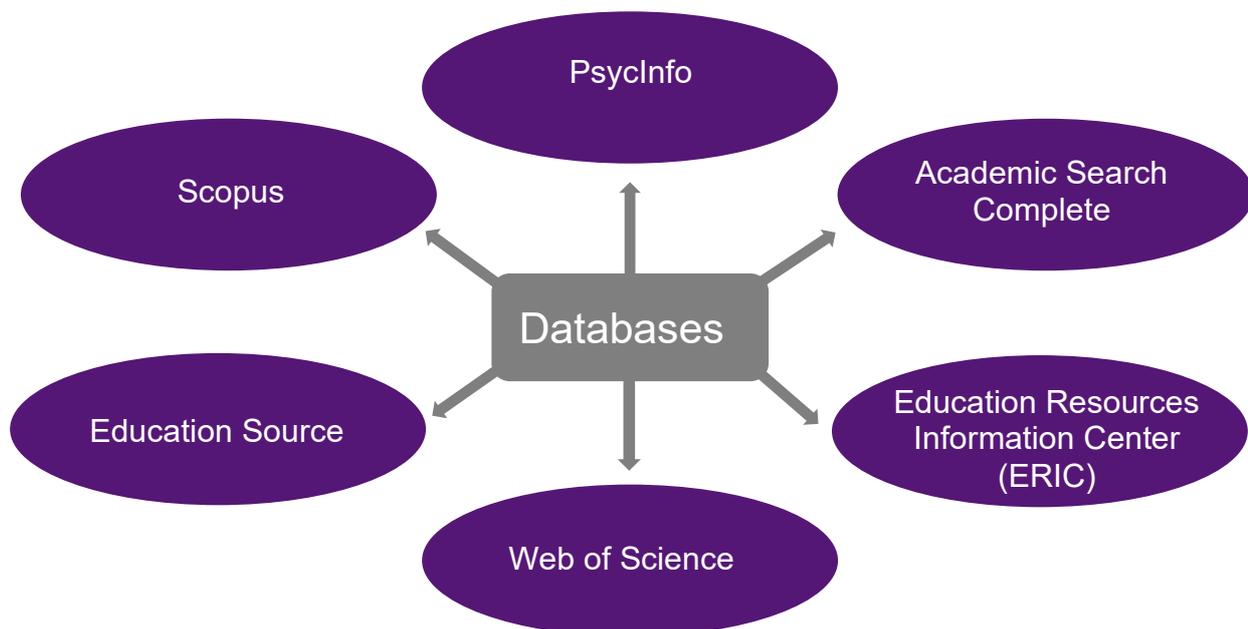
Exclusion Criteria

S	Sample: School principals; school leaders	Sample: Higher education/university administrators; teachers and educators in non-leadership positions
PI	Phenomenon of Interest: Offensive behaviours (e.g., bullying, harassment, threats, violence)	Phenomenon of Interest: Non offensive behaviours
D	Design: Empirical research studies	Design: Non empirical research studies
E	Evaluation: School leaders' productivity	Evaluation: Productivity in non-school settings
R	Research Type: Qualitative; quantitative; mixed methods	Research Type: Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, policy briefs, opinion pieces, and conceptual papers

Search Strategies

The search strategies were developed in consultation with the research team, a research librarian, and through preliminary searches. Search terms were applied to academic databases and restricted to title/abstract fields to ensure relevance.

Information Sources



Search Term Examples

A wide range of search terms as part of the review of the literature. These terms were organised into key areas of 'Principal', 'School', 'Offensive Behaviours', and 'Productivity'. For example, within 'Principal', search terms included would be terms such as 'school leader' or 'headmaster', while the 'Productivity' group included terms such as 'school performance' or 'wellbeing'. A full list of search terms used is provided in the Appendix 1 in Table A1.

Review Process

The literature review process involved screening articles using Rayyan^[34], with independent assessments by at least two reviewers at both the title/abstract and full-text levels to ensure eligibility, resolving conflicts through discussion or a third reviewer if needed. When full texts were inaccessible, efforts were made to obtain them via university resources or by contacting authors, and a risk of bias assessment was conducted. Data extraction was performed independently by two reviewers using Excel to check consistency, with discrepancies settled collaboratively or by a third reviewer, after which the remaining data were extracted by one of the reviewers. Key information, such as study and participant details, methodology, and findings, was recorded. Qualitative data were analysed thematically in NVivo, while quantitative data were summarised descriptively, including correlation and regression coefficients and effect sizes, with moderator analyses conducted as appropriate. Results from both types of studies were synthesised narratively to highlight overarching patterns, similarities, and differences (see Appendix 1).

Current Literature

Offensive behaviours, such as threats, violence, bullying, and unwanted sexual attention, are actions intended to cause harm or distress^[35]. These behaviours can disrupt tasks and negatively impact mental health^[22, 23]. In caring professions, particularly healthcare, research has shown that experiencing high rates of offensive behaviours diminishes productivity, adversely influencing the quality of patient care^[24]. Similarly, in the education sector, violence towards teachers and school leaders is highly prevalent among both students and parents^[8, 16, 17]. Studies indicate that experiencing offensive behaviours contributes to emotional distress, reduced job performance, and diminished confidence in school management^[36].

While international research has highlighted the broad impacts of offensive behaviours, studies from specific contexts provide additional insights^[15]. Research focusing on school leaders reveals that exposure to such challenges results in experiencing heightened emotional strain^[37]. For example, evidence points to declining mental health, wellbeing, and retention among school leaders, alongside increasing reports of offensive behaviours directed towards them, as highlighted in findings from the Annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey report highlight this troubling trend^[16]. Although there is no universally accepted definition of productivity for school leaders, productivity is often linked to a leader's ability to enhance student achievement and effectively manage school operations and foster a positive school climate that drives overall school improvement^[18].

Review Findings

Evidence Summary

A total of 20 studies, consisting of both of quantitative and qualitative designs, examined associations between offensive or aggressive behaviours encountered by school leaders and outcomes reflecting wellbeing and productivity or work functioning. Quantitative studies ($n = 9$) primarily tested statistical associations between exposure to such behaviours and indicators such

as stress, burnout, organisational commitment, and turnover intentions. Qualitative studies ($n = 11$) explored school leaders' lived experiences of offensive behaviours, focusing on the types and sources of these behaviours, their frequency and severity, and their impacts on leaders' productivity, wellbeing, school climate, and coping responses.

Study Characteristics

Most studies that examined the association of offensive behaviours and school leaders' productivity were conducted in Western or anglophone contexts, with the largest number originating from the United States^[38-45]. Other studies were based in Turkey, Israel, Italy, Sweden, the Philippines, and Kazakhstan^[46-51]. Two large-scale quantitative investigations used cross-national TALIS datasets, providing comparative evidence across multiple OECD education systems.

Sample sizes varied widely (4 to 8,978 participants) and largely focused exclusively on school leaders (principals, assistant principals, or administrators). Only the TALIS studies drew on system-level data, though they restricted analyses to respondents in formal leadership positions. Most samples represented mixed school levels (primary through secondary), and few studies reported stratified analyses by school level or sector. Where reported, gender referred to the number or percentage of female participants, which ranged from approximately one-quarter to three-quarters of each sample. This gender distribution broadly reflects the demographic imbalance in leadership roles across the included systems. Participants were typically middle-aged, with reported mean ages in the late forties (see Appendix 1 for detailed study information).

Measurement and Methodological Approaches

Quantitative

All studies relied on self-report measures of both offensive behaviours and outcomes. Measures of offensive behaviours included validated instruments such as the *Educator Victimization Scale*^[52], bespoke scales assessing *school violence* or *bullying*^[47, 48], and indicators of *school delinquency and violence* from TALIS^[53]. Outcome measures varied according to study focus, covering *stress, burnout, wellbeing, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, innovation, and turnover intentions*. Reliability indices were generally reported as acceptable to high (ω or $\alpha \geq .70$). All studies used cross-sectional correlational designs; no longitudinal or intervention studies were identified, and few reported background factors beyond demographics.

Qualitative

Most qualitative studies gathered data through interviews with school leaders, with some also using open-ended questionnaires completed individually rather than through live discussion. Additional sources included document reviews, which involved examining materials such as emails or reports to understand the context, and field notes, which are notes recorded by researchers during visits or interactions. The most common research designs were phenomenology, which focuses on understanding lived experiences, and case studies, which involve examining a particular school or situation in depth. Most studies analysed their data using content analysis or thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns or themes within the data.

Productivity and Work Functioning Outcomes

Quantitative

Eight effects from four studies assessed outcomes reflecting leaders' work functioning or productivity, including organisational commitment, innovation, decision-making, and retention (reversed turnover intention). Correlations ranged from $r = -.35$ to $+.06$ (median $r = -.12$). Most effects were negative, suggesting that exposure to offensive behaviours is typically associated with lower perceived effectiveness or reduced work engagement, although this was not a universal observation. Outcome measures varied widely across studies. Commitment and innovation showed small negative correlations with offensive behaviours, whereas turnover intentions were positively correlated, indicating increased intent to leave among those experiencing aggression.

Wellbeing Outcomes

Quantitative

Eleven effects from five studies investigated leader wellbeing indicators such as perceived stress, burnout, or job satisfaction. Reported correlations ranged from approximately $r = -.30$ to $-.09$, with a median of $-.20$. All effects were negative as expected, indicating that leaders exposed to greater levels of offensive or violent behaviour reported poorer wellbeing. Models yielded small-to-moderate average associations (around $r = -.18$); however, substantial differences in how exposure and outcomes were measured, the settings of each study, and the ways key concepts were defined were observed between studies. These results suggest a consistent but variable detrimental pattern rather than a uniform effect, implying that contextual and methodological factors influence effect magnitude.

Interpretation and Limitations

Quantitative

Overall, quantitative evidence suggests that offensive behaviours experienced by school leaders are associated with poorer wellbeing and, to a lesser extent, reduced work functioning. However, the evidence base is limited and fragmented, with few studies, reliance on self-report data, and heterogeneous measures limit generalisability. Existing research also lacks cultural and temporal depth and rarely examines contextual moderators (e.g., school level, gender composition, organisational climate) or mediating mechanisms such as coping or institutional support, and no studies compare impacts across educational systems. These findings provide an initial quantitative evidence map, which will be integrated with qualitative studies in the next phase of the review to examine underlying mechanisms, contexts, and lived experiences.

Qualitative Study Themes

School leaders internationally encounter a wide range of offensive behaviours, from passive-aggressive actions and verbal abuse^[41], often from parents, to extreme cases of physical violence^[43, 44, 46]. Bullying, cyberbullying^[39, 40], threats, and harassment are also prevalent, with digital platforms amplifying these issues. Offenders include parents, students, colleagues, management, and, in conflict-affected settings, external groups such as militias^[41, 49, 50, 54, 55].

The psychological and professional toll on leaders is substantial. Persistent hostility leads to stress, burnout, fear, trauma, diminished self-confidence, and feelings of demoralisation^[39, 43, 44, 50, 55, 56]. Productivity suffers, with leaders reporting reduced focus, avoidance behaviours, and increased administrative burdens. In some cases, leaders become guarded in interactions and lose motivation, impacting their effectiveness and engagement^[41, 49, 56].

These challenges extend to the wider school community^[44, 56], disrupting teaching, lowering morale, and contributing to staff turnover^[54] and deteriorating parent–school relationships^[41, 49, 50]. Although school leaders adopt coping strategies such as seeking peer support and implementing security measures, organisational responses are often insufficient, leading some leaders to consider leaving their roles. This highlights the need for more robust systemic and policy-level support^[39, 43, 44, 50, 55].

Conclusion

The systematic review underscores a clear and consistent association between exposure to offensive behaviours and negative outcomes for school leaders, particularly in terms of wellbeing and productivity. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence reveal that school leaders face a spectrum of offensive behaviours; from threats and bullying to physical violence and cyberbullying. These behaviours are often perpetrated by parents, students, colleagues, and, in certain contexts, external groups. These experiences not only erode leaders' mental health and job satisfaction but also diminish their effectiveness and engagement at work. The resulting stress, burnout, and demoralisation can ripple through the entire school community, affecting staff morale, student outcomes, and parent–school relationships. Despite the adoption of various coping strategies, the lack of robust organisational and systemic support leaves many leaders vulnerable and, in some cases, considering leaving their roles. These findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy and systemic interventions to better protect and support school leaders, ensuring a healthier and more productive educational environment.

Survey & Interview Findings

Demographics

A total of 616 school leaders participated in the Ripple Effect survey, including partial responses. Of the participants, 61% identified as female, 34% identified as male, and 5% preferred not to say. In terms of roles, 78% were principals, 5% were deputy principals, 2% were assistant principals, and 15% held other leadership positions. Regarding school types, 49% of school leaders were from government schools, 34% were from Catholic schools, and 10% were from independent schools. 7% did not respond or preferred not to say. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of Ripple Effect survey participants by state and territory. Figure 1 displays the school type distribution of Ripple Effect survey participants.

Table 1. The Breakdown of Participants by State and Territory

State or Territory	Percentage
Australian Capital Territory	2.8%
New South Wales	31.3%
Northern Territory	2.4%
Queensland	17.9%
South Australia	17.5%
Tasmania	1.1%
Victoria	11.5%
Western Australia	8.1%
Not Reported	7.3%

Note: 100% includes those who did not complete or did not enter information about their state/territory.

Ripple Effect Survey School Type Distribution

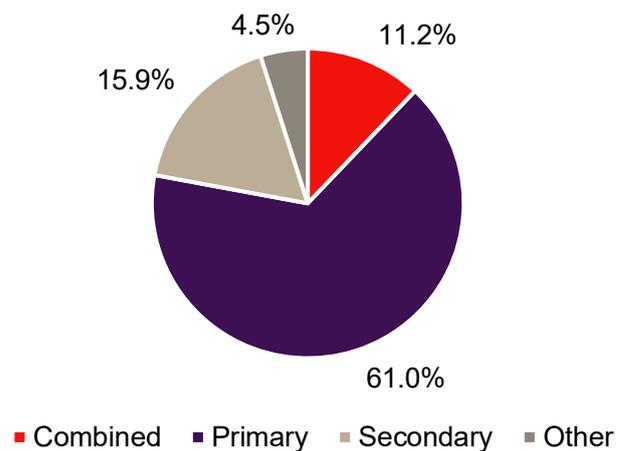


Figure 1. The Breakdown of Participants School Type



Ripple Effect Survey School Sector Distribution

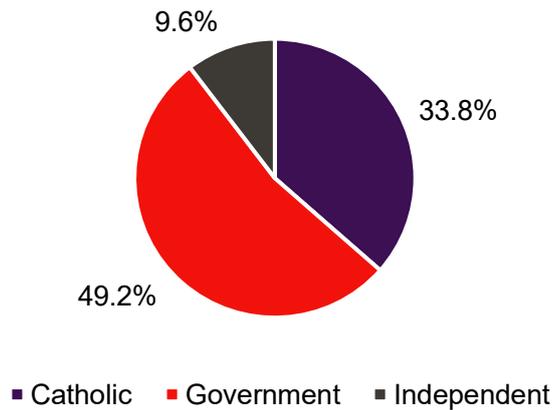


Figure 2. The Breakdown of Participants by School Sector

Ripple Effect Survey Leadership Experience Distribution

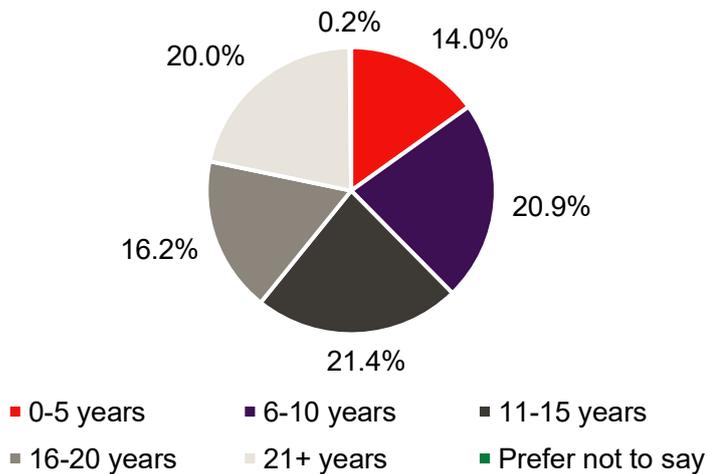


Figure 3. The Breakdown of Participants by Leadership Experience

“

Offensive behaviours can greatly impact the level of work satisfaction I feel. Often we give above and beyond to our roles and these offensive behaviours are extremely demotivating. This affects my mood and behaviour/irritability in my personal life as I have to manage and shelter my emotions and reactions at work.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

”

In terms of school setting, most school leaders worked in primary schools (61%), followed by secondary schools (15.9%), and then combined or other school types (15.7%). Participants were employed across a range of Australian states and territories, with 31% based in New South Wales, 18% from Queensland, 18% from South Australia, 11% from Victoria, and 8% from Western Australia. The Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania together make up an additional 6.3%.

