Exploring Factors that Affect School Counselors' Use of Time

Michelle W. Brasfield
The University of Memphis

Chloe Lancaster
University of South Florida

Martha F. Burke
The University of Memphis

Abstract

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) advocates for school counselors to allocate 80% of their time to direct and supportive services to students and against non-counseling duties inconsistent with the ASCA National Model. For this exploratory study, we investigated how time allocations were impacted by non-counseling duties, school characteristics, and the presence of supportive services for 143 public school counselors. Results indicated that time allocations were impacted by grade level, non-counseling duties, Title I status, school enrollment, and the existence of supportive personnel. Implications for school counseling advocacy and areas of future research are addressed.

Keywords: school counseling, time allocations, non-counseling duties

Exploring Factors that Affect School Counselors' Use of Time

The work of school counselors has evolved over the past century in response to societal changes, human capital demands, state and federal policy, and advancements in the field of psychology and counseling (Studer, 2015). School counselors have been defined by flexibility in their work, tending to adjust their role to meet the needs of their students and the exigencies of their setting (Savitz-Romer, 2019). A lack of role clarity has contributed to ongoing debate and misunderstanding regarding the purpose and function of a school counselor (Savitz-Romer, 2019). More problematic has been the assignment of non-counseling duties, which has contributed to role diffusion and professional identity erosion (Bain et al., 2011; Moyer, 2011). By the 1990s, in an attempt to redress these ongoing professional practice issues, scholars, taskforces, and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) converged around the need for the school counseling profession to transform from a service-focused model that helps some students, to a program-focused model that helps all students (Erford, 2019). In 1997, ASCA published the national content standards for students, which was followed in 2003 with the ASCA National Model (2003), a blueprint for comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCPs) focused on supporting all students' academic achievement, career exploration, social/emotional development, and more recently, college readiness (ASCA, 2019). Now in its 4th edition (ASCA, 2019), the ASCA model has wide-reaching influence, reflected by 45 states adopting CSCPs, compatible with the national framework (Savitz-Romer, 2019). To date, while research has demonstrated correlations between school counselors' implementation of national model aligned activities and positive student outcomes (Chandler et al., 2018; Dahir et al., 2009; Fan et al., 2019), studies have also revealed how school

variables, such as case load, location, administrator support, and assignment of non-counseling duties, can compromise a school counselor's ability to implement model endorsed roles (Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012; Lane et al., 2020; McCoy-Harless, 2015; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). Additionally, no study has comprehensively examined how these aforementioned variables affect school counselor role allocation in ASCA aligned domains. This exploratory study extended previous research by examining how the provision of direct and student support services is influenced by school variables, the allocation of non-counseling duties, and availability of other student support services, with the intent that knowledge generated can inform advocacy, training, and public policy.

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model (2019) is comprised of four program domains: *define, manage*, *deliver*, and *assess*. ASCA recommends that school counselors spend 80% of their time in the *deliver* component which consists of direct and indirect services to students. Program elements within direct service include curriculum delivery, individual student planning, and responsive services. The school counseling curriculum is prevention-focused, developmentally sequenced, and predominately disseminated through large group classroom guidance activities to all students (ASCA, 2019). Individual student planning focuses on integrating data to assist students in attaining their academic and career goals (ASCA, 2019). Responsive services consist of brief individual and small group counseling to address emerging student needs in an effort to increase their coping skills and resiliency (ASCA, 2019). In addition to these direct services, school counselors provide *indirect services*, inclusive of student and family referrals to other agencies and programs within and outside the school system, and consultation

and collaboration with stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, administrators, community partners) particularly in the area of crisis response (ASCA, 2019). ASCA recommends school counselors dedicate 20% of their time to the other model components: define, manage, and assess, which consists of efforts and organizational tasks to ensure alignment of one's school counseling program to the district mission and professional standards, as well as promoting fidelity of direct and indirect services (ASCA, 2019).

School Counselors' Use of Time

Grade Level Differences

The ASCA National Model 4th edition (2019) recommends school counselors spend 80% of their time in the deliver domain, yet, since CSCPs are data-driven ASCA does not further provide percentages of time school counselors should dedicate to direct and indirect services within this domain. Nonetheless, due to students' changing academic and maturational needs, certain areas of direct and indirect services tend to dominate the work of school counselors across the grade levels (Erford, 2019). Over the years authors have offered suggestions for appropriate allocation of time relative to activities within the deliver domain for elementary, middle/junior high, and high school counselors. Figure 1 illustrates the suggested percentages outlined by Gysbers and Henderson (2012) for school counselor time distributions across the three grade levels, based on the previous ASCA model. While these distributions allow for flexibility on the counselors' part and comprehensive guidance programs overall, they provide practical guidelines for counselors' use of time that takes into consideration a variety of student needs.

Multiple studies have identified grade level as a significant determinant of school counselors use of time (Chandler et al., 2018; Dahir et al., 2009; Fan et al.,

2019; Walsh et al., 2007). In a recent, national study exploring school counselor practices (Fan et al., 2019), researchers found elementary school counselors engaged in higher levels of group counseling in comparison to all other grade levels. By contrast, high school counselors reported the highest levels of engagement in college and career counseling (individual student planning), followed by middle school counselors, and lastly elementary school counselors. Similarly, Dahir and colleagues (2009) found that elementary school counselors placed the highest value on activities such as classroom guidance and group counseling, whereas high school counselors prioritized activities associated with career and post-secondary planning.

