

# Crisis leadership in public early childhood education centers in Finland – relation to wellbeing at work and resilience

*Sanna Parrila & Marjo Mäntyjärvi, University of Oulu*

## Abstract

This study addresses leadership enactment in the context of municipal early childhood education and care (ECE) centers in Finland. It was conducted at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, thereby posing new challenges to the ECE leadership. The research draws from crisis leadership and resilience theories to address the following questions: How does crisis leadership link to organization- and individual-level resilience? What kind of expectations are placed on crisis leadership? We understand resilience as one of the key elements of wellbeing at work in today's complex working life. This study conceptualizes crisis leadership as a context-dependent phenomenon constituted by shared meanings and relationships among leaders and practitioners in ECE centers. The data was collected through online focus group interviews with ECE leaders, teachers and researchers. The interviews were conversational in nature and guided by a semistructure of themes. The discussions were analyzed with theory-based content analysis. The aim was to recognize the key elements of good crisis leadership.

Keywords: COVID-19, crisis leadership, resilience, leadership, early childhood education and care (ECE)

## Introduction

In March 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic resulted in a historically unprecedented change in Finnish early childhood education (ECE). The Finnish Parliament introduced the Contingency Act (1552/2011) for the period from 16 March to 15 June 2020 owing to the exceptional conditions in the country. Under this Act, the State Council stated that ECE for under-school-age children should be arranged at home only if possible. Nonetheless, during the pan-

demic, early childhood services officially remained open, and children continued to be admitted to them. However, the transition of schools to distance education for the first time from 16 March to 14 May 2020 clearly reduced the number of children in ECE.

The responses of municipalities and ECE providers to the pandemic have varied greatly at the organization and individual levels. They were impacted by the management culture, crisis management expertise, and resilience of the organization and individuals. A crisis often reveals an organization's management culture better than any other situation (Seeck 2009). People show their true selves and go back to basics in a crisis: some are crippled by fear, and others get moving. Valli (2020) noted that the management of resilience potential can result in better wellbeing at work and increase the ability of workers to deal with increasingly complex changes in the workforce and the crises it contains. Although resilience is considered a controversial concept (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000), it has provided a perspective to examine various phenomena in educational science (Smith and Ulvik 2017; Wosnitza et al. 2018).

This study aims to identify the key elements of good crisis management in ECE that supports both organization- and individual-level resilience and wellbeing at work. The study draws upon crisis leadership and resilience theories to address the following questions: How does crisis leadership link to organization- and individual-level resilience? What kind of conceptions and expectations are placed on crisis leadership?

## Theoretical underpinnings

Our theoretical underpinnings are drawn from research of leadership, especially crisis leadership and resilience. The success of crisis management is reflected by the wellbeing of a community that retains its capacity to operate, that is, its own resilience to cope with various stages of a crisis.

A crisis refers to a situation that causes great uncertainty, hinders the basic organizational functions, and calls for an immediate response (Bundy et al. 2017; Steen and Morsut 2020). A crisis can also refer to a combination of circumstances that threaten life, property, or security, including temporal pressure to react and uncertainty about the consequences of the crisis and extent of the impact (Steen and Morsut 2020, 37–38). Bundy and colleagues (2017, 1663) define a crisis as a source of disruption, uncertainty, and change as well as behavioral phenomena. A crisis can also be described as a test of the firmness of an organization (Carayannopoulos and McConnell 2018). Crises may arise within an organization or, as in the case of the pandemic, may be directed at the organization from outside.

In early education, the staff's wellbeing is of a multidimensional nature. It can be viewed from the perspectives of individual employees as well as the interaction of the entire work community. Logan and colleagues (2021) define ECE workers' work wellbeing as a dynamic state involving interaction and relationships between individuals, work environment, various socio-political factors, and context. Cumming (2017) compiled four wellness categories from studies of occupational wellbeing with ECE staff: work environment, workplace relationships, job satisfaction, and psychological and emotional wellbeing.