Nearly half of participants worked in government schools (49%), while another 33% were employed in Catholic schools, and 10% were from independent schools. Years of experience as a school leader varied across the sample, with 14% of participants having 0–5 years of experience, 21% with 6–10 years, 21% with 11–15 years, 16% with 16–20 years, and 20% with over 21 years of experience.

The additional 20 participants in the online interviews were all employed in educational settings across Australia. The majority identified as female (75%), while the remaining 25% identified as male. Most participants (90%) were principals, with one participant identifying as an assistant principal and another identifying their role as “other.”

Descriptive Statistics

Among the Ripple Effect survey participants, 93.5% reported experiencing one or more types of offensive behaviour over the last 12 months. Further to that, 69.6% of participants reported experiencing three or more types of offensive behaviour over the last 12 months. A breakdown of offensive behaviours by type (Figure 4) shows the percentage of the participants who reported each type of behaviour. Figure 5 shows the percentage of school leaders who experienced several different types of offensive behaviours.

Ripple Effect Survey Percentage Reporting Types of Offensive Behaviour

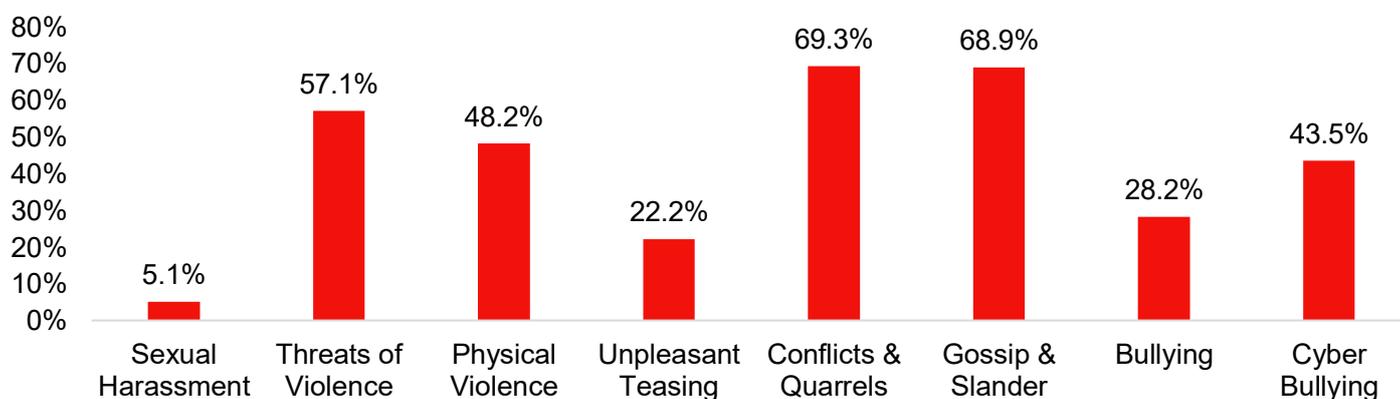


Figure 4. The Percentage of Participants Reporting Each Type of Offensive Behaviour

Participants were also asked to indicate the perpetrators of each offensive behaviour they have experienced. Table 2 below shows the perpetrators of each type of offensive behaviour across all participants in the Ripple Effect survey. Percentages are based on those who experienced that type of offensive behaviour. Participants can nominate more than one source of the offensive behaviour, so percentages will add up to more than 100%. For example, 67.8% of those

participants that reported experiencing threats of violence reported receiving it from students. A staggering 95.1% of those experiencing physical violence say they received it from students, while 90.8% of those experiencing cyber bullying reported receiving it from parents.

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It's the accumulation of lower level offensive behaviours that can impact, other more than the large events.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

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Distribution of School Leaders Exposed to Different Types of Offensive Behaviour

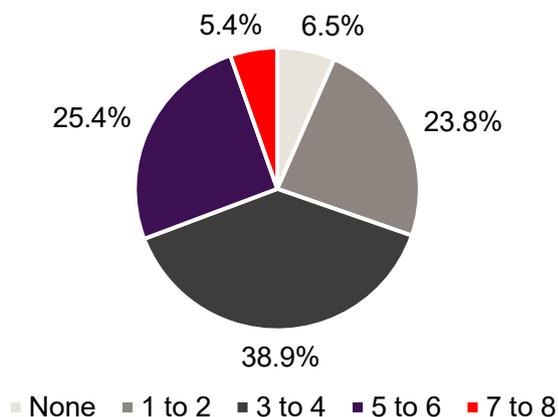


Figure 5. Percentage of Participants Exposed to Different Numbers of Offensive Behaviour

Table 2. The Percentage of Participants Reporting each Possible Source of Offensive Behaviour Among those that Experienced that Behaviour

Offensive Behaviour	Colleagues	Manager	Subordinates	Parents	Students
Sexual Harassment	25.0%	0.0%	7.1%	57.1%	21.4%
Threats of Violence	2.9%	0.6%	3.8%	69.4%	67.8%
Physical Violence	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	15.8%	95.1%
Unpleasant Teasing	27.9%	8.2%	21.3%	53.3%	36.1%
Conflicts & Quarrels	40.2%	10.2%	38.6%	75.6%	30.4%
Gossip & Slander	30.9%	6.1%	36.1%	73.9%	14.5%
Bullying	23.9%	15.5%	25.8%	54.2%	12.3%
Cyber Bullying	5.9%	1.3%	7.9%	90.8%	14.2%

Participants were asked in the online interviews about the offensive behaviours that they have experienced. In a very similar pattern to the results from the Ripple Effect survey, nine out of 20 participants mentioned violence, including violent behaviour from parents and students. Eight out of 20 participants also mentioned aggression and abuse, including from parents. Recurring patterns of behaviour identified in the online interviews are thematically displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes around Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

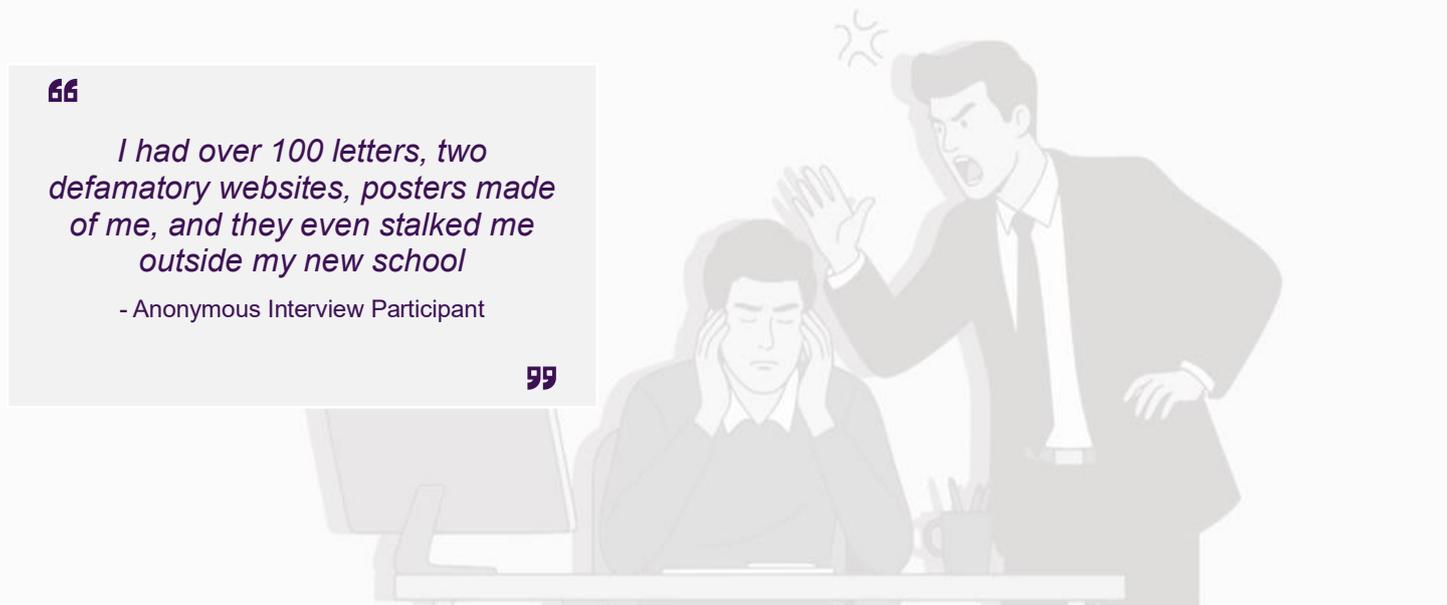
Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Physical Threats & Violence	9	“A parent came with a crowbar planning to hit me. He smashed it against the door and we had to call the police.” (Participant N)
Verbal Threats	8	“Parents would storm into the office screaming abuse at us, swearing and yelling in front of staff and children.” (Participant N)
Cyberbullying	7	“They made posters of me dressed like a Nazi and created websites saying I was having an affair with the minister.” (Participant A)

Note: Participant identifiers (e.g., Participant A, Participant B) are pseudonyms assigned for anonymity.

Table 4 further disaggregates the offensive behaviours reported in the Ripple Effect survey by school type. Different school types show a similar pattern in offensive behaviours compared to participants generally. Primary school leaders have a slightly higher percentage reporting physical violence, while secondary school leaders have a lower percentage reporting physical violence compared to all school leaders in the Ripple Effect survey.

Table 4. Percentage Reporting Each Type of Offensive Behaviour by School Type

	Sexual Harassment	Threats of Violence	Physical Violence	Unpleasant Teasing	Conflicts & Quarrels	Gossip & Slander	Bullying	Cyber Bullying
Primary	5.5%	58.5%	51.9%	22.0%	67.6%	72.8%	27.2%	46.7%
Secondary	4.3%	50.5%	38.7%	23.7%	75.3%	62.4%	24.7%	37.6%
Combined	4.5%	50.0%	31.8%	21.2%	66.7%	60.6%	33.3%	36.4%



“I had over 100 letters, two defamatory websites, posters made of me, and they even stalked me outside my new school”
- Anonymous Interview Participant

“They set up an Instagram page accusing me of being a perpetrator of child abuse and shared it with the community”
- Anonymous Interview Participant

Impact of Offensive Behaviour Events

Ripple Effect survey participants responded to a recognised scale measuring the psychological impact of an event on their life, such as an offensive behaviour. Higher scores in this scale indicate increased symptoms and less favourable outcomes. The mean scores for the Impact of Event Scale's three domains of Intrusion, Hyper-Arousal, and Avoidance for participants in the Ripple Effect survey are shown in Figure 6. Scores are shown for those participants that experienced no offensive behaviours and those that did. Experiencing offensive behaviours increases the mean score for all three domains, indicating increased symptoms due to offensive behaviours.

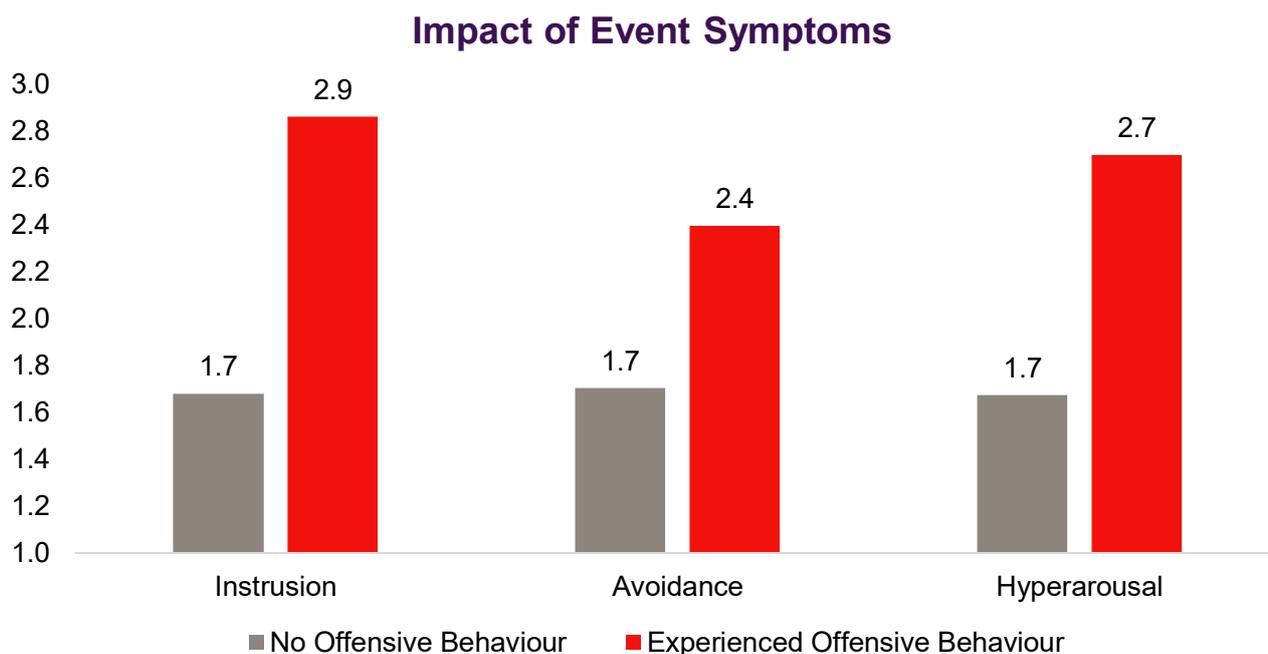


Figure 6. Mean Scores for each of the Domains/Symptoms in the Impact of Event Scale

Interview participants were asked to respond to an open question, “How did this impact you?”, when speaking about their experiences of offensive behaviours. Many participants spoke about the influence of offensive behaviours on their mental health, family/relationships, and their confidence/identity. Table 5 has some of the major themes around this question in the online interviews. Eleven out of 20 interview participants reported that offensive behaviours impacted their mental health, while eight out of 20 reported some form of burnout. When looking at what specific participants reported, every participant in the online interviews reported some negative impact on their physical and emotional wellbeing because of offensive behaviours (Mental Health, Physical Health, Burnout/Exhaustion, or Fear/Hypervigilance).