The aforementioned studies (Dahir et al., 2009; Fan et al., 2019) contribute to an understanding of variables that affect counselors' time, yet these studies did not explore school counselor time in terms of the ASCA program elements related to direct and indirect services. To date, only one small study has investigated school counselors' use of time in activities associated with the ACSA service domains. Walsh and colleagues (2007) investigated the allocation of time to activities in the *deliver* system among elementary school counselors. Researchers found that counselors spent 34% of their time in responsive services and 17% in system support, allocations largely aligned to Gysbers and Henderson's recommendation (Figure 1). However, participants spent less time in guidance (32%) and increased time in individual student planning (17%) than the proposed time allocations for elementary settings (Walsh et al., 2007). In addition to the small sample size, the study was further limited by its focus on elementary school counselors and program elements within the domains of direct services. This study was conducted, in part, to

better discern school counselor time allocations across all grade levels relevant to direct and indirect student services, as outlined in state and national models.

Non-Counseling Duties

Many school counselors struggle to receive the resources and support to follow recommended time allocations despite favorable research, which indicates the positive impact of school counseling services upon graduation rates (Lapan et al., 2012), disciplinary incidents (Reback, 2010), and other improved measures of academic, emotional, and post-secondary performance (Parzych et al., 2019), especially for minority populations and those in poverty (Lapan et al., 2019). Most notably, administrator support has been widely cited as central to a school counselor's capacity to implement state and national model guidelines (Lane et al., 2020; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). While “fair share” duties are part of any school counselor’s contracted role (Chandler et al., 2018), research revealed that most principals believe clerical tasks, including registration and scheduling, maintaining student records, and test administration are appropriate school counselor duties (Lane et al., 2020; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). Grade level differences have been detected, with high school counselors reporting significantly more non-counseling duties, particularly in comparison to elementary school counselors (Chandler et al., 2018; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012. Allocation of non-counseling duties is detrimental to students and school counselors (Clemens et al., 2009; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Pyne, 2011), yet, little is known about which non-counseling duties are most intrusive upon school counselors’ appropriate use of time. A lack of precision regarding the impact of specific non-counseling duties limits school counselors' efforts to advocate for appropriate roles with their administrators, particularly as they negotiate their annual management agreements (ASCA, 2019).

This study attempted to identify and increase knowledge of the most problematic non-counseling duties by assessing their individual effects upon school counselors' appropriate use of time.

School Variables and School Counselors' Use of Time

In addition to a lack of administrator support, the size of caseload and school variables have been explored in relation to school counselor practices and outcomes. Large student to school counselor ratios are associated with increased role diffusion and less time providing comprehensive services, which has been found to negatively impact student attendance, graduation rates, and disciplinary infractions (Parzych et al., 2019). Related to school variables, a limited number of studies have found that school counselors who work in high poverty settings (Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012; McCoy-Harless, 2015) and with minority populations (Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012) provide fewer comprehensive services. Geographic differences have also been noted, with rural schools being significantly higher in non-counseling duties than urban schools (Chandler et al., 2018). Some authors have noted that having access to additional staff who provide mental health services helps to address the needs of the whole child (Brown et al., 2006) and decrease feelings of burnout (Bain et al., 2011); however, the extent to which student support personnel impact the provision of ASCA aligned activities remains unexplored in the literature. This represents a gap in the research given that experts (see Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) identify student support services as an important input factor of a CSCP.

Purpose of Research

A lack of current research examining, (a) school counselor time allocations relative to grade level in ASCA and state model aligned activities; (b) the impact of non-counseling duties on ASCA and state model aligned activities; (c) the influence

of school variables on school counselor use of time; and (d) the impact of student support professionals upon school counselor activities, all prompted further research. This exploratory study used a single assessment, cross-sectional survey of school counselors in Tennessee. A study limitation includes the use of a state-level sample versus a national sample. Four research questions were developed to answer the purpose of the study. The language of the questions was adjusted to reflect the TN school counselor state model, which is described in detail below.

1. How do reported school counseling time distributions in program elements and the allocation of 80% of time to direct and student support services compare across elementary, middle, and high school counselors?
2. How are non-counseling duties related to school counseling time allocations and meeting the 80% recommended time in direct and student support services? Is there a difference in non-counseling duties between elementary and secondary school counselors?
3. Are school counseling time allocations and the provision of 80% direct and indirect services related to school characteristics such as Title I status, location (urban, suburban, rural), student race/ethnicity, grade level (elementary or secondary), and the number of students enrolled in the school?
4. Is reported time spent in different program elements and the allocation of 80% of time to direct and student support services affected by the presence of student support personnel (school psychologist, school social worker, mental health counselor, behavioral interventionist, instructional facilitator, post-secondary support, and other support)?

Tennessee School Counseling Model

Tennessee School Counseling Model and Standards Policy 5.103 (2017) was adopted in the 2108-19 school year and serves as a tool for state counselors to identify critical program elements and prioritize activities. Domains and categories of the Tennessee School Counseling Model directly correlate to the ASCA National Model, in addition to its emphasis on academic development, social and emotional development, and college and career readiness. The TN model consists of direct student services, student support services, and program management and school support. Direct student services and student support services align to ASCA's deliver domain, and, similar to the national model, school counselors are expected to spend 80% of their time in these domains. Direct student services are described as prevention and intervention programs delivered to all students and like its ASCA counterpart is comprised of school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services. Student support services are defined as those services and programs delivered on behalf of students and mirror ASCA's indirect student services: consultation, collaboration, and referrals. Program management and student support are comprised of program foundation, aligned to the ASCA's define, management aligned to the ASCA's manage, and accountability aligned to the ASCA's assess. In addition to the ASCA categories, the program management and student support domain encompasses fair-share responsibility, or those duties shared by all school staff to ensure smooth school functioning.

