Effects of Non-Guidance Activities, Supervision, and Student-to-Counselor Ratios on School Counselor Burnout

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Abstract

School counselors, like all mental health professionals are at high risk for burnout. High caseloads, job role ambiguity, and lack of supervision increase their propensity for burnout. Three areas were selected for study in this article due to their potential impact on burnout: supervision, student-to-counselor-ratios, and non-guidance related duties. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted and findings indicate non-guidance related duties and supervision are the best predictors of burnout. Implications and limitations are discussed.

   Keywords: school counseling, burnout, school counselor supervision

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on School Counselor Burnout

Burnout, the term originally coined and defined by Freudenberger (1974) as a debilitating psychological condition caused by unrelieved work stress. Symptoms may include: depleted energy, lowered resistance to illness, increased depersonalization in interpersonal relationships, increased dissatisfaction and pessimism, increased absenteeism, and work inefficiency. Burnout affects approximately 39% of all mental health counselors (Lambie, 2007). Previous researchers have recognized the impact of burnout among counselors, social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists (Russell, 1990; Skovalt, 2001). In addition, burnout has been documented in various educational fields for positions such as teachers and administrators (Brock & Grady, 2002). School counselors, who bring education and mental health together, may be particularly vulnerable because of their job demands. Typical demands include heavy caseloads, little to no clinical supervision and environments with constant role ambiguity (Brewer & Clippard, 2002). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) describes school counselors as responsible for students' academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2003); this alone is a monumental task. When you add the all too common "non-counseling" duties (e.g. lunch duty, substituting for absent teachers, bus duty, administering achievement tests) the responsibility can become even more overwhelming, especially when considering some school counselors may be responsible for as many as 800 students (NCES, 2011).

Baggerly and Osborn (2006) describe the school counselor position as one in which there are frequent expectations to perform tasks unrelated to professional school

counseling, and little importance given to defined roles and clinical supervision. Comments from practicing school counselors parallel Baggerly and Osborn's description with claims of continuous job ambiguity resulting in the assignment of administrative duties, caseloads being much too large to be effective, and a great deal of isolation with little to no supervision (Johnson, 2000; Wilkerson, 2009). As such, school counselors often feel pulled in many directions and are at risk for high levels of stress, exhaustion, and overall burnout in their daily work (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that even though the majority of counselors in their study reported being satisfied with their job, almost 90% of their participants reported increased stress due to job demands over the past couple of years. The potential fallout and consequences associated with school counselor burnout may significantly affect students, families and the overall school environment (Lambie, 2007).

The ASCA model defines the role of school counselors and offers a guide to developing, implementing, and maintaining effective school counseling programs and promoting the profession (ASCA, 2005). Specifically, ASCA outlines definitions of a school counseling program, basic themes, philosophies, management systems, accountability, and implementation of programs. Three areas explicitly addressed in the model are school counselor supervision, counselor-to-student ratios, and appropriate versus inappropriate activities for school counselors (ASCA). These three areas are highlighted in this article due to their potential correlation to school counselor burnout.

Supervision

   Bernard & Goodyear (2004) defined supervision as:

   An ongoing, evaluative intervention provided by a senior member of a profession

   to a junior member or members of that same profession, serves the purpose of

   enhancing the professional abilities of the junior member(s), monitoring the

   services offered, and acting as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the

   profession. (pg. 6)

Supervision of school counselors is an essential component of professional

development principally due to frequent role ambiguity, large caseloads, and varied

administrator expectations (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Counselors working without the

support of ongoing supervision are more susceptible to the stress of daily activities and

large caseloads (Borders & Brown, 2005). Researchers (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006;

Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Luke & Bernard, 2006; McMahon & Patton, 2000; Page,

Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001; Wood & Rayle, 2006) have extensively highlighted different

models, benefits, and the need for regular and continuous supervision for professional

school counselors by professional school counselors. Supervision provides both new

and seasoned professionals with support and mentorship. It promotes growth and

development, and alleviates deficits associated with lack of supervision including

professional identity problems and ineffective delivery of services (Dollarhide & Miller,

2006). In the professional literature, scholars have demonstrated how clinical

supervision improves effectiveness, accountability, confidence, comfort, and overall job

performance (Wood & Rayle, 2006). Dollarhide and Miller (2006) describe it as a "rite of

passage, the means by which skills are refined, theory and practice are integrated, and trainees explore their new professional identities" (p. 242).