Offensive behaviours take time away from performing the job well, thinking clearly, and innovating.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

Table 5. Impact of Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Mental Health	11	<i>"I had to take leave because I ended up going on antidepressants... I thought I couldn't breathe properly, had swallowing problems, and it turned out it was stress."</i> (Participant A)
Burnout/Exhaustion	8	<i>"They make me not want to come to school. On some days I'd sit in my car around the corner because I didn't want to go in."</i> (Participant R)
Physical Health	7	<i>"You don't sleep when it's happening. It seriously impacts your sleep and then that culminates in everything else."</i> (Participant K)
Family/Relationships	6	<i>"It had an impact on my marriage... I started to drink too much alcohol, gained weight, and wasn't sleeping at night."</i> (Participant B)
Confidence/Identity	5	<i>"It knocks your confidence around... your authority... staff have seen me like this, do they still see me as a good boss?"</i> (Participant O)
Fear/Hypervigilance	3	<i>"It doesn't matter what room I enter, I always scope the room and make sure there are multiple exits."</i> (Participant S)
Career Impact	3	<i>"It got to a point where my role was not sustainable. I resigned last August."</i> (Participant K)

Presenteeism

Participants were asked a series of questions on how offensive behaviours impacted their ability to focus on and complete work tasks. Presenteeism refers to situations where people continue working despite feeling distressed, unsettled, or undermined by negative experiences in the workplace. In these circumstances, individuals remain physically present, but their productivity, concentration, and overall wellbeing are reduced. The scale used ranges from 6-30, and the mean score for participants in the Ripple Effect survey is 18.3. This reflects a moderate level of Presenteeism across all participants regardless of exposure to offensive behaviours and indicates that it is a relatively widespread issue.



Figure 7 shows the mean scores for Presenteeism depending on how many kinds of offensive behaviours a participant was exposed to. Presenteeism increases as the number of offensive behaviours experienced increases, suggesting a greater negative impact on work outcomes due to offensive behaviours.

Figure 8 shows the difference in Presenteeism depending on whether a participant was exposed to offensive behaviours. Again, exposure to offensive behaviours increases mean Presenteeism slightly.

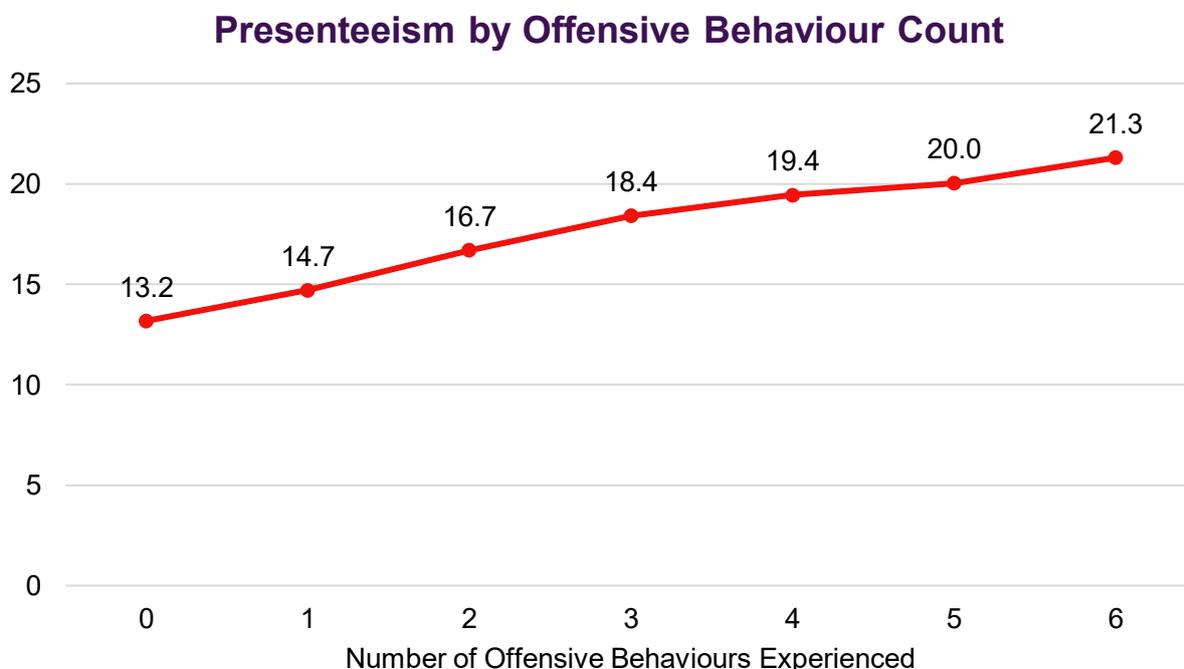


Figure 7. Mean Scores for Presenteeism with Increasing Exposure to Offensive Behaviours

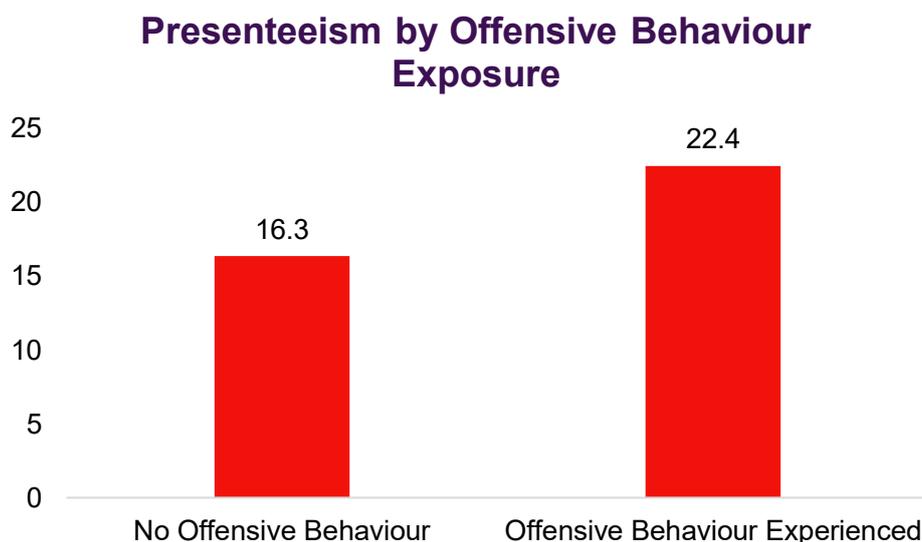


Figure 8. Mean Scores for Presenteeism based on Offensive Behaviour Exposure

Interview participants were asked “Have offensive behaviours ever affected your ability to work?” Table 6 shows the two categories of response to this question, where 15 out of 20 participants reported that offensive behaviours impacted their ability to be present and work.

Table 6. Presenteeism Impact of Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Affected Ability to Work	15	<i>“What one parent does can chew up hours - complaints, mediations, reviews - and it means I don’t get the real work done. It’s draining and stressful.”</i> (Participant C)
Caused Additional Work Only	5	<i>“Mostly I would say no, it hasn’t impacted my ability to work... but aggressive behaviour from students and parents causes a lot of issues to work through.”</i> (Participant N)

Impact on Productivity

Participants were asked to rate to on a scale from 1-10 the extent to which the offensive behaviours they experienced affected their work productivity and daily life productivity. Figure 9 shows the mean rating for work productivity loss depending on whether participants were exposed to offensive behaviours. Experiencing more types of offensive behaviours also increases the reported loss in work productivity, with those experiencing 6 different types rating their productivity loss 6.0 out of 10 on average.

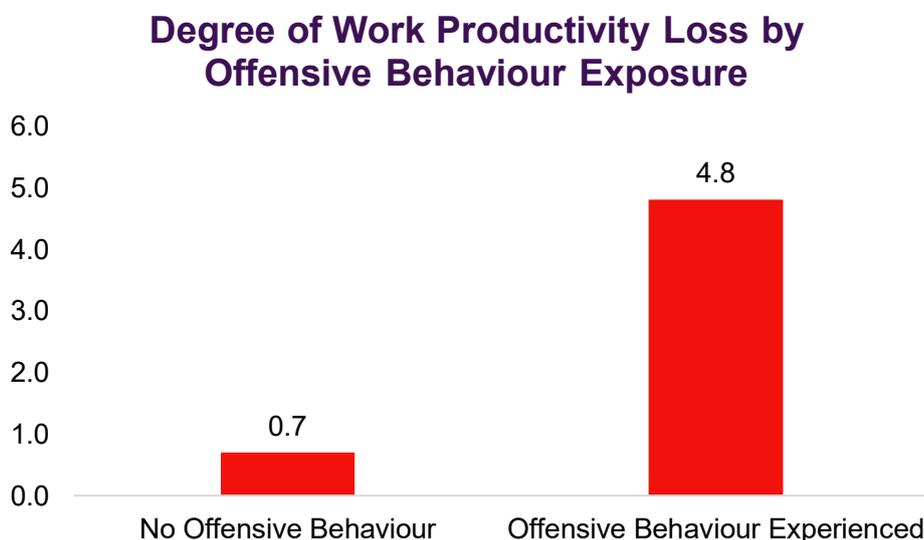


Figure 9. Mean Negative Effect on Work Productivity Against Exposure to Offensive Behaviours

When it comes to the effect on daily life activities, the mean rating for participants that experienced offensive behaviours is 6.0 out of 10. This indicates that participants feel that exposure to offensive behaviours impacts their productivity around daily life activities similarly to at work. Increasing exposure to different kinds of offensive behaviour does seem to increase the impact on work productivity.

Participants were also asked to report on what percentage of their time they believed they spent on dealing with offensive behaviours. Around 28% of participants reported that they spent 30% of their time or more on dealing with offensive behaviours, while around 11% report spending at least 50% of their time. Only 5% indicated they spent 5% of their time or less. The full breakdown of reported time percentages is in Table 7.

Interview participants were asked about how they managed the impact of offensive behaviours on their productivity, for example, by taking time off or continuing to work. Further to the points made around Presenteeism earlier, 9 out of 20 participants reported continuing to work through and despite offensive behaviours around them, as shown in Table 8.

Table 7. The Breakdown of Percentage Time Spent Dealing with Offensive Behaviours Across Participants

Time Lost to Offensive Behaviours	Proportion of Participants
0-5%	4.5%
5-10%	13.8%
10-20%	14.4%
20-30%	9.3%
30-40%	9.4%
40-50%	7.8%
>50%	10.7%

Table 8. Management of Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Continue Working (Presenteeism)	9	<i>“Unless I’m actually sick, no I have to continue work. I don’t think it would be well thought of by my boss if I took time off.” (Participant G)</i>
Time Off / Sick Leave	6	<i>“I’ve had to take time off and ended up on medication to help me sleep.” (Participant K)</i>
Wellbeing & Lifestyle	3	<i>“Yoga, gym, professional supervision. You have to take responsibility for your own wellbeing, no one else will.” (Participant 20)</i>

“

Yes I have reported offensive behaviour. The impact that this behaviour had on my work was that I questioned whether I wanted to continue to do this job. Impacted my family and due to the type of behaviour, it could have impacted my career.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

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Emotional Labour

The Emotional Labour Scale measures the impact of different types of emotional labour (defined in the methods as effort around displaying appropriate emotions) on the participant. In the Ripple Effect survey, two types were measured, Genuine Acting and Surface Acting. Higher scores for Surface Acting indicate an increased amount of emotional labour, while higher scores for Genuine Acting indicate reduced emotional labour. Scores range from 1-7. For participants experiencing offensive behaviours, the mean score for Surface Acting is 4.3, while for Genuine Acting it is 4.0. Figure 10. Shows the mean scores for participants depending on their exposure to offensive behaviours. Exposure to offensive behaviour shows an increase to emotional labour through higher Surface Acting and lower Genuine Acting.

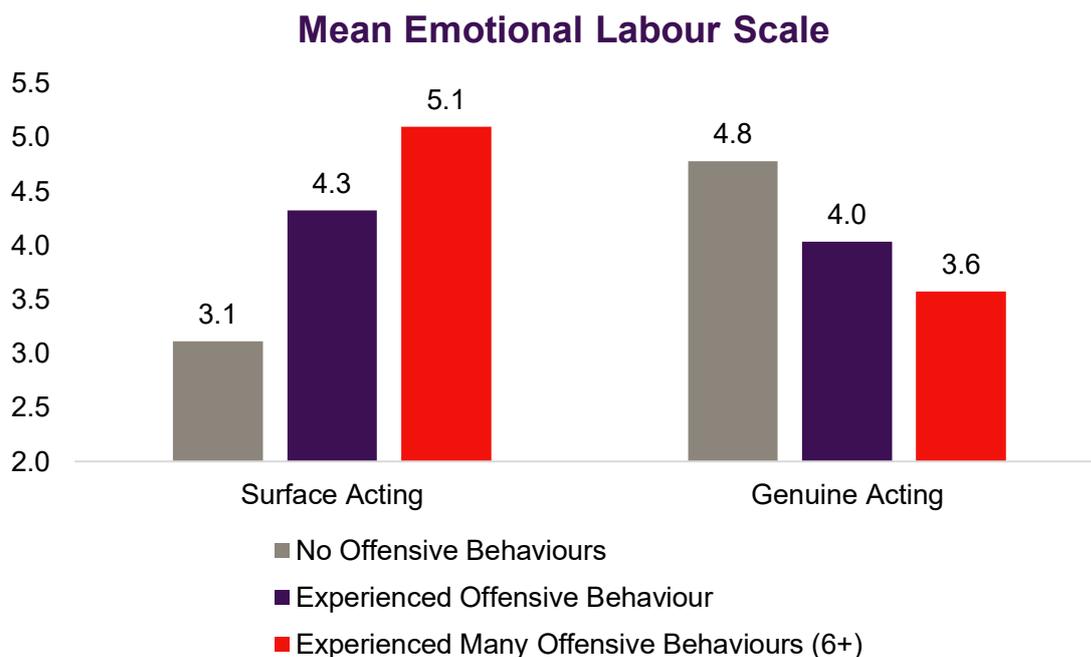


Figure 10. Mean Emotional Labour Scale Scores for Surface and Genuine Acting Against Exposure to Offensive Behaviours

Brief Resilience & Life Satisfaction

Two other measures used in the Ripple Effect survey are the Brief Resilience Scale and the single item Life Satisfaction Scale. Both scales range from 1-5 with higher scores indicating a more favourable result. The mean score for the Brief Resilience Scale was 3.9 for those who did not experience offensive behaviours and 3.6 for those that did. This suggests experiencing offensive behaviours negatively impacts school leaders' ability to bounce back.

The mean score for the Life Satisfaction Scale was 3.6 for those that did not experience offensive behaviours and 3.2 for those that did. This indicates that offensive behaviours have a negative impact on school leaders' sense of life satisfaction.

Qualitative Data and Themes

A total of five open-ended responses were included in the Ripple Effect survey. Responses were coded according to a framework of major themes present across all responses. Each response was assigned a single, main theme. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you need anything to help you deal with any past offensive behaviours?
2. Have you ever reported an offensive behaviour in the past? If so, did that behaviour impact or impair your work?
3. Do you believe there is a breaking point for school leaders around offensive behaviours? If you are currently working, what do you think would cause you to retire or quit?
4. What could Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) do to influence system or policy around offensive behaviours?
5. Anything to add about how offensive behaviours have impacted you?

The full list of themes is presented in Appendix 3. The frequencies of the different themes for each question are shown in Table 9. Only the six major themes are included in Table 9, percentages for Theme 7 (No) and Theme 8 (Other) are not included. Percentages will not add up to 100%.

Table 9. Theme Frequency Percentages Across the Five Open-ended Responses in the Ripple Effect Survey

1. Support for Managing Offensive Behaviours	2. Offensive Behaviour Reporting and Impact	3. Breaking Point for School Leaders	4. APPA Influence on Policy	5. Other Offensive Behaviour Impacts
1. Professional / Systemic Support (24.5%)	1. Prevalence of Reporting and Documentation (18.9%)	1. Violence, Threats, and Safety Concerns (18.0%)	1. Stronger Policies and Legal Protections (22.9%)	1. Mental Health and Personal Wellbeing (31.7%)
2. Mental Health and Counselling Support (14.3%)	2. Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing (15.2%)	2. Challenging and Aggressive Parent Behaviours (10.5%)	2. Support and Resources for School Leaders and School Staff (21.1%)	2. Professional Identity and Career Disillusionment (8.6%)
3. Peer and Collegial Support (13.4%)	3. Workplace Disruption and Professional Impact (17.6%)	3. Lack of Systemic and Leadership Support (27.1%)	3. Parent and Community Education and Accountability (19.0%)	3. Unsustainable Workload and Burnout (5.3%)
4. Legal and Safety Measures (4.3%)	4. Nature and Triggers of Incidents (4.0%)	4. Cumulative Stress, Workload, and Burnout (23.9%)	4. Advocacy and Public Image of Educators (16.4%)	4. Hostile Parent and Community Dynamics (12.8%)
5. Coping Strategies and Personal Resources (3.8%)	5. Institutional and Social Response (10.1%)	5. Erosion of Purpose, Joy, and Professional Respect (9.0%)	5. Wellbeing, Safety, and Recognition of Harm (4.2%)	5. Systemic Failure and Lack of Support (11.9%)
6. Perceived Gaps and Negative Experiences (7.7%)	6. Attitudes Towards Reporting (3.5%)	6. Personal and Family Impact (4.9%)	6. Training and Professional Development (1.8%)	6. Resilience and Calls for Change (9.1%)

For Question 2 concerning the reporting and impact of offensive behaviours, some additional sub-themes were identified. These are noted in Table 10 to the right.