Method

Study Design and Sample

Instrument Construction

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the absence of a TN school counselor model aligned survey, and the preponderance of demographic items, we used a non-standardized survey instrument to gather data while following best practices in survey design. Demographic questions were informed by categories aligned to the US Census, Tennessee Department of Education, inclusive approaches to demographic data collection (Fernandez, et al., 2016), and the extant literature that has identified school counselor and school variables that affect school counselors' daily roles (e.g. Chandler et al., 2018; Dahir et al., 2009; Fan et al., 2019; Walsh et al., 2007). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that school counselors conceptualize their work in terms of activities endorsed by state and national standards, and when unencumbered with non-counseling duties, their daily activities largely correlate to these core areas of practice (Chandler et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2019), which provides additional conceptual support for instrumentation design related to those items intended to assess school counselor use of time.

This study is based on a section of a larger, 50 item survey designed to assess the impact of a policy change on school counselor roles and ratios. The current study utilized data from items related to school demographics, school counselor activities, percentage of time spent in model aligned activities, and the presence of additional student support personnel. Two items measured the criterion variables: (a) school counselor use of time in model aligned activities, and, (b) allocation of time in direct and student support services. In regard to the former, a constant sum format item was developed for respondents to estimate their total use

in model endorsed and non-endorsed duties. A multiple-choice item determined if school counselors dedicated 80% of their time to direct and student support service, with the options of yes, no, or unsure. To promote accurate responses to these items, a concise description of the state model domains and activities was embedded in the survey. Several multiple-choice and open-ended items were developed to gather information about school counselor demographics: age, gender, race, education, years of service, and current grades served. Eleven multiple choice and open-ended items were designed to gather school demographic data: school size, location, student demographics, state report card standing, Title I status, and number of administrators, as well as academic, behavioral, mental health, and college and career support personnel. Six items were developed to elicit information related to student support services and non-counseling duties. Due to the absence of research around the impact of school counselor activities outside of the delivery system, this study did not analyze factors that affect school counselors' use of time in the TN model domains of *program management and student support.*

A pilot study was conducted with 41 school counselors during the Fall 2019 state counseling association conference to determine the quality of each item and overall survey. The survey pilot produced a completion rate of 73.2% (n = 30). Through item analysis of the pilot results, we noticed missing or ambiguous data on several items. In the original survey, the items querying school counselors about their non-counseling related duties and support personnel were open-ended. To increase response rates, we used categories provided by participants to create a multiple-selection, drop-down item, which allowed respondents to select the non-counseling duties and support personnel they encounter in their work. Additionally, in the first survey, the school counselor to student ratio question was open-ended, and

we revised this question to provide ranges for selection. Several minor changes of this nature were made prior to launching the updated survey. The beta version of the survey was pushed out through social media and counseling supervisors at districts in all three divisions of Tennessee (east, middle, and west). This version yielded 146 responses; 79.5% (n = 116) were complete. Data from the pilot study was combined with data collected in the modified instrument, with a total of 146 complete responses. To maintain the focus on currently practicing school counselors in K-12 public schools, 3 participants were eliminated: Two indicated employment in a non-public school, and one person identified as a school counseling supervisor.

Sample

The final sample consisted of 143 predominately female respondents with the majority identifying as White/Caucasian or Black/African American (see Table 1). All participants reported that they held a graduate degree, with the majority of those in school counseling (*n* = 116, 81.1%). Other reported graduate degrees were: (a) dual program in school counseling and clinical mental health counseling (*n* = 20, 14.0%); (b) clinical mental health counseling (*n* = 4, 2.8%); (c) social work (*n* = 1, 0.7%); and (d) curriculum and instruction (*n* = 1, 0.7%). Two participants reported additional degrees in educational leadership and human resources management, and one participant did not report the type of graduate degree. Although one participant did not answer, 142 participants reported a range in school counseling experience of zero to 36 years (*Mdn* = 8.0, *M* = 9.5, *SD* = 7.4). The student racial composition was predominately Black/African American (*M* = 50.2, *SD* = 34.6, *Mdn* = 45.0), followed by White/Caucasian (*M* = 32.5, *SD* = 33.7, *Mdn* = 15.0) and Hispanic/Latinx (*M* = 12.8, *SD* = 16.3, *Mdn* = 7.0) with 2.0% or less from American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Asian, or other racial groups.

Research Analyses

After combining the valid responses from the first survey with the second survey, we analyzed the data using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 26 (SPSS, 2019). We combined the presence of three different types of post-secondary supports (College and Career Counselor, Early Post-Secondary Options Coordinator, and GEAR UP Coordinator) into one variable due to the small numbers and similar job characteristics or responsibilities. During this process, we removed several participants who did not include adequate data for analysis. For example, we did not include an alternative school counselor with revolving enrollment or four participants who included a range of students in the analysis regarding school enrollment. Additionally, participants who did not know the location of their school (urban, suburban, or rural), Title I status, or whether or not they followed the 80% guideline were not included in those specific analyses.

