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The Experiences of Jamaican Secondary School Counselors Who Provide Psychological Support to Adolescents

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Abstract

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MSc, Walden University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Developmental Psychology

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Abstract

School counselors play an integral role in helping adolescents navigate and overcome the psychological distress that they experience. This study aimed to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development and Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1981) hermeneutic theory formed the conceptual framework for this study. Seven Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school participated in semistructured interviews via the Zoom online platform. Narrative analysis was used to code and analyze the data from the interviews. Seven themes emerged from the data: school counselors describe their role and experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents, counselors' experiences of factors that influence and factors that discourage help-seeking behavior among adolescents, counselors' experiences of social media and social class as deterrents to adolescents seeking psychological support, counselors experience high workload and the need for more internal support and additional human resources, counselors' experiences working with external government psychological support services, counselors' experience of psychological impact and self-care practices, and counselors' experiences of determining the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide. The findings of this study have implications for the establishment of stronger support systems for Jamaican school counselors and the development and enforcement of policies governing the operation of school counselors.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Psychological distress is a common occurrence among adolescents (Call et al., 2002). A social situational analysis of Jamaican adolescents revealed that a significant percentage of this population experiences psychological distress (Caribbean Policy Research Institute [CAPRI], 2018). School counselors play an integral role in helping adolescents navigate and overcome the psychological distress that they experience (American School Counselor Association, 2023). Unresolved psychological distress among adolescents is implicated in maladaptive behaviors, and social-relational and emotional challenges (Aldam et al., 2019).

Through this study, I aimed to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The study focused on the experiences of Jamaican school counselors because Jamaica is the social context in which I operate. Additionally, despite the importance of school counselors in Jamaican schools, few or no studies have been done to capture their experiences with respect to offering psychological support to adolescents. This study is important because it can provide insight into the challenges Jamaican counselors face when they attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. The study may also lead to the discovery of best practices that school counselors employ to treat the psychological challenges that adolescents present with.

Chapter 1 includes information on the background of the study, which situated the research problem as a knowledge gap that needed to be addressed by the present study. The problem and purpose statements, respectively, highlight the issue that is of concern that was directly addressed by this study and what the study proposed to achieve. The research question is presented to establish the focus of the study while the theoretical framework positions the study within a scientific context that guided the analysis of data. In addressing the nature of the study, I discuss the methodological approach and design that guided the data collection and analysis process. Definitions of key concepts are also covered to provide greater clarity and understanding of the study content. Collectively, the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations highlight factors that possibly influenced the research outcome. The significance of the study is also covered in Chapter 1. In describing the significance of the study, I outline the contributions that the present study will potentially make to the scientific community.

<div align="center">**Background**</div>

Psychological Distress Among Jamaican Adolescents

Records of psychological distress among Jamaican adolescents date back to 1985 when the Ministry of Education launched the Prevention Education Program (PEP). PEP was a response to societal problems such as substance abuse that affected the psychological health of children in both primary and high schools (Palmer et al., 2012). A part of the PEP response was also the introduction of school counselors in Jamaican schools to assist these children with the psychological challenges they were experiencing

(Palmer et al., 2012). As Jamaica transformed over the years, various sociocultural factors impacted adolescents' psychological health, including violence, neglect, poverty, and a lack of mental health awareness and appreciation (Wilks, 2023).

The CAPRI (2018) revealed that 25% of Jamaican children were diagnosed with a mental disorder, and 15% of Jamaican adolescents displayed symptoms of depression and anxiety. Additionally, 25% of Jamaican adolescents had considered suicide, while 18% had attempted suicide; 45% were consuming alcohol, 70% had tried cigarettes, and 12% consistently smoked marijuana (CAPRI, 2018). The Jamaica Information Service (JIS, 2021) also reported that 40% of murder perpetrators in Jamaica were adolescent males.