Student-to-Counselor Ratios

Student-to-counselor ratios have fluctuated throughout the history of the profession. They have ranged close to 1000 students per school counselor in some states and continue to stay above the current ASCA recommended ratio of 250 to 1 (ASCA, 2005). Based on statistics from the 2008-2009 school-year, the national average was 457 students per counselor. Only 13 states average less than 350 students per counselor (NCES, 2011). Elementary schools traditionally have the highest student to counselor ratios and numbers decrease as the school level increases (Astramovich & Holden, 2002).

Although the ideal and recommended ratios may not be met, the ratios simply must be reduced in order for school counselors to be effective in their role (Baker & Gerler, 2008). Schmidt (2008) emphasized "the number of counselors hired in a school counseling program makes a difference in the quantity and quality of services offered" (p. 100) and traditionally, the most successful guidance programs are associated with lower student-to-counselor ratios (Baker & Gerler, 2008).

Although there is still a dearth of research on the impact of higher student-to-counselor ratios (Carrell & Carrell, 2006), there is some evidence that high ratios negatively affect school counselor performance (Downs et al., 2002; McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzmán, 2010). McCarthy et al. (2010) found a theme of frustration when talking to school counselors about working with large populations and the inability to address the needs of all students when given large caseloads. In addition,

Downs et al. (2002) found that counselors at schools with higher ratios were overwhelmed with providing services to students and routinely neglected their own professional development.

Non-Guidance Activities

Gysbers & Henderson (2006) identify non-guidance activities as typically fitting into four categories: student supervision, instruction, clerical, and administrative. Non-guidance activities commonly assigned to school counselors include: lunch duty, substituting for absent teachers, bus duty, administering achievement tests, discipline, and registering students. Despite the numerous resources available (e.g., textbooks, professional journals, state and national organizations), school counselor role ambiguity and role confusion continue to be major issues for school counselors, administrators, and parents (Lieberman, 2004). Thus, many school counselors are assigned non-guidance tasks and clerical duties unrelated to their professional training (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Dahir, 2004). Concomitantly, counselors may feel added pressure to complete assigned non-guidance tasks due to the lack of security in many school counseling positions (DeMato & Curcio, 2004). However, performing such tasks hinders counselors when developing and implementing a quality comprehensive guidance program and ultimately, non-guidance related tasks impact counselors' overall self-efficacy. Non-guidance activities also often diminish the importance of school counseling and a comprehensive counseling program (Nelson, Robles-Pena, & Nichter, 2008).

DeMato and Curcio (2004) reported counselors expressing concern over too many administrative tasks being assigned which makes it difficult to work with children

one-on-one or in classroom guidance settings. Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, and Zlatev (2009) described counselors as being overwhelmed and feeling off-task due to excessive non-guidance related tasks that take away from their ability to counsel with students. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that performing inappropriate or non-guidance related tasks significantly affected school counselors' job satisfaction. All of the above indicate school counselors may become discouraged by incongruous task assignments, possibly resulting in elevated levels of unhappiness (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Many professional school counselors are taxed with extraordinary high caseloads (i.e., above the recommended 250 to 1) (ASCA, 2005), receive little to no supervision (McMahon & Patton, 2000), and are often expected to perform duties outside of their training and professional role (Lieberman, 2004). The purpose of this research is to understand how burnout affects school counselors when looking at the predictive qualities of student to-counselor-ratios, the amount of supervision received, and the number of hours spent on non-counseling activities. Three specific research questions are examined: What are the predictive qualities of high student-to-counselor ratios, the amount of supervision received, and the amount of time spent on non-counseling duties when looking at burnout among school counselors. Based on previous research, the author hypothesizes that the number of hours counselors spend on non-guidance activities will explain the greatest amount of variance of the criterion variables.

Method

Participants

Purportedly, school counselors may join their state/regional affiliate rather than the national organization due to the state/regional affiliate being more likely to concentrate on state/regional issues, not to mention state/regional affiliates may be more affordable. Therefore, the author made the decision to contact ASCA's regional and state affiliates rather than contact ASCA directly to recruit participants. After approval from the authors institutional Review Board, web-based surveys including a description of the purpose of the study were sent to ASCA's regional and state representatives via email. In the email each state and regional representative was asked to forward the web-based survey to their membership. Currently working school counselors were selected for the study. A total of 382 school counselors completed the survey. Actual response rates were unable to be determined because there was no way to ascertain which state representatives actually forwarded the survey on to their constituents and how many school counselors were actually made aware of the research.

Of the 382 respondents, 52 (13.6%) were male, 325 (85.1%) were female, and 5 (1.3%) did not indicate their gender. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 70 years old with an average age of 44 years old (SD = 11.3). The participants were predominantly Caucasian (n = 343, 89.8%). The remaining sample was comprised of African American (n = 20, 5.2%), Asian (n = 2, 0.5%), Hispanic (n = 8, 2.1%), and nine participants (2.4%) who did not indicate ethnicity. At the time of data collection, 111 (29.1%) of the participants worked in elementary school settings, 85 (22.3%) in middle

school, 128 (33.5%) in high school settings, and 58 (15.2%) did not indicate a work

setting.

Criterion Variables

The Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI; Lee, Baker, Cho, Heckathorn, Holland,

Newgent, ... Yu , 2007) was given to participants to assess their level of burnout. The

CBI is a self-report measure consisting of 20 items which are divided into five subscales

(each scale consisting of 4 items); these subscales represent the criterion variables

examined in this study. Subscales include: (a) Exhaustion (e.g., "I feel exhausted due to

my job as a counselor"), (b) Incompetence (e.g., "I do not feel like I am making a

change in my clients"), (c) Negative work environment (e.g., "I feel frustrated with the

system in my workplace"), (d) Devaluing client (e.g., "I am not interested in my clients

and their problems"), and (e) Deterioration in personal life (e.g., "My relationships with

family members have been negatively impacted by my work as a counselor"). Each item

has a five-point Likert scale response (*1 = never true*; *5 = always true*). Internal

consistencies from previous research have been reported as follows: .85 for the

exhaustion subscale, .83 for the negative work environment subscale, .80 for devaluing

client subscale, .73 for the incompetence subscale, and .78 for the deterioration in

personal life subscale (Lee et al., 2007). Alpha coefficients for this sample are

comparable to previous studies: .86 for the exhaustion subscale, .86 for the negative

work environment subscale, .74 for devaluing client subscale, .73 for the incompetence

subscale, and .80 for the deterioration in personal life subscale.

Predictor Variables

Three predictor variables were investigated in this study: the number of hours of non-guidance activities performed, the amount of supervision received, and student to counselor ratios. The first of these, non-guidance activities, refers to the average number of hours each counselor spends performing non-guidance related tasks (e.g., facilitating statewide achievement testing, lunch/bus duty, administrative duties) each week. Participants were asked to gauge amount of time they spent on non-guidance activities during a typical work week (i.e., 0-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-15 hours, 16-20 hours, or 21+ hours). Those responding indicated they spent between zero and more than twenty hours per week performing non-guidance activities. Ninety-nine (25.9%) participants indicated they spent 0-5 hours on non-guidance activities each week, 85 (22.3%) spent 6-10 hours, 67 (17.7%) spent 11-15 hours, 68 (18%) spent 16-20 hours, and 55 (14.6%) spent over 20 hours per week on non-guidance activities. Overall, 50% of participants reported spending over 10 hours per week on non-guidance activities.

The second predictor variable, supervision, refers to the average number of hours of supervision the school counselor received each month. Participants were asked to indicate how many hours of supervision they receive, on average, each month. Two hundred ninety-two (77%) indicated they received 0-1 hours supervision each month, 47 (12.4%) received 2-3 hours, 20 (5.3%) received 3-4 hours, and 20 (5.3%) received five or more hours of supervision each month.

The third predictor variable, student to counselor ratio, refers to the ratio of students to school counselors on a campus. Counselors were asked to report the average number of students per each school counselor on their campus. Among the

358 participants the average counselor to student ratio was 1:348 with a standard deviation of 146.54. When looking at the ratio for each level, the average counselor to student ratio was 1:388 (n = 111, SD = 150.99) for elementary school, 343 (n = 109, SD = 132.46) for middle school, and 1:322 (n = 109, SD = 149.34) for high school.

Model Fit

Model fit was determined using the chi-square test (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and the Rooted Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The χ^2 goodness of fit test evaluates the difference between the predicted and sample covariance matrix. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was chosen because it can be evaluated for statistical significance. Along with the benefits, there are several limitations to using the χ^2 such as: its sensitivity to sample size, model complexity, and violations of multivariate normality. Even so, a good fitting model will be non-significant with p ≥ .05. In general, the TLI and CFI statistics are considered acceptable for values larger than .90, although values greater than .95 are often preferable to minimize Type I and Type II errors. The fit index for RMSEA is often judged acceptable for values less than .08.

Model Fit: Overall CFA

The overall CFA model revealed an adequate model fit, χ^2 (62) = 269.099, p<.001, CFI = .939, TLI = .975, RMSEA = .094, with all estimated factor loadings greater than .40. To accompany the estimated factor loadings, the interfactor correlations (i.e., correlation matrix is provided in Table 1). These relationships represent simple bivariate correlations that were corrected for measurement error. The error terms were all uncorrelated. The author contemplated correlating two items and

doing so would have slightly improved the overall fit. However, correlating items would capitalize on chance and thus the decision to leave all items uncorrelated was made.

Results

An analysis was performed to screen data and determine outliers that may have potentially influenced results. Multicollinearity was not a concern given that the VIF (.992-1.00), tolerance statistics (1.00-1.008), and correlation coefficients between predictor and criterion variables did not exceed .75 (see Table 1). These statistics suggest that each variable measured separate constructs. Residual plots were used to check for outliers. Although a few outliers (n = 12, 0.3%) did fall more than three standard deviations from the mean they were not eliminated because the author believed them to be legitimate cases and not a result of improper data entry. Normality can be assumed given the project's sample size (N>30) according to Central Limit Theorem. However, further examination of skewness and Kurtosis confirms normality. Given the small percentage (1%) of missing data, analyses were conducted using listwise deletion.

Table 1

Correlations Among Observed Variables

	DPL	EXHAUST	INCOMP	NEG_WORK	DEVAL
DPL	1.00				
EXHAUST	0.75	1.00			
INCOMP	0.52	0.58	1.00		
NEG_WORK	0.58	0.68	0.52	1.00	
DEVAL	0.45	0.44	0.71	0.38	1.00

Note. DPL = Deterioration in personal life; EXHAUST = Exhaustion; INCOMP = Incompetence; NEG_WORK = Negative work environment; DEVAL = Devaluing clients.

Correlations among scores on the five criterion variables are presented in Table 1. Scores on the five CBI subscales were moderately to strongly correlated with one another. A hierarchical regression analysis was chosen to determine the unique and combined predictive qualities of the three predictor variables (student-to-counselor ratios, supervision received, and non-guidance activities). Five different models were used to determine which predictor variable accounted for the greatest amount of variance on each of the five scales of the CBI. A sixth model was then run to determine which predictor variables accounted for the greatest amount of variance for burnout as a whole (i.e., all five scales together). Non-guidance duties were entered as the first step for each of the six models, supervision as the second step, and student-to-counselor ratios as the third step. The student-to-counselor ratios variable did not account for a significant amount of the variance in any of the six models, so it will not be discussed in the description of results that follows. Detailed results of the hierarchical regression analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting School Counselor Burnout (N=358)

Model 1: Exhaustion	b	SE b	β
Step 1			
Constant	9.335	.386	
Non-guidance activities	.529	.126	.22*
Step 2			
Constant	9.686	.495	
Non-guidance activities	.530	.126	.22*
Supervision	-.258	.228	
Step 3			
Constant	9.603	.648	
Non-guidance activities	.530	.126	.22*
Supervision	-.254	.229	
Student-to Counselor ratios	.000	.001	

Model 2: Negative Work Environment	b	SE b	β
Step 1			
Constant	7.683	.405	
Non-guidance activities	.652	.132	.25*
Step 2			
Constant	8.455	.516	
Non-guidance activities	.654	.131	.25*
Supervision	-.567	.237	-.12**
Step 3			
Constant	9.001	.674	
Non-guidance activities	.655	.131	.25*
Supervision	-.594	.238	-.13**
Student-to Counselor ratios	-.002	.001	
Model 3: Incompetence	**b**	**SE b**	**β**
Step 1			
Constant	7.529	.284	
Non-guidance activities	.357	.093	.20*
Step 2			
Constant	7.987	.363	
Non-guidance activities	.359	.093	.20*
Supervision	-.337	.167	-.10**
Step 3			
Constant	8.081	.475	
Non-guidance activities	.359	.093	.20*
Supervision	-.341	.168	-.11**
Student-to Counselor ratios	.000	.001	
Model 4: Deterioration in Personal Life	**b**	**SE b**	**β**
Step 1			
Constant	6.828	.332	
Non-guidance activities	.382	.108	.18*
Step 2			
Constant	7.106	.425	
Non-guidance activities	.383	.108	.18*
Supervision	-.205	.196	
Step 3			
Constant	7.180	.557	
Non-guidance activities	.383	.109	
Supervision	-.208	.197	.18*
Student-to Counselor ratios	.000	.001	

Model 5: Devaluing Clients	b	SE b	β
Step 1			
Constant	4.897	.208	
Non-guidance activities	.147	.068	.11**
Step 2			
Constant	5.243	.266	
Non-guidance activities	.148	.068	.12**
Supervision	-.255	.122	-.11**
Step 3			
Constant	5.380	.348	
Non-guidance activities	.148	.068	.12**
Supervision	-.262	.123	-.11**
Student-to Counselor ratios	.000	.001	
Model 6: Total Burnout	**b**	**SE b**	**β**
Step 1			
Constant	26.94	.888	
Non-guidance activities	1.54	.29	.27*
Step 2			
Constant	28.79	1.130	
Non-guidance activities	1.54	.288	.27*
Supervision	-1.36	.520	-.13**
Step 3			
Constant	29.64	1.48	
Non-guidance activities	1.55	.288	.27*
Supervision	-1.41	.522	-.14**
Student-to Counselor ratios	.002	.003	

Note. * = ρ< .001, ** = ρ< .05

　　Model 1: Exhaustion: R^2 = .05 for Step 1: ΔR^2 for Step 2 not significant.
　　Model 2: Negative Work Environment: R^2 = .06 for Step 1: ΔR^2 = .02 for Step 2 (ps<.05)
　　Model 3: Incompetence: R^2 = .04 for Step 1: ΔR^2 = .01 for Step 2 (ps<.05)
　　Model 4: Deterioration in Personal Life: R^2 = .03 for Step 1: ΔR^2 for Step 2 not significant
　　Model 5: Devaluing Clients: R^2 = .01 for Step 1: ΔR^2 = .01 (ps<.05)

Model 1

In the first step, non-guidance duties accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the exhaustion variable (R^2 = .047, $F_{(1, 357)}$ = 17.55, p < .01). In the second step, supervision did not account for a significant amount of additional variance in exhaustion after removing the variance explained by non-guidance duties. From a

practical standpoint this model produced a small to medium effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

Model 2

In the first step, non-guidance duties accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the negative work environment variable (R^2 = .064, F (1, 357) = 24.25, p < .01). In the second step, supervision accounted for a significant amount of additional variance in negative work environment after controlling the variance explained by non-guidance duties (R^2 = .078, F (1, 356) = 5.70, p < .05). From a practical standpoint this model produced a small to medium effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

Model 3

In the first step, non-guidance duties accounted for a significant amount of variance in the incompetence variable (R^2 = .04, F (1, 357) = 14.78, p < .01). In the second step, supervision accounted for a significant amount of additional variance in incompetence after controlling the variance explained by non-guidance duties (R^2 = .051, F (1, 356) = 4.06, p < .05). From a practical standpoint this model produced a small to medium effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

Model 4

In the first step, non-guidance duties accounted for a significant amount of variance in the deterioration in personal life variable (R^2 = .034, F (1, 357) = 12.42, p < .01). In the second step, supervision did not account for a significant amount of additional variance in deterioration in personal life after controlling the variance explained by non-guidance duties. From a practical standpoint this model produced a small effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

Model 5

In the first step, non-guidance duties accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the devaluing clients variable ($R^2 = .013$, $F (1, 357) = 4.67$, $p < .05$). In the second step, supervision accounted for a significant amount of additional variance in devaluing clients after controlling the variance explained by non-guidance duties ($R^2 = .025$, $F (1, 356) = 4.35$, $p < .05$). From a practical standpoint this model produced a small effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

Model 6

In the first step, non-guidance duties account for a significant portion of the variance of total burnout ($R^2 = .073$, $F (1, 357) = 28.06$, $p < .01$). In the second step, supervision accounted for a significant amount of additional variance in total burnout after controlling the variance explained by non-guidance duties ($R^2 = .09$, $F (1, 356) = 17.70$, $p < .01$). From a practical standpoint this model produced a small to medium effect size based on Cohen's (1988) standards.

<center>**Discussion and Implications**</center>

School counselors play a vital role within the school system. They contribute to student success and to students' academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2005). Those unable to avoid burnout (i.e. having feelings of incompetence, devaluing clients, feelings of exhaustion, seeing deterioration in their personal life, and feeling they are caught in a negative work environment) are often times not able to fulfill their job responsibilities. The authors of the ASCA National Model and previous researchers have highlighted the importance of setting appropriate student-to-counselor ratios, providing adequate professional supervision, and firmly defining the roles and

responsibilities for school counselors. The results of this study suggest that a lack of school counselor supervision and greater amounts of time spent on non-guidance activities increase the likelihood of school counselor burnout.

Non-Guidance Activities

The results of this study parallel previous studies (Ballard & Murgatroyd, 1999; Demato & Curcio, 2004; Lambie, 2007) and indicates that the greater amount of time spent on non-guidance duties, the greater it significantly affects school counselor burnout. The number of hours school counselors spent performing non-counseling tasks was found to be a significant predictor of burnout in all six models. Thus, counselors were more likely to have symptoms of burnout (e.g., feel incompetent, feel exhausted, devalue their clients, perceive their work environment negatively, and/or experience deterioration in their personal life). Over 50% of the school counselors surveyed indicated they spent 10 or more hours per week on tasks unrelated to their professional training. As their time spent on non-guidance activities increased, so too did their feelings of exhaustion and incompetence. In addition, they had decreased feelings of pleasure related to their personal life and had negative feelings towards their work environment. Finally, participants who spent more time on non-guidance related tasks were less likely to show empathy towards students.

Given that 74% of the participants reported that they spent more than five hours during the week performing non-guidance activities, it seems that these activities constitute a significant portion of a the work load for many U.S. school counselors. Results from this study and previous studies suggest that higher levels of non-guidance

tasks relate to burnout, which highlight the need to understand how school counselors might better limit the amount of non-guidance activities they are assigned.

Administrators, teachers, parents, and even school counselors themselves all understand the school counselor roles and responsibilities differently (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). As a result, many school counselors are assigned various unrelated tasks that may lead to frustration and resentment towards the working environment and the entire school system. Johnson (2000) noted that counselors who blame others for not appreciating their role and responsibilities are misdirected.

According to Johnson (2000) it is not enough to simply collect and report data. School counselors also must consider aligning the goals of their program to match the mission and goals of the school or district as a whole. Gysbers (2004) encouraged school counselors to focus their time and energy on goals and activities that are important to school improvement plans. By doing so, they are better able to show their effectiveness. In addition, they are able to provide evidence to administrators and other stakeholders regarding the positive effects school counseling has on overall student success. School counselors who highlight the success of their program and connect their program goals to the mission and goals of the school are better able to define their role. Those that solidify that definition and educate others on the role of a school counselor may be less likely to be assigned non-guidance activities.

Supervision

Similar to non-guidance activities, the amount of supervision received was a significant predictor of burnout, but only in four of the six models. The amount of supervision was seen to be a significant predictor for the incompetence, negative work

environment, and devaluing clients factors. Additionally, the amount of supervision was a significant predictor of overall burnout. This indicates that school counselors who are feeling incompetent in their role, showing frustration with their school setting, or lacking compassion for students may benefit from increased supervision in addition to a better definition of their roles. Interestingly, the two significant predictors of burnout, the amount of supervision and time spent on non-guidance activities, are two areas over which school counselors and school counselor supervisors may have the most control. School counselors are able to advertise the strengths and benefits of their program in order to better educate stakeholders about their role, and supervisors are able to provide supervision to their counselors.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of information found in the literature related to school counselor supervision and the limited material available is rapidly becoming outdated. Programs which are in need of having their supervision practices updated or implementing a new model have few updated models to follow. One of the few recent models (Somody, Henderson, Cook, & Zambrano, 2008) promotes a performance improvement system that includes both clinical and administrative supervision. A main component identified by the authors is the establishment of a firm definition of the role of the school counselor and mutually agreed upon job expectations for the counselor (Somody et al.). Setting firm expectations at the outset provides counselors with a solid foundation. It also offers a means to measure their success and overall job performance.

Despite the evidence in favor of supervision, many school counselors do not receive clinical supervision after their educational program is completed. Seventy-seven percent of respondents to this research indicated they received one hour of clinical

supervision per month, at most. Many respondents indicated they received less than one hour per month. Prior research (Beggerly & Osborn, 2006; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Wood & Rayle, 2006) underscores the importance of regular and ongoing professional supervision for school counselors. The current findings suggest that counselors receiving adequate supervision feel more competent in their duties. Supervision provides school counselors with timely feedback, both positive and negative. It allows them to gauge their performance in the role of school counselor. Supervision also provides school counselors with an avenue to vent frustrations that come about. It is a means of support that may lessen feelings of incompetence and increase empathy for students and their presenting issues.

Limitations

While the findings of this research provide valuable information to school counselors and school counselor supervisors, there are some significant limitations. Firstly, the participants were only from 16 states and the method chosen for recruiting participants made it difficult to obtain actual response rates. Future researchers may want to explore ways to encourage more participants from all areas of the country. Secondly, the participants were recruited through their state school counseling associations and thus all participants were members of those associations. School counselors not belonging to professional organizations may have different experiences and attitudes. Finally, several regression analyses were done instead of structural equation modeling. Regression models were chosen because the primary focus of this article is predicting the effect of the three identified predictor variables. Additional

research may choose structural equation modeling to better explain the effects of each predictor.

Conclusion

Burnout is an issue in many professional work settings and can be a detriment to overall productivity and quality of work. The school counseling profession is no different and may be especially susceptible to burnout due to the excessive work load, job role confusion, and lack of professional supervision. Once symptoms are detected, a key to counteracting the effects is to identify factors contributing to the impairment and addressing those factors. This study examined non-guidance related activities, the amount of supervision received, and student-to-counselor ratios as possible factors relating to school counselor burnout. Performing non-guidance related tasks and the amount of clinical supervision received were both found to be significant predictors of burnout. Student-to-counselor ratio was not found to be significant.

Avoiding all work related stress is an unattainable goal. However, circumventing burnout is achievable. Counselors and supervisors both have a role in assuring that school counselors have the resources available to perform at optimal levels. Counselors may aid their own efforts to avoid non-guidance activities by advocating for their position and responsibilities. Doing so includes aligning the goals of the counseling program with those of the larger school community, collecting and reporting data, and making sure that school administrators and other stakeholders are aware of all the vital contributions counselors make to the school community. A leading cause for being assigned excessive non-guidance related tasks is not defining one's role within the school. Therefore, school counselors who firmly establish their role within the school may be

relinquished from unnecessary non-guidance tasks and be free to explore other ways to benefit the students within their school. Supervision is crucial for providing support to school counselors as they establish and maintain their position. Supervisors also afford counselors a sounding board for addressing concerns that go along with the job. Supervision provides confirmation to counselors that they are performing appropriately in their role and also gives mentorship regarding ways to effectively handle job stress.

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