Due to the nominal and ordinal nature of the majority of the survey data and the non-normal distribution, we analyzed the data using descriptive and non-parametric statistics with α at .05: (a) point-biserial correlation analysis for one continuous variable and one dichotomous variable; (b) Fisher's exact test for two dichotomous variables, which is used for small samples with random sampling and independent observations; and (c) Spearman's rank-order correlation for ordinal or continuous data, which is robust to outliers and used with non-normal distributions. We also examined corresponding measures for effect size to determine practical importance using the following levels suggested by Rea and Parker (1992): *negligible* ($0 < .1$), *weak* ($.1 < .2$), *moderate* ($.2 < .4$), *relatively strong* ($.4 < .6$), *strong* ($.6 < .8$), and *very strong* ($.8 < 1.0$).

Results

Research Question 1

For the first research question we examined how reported school counselor time allocations in counseling duties compare across elementary (*n* = 74), middle (*n* = 22), and high (*n* = 37) school counselors. School counselors reported the percentage of their time spent delivering school counseling core curriculum as well as providing individual student planning, responsive services, student support services (comprised of referrals, consultation, and collaboration), program management/system support, and non-counseling duties. Table 2 includes the medians, means, and standard deviations for each of the categories and grade levels.

School counselors reported whether or not they followed the guidelines for spending 80% of their time in direct and student support services. The majority of elementary school counselors (*n* = 63, 85.1%) reported they spend at least 80% of their time in this domain, while these numbers decreased to approximately half of the middle school counselors (*n* = 12, 54.5%) and high school counselors (*n* = 20, 54.1%). Conversely, only 10.8% (*n* = 8) of elementary school counselors reported that they did not follow the 80% guideline, while these percentages were much greater for middle school counselors (*n* = 9, 40.9%) and high school counselors (*n* = 12, 32.4%). A small number of school counselors were unsure if they met the recommended time allocation: elementary (*n* = 3, 4.1%), middle, (*n* = 1, 4.5%), and high (*n* = 5, 13.5%).

To examine differences in engagement in program elements (school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and student support services including referrals, consultation, and collaboration) between

counselors who reported that they followed the 80% guidelines as compared to those who reported that they did not, we utilized point-biserial correlation analyses. For elementary school counselors, the relationship between following the 80% guideline was significant for the delivery of school counseling curriculum with a moderate positive association (r_{pb} = .254, p = .017), with those who follow the 80% guideline reporting a higher percentage of school counseling curriculum (M = 26.4) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 11.9). All other time allocations were not significant for the 80% provision of service guidelines for elementary school counselors.

For middle school counselors the relationship between following the 80% guideline was significant for individual student planning with a relatively positive strong association (r_{pb} = .461, p = .035) with those who follow the 80% guideline having more individual student planning (M = 12.4) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 6.9). Additionally, following the 80% guideline was significant for consultation with a strong positive association (r_{pb} = .639, p = .002) with middle school counselors who follow the 80% guideline providing more consultation (M = 8.1) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 2.6). All other time allocations were not significant with the provision of 80% service delivery for middle school counselors.

For high school counselors the relationship between following the 80% guideline was significant for individual student planning with a relatively strong positive association (r_{pb} = .413, p = .019) with those who follow the 80% guideline spending more time in individual student planning (M = 28.7) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 13.9). All other time allocations were not significant with the 80% time allocation guideline for high school counselors.

In examining the relationship between meeting the 80% service delivery guideline and non-counseling duties, all three grade levels reported significant results: (a) with a relatively strong negative association (r_{pb} = -.433, p < .001), elementary school counselors who follow the 80% delivery guideline report less non-counseling duties (M = 4.2) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 19.4); (b) with a strong negative association (r_{pb} = -.614, p = .003), middle school counselors who deliver 80% student services report less non-counseling duties (M = 3.3) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 26.6); and finally (c) with a relatively strong negative association (r_{pb} = -.502, p = .003), high school counselors who follow the 80% guideline report less non-counseling duties (M = 5.5) than those who do not follow the 80% guideline (M = 20.9).

Research Question 2

For research question 2 we examined the relationship between the provision of 80% of time to direct and student support services and non-counseling duties. For the first part of this question, we included the 132 respondents, regardless of grade level, who indicated they met (n = 102) or did not meet (n = 30) the 80% guideline. A one-sided Fisher's exact test was conducted, due to the expectation that there would be an inverse relationship between non-counseling duties and provision of 80% of time providing direct and student support services. Results revealed significant relationships, with moderate negative associations, between meeting the state and national model guideline and the following non-counseling duties: (a) standardized testing coordinator (p = .006, ϕ = -.262), with 6.9% of school counselors (n = 7) who met the 80% guideline reporting serving as standardized testing coordinator as compared to 26.7% (n = 8) of school counselors who did not meet the 80% guideline; (b) new student enrollment (p = .016, ϕ = -.223), with 8% (n = 9), of school

counselors who met the 80% guideline reported enrolling new students in contrast to 26.7% (n = 8) of school counselors who did not meet the 80% guideline; (c) discipline referral entry (p = .016, ϕ = -.223), with 8.8% (n=9) of school counselors who met the 80% guideline reporting entering discipline referrals as compared to 26.7% (n = 8) of school counselors who did not meet the 80% guideline (n = 8), and finally; (d) other non-counseling duties (p = .018, ϕ = -.207), with 21.6% of school counselors who met the 80% guideline (n = 22) reporting they had additional non-counseling duties, in contrast with 43.3% of school counselors who did not meet the 80% guideline (n = 13). Student transfers (p = .047, ϕ = -.186) had a weak negative association, with school counselors who met the 80% guideline, less likely to report that they complete student transfers than those who did not meet the 80% guideline; however, given the small effect size, this result offers little practical importance. All other non-counseling duties were not significant with the provision of 80% of time in direct and indirect student support services.