There are several common themes from the open-ended responses. First is the need for systemic support around offensive behaviours, both the presence of it and that many school leaders do not feel adequately supported by the system regarding offensive behaviours. Theme 2 from Questions 1 & 2, and Theme 1 from

Question 5 also indicate a strong importance on the mental health and wellbeing impact of offensive behaviours. A third key set of themes concern the challenges of parent and carer behaviour, and the need to have the ability to hold them accountable for that behaviour.

Table 10. Secondary Themes Noted in Question 2 of the Open-Ended Questions of the Ripple Effect Survey

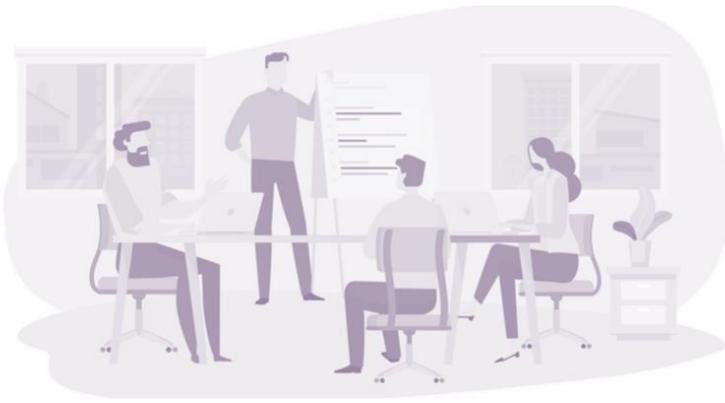
Question 2 Secondary Theme	Percentage of Responses Within Theme	Percentage of all Responses
1A: Positive Reporting Outcome	11.6%	2.2%
5A: Positive Institutional Response	17.4%	1.8%
5B: Negative Institutional Response	82.6%	8.4%

Addressing Offensive Behaviours

Online interview participants were asked, “How do you perceive the way offensive behaviours are addressed?”. Similar to themes in the Ripple Effect survey data, Table 11 indicates that 13 out of 20 interview participants felt that there was a lack of systemic support around offensive behaviours. On the other hand, 6 out of 20 felt support existed but was inconsistent. This is echoed by 27.1% of participants responses in the Ripple Effect survey to Question 3 (Breaking Point for School Leaders) of the open-ended questions falling under Theme 3: Lack of Systemic and Leadership Support, and 11.9% of response to Question 5 (Other Offensive Behaviour Impacts) falling under Theme 5: Systemic Failure and Lack of Support. Many responses in the open-ended questions of the Ripple Effect survey highlight how offensive behaviours seem to be tolerated in ways that other industries would not allow, and that the system rules and policies in place to address them are not sufficient.

Table 11. School Leaders’ Common Perceptions of How Offensive Behaviours Are Addressed in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Lack of System Support / Backing (incl. Silence & Avoidance)	13	<i>“The department don’t do anything to help us. They don’t back us... we really support ourselves.” (Participant R)</i>
Downplayed / Normalised	8	<i>“I think a lot of the offensive behaviours have been normalised or desensitised... the baseline of stress has gone up and this is just where we always are.” (Participant N)</i>
Inconsistent Support (Depends on Leadership/Region)	6	<i>“It depends on the region. In one, I had bodyguards and psychologist support, in another I got nothing and just had to deal with it myself.” (Participant E)</i>
Policies Seen as Ineffective / Burdensome	5	<i>“We have a charter, but it’s not worth the paper it’s written on because there are no consequences.” (Participant R)</i>



Looking at what school leaders believe helped respond to and deal with offensive behaviours (Table 12), half of interview participants (10) felt they had received no formal training and had to learn on the job. Only 3 out of 20 reported receiving some form of targeted training around offensive behaviours, and this targeted training was not always organised by the system supports. Question 1 of the open-ended

questions in the Ripple Effect survey looks at support participants felt they needed to deal with offensive behaviours. While some responses did claim there was a lack of systemic support, some responses did indicate that system support helped. This is echoed by the 1.8% of respondents to Question 2 (Offensive Behaviour Reporting and Impact) that fell under Theme 5A indicating a positive response to reporting as a key theme. A much greater proportion of school leaders, with 17.2% of respondents to Question 1 falling under Themes 3 or 5 indicating more informal support or personal resources.

Table 12. Key Experiences that Helped School Leaders Respond to Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
No Formal Training / On the Job Learning	10	<i>"No, you don't get experience with things like that... no one can prepare you for that, and it depends on your own resilience."</i> (Participant A)
Personal Life Experience & Resilience	9	<i>"Knowing yourself, your strengths and blind spots, being humble, and self-regulating so you respond rather than react."</i> (Participant D)
Mentorship & Collegial Support	5	<i>"I think it's having good mentors... incredible people I learned a lot from and could debrief with. I still do."</i> (Participant H)
Targeted Training or System Support	3	<i>"We did de-escalation training and worked with trauma-based psychologists... but mostly we had to organise it ourselves."</i> (Participant J)

Interview participants were also asked how they perceive the system has adapted to deal with offensive behaviours in their time since becoming a school leader (Table 13). Many participants indicated that there had been some level of change, such as new policies (5 out of 20), wellbeing supports (3 out of 20), or local school adaptations (6 out of 20). However, the perception is that

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Yes and I was well supported by my employer so once I was able to lean into their advice and support it reduced my workload.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

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higher level responses were not as impactful as local responses, with 5 out of 20 interview participants believing that there has been little to no system changes to help school leaders deal with offensive behaviours. Even those participants that felt some changes had been made, they felt the system level changes were ineffective or weakly enforced. Two of the themes present in Question 4 (APPA Influence on Policy) of the open-ended responses in the Ripple Effect survey (Theme 1 and 3) also suggest that more needs to be done to protect school leaders and educators from offensive behaviours, and that changes that have been made do not go far enough. A total of 41.9% of responses fell under these two themes.

Table 13. Common Perceptions of System Adaptations to Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Local School-Level Adaptations	6	<i>“We specifically hired a wellbeing lead... he can handle a lot of the really pointy stuff. That’s been a gift.”</i> (Participant D)
Little or No System Adaptation	5	<i>“No, there is absolutely no system response in regards to principals... nothing at all in place or planned.”</i> (Participant G)
Policies Introduced but Weakly Enforced	5	<i>“We’ve got lovely codes of conduct around parent behaviour... but there doesn’t seem to be much thought given to how they’re enforced.”</i> (Participant K)
Partial Adaptation / Trying but Ineffective	4	<i>“They brought in a ‘team around the school’ to provide expertise, but it’s been an absolute failure... a travesty the way the system responded.”</i> (Participant T)

Lastly, interview participants were asked what support measures they sought out or that exist to manage offensive behaviours (Table 14). This is different to what is presented in Table 12, as Table 12 looks at what school leaders believe helped to manage offensive behaviours, while this refers to what supports exist, regardless of whether they would be considered helpful. Most interview participants report some kind of support existing, although 7 out of 20 believe that support at the system level is inadequate and/or non-existent. Conversely, 5 out of 20 felt that system support provided was effective if at times inconsistent. School leaders rely on collegial (10 out of 20) and personal (8 out of 20) support networks to help them manage offensive behaviours.

“

Continual high quality professional development contributes to understanding, as well as a supportive Principal who addressed students and parents in relation to proposed disciplinary action. I also have a supportive family and network of friends.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

”

Table 14. Main Supports for Managing Offensive Behaviours Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Theme	Count	Direct Quote
Collegial & Principal Networks (incl. reflective supervision, coaching, WhatsApp groups, conferences)	10	<i>“Your support is your own people, because no one gets it but them... I was on the phone to one today.” (Participant A)</i> <i>“Having a principal friend to call on the drive home and debrief is a gift.” (Participant D)</i>
Employee Assistance / Counselling (EAP, psychology, external counselling)	9	<i>“It would just be the employee assistance program. If you're upset, you can ring up and get six free counselling sessions.” (Participant A)</i>
Family & Personal Support	8	<i>“I have a husband who is also a principal, so he's very, very supportive.” (Participant E)</i>
Supervisors / Directors	7	<i>“My supervisor was incredibly supportive once she got on board and did that deep dive into it.” (Participant I)</i>
No / Inadequate System-Level Support	7	<i>“We needed support... and it was radio silence. So we outsourced training and figured it out ourselves.” (Participant J)</i>
Training & Professional Learning (de-escalation, trauma, wellbeing programs)	6	<i>“We did de-escalation training, PDA, trauma-based psychology input, anything that gave us more insight.” (Participant J)</i>

Results from Table 14, emerging themes from the other tables and results from the open-ended responses in the Ripple Effect survey suggest that many school leaders do not feel adequately supported or prepared by the system to deal with offensive behaviours. School leaders feel they must support themselves, both in managing the behaviours and in implementing procedures to prevent them from occurring. They feel they must rely on informal support networks, and there is a significant wellbeing impact from these behaviours.

Inferential Statistics

Several statistical tests including *t*-tests, measurements of Cohen’s *d* and correlations were conducted as part of the analysis. These are laid out in more complete detail in the Appendix. However, some of the analyses are highlighted here. The internal consistency of the recognised scales used in the Ripple Effect survey is presented in Table A4 within Appendix 2.

Impact of General Exposure to Offensive Behaviours

Several *t*-tests were run to compare people who had experienced offensive behaviours with those who hadn’t. Table 15 shows a summary of these results. *P*-values smaller than 0.05 generally indicate a statistically significant difference between the two means. In general, school leaders who were exposed to offensive behaviours scored less favourably on most productivity and wellbeing measures. This means exposure to offensive behaviours had a distinct negative impact. However, there was no significant difference between the two groups when it came to the Hyper-Arousal and Avoidance parts of the Impact of Event Scale. The last column in Table 15 shows the nature of the impact on those exposed to offensive behaviours.

Exposure to offensive behaviours in the workplace is associated with reduced task effectiveness and impaired job performance among school leaders. It also increases emotional regulation demands, diminishes resilience, and is linked to elevated psychological distress.

Table 15. T-test Results for Psychosocial Measures with Participants Separated by Offensive Behaviour Exposure

Measure	No Exposure	Any Exposure	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Outcome of Exposure
Presenteeism	16.3	22.4	-9.5	< .001	↑ Impaired functioning at work
Work Productivity (7-day)	0.7	4.8	-14.0	< .001	↑ Interference with work
PTSD Intrusion Symptoms	1.7	2.9	-6.1	< .001	↑ Mental health strain
Brief Resilience	3.9	3.6	2.2	0.04	↓ Coping capacity
Surface Acting	3.1	4.3	-6.1	< .001	↑ Emotional masking
Genuine Acting	4.8	4.0	3.8	< .001	↓ Authentic emotional expression

Correlation of Psychosocial Measures and Offensive Behaviours

As well as using *t*-tests, how different types of offensive behaviours relate to various aspects of productivity, wellbeing, and work life were examined by running correlation tests. These range between -1 and 1 with -1 indicating a very strong negative correlation and 1 indicating a very strong positive correlation. This analysis facilitated an examination of how exposure to offensive behaviours relates to participants’ psychosocial outcomes. Full statistical results are provided in Table A5 of Appendix 2, but Figure 11 gives a snapshot of the main findings in terms of the direction and strength of the correlations. Other offensive behaviours not included in the graph showed similar patterns to the four shown in Figure 11.

Results indicate that offensive behaviours like bullying, gossip, and threats are closely linked to problems such as feeling more mentally invaded (Intrusion), showing up to work but not really being engaged (Presenteeism), faking emotions (Surface Acting), and losing work productivity. Among these, gossip and slander stood out, having some of the strongest connections with negative productivity and wellbeing outcomes. Bullying and threats also had clear ties to issues like Presenteeism and pretending to feel emotions. Overall, this means that experiencing offensive behaviours at school can seriously impact how well people feel and perform at work.

Bullying and gossip (including slander) are closely linked to lower resilience, meaning people find it harder to bounce back from tough situations. Other positive measures, like being satisfied with life and showing genuine emotions at work, also drop when people are exposed to offensive behaviours. The details can change depending on the type of offensive behaviour, but the overall message is clear: dealing with offensive behaviours in schools makes it harder for staff to feel good and do their jobs well.

Correlations of Psychosocial Measures Against Offensive Behaviours

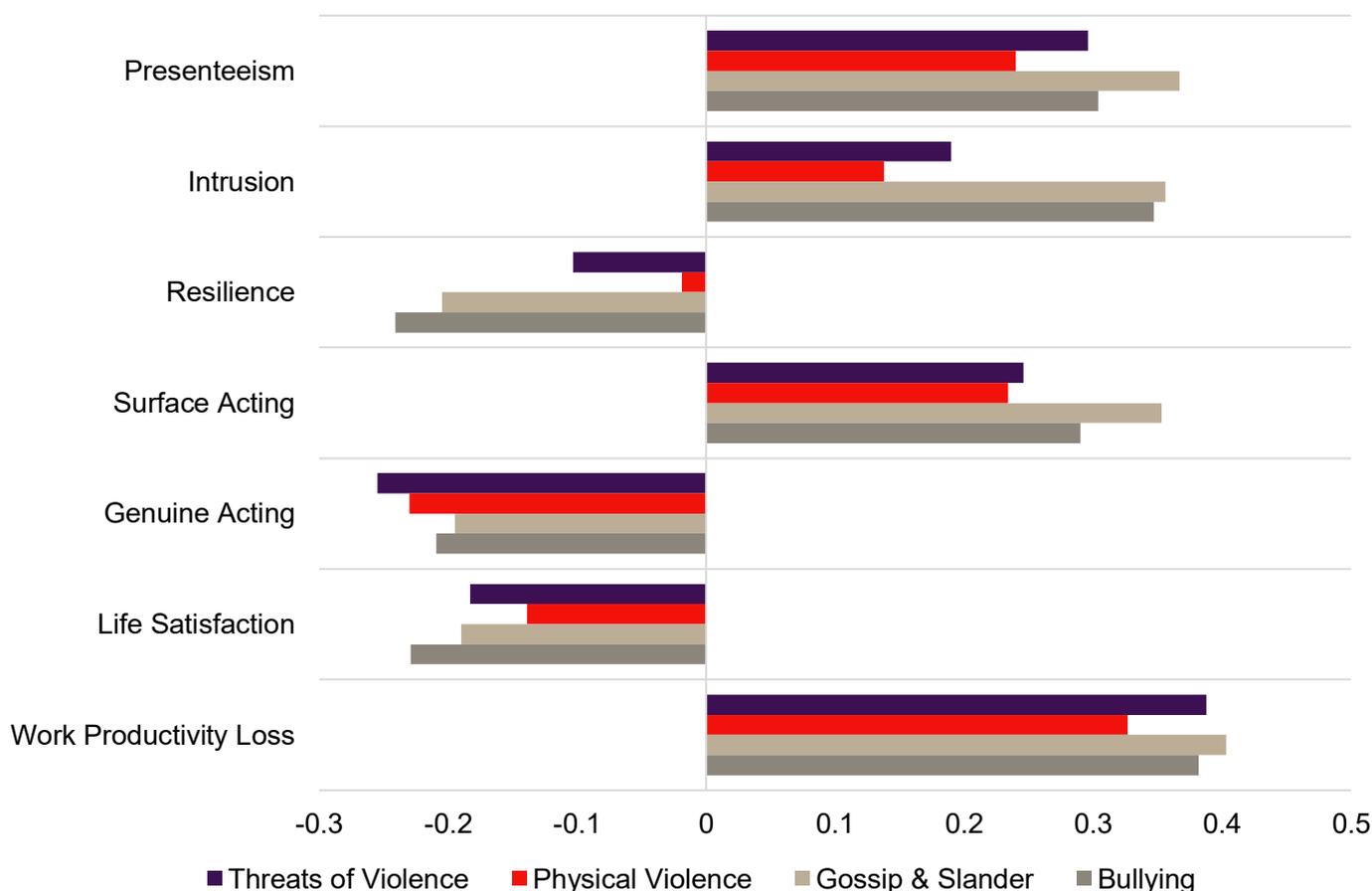


Figure 11. Correlation Coefficients for Main Psychosocial Measures for Certain Offensive Behaviour Types and Across All Participants.