In this study, wellbeing at work is linked to the concept of resilience, which has been defined differently in different disciplines. According to Nieminen and colleagues (2017, 13), the various definitions are united by the idea of recovering from adversity and adapting to changes. Studies have evaluated the factors that affect resilience and how it can be evaluated and led (Nieminen et al. 2017). Individual resilience refers to an individual's ability to cope with crises and their mental recovery capacity (Nevalainen, Tukiainen and Myllymäki 2021; Valli 2020). Individual resilience is supported by adaptability, self-control, self-help, optimism, perseverance, creativity, and humor (Nevalainen, Tukiainen and Myllymäki 2021; Valli 2020). Valli (2020) highlights how all people have opportunities and abilities to elastically adapt even in demanding situations; in other words, resilience is not a favorable character trait that only some individuals have. Resilient individuals embrace change and use it creatively to develop better ways of living (Lazaridou 2020). Individual resilience is also influenced by environmental factors; the individual must feel that they are a crucial factor in their environment. Notably, some theorists suggest that resilience is better understood as a learnable process rather than as a trait of an individual (Patterson and Kelleher 2005; Valli 2020). Resilience is therefore not a congenital or permanent property. Resilience is a process built in its context, and it is activated in interpersonal relationships and social networks, for example, by working together (Poijula 2018; Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). Resilience has been identified as one of the conditions for wellbeing at work in the educational sector (Fernandes et al. 2019).

Wosnitza and colleagues (2014) stated that, for teachers, resilience refers to the positive process, ability and outcome of adaptation, and professional engagement and growth in challenging conditions. Resilience is shaped individually, situationally, and contextually as a dynamic process to create risky (challenging) or protective (supportive) factors. An individual can use personal, professional, and social resources not only to recover but also to succeed professionally and personally and to experience job satisfaction, personal wellbeing, and a constant commitment to the profession (Wosnitza et al. 2014). According to Steen and Morsut (2020, 38), in crises, organizational or community resilience refers to the capacity of an organization to quickly resume its im-

portant activities after a shock. The personal and organizational values that coincide during crisis support increase resilience (Smith 2017a; Valli 2020).

The organizational culture may include capacities for change, which reinforces resilience (Nevalainen, Tukiainen, and Myllymäki 2021); by contrast, in a more static community, the policies become inflexible, causing the resilience to deteriorate (Nieminen et al. 2017). Organizational resilience refers to a form of learning in which an organization copes with adversity through positive adaptation and strengthens the ability to cope with future challenges (Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). Adaptation to changing conditions implies an increase in resilience (Nieminen et al. 2017). At the organizational level, resilience therefore relates to the capacity for renewal.

During crises, awareness of others and the importance of joint work is emphasized. Therefore, the leader should be able to quickly establish an understanding of the relevance of work in their community and devise concrete solutions and make decisions on how to proceed and generate confidence and faith in the future (Dýrfjörð and Hreiðarsdóttir 2022; Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). Social capital is the main source of recovery from crises (Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017, 137). Resilience can be activated through traditional means of organizational management: interaction, division of labor, care for basic needs, feedback (Valli 2020), and communication enhancement (Seeck 2009; Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). During a crisis, management should aim to drive action toward common values and basic tasks (cf. Valli 2020), as resilience is supported by the possibility of working without trade-offs (Smith 2017a). The leader must support the interaction, act as a model, lead themselves (Valli 2020), and rely on information about the current situation (Seeck 2009).

Crisis management focuses on various aspects at distinct stages of the crisis. Different stages of a crisis include preparedness (preparation for crisis), measures during the crisis (what was taken and how quickly), and recovery (Aldrich et al. 2015; Steen and Morsut 2020). The challenges identified in crisis management occur in information transmission and communication, capacities of renewal, issues of power, and human behavior (Steen and Morsut 2020, 43–43).

Crises have also been identified as triggering a positive change in crisis management (Steen and Morsut 2020, 37–38). The success of crisis management can be viewed at both individual and community levels: in what way the resilience and wellbeing of the community was maintained, and how learning manifested itself (e.g., as a change in policies). For example, in England, Fogerty (2020) identified the pandemic period in his community and reinforced the focus of conversations in pedagogical development and learning in a way that supports adults and children alike. According to Fogerty (2020), this also supported welfare. Learning is also important from the viewpoint of crisis management, as it will enhance crisis management and help in better preparing for the next crisis (Steen and Morsut 2020, 42).

In this study, crisis management refers to the management practices and means of managing the effects of a crisis within an organization in pursuit of maintaining its operational capacity at the beginning, during, and end of a crisis. In the context of ECE, management is based on leadership that is interactively shaped in the relationships among the leader, staff, and environment (cf. Mäntyjärvi and Parrila 2021). Organization-level resilience can be seen to interfere with these relational-interactive relationships (Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). Therefore, resilience is understood as a dynamic process that encompasses positive adaptation in the context of adversity experienced during various stages of the pandemic (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000).