For the second part of our analyses for research question 2, we examined non-counseling duties by grade level. Due to the size of our small sample and the similarity between middle and high school report of ability to follow the 80% guideline, we combined the middle school and high school responses into one variable, secondary. The two groups consisted of elementary (n = 74) and secondary (n = 60) school counselors. A two-sided Fisher's exact test revealed that there was a significant relationship with a moderate association between grade level and two non-counseling duties: (a) standardized testing coordinator (p < .001, ϕ = .330), with 21.7% of secondary school counselors (n = 13) serving as standardized testing coordinator as compared to 1.4% of elementary school counselors (n = 1), and, (b) student transfers (p = .042, ϕ = .201), with 13.3% of secondary school

counselors (n = 8) tasked with student transfers in contrast with 2.7% of elementary school counselors (n = 2). The other non-counseling duties were not significant by grade level.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 examined the relationship between direct and student support services time distributions and the assignment of non-counseling activities with the following school characteristics: Title I status, student race/ethnicity, location (urban, suburban, or rural), and number of students enrolled in the school. We conducted point-biserial correlation analyses to determine the relationship between the time allocations with location and Title I status (N = 138). Individual student planning (r_{pb} = -.234, p = .006) was found to have a moderate negative association with Title I status with school counselors whose schools do not have Title I status having more individual student planning (M = 20.4) than those who have Title I status (M = 11.9). All other time allocations for Title I status were not significant. Location (urban, suburban, and rural) was not significant with the direct/student support services category.

We conducted Spearman's rank-order correlations to determine the relationship between the time allocations with the number of students enrolled in the school and student race/ethnicity. Student enrollment was found to have a moderate positive association with individual student planning (ρ = .321, p < .001), insofar as, when the number of students increases, so does the percentage of time allocated to individual student planning. However, school size was found to have a moderate negative association with non-counseling duties (ρ = -.235, p = .006) and a weak negative association between school counseling curriculum and number of students (ρ = -.197, p = .021), suggesting as enrollment increases the

percentage of time school counselors report spending both on school counseling curriculum and non-counseling duties decrease. All other time allocations were not significant with the number of students enrolled. To determine if these findings were related to the school counselor to student ratio, we performed point-biserial correlation (student service delivery by ratio) and Spearman rank correlation analyses (time allocation by ratio). None of the analyses were significant. Additionally, student race/ethnicity was not significant.

In examining the specific non-counseling duties through point-biserial correlation analysis, serving as attendance monitor (r_{pb} = -.345, p < .001) had a moderate negative association with student enrollment with those who serve as attendance monitor having lower student enrollment (M = 615.8) than those who do not serve as attendance monitor (M = 833.0). There was a moderate positive association between the number of students enrolled and school counselors' report of not having any non-counseling duties (r_{pb} = .339, p < .001) with those without non-counseling duties having a larger number of students enrolled (M = 1337.5) than school counselors with non-counseling duties (M = 749.8). Although of little practical importance, serving as RtI Coordinator (r_{pb} = -.180, p = .035) had a weak negative association with number of students with those who serve as RtI Coordinator having less students (M = 598.0) than those who do not serve as RtI Coordinator (M = 833.0). All other non-counseling duties were not significant with the number of students enrolled.

The results of a two-sided Fisher's exact test examining the independence between the 80% of time-variable (N = 127) with location (urban, suburban, and rural) and Title I status indicated that there were no significant relationships. Additionally, point-biserial correlation analysis (N = 127) indicated that there was not

a significant relationship between those who dedicated 80% of time to direct and student support services and the number of students enrolled in the school (N = 127) or student race/ethnicity (N =132).

Research Question 4

Research question 4 examined the relationship between school counselor time allocations and provision of 80% of time to direct and student support service with the presence of academic supportive services: (a) school psychologist, (b) school social worker, (c) mental health counselor, (d) behavioral interventionist, (e) instructional facilitator, (f) post-secondary support, and (g) other support. We used point-biserial correlation analyses to determine the relationship between the time allocations and each of these supportive services found the following significant results (N = 143): responsive services (r_{pb} = .224, p = .007) and student support services (r_{pb} = .231, p = .006) were both found to have a moderate positive association with behavioral interventionist, indicating that school counselors who have a behavioral interventionist spend more time delivering responsive services and student support services than those without a behavioral interventionist. For secondary school counselors, counseling curriculum was moderately negatively associated with the presence of a secondary support professional (r_{pb} = -.300, p = .020), suggesting those school counselors with post-secondary support personnel conduct less school counseling curriculum. Referrals were positively associated with both behavioral interventionist (r_{pb} = .177, p = .035) and school psychologists, (r_{pb} = .179, p = .031); however, both produced a small effect size and offer little practical significance. Finally, consultation was found to have weak positive association with having a behavioral interventionist (r_{pb} = .181, p = .030), and similarly offers little practical significance. The presence of an instructional facilitator, mental health

counselor, or RtI coordinator was not significant with any of the time allocation categories.

For the second part of the research question, we examined if there was a relationship between the provision of 80% of time to direct and student support services and the presence of various support personnel. After excluding those school counselors who indicated that they were unsure if they met this guideline, a two-sided Fisher's exact test (N = 132) revealed that there was a significant relationship between meeting the 80% guideline and having a school psychologist with a moderate positive association (p = .019, ϕ = .218); 81.9% of the 105 school counselors who reported having a school psychologist met the 80% guideline (n = 86), while 59.3% of the 27 school counselors without a school psychologist did not meet the 80% guideline (n = 16). All other academic support services were not significant to the provision of 80% of time to direct and student support services.

Discussion

For research question 1, results indicate that elementary school counselors conduct more guidance when compared to their secondary counterparts, although on average this was significantly less than previous recommendations outlined in literature (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). We theorize a decline in guidance may be connected, in part, to the prevalence of mental health issues that increasingly impact elementary populations and the demand to meet the needs of the whole child, in addition to the influence of data-driven programming (Savitz-Romer, 2019). Further evidence to support the waning salience of curriculum delivery is demonstrated by elementary school counselors' equal allocation of time to responsive services (20%) and student support services (20%), domains associated with intervention versus prevention activities. In regard to middle school, those

counselors who provided 80% of service were found to engage in more individual student planning and consultation than those who do not. Consistent with previous model suggestions (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) individual student planning appeared to increase at the middle school level, yet on average, middle school counselors spent only 10% of their time conducting individual student planning activities, which is considerably less than previous recommendations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Further, the finding that middle school counselors dedicate, on average, 25% of time to student support services may reflect an increased demand for consultation as students' maturational tasks create a greater demand for school counselor assistance. Similarly, in high school, the strong positive correlation between the provision of 80% of direct service and conducting individual student planning, underscores previous understanding that assisting students at the individual level continues to be a salient role for high school counselors. Finally, across the grade levels, there was a strong, to relatively strong, association between non-counseling duties and provision of 80% services, which suggests that assignment of tasks outside of school counselors' purview is the common denominator among those school counselors who do not meet state and national model guidelines.

Research Question 2 further examined the non-counseling duties that are most deleterious upon school counselors' ability to meet the 80% guideline. Most notably, serving as the standardized test coordinator and duties associated with discipline referral and new student enrollment compromised school counselors' time in model program elements. This finding also aligns with other studies that test coordination is an onerous responsibility that impairs school counselors' capacity to meaningfully work with students (Brown et al., 2019). Grade level differences

emerged, with secondary school counselors more likely to report non-counseling duties, particularly test coordination and student transfers. This finding reflects continuing tension between comprehensive models and actual school counseling practices, particularly in high school settings, which have consistently retained a more administrative orientation, despite a call to implement data-driven programs (Fan et al., 2019).

Research Question 3 further examined variability in school counselors' role by school demographic characteristics. School counselors in non-Title I schools reported engaging in more individual student planning. This finding resonates with research that found parents in more affluent schools often insist upon their children receiving individual attention, which comes at the expense of services that meet the needs of the greater school community (Landeros, 2011), such as school counselor engagement in school-wide guidance. Interestingly as school size increased, non-counseling duties decreased. While this result merits further investigation, one could conjecture that larger schools have more resources, including dedicated personnel to perform those non-counseling duties frequently delegated to the school counselor. This supposition is supported by the finding that school counselors in schools with smaller populations conduct more non-counseling duties, especially attendance monitoring. A couple of our findings for research question 3 contrasted with previous studies. In particular, location did not affect non-counseling duties and provides contrary evidence to previous findings (e.g. Chandler et al., 2018) that rural school counselors engage in less comprehensive programming. Second, the counselor-to-student ratio did not affect school counselors' capacity to implement state and national models, which also contrasts with findings from other studies (e.g. Moyer, 2011; Parzych, et al., 2019). Nonetheless, since we did not gather program fidelity

data, such as student outcomes, we cannot speculate on the quality of school counselors' programs in those schools with larger ratios.

Finally, research question 4 examined the influence of additional school support personnel and comprehensive programming. Most notably the presence of a behavioral specialist increased time in responsive services. One could intuit that since behavioral coaches are embedded in schools that implement comprehensive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) systems, these schools have more robust structures for addressing students' tier 2 academic and behavioral needs, and in turn, amplifies school counselors' time in responsive services. For secondary school counselors, post-secondary support personnel decreased time in school counseling curriculum. One practical conclusion to be drawn from this finding is the presence of post-secondary personnel diminishes the need for school counselors to conduct school-wide college planning sessions. Across the grades, the only professional who ostensibly impacted school counselor's capacity to meet the 80% guidelines was the presence of a school psychologist. Logically, one could theorize that schools with consistent access to a school psychologist have more resources, which in turn permits school counselors to fulfill their appropriate roles. Yet, this finding also opens the door for future research that examines symbiotic aspects of their roles, which may enhance the provision of their respective services.

Implications

The results of this study provide a case for advocacy and a glance into understanding the current roles and responsibilities of school counselors. In order to have adequate time for direct and student support services, school counselors may need to self-advocate and educate administrators and district leaders regarding the detrimental effects of an exorbitant amount of non-counseling duties. Data-driven

school counseling programs indicate what services are needed according to the student population, rather than following model prescribed time allocations. Depending on the types of supportive personnel, school counselor roles may shift, especially within a program that involves RtI or a MTSS (Belser et al., 2016). In an MTSS model, school counselors may perform some tasks seen as “non-counseling,” such as attendance monitor or Section 504 coordinator, in order to provide tier 2 services. Although the time allocations vary according to district and school, the results of this study support the notion that elementary school counselors spend the majority of their time providing guidance education, while secondary school counselors provide more time in individual student planning; however, there was great variability in time allocations for school counselors in this study, which is indicative of the challenges in the profession. This information is vital for counselor educators to relay to students in order that they may prepare future school counselors for their job expectations.

Limitations

The generalizability of these findings is limited due to the goal of the research, population under review, and ad hoc, self-report survey. This research was conducted in conjunction with another, time-sensitive, study examining the impact of a state school board policy. This restricted our sample to school counselors located in Tennessee, and the window of opportunity for participant recruitment. Although we found significance across multiple categories, given our small sample and non-standardized survey, in addition to non-parametric analyses, substantive inferences cannot be drawn from the results of the current inquiry. Additionally, the nature of self-report surveys is the reliance on the participants’ interpretation of the questions. For example, one question involved school counselors indicating if they have the

support of a school psychologist. Although most school districts employ school psychologists for student evaluation, this perceived level of support may vary by district, school, or individual.

Future Research

More comprehensive data may be gained by distributing this survey to school counselors in numerous states, including those with and without policies for student services delivery. However, due to the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of educational services, including school counseling (Stone, 2020), results from surveys in the near future may be impacted and skewed by the learning and service delivery method: in-person, hybrid, or virtual. Any surveys distributed during the pandemic should include questions regarding the structure of the educational environment, availability of technological resources for educators and students, and capacity to provide services due to confidentiality concerns.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2003*). The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs.* Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2019). *ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs (4th ed.).* Author.

Bain, S. F., Rueda, B., Mata-Villarreal, J., & Mundy, M. A. (2011). Assessing mental health needs of rural schools in South Texas: Counselors' perspectives. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, *14*, 1–11. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068820.pdf

Belser, C. T., Shillingford, M. A., & Joe, J. R. (2016). The ASCA model and mulit-tiered system of supports: A framework to support students of color with problem behavior. *The Professional Counselor, 6,* 251-262. doi:10.15241/cb.6.3.251

Brown, C., Dahlbeck, D. T., & Sparkman-Barnes, L. (2006). Collaborative relationships: School counselors and non-school mental health professionals working together to improve the mental health needs of students. *Professional School Counseling*, *9*(4), 332-335. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42732694

Brown, M. H., Lenares-Solomon, D., & Deaner, R. G. (2019). Every student succeeds act: A call to action for school counselors. *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy*, *6*(1), 86-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/2326716X.2018.1557574

Chandler, J. W., Burnham, J. J., Riechel, M. E. K., Dahir, C. A., Stone, C. B., Oliver, D. F & Bledsoe, K. G. (2018). Assessing the counseling and non-counseling roles of school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, *16*(7), n7. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1182095.pdf

Clemens, E. V., Milsom, A., & Cashwell, C. S. (2009). Using leader-member exchange theory to examine principal–school counselor relationships, school counselors' roles, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. *Professional School Counseling, 13*(2), 75-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0901300203

Dahir, C. A., Burnham, J. J., & Carolyn, S. (2009). Listen to the voices: School counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(3), 182-192. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42732775

Dimmitt, C., & Wilkerson, B. (2012). Comprehensive school counseling in Rhode Island: Access to services and student outcomes. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 125-135. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600205

Erford, B. T. (2019). *Transforming the school counseling profession* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Fan, K. Y., Carey, J. C., Martin, I., & He, L. (2019). Activities and role of school-based counselors in the us: A national survey of American counseling association members. *Journal of School-Based Counseling Policy and Evaluation*, *1*(2), 5. https://doi.org/10.25774/8nz2-4y62

Fernandez, T., Godwin, A., Doyle, J., Verdin, D., Boone, H., Kirn, A., & Potvin, G. (2016). More comprehensive and inclusive approaches to demographic data collection. *School of Engineering Education Graduate Student Series*. Paper 60. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=enegs

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program* (5th ed.). American School Counseling Association.

Landeros, M. (2011). Defining the ‘good mother’ and the ‘professional teacher’: Parent–teacher relationships in an affluent school district. *Gender and Education*, *23*(3), 247-262. doi: 10.1080/09540253.2010.491789

Lane, J. J., Bohner, G. L., Hinck, A. M., & Kircher, R. L. (2020). Current administrative perceptions of school counselors: Kansas administrators’ perceptions of school counselor duties. *Journal of School Counseling, 18*(2). Retrieved from http:/www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v18n2.pdf

Lapan, R. T., Gysbers, N. C., Bragg, S., & Pierce, M. E. (2012). Missouri professional school counselors: Ratios matter, especially in high-poverty schools. *Professional School Counseling, 16* (2), 108-116. doi: 10.1177/2156759X0001600207

Lapan, R. T., Poynton, T., Balkin, R., Jones L. (2019). ASCA National Model implementation and appropriate school counselor ratios promote more informed college decision- making. *ASCA Research Report*. Retrieved from www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/ Research-Release-Lapan.pdf

McCoy-Harless, A. (2015). *A comparison and exploration of Arkansas professional school counselor activities across poverty* (Publication No. 3715940) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Monteiro-Leitner, J., Asner-Self, K. K., Milde, C., Leitner, D. W., & Skelton, D. (2006). The role of the rural school counselor: Counselor, counselor-in-training, and principal perceptions. *Professional School Counseling*, *9*(3), 248-251. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42732678.pdf

Moyer, M. (2011). Effects of non-guidance activities, supervision, and student-to-counselor ratios on school counselor burnout. *Journal of School Counseling*, *9*(5), n5. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ933171.pdf

Mullen, P. R., & Gutierrez, D. (2016). Burnout, stress, and direct student services among school counselors. *The Professional Counselor*, *6*(4), 344–359. doi:10.15241/pm.6.4.344

Parzych, J., Donohue, P., Gaesser, A., Chiu, M. (2019). Measuring the impact of school counselor ratios on student outcomes. ASCA Research Report. Retrieved from www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/Research-Release-Parzych.pdf

Pyne, J. R. (2011). Comprehensive school counseling programs, job satisfaction, and the ASCA National Model. *Professional School Counseling, 15*(2), 88-97. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1101500202

Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (1992). *Designing and conducting survey research: a comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Reback, R. (2010). Non-instructional spending improves noncognitive outcomes: Discontinuity evidence from a unique elementary school counselor financing system. *Education Finance and Policy*, *5*(2), 105-137. https://ideas.repec.org/p/brn/wpaper/0903.html

Savitz-Romer, M. (2019). *Fulfilling the promise: Reimagining school counseling to advance student success*. Harvard Education Press.

Stone, C. (2020, May 1). *Issues and lessons emerging from COVID-19.* American School Counselor Association. https://www.schoolcounselor.org/magazine/blogs/may-june-2020/issues-and-lessons-emerging%C2%A0-from-covid-19

Studer, J. R. (2015). *The essential school counselor in a changing society.* Sage Publications.

Tennessee State Board of Education. (2017). School counseling model and standard policy. Tennessee Department of Education. 5.103.https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/stateboardofeducation/documents/policies/5000/5.103%20School%20Counseling%20Model%20and%20Standards%20Policy%204-21-17.pdf

Walsh, M. E., Barrett, J. G., & DePaul, J. (2007). Day-to-day activities of school counselors: Alignment with new directions in the field and the ASCA National Model. Professional School Counseling, 10(4), 370-378. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0701000410

Appendix

Figure 1

Counseling Program Elements (used with publisher permission).

	Elementary School	Middle/Junior High School	High School
Guidance support	35-45%	25-35%	15-25%
Individual student planning	5-10%	15-25%	25-35%
Responsive services	30-40%	30-40%	25-35%
System support	10-15%	10-15%	10-15%
	100%	100%	100%

Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N = 143)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Age		
18-24 years	1	.7
25-44 years	82	57.3
45-64 years	58	40.6
65 years plus	2	1.4
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	61	42.7
Latino/Hispanic	1	.7
White/Caucasian	75	52.4
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1	.7
Other	5	3.5
Gender		
Female	133	93.0
Male	10	7.0

Table 2

Time Allocation Percentages Reported by Grade Level (N = 133)

	Elementary (*n* = 74)			Middle (*n* = 22)			High (*n* = 37)		
	Mdn	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*	*M*	*SD*
Direct/Ind. Stud. Services	80.0%	76.7%	13.8	72.5%	67.0%	20.3	75.0%	69.4%	18.8
School Coun. Curr.	20.0%	24.3%	18.0	10.0%	10.7%	7.2	5.0%	8.1%	7.7
Indiv. Stud. Planning	6.5%	9.9%	11.3	10.0%	10.3%	6.0	20.0%	23.4%	17.3
Responsive Services*	20.0%	21.8%	13.6	20.0%	25.2%	18.1	10.0%	17.5%	14.0
Stud. Supp. Services*	20.0%	20.7%	10.6	25.0%	20.8%	14.0	20.0%	20.4%	9.3
Referrals	5.0%	8.1%	7.1	10.0%	9.6%	8.5	5.0%	5.9%	4.1
Consultation	5.0%	6.9%	4.8	5.0%	5.5%	4.5	5.0%	6.7%	3.7
Collaboration	5.0%	5.7%	3.7	5.0%	5.7%	5.5	10.0%	7.8%	4.5
Prog. Mngmt./Sch. Sup.	16.0%	17.1%	9.7	20.0%	20.4%	13.7	18.0%	20.1%	11.7
Prog. Foundation	3.0%	4.0%	4.0	2.0%	2.7%	2.9	3.0%	3.8%	4.2
Management	5.0%	4.3%	3.3	5.0%	5.4%	4.9	5.0%	6.9%	6.8
Accountability	4.5%	3.6%	3.0	5.0%	4.1%	3.9	5.0%	5.4%	5.0
Fair-share Resp.	5.0%	5.2%	4.4	5.0%	8.2%	12.4	2.0%	4.0%	4.6
Non-counseling Duties	4.0%	6.1%	11.1	5.0%	12.7%	18.9	5.0%	10.5%	14.3

*Student Support Services were included under Responsive Services under the model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).