Increased Exposure to Offensive Behaviours and Psychosocial Outcomes

A final series of tests conducted grouping participants into exposure levels based on number of offensive behaviours, as well as tests to confirm the extent of the difference. The four levels of exposure to offensive behaviours were 'none' (0), 'low' (1-2), 'moderate' (3-4), and 'high' (5+). Figure 12 shows how the mean score for six of the psychosocial measures differed depending on the exposure group participants belonged to. The tests on exposure groups align with findings in other areas; higher or more frequent exposure is associated with more adverse outcomes for school leaders.

Presenteeism shows a clear and significant increase based on exposure to offensive behaviours. All group comparisons were significant, indicating that each level of exposure has an additive negative impact. Increased exposure erodes school leader's capacity to fully engage with their work, even when present. Similarly, work productivity loss increases sharply between exposure levels, especially for those experiencing at least three offensive behaviours.

Symptoms of Intrusion also increased significantly depending on level of exposure, indicating that even moderate levels of offensive behaviours are associated with psychologically distressing symptoms. Other psychosocial measures presented in Figure 12 do not show significance for every group comparison, but all show a significant difference between the lowest and highest levels of exposure.

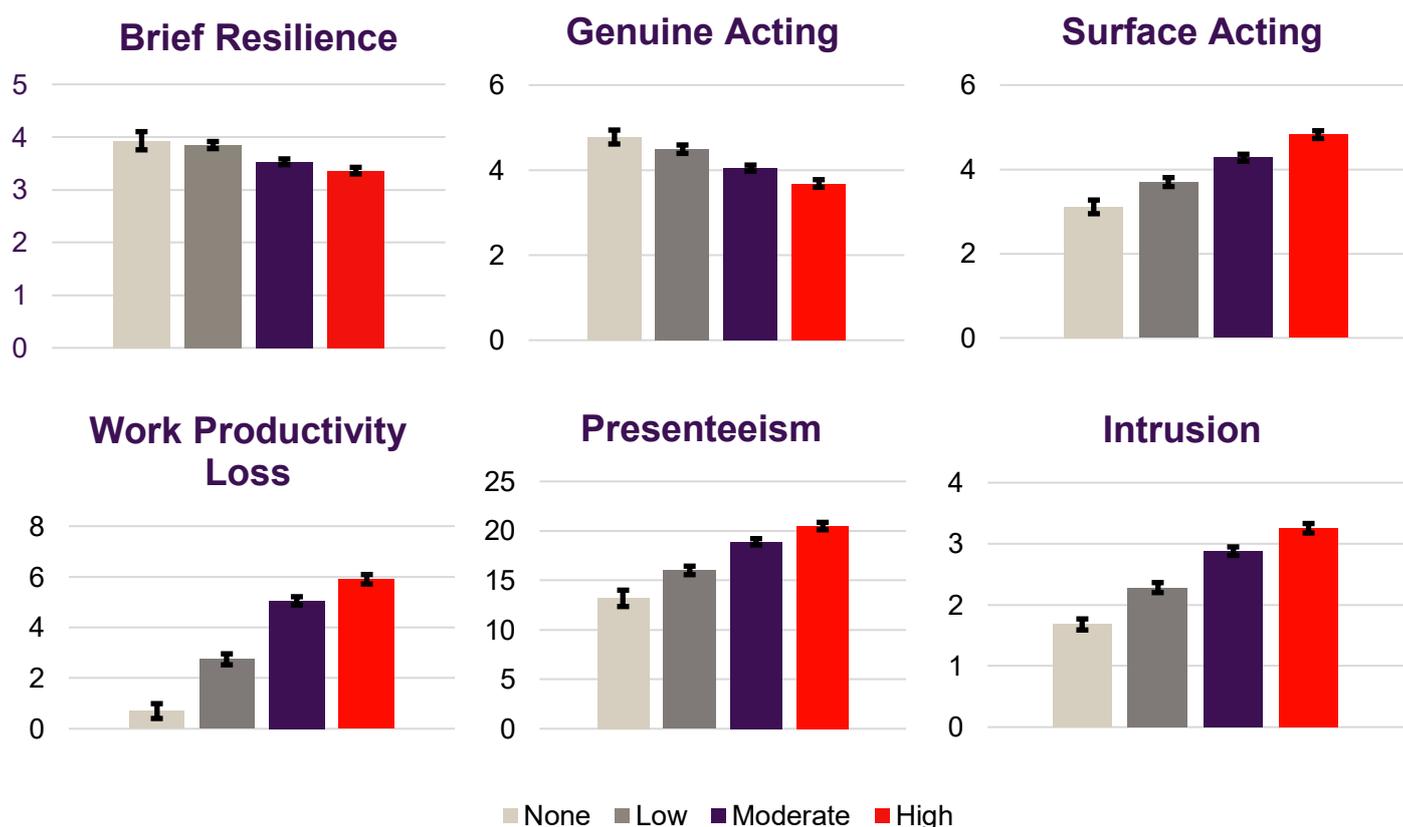


Figure 12. Mean Scores for Psychosocial Measures Based on Exposure Group for Offensive Behaviours

Note: Bars showing standard error are included

In the interviews, the majority of school leaders (15 out of 20) reported a clear increase in the frequency and intensity of offensive behaviours in schools, attributing this rise to growing parent defensiveness and blame-shifting, the breakdown of family structures, diminished resilience, and a cultural shift in which poor behaviour is increasingly tolerated or modelled at home. They also described an escalation in aggression and violence from both students and parents, alongside greater legalism and complaints (such as threats, recordings, and the use of social media as a weapon against staff). Broader societal pressures, including trauma, poverty, and the mismatch between traditional schooling and contemporary student needs, were also identified as contributing factors. In contrast, a minority (3 out of 20) did not perceive a substantive increase in offensive behaviours. Instead, they suggested that these incidents may appear more common because behaviours that were once tolerated are now less readily accepted, and because the cumulative nature of repeated exposure can make individual incidents feel more impactful over time. Overall, most school leaders viewed offensive behaviours as worsening in both prevalence and intensity, while a smaller group attributed the apparent rise to shifting perceptions rather than actual behavioural change.



Primary School Leader Specific Results

Primary school leaders make up a significant proportion of school leaders that participated in the Ripple Effect survey (61%). Within primary school leaders, 30% in the Ripple Effect survey identify as male, while 70% identify as female. A total of 64% of primary school leaders in the Ripple Effect survey were from government schools, 28% were from Catholic schools, and 8% were from independent schools.

When looking at results for primary school leaders specifically, some differences compared to all participants in the Ripple Effect survey are visible. For the percentage reporting offensive behaviours split by school type in Table 4, it can be seen that primary school leaders face more violent offensive behaviours than secondary school leaders and slightly more than school leaders generally. Likewise, primary school leaders have a higher mean score for Presenteeism (18.8) compared to secondary school leaders (17.0) and slightly higher than school leaders generally (18.3).

For other measures such as emotional labour, primary school leaders have slightly less favourable results for Surface Acting (4.4) and similar results for Genuine Acting (4.0) compared to all participants that experienced offensive behaviours. Almost all other scales have primary school leaders scoring similarly to school leaders generally.

From the qualitative data in the Ripple Effect survey, primary school leaders show similar percentages of the various themes in the open-ended responses. A slightly higher percentage of responses to Question 4 (APPA Influence on Policy) fell under Theme 1 (Stronger Policies & Legal Protections) at 27.5% compared to 22.9% of all school leaders. Similarly, a slightly higher percentage of primary school leaders' responses to Question 5 (Other Offensive Behaviour Impacts) fell under Theme 1 (Mental Health and Personal Wellbeing) at 37.8% compared to 31.7%.

Primary Principals Association Support

In the online interviews, participants were asked about their engagement with the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), the ways in which they utilised its resources, and their suggestions for how principal organisations could better support school leaders in managing offensive behaviours. Tables 16 and 17 examine how interview participants responded to these questions. From Table 16, 9 out of 20 participants said they actively used the associations as a support network, while many participants reported receiving support from APPA such as Formal Support/Advocacy (4 out of 20) or Collegiality and Professional learning (10 out of 20), based on Table 17.

Participants' main suggestion for APPA going forward was to advocate for and provide a greater amount of professional learning and development around offensive behaviours (6 out of 20). Other suggestions included support around wellbeing/safety, as well as community education programs.

Table 16. Participants Utilisation of APPA Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Response	Count	Direct Quote
Yes – Actively Used Associations	9	<i>“Back when I had to go to court, I took the PPA president with me... they are the best, they are so good.”</i> (Participant A)
Minimal Use or no Use (information, PD only)	7	<i>“I’ve never actually used them as a support network. Just accessed their professional development material.”</i> (Participant J)
Other Bodies Instead (Union, Legal, Alternative Groups)	3	<i>“The Queensland Teachers Union... I did contact them and their lawyers.”</i> (Participant F)

Table 17. Support Provided by APPA Reported by School Leaders in the Online Interviews

Use of Support	Count	Direct Quote
Networking, Collegiality & Professional Learning	10	<i>“I go to the conferences. I learn so much from everybody there. I’ve built friendships... it’s been a great source of information and support.”</i> (Participant C)
Formal Support / Advocacy (court, welfare officers, direct help)	4	<i>“When I was on leave, they had a list of people who rang and checked in on me... without them I wouldn’t have had a voice.”</i> (Participant B)
Preferred State Associations over National (APPA)	4	<i>“I wouldn’t go to the Australian one... I just use the NSW one, they’re phenomenal.”</i> (Participant A)

Costs of Offensive Behaviours: Results from the Annual School Leader Health and Wellbeing Survey

Questions from the Presenteeism scale and questions relating to productivity loss were included in the Annual survey. Results from the Annual survey in terms of Presenteeism and productivity loss are displayed in Table 18. Overall trends in the Annual survey align with those identified in the Ripple Effect survey. While Presenteeism scores in the Annual survey were broadly comparable, they were slightly more favourable than those reported in the Ripple Effect survey when examined by exposure to offensive behaviours. They also show similar productivity loss due to dealing with offensive behaviours. This strengthens the reliability of the findings in the Ripple Effect survey.

Table 18. Annual Survey Mean Scores for Presenteeism & Work Productivity for Different Numbers of Offensive Behaviours

Number of Offensive Behaviours	Presenteeism	Work Productivity Loss
1+	16.8	3.7
1	13.8	1.8
6	19.8	5.4

The analyses also included correlation tests for the different offensive behaviours against productivity and wellbeing scales used in the Annual survey. All offensive behaviours are significantly correlated with Presenteeism, Resilience and Work Productivity in the Annual survey in the same way as in the Ripple Effect survey. Presenteeism is strongly positively correlated with increasing exposure to different types of offensive behaviour as well. This further reinforces the results from the Ripple Effect survey. Significant correlations with measures such as Burnout, Stress, and Depressive Symptoms were observed, with increased exposure leading to increased burnout. Similarly, job outcome measures such as Job Satisfaction showed reduced satisfaction with increased exposure to offensive behaviours.

Annual Income and the Cost of Offensive Behaviours

An additional analysis from the Annual survey results estimated the cost of dealing with offensive behaviours, both in terms of individual income and the education sector. Participants in the Annual survey reported their yearly income band from <\$50,000 per annum to >\$210,000 per annum. This was used alongside both the number of hours per week and the percentage of their time they reportedly spend dealing with offensive behaviours. The time percentage was used primarily and the reported hours per week used for confirmation. Multiple methods were independently tested by members of the research team who then collaborated to choose the most appropriate method.

These variables can be used together to generate an estimate of average daily cost and average annual cost based on reported time percentage. Figure 13 shows daily costs as an average across participants breaking them down by the number of offensive behaviours they have experienced. A more detailed explanation of the calculations is detailed in Appendix 4.

For school leaders that experienced offensive behaviours, dealing with them costs on average \$106.5 a day based on reported time percentage. School leaders that experienced more offensive behaviours also carry a greater cost for dealing with offensive behaviours, rising to \$221.6 a day for those that experienced nearly every kind of offensive behaviour. This represents a substantial daily cost alongside the loss in productivity and in accomplishing normal work tasks.

Frequency of a given offensive behaviour also influences the estimated cost. Participants within the Annual survey can report how often they believe they have experienced each offensive behaviour from 'a few times' to 'daily'. Many offensive behaviours have a substantially increased cost when at high frequencies, especially if the offensive behaviour is experienced daily. For example, when looking at Threats of Violence, the estimated daily cost based on time percentage

is \$109.1 for those that experienced threats only a few times but is \$308.1 for those that experienced threats daily. Figure 14 has the percentage based daily cost estimate for those that experienced different frequencies of Threats of Violence, Physical Violence, Bullying, and Gossip & Slander. Note that those that did not experience a particular offensive behaviour may have experienced others.

In terms of annual cost to school leaders, on average it costs \$24,495.1 a year for a school leader experiencing offensive behaviours to deal with them based on reported time percentage. This also increases depending on the number of offensive behaviours experienced, with a cost of \$50,976.9 annually for those experiencing nearly every offensive behaviour. If the first average is extrapolated to cover the 9653 schools registered in Australia in 2024^[57] and the percentage of currently employed school leaders that reported offensive behaviours is taken into account (87.2%), it represents an average cost of approximately **\$206,229,965** a year to the education sector for school leaders to respond to and manage offensive behaviours that occur around them and that they experience. Figure 15 summarises the steps taken to reach this estimate. A more detailed breakdown of cost estimates by state/territory is in Appendix 5. The national estimate is very conservative as any given school is likely to have more than one school leader. Despite this, it also represents a very significant cost to the Australian education sector.

