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Self-Efficacy and Caseload as Predictors of School Counselor Burnout

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Marcos G. Casares

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Walden University
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Abstract

Self-Efficacy and Caseload as Predictors of School Counselor Burnout

by

Marcos G. Casares

MS, Springfield College, 2018

BS, Springfield College, 2015

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

October 2022

Abstract

School counselors are faced with many job duties, including supporting students' academic, career, and emotional needs; maintaining these duties can increase stress and lead to burnout. The need to provide high-quality services to students, along with a high caseload, may be associated with the self-efficacy beliefs of school counselors and the possibility of burnout. However, there has been little to no interest on researching the subject of burnout, and its causes and outcomes concerning school counselors. The purpose of this quantitative study was to fill this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between school counselor burnout, specifically, the emotional exhaustion and the depersonalization dimensions of burnout, which served as dependent variables, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and self-efficacy. Self-Efficacy was measured by the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale, along with caseload as the predictors in this research. Maslach's burnout theory and Bandura's conceptualization of self-efficacy, guided the research questions. The target population consisted of 128 school counselors from public and private school settings. An online data collection method was used to reach participants in the public and private school settings who had been school-based counselors. Results were analyzed through multiple regression. Research results indicated significant relationships between burnout, school counselor self-efficacy, and caseload. The findings may lead to positive social change by raising awareness of counselor burnout and informing measures to prevent burnout among school counselors who can then, in turn, optimally work with the school children whom they serve.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my work to my daughter, Madelynne, my happiness, my heart, my joy, and my reason to strive to be a better person.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my lord Jesus Christ first and foremost. I would also like to thank my chair and mentor, Dr. Talpade, for the encouragement and guidance. I would also like to acknowledge my family who believed in me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In the United States, there are many issues that currently exist that plague students, as well as those who serve students. These issues involve depression, suicidal ideation, alcohol, marijuana use, bullying, school shootings, the Covid-19 pandemic, and burnout (Holman et al., 2019). These current events can trigger students and those who serve them to experience posttraumatic stress disorders, which leave a need for concern for their mental health that includes all stakeholders and school faculty.

Stressors and depressive conditions can affect students' mental health and daily functioning, as well as how educators and counselors interact with students. School counselors supposed primary role is to support the social and emotional well-being of all students; however, crowded classrooms and high caseloads face school counselors in record numbers (Kovac et al., 2016). These demanding stressors can increase school counselor burnout and decrease the effectiveness of the school climate and the effectiveness of the school counselor in supporting the mental health stability of students.

In past literature, burnout has been described as having three dimensions—(a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization of clients, and (c) a reduced sense of accomplishment—in addition to being related to other variables such as strain, stress coping, and self-efficacy in predictable and meaningful ways (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Freudenberger (1990) described symptoms of burnout as (a) adverse changes in individuals' attitudes and decision making, (b) physiological states in relation to mental,

emotional, and behavioral health, and (c) occupational motivation and high stressors that correlate with a high workload.

There is a gap in research on how self-efficacy may correlate with caseload, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). This study was essential to better prepare counselors for the high demands of their job. School counselors often have large caseloads and have high student-to-counselor ratios and thus are likely to experience increased feelings of burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Although the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2014) recommends a student to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1, the U.S. average student-to-counselor ratio is almost double the recommended proportion (491-to-1; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Burnout has significant consequences, including compromised physical health, increased risk of mental health disorders (e.g., depression, substance abuse), poor job performance, absenteeism, occupational attrition, and low self-esteem (Maslach & Jackson, 1997).

Burnout can also cause symptoms such as fatigue, exhaustion, and insomnia, as well as physical symptomology (Acker et al., 2009). The challenges and obstacles that many students face in the modern world are reinventing the role and the responsibilities of the school counselor, thus increasing the demands placed on the members of the profession (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). School counselors may experience chronic fatigue, depersonalization, or feelings of hopelessness and thus, leave their jobs because of the lack of support and aid of a limited school system (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Insufficient resources for school counselors and negative job perceptions increase the school counselor's likelihood of experiencing feelings of burnout and also feeling intense depersonalization (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Often, the lack of school support from the academic school staff, namely administrative leaders such as the principal, along with a lack of clinical supervision, can raise school counselors' occupational stress and have a direct impact on job performance (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

This study is essential to understanding factors associated with burnout as experienced by school counselors, and specifically to understand the role of self-efficacy and caseload as determinants of school counselor burnout. No known studies in the United States have assessed these factors among school counselors. The findings may lead to social change by raising awareness of counselor burnout and establishing measures to prevent burnout among school counselors who can then, in turn, optimally work with the school children whom they serve.

In this chapter, I will cover the following topics: background, problem and purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses, operational definitions, theoretical framework, and assumptions and limitations.

Background

Due to the high demands and intricacies of a school counselor's role, along with their workload and the general scope of their caseload work, school counselors are often under a lot of stress, which may eventually develop into occupational burnout (Kovac et al., 2016). The high-quality service provided to the students from school counselors, and

having a high caseload, may be associated with the self-efficacy belief of school counselors and the possibility of burnout (Gunduz, 2012).

School counselors experiencing feelings of burnout and depersonalization often demonstrate reduced the quality of service to clients, had lower job commitment, lower productivity, and high turnover (Maslach et al., 2001). Continuous negative factors may impact a school counselor's effectiveness with clients and affect overall job performance, which can in turn, hinder professionalism, and the effectiveness of therapy. Based on the domains of burnout, emotional exhaustion and or depersonalization can interfere with effectiveness (Maslach et al., 2001). Therefore, it is likely that burnout has a direct correlation with self-efficacy, depersonalization, overload, and caseload, hindering a counselors' ability to achieve self-personal accomplishments.

Gunduz (2012), conducted a study in Mersin, Turkey, where the health and social systems are different from those of the United States, as Gunduz found that there was limited research on the relationship between burnout in school counselors (specifically concerning emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) and their self-efficacy and caseload. In the current study, I sought to fill a gap in the literature by considering the role of self-efficacy, caseload, and burnout among school counselors in the United States.

There is a gap in research on how the school counselor profession may interact with burnout and the variables associated with burnout. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout, specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables), and self-efficacy and caseloads as predictors. This study may be essential in helping counselor

educators better prepare school counselors by aiding in identifying factors that can cause burnout and by identifying the variables that contribute to burnout. The information could further benefit supervisors and administrators by specifically addressing the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables) and self-efficacy and caseloads as predictors of burnout.

Vital information related to burnout and depersonalization is needed to aid school administrators in better support for school counselors and the overall profession. Additionally, the study could help school counselors become more aware of factors that may impact their performance. Finally, this study may provide insight into how burnout can impact counselors' personal lives, while also supporting a plan to prevent counselor burnout, thus supporting counselors in achieving greater success in the field.

Problem Statement

Many professions are associated with high levels of stress, which represent an emerging health risk linked to mental and physical ailments that often result in fatal consequences (Holman et al., 2019). The profession of school counselors deals routinely with complex situations in which students have acute counseling needs, such as severe depression, suicide attempts, pregnancy, substance abuse, school violence, and child abuse (Gunduz, 2012). School mental health professionals, such as counselors, have many roles within a school that may involve seeing children, adolescents, and school staff as well. Most of the school counselor's work is often dedicated to conducting one-on-one counseling with students, as well as group informative sessions in a school setting, often resulting in seeing a high volume of students. High volume caseload can

often lead to a school counselor having a high caseload and thus, a higher consequence of mental fatigue, depersonalization, and burnout symptoms.

Additionally, school counselors also deal with grades and class changes, support children with special needs, and work in a high-pressure environment (Kovac et al., 2016). Thus, school counselors face a demanding work environment that can cause burnout, contribute to physical health problems, and lead to increased risk of mental health disorders such as depression, substance abuse, poor job performance, absenteeism, occupational attrition, and low self-esteem (Maslach et al., 2001). People who suffer burnout are often identified as idealists who exert efforts to reach their goals, and some studies indicate a relationship between burnout and the self-efficacy of an individual.

Self-efficacy beliefs are often developed in various areas for members of the school counseling profession, and are often associated with caseload (Gunduz, 2012). Counselors often suffer burnout as they fail to meet their own emotional needs, suffer physical ailments, and struggle with mental demands based on high caseloads and their personal self-efficacy (Gunduz, 2012). There are often mental health and physical ailments that are vastly associated with being overworked (Holman et al., 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout, specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables), with self-efficacy and caseload as the predictors. The theory of self-efficacy and burnout served as the theoretical foundations for this study. The research conducted on the topic of burnout addresses indicators that

show that self-efficacy and caseload can be predictors of school counselor burnout. For the study approach, I used a quantitative paradigm, along with a standard multiple regression, to measure the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and caseload as predictors of school counselor burnout.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 (RQ1): To what extent does self-efficacy predict school counselor burnout?

H01: Self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of burnout.

HA1: Self-efficacy is a significant predictor of burnout.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): To what extent does the caseload contribute to school counselor burnout, as measured by each of the three subscales of the MBI-HSS for the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout among school counselors?

H02: Caseload contributes to school counselor burnout.

HA2: Caseload does not contribute to school counselor burnout.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework on which this study was based was Maslach's development of burnout, which indicates that burnout is the reaction that occurs after prolonged periods of stress in the workplace (Maslach et al., 2001). Social psychologist Christina Maslach outlined a theory of burnout in the mid-1970s, which has been used to study burnout in relation to emotions and self-efficacy in the workplace (Maslach et al., 2001).

The theory of self-efficacy was also used to guide this study. Albert Bandura (1986, 1995) noted that people's self-efficacy beliefs are defined as their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Self-efficacy beliefs are based on not only people's expectations to acquire knowledge and skills, but also their expectations to overcome problems and realize certain actions required to accomplish goals under social pressure and distress (Gunduz, 2012). Self-efficacy and burnout were the two theories that were used as foundations to guide this study.

Nature of the Study

A quantitative approach was utilized using a correlational research design in this study, as I sought to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and case ratio as predictors and school counselor burnout as the dependent variable. A correlational matrix was also utilized, along with a Pearson product-moment correlation, to determine whether there is a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the dimensions of (a) emotional exhaustion and (b) depersonalization and the predictors, self-efficacy and caseload. Standard multiple regression analyses were used to determine whether self-efficacy and caseloads can significantly predict burnout, specifically concerning the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), was utilized to measure three levels of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI-HSS is designed for professionals in human services and addresses emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment

(Maslach, 1986). The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES) was utilized as well, as it is a unidimensional measure of school counselors' self-efficacy level to perform counseling tasks (Maslach, 1986). The caseload information in this study was obtained through self-report.

Definitions

Burnout: A syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment as measured by the MBI (Wang et al., 2020).

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: A handbook used by health care professionals containing descriptions, symptoms, and other criteria for diagnosing mental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Case overload: Occurs when an individual perceives that there is too much work to be completed given the time and resources available (Wilkerson & Billini, 2006).

Self-efficacy: Beliefs about one's ability to successfully perform a given behavior (Bandura, 1986).

School climate: Based on patterns of people's experiences of school life; reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Assumptions and Limitations

I assumed that most school counselors were experiencing some form of burnout and had caseload overload. I also assumed that school counselors were honest and forthright in answering the survey. I assumed that all questions would be answered and not skipped over and that counselors would take their time and think about the correct

answer. I further assumed that the instruments that I used were valid and reliable measurements for the variables. Assumptions were important to help guide my study. Assumptions helped with developing demographic questions. Assumptions helped me think about how I wanted the results to be represented.

Scope and Delimitations

Due to convenience sampling, there may be an issue with internal validity. Internal validity issues occur when the variables affecting the dependent variable/s cannot be controlled. Concerning internal validity, since the participants were based on convenience rather than random sampling, there may be some selection or response bias associated with the responses. There were also threats to external validity or generalizability that occurred in my study, as there were school counselors who were not working currently in the field at the time of my study and because of the inclusionary criteria, were not within the area of the Houston and Pasadena Texas school districts. The school counselors who also were not working at the time in surrounding school districts and or private/charter schools, were also unintentionally excluded. Due to the internal and external issues, my current study may not be generalized to all school counselors, to all levels of counseling, or to school counselors across the entire United States.

Limitations

One limitation was the selection bias because only school counselors could participate in the study. Another limitation was the use of 'self-report data', as surveys are dependent on participants answering truthfully about their attitudes, opinions, or behaviors. Another limitation was that school counselors might not take the survey due to

time constraints and conflicts with time management schedules, which might see the survey as too time consuming.

Significance

As a result of this study, awareness and significance concerning school counselor burnout might increase among supervisors and administrators in the school administrative setting. This study could hopefully encourage supervisors and school administrators in aiding and supporting school counselors when they are exhibiting signs of burnout. School districts and school campuses might hire more school counselors to reduce high caseload and burnout, as well as demonstrating empathy and awareness to school counselors concerning burnout and mental fatigue. A smaller workload/caseload of students, as well as acknowledging feelings of depersonalization in school counselors, could increase their self-efficacy and counseling productivity.

School administrators may change the school climate to help lower burnout among counselors, which could result in a more positive school climate and boost the counselor's effectiveness with students. In having a positive and productive school climate, a school counselors' motivation and self-efficacy could in turn, result in better relationships with students and the overall school administration. As a result of this study, colleges and licensing boards may include self-care and burnout content in their counselor curriculum as part of an internship process. The counselor burnout content can also be included in the counselor's renewal process for counseling licensure. Counselor interns may identify strategies to use in the future when they experience burnout, and counselor educators may have more discussions about burnout with interns.

Summary

In this study, I used a quantitative predictive survey approach to analyze the perceptions of school counselors to determine whether school counselor self-efficacy and caseload had a negative relationship with counselor burnout. The responses of school counselors may help fill the gap in the literature on the relationship between self-efficacy, caseload, and burnout. In Chapter 2, I will discuss and present an overview of the literature related to school counselor burnout with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as dimensions of burnout and with predictors of self-efficacy and caseload.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 contains an overview of the literature related to school counselor burnout with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as dimensions of burnout and with predictors of self-efficacy and caseload, in keeping with the purpose of this quantitative study. The literature review includes how these variables are related to burnout, as it is a common factor in all three variables. The literature review was guided by a search to assess the relationship between school counselor burnout (specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables) and self-efficacy and caseload as predictors. The theory of self-efficacy and burnout served as the theoretical foundations for this study.

The research conducted on the topic of burnout addresses indicators that show that self-efficacy and caseload can be predictors of school counselor burnout. The study approach used a quantitative paradigm along with a standard multiple regression to measure the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and caseload as predictors of school counselor burnout. This chapter begins with a discussion of how negative experiences of the symptoms of burnout can have a plethora of negative effects on teachers, students, and schools. For example, one can experience mental health difficulties such as low self-confidence, low self-esteem, and clinical depression from burnout (Kim & Burić, 2019).

Burnout has been documented and widely associated with human service professions, and it has surfaced as a problematic experience that is seen mostly in the

nursing, teaching, and mental health professions (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Within the literature, there are indicators suggesting that school counselors experience high levels of competing demands from a variety of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the profession itself) over which they have little or no control (Baggerly & Osbourn, 2005). This chapter concludes by addressing factors related to job burnout and specifics related to school counselors, mental health professionals, and educators (teachers, school staff, etc.).

Literature Search Strategy

A search strategy was implemented using the Walden University Library's multiple databases (PsycInfo, PsycArticles, SAGE Full-Text, EBSCOHOST, and APA Journals). The bulk of the research was conducted using Google Scholar and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), because the other databases seemed far more limited. I gathered as much research as I could from the previous 5 years; however, that only led to a handful of studies on my topic (school counselor burnout). I opened my search to include studies from the previous 20 years and had much more success.

The following search terms were applied: (a) *school counseling and wellbeing*, (b) *exploration of burnout in school counseling*, (c) *implications of school counselor burnout and suicide*, (d) *school counselor burnout and caseload*, (e) *counselor burnout and inventory*, (f) *psychometric properties of school counselor burnout*, (g) *self-efficacy and burnout in school counselors*, (h) *stress and depersonalization in school counselors*, (i) *psychological and burnout and depression with caseloads*, (j) *school counselor burnout*

and self-efficacy, (k) caseload as a predictor of burnout, (l) self-efficacy and burnout, and (m) school counselor and burnout.

Theoretical Foundation

Burnout Theory

The concept of burnout is usually associated with the depletion of morale feelings of fatigue, and that of being overly stressed in an environment. Author Matthew Hoffarth, (2017), in his publication ‘the Making of Burnout’, mentioned psychoanalyst Herbert Freudenberger and social psychologist Christina Maslach in the identification of the burnout phenomena. Herbert Freudenberger was the first psychoanalyst to describe ‘burnout’, as his colleagues and himself experienced burnout symptomology and its effects, while establishing and working in a free clinic in New York city (Hoffarth, 2017).

Freudenberger correlated burnout with ‘emotional and physical exhaustion’, and stated that he and his colleagues, should think more about themselves, to promote promoting and practice self-care (Hoffarth, 2017). The dimensions that often describe burnout and its symptomology, are exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Exhaustion is often the emotion and expression that is physically seen in a person, as it is often correlated with fatigue, both mentally and physically (Hoffarth, 2017).

Freudenberger experienced the symptomology of burnout and exhaustion, as the director at Haight Ashbury Free Clinic in San Francisco, where he worked for more than a year, working 16-hour days at a time (Hoffarth, 2017). After a year’s time of

working the tiresome schedule, Freudenberger experienced physical exhaustion and breakdown (Hoffarth, 2017). Freudenberger experienced a particular set of symptoms consisting of ‘exhaustion, cynicism, rigidity, and loss of efficacy’, and thus had to leave the clinic for a months’ time (Hoffarth, 2017).

Freudenberger found that the symptomology of exhaustion and mental fatigue was shared by his fellow coworkers at the free clinic, and that they attributed the symptoms to the overbearing of work hours, and to a ‘pressure from within to work’ and a ‘pressure to help, and to give’ (Freudenbergerer, 1974, pps. 159, 161). Freudenberger and his colleagues thus referred to the symptoms they experienced as feeling a ‘burnout’, thus equating the name synonymously with overwork, mental fatigue, and stress (Hoffarth, 2017).

In the United States (2009), a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), found that 69% of all employees felt that their job was a significant source of stress, and 40% felt stressed during a typical workday, thus affecting productivity (Levinson, 2012). The U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reported that 26 % of their workers were ‘often or very often burned out or stressed by their work,’ as 29% said they felt "quite a bit or extremely stressed at work" (NIOSH, 1999).

School counselors and mental health workers in a school setting suffering from burnout, can attribute its symptomology to various obstacles within the school counseling profession, as well as because of very limited research concerning burnout and its preventive methods. The lack of research is vastly being overlooked academically and in

mental health profession, even though individuals in both mental health and education professions are at risk of developing burnout control (Baggerly & Osbourn, 2005).

Although the subject of burnout has been identified as a major concern in various professions, mental health trainings, and overall school counseling profession, the exploration of the topic in professional literature has been extremely limited with only two studies published in the past 5 years. In a study that focused on the role that clients play in staff burnout, Maslach (1981), mentioned important client factors that contributed to burnout, such as the severity of clients' problems and their expectations regarding counselors and mental health workers empathy and unrealistic ideas.

The client factors also included the extent of personal warmth exhumed from the staff, as well as caring and individual time (Maslach, 1981). The symptomology of burnout can have a plethora of negative effects on teachers, students, and counselors, as they can exhibit mental health difficulties such as low self-confidence, low self-esteem, and clinical depression, resulting from burnout (Kim & Burić, 2019). Psychotherapists and counselors are often subjected to severe stress when working with clients, as well as Budget cuts, increased therapy caseloads, and third-party reimbursements, representing a sampling myriad of stressors that psychotherapists may face.

There are universal and culture-specific aspects of the burnout experience and its categorization from people from diverse cultures, that may categorize and recognize different burnout symptoms and thus divide them into different categories (Kim & Burić, 2019). Some psychotherapists often describe burnout as that of 'devaluing a client',

which exists in Western nations, but is not in compliance and sentiment in Asian cultures, as well as different cultures that differ in the meaning of devaluation (Zhao, 2021).

Savicki (2002), extensively explored counselor burnout among child- and youth-care workers across 13 cultures (e.g., England, Scotland, Israel, and the United States, among others), using four research scales. According to Savicki, the purpose of the research was to study the cultural responses when working with youth and how they dealt with burnout (Savicki, 2002). Savicki's findings showed the importance of understanding burnout from a multicultural perspective and framed the measurement of burnout through cultural dimensions while establishing cultural differences (Savicki, 2002).

Savicki's findings also demonstrated the mannerisms of how child and youth care practices are related to burnout, and the difference of the classification of burnout in different cultures (Savicki, 2002). Burnout has been documented and widely associated with human service professions and has surfaced as a problematic experience that is seen mostly in the nursing, teaching, social worker, and mental health professions (Bohecker, et al., 2017). Consistent with research and literature, indicators suggest that school counselors experience high levels of competing demands from a variety of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the profession itself) over which they have little control (Bohecker, et al., 2017).

Research involving burnout and school counselors in the United States is vital in being able to aid professionals that suffer from its effects. Authors Kim and Burić (2019), stated that low levels of teacher self-efficacy (TSE), has a direct correlation to burnout and has rarely been documented or researched. Burnout can manifest itself physically,

emotionally, and/or psychologically in those professionals who aid students in educating the mind and body of students (Kim & Burić, 2019). School counselors, as well as teachers, have demanding and multifaceted roles in their employment that can be a contributor to burnout in the educational mental health field, as counselors must be both counselors and educators (Bohecker et al., 2017).

Maslach's Development of Burnout

The theory that was the framework and base for this study's investigation of school counselor burnout was Maslach's development of burnout. Maslach's development of burnout states that burnout is a response to job stress that professionals of different areas experience as a derivative of having contact with people (Maslach et al., 2001). Freudenberger, as mentioned earlier, was credited as being the first in describing burnout, but Maslach and Jackson (1981), constructed the first instrumentation Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), for the measurement and test of burnout (Garcia, et al., 2019).

Maslach and Jackson produced a new version of the MBI in 1986, and then revised it to include the MBI-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), which was aimed at professionals of human services. The MBI-Educators (MBI-ES) for professionals was also included in education, as well as the MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS), for the population of other professions (Garcia et al., 2019). Maslach and Jackson described burnout as a phenomenon, and stated that it has three dimensions: low personal accomplishment (PA) at work, emotional exhaustion (EE), and depersonalization (DP), (Garcia et al., 2019). Maslach and Jackson also studied burnout in relation to emotions

and self-efficacy in the workplace, along with education and care giver environments, where people have a high rate of susceptibility to burnout (Garcia et al., 2019).

Maslach and Jackson both utilized the MBI to measure burnout in different professions and work environments, as it has been widely used since its introduction in 1981. Maslach and Jackson also identified three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Maslach's burnout inventory (MBI), was used to examine the occupational burnout levels of preschool teachers working in the eastern and western parts of Turkey considering gender, working location, and age (Dicke et al., 2014).

The results of the survey showed that the teachers were stressed and that the indicators showed the culprits to be a heavy workload and hours at work, as well as the self-expectancy and self-actualizations being the culprits of burnout (Derman & Güney, 2020). The inventory also showed that the preschool teachers were emotionally exhausted and were prone to medical issues and departure from work.

Another study involved factorial validity of the MBI-HSS in a sample of 947 Spanish social workers (90.9% women) with an average age of 39.4 years ($SD^{1/4}$, 8.9) and an age range from 21 to 63 years (García et al., 2019). One third of survey respondents (32.0%, $n^{1/4}$ 303) had been in their current position for less than 5 years, as 42.9% ($n^{1/4}$ 406) had been in their current position for between 5 and 15 years, and finally, 25.1% ($n^{1/4}$ 238) had been in their current position for more than 15 years (García et al., 2019).

The analyses of the data from the sample of Spanish social workers utilized in the survey, showed that the underlying factorial structure of the MBI-HSS, is three-

dimensional, and showed the results of the survey to have satisfactory psychometric properties and proved to be a valid and reliable measure (García et al., 2019).

The MBI's limitations, however, indicate that the stability of the psychometric properties has not been proven, as the study must be replicated in different samples of social workers, adopting longitudinal designs to prove the stability of the measurements (García et al., 2019). Maslach and Jackson (1981), have suggested that burnout syndrome is characterized by a 'reaction to chronic stress integrated by negative feelings', as well as the 'attitudes toward people who receive a service'. Several instruments have been designed through the years since Maslach and Jackson's (MBI) to measure the construct of burnout, but the (MBI) has been the most extensively used and tested (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1986).

The research used by Maslach's (1981) theory of burnout, is considered by many in the field of psychology, to be the most widely accepted framework for burnout, and has also been utilized to assess individuals who are experiencing the identified symptomology of burnout (Posig et al., 2003). The MBI has also been used worldwide to assess occupational stress and the symptomology of burnout in the human service professions, as well as in school settings, social work, and in the work professional settings. There is also ample empirical evidence that show burnout as being a 'serious threat to employee's psychological health and working ability', as it is correlated with negative outcomes for individuals and organizations (Stangor, 2011). The MBI has also been used in the construct of burnout syndrome within the mental health profession, as burnout syndrome is best conceptualized as the inability to perform clinical tasks

correctly, due to personal discouragement, apathy towards the system, related stress, and emotional/physical exhaustion (García et al., 2019).

Burnout plays an important role in many areas, including effort in job performance and perception of aid given to others. Higher levels of burnout are related to lower investment interest in job performance because of stress, mental fatigue, etc. (Maslach, 2001). School counselors who experience stress and burnout, can negatively affect the services that they provide to students in a school setting, thus affecting the student's overall performance and mental stability. Mullen and Gutierrez (2016), examined counselors' degree of burnout and its impact on services that were provided to students, and found that burnout is a significant predictor because of direct services provided to students, as well as high caseload. School counselors are deemed with providing services to meet the needs of all students and in many cases, the overall school administrative staff (ASCA, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

History of School Counselors

The profession of school counseling has been in constant change and progression in many aspects in a span of years. In the early years of school counseling, there were questions as to the exact role and duties of a school counselor. The counseling school model mainly focused on academic, personal/social, and career development and progression (ASCA, 2014). The school counselor has evolved from its premise in career preparation solely, to having a greater emphasis on mental health issues such as depression, self-esteem issues, anxiety, bullying (cyber, in-person), divorce, teen

pregnancy, dropout rates, gangs, and substance abuse. In recent years, school mental health programs have been supported by school staff (school psychologists, social workers, counselors, administrators), as well as school-based community mental health clinicians, in the support of families (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

In the early years of the counseling profession and vocation, the role of the school counselor was mainly that of a vocational guidance counselor that was utilized to prepare students for life after high school and for a vocation (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In 1952, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) initiated that school counselors aid students to focus on academics, aid with personalization issues, help with career development, and to aid in making productive members of society (Moate et al., 2016).

In the 2000's and present day, the ASCA created a national model for school counselors, which defines the school counselor's professional identity. The ASCA model links the work of school counselors to the development of a comprehensive school counseling program and the approach to aiding students in becoming productive and responsible members of society (Moate et al., 2016).

Self-Efficacy and Burnout

Self-efficacy and its theoretical foundations were used as a foundation to guide this study. Bandura (1986,1995), noted that people's self-efficacy beliefs are defined as their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Self-efficacy beliefs are also based not only on people's expectations to acquire knowledge and skills, but also on their expectations to overcome

problems and realize certain actions required to accomplish goals under social pressure and distress (Gunduz, 2012).

The theory of self-efficacy refers to the belief that one can effectively utilize his or her resources to achieve certain outcomes through an individual's competency, beliefs, and broad sets of activities applicable to social roles (e.g., employee, leader, and student), or role-specific self-efficacy (Peng et al., 2021). Self-efficacy allows an individual the ability and capacity, to cope in a professional situation and to execute certain behaviors that will aid in achieving a particular task (Peng, et, al, 2021). The research conducted on the topic of burnout addresses indicators that show self-efficacy can be a predictor of school counselor burnout, as self-efficacy is an important mechanism of human behavior. The research conducted on burnout and its symptomology, addresses indicators that demonstrate that self-efficacy and caseload can be predictors of school counselor burnout.

Self-efficacy has long been associated with the beliefs in one's own ability to manage challenging situations and has been investigated thoroughly regarding teacher/counselor burnout. Teacher self-efficacy in the classroom, in association with burnout, was investigated in a study consisting of teachers' level of self-efficacy in classroom management. A sample of 1,227 German teacher candidates showed that positive self-beliefs among teachers drove their emotional exhaustion when students had poor classroom etiquette and led to teacher burnout (Dicke et al., 2014).

The teacher's self-efficacy and belief in themselves had deteriorated, as poor classroom management and classroom disturbances had left teachers with emotional

exhaustion and had resulted in their overall feeling of burnout (Dicke et al., 2014). There is a current need to determine the processes by which burnout can influence teacher's stress, and to the degree of which these processes generalize across early career teachers (Dicke et al., 2014). Nancy Bodenhorn and Gary Skaggs (2005) revised the self-efficacy scale as there was 'no self-efficacy scale that exists', nor that is 'validated for use in school counseling'.

The research is focused on how self-efficacy affects professional school counselors, as the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Sutton & Fall, 1995), was modified from the teacher efficacy scale, as it was the only one current in use (Bodenhorn, Skaggs, 2005). Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005), gathered school counselors using the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE), to determine if the self-efficacy scale would be able to be used across different school counselor settings, and to analyze responses from current practicing school counselors.

The result of the study indicated that the SCSES were most effective in measuring anxiety, social desirability, self-efficacy in job relation, and overall training (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The study also rendered information that strongly indicated that self-efficacy is strongly related to job performance, and that strengths and perceived weaknesses can be formalized among colleagues (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005), also commented on the existing formats of the National Standards, as well as the ASCA model, and stated that it calls upon the importance of self-efficacy.

Additionally, Bodenhorn and colleagues found that school counselors' self-efficacy was positively related to their use of the ASCA (2014) National Model. A study conducted on the psychological, personal, and the viewpoint of therapists, showed that self-efficacy demonstrated compassion and overall satisfaction, while empathy was correlated with secondary traumatic stress (Lakioti et al., 2020). The study concluded that a workplace setting was often a significant predictor of burnout, and that positive psychology is a useful variable in the mental resilience field (Lakioti et al., 2020).

The findings from the study further indicated that perceptions of self-efficacy such as positive emotions, and positive interpersonal relationships, aid in protecting therapists from burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Thus, a fully functioning work study may be a risk factor for burnout, as increased empathy is a risk factor for secondary stress (Lakioti et al., 2020). In a study that included self-efficacy as a moderator between stress and professional burnout in firefighters, concluded that self-efficacy was a crucial personal resource that buffers the impact of perceived stress on most burnout symptomology.

The study further concluded that in high-risk professions, self-efficacy is often an important factor in the prevention of burnout, and that it should be acknowledged, and related information included in prevention programs, pro-health activities, and in the psychoeducational field (Moate et al., 2016). Self-efficacy also supports employees' mental well-being, as it aids in the positive coping of stress and burnout. Self-efficacy is a crucial component of self that supports demanding actions that require persistence and is often characterized by a high level of complexity (Moate et al., 2016).

A study was conducted with psychiatrists and mental health professional exploring the relationships between the major moderator that affects the variables and the causes for exhaustion. The study indicated that psychiatrists exhibit a higher degree and standard of emotional exhaustion, and have a lower sense of personal accomplishment (Moate et al., 2016). Psychiatrists are perceived to be at a higher risk of burnout due to their profession being prone to dealing with clients that have ‘higher’ mental health needs, as their clients can exhibit extreme symptomology (anger, guilt, fear, anxiety) (Guglielmetti et al., 2022).

The stressors that are experienced in the psychiatric setting by psychiatrist, include an unfathomable stigma and view toward mental health patients that deal with hostile and aggressive behaviors, and the stressors of having to often aid in unresolvable issues. Other symptomology often treated by psychiatrists and exhibited by clients, is the rampant use of drugs and/or alcohol, suicide, severe mental health disorders, and premature retirement (Dicke et al., 2014). Self-efficacy has also been shown to have its direct correlation with burnout and emotional exhaustion, as studies of burned-out experienced by teachers, psychiatrist, mental health workers, and school counselors, have given a voice to many in these fields that suffer from the effects of burnout and are seeking aid.

The workers who are employed in the various fields suffering from the effects of burnout, started in their profession with the hopes of ‘helping people’, and often experience ‘shattered dreams of idealistic performance’, coupled with high levels of stress, burnout, and the demands (Dicke et al, 2014). School counselors, teachers, etc.,

often have challenging students with harsh and improper etiquette, disrespectful mannerisms, and low overall classroom and client etiquette. School Counselors may in turn, suffer from physical/mental fatigue and thus, may respond with hostility and enact punitive measures, reactions that may disrupt student motivation and contribute to a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption coupled with low self-efficacy (Dicke et al., 2014).

The high levels of stress and improper conditions in education for school counselors, may lead to counselor burnout, as self-efficacy was shown in research to be a major contributor to burnout. Research has shown that stressors and psychological detachment experienced by fatigued counselors, can in fact impair job performance, increases job stressors, and damage the well-being of the school counselor mentally and physically (Salkind, 2010). In the literature pertaining to stress, health, and burnout, self-efficacy is often conceptualized as an important personal resource that aids individuals in being able to cope with role-related demands and high stressful situations (Peng et al., 2021).

Accumulating evidence in research also suggests that there is a temporal fluctuation regarding self-views and self-esteem, that can represent an individual characteristic that affects how individuals cope with demands (Cervone et al., 2020). Self-efficacy has been correlated and shown to include factors that often aid therapists and professionals in the mental health fields, as it maintains their resilience to work when facing stressors and burnout because of self-perception and expectations (Lakioti et al., 2020).

There is current research concerning caseload and self-efficacy in how it contributes and coincides with burnout thru the external means of aggression, poor mental health, and job stressors with counselors (Guglielmetti et al., 2022). The self-efficacy theory relates to the present study, in that self-efficacy beliefs are not only based on people's expectations to acquire knowledge and skills, but also on their expectations to overcome problems and realize that certain actions are required to accomplish goals under social pressure and distress (Gunduz, 2012).

Caseload and Burnout

There are various predictors and factors that can contribute to burnout that often include perceived job control, the nature of psychotherapists' countertransference reactions, supervisory support, and most and importantly overlooked, caseload and the client's personal needs (Yang & Hayes, 2020). The effects and correlation of burnout among psychotherapists and school counselors, raises many important questions concerning the mental health and mental impact it has on these individuals. Empirical information concerning the factors that contribute to burnout, can influence and infuse knowledge for these professionals to take steps to minimize and or prevent burnout. Burnout affects many professionals on a daily basis as they are prone to work and deal in high stressful environments and suffer from mental fatigue and low self-efficacy daily.

A study conducted on predictors of burnout among community therapists in children's mental health, suggested that burnout is prevalent within the community mental health (CMH) settings, where therapists often carry large caseloads characterized by poverty, clinical severity, complexity, and comorbidity (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Poor

boundaries, excessive intrusion, and over involvement with clients and therapists, all contributed to burnout factors. Caseload, however, was a prominent predictor of burnout when individuals tried to complete multiple tasks in high stressful situations, and where coping mechanisms were scarce and not utilized.

Caseload size has often been overlooked in research as other prevalent contributors to physical and mental fatigue have received the bulk of attention, such as stress, mental anguish, job stress, etc. Cross-sectional studies that have examined the relationship between caseload size and burnout, have produced mixed results, as research has shown that larger caseload size is related to greater role stress, but unrelated to emotional exhaustion among mental health workers in a managed care setting (Acker & Lawrence, 2009). Work caseload is often interpreted to mean that a school counselor or therapist has multiple clients and immense work responsibilities. Work caseload can have a direct correlation to burnout, and is co-associated with fatigue, stress, mental fatigue, and employee termination and resignation (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Employment responsibilities of a counselor/therapist, that include job factors and job control, work environment, and work demand (workload and caseload), were all shown to be contributing factors to high stress and overkill (Acker & Lawrence, 2009). Therapists in various studies have also attributed high work and caseload to be a high determinant of high stress, and thus, were in direct correlation to burnout, low work performance, and hindering health (Killian, 2008). As a cause for many resignations, psychotherapist and mental health workers were shown to exhibit poor mental health and mental fatigue as factors and contributors to their burnout (Killian, 2008).

Research concerning burnout and focusing on the preventive factors, have shown that smaller caseloads, less paperwork, and more flexibility at work, were all associated with lower rates of burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Burnout results in various studies have all shown negative outcomes for both practitioners and clients, as high caseloads have contributed to the symptomology of burnout. These results of negative outcomes, demonstrate that burnout is not just correlated with mental fatigue, but is linked to physical ailments as well, such as headaches, gastrointestinal problems, etc. (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Having a high caseload was shown as a contributing factor when identifying skills related to resilience and burnout, as it has been shown to be correlated with high stress and attributed to poor job performance and low morale (Killian, 2008). These high caseloads often seen by therapists and counselors, include clients that are trauma survivors, and that have experienced severe mental health trauma (Killian, 2008). In a study conducted on the demands of treating people with psychological problems among psychotherapists, the psychotherapists often developed positive skills and positive coping mechanisms that served as buffer to burnout (Yang & Hayes, 2020). Another study showed that child and adolescent mental health service providers operating within a public-sector mental health service system, showed a high tolerance to burnout, as they developed positive coping mechanisms thru their work and experience (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Literature Review/Key Variables/Concepts

School counselor burnout is somewhat of commonality as it is vast in numerous professions and occupations, as well as in literature (Lambie, 2007). Literature related to school counselor burnout has primarily focused on demographic and occupational factors as literature on several demographic variables (age, sex, race, ethnicity, and personal), and occupational variables (years of experience as a school counselor, caseload, no counseling duties, principal support, and mental health needs), related to burnout in school counselors. In research and studies, the outcome of the impact of age and gender on school counselor burnout has found similar results while few studies have been conducted.

Kalkan and Demir (2015) did not find a significant relationship between school counselors' age and levels of burnout, as in a similar study, Kim & Burić (2019), also did not find any relationship between significant relationship between school counselor's age and levels of burnout. Savicki (2002), also did not find a significant relationship between school counselors' age and levels of burnout in the research study. There is limited research on school counselor burnout and race and ethnicity as school counselors of color may experience increased levels of stress and burnout (McCarthy et al., 2010).

In a study conducted by McCarthy et al. (2010), consisting of 227 school counselors from Texas that were identified as a minority group, reported higher levels of stress. School counselors attributed the high levels of stress to high demands, paperwork, number of students in caseload, testing duties, and non-counseling duties, more so than

low available resources such as other counselors, other professionals, administration support, and staff development.

In another study with results in negative outcomes for both mental health practitioners (MHPs, e.g., counselors, psychologists, social workers) and their clients, Dispenza et al., (2017), found that sexual-minority-identified MHPs reported higher rates of burnout when compared to heterosexual-identified MHPs. The found factors that contribute to burnout among sexual-minority-identified MHPs, used internet survey procedures to explore possible correlates and predictors of burnout among 84 sexual-minority-identified MHPs. MHP's were recruited and sampled from across the U.S. (Dispenza et al., 2017). The perceptions of reasonable workload, perceptions of workplace heterosexism, perceptions of workplace support, and identity concealment were all explored in this study as specific factors that could lead to burnout.

Age

Age has also been explored concerning burnout as Craig and Sprang (2010), found that age significantly predicted and attributed depersonalization and emotional exhaustion concerning burnout. The research suggested that older MHPs were less likely to report experiencing symptoms of burnout because they possibly developed certain characteristics, such as more effective coping, as they matured in age (Dispenza, et al., 2017). Craig and Sprang (2010), also examined a group of trauma counseling practitioners, and found that therapists younger than the reported age experienced higher rates of burnout as they had a lower perceived self-efficacy concerning themselves, their work, and were ill-equipped to handle the stressful demands of trauma work.

Demographic variables associated with burnout can be found in research as Dollarhide et al., (2013), conducted a qualitative study with 19 non-white school counselors to understand the impact of stress on counselors with different racial/ethnic backgrounds. The results of the study concluded that 18 out of the 19 participants expressed frustration and felt overwhelmed by being in school environments that did not support diversity. Participants reported feeling defeated, stressed, and burned out and thoughts of moving to a new job due to their experiences with negative racial events (Dollarhide et al., 2013).

In research studies regarding demographic variables, were found limited as Kalkan and Demir (2015), did not find a significant relationship, nor correlation between school counselor's age and levels of burnout. Kim and Burić (2019), also did not find a significant relationship between school counselor's age that correlated with the different levels of burnout. Savicki (2002) also did not find a significant relationship between school counselors' age and levels of burnout, as his research study lacked sufficient research in relation to demographics, majority population, and school counselor burnout measurements.,

Dispenza et al., (2017), in researching race, MHPs, and its connection with burnout, found that sexual-minority-identified MHPs reported higher rates of burnout when compared to heterosexual-identified mental health practitioners (counselors, psychologists, social workers). There is also very limited research on school counselor burnout and race and ethnicity, as school counselors of color may experience increased levels of stress 31 and burnout (McCarthy et al., 2010). In a research study consisting of

227 school counselors from Texas that were identified as minority, reported higher levels of stress and burnout than their non-minority counterparts in a school setting (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Summary of Findings

In chapter 2, I reviewed the current pertinent literature related to the relationship between school counselor burnout, specifically emotional exhaustion, the depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables), and self-efficacy with caseloads as the predictor. I also noted important findings related to the population of interest: School counselors in grade levels ninth to twelfth grade. Prior research indicates that there is a clear link between school counselor burnout and exhaustion, as well as depersonalization as proven in some of the reliable studies. There is however the links between self-efficacy and caseload as predictors have not been thoroughly established nor researched thoroughly.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout specifically emotional exhaustion and the depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables), with self-efficacy and caseloads as the predictors. The theory of self-efficacy and burnout served as the theoretical foundations for this study. The research conducted on the topic of burnout addresses indicators that show self-efficacy and caseload can be predictors of school counselor burnout. The study approach described in Chapter 3, was utilized in this study, as a quantitative paradigm, along with a standard multiple regression, to measure the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and caseload as predictors of school counselor burnout.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout—specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables)—and self-efficacy and caseload as predictors. The literature review revealed several demographic and occupational variables related to school counselor burnout, the self-demands of self-efficacy and mental health issues, and the rising caseload of school counselors and its contribution to burnout. This chapter addresses the methodology of this study, including the research design and rationale for the study, population and sample strategy, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and research questions and hypotheses.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: To what extent does self-efficacy predict school counselor burnout?

H01: Self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of burnout

HA1: Self-efficacy is a significant predictor of burnout.

RQ2: To what extent does the caseload contribute to school counselor burnout, as measured by each of the three subscales of the MBI-HSS for the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout among school counselors?

H02: Caseload contributes to school counselor burnout.

HA2: Caseload does not contribute to school counselor burnout.

The nature of the study was quantitative with an approach using a correlational research design to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and caseload as predictors and school counselor burnout as the dependent variable. The design was appropriate for my research questions, as my goal was to find relationships, or correlations, between variables. A correlational matrix was used with a Pearson product-moment correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the dimensions of (a) emotional exhaustion (EE) and (b) depersonalization (DP) and the predictors, self-efficacy and caseload.

Correlational designs can be used to study everyday behavior. They can offer some information regarding the degree of the relationships between studied variables, and they are often the only way to study some phenomena (Stangor, 2011). Correlational designs can offer a variety of information regarding the degree of the relationships between studied variables, and they are often the only way to study some phenomena (Stangor, 2011). Standard multiple regression analyses were used to determine if self-efficacy and caseloads can significantly predict burnout, specifically in the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions. The predictor variables in this study (i.e., self-efficacy and caseload), were used in determining their relationship to school counselor burnout, which filled a literature gap.

Methodology

Population and Sample Strategy

The target population for this study consisted of school counselors who worked in the public and private school setting, in Houston Texas. Based on the sample size used in

a related study conducted in Turkey (Gunduz, 2012), approximately 250 counselors were asked to participate from one school district in the Houston Texas area, as well as the neighboring school district in Pasadena Texas.

School counselors were gathered from various grade levels (ninth through 12th grade), from diverse ethnic and age demographics. To achieve the response rate, I had to consider the percentage of nonresponses. I needed to send at least 250 invitations to potential participants. I utilized a convenience sample procedure to select the participants for this study. A convenience sample uses subjects that are nearest and available to participate in the research study, in this case, from the population of school counselors from the Houston and Pasadena school districts. I sent 250 invitations to potential participants.

Procedure for Recruitment

Approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted, and I posted a link on the ASCA website, as well as on the School District's webpage and the private/public school website for educators. School counselors were gathered from grade levels (ninth through 12th grade).

When the participants clicked on the link, they were taken to SurveyMonkey, a secure web-based site (SurveyMonkey.com, 2022). First, the participant was asked for consent, and when the consent was obtained, they completed a demographic questionnaire. Once the demographic questionnaire was completed, participants completed the MBI-HSS and the SCSES, as the caseload was determined through self-report. After several weeks, a second request was sent to public and private school

counselor webpages, along with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) website, to gain additional participants.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study to collect data. The MBI-HSS was used to measure three levels of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI-HSS was designed for professionals in human service and addresses emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Maslach, 1986). The SCSES was also utilized in this research and is a unidimensional measure of school counselors' self-efficacy level to perform counseling tasks (Maslach, 1986). Caseload information was obtained through self-report.

The data for this research study included survey responses from school counselors in a public and private school setting, along with the ASCA website. An online data collection method was used to reach participants in Survey Monkey. Based on the sample size used in a related study conducted in Turkey (Gunduz, 2012), approximately 250 counselors were targeted and asked to participate in the survey. All willing participants were accepted in the beginning, pending satisfaction of the following inclusion requirements: working full time and being on the job for 5 or more years. The quantitative design included the following variables: (a) burnout dimensions EE and DP, (b) self-efficacy, and (c) self-report of caseloads, current and past.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory—Human Services Survey

Freudenberger was the first to describe the symptomology of burnout in 1973, and it was Maslach and Jackson (1981) who constructed the first instrument for its

measurement: the MBI (Gómez et al., 2019). The same authors that produced the MBI-HSS, aimed at professionals in human services (Gómez et al., 2019). The MBI-HSS is a 22-item survey that covers 3 areas: emotional exhaustion (EE) and depersonalization (DP).

The MBI-HSS relates to professionals' feelings concerning interaction with their work, which is assessed utilizing a Likert scale, of which the professional assesses, using a range of seven options from *never* (value 0) to *always/every day* (value 6), and how frequently they experience each of the situations described (Gómez et al., 2019). The organization of the instrument for the evaluation of the 22 items differentiates three factors: EE, DP, and PA. These factors make up the three dimensions or subscales of the MBI. The EE subscale is made up of nine items that relate to the decrease or loss of emotional resources or describe feelings of being overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted by the demands of the job (Gómez et al., 2019).

The EE subscale is made up of nine items that relate to the decrease or loss of emotional resources or describe feelings of being overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted by the demands of the job. The survey questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 20 belong to this subscale. The scoring is directly proportional to the intensity of the syndrome (Gómez et al., 2019). The maximum score is 54 points, and the higher the EE score, the higher the level of burnout experienced by the individual (Gómez et al., 2019).

The DP subscale is made up of five items that describe a cold, impersonal, and insensitive relational response toward the people served. Survey questions 5, 10, 11, 15, and 22 make up this subscale. The maximum score is 30 points, and the higher the DP

score, the higher the level of burnout experienced by the individual. The PA subscale is composed of eight items that describe feelings of competence, effectiveness, and accomplishment at work (Gómez et al., 2019). The inventory questions that belong to this subscale are 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21. The maximum score is 48 points, and the higher the score on this subscale, the more personal accomplishment and less burnout the individual experiences (the scoring is inversely proportional to the degree of burnout) (Gómez et al., 2019).

Most of the current research on burnout uses the MBI-HSS (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). Although the MBI-HSS provides insight into burnout, it is not specific to school counselor burnout (Lee, 2009). Reinke et al. (2011), reported Cronbach's alpha for the subscales; 0.82 for the barriers scale, 0.86 for the reasons of fail, 0.78 for the teacher role scale, and 0.86 for the school psychologist role scale. The content validity for the MBI-HSS has been revised through a panel of experts in the field of education as items can be changed and revised for greater clarity (Maslach, 1981). Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) tested for reliability and reported Cronbach alpha ratings of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.76 for depersonalization, and 0.76 for personal accomplishment.

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

The SCSES was modified from a teacher efficacy scale and used in a study on school counselors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). This scale may be used to assess the effectiveness of the education process in school counseling programs, as well as to provide insight into the success of practicing school counselors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). According to Bandura's (1986, 1995) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is an

important aspect of career performance and preparation. Self-efficacy, defined as beliefs about one's own ability to successfully perform a given behavior, involves "a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioral skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve memorable purposes" (Bandura, 1986).

The school counselor self-efficacy was measured with SCSES, which is a scale modified from a teacher self-efficacy scale by Gibson and Dembo (1984). Their results indicated that support staff and administrators were the strongest predictors of high school counselor efficacy. The SCSES provides numerical indices for the self-efficacy of school counselor participants. The SCSES is a unidimensional measure of school counselors' self-efficacy level to perform counseling tasks.

The SCSES generally uses probing questions to indicate school counselors' confidence in their current ability to perform each activity by using a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not confident*) to 5 (*highly confident*), such that high scores indicate high self-efficacy (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). In developing the SCSES, reliability had a coefficient alpha of .95 as the reliability of items will be tested using SPSS (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

The SCSES is a derivative from the teacher self-efficacy scale and used in a study for school counselors and tested for the effectiveness of the education process in school counseling programs. The purpose of the research was to provide insight into the success of practicing school counselors and its effects on the counselors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). This 43-item scale measures the school counselor's self-efficacy to complete counseling duties (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

One sample item included on the scale was the following: “to help students identify and attain attitudes, behaviors, and skills that lead to successful learning” (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). In developing the scale, reliability had a coefficient alpha of .95 (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The reliability of the items was tested using SPSS, and the evidence of validity provided revealed that counselors with 3 or more years of experience had higher scores than counselors with less experience (Bodenhorn et al., 2005).

Second, counselors who had training in the ASCA model had higher scores (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Third, the scores were correlated ($r = .41$) with a test designed for individual personal counseling (Bodenhorn et al., 2005). Fourth, scores were negatively correlated ($r = -.42$) with anxiety, which indicated that counselors with high self-efficacy had low stress (Bodenhorn et al., 2005). The SCSES provided both reliability and validity as evidence of validity that was used in research of which examined school counselors with experience that could achieve higher or lower scores than those with less experience (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

Overall, the SCSES seems to be internally reliable, and its construct validity is supported by clear factor structures and average-to-high factor loadings, as both the single higher order factor derived from exploratory factor analysis using the six subscales (Holcomb et al., 2008). The scores of the SCSES should have a high internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$) of the total score, suggesting that all items on the SCSES are related closely to one another and reflect a single overarching construct (Holcomb, et al., 2008).

Data Analysis Plan

The survey responses were entered into SPSS version 27.0. A correlational matrix was used with a Pearson product-moment correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the dimensions of (a) emotional exhaustion and (b) depersonalization and the predictors, self-efficacy, and caseload. The correlation matrix using Pearson product-moment correlation is more than one independent variable; it is a collection of all pairwise correlations that are succinctly represented in a matrix form.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is unduly influenced by outliers, unequal variances, nonnormality, and nonlinearities. The patterns of missing values in multiple regression and correlation analysis can be very complex (Friendly & Kwan, 2003). As a result, missing values can be deleted in a pairwise or a row-wise fashion, and if there are only a few observations with missing values, it might be preferable to use row-wise deletion, especially for large data sets (Friendly & Kwan, 2003).

The assumptions concerning the correlation matrix, are used to determine if there is a significant relationship between school counselor burnout, self-efficacy and caseload. The assumptions include a linear relationship, homogeneity of variance, and data on the continuous scale. If the assumptions are not met, a Spearman correlation coefficient is appropriate. A Spearman correlation coefficient measures the monotonic association between two variables in the terms of ranks and measures and even when one variable increase or decreases with another. The Spearman correlation also works even when the relationship between the two variables is not linear or bivariate normal. The Spearman

correlation however was not utilized in this study, as the assumptions and testing were met in this research.

The standard multiple regression analyses were used to determine if self-efficacy and caseloads could significantly predict burnout, specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions. Standard multiple regression is an extension of simple linear regression and is used when one wants to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables. Multiple regression allows one to determine the overall fit (variance explained) of the model, and the relative contribution of each of the predictors to the total variance explained (Friendly & Kwan, 2003).

Multiple regression is a general and flexible statistical method for analyzing associations between two or more independent variables, as well as a single dependent variable (Salkind, 2010). As a general statistical technique, multiple regression can be employed to predict values of a particular variable based on knowledge of its association with known values of other variables. Multiple regression can also be used to test scientific hypotheses about whether and to what extent certain independent variables explain variation in a dependent variable of interest (Salkind, 2010).

If the assumptions of multiple regression would have not been attained, then a non-least-squares, robust, resistant regression method, transformation, weighted least squares linear regression, or even a nonlinear model, would have been utilized to ensure a better fit. The population variance for Y is not constant, therefore, a weighted least squares linear regression or a transformation of Y may provide a means of fitting a regression adjusted for the inequality of the variances (Freedman, 2006). If fitted,

coefficients are unstable because of multicollinearity in the X variables, then a method designed to deal with multicollinearity may provide a more useful fit.

To test validity and reliability, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were utilized to determine whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data, and can also test for the statistical significance of each of the independent variables (Friendly &Kwan, 2003). The tests can determine whether the unstandardized (or standardized) coefficients are equal to 0 (zero) in the population, as If $p < .05$, it can be concluded that the coefficients are statistically significantly different from 0 (zero) (Friendly &Kwan, 2003).

Ethical Procedures

Counselors who conduct research should abide by the standards set by the ACA Code of Ethics (2014). One responsibility of the researcher is to avoid causing injury to participants (Standard G.1.e.). Researchers should protect the rights of participants by providing informed consent and protecting the confidentiality of information received (Section G.2.). Before collecting data, the research study will have to be approved by the IRB at Walden University. Participants will receive informed consent about the study before the research begins. Part of the informed consent is to notify participants that the data will be protected.

I, the researcher, respected participants' confidentiality after data was collected by removing all identifying information from data and electronic databases. Additionally, data should be reported accurately. Researchers should consider words used to avoid bias

against persons based on gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, or age. The results of the study will be made available for participants if requested.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology that was used in this study including research design and rationale, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and research questions and hypothesis were discussed. The research used a quantitative research design to examine the school counselor's perceptions of mental health needs, mental health knowledge, and mental health skills, as well as the relationship to the degree of school counselor burnout. Data were analyzed separately in three groups of early, middle, and high school counselors. Results of this study including analysis of the data, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout—specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables)—and self-efficacy and caseload as predictors. The literature review revealed several demographic and occupational variables related to school counselor burnout, the role of self-efficacy, and the rising caseload of school counselors and its contribution to burnout. This chapter includes a description of the collected data and results of the data analysis, concluding with a summary. The following research questions and hypotheses guided this study:

RQ1: To what extent does self-efficacy predict school counselor burnout?

H01: Self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of burnout.

HA1: Self-efficacy is a significant predictor of burnout.

RQ2: To what extent does the caseload contribute to school counselor burnout, as measured by each of the three subscales of the MBI-HSS for the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout among school counselors?

H02: Caseload contributes to school counselor burnout.

HA2: Caseloads does not contribute to school counselor burnout.

Data Collection

Data were collected from school counselors (elementary, middle, and high school) who were currently working. A survey was set up in Survey Monkey and posted within

the two school districts (Houston, Pasadena Texas) that targeted elementary, middle, and high school counselors, along with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA)(<https://www.schoolcounselor.org>). The survey items began with demographic questions, which addressed characteristics such as gender, school level, type of school, race, and years of experience. These were followed by the counselor burnout scale, which consisted of 20 questions answered on a scale ranging from *never true* to *always true*, and the self-efficacy scale, which consisted of 43 questions using a Likert scale, with responses ranging from *not confident* to *highly confident*.

Data collection lasted from November 15, 2021, to January 17, 2022, with an expectation to attain 250 school counselor responses. The target population consisted of 250 school counselors who worked as school counselors in a public and private school setting, however, only 128 school counselor responses were obtained. After a month of inactivity and resending invitation emails to both school districts and the ASCA, a request and consent were obtained from my chair and IRB to discontinue. The discontinuation was unfortunate, as a smaller sample size changes the impact on the power analysis, however, consent to cease was approved by the chair and IRB, and the survey was then unfortunately closed on January 17, 2022, due to inactivity.

Descriptive Statistics

Survey Monkey was utilized to reach participants in the public and private school setting who had been school-based counselors. The participants answered the demographic questionnaire followed by the MBI-HSS and the SCSES. Caseload was determined through self-report. One hundred and twenty-eight participants completed the

survey. Table 1 shows a description of each category. The results represented 128 participants; there were 57 females and 71 males. The school levels were elementary (1%), middle (2%), and high school (96%).

Most participants were from public schools (96%); 3.8% were from private schools. The largest group of participants was Hispanic 50 (39%), followed by African American 27(20%), Asian 11 (8%) and Caucasian 40 (White; 31%). The years of experience response categories for school counselors were 1–5 years (2%), 6–10 years (3%), 11–15 years (19%), and 15 or more years (75%). Frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics: Gender, School Level, Type of School, Race, Years of Experience

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	71	55%
Female	57	44%
Total	128	
School level		
Elementary	2	1%
Middle	3	2%
High	120	96%
Missing	3	
Total	125	96%
School type		
Public	123	96%
Private	5	3.8%
Missing	0	
Total	128	98.5%
Years of school counselor experience		
1–5 years	3	2.3%
6–10 years	4	3.13%
11–15 years	25	19.53%
15 years +	96	75%
Missing	0	
Total	128	

The dependent variables used in testing the study hypotheses were subscales from the MBI-HSS. The study's purpose was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout, specifically the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables, as measured by the MBI), using self-efficacy (as measured by the SCSES) and caseload as the predictors of the sample scored on this subscale under the threshold of emotional exhaustion. In Table 2, the descriptive statistics of the variables are provided.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Caseload, School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale, Emotional Exhaustion, and Depersonalization

	Mean	Std. deviation	N
What is your caseload per year?	3.9922	1.00387	129
EE	16.5891	6.14361	129
DP	9.4297	4.06964	128
SCSES	121.2155	21.25653	116

Note. EE = emotional exhaustion; DP = depersonalization; SCSES = School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale.

Results

SPSS 28.0 was used to analyze the data. The first research question was tested using a correlational analysis, and the second research question was tested using a regression analysis. Tests of assumptions were conducted prior to the analyses.

For RQ1 (To what extent does self-efficacy predict school counselor burnout?), the research hypothesis was that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of burnout. Thus, a correlational analysis was appropriate. Assumptions of correlation analyses include that the variables are on a ratio or interval scale, and that there is a linear relationship between the variables. The further assumption is that both variables are approximately normally distributed, and that the dataset consists of pairs of scores, as well as that there are no extreme outliers in the dataset.

The data satisfied the type of measurement that was utilized, as the rest of the assumptions were revealed by the normal probability plot as shown in Figure 1 indicate that there is a linear relationship between SCSES as the independent variable, and depersonalization (DP) as the dependent variable. The same linear relationship is demonstrated in Figure 2 between SCSES as the independent variable, and emotional exhaustion (EE) as the dependent variable. The assumptions of normality were tested by visual inspection of a normal probability plot. Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by the visual inspection of a normal P-P plot. The P-P plots used to determine the normality of the study variables are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1

School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale as Predictor of Depersonalization

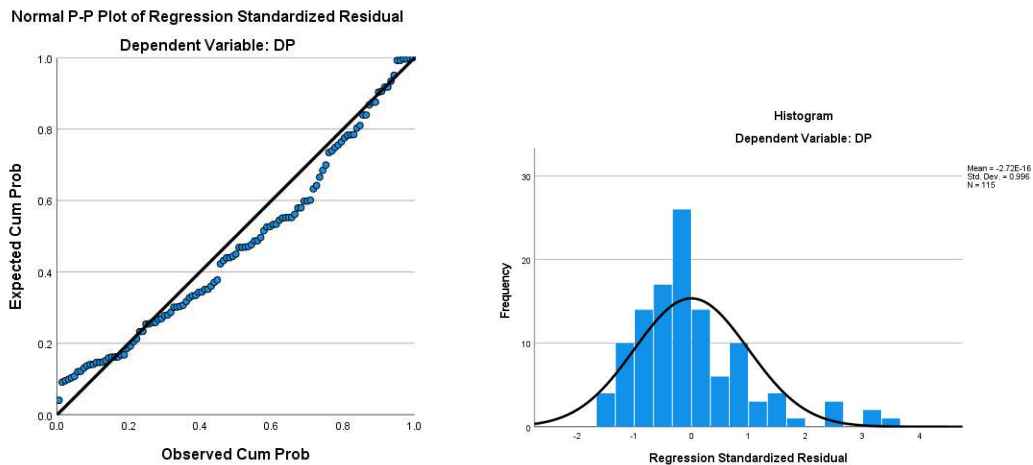
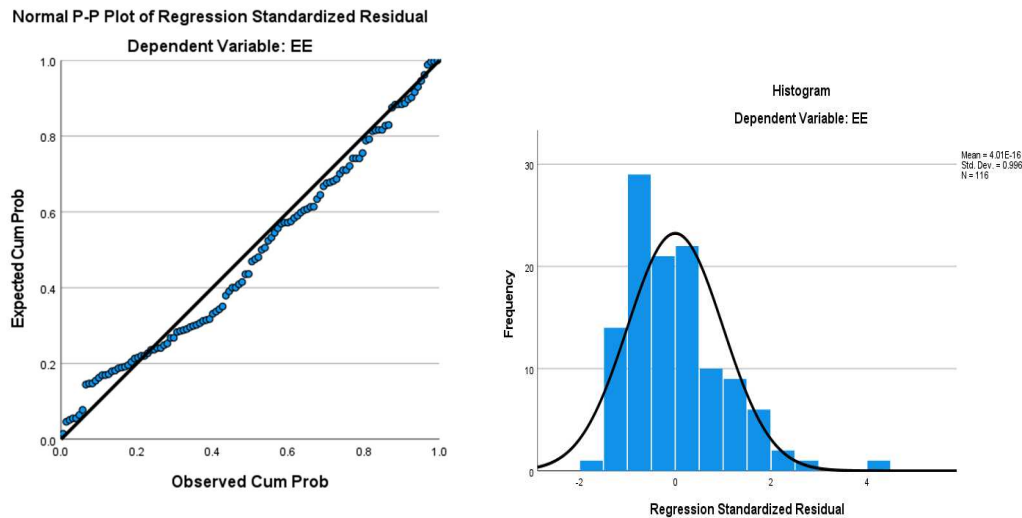


Figure 2

School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale as Predictor of Emotional Exhaustion



Correlational Analysis

A correlational analysis was conducted with a Pearson product-moment correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the dimensions of (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and the predictors (c) self-efficacy and (d) caseload. In the Pearson correlation results, there is a significant correlation/relationship between caseload and self-efficacy. In Table 3, the results of the analyses indicate that SCSES scores were negatively correlated to EE and DP; thus, as demonstrating that as self-efficacy increased, burnout and EE and DP decreased. Additionally, results revealed that as caseload increases, EE and DP increase as well.

Thus, results for RQ1 revealed significant relationships between SCSES and DP. The effect size as estimated by the coefficient of determination was $R^2 = .223$, which indicates that because there is a correlation, there is no direction for the relation. This indicates that 22% of the variance in SCSES is explained by its relationship with DP. Additionally, the results revealed a significant relationship between SCSES and EE, with an effect size of $R^2 = .05$, which indicates that 5 % of the variance in EE can be explained by the relationship with SCSES.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of Predictors School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale and Caseload by Dependent Variables Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion

		What is your caseload per year?	EE	DP	SCSES
What is your caseload per year?	Pearson correlation	1	-.331**	-.264**	-.248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003	.007
	<i>N</i>	129	129	128	116
EE	Pearson correlation	-.331**	1	.659**	.227*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.014
	<i>N</i>	129	129	128	116
DP	Pearson correlation	-.264**	.659**	1	.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000		.000
	<i>N</i>	128	128	128	115
SCSES	Pearson correlation	-.248**	.227*	.473**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.014	.000	
	<i>N</i>	116	116	115	116

Note. EE = emotional exhaustion; DP = depersonalization; SCSES = School Counselor

Self-Efficacy Scale. SCSES (1= *not confident*, 5 = *highly confident*), EE and DP (1 = *never true*, 5 = *always true*).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

RQ2 was as follows: To what extent does the caseload contribute to school counselor burnout, as measured by each of the subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory—Human Services Survey (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions) among school counselors? A regression analysis was conducted with caseload as the predictor and EE and DP as the dependent variables to answer this research question. Linear regression is an analysis that assesses whether one or more predictor variables explains the dependent (criterion) variable. The linear assumption was tested using a scatterplot (Figure 3), which shows that there is a linear relationship between caseload and EE and DP.

The ANOVA using the dependent variables EE and DP and predictors caseload and SCSES, indicates that the model was statistically significant at .000. Table 4 includes the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF), which assess the degree of multicollinearity between variables, which happens when variables are too closely related (Allison, 2012). Tolerance ranges from 0 to 1, and as noted by Allison (2012), there is not a strict cutoff for tolerance, but tolerance of below .40 is cause for concern.

Tolerance was above this value, and thus the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. VIF is a reciprocal value with tolerance, and the value of 1.0 also indicated that multicollinearity was not a significant issue. Tolerance was above this value, and thus the assumption of no multicollinearity was not violated. The assumption of homoscedasticity tests whether the residuals at each level of the independent variable, have similar variances. Scatterplots can be used to test this assumption (see Figure 3 and 4). The plots reveal that the assumption of homoscedasticity was met.

Figure 3
School Counselor Self-Efficacy and Caseload as Predictors of Depersonalization

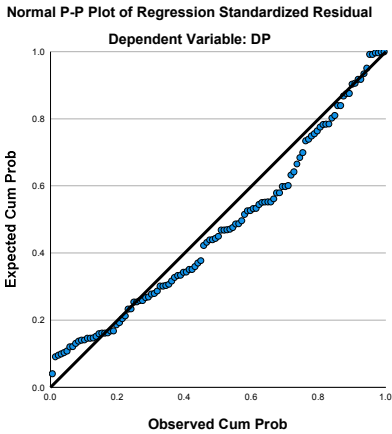
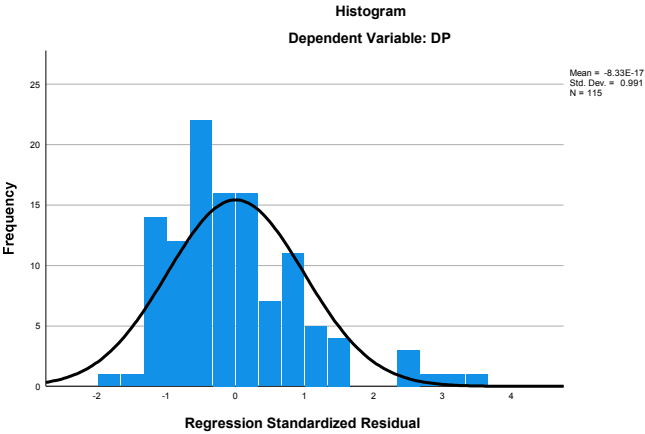


Figure 4

School Counselor Self-Efficacy and Caseload as Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

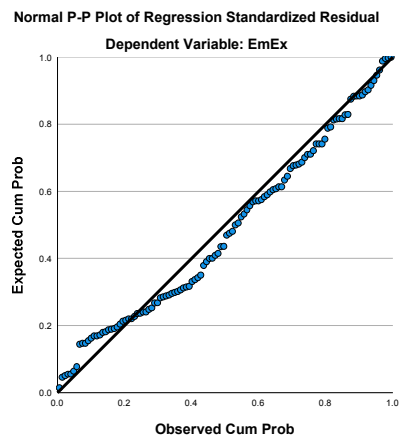
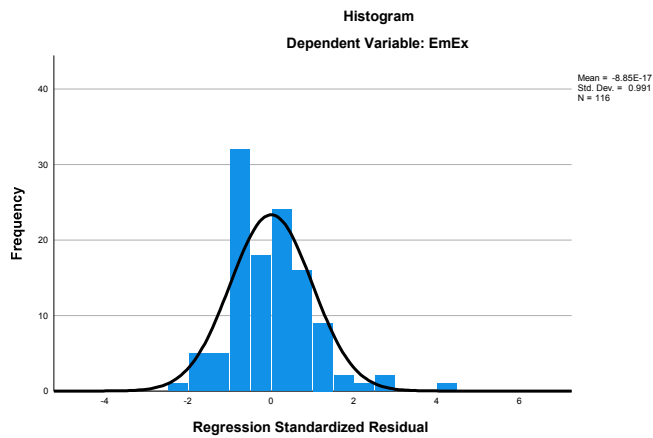


Table 4*Caseload and School Counselor Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion*

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	18.417	4.237		4.346	.000		
	What is your caseload per year?	-1.831	.537	-.307	-3.409	.001	.939	1.065
	SCSES	.043	.026	.150	1.671	.097	.939	1.065

Note. Dependent variable: Emotional exhaustion.

As shown in Table 4, caseload was statistically significant predictor of EE ($p < .001$). Higher caseloads predicted higher emotional exhaustion ratings. The School Counselor Self Efficacy Scale (SCSES) demonstrated a trend ($p = .097$) but was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion. Thus, caseload is shown to be a better predictor of EE than self-efficacy score. The regression equation for predicting EE is: $EE_{score} = (-.307) X_{caseload_score} + (18.417)$. The next regression analyses included DP as the dependent variable. Results of the ANOVA (Table 5) are below with the dependent variable Depersonalization (DP), and predictors Caseload and School Counselor Self Efficacy Scale (SCSES). The ANOVA (Table 5) showed that this model with the two predictors was statistically significant.

Table 5*Caseload and School Counselor Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Depersonalization*ANOVA ^a

Model	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1 Regression	493.663	2	246.832	19.282	.000 ^b
Residual	1433.728	112	12.801		
Total	1927.391	114			

Note. Dependent variable: Depersonalization. ^b Predictors: (Constant), SCSES, What is your caseload per year?

In looking at Table 6, the assumption in conducting the regression analyses is satisfied and show that there are no collinearity problems as revealed by the Tolerance index and the Variance Inflation factor (VIF).

Table 6

Coefficients and Test of Assumptions for Depersonalization as the Dependent Variable and Caseload and School Counselor Self-Efficacy as the Predictors

Coefficients ^a							
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>		Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.384	2.662		.896	.372		
What is your caseload per year?	-.745	.337	-.186	-2.209	.029	.939	1.065
SCSES	.082	.016	.427	5.076	.000	.939	1.065

Note. SCSES = School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale.

This indicates that caseload and SCSES are significant predictors of DP.

Therefore, the prediction equation for a score on DP is: DP score = (-.186)

$X_{\text{caseload_score}} + (.427) X_{\text{SCSES_score}} + (2.384)$. Higher caseloads and lower self-efficacy predicted higher depersonalization ratings.

Summary

One hundred and twenty-eight participants completed the Counselor Burnout Inventory and the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale, as well as the demographic questions. The results of the hypothesis tests indicated that there were significant correlations/relationships among the variables SCSESs, EE, and DP. To test whether caseload was a predictor of burnout, multiple regression analyses was used to determine if self-efficacy and caseloads can significantly predict burnout, specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions. Results indicated that caseload is a better predictor of EE than self-efficacy, and that both caseload as well as SCSES are significant predictors of depersonalization. In the next chapter, detailed interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout—specifically, the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout (dependent variables)—as measured by the MBI-HSS, along with self-efficacy (as measured by the SCSES) and caseload as the predictors. There are numerous stressors that have an impact on school counselors that can cause burnout and hinder school counselors in their profession and personal life overall. It is essential that school counselors, counselor educators, and the overall school administration, are aware of the signs and symptomology of school counselor burnout.

Identifying burnout and its causes can aid school counselors in the present and future in being successful in serving their school population and developing personal efficacy. One hundred and twenty-eight participants completed the Counselor Burnout Inventory and the SCSES, as well as the demographic questions. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between SCSES, EE, and DP. The results of this study indicate that caseload is a better predictor of EE than SCSES, and that both caseload and SCSES are significant predictors of DP.

The relationship between the variables demonstrates that caseload needs to be significantly lowered for school counselors' emotional exhaustion to be low, as well as for the overall betterment of the school counselors' well-being and job performance. The results of this study also indicate that the increases in caseload decreases school counselor self-efficacy, and increase feelings of depersonalization and emotional

exhaustion. These results could allow school counselors and administrators establish protocols that will decrease burnout among school counselors through manageable caseloads, as well as increase trainings that can increase awareness regarding the early detection signs of burnout for prevention.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study extend and add to the literature concerning burnout among school counselors. In this research study, I explored the variables related to school counselor burnout using the SCSES, along with the extent to which caseload contributes to school counselor burnout, incorporating the MBI-HSS subscales. The current and past literature on self-efficacy has focused on training, aptitude, level of experience, techniques, diagnosing, and self-perception, but have ignored self-worth.

Self-efficacy has long been associated with the belief in one's own ability to manage challenging and difficult situations and has been investigated thoroughly regarding teacher/counselor burnout. There is a pressing need to determine the processes of self-efficacy by influencing teacher/counselor stress, to the degree to which it generalizes across early teachers'/counselors' careers (Dicke et al., 2014). The Self-efficacy theory relates to the present study as self-efficacy beliefs are based not only on people's expectations to acquire knowledge and skills, but also on their expectations to overcome problems and realize certain actions required to accomplish under social pressure and distress (Gunduz, 2012).

There is prevalent past research on how caseload and self-efficacy contribute to burnout, especially among professionals such as nurses and school counselors. Past

research has shown that self-efficacy is associated with several factors that help therapists maintain their resilience to various work stressors (Lakioti et al., 2020). Past research has further suggested that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of burnout, and due to the self-perception and one's expectations, have a direct correlation with poor mental health, job stress, and burnout among counselors (Guglielmetti et al., 2022).

My research study did support the theory that there is significant relationship between SCSES, DP, and EE. However, results of this study indicate that as EE and DP increase, SCSES decreases. Results of this study also contribute to knowledge by indicating that self-efficacy is not the sole contributor in relation to burnout. There are other variables such as caseload that can affect self-efficacy amongst school counselors. The results of this study also showed that caseload was a better predictor of emotional exhaustion than school counselor self-efficacy.

The results of my study further demonstrated that caseload and school counselor self-efficacy are also significant predictors of depersonalization. The key findings of the study indicated that there is a relationship between school counselor burnout, DP, EE, and SCSES (as measured by the SCSES as previous literature and studies have demonstrated (Dicke, et al, 2014). The results for RQ1 revealed that there is a significant relationship between SCSES, DP, and EE, as past research had demonstrated. However, my research has indicated that as EE and DP increase, SCSES decreases.

The results of the study also showed that self-efficacy can affect a school counselor by decreasing their self-efficacy and belief in themselves, as they are bombarded by feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The results for

RQ1 also suggest that taking measures toward decreasing EE and DP, can increase a school counselor's self-efficacy and perhaps restore balance and mental health and wellness in the individual.

Caseload size has often been used as an objective measure of workload for mental health providers and mental health counselors. Several cross-sectional studies have examined the relationship between caseload size and burnout and have produced mixed results. The studies have shown that a larger caseload size is significantly related to greater role stress in mental health workers but is unrelated to emotional exhaustion in a managed care setting (Acker & Lawrence, 2009). Thus, my results differ from those of past studies, as my results showed that caseload is a better predictor of emotional exhaustion among school counselors, more so than that of self-efficacy. The reason for this difference could be the sampling frame of school counselors instead of a diverse group of mental health professionals.

Thus, it is essential that school counselors, counselor educators, and school administrators, be aware of the signs of burnout to help school counselors in being successful with their school population. According to my study and findings, decreasing caseload will lower emotional exhaustion and help increase school counselor self-efficacy. Previous research studies mainly focused on teacher and school counselor burnout and other various causes of burnout as well. The findings of my research have added impactful information regarding school counselor burnout within the United States, as that of a similar study that was conducted at an international site (Turkey) by Gunduz in 2012.

Gunduz (2012) investigated the relationships between burnout and self-efficacy among school counselors using the MBI and the SCSES. Gunduz's findings through research, revealed that there is a negative relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Gunduz (2012) also found through his research that there is a positive relationship correlation between personal accomplishment and self-efficacy. Gunduz's (2012) study was conducted in Mersin, Turkey, where the health and social systems are different from those of the United States; furthermore, Gunduz's findings also indicated that SCSES predicts DP and personal accomplishment, but not EE. Gunduz's (2012) study further revealed that counselors who had 1,000-1,500 students for their caseload, had a significantly higher DP score and low level of SCSES.

The results for RQ2 revealed that a significant relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, added an important predictor, that of caseload. This indicated that a decreasing caseload contributed to lower emotional exhaustion, and that it had an increase in school counselor self-efficacy. Results that have implications in this context indicate that caseload is a better predictor of EE than self-efficacy and that both caseload and SCSES are significant predictors of depersonalization. My research is relevant to the U.S. context, as compared to Gunduz's, which was conducted in Turkey. This study filled a gap in the literature by addressing the role of self-efficacy and caseload in burnout among school counselors in the United States.

The MBI instrument has been used worldwide to assess occupational stress in human service professions. For school settings, an inventory specifically oriented to measure burnout in teachers was developed (MBI-Form Ed; Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

The MBI describes burnout as a syndrome consisting of three parts (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) that can occur when people are engaged in highly interactive types of work (Maslach, 1982).

My results utilizing the MBI in this study, revealed that caseload is a better predictor of emotional exhaustion than self-efficacy, thus contributing to school counselor burnout. A tentative explanation for the results, is that the relationships could be due to the emotional effort expended by school counselors when working with children, rendering the impact of a heavy caseload on EE. On the other hand, DP as measured by MBI, ‘measured an unfeeling and impersonal response’, as it was gauged at the individual’s view towards service, care, treatment, and or instruction (Maslach, 1982). The reaction towards recipients can also be a defensive reaction to a heavy workload, and thus can affect one’s self-efficacy, and one’s belief in the ability to achieve particular tasks or goals (Maslach, 1982).

The combined impact of school counselors’ perceptions of their inability to do what they need to do, and the defense mechanism triggered by the heavy caseload on DP, makes the results an important contribution to the knowledge of burnout among school counselors. The study affirms that lowering caseload will impact EE and DP, thus improving a school counselor’s overall mental health. These findings, in the context of the United States, are important as they could increase awareness concerning burnout among school counselors. The findings could also aid educators and mental health programs (universities, licensure) in better preparing new school counselors to be able to identify burnout and come up with optimal solutions.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. One limitation was that my sample did not represent all school counselors within the public/ private school areas in Houston Texas, or all school counselors' members with ASCA. I recruited only the school counselors who were able to see my survey on their school or business website and reached only those who had time to fill out my survey. My survey overall did not account for all school counselors within my surrounding area of recruitment, nor ASCA members within the USA. My research unfortunately only focused on the recruited small sample size of ($N = 128$), and not the projected 250 school counselors that were asked to participate from the public/private school settings, and the ASCA.

There was also a lack of diversity in that most participants from my recruited sample, were not representative of all the diverse population of school counselors in the United States. My survey only included public and private schools and did not include any charter schools or alternative schools in the Houston Texas and neighboring Pasadena Texas area. Further, my research study did not include early childhood school counselors or early college school counselors as well.

The survey was a self-report. In self-report surveys, participants may not always be honest, and they may report what they think the researcher wants to hear. The timing and recruitment of my study was also during the COVID-19 pandemic, of which many school counselors were absent or bogged down by extra duties at their school district, and thus served as an overall limitation. Due to these limitations, the study may not be generalized to all school counselors, all levels of counseling, and to the entire United

States. However, the results related to the sample of school counselors are compelling and can be used to address social change for this group, which serves school children in the Houston, Pasadena, and neighboring areas.

Recommendations for Future Research

A recommendation for further research is to conduct a qualitative study of which school counselors would be interviewed and data gathered from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. This would give me an opportunity to explore the experiences of school counselors, the development of self-efficacy, and phases of burnout across time. It would be useful to explore the characteristics of what constitutes a “manageable” caseload. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore the age of these counselors, as well as the perceptions of school administrators concerning school counselor burnout.

After reviewing the data from my research, I would like to do an initial quantitative study with a larger sample size that would consist of two subgroups of school counselors within a full school year. The two subgroups would consist of equal numbers of participants, and the study would consist of school counselors with high caseloads, and those with low caseloads. This would in fact, serve to research if caseload is truly a vast contributor to school counselor burnout to a greater extent than self-efficacy. A further study would also investigate the cause/effect relationships in an experimental study manipulating caseload and size of caseload in relation to school counselor burnout.

It would also be informative to study burnout among different groups (new counselors, counselors with 5–10 years of experience, counselors with 30+ years of experience). Additionally, the SCSES is 20 years old but is still used in research studies

and is effective; in the future, a more up-to-date scale could be used. The recommendations may inform school counselor burnout mitigation, optimize the functioning of school counselors in their workplace, and serve as an advisory against huge caseload size to prevent its effects on school counselors' well-being.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may inform those in counselor education programs about the relationship between self-efficacy, caseload, and burnout. This information could be added to the school counselor curriculum concerning burnout for new counselors during internship before licensure, and their academic school year at work. The results of this study could further show school districts, counselor educators, and school administrators how decreasing caseload can lower emotional exhaustion, help increase school counselor self-efficacy, and decrease depersonalization.

Additionally, the information from this study can be used to advocate for social change for school counselors. The study highlights the effects of counselors having high caseloads that lead them to be overworked and bombarded by huge client populations. The mental stability of school counselors affects the vast population with which they work, which includes students, faculty, and others. This study may be shared at conventions to encourage more discussions concerning school counselors' self-efficacy, caseload, and burnout. The results of this study may increase the awareness of school administrators and supervisors on the impact of burnout and thus, have a preventive minded approach to aiding school counselors.

Conclusion

This study implies that caseload is a better predictor of EE and that both SCSES and caseload are predictors of DP. The results also indicate that as caseload increases, EE increases and DP increases, but self-efficacy decreases. School districts and administrations should consider the data from this study and examine school counselor caseload as a predictor for emotional exhaustion and burnout. The results of the study further indicate that healthy resources, as well as lower caseloads, should be examined for healthier school counselors who, in turn, aid children, adolescents, and school administration more effectively.

This results from this study further indicated that there is a definite relationship between self-efficacy, caseload, and burnout. As a result of this study, the overall school administration and school staff, will hopefully be more aware of the predictive factors of burnout and seek preventive methods in aiding the school counselor and in turn, helping their students. Preventive methods and information regarding the effects of burnout, will increase awareness and may impact stronger relationships within the school community formulating a more positive working environment.

It is important to continue exploring various aspects of burnout and its impact on school counselors. Future studies should continue to increase awareness of burnout and its impact on school counselors and their mental health well-being. Future studies may result in more conversations about caseloads and self-efficacy for the optimal functioning of school counselors and for the schoolchildren whom they serve.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other (Specify)

What school level do you counsel?

Elementary

Middle

High

What type of school do you work at?

Public

Private

Charter Other (Specify) What is

your Race?

African American

Asian

White

Hispanic

Other

How many years of experience as a school counselor?

1-5

11-15

6-10

15+

Appendix B: School Counselor Concept Scale

Below is a list of activities representing many school counselor responsibilities. Indicate your confidence in your current ability to perform each activity by circling the appropriate answer next to each item according to the scale defined below. Please answer each item based on one current school, and based on how you feel now, not on your anticipated (or previous) ability or school(s). Remember, this is not a test and there are no right answers.

Use the following scale:

- 1 = not confident,
- 2 = slightly confident,
- 3 = moderately confident,
- 4 = generally confident,
- 5 = highly confident.

Please circle the number that best represents your response for each item.

1. Advocate for integration of student academic, career, and personal development into the mission of my school.
2. Recognize situations that impact (both negatively and positively) student learning and achievement.
3. Analyze data to identify patterns of achievement and behavior that contribute to school success
4. Advocate for myself as a professional school counselor and articulate the purposes and goals of school counseling.
5. Develop measurable outcomes for a school counseling program which would demonstrate accountability.
6. Consult and collaborate with teachers, staff, administrators, and parents to promote student success.
7. Establish rapport with a student for individual counseling.

8. Function successfully as a small group leader.
9. Effectively deliver suitable parts of the school counseling program through large group meeting such as in classrooms.
10. Conduct interventions with parents, guardians and families in order to resolve problems that impact students' effectiveness and success.
11. Teach students how to apply time and task management skills
12. Foster understanding of the relationship between learning and work.
13. Offer appropriate explanations to students, parents and teachers of how learning styles affect school performance
14. Deliver age-appropriate programs through which students acquire the skills needed to investigate the world of work
15. Implement a program which enables all students to make informed career decisions
16. Teach students to apply problem-solving skills toward their academic, personal and career success
17. Evaluate commercially prepared material designed for school counseling to establish their relevance to my school population
18. Model and teach conflict resolution skills

Appendix D: Permission to Use the Maslach Burnout Inventory—

Human Services Survey

For use by Marcos Casares only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on October 4, 2021 www.mindgarden.com

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

Maslach Burnout Inventory forms: Human Services Survey, Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel, Educators Survey, General Survey, or General Survey for Students.

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument form may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below.

Sample Items:

MBI - Human Services Survey - MBI-HSS:

I feel emotionally drained from my work.

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.

I don't really care what happens to some recipients.

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Appendix E: Maslach Burnout Inventory—Human Services Survey

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
3. I don't really care what happens to some recipients

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