## Implementation of research

The research data has been collected through focus group interviews aimed at ECE leaders and teachers. This method is commonly used in educational research and early childhood management studies (Heikka 2014; Fonsén et al. 2021). In a group interview, people gather to talk about a common topic, making the interview conversational in nature (Liamputtong 2011). This methodology is suitable for research such as that in the present study, which seeks different perspectives on the phenomenon being studied and provides opportunities for participants to bring their own experiences into the discussion on the subject. The interaction that emerged in the group also provided participants with understanding and peer support as they discussed their experiences and revealed shared experiences and interpretations (Liamputtong 2011).

The study was publicly communicated in in-service-training- groups and with e-mailing several ECE centres and leaders, asking for volunteer participants. However, the pandemic also challenged the implementation of the research: finding common time for participants and researchers proved difficult in the rapidly changing situation. Focus group interviews invited ECE leaders and teachers working in various municipalities and units across Finland. The discussion of the group interview was supported by the fact that the participants were sufficiently similar in terms of their occupation and educational background and they shared the interest to discuss the issue (Pietilä, 2017). All 13 participants had several years of work experience in ECE. Interviews with ECE leaders were conducted in groups of four in November 2021 (FG1) and January 2022 (FG2). The ECE teachers focus group interview involved five ECE teachers and was conducted in February 2022 (FG3). The interviews were conducted using Zoom and were recorded; the recordings were then transcribed into text.

During the analysis, the thinking of the researchers was guided by both the theory and dataset. To paraphrase theory-driven content analysis, the tran-

scribed text was read by considering key concepts to produce descriptive content (Rosqvist et al. 2019; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018). Subsequently, a search for data-oriented recurring themes was conducted, and these were then further grouped and restructured based on the theory and previous research. Notably, what remains unsaid can be as important as what is said in all qualitative research encounters.

The discussions revealed different experiences, sensations, and descriptions from the pandemic period, and the debaters formed different interpretations together. Both leaders and teachers described their own but also their colleagues and co-workers experiences in these discussions. The discussions covered the period from the initial stage of the pandemic to the present day, and the interlocutors felt that the interviews were important opportunities for themselves to share their experiences during the pandemic. This approach provided rich data to understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

## Results

### Individual and organizational differences

The results indicate that ECE leaders play a vital role in coping with a crisis and maintaining staff capacity and wellbeing at work. Successful crisis management requires identifying and responding to different organizations and employees. According to the leaders, individuals and staff showed extreme responses to an acute crisis. Some staff responded through doing (cf. agency) to the crisis quickly and set out to think about concrete means to continue their work. Some were crippled by fear caused by, among other things, fear of their own or loved ones being ill as well as a lack of awareness of what was to come.

“Some were really scared and kind of crippled of that situation. They needed a lot of clear instructions, even though supervisors or others had no knowledge of what to do, how to act, what makes sense. Others responded well and adapted to the change. We had to modify our work, and the kids suddenly disappeared from the centre or preschool. Some adapted quickly whereas others were fearful and needed to be dealt with the leader.” (FG1)

The ability of an employee to recover from adversity and adapt to changes is commonly linked to resilience. Other related traits include adaptability, self-control, self-help, optimism, perseverance, creativity, and humor (cf. Nevalainen, Tukiainen and Myllymäki 2021; Valli 2020). This research supports the notion that resilience is an existing individual ability or capacity and is developed communally and in combination with doctrines (cf. Patterson and

Kelleher 2005; Valli 2020). Good crisis leadership has a key impact on the development of both individual and organizational resilience.

According to the ECE leaders, it was crucial to find solutions to maintain control and respond quickly to the needs and emotions that arise among staff: getting the most panicked employee to calm down to avoid the spread of panic, helping employees overcome their fears and return to their basic mission of promoting children's wellbeing and learning and supporting families.

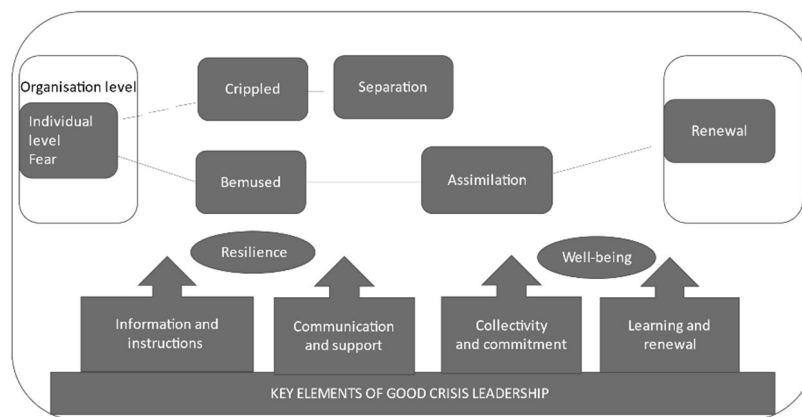


Figure 1. The key elements of good crisis leadership in relation to resilience and well-being

The ECE leaders noted differences between not only individuals but also ECE centres in responding to the crisis (cf. Nevalainen, Tukiainen and Myllymäki, 2021 Nieminen et al., 2017). In an ECE centre, where the staff had learned to deal with challenging events and accustomed to working with diversity of families and children, the staff greater flexibility and readiness to face the pandemic. By contrast, in homogeneous centers where the staff was not accustomed to greater concerns or crises showed negative response and strong fear, and there a leader was needed on a daily basis to deal with concerns.

“My big house is in a socioeconomically good area. The other has many families with immigrant backgrounds and is nonhomogenous. In the more homogeneous area, people were very scared and reacted strongly. I had to have Teams- meetings every day, we just dealt with things and emotions... some workers self-regulation betrayed. Whereas, the second place ...of course there were feelings and questions, and things were going through. However, they started brainstorming what we can do for the children who were at home...” (FG2)

In the Figure 1, we have compiled the key elements of good crisis management that we open in the following subchapters.

## Information and instructions

Overall, leaders impressed that at an acute crisis stage, staff expectations of leadership regressed and staff capacity for shared leadership, self-direction, and shared responsibility deteriorated. During the crisis, staff longed for authoritarian, rigid and strong front management, as well as clear and detailed instructions, for example meeting memos were not perceived as adequate guidance. In times of uncertainty, the behavior of a leader that was otherwise considered unwanted was now perceived as positive (Halverson et al. 2004).

“... leading from the front, setting an example, and conveying clear rules. People greatly needed this.” (FG1)

Instructions were needed, although no one necessarily could provide them. Fear and uncertainty were compounded by constant changes in guidance. Effective information transmission has emerged as one of the key elements of good crisis management (cf. Logan et al. 2021; Steen and Morsus 2020).

The experiences of ECE leaders differed in how quickly information was managed during the crisis. Some of the ECE leaders had been involved in quickly setting up a Corona Fist- group, which responded and coordinated the guidelines. Some of the leaders had to wait a long time for a clear entity to take over the crisis and act. In addition, some of the ECE leaders had to seek and interpret the ‘received guidelines to fit to early education context (c.f Dýrfjörð & Hreiðarsdóttir 2022). The lack of clarity and constant change in guidance was also influenced by the continued change in nationwide guidelines and instructions, reflecting general uncertainty about the direction in which the pandemic was moving and how to respond to it.

## Communication and support

During the pandemic, wellbeing at work was undermined not only by living in fear, but also by the experience of not valuing or supporting the work of early educators enough (also Logan et al. 2021). However, the ECE teachers and other staff described a moral responsibility to enter the workplace and be available to children, while at the same time knowing they were putting themselves at risk of becoming ill (also Logan et al. 2021).

“It was just as difficult for everyone to be in that situation, but many employees felt it very strongly that we were not supported by the management, here we are at the front line...” (FG3)



In this research, staff longed for more support and emotion sharing what ECE leaders provided. Especially the centres where the leader was not physically present experienced fear and disappointment that the support received was less than desired. The staff, especially in the early stages of the crisis, longed for the leader's presence, listening and supportive interactions as well as the sharing of emotions (also Valli 2020). The ability of a leader to act interactive, listening, supporting, and interested in their staff is highlighted in the more difficult situation. When the concerns of the employees are taken seriously without belittling and ignoring, supporting, and understanding, the leader acts on the support of emotions, which is a key part of resilience derivation (Valli, 2020).

"In the work community, for us staff, there was no possibility of dismantling, i.e. to talk to a manager or someone about it, about the feelings of what that situation produced and what impact it had on the team. You needed some dismantling, because we were pretty much in the eye of the vein. Everyone was in the same situation and stayed quiet about it..." (FG3).

A leader was expected to provide hope for getting out of the crisis. Providing hope is important for achieving resilience (Valli 2020).

"I really feel that there should have been someone to say that everything will be all right and that we would survive... even though I was almost the oldest one, I felt a little bit helpless..." (FG3)

In units having strong confidence in the leader and good interrelationships, the crisis brought the work community closer. The ECE leader's role was perceived as being significant for building confidential and good interactions and perpetuating a positive atmosphere and sense of community. Although reducing the risk of infection by minimizing close contact between children, guardians, employees, and teams, some units devised creative solutions to support and interact within the community, for example by providing informal gatherings through Teams. Strengthening interactions between the working community is crucial for achieving resilience (Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017) and according this research, also to increase wellbeing at work.

"...everyone feels and is stressed differently, but I could say that there is a lot of convergence and unification spirits for everyone. And help has always been received from another team, if needed ... And I do believe that it goes back to the leader and ones' ability to lead this." (FG3)

The importance of a good working team and with humor that endures even through the most difficult times was found crucial for supporting wellbeing at work.

### **Collectivity and commitment**

The quality of interaction, each employee's commitment to their basic role at work and the work community were strongly linked to resilience management. The results suggested that it seemed to involve certain challenges. The leaders described identifying early on the workers who had a low threshold for sick leave and broke away from their work communities. Decoupling from the work community was also carried out by the senior organization by directing, for example, nurses to health care tasks and disconnecting from their main tasks. According to the experience of the teachers, this was done quite strongly and caused anxiety and fear in some employees.

“When the announcement came late in the evening that one had to go to a nursing home in the morning, it seemed a bit like going to war. It lacked discretion. Personnel were treated like cattle in that situation ...they were driven from place to place.” (FG3)

The work communities and teams were therefore broken up, and they attempted to unite. How the transfer to other positions was perceived was central to whether the move was made while listening to the employee's own wish or by order from senior management. According to the leaders, employees who had been allowed to share their strengths in advance and to accordingly hope for a move perceived the move as a positive and educational experience.

“Interestingly, when they got an easier situation and they got back to normal work ... it was like fun, when they had seen this crisis from a different perspective...they saw management and work on the frontline, not with COVID-19 patients, by healthcare professionals. They also received positive feedback from them about the situation here, and they felt that we also were doing well and that the work community was effective...” (FG1)

The experience gave them a new perspective and positive outlook for their own work, which they also conveyed to their entire working community when they returned to their own mission.

### **Learning and renewal**

Considering that over two years have passed since the first wave of the pandemic, both ECE teachers and leaders reflected on what has been learned and what has changed. The development of new forms of activity was actively started with the first wave of the pandemic, when a large number of children stayed at home. The staff had to adopt the so-called hybrid model that would serve children in the ECE centre unit and at home. The leaders felt that adopt-

ing a new approach and acting in accordance with the basic mission did not arise from all employees self-direction; instead, pedagogical leadership and guidance were required.

“... I was surprised by that, especially when there were only a few children and they should have time to write group plans or make an assessment or...it was interesting that you had to guide even teachers, naturally not everyone...some of them could do it independently... but at least during the first spring, I had prepared a letter where I wrote instructions on what is worth doing in this situation. This was like a to-do list for teachers and teams... But then some people came up with wonderful and creative ideas and solutions. We helped families with outdoor activities and made QR code tracks for families to use in the evenings and on weekends.” (FG1)

In ECE, the development of the hybrid model was also hampered by the fact that digital systems remained undeveloped in the early stages of the pandemic, and there was little experience about remote pedagogy for young children. During the pandemic there was a developmental step in ECE in the use of digital tools when the ECE staff started to use these tools for interaction and distance learning with children at home and for various meetings, trainings, and conversations with guardians, work community, supervisors, and other collaborators. Some leaders noted that telecommuting required a new kind of time management owing to the lack of transitions for example in taking care of breaks, even if remote connections are within reach all the time.

The staff's descriptions, attitudes, and expectations of the leader also changed substantially. In the early stages of the crisis, the ECE leader was needed for everything. Later, the ECE teachers and other staff were aware of the workload of their leader and considered better to avoid overburdening the leader and approached the leader only for the most urgent issues. Thus, the leader's support was still needed, especially for the substantially increased problems of children and families during the pandemic.

“In relation to the leader, by knowing their workload as an employee, I prioritized the issues I sought help for as she was in our unit only a couple of days a week. Even though we used digital communication, I wondered how I could burden her with these concerns of the children and families in my own group and what were the things for which I really needed support.” (FG3)

With this research, our understanding has been confirmed through our finding that good (crisis) leadership, wellbeing at work, and resilience are dynamic, relational phenomena are strongly interconnected. They are verified in a certain time and place and become ennobled with experience. They strengthen one another, and all are needed for wellbeing at work.

## Discussion

Our study aimed to identify the key elements of good crisis management that support both organization- and individual-level resilience and wellbeing at work in ECE. This is essential for the development of not only crisis management but also, more generally, ECE leadership.

Today's work life is characterized by various crises and complex problems that can seem chaotic but allow a new stage of creative transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic was initially perceived as a shock two years ago in March 2020 and was accompanied by fear, paralysis, and decline. It challenged the ability of ECE leaders to lead individuals and communities in crisis in such a way that staff remained operational. Initially, it required strong frontal management, clear guidance, and strong emotional support to calm staff and enable them to reorient themselves toward their basic role. Interestingly, the staff's self-referential and shared leadership and longing for the so-called old authoritarian leadership model disappeared.

The protracted and wave-like nature of the COVID-19 crisis has impacted crisis management. The pandemic began in March 2020 and continues today, although it is being controlled better. These two years have seen various phases that have affected the expectations and experiences that leaders and staff associate with the pandemic and good crisis management. Whereas precise guidelines were expected and followed in the initial stages, as the crisis drags on, people are becoming rebellious and questioning. This has contributed to the fact that whether the crisis will end or has become part of the norm remains unknown.

In this study, we identified the factors that teachers and leaders linked to good crisis management and how these can be used to support both community- and individual-level resilience. The following factors emerged as important ones on the early stages of the crisis: *clear transmission, information and instructions, functional communication and support, collectivity and commitment, and learning and renewal ability*. Leaders and teachers also identified the differences in people, which we interpreted as a difference in resilience. Some had stronger resilience, were more optimistic about the crisis, and recovered and oriented themselves to action more quickly. Some staff with lower resilience became depressed, felt intense fear, and even disengaged from their work and work community by remaining on sick leave. Our interpretation of the reliability of the link between weak resilience and disengagement from work is in part undermined by the fact that no employees in our research team explained their reasons for disengagement in more detail. Overall, the reliability of our research in terms of resilience at both individual and organization levels would have been increased by the inclusion of more different ECE organizations as well as representatives from all different professional groups in

ECE. We recognize that in our study the interpretations of personnel are those told by ECE leaders and teachers. More research on the crisis management and how to support the wellbeing in ECE is needed (also Logan et al. 2021), not only by the involvement of all professionals of the staff, but also by involving other parties such as children and parents.

However, our research showed how coping with the organization's crisis is both a resilience and leadership issue (also Teo, Lee, and Lim 2017). Resilience develops by exposure (cf. Smith 2017), but at both the individual and organizational level, it also requires leadership that supports resilience potential, to which the factors of good crisis management structured in our study are substantially related. According to Smith (2017a), in the context of crises, it should be known that resilience is not an endless energy system but must be replenished, since prolonged crises and long-lasting changes can lead to a period where the need for resilience exceeds its supply. This is not so much a lack of skill, but rather an energy deficit that prevents the use of positive resources associated with resilience. In these situations, individuals often withdraw and feel disconnected from their work, emotions, and other people. This might also inform a coping mechanism that protects the individual and creates recovery time. Thus, resilience would appear to be not just the personality traits or skills that exist in an individual in difficult situations, but a more complex entity (Smith 2017a, p.16).

In relation to good crisis management, this makes the leader's ability to lead and take care of their own wellbeing an important factor. "Put an oxygen mask on your own face first before helping others" is a good guideline in this regard. In our study, leaders described considering, among other things, whether their vacation was enough to recover and how long it would take to recover from the pandemic. As factors supporting their own wellbeing, leaders raised issues such as the support of a senior supervisor, opportunity to share their experiences with colleagues, prioritizing and taking care of their own physical condition and getting adequate rest.

In this research, leaders and teachers considered the wider consequences of the pandemic and raised concerns about increasing problems with children and families. The pandemic has clearly increased the need for support for the whole family and the impacts of this long-lasting crisis to an extent remains unclear. Staff were concerned about the adequacy and timeliness of support services to children and families. They found it important to be sensitive overall in relation to each other to identify those for whom the burden has been too heavy and what kind of help is needed.

Finally, we note that, as with all superheroes, strength is created through difficulties and requires perseverance. After this pandemic, plenty of superheroes, both in leaders and staff, will remain in early childhood education.

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