Estimated Individual Cost to Manage Differing Numbers of Offensive Behaviours for School Leaders

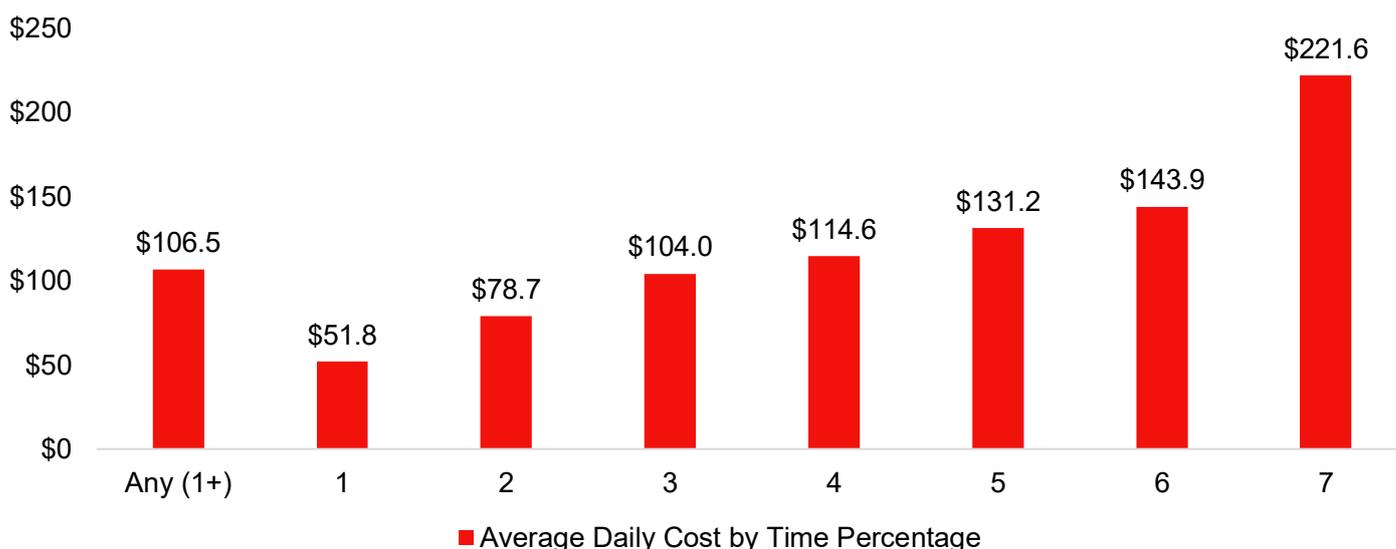


Figure 13. Estimated Average Daily Individual Cost in Terms of Income for School Leaders to Manage and Respond to Differing Numbers of Offensive Behaviours.

Estimated Average Daily Cost by Offensive Behaviour Frequency

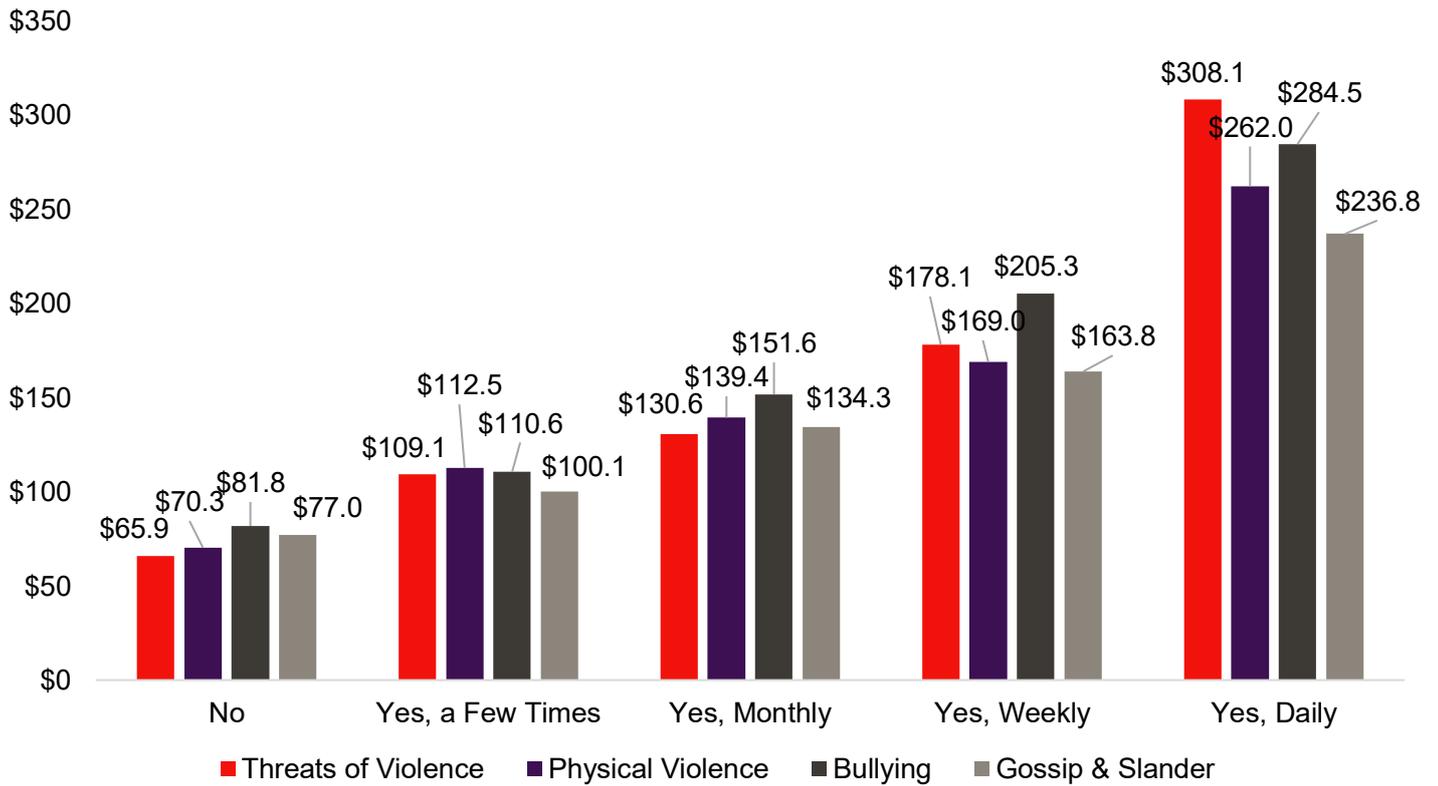


Figure 14. Estimated Average Daily Individual Cost in Terms of Income for School Leaders to Manage and Respond to Differing Frequencies of Offensive Behaviours

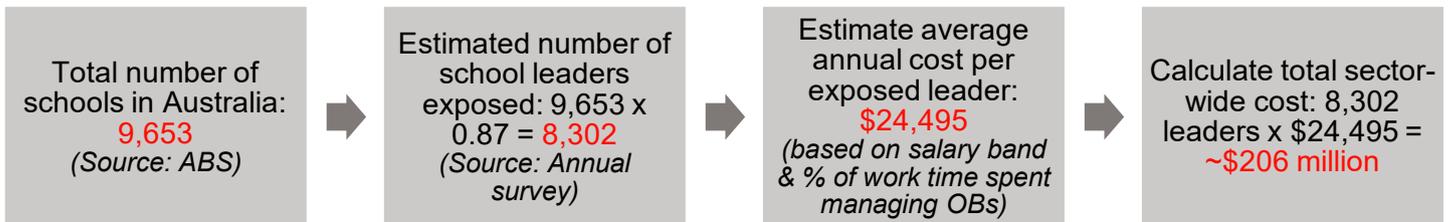


Figure 15. Summary of Steps Taken to Reach Estimate of Annual Education Sector Cost.

It is worth noting as well that there are additional impacts besides the costs mentioned here. The costs are derived from the proportion of time spent dealing with and managing offensive behaviours. This proportion of time also represents lost hours that could not be spent undertaking other tasks that are part of school leadership. This could include instructional leadership, staff management, or family and community engagement. Thus, there may be hidden or **ripple effect costs** beyond the daily income costs estimated here.

Key Recommendations

The findings from this report clearly demonstrate that offensive behaviours toward school leaders are not isolated incidents but systemic challenges with significant personal, professional, and economic consequences. The evidence reveals a pattern of increasing aggression and hostility directed at school leaders from multiple sources, particularly parents, and highlights a lack of consistent, effective system-level responses.

These recommendations translate the report's findings into a targeted, multi-level action plan designed to improve the safety, wellbeing, and productivity of Australian school leaders. They combine immediate system interventions (e.g., frameworks, roles, and legal protections) with long-term cultural and preventative strategies (e.g., public campaigns, training, and monitoring). Collectively, these actions form a blueprint for fostering a safer, more respectful, and more sustainable educational leadership environment.

The recommendations below are structured to guide policy, practice, and investment at both national and state levels, ensuring coordinated responses that protect the wellbeing of school leaders while strengthening the culture of respect within Australian education systems.

Recommendation 1: Establish a National Offensive Behaviours Response Framework

Currently, responses to offensive behaviours toward school leaders vary widely between states, sectors, and even individual schools. This inconsistency leaves leaders uncertain about their rights, limits accountability, and often results in underreporting. A nationally consistent framework would establish clear prevention, reporting, and post-incident procedures, ensuring every leader receives equal protection and support, regardless of jurisdiction. It would also provide a common language for Departments of Education, professional associations, and policymakers to address these behaviours systematically rather than reactively.

Actions:

- Co-develop frameworks with the Australian Teaching and Learning Commission (ATLC), Departments of Education, and principal associations.
- Standardise incident reporting procedures, including clear escalation timelines and accountability points.
- Implement confidential, accessible reporting tools (e.g., digital reporting portals or apps).
- Mandate post-incident debriefing and follow-up support for affected leaders and staff.
- Require annual compliance audits within each jurisdiction to ensure consistent adoption and enforcement.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect Survey):

- **93.5%** of school leaders experienced at least one offensive behaviour in the past 12 months; **69.6%** experienced three or more.
- **13 of 20 leaders** reported departmental inaction or inconsistent support.

- Leaders described responses as “*normalised*” and “*downplayed*”, reflecting systemic fragmentation and lack of accountability.

Recommendation 2: Implement a Preventative Psychological Support Program for School Leaders

Repeated exposure to aggression and hostility places school leaders at heightened risk of psychological distress, burnout, and long-term health issues. Current wellbeing supports are typically reactive and limited in scope. A national preventative wellbeing program for school leaders would integrate early intervention, ongoing monitoring, and tailored recovery supports, helping leaders maintain resilience and sustain their effectiveness over time. This approach reframes wellbeing from an individual responsibility to a structural safeguard built into the education system.

Actions:

- Provide annual psychological wellbeing check-ins through accredited practitioners.
- Fund trauma-informed counselling services with priority access for principals and deputy principals.
- Expand the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to include unlimited confidential sessions for those exposed to offensive behaviours.
- Offer department-funded recovery leave for leaders experiencing acute distress following incidents.
- Embed wellbeing performance indicators in departmental policy reviews.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect Survey):

- Exposure to offensive behaviours correlated with increased **Intrusion, Hyper-Arousal, and Avoidance symptoms**.
- **Resilience scores** were significantly lower among exposed participants (3.55 vs 3.93).
- **31.7%** of qualitative responses focused on mental health and wellbeing impacts.
- Leaders reported physical and emotional strain: “*It seriously impacts your sleep and everything else*” (From the online interviews).

Recommendation 3: Institutionalise Professional Supervision and Reflective Practice for School Leaders

School leaders often manage emotionally charged situations without access to structured professional reflection or supervision. Over time, this contributes to fatigue, reduced decision-making quality, and a sense of professional isolation. Embedding professional supervision and reflective practice creates a systematic avenue for leaders to process complex experiences, strengthen coping mechanisms, and enhance professional growth. Such programs are well-established in other human service fields (e.g., health and social work) and have demonstrated strong benefits for wellbeing and retention.

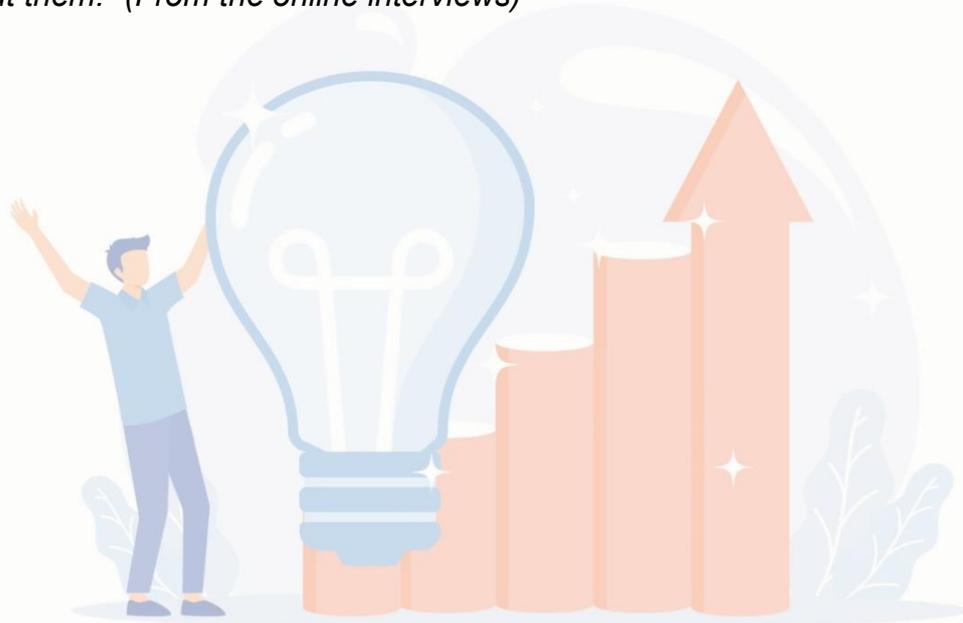
Actions:

- Require all principals and deputies to participate in monthly reflective supervision with trained facilitators.

- Fund regional supervision hubs coordinated through principal associations.
- Integrate reflective practice modules into leadership development and principal preparation programs.
- Encourage peer consultation circles and debriefing sessions for leaders following critical incidents.
- Incorporate supervision participation into leadership accreditation frameworks.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect Survey):

- **Presenteeism** was markedly higher among leaders exposed to offensive behaviours compared with those not exposed (22.4 vs 16.3).
- **13.4%** of participants relied mostly on informal peer networks for support.
- **10 of 20 leaders** reported *no formal training* in managing offensive behaviours.
- Participants described self-reliance: *“Your support is your own people, because no one gets it but them.”* (From the online interviews)



Recommendation 4: Create Dedicated Offensive Behaviour Response and Wellbeing Roles in Schools

Managing offensive behaviours has become a substantial administrative and emotional burden for school leaders, diverting their attention from instructional leadership. Designating specialised Wellbeing and Safety Coordinators within schools would relieve this pressure, ensuring that case management, documentation, and communication are handled professionally and consistently. This investment would yield productivity gains while strengthening each school’s capacity to manage incidents and care for its staff.

Actions:

- Allocate specific funding for this role through federal–state wellbeing grants.
- Train coordinators in conflict de-escalation, trauma-informed practice, and incident management.

- Assign responsibility for incident documentation, communication with parents, and coordination with external services.
- Integrate the role into existing school wellbeing and safety teams for alignment with staff mental health initiatives.
- Monitor effectiveness through annual school climate audits and productivity metrics.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect and Annual Surveys):

- **28% of leaders** reported spending **30% or more of their time** managing offensive behaviours; **4.5%** spent less than 5% of their time on such issues (from the Ripple Effect survey).
- Estimated **annual cost per leader: \$24,495**, rising to **\$50,977** for those facing multiple behaviours (from the Annual survey).
- National productivity loss estimated at **\$206 million annually** (from the Annual survey).

Recommendation 5: Strengthen Legal Protections and Enforcement for School Leaders

Despite facing behaviours equivalent to workplace harassment or violence in other industries, school leaders often lack the same legal recourse and protection. Introducing explicit occupational offence provisions and ensuring consistent legal support would close this gap, signalling a zero-tolerance stance toward offensive behaviours in schools. Stronger legal frameworks would also deter repeat offenders and rebuild public confidence in education as a safe and respected profession.

Actions:

- Collaborate with state attorneys-general and education ministers to amend occupational health and safety laws.
- Establish a national legal advocacy service accessible to school leaders experiencing abuse or defamation.
- Implement automatic school access bans for individuals engaging in verbal or physical aggression.
- Ensure all Departments of Education provide legal indemnity coverage for school leaders facing external complaints or online harassment.
- Publicly report annual data on legal actions and sanctions to promote transparency and deterrence.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect Survey and Online Interviews):

- **75.6%** of leaders that reported conflict cited parents as a source.
- **73.9%** of those that experienced gossip or slander cited parents as a source, while this is **90.8%** of those that experienced cyberbullying.
- Interview examples include stalking, defamation, and physical attacks (“*A parent came with a crowbar planning to hit me.*”).