Historical Trend of Professional Counseling in Jamaica

Scholarly information is scarce on the development and practice of school counseling in Jamaica. In a seminal work conducted by Palmer et al. (2012), three major factors were noted to influence the development of professional counseling in Jamaica; the first of the three factors was the church. In the early 1990s, many churches in Kingston and St. Andrew offered psychological support for community members through their counseling ministries (Palmer et al., 2012). The second factor was the implementation of PEP by the Ministry of Education. The program was a response to the increasing number of substance abuse cases in the 1980s, both in the general population and within schools (Palmer et al., 2012). To achieve the objectives of the PEP program, school counselors were employed (Palmer et al., 2012). The third factor was the

implementation of formal counselor education training programs in 1985, which increased the delivery of these programs in colleges and universities (Palmer et al., 2012).

School Counselor's Workload

The workload of Jamaican school counselors is heavy. The current stipulated counselor–student ratio is 1 to 500, which is exceeded in many schools. The Chief Education Officer indicated that for the stipulated ratio to be met, an additional 292 counselors are needed (Public Broadcasting Cooperation of Jamaica [PCB], 2023). This indicates that Jamaican school counselors are tasked with providing psychological support services to more students than their service capacity limit. The 1 to 500 counselor–student ratio makes it challenging for counselors to serve each student adequately. The current Minister of Education admitted that an ideal counselor-to-student ratio would be 1 to 50, especially now when students are presented with a myriad of psychological issues resulting from violence and conflicts (PCB, 2023). The Minister of Education indicated that while it is recognized that a reduced counselor–student ratio will ease the workload challenge faced by school counselors, budgetary constraints prevent the employment of additional school counselors (PCB, 2023).

In addition to being the chief mental healthcare providers in the school environment, school counselors are responsible for delivering the guidance curriculum, planning and executing activities, and coordinating services. School counselors have also reported that even while at home, they are contacted by parents who seek their professional help to address matters arising with their children (Wilson, 2018).

Additionally, school counselors lack the human resource support to conduct their daily duties (CAPRI, 2021). As a result, there is often a delay in the timely implementation of psychological intervention for students with this presenting need (CAPRI, 2021). It is also noted that as a result of the stress that school counselors are experiencing, an increased number of them are seeking mental health care (Wilson, 2018).

Knowledge Gap

While numerous studies have been conducted on various aspects of counseling in Jamaica (Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013; Marks et al., 2023; Passard, 2023), no studies have been conducted to explore the experiences of school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school. The gap is made more prominent by the fact that adolescent development is also characteristic of psychological challenges (Call et al., 2002). Adolescents spend the majority of this developmental period in school, and the school counselor plays a critical role in helping adolescents navigate the psychological challenges they encounter (Collins, 2014). The absence of this scientific information created a need for research that explores the experiences of school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. This study was necessary because it holds the potential to produce novel information that can be used to help the scientific community better understand how Jamaican school counselors conceptualize and address psychological distress experienced by adolescents. This study allowed counselors to provide firsthand articulation of how they experienced their role. Additionally, the study identified and described the unique challenges that Jamaican

school counselors face in their attempt to offer psychological support to adolescents in high school.

Problem Statement

The situation or issue that prompted me to search the literature was the revelation that 25% of Jamaican children have been diagnosed with a mental disorder, and 15% of Jamaican adolescents have displayed symptoms of depression and anxiety (CAPRI, 2018). Maladaptive behaviors and social-relational and emotional challenges are risk factors stemming from mental health challenges that adolescents experience (Aldam et al., 2019). Consistent with Adlam et al. (2019), CAPRI (2018) reported that 25% of Jamaican adolescents had considered suicide, while 18% had attempted suicide, 45% were consuming alcohol, 70% percent had tried cigarettes, and 12% consistently smoked marijuana (CAPRI, 2018). The Jamaica Information Service (JIS, 2021) also reported that 40% of murder perpetrators in Jamaica were adolescent males. The existing qualitative literature on Jamaican adolescent mental health places focus on intrapersonal factors that hinder their access to mental health care (Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013), health awareness and practices of the clergy (Passard, 2023), and the general state of health psychology in Jamaica (Marks et al., 2023). Interestingly, though, despite the fact that adolescents spend the majority of this developmental period in school, little or no qualitative study had been done to explore the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. The absence of such a study translated into the need for research that captures the experiences of school

counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The participants' role as school counselors uniquely positioned them to work with adolescents daily. As a result, school counselors were able to provide novel information that can be used to help the scientific community better understand psychological challenges among adolescents, deter future psychological illness among adolescents, and/or provide for the creation and implementation of psychological interventions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support for adolescents. The extant literature does not capture the experience of Jamaican school counselors, who are the primary psychological health support professionals in schools. The absence of this information created a noticeable and significant gap in the literature, which I aimed to fill with this study.

Research Question

This study had one research question: What are the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school?

Conceptual Framework

The present qualitative study was conducted to understand the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The framework for this study comprised two theoretical approaches: Urie

Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development and Hans-Georg

Gadamer's (1981) hermeneutic theory. The bioecological model of human development

posits that the child/individual develops within an intricate system of relationships that is

impacted by different aspects of the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

These systems, also referred to as *nested structures*, include the home but also extend to

other spaces where the individual invests time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

     The microsystem is the first of the systems. It is the innermost system and

constitutes interactions within the immediate environment—for example, the home

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). At this level, development is a two-way process in

which the adult impacts the child's development, and the child's biosocial traits can

impact the adult's behavior (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The mesosystem is where

connections are made with the microsystem—for example, the link between the child's

academic progress and the relationship with parents at home. The exosystem includes

formal or informal social settings that can directly impact the individual's life

experiences and indirectly impact the experiences of those who relate to the individual

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The macrosystem is the fourth system within the

nested structure. It consists of interactions with social structures such as laws and

traditions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner outlined that the quality of

interactions in the macrosystem directly affects the quality of interactions in the

microsystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The chronosystem is the final and

outermost system within the nested structure. The chronosystem emphasizes that events

and experiences that occur over time can lead to life changes for the individual

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Altogether, the bioecological model provides a

scientific scaffold to build an understanding of how interactions between adolescent and

various environments may shape the experiences of school counselors who provide

psychological support to adolescents.

 The second theoretical framework for this qualitative study was the theory of

hermeneutics. The theory of hermeneutics can be used both as a theoretical and a

methodological framework (Gadamer, 1981). For this study, this theory was used as a

theoretical framework. The hermeneutics theory informs the interpretive inquiry process

to determine people's interpretation of their experiences (Gadamer, 1981). The

hermeneutic theory holds three primary concepts. First is the whole-part concept, also

called the "hermeneutic circle." The whole-part concept looks at the relationship between

the micro and macro perspectives that inform the interpretation of the participant's story.

The language concepts outlines that the process of interpretive inquiry occurs through

communication between the researcher and the participants, and language is the medium

through which this occurs; language invokes the whole-part interpretation (Gadamer,

1981). The third concept, interpretation, is broken down into two subcategories: soft

interpretation, which addresses universal interpretation, and hard interpretation, which

involves uncovering an experience when the respondent lacks the appropriate frame of

reference to produce such interpretations (Gadamer, 1981). The interpretation concept

also involves the effort to ensure that the respondent and the researcher are of a shared understanding (Gadamer, 1981).

The bioecological model of human development related to my research gap in that it provided a scaffold for building an understanding of how the experiences of Jamaican school counselors regarding counseling adolescents within the systems impacted mental health (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The bioecological model of human development posits that each system has a distinct impact on the individual. The detailed explanation of the types of interactions at each level of the system provides a base for counselors to analyze how factors within these respective environments compromise adolescents' psychological health. The resulting impact of these environments provided insight into how the counselor experiences relationships with adolescent clients. Additionally, the model provided a framework for understanding how factors within the system aided or hindered the efforts of school counselors to provide psychological support to adolescents. The bioecological model of human development's relevance to this study was supported by its previous utilization and success in adolescent mental health programs (Halsall et al., 2018; Rothenberg et al., 2023). Zaatari and Maalouf (2022) also concluded that students' development and sense of belonging at school are impacted by interactions between the child and the school's ecological systems. Considering the potential of the theory to facilitate a better understanding of counselors' experiences providing psychological support to adolescents in the high school environment, it was relevant to this research.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1981) hermeneutic theory related to my study in that it provided a framework that allowed for the understanding of the counselor's experiences as interpreted by the counselor. Gadamer's explanation of the primary concepts and their role in how the individual develops interpretations of their experiences provided a foundation to understand these experiences better. These concepts also helped to frame the understanding of how counselors view both external and internal factors as contributors to their experiences while working with adolescents. Furthermore, the hermeneutic theory complemented the use of the bioecological model of human development, as while the latter provided an understanding of the systems that contributed to adolescents' mental health challenges, the hermeneutic theory provided a framework for an understanding of how the counselor interpreted their experiences working with the adolescents whose psychological health was impacted by the systems in which they operate. The effectiveness of hermeneutic theory was highlighted by Muganga (2015) and Nigar (2020). Using both theoretical models provided a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support for adolescents.

Nature of the Study

This study assumed a qualitative methodology. The narrative research design was used to address the research question. Connelly and Clandinni (1990) stated that the study of narratives seeks to understand people's experiences. The study of narratives also emphasizes that people are both storytellers and characters in their own life stories, and

they are also storytellers and characters in the life stories of other people. The narrative

design is a design of inquiry that allows participants to share stories about their

experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The narrative design facilitates the exploration

and conceptualization of human experience as it is told and then represented in text

(Josselson, 2010). A key attribute of this design that reiterated its relevance to this study's

purpose is that the stories told by the participants become the data, and these data are a

first-person account of their experiences told in story form (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The narrative research design facilitated the understanding of the experiences of

Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents

in high school through the exploration and conceptualizing of the stories they shared.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also indicated that the narrative design is supported by the

hermeneutics theoretical framework (one part of the theoretical framework of this study),

which provides for the interpretative understanding of the participants' experiences.

Essentially, data for the present study were collected through semistructured

interviews that were conducted over Zoom. These interviews were conducted with

Jamaican school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high

school. The data were analyzed using the inductive narrative analysis method. Narrative

analysis aims to interpret human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When

conducted inductively, data analysis is approached without preconceived thoughts. The

inductive narrative analysis method required familiarization with the transcripts, storying

the transcripts, cocreating the transcript, meaning-making, and developing the story

(Nasheeda et al., 2019). This approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of the counselors' narratives and identified consistent themes and patterns across their stories.

Definitions

Adolescent

An adolescent is an individual who falls within the age group of 10 to 19 years (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). This period of human development is referred to as *adolescence*. Adolescents experience rapid growth, including psychological, physical, and mental growth (WHO, 2023). These rapid changes directly impact the adolescent's cognitive processes, decision-making competencies, feelings, and manner of interaction within social environments (WHO, 2023).

Psychological Support

Psychological support is defined as a distress response to mental disturbances that the client experiences. It is the aspect of a professional helping relationship that enhances the client's mental capacity, self-worth, self-identity, and overall competence (Russel, 2004). Psychological support is facilitated through a close interpersonal relationship between the client and the professional that is built on mutual trust and respect, which facilitates the roles of each party to be fulfilled (Russel, 2004).

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress is defined as a state of emotional pain that is characterized by the presence of depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms such as lack of energy, insomnia, and headaches (Belay et al., 2021). Psychological distress is also

defined as a set of nonspecific symptoms related to depression, stress, and anxiety (Viertiö et al., 2021). Further to these definitions, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2023) defines psychological distress as a set of painful mental and physical symptoms that fluctuate with mood. While the symptoms of psychological distress may vary with the client's mood, it is noted that psychological distress may indicate the onset of more serious depressive disorders (APA, 2023).

School Counselor

School counselