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Examining the Theoretical Framework for the Unique Manifestation of Burnout among High School Counselors

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Examining the Theoretical Framework for the Unique Manifestation of Burnout among High School Counselors

Abstract

Utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol this study engages in a phenomenological inquiry to examine school counselors' experiences of job stress and burnout. We specifically explore the use of two different theoretical frameworks for understanding these phenomena, in order to improve our understanding of how to frame future research efforts. We identify themes consistent with the Maslach model of burnout and themes consistent with the Job Demand Control Support (JDCA) theory of job stress. We make recommendations regarding use of the JDCA in future research, as well as discussing avenues for advocacy.

Keywords

burnout, school counselor, job stress, qualitative

It is documented that burnout is problematic for social work and psychology professionals (Di Benedetto & Swadling, 2014; Maslach, 1982; McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015; Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1984; Rupert, Miller, & Dorociak, 2015; Russell, 1990; Senter, Morgan, McDonald, & Bewley, 2010; Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, & Segal, 2015). It is also a concern among teachers and educational administrators (Brock & Grady, 2002; Farber, 1991; Gold & Roth, 1993; Laueremann, & Konig, 2016; Zhang, Zhou, & Zhang, 2016; Zysberg, Orenshtein, Grimmon, & Robinson, 2016). However, professional school counselors are in the unique position of working within both mental health and educational contexts potentially increasing their risk of developing burnout (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). They are subject to the external demands of multiple stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the profession itself) over which they have little control (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bardhoshi, Schweine, & Duncan, 2014; Byrne, 1999; Culbreth, Gruilka, Karpinski, & Smith, 2015; Moyer, 2011; Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). When people experience burnout, we know there is a resulting psychological and behavioral impact on the counselor's personal life as well as a decreased interest or ability to engage in their jobs, thus potentially placing student welfare at risk. Therefore, utilizing the most accurate model of school counselor burnout when studying the phenomenon is crucial as a foundation for advocacy efforts aimed at prevention or intervention of school counselor burnout. Our study utilizes the results of a phenomenological inquiry initially examining the burnout phenomenon among 10 school counselors to provide support for an alternative theoretical framework for conceptualizing future research.

Maslach Burnout Model

Existing school counselor burnout literature appears to rely exclusively on a framework established by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997; Bardhoshi, Schweine, & Duncan, 2014; Butler

& Constantine, 2005; Gnilka, Karpinski, & Smith, 2015; Gunduz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Thomas, 2011; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). They identify three salient variables, which have causal relationships with burnout among non-school counseling professions. These variables include

- (1) emotional exhaustion (EE, the feeling of being overextended and depleted of resources, representing the basic individual stress dimension of burnout), (2) depersonalization (DP, a cynical and distant attitude toward one's work and the people one works with, representing the interpersonal context in which burnout occurs), and (3) reduced personal accomplishment (PA, the tendency to evaluate one's achievements at work negatively, thus referring to the self-valuation dimension of burnout). (Taris et al., 2005, pp. 238-239)

However, one example indicating the Maslach model may not fit for school counselors is that it describes 'lacking a sense of personal accomplishment' as the final stage of burnout (Maslach et al., 1997). However, both Wilkerson and Bellini's (2006) and Gunduz's (2012) studies indicate that personal accomplishment may not be part of the burnout construct for school counselors, or that it may develop along a different trajectory among school counselors than it does among educators or mental health counselors. This further indicates a need to explore a new model of school counselor burnout, as we do in this study.

Additionally, existing school counselor burnout (SCBO) literature suggests other factors are important to consider in framing our understanding of this phenomenon. Size of caseloads is indicated in the literature (Bardhoshi, Schweine, & Duncan, 2014; Gnilka, Karpinski, & Smith, 2015; Gunduz, 2012), as is assignment of non-counseling duties (Bagerly & Osborn, 2006; Author, 2007; Moyer, 2011). Additionally, perceptions of administrative support (Author, 2007; Thomas, 2011), provisions for supervision (Bagerly & Osborn, 2006; Gnilka et al, 2015; Moyer, 2011), and

feeling appreciated or supported by co-workers (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Author, 2007; Gunduz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Rayle, 2006; Thomas, 2011) are potential variables contributing to SCBO. Baggerly & Osborn (2006) also indicated that higher levels of commitment to the profession might mediate the development of burnout among school counselors.

Karasek's Job Demand Control Support (JDCS) Model of Job Stress

Karasek's model of job stress, developed over 25 years ago, has extensive research support in a number of countries (Dawson, O'Brien, & Beehr, 2016; Hausser, Mojzisch, Nielsel, & Schultz-Hardt, 2010; van den Tooren, & Rutte, 2015; van Woerkom, Bakker, & Nishi, 2016; Vogt, Hakanen, Jenny, & Bauer, 2016; Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). "The model posits that job strain (stress) results when job-decision latitude (control) is not commensurate with the psychological demands imposed by the job" (Sauter & Murphy, 1995, p. 2). Researchers expanded the model to include the support variable when research indicated low support or isolation (iso-strain) in combination with low control in high demand situations increased the predictive value of the model (Sauter & Murphy). To examine the validity of the theory, researchers reviewed 63 published studies on the JDCS model conducted over two decades and found the research generally supported the theory with strong support for the iso-strain hypothesis (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999).

Although SCJS research does not use this framework, a study on educator job stress used the Karasek model (Byrne, 1999). Byrne (1999) found that teacher burnout was associated with lack of control in decision-making. Additionally, the JDCS model was used to conceptualize burnout in a large scale study of human service workers, which strongly supported the model in relationship to three self-reported perceptions of burnout measured by the Maslach Burnout

Inventory (MBI), including exhaustion, cynicism (an element of depersonalization), and self-efficacy (personal accomplishment) [Bakker et al., 2003]. One study of the JDCS model conceptualizing burnout with respect to exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment indicated support for use of the theory as a structure for understanding burnout (Rafferty, Friend, & Landsbergis, 2001). These studies point to its potential efficacy in conceptualizing school counselor burnout.

Methodology

Because school counselors work as mental health workers in educational settings, the context in which they develop burnout is different than it is for other professionals. Existing literature, however, does not reflect this unique experience. We hypothesize that by examining the experience of burnout through the lens of the JDCS model, it will improve our understanding of the developmental trajectory of school counselor burnout. Conceptually, understanding the impact of external demands upon which a school counselor has little control, like the assignment of non-counseling duties, we believe is a particular strength of the model that is not present in the Maslach model. Therefore, we designed our research to contribute to the knowledge base regarding this experience and assist school counselors and those who train and supervise them in order to improve our understanding of the developmental trajectory of burnout as experienced within this unique context. Our research is a phenomenological design because we want capture the experience of these school counselors in a careful and thoughtful manner.

Participants

We selected the participants to reflect existing literature, which indicates school counselors in urban settings and those working with high school populations are at an increased risk for SCJS (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; DeMato

& Curcio, 2004; Rayle, 2006). Our participant pool also reflects the fact that those with either more than 20 years' experience or less than 10 years' experience (2005) report more burnout symptomology, as well as those with large (300+) caseloads (Gundez, 2012; Kendrick, Chandler, & Hatcher, 1994; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). We therefore purposefully gathered a sample of ten high school counselors from large high schools located in one of the top five most populated cities in America. We first identified participants by talking to school counselors who we knew. Those counselors referred us to school counselors meeting the parameters of the study. The primary author met with them, explained the study, and requested their participation. All agreed to participate. Forty to sixty percent of the students in the school populations where these counselors work represent ethnic minorities and one-third to one-half are of lower socioeconomic status (SES), as identified by the counselors interviewed. All of our participants reported experiencing burnout.

Purposeful sampling also enabled us to choose school counselors who represented diversity in gender, race, and range of experience (6 months to 25 years). Two of the participants were male and eight were female participants with three identifying as Hispanic, two identifying as Black/African American, four identifying as Caucasian, and one identifying as both Hispanic and Black. Participants volunteered for the study, and we informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. We use pseudonyms to minimize identifying information.

Data Collection

The first author conducted interviews in a setting chosen by the participants using a semi-structured interview protocol. Prior to use, professional school counselors not associated with the study reviewed the protocol in order to provide and incorporate feedback on its clarity and reliability for gathering the intended information. The interview protocol included open-ended

questions in order to encourage the participants to describe in their own words those experiences that were most salient. Areas explored included the participants' backgrounds regarding their journeys to becoming school counselors; their training and experience; and their experiences with regard to role conflicts, role ambiguity and workload as related to school counselor job stress and burnout.

Data Analysis

The interviews were audio taped, coded to mask the participants' identities, and transcribed by the first author, consistent with IRB stipulations. We utilized researcher triangulation (Johnson, 1997) using two researchers independently studying the transcribed interviews. Two researchers independently read each transcribed interview and coded them, using open coding (Patton, 2015) to search for themes. As we identified themes, we marked passages, writing memos in the margins, and comparing each transcript to the others. We sorted the data thematic groupings shared by two or more transcribed interviews. Further, we utilized comparative methods to identify core themes. Existing literature on burnout informed initial coding efforts; however, the researchers intentionally examined the transcriptions for data, which might contradict or expand on the existing variables used in the Maslach Model as a framework for school counselor burnout research.

Specifically, we used deductive analysis to document themes resonating with the variables currently identified by the literature that contribute to burnout including exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Patton, 2015). We identified themes emerging from the data, which deviated from the current literature, through inductive analysis. We specifically identified themes related to school counselors as a unique population. We noted those which reflected the job demand, control, and support variables of the JDACS theoretical framework

discussed in our literature review. Use of inductive logic to identify themes in the experiences of high school counselors allows us to improve our understanding of this potentially unique manifestation of burnout among school counselors.

We used low inference descriptors representative of the themes agreed upon by the researchers to capture the essence of the lived experience of the school counselors sampled (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Following data analysis, we conducted member checks, in order to gain participant feedback regarding the accuracy of our written representations of their experience. We then incorporated their feedback into the final report of these findings.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Having school counselors review our interview protocol prior to use, researcher triangulation during data analysis, and employing member checks each helped to ensure the essence of the participants' lived experiences was communicated accurately (Patton, 2015). Additionally, each of these contribute to improved reliability and interpretive validity of our results (Patton). Further, investigator triangulation (Onwuegbuzie & Mayoh, 2016) also served to increase the descriptive validity of our study. Additionally, we enhanced the theoretical validity through pattern matching from data collected from several participants (2015). The primary goal of phenomenological research is to provide a deep and meaningful description of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomena studied. Therefore, generalization was not our primary concern. However, we hope that the study results in improving our understanding of the developmental trajectory of burnout as uniquely experienced by school counselors, as potentially different from educators or mental health professionals who work only within one context.

Results

To illustrate the essence of the experiences of the high school counselors interviewed, their experiences are documented in their own words. Themes are organized using the descriptors from Maslach's burnout model and the JDCS model of job stress. We only included descriptors (lack of control, external demands, support, exhaustion, and disengaging from the work environment) which emerged during analysis. Lack of personal accomplishment is not reflected in the data gathered as we analyzed it.

Lack of Control over External Demands

Participants' responses revealed several external demands. These include large caseloads, conflicting expectations of their time, and assignment of non-counseling clerical duties they viewed as inappropriate for their role. Participants reported that large caseloads coupled with high workloads affected the counselors' perception that they are accomplishing less with students than desired. Daniel discussed this theme,

I think I have a huge impact on the students that I get to see, which is not nearly the 400 kids that are assigned to me. I think I have a big impact on the 50-75 kids that I can name, identify, talk to about anything that we've established a regular rapport with each other. The other 300 kids, they're on paper; they're in the right class; they're going to school, I suppose; they're not in trouble, I suppose; I don't know. So I don't know. The kids I actually touch . . . I know that I make an impact on. It just hurts me. . . I can't touch a lot more than that.

Daniel illustrates the frustration of most of our counselors who report unrealistically large caseloads resulting in challenges to effective management. Many described this reality as negatively influencing how they felt about their jobs.

The participants described pressure to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders (parents, students, administrators, and even campus police), each of them having widely varying expectations of the school counselor's roles. The participants frequently discussed how they triaged these situations and how these factors affects their levels of stress. In one example Felicia described,

Well, (pause) I had to assist a student who just didn't want to be in school. And the mother was crying. My biggest stress that day was she spoke only Spanish. So I had somebody interpreting, but I had this student over here . . . whose attitude was, I don't want to be here. And . . . there was nothing we could say, no way to change it. And it wasn't really that he didn't want to be in school, it was that he didn't want to be in *this* school. And, um, that one was hard. You know, more because he looked like he had just shut down, even though his mother was crying herself into whatever. So that was a little stressful.

Carole illustrated how multiple external demands can result in feeling a lack of care and support among those the counselors are trying to serve.

I was out for two days [for oral surgery]. I came back in with a swollen face and everything; parent insisted I hadn't seen his daughter since the first week of school. And um when the daughter came in, [I reminded] the daughter about the conversations we had, numerous conversations . . . and she said, well you haven't called me in in two weeks. And basically I was jumped on in front of the daughter and the parent, by the AP, even though I've seen this girl. So what I did was, I left for the day because I was an emotional wreck because I'm like what more do they want us to do? . . . I just think the way that I was treated without any respect, after I've met with this kid over and over. I couldn't take it that day . . . [with] the principal, the parent, and with the little girl witnessing . . . especially after she admitted

that yeah we just talked about this. And I'm like, doesn't anyone understand that we've been testing for a week, and then yeah I was out for two personal days and then came in, face still swollen, but still I should have called her in, and so, yeah, I had, I had to leave.

(pause)

One type of external demand that appeared to be most stressful were the assignment of non-counseling duties. The participants shared multiple situations about assignment of work that they did not believe was consistent with their roles as school counselors. As a result, they feel like administrative assistants rather than counselors with specialized training and skills. Juanita discussed an example of this when she experienced of work assigned by principals that did not reflect her training.

[W]e're sitting here [saying] we need to do something with kids, and [the administrators] are constantly, the counselors need to show us this [statistical report] show us that [statistical report]. It's about the numbers right now, and I'm like use these numbers to *do* something because it's depressing when we put these numbers together . . . we realize how many failures we had, and, and *that is depressing*. Then to see nothing done with the numbers . . . a program . . . Hey what can we do? You put the numbers together and then let us brainstorm on how we're going to work on these numbers. You know, that's what I say. Let's reverse it.

Performing clerical administrative support duties for principals, rather than engaging in counseling programming, led to frustration for these school counselors. They frequently expressed a desire to carry out their mission of preventative programming consistent with the state and national standards for school counselors, but they experienced frustration when they attempted to do that because administrators did not seem to understand the role of a school counselor.

Participants reported that administrator's view tasks assigned by external stakeholders the priority, school counselors reported that making a difference with students was more important to them. Barbara best illustrated this point,

But really the students, when you see a smile or when they say, Miss I didn't know that. That's all I need right there.... As long as we can see the productivity of the students, and we know what we're doing. It's like a millionaire who gives some money and [doesn't] want their name to be acknowledged . . . as long as we see the kids using it. . . That's one kid who wasn't going anywhere, and now he's in Junior College that you just stayed with the whole year.

When the counselors were able to do what they perceive to be appropriate duties for a school counselor, then they described great satisfaction and meaning in their jobs. However, they experienced frustration when they have to do things they clearly did not believe were appropriate duties. Most concerning to them were the times they were unable to do the things they believed they needed to within the school counselor function because the priority placed on clerical or administrative duties took precedence.

Need for Support

The participants discussed the need for connection, support, and recognition from the administrators and teachers. Carole expressed the frustration communicated consistently throughout the interviews,

The teachers, the administrators, they don't say a word to us. They don't have to ever, never, ever, ever acknowledge anything we're doing on this campus. . . . I would hope that, if [teachers and administrators] would continue to see what's going on and how we're doing that, that they would say, let's give the counselors a *break* and let them truly work

on what they're working on. But I think they have this attitude though that if we're not changing schedules, [then] why are we on this campus.

Our participants reported that lack of acknowledgement from teachers and administrators resulted in counselors' experiencing little institutional support for their activities. They expressed that they did not feel they were being 'heard' by often-critical administrators and teachers when they were unable to meet overwhelming external demands placed on them. Counselors like Juanita noticed they depleted their personal resources in these situations,

With co-workers sometimes I have to work on my positive attitude. But it's all because of the stress level. If they would actually just sit down and talk to us, by they I mean the administrators and teachers . . . maybe they're hearing us but they don't believe us, you know, because a lot of people can say we do this . . . and they don't see it done. You know but just . . . listen, and let's talk for a second. Let's just have a session . . . you know because with the kids I still try to be positive, but some days they see me drained. And they're like what's wrong you're not smiling as much . . .

The counselors interviewed expressed a desire to have more constructive and communicative relationships with colleagues, but experiencing a lack of cooperation from teachers and administrators over time led to distancing themselves. Experienced counselors, like Ginger, often felt undervalued for their experience, resulting in depersonalization.

It has made me not to be as interactive as I was. You know, if you don't value my expertise, I'm not gonna give it to you. . . . I don't have to. [I]f you don't value it, then, if you ask me fine, but . . . I've just got to be effusive with those kinds of things. . . . It's a personal thing. . . . It hasn't affected my relationship with the kids whatsoever. (quietly) It's affected me in that I don't enjoy coming here every day . . . I loved coming here, and it's not fun

anymore. (pause) You know I just sometimes I feel like I need to go to my little cubbie hole and do what I'm supposed to do, and then I go home. It's . . . so not me. . . . The part that I'm having trouble with the most is that that's so unlike my own personality and professionalism. . . . It's not at all me. And that bothers me because it's making me do something that goes totally against who I've always been.

The lack of connection with their coworkers often led to a sort of dissonance between personal and professional values and a desire to distance themselves from workplaces they experienced as unsupportive and undervaluing of their role.

Although school counseling professionals work very hard to keep up with the many conflicting demands on their time, they often do not receive positive feedback about their efforts.

Daniel explained his experience,

I've grown accustomed to not having, or needing, the positive strokes. It's, it's probably overall very sad, 'cause in a classroom you get it on a daily basis, positive and negative, but you get it all the time. In the counseling office, if you got it once a week, it's probably a good deal. So it's probably, throughout the years, when I look back in classroom and then look at it now-in-days it's something I've grown used to, but it's something that is needed.

You don't get that as counselors. (pause)

School counselors specifically discussed experiencing frustration when dealing with chronically stressful situations involving teachers and administrators who do not understand or value their counseling roles in schools. Jan discussed how the lack of support from administrators and teachers has affected her motivation to continue working as a school counselor,

I have never ever not wanted to go to a job like I don't want to go to this job. I encourage myself every morning on the way here. You know, and I try to come in. I try to have the

perky attitude, the smile with the kids. But some days I truly feel, man I just don't want to do this anymore . . . I talked to my mom about it, and she even pulled out my high school yearbook for me. . . . I stated what I was going to be, that was a counselor. You know, I stated that in my high school yearbook. . . right now it's chaotic, and it's almost to the point that I want to give up. I quit. There's nothing working.

Interactions with colleagues have also negatively affected Anita's desire to continue as a school counselor,

This has been a really stressful year . . . except for the year I went through a divorce. (laugh)
On a level of 1 to 10, this is about a 9. . . . And it has impacted me greatly, to the point that I don't know what I want to do. I'm eligible for retirement, and, uh, it's made me think about that. It isn't fun anymore . . . So you know the kids are why I'm here, but it is the adults that seem to be getting in the way.

In spite of strong personal desires to serve students, negative working environments at times exhausts school counselors' resources to the point they feel like giving up.

Emotional and Physical Exhaustion

All the female school counselors interviewed indicated experiencing elements of exhaustion, although their school counseling experience spanned a twenty-five year range. Jan discussed her first year as a school counselor as being able to deal with the stress through her enthusiasm towards the job,

Last year I wasn't really affected emotionally about the job. I just did what I had to do, but of course we had people who said this is what we have to do and this is the deadline . . . and I just did it. Things were like, they need to change this, but it wasn't emotional. But of

course it was my first year in counseling, and I was just in the giddy stage where ‘oh, everything is great, I’ll just do it.’

This year however, Jan described experiencing increased symptoms of exhaustion,

This year, uh, I don’t know. . . It’s made me realize we’ve been truly (pause) truly, truly stressed out, and we should not be like that. . . . My emotional state has been turned around. I’m normally such a perky person. I’ve had so much happen to me personally that I’ve never let it knock me down, but this year, this work load, these situations on this campus have truly worked with me mentally. . . I am drained . . . I’m truly drained. I have to keep going, keep going, drink coffee, drink coffee. And then once I get home and get everything situated . . . I’m out in two hours. And you know my sleep patterns are making me drained also. But I’m truly drained, mentally drained, and physically drained.

Experiencing exhaustion seemed to be progressively more intense as counselors worked in chronically stressful situations over time. Ginger, a counselor with over 20 years’ experience, identified her exhaustion as preventing her from taking care of herself,

umm (pause) I think when I’m here I’m fine, but when I go home I’m exhausted, absolutely exhausted. I know I need to be doing some things to be taking care of myself, um, because I’m so tired when I get home, I know that’s an excuse . . .

She went on to explain that she has experienced mental and emotional fatigue,

So, I think that, you know I don’t know if it’s just tired or exhaustion or what it is. A lot of it may even be mental fatigue . . . and maybe emotional fatigue even more than that because I think a lot of the stress. . I take things so personally . . . and I know that that’s not a real healthy thing to do, but I do. And I’m trying not to. I’m working real hard on not doing it.

Exhaustion resulting from chronic job stress was a significant theme reported throughout the interviews, consistent with research on other professions.

Disengaging because of Stressful Work Environments

The school counselors interviewed found different ways to escape the stressful environments they chronically experience. Michael discussed leaving campus in an effort to regroup and de-stress,

Hey, sometimes I just jump in my van and leave, and I just let the secretary know, hey call me if an emergency comes up, gotta get off this campus for a second. And that's just the type of stuff you have to do . . . and then I'm ready to dive into my work again. Or like this morning, I came in at 8 o'clock and was feeling just great, that extra hour of me just taking my time instead of rushing out the house helped out.

Others, like Anita, wait until they are home before they seek escape from the stress,

Um, but I think it does take a toll, you know, on me. I know it does because when I get to a point where I'm so very stressed then I, I don't shut down here, but I shut down at home. And I live alone so I can shut down if I want to and nobody cares. (laughs) I just go home and go to sleep.

Whether disengaging by leaving temporarily, by shutting themselves in their office refraining from interaction with colleagues, or going home and mentally escaping through sleep or using substances, study participants attempted to construct a protective barrier between themselves and work environments they experienced as damaging.

Limitations

We acknowledge several limitations of this study. It is a phenomenological study based on a small number of school counselors; therefore, we cannot consider the findings generalizable to

a large population. However, we believe this study can inform future research designed to generalize to the population of school counselors. We also chose the sample of participants from a convenience pool, which represented only school counselors in one large southwestern city. In order to explore the viability of our findings, we recommend that future research is drawn from a more diverse participant pool. Finally, although the study may suggest potential policy changes, that is not the intent of the study. Therefore, further study is necessary before districts expend resources on changing methods of prevention or intervention in SCJS.

Conclusions and Implications

The school counselor literature we found relies exclusively on the Maslach burnout model (1997), which indicates that workers become emotionally exhausted by their jobs, resulting in depersonalizing clients/students, which then leads to feelings of low personal accomplishment in their work settings. However, studies suggest there may be different characteristics of burnout to consider when studying professional school counselors (Bunduz, 2012; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Our phenomenological analysis of interviews with ten school counselors experiencing burnout support the need for a different theoretical framework for conceptualizing burnout this population.

Although we found the participants experienced levels of emotional exhaustion resulting in depersonalization, which were consistent with the Maslach model, our study indicates there are differences in how the counselors' sense of personal accomplishment is impacted. The school counselors interviewed described feeling less efficacy in their counseling roles because of the overwhelming demands placed on them by multiple stakeholders (administrators, parents, teachers, students) who had inappropriate and often conflicting expectations of their roles. These expectations also conflicted with the participants' view of their role as a program manager that

plans preventative and intervention counseling services for the school. However, in spite of feeling frustrated in carrying out this role, they all described situations where they believed they were effective with individual students. So when they were able to engage in appropriate school counseling roles, they felt a sense of high personal accomplishment, which may be why some studies may not have indicated significantly elevated scores on the Maslach subscale measuring levels of perceived personal accomplishment. This is a nuanced understanding of the personal accomplishment construct as it uniquely manifests among school counselors

As a result, the unique context of burnout as it occurs among professional school counselors may be better explained by the JDCA model. This model emphasizes the role of multiple external demand over which the school counselor has little control, with a potential mediating variable of colleague support. Specifically, our experience of the affective reactions of these school counselors to questions and prompts indicated that the daily feelings of frustration by school counselors as a result of inappropriate role assignments, multiple externally imposed demands on the counselor's time, and too much work to do with limited resources combined to create situations where they inevitably experienced failures to meet their own goals for making a difference for all the students assigned to them. This often led to emotional, mental, or physical exhaustion. These results indicate a need for further advocacy regarding the appropriate school counselor roles.

To support advocacy efforts, we would suggest grounding future school counselor burnout research in Karasek's job demand-control-support (JDCA) theoretical model of job stress (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Additionally, we are suggesting the JDCA model would account for the assignment of non-counseling duties. Currently these duties are explored using the SCARS (Scarborough, 2005) non-counseling duties subscale, which demonstrates low Cronbach alphas (Scarborough). If JDCA demonstrates better reliability, then research results may

be more respected and valued by administrators who make decisions regarding the roles of school counselors in day-to-day activities. To further illustrate the potential need for attention to the problem of school counselor burnout, this model could be used to frame additional qualitative research on the impact of burnout on professional school counselors personally and perhaps more persuasively, the impact on the schools and students they serve.

Finally, the variables consistently described by our participants that appear to impact their levels of job stress and burnout most, beyond the assignment of non-counseling duties and large caseloads, are social support and supervision. Using the JDCS model may also help advocacy efforts by illustrating the importance of nurturing colleague support and school counselor-specific supervision as potentially mediating the development of burnout. In this vein, researchers should further explore the impact of support and supervision variables on the development of school counselor levels of job stress and burnout. This research could then inform how support and supervision might be utilized in future prevention and/or intervention protocols that could be tested to improve working conditions for school counselors and reduce incidence of school counselor burnout.

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