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Title

Sources of stress and scholarly identity: the case of international doctoral students of education in Finland / Sotiria Pappa ; Mailis Elomaa ; Satu Perälä-Littunen

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Abstract

Although stressors and coping strategies have been examined in managing stress associated with doctoral education, stress continues to have a permeating and pernicious effect on doctoral students' experience of their training and, by extension, their future participation in the academic community. International doctoral students have to not only effectively cope with tensions during their training and their socialization in their discipline but also address the values and expectations of higher education institutions in a foreign country. Considering the increase of international doctoral students in Finland, this study focuses on perceived sources of stress in their doctoral training and how their scholarly identity is involved when responding to them. The study draws on thematically analyzed interviews with eleven international doctoral students of educational sciences. The participants, one man and ten women, came from nine countries and conducted research in six Finnish universities. The principal sources of stress identified were intrapersonal regulation, challenges pertaining to doing

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research, funding and career prospects, and lack of a supportive network. Despite the negative presence of stress, most participants saw stress as a motivating element. However, in order for stress to become a positive and motivational force, participants had to mediate its presence and effects by means of personal resources, ascribing meaning and purpose to their research, and positioning themselves within their academic and social environment. The study argues for stress as a catalyst for scholarly identity negotiation and professional development when perceived positively. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)