- Over half of participants reported *no departmental follow-up* or protection after serious incidents.

Recommendation 6: Launch a National “Respect for Education” Public Health Campaign

Aggression toward educators reflects not only individual behaviours but also shifting community norms. A national Respect for Education campaign would address these attitudes directly, framing respect for educators as a shared social responsibility. By combining public messaging with school-based education and parent engagement, this campaign could help restore trust and partnership between schools and communities.

Actions:

- Develop the campaign with Departments of Education, principal associations, and parent organisations.
- Use TV, social media, and print campaigns to convey the message: *“No Excuse for Abuse - Respect Our Schools.”*
- Display Respect Charters at school entrances, signed by parents and staff.
- Provide communication toolkits and posters for schools to reinforce the campaign’s values.
- Deliver mandatory de-escalation and communication training for staff.
- Introduce community workshops through P&Cs or school councils to promote shared accountability.
- Collaborate with other professions such as health and ambulance officers on campaigns around increasing respect for those professions to improve safety and productivity.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect Survey):

- **15 of 20 school leaders** reported escalating aggression from parents and students.
- **19%** of responses called for parent/community education and accountability.
- **16%** recommended public campaigns to rebuild educator respect.
- Over **90%** of participants reporting cyberbullying incidents state it originated from parents.
- Leaders called for a cultural reset: *“Where’s the respect campaign for teachers? You wouldn’t treat a doctor or nurse like that.”* (From the online interviews)

“

Whilst there is the ability to ban parents for a period of time, there needs to be more done to support the Principal in an ongoing way to ensure they are feeling safe and supported by the system. Greater protections need to be in place to protect the Principal when the event involves a staff member. This may include/involve swift action to remove the staff member from the school.

- Anonymous Ripple Effect Survey Participant

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Recommendation 7: Establish Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation of Offensive Behaviours

Long-term progress requires sustained monitoring of both problem prevalence and intervention outcomes. A national monitoring and evaluation framework would enable governments to track trends, measure policy impact, and continuously refine prevention strategies. It would also provide transparency and accountability for how public resources are used to protect educators and improve workplace safety.

Actions:

- Embed offensive behaviour indicators into the independent and government supported Annual School Leader Health and Wellbeing Survey.
- Develop a central data dashboard for Departments of Education to analyse trends and intervention outcomes.
- Conduct annual public reporting on prevalence, costs, and wellbeing impacts.
- Partner with universities to perform independent longitudinal evaluations of interventions.
- Use data insights to inform continuous policy refinement and resource allocation.

Supporting Data (from the Ripple Effect and Annual Surveys):

- **Average annual individual cost:** \$24,495 per leader (from the Annual survey).
- **Total estimated sector cost: \$206 million annually** (from the Annual survey).
- Productivity loss increases sharply with higher exposure levels (from the Ripple Effect survey).
- Lack of longitudinal tracking currently prevents accurate policy evaluation (from the Annual survey).

Summary

This report, *Unveiling the Ripple Effect*, shines a light on an issue that has too often been normalised in Australian schools - the growing prevalence and impact of offensive behaviours directed at school leaders. Across the nation, school leaders are facing increasing levels of aggression, hostility, and abuse from a range of sources, particularly parents and students. These experiences are taking a significant toll on their wellbeing, effectiveness, and the overall health of school communities.

The data from this study show that more than nine out of ten school leaders have encountered offensive behaviours in the past year, and most have faced multiple types. The personal cost is high: many reported stress, anxiety, sleep problems, and feelings of fear or isolation. Professionally, the effects are clear with leaders are spending large portions of their time managing conflict instead of leading teaching and learning. Collectively, this loss of productivity represents an estimated \$206 million annual cost to the education sector.

What stands out most from the voices in this research is not only the frequency of these experiences but the sense of abandonment that often follows them. Many leaders felt that offensive behaviours were ignored or downplayed, leaving them without clear processes or consistent support. Yet despite this, their commitment to their schools and communities remains strong, which is a testament to the resilience and dedication of those who lead Australia's schools.

The recommendations in this report set out a clear plan for change. They call for national consistency through a framework for responding to offensive behaviours, stronger psychological and wellbeing supports, dedicated school-level wellbeing roles, and a public Respect for Education campaign to reset community expectations. Together, these measures aim to shift the system from a reactive stance to one that is proactive, preventative, and anchored in respect.

Ultimately, addressing offensive behaviours is not just about protecting individual leaders. It is about protecting the heart of the education system. When leaders feel safe, valued, and supported, they are better able to lead thriving school communities and focus on what matters most: the learning, wellbeing, and success of students.

This report ends with a simple but urgent message: caring for those who care for our schools is essential. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australian school leaders is not only a matter of fairness and duty, it is a foundation for a stronger, more respectful, and more effective education system for everyone.

“

And you know these events every week they take a piece of you. They take a piece and that's just not fair. That's not why we go to do our job. We go to do our job, from passion and commitment to supporting students... But you know the total lack of respect for the education system, for teachers and principals is so poor.... You wouldn't pick this job if you knew what it was. Would I pick the job again? Probably not.

- Anonymous Interview Participant

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Systematic Review Information

Table A1. Search terms used in the systematic review of the literature

Principal	School	Offensive Behaviours	Productivity
Principal*	School*	“offensive behavio?r*”	Abilit*
“school leader*”		Bully*	wellbeing
Leader*		Violen*	well-being
		Threaten*	“school climate”
Administrator*		Intimidat*	“school culture”
“educational administrator*”		Assault*	“school environment”
		Harass*	“student achievement”
Superintendent*		Degrad*	“school management”
		Discriminat*	“school performance”
headmaster		Cyber*	“school effectiveness”
		Gossip*	“leadership effectiveness”
headmistress		Slander*	Emotion*
		Teas*	Anxi*
“educational leader*”		Conflict*	Task*
		Quarrel*	

Note: Each search term group will be joined by “AND” and individual search terms will be joined by “OR”.

Table A2. Summary of study characteristics

Variable	Sub-variable	Count
Study Design	Qualitative	11
	Quantitative	9
Country	United States	8
	International (TALIS)	2
	Israel	1
	Italy	1
	Turkey	5
	Kazakhstan	1
	Philippines	1
	Sweden	1
School Gender Composition	Mixed	6
	Co-education	3
School Location	Mixed	7
	Rural	2
School Type	Secondary school	2
	Primary school	1
	Middle school	1
	Mixed	15
School Leader Role	Leaders	15
	Teachers (former school leaders)	1
	Mixed	2

Table A3. Summary of included studies including country, title, and methods

Study number	Title	First Author	Year	Study Design	Country	Total Sample Size (N)
1	Principals' boundary activities and school violence: The mediating role of school management teams	Benoliel	2020	Quantitative	Israel	92
2	The Problems of School Administrators Scale	Bozkus	2022	Quantitative	Turkey	709
3	The roles of work-life conflict and gender in the relationship between workplace bullying and personal burnout. A study on Italian school principals	Buonomo	2020	Quantitative	Italy	860
4	Impact of School Climate and Resources on Principal Workload Stress and Job Satisfaction: Multinational Evidence from TALIS 2018 Data	Chen	2023	Quantitative	International (TALIS)	8978
5	The Plight of School Heads During Armed Conflict: The Untold Stories	Delavin	2024	Qualitative	Philippines	4
6	School Leaders' Well-Being during Times of Crisis: Insights from a Quantitative Study in Kazakhstan	Durrani	2024	Quantitative	Kazakhstan	1299
7	Leading in an Era of School Violence: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of School Shootings on School Principals	Dubei	2024	Qualitative	United States	11
8	An Exploratory Case Study of How Middle School Principals of Small Rural Schools Address Cyberbullying	Force	2013	Qualitative	United States	10
9	Negotiating for influence and resources: A study of Swedish teachers' and principals' experiences of aggressive emails from parents	Forsell	2024	Qualitative	Sweden	31
10	School Administrators' Opinions on Rumor and Gossip Network as an Informal Communication Type in Schools	Himmetoğlu	2020	Qualitative	Turkey	15
11	High school principals' perceptions of cyberbullying	Hyland	2025	Qualitative	United States	6
12	Administrator Turnover: The Roles of District Support, Safety, Anxiety, and Violence from Students	Perry	2024	Quantitative	United States	457
13	To What Extent Do the School and School Principal Variables Predict the Principal Job Satisfaction?	Ozmusul	2017	Quantitative	International (TALIS)	902
14	A Critical Incident Analysis of Parent-School Administrators' Conflicts in Primary Schools	Özsoy	2024	Qualitative	Turkey	10
15	The Reasons of Teachers to Leave the School Management Voluntarily and their Emotions based on these Reasons: A Phenomenological Study	Kazak	2021	Qualitative	Turkey	13
16	Job stress among school administrators: Factorial dimensions and differential effects	Koch	1982	Quantitative	United States	1156
17	Distributed leadership, professional collaboration, and teachers' job satisfaction in U.S. schools	Torres	2019	Quantitative	United States	1925
18	Secondary School Administrators' Opinions on the Prevention of Violent Behaviours in Schools	Tosun	2015	Qualitative	Turkey	21
19	The Silenced Voices of Principals: A Narrative Case Study of Principal Perspectives throughout Complex Crises and Their Resilience	Turek	2022	Qualitative	United States	5
20	Principal perceptions of parental aggression	Unger	2014	Qualitative	United States	206

Selection and Data Collection Process

Rayyan was used to screen literature during the review process. Articles were screened independently by a minimum of two reviewers at both the title/abstract and full-text stages to determine eligibility based on the inclusion criteria. Conflicts at each stage were resolved through discussion among the screening authors or, if needed, by consulting an independent third reviewer. If full-text articles were unavailable, the research team would seek access through university resources or contact the corresponding author. Additionally, a risk of bias assessment was completed.

Data Extraction

Data extraction for included articles was initially conducted independently by two reviewers to assess consistency, utilising Microsoft Excel. Inter-rater agreement was calculated, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion or with a third reviewer. Once sufficient agreement was reached, the remaining data were extracted by a single reviewer. Key data were inputted including study details, participant details, moderators, methodology, aims, key findings and recommendations.

Strategy for Data Synthesis

Based on the type of data collected, qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis in NVivo, where extracted findings were coded and categorised into key themes. Quantitative data were summarised descriptively in the extraction sheet, with key numerical findings recorded for comparison. This included the extraction of correlation and regression coefficients, as well as any reported or computable effect sizes (e.g., Cohen's *d*). Due to the small number of studies identified meta-analysis and moderator analysis were not possible and findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies were synthesised narratively to identify patterns, similarities, and discrepancies.

Appendix 2: Other Statistical Tables

Table A4: Internal Consistency of Ripple Effect Survey Scales

Scale	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	Average Inter-item Correlation	No. of Items
Presenteeism	0.79	3.6	0.8	0.38	6
PTSD – Intrusion	0.94	2.8	1.1	0.65	8
PTSD – Avoidance	0.8	2.4	0.8	0.33	8
PTSD – Hyper-Arousal	0.9	2.6	1.1	0.59	6
Brief Resilience Scale	0.87	3.6	0.8	0.54	6
Emotional Labour – Surface Acting	0.95	4.3	1.2	0.7	8
Emotional Labour – Genuine Acting	0.89	4.1	1.1	0.73	3

Table A5: Pearson correlation coefficients among study variables

	<i>ofb_buf</i>	<i>ofb_shf</i>	<i>ofb_tvf</i>	<i>ofb_pvf</i>	<i>ofb_utf</i>	<i>ofb_cqf</i>	<i>ofb_gsf</i>	<i>ofb_cbf</i>	<i>presenteeism_scale</i>	<i>ptsd_intrusion</i>	<i>ptsd_avoidance</i>	<i>ptsd_hyperarousal</i>	<i>brief_resilience</i>	<i>els_surface_acting</i>	<i>els_genuine_acting</i>	<i>life_satisfaction</i>	<i>prd_q01_1</i>	<i>prd_q02_1</i>	<i>prd_time</i>
<i>ofb_buf</i>		0.146 (.001)	0.158 (<i><.001</i>)	0.081 (.038)	0.334 (<i><.001</i>)	0.274 (<i><.001</i>)	0.319 (<i><.001</i>)	0.292 (<i><.001</i>)	0.304 (<i><.001</i>)	0.347 (<i><.001</i>)	0.246 (<i><.001</i>)	0.335 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.241 (<i><.001</i>)	0.290 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.209 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.229 (<i><.001</i>)	0.382 (<i><.001</i>)	0.389 (<i><.001</i>)	0.231 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ofb_shf</i>	0.146 (.001)		0.146 (.001)	0.122 (.004)	0.262 (<i><.001</i>)	0.102 (.017)	0.160 (<i><.001</i>)	0.154 (<i><.001</i>)	0.093 (.036)	0.109 (.019)	0.101 (.031)	0.122 (.009)	-0.072 (.128)	0.113 (.016)	-0.104 (.026)	-0.155 (.001)	0.097 (.026)	0.106 (.016)	0.040 (.408)
<i>ofb_tvf</i>	0.158 (<i><.001</i>)	0.146 (<i><.001</i>)		0.662 (<i><.001</i>)	0.149 (<i><.001</i>)	0.166 (<i><.001</i>)	0.174 (<i><.001</i>)	0.218 (<i><.001</i>)	0.296 (<i><.001</i>)	0.190 (<i><.001</i>)	0.155 (<i><.001</i>)	0.215 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.103 (.029)	0.246 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.255 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.183 (<i><.001</i>)	0.388 (<i><.001</i>)	0.335 (<i><.001</i>)	0.341 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ofb_pvf</i>	0.081 (.038)	0.122 (.004)	0.662 (<i><.001</i>)		0.089 (.036)	0.094 (.028)	0.068 (.114)	0.164 (<i><.001</i>)	0.240 (<i><.001</i>)	0.138 (.003)	0.121 (.009)	0.141 (.002)	-0.019 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.230 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.139 (.003)	0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	0.233 (<i><.001</i>)	0.276 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ofb_utf</i>	0.334 (<i><.001</i>)	0.262 (<i><.001</i>)	0.149 (.036)	0.662 (<i><.001</i>)		0.089 (.036)	0.094 (.028)	0.164 (<i><.001</i>)	0.240 (<i><.001</i>)	0.138 (.003)	0.121 (.009)	0.141 (.002)	-0.019 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.230 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.139 (.003)	0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	0.233 (<i><.001</i>)	0.276 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ofb_cqf</i>	0.274 (<i><.001</i>)	0.102 (.017)	0.166 (<i><.001</i>)	0.089 (.036)		0.089 (.036)	0.094 (.028)	0.164 (<i><.001</i>)	0.240 (<i><.001</i>)	0.138 (.003)	0.121 (.009)	0.141 (.002)	-0.019 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.230 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.139 (.003)	0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	0.233 (<i><.001</i>)	0.276 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ofb_gsf</i>	0.319 (<i><.001</i>)	0.160 (<i><.001</i>)	0.174 (<i><.001</i>)	0.068 (.114)	0.324 (<i><.001</i>)	0.370 (<i><.001</i>)		0.361 (<i><.001</i>)	0.367 (<i><.001</i>)	0.356 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	0.383 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.205 (<i><.001</i>)	0.353 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.195 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.190 (<i><.001</i>)	0.403 (<i><.001</i>)	0.412 (<i><.001</i>)	0.145 (.003)
<i>ofb_cbf</i>	0.292 (<i><.001</i>)	0.154 (<i><.001</i>)	0.218 (<i><.001</i>)	0.164 (<i><.001</i>)	0.299 (<i><.001</i>)	0.222 (<i><.001</i>)	0.361 (<i><.001</i>)		0.241 (<i><.001</i>)	0.256 (<i><.001</i>)	0.150 (.001)	0.237 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.092 (.051)	0.181 (.002)	-0.144 (.002)	-0.138 (.003)	0.284 (<i><.001</i>)	0.293 (<i><.001</i>)	0.139 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>presenteeism_scale</i>	0.304 (<i><.001</i>)	0.093 (.036)	0.296 (<i><.001</i>)	0.240 (<i><.001</i>)	0.187 (<i><.001</i>)	0.329 (<i><.001</i>)	0.367 (<i><.001</i>)	0.241 (<i><.001</i>)		0.561 (<i><.001</i>)	0.364 (<i><.001</i>)	0.600 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.448 (<i><.001</i>)	0.478 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.381 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.349 (<i><.001</i>)	0.647 (<i><.001</i>)	0.652 (<i><.001</i>)	0.438 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ptsd_intrusion</i>	0.347 (<i><.001</i>)	0.109 (.019)	0.190 (<i><.001</i>)	0.138 (.003)	0.216 (<i><.001</i>)	0.222 (<i><.001</i>)	0.356 (<i><.001</i>)	0.256 (<i><.001</i>)	0.561 (<i><.001</i>)		0.710 (<i><.001</i>)	0.908 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.457 (<i><.001</i>)	0.536 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.325 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.299 (<i><.001</i>)	0.522 (<i><.001</i>)	0.580 (<i><.001</i>)	0.263 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ptsd_avoidance</i>	0.246 (<i><.001</i>)	0.101 (.031)	0.155 (.001)	0.121 (.009)	0.161 (.001)	0.108 (.020)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	0.150 (.001)	0.364 (<i><.001</i>)	0.710 (<i><.001</i>)		0.713 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.310 (<i><.001</i>)	0.482 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.277 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.243 (<i><.001</i>)	0.360 (<i><.001</i>)	0.416 (<i><.001</i>)	0.185 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>ptsd_hyperarousal</i>	0.335 (<i><.001</i>)	0.122 (.009)	0.215 (<i><.001</i>)	0.141 (.002)	0.206 (<i><.001</i>)	0.220 (<i><.001</i>)	0.383 (<i><.001</i>)	0.237 (<i><.001</i>)	0.600 (<i><.001</i>)	0.908 (<i><.001</i>)	0.713 (<i><.001</i>)		-0.502 (<i><.001</i>)	0.522 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.311 (<i><.001</i>)	0.562 (<i><.001</i>)	0.608 (<i><.001</i>)	0.292 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>brief_resilience</i>	-0.241 (.128)	-0.072 (.029)	-0.103 (.029)	-0.019 (.690)	-0.112 (.017)	-0.196 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.205 (.051)	-0.092 (.051)	-0.448 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.457 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.310 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.502 (<i><.001</i>)		-0.370 (<i><.001</i>)	0.296 (<i><.001</i>)	0.454 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.389 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.430 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.218 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>els_surface_acting</i>	0.290 (<i><.001</i>)	0.113 (.016)	0.246 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	0.186 (<i><.001</i>)	0.234 (<i><.001</i>)	0.353 (<i><.001</i>)	0.181 (<i><.001</i>)	0.478 (<i><.001</i>)	0.536 (<i><.001</i>)	0.482 (<i><.001</i>)	0.522 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.370 (<i><.001</i>)		-0.642 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.431 (<i><.001</i>)	0.450 (<i><.001</i>)	0.498 (<i><.001</i>)	0.200 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>els_genuine_acting</i>	-0.209 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.104 (.026)	-0.255 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.230 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.072 (.125)	-0.176 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.195 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.144 (.002)	-0.381 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.325 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.277 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.296 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.642 (<i><.001</i>)		0.426 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.371 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.398 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.143 (.005)
<i>life_satisfaction</i>	-0.229 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.155 (.001)	-0.183 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.139 (.003)	-0.197 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.171 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.190 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.138 (.003)	-0.349 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.299 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.243 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.311 (<i><.001</i>)	0.454 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.431 (<i><.001</i>)	0.426 (<i><.001</i>)		-0.324 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.316 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.168 (.001)
<i>prd_q01_1</i>	0.382 (<i><.001</i>)	0.097 (.026)	0.388 (<i><.001</i>)	0.327 (<i><.001</i>)	0.228 (<i><.001</i>)	0.399 (<i><.001</i>)	0.403 (<i><.001</i>)	0.284 (<i><.001</i>)	0.647 (<i><.001</i>)	0.522 (<i><.001</i>)	0.360 (<i><.001</i>)	0.562 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.389 (<i><.001</i>)	0.450 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.371 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.324 (<i><.001</i>)		0.773 (<i><.001</i>)	0.568 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>prd_q02_1</i>	0.389 (<i><.001</i>)	0.106 (.016)	0.335 (<i><.001</i>)	0.233 (<i><.001</i>)	0.257 (<i><.001</i>)	0.318 (<i><.001</i>)	0.412 (<i><.001</i>)	0.293 (<i><.001</i>)	0.652 (<i><.001</i>)	0.580 (<i><.001</i>)	0.416 (<i><.001</i>)	0.608 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.430 (<i><.001</i>)	0.498 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.398 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.316 (<i><.001</i>)	0.773 (<i><.001</i>)		0.516 (<i><.001</i>)
<i>prd_time</i>	0.231 (<i><.001</i>)	0.040 (.408)	0.341 (<i><.001</i>)	0.276 (<i><.001</i>)	0.147 (.002)	0.235 (<i><.001</i>)	0.145 (.003)	0.139 (.004)	0.438 (<i><.001</i>)	0.263 (<i><.001</i>)	0.185 (<i><.001</i>)	0.292 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.218 (<i><.001</i>)	0.200 (<i><.001</i>)	-0.143 (.005)	-0.168 (.001)	0.568 (<i><.001</i>)	0.516 (<i><.001</i>)	

Computed correlation used spearman-method with pairwise-deletion

Note: The variables names in the table are in abbreviated form. The abbreviations for the offensive behaviours are the following: ob_ = Offensive Behaviour and shf = Sexual Harassment, tvf = Threats of Violence, pvf = Physical Violence, buf = Bullying, utf= Unpleasant Teasing, cqf = Conflicts & Quarrels, gsf = Gossip & Slander, cbf = Cyber Bullying. For other variables with abbreviations the codes are: prd_q01= Work Productivity Loss, prd_q02 = Life Productivity Loss, prd_time = Percentage time spent dealing with offensive behaviours.

Appendix 3: Full Themes and Frequencies of Qualitative Data in Unveiling the Ripple Effect Survey

This part of the appendix contains the full text of the open-ended questions asked in the Ripple Effect survey. The list of themes under each question, the percentage of non-blank responses falling into that theme, and a single sentence explaining the theme are included.

Question 1: “Did you need anything to help you deal with any past offensive behaviours?”

1. Professional/Systemic Support (**24.5%**) – Formal organisational, managerial, or departmental assistance to handle offensive behaviours.
2. Mental Health and Counselling Support (**14.3%**) – Professional psychological or medical supports to address wellbeing and safety.
3. Peer and Collegial Support (**13.4%**) – Support from professional peers, colleagues, mentors, or personal networks.
4. Legal and Safety Measures (**4.3%**) – Protective or legal responses to safeguard wellbeing and enforce accountability.
5. Coping Strategies and Personal Resources (**3.8%**) – Individual-level approaches and resources to self-manage stress.
6. Perceived Gaps and Negative Experiences (**7.7%**) – Where support was missing, delayed, inadequate, or harmful.
7. No (**27.2%**) – Responses that clearly state no support was needed or sought.
8. Other (**4.5%**) – Ambiguous or unclear responses that don't fit elsewhere.

Question 2: “Have you ever reported an offensive behaviour in the past? If so, did that behaviour impact or impair your work?”

1. Prevalence of Reporting and Documentation – Whether and how people reported incidents.
 - a. Positive Outcomes of Reporting – Improved conditions, resolutions, and positive actions taken because of reporting.
2. Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing – The internal psychological toll and impact from offensive behaviours, such as stress and anxiety.
3. Workplace Disruption and Professional Impact – How offensive behaviours interfered with professional roles and identity, reduced productivity, and impaired leadership.
4. Nature and Triggers of Incidents – The sources and types of offensive behaviours experienced, such as harassment or online slander.
5. Institutional and Social Response – How organisations and colleagues responded to reports.
 - a. Positive Responses – Feeling backed by leaders, the system, or colleagues
 - b. Negative Responses – Dismissive systems, retraumatising processes, limited action, or even participants being blamed themselves after reporting.
6. Attitudes Toward Reporting – Beliefs and cultural framing of offensive behaviours and reporting them, including underreporting due to tolerance of misconduct.
7. No (**27.1%**) – Responses that state no offensive behaviours were reported.
8. Other - Ambiguous or unclear responses that don't fit elsewhere.

Question 3: “Do you believe there is a breaking point for school leaders around offensive behaviours? If you are currently working, what do you think would cause you to retire or quit?”

1. Violence, Threats, and Safety Concerns – Physical danger and personal security risks acting as a breaking point.

2. Challenging and Aggressive Parent Behaviours – Social hostility and reputational damage from parents causing principals to quit.
3. Lack of Systemic and Leadership Support – Institutional abandonment and failure to protect leaders.
4. Cumulative Stress, Workload, and Burnout – The chronic build-up of stress and demands over time.
5. Erosion of Purpose, Joy, and Professional Respect – Loss of meaning, motivation, and dignity in the role.
6. Personal and Family Impact – When stress and hostility spill over into family life.
7. No – Responses that state they don't believe there is a breaking point.
8. Other – Ambiguous or unclear responses that don't fit elsewhere.

Question 4: "What could APPA do to influence system or policy around offensive behaviours?"

1. Stronger Policies and Legal Protections (**22.9%**) – Pushing for establishing enforceable rules, legislation, and systemic safeguards that protect educators.
2. Support and Resources for Principals and School Staff (**21.1%**) – Providing practical, material, and emotional resources to help school leaders manage offensive behaviours.
3. Parent and Community Education and Accountability (**19.0%**) – Changing parent and community behaviours through education, codes of conduct, and enforceable accountability mechanisms.
4. Advocacy and Public Image of Educators (**16.4%**) – APPA's role in lobbying, evidence-sharing, and shaping the narrative about school leaders in public and political spaces.
5. Wellbeing, Safety, and Recognition of Harm (**4.2%**) – Ensuring principals' psychological and physical safety, with recognition of trauma, stress, and the toll of offensive behaviours.
6. Training and Professional Development (**1.8%**) – Building principals' and staff capacity through specialist training in managing offensive behaviours.
7. No (**7.7%**) – Responses that did not believe APPA could do anything in particular to influence system or policy.
8. Other (**6.8%**) – Ambiguous or unclear responses that don't fit elsewhere.

Question 5: "Anything to add about how offensive behaviours have impacted you?"

1. Mental Health and Personal Wellbeing (**31.7%**) – The impact of offensive behaviours on principals' psychological and physical health, and the spillover into their personal and family lives.
2. Professional Identity and Career Disillusionment (**8.6%**) – The erosion of principals' professional self-worth, passion, and credibility due to repeated offensive behaviours.
3. Unsustainable Workload and Burnout (**5.3%**) – The added burden of managing offensive behaviours on top of core leadership responsibilities.
4. Hostile Parent and Community Dynamics (**12.8%**) – The intensifying aggression, entitlement, and criticism from parents and community members.
5. Systemic Failure and Lack of Support (**11.9%**) – The gap between principals' lived experiences and the systemic/policy response.
6. Resilience and Calls for Change (**9.1%**) – Despite the challenges, some leaders emphasise resilience and the need for systemic reform.
7. No (**15.6%**) – Responses that stated they had nothing more to add.
8. Other (**4.9%**) – Ambiguous or unclear responses that don't fit elsewhere.

Appendix 4: Cost Calculation Details Using Annual Report Data

This report aimed to understand the real cost of offensive behaviours not only emotionally, but economically as well. The report aimed to do this by estimating how much productivity school leaders are losing, and what that means in dollars. This was done through six main calculation steps.

1. Survey responses on percentage of time spent dealing with offensive behaviours were turned from bands (1-5%) to midpoints of those bands (2.5%). This was done for each possible response from 1-5% to >50%. Those selecting >50% had their response converted to 60%.
2. Likewise, chosen income band was converted to the midpoint of that band. For example, a response of <\$50,000 per annum was converted to \$40,000 per annum, while a response of \$90,000-\$100,000 per annum was converted to \$95,000 per annum.
3. A daily cost was calculated for each school leader by first calculating daily income (annual income divided by 230 working days) then multiplying it by the percentage of time lost to offensive behaviours. This averaged at **\$106.5** per day for school leaders experiencing offensive behaviours. Increasing numbers of offensive behaviours increased the daily cost. For example, those experiencing only one type of offensive behaviour had an average daily cost of **\$74.8**, while those experiencing seven types had an average daily cost of **\$210.9**. The formulas used here were
 - a. Daily Income = Annual Income/230
 - b. Daily Cost = Daily Income X Reported % Time Lost
4. Daily cost for everyone was then multiplied by the 230 working days to get an annual cost for each school leader. For all school leaders experiencing offensive behaviours the average cost was **\$24,495.1** per year, while the average cost for those experiencing seven types of offensive behaviour was **\$50,976.9** per year. The formula here was:
 - a. Annual Cost = Daily Cost X 230
5. The proportion of school leaders affected by offensive behaviours was then calculated. This was the number of school leaders in the Annual survey that reported offensive behaviours compared to all current school leaders in the Annual survey. This ended up being **87.2%** of school leaders.
 - a. Exposure Prevalence = Participants Experiencing OBs/Total Participants
6. Finally, the number of schools in Australia according to the ABS (9653) was multiplied by the exposure prevalence (0.872) and the average annual cost to arrive at an estimated sector wide cost of **\$206.2** million per year. The formula here was:
 - a. 9653 X Exposure Prevalence X Average Annual Cost

It is worth noting that this represents a very conservative estimate and approach, as most schools have more than one school leader.

Appendix 5: State & Territory Estimates for Average Annual Cost for School Leaders to Manage Offensive Behaviours

This table presents **state-level** estimates of the annual financial cost associated with school leaders managing offensive behaviours in Australian schools. These figures are derived from three inputs:

1. The proportion of school leaders exposed to at least one offensive behaviour (from the Annual survey)
2. The average annual cost per exposed school leader, calculated based on reported productivity loss due to dealing with offensive behaviours (estimated for each state)
3. The number of school leaders in each state, drawn from the most recent ABS national school data.

For example, the cost for New South Wales is based on:

- The estimated number of school leaders in NSW (3,132),
- The proportion exposed to at least one offensive behaviour (89%),
- Multiplied by the estimated average annual cost per exposed leader for each state.

Table A6: State & Territory Breakdown of Estimated Costs of Managing Offensive Behaviours

State/Territory	Estimated Number of School Leaders	Percentage of School Leaders Exposed	Average Annual Cost per Exposed School Leader	Total Estimated State Cost
ACT	138	94.6%	\$34,444	\$4,496,354
NSW	3132	89.1%	\$24,087	\$67,200,372
NT	193	88.9%	\$24,066	\$4,128,708
QLD	1798	93.6%	\$25,886	\$43,563,676
SA	714	88.2%	\$25,428	\$16,019,850
TAS	261	93.5%	\$23,189	\$5,661,972
VIC	2292	86.5%	\$23,915	\$47,420,575
WA	1125	91.2%	\$21,555	\$22,118,490

Important notes for Interpretation

- Differences in total cost between states primarily reflect differences in the number of school leaders, not higher or lower rates of offensive behaviours or severity.
- In fact, the prevalence of offensive behaviours is relatively consistent across states, generally falling within a small range for most types.
- The cost per leader is also similar across jurisdictions, meaning larger states like NSW and Victoria have higher overall totals simply due to scale.
- These are conservative estimates. They rely on self-reported exposure and productivity loss and assume only one school leader per school.
- The data are intended to illustrate the scale and systemic impact of offensive behaviours in schools, not to encourage inter-state comparisons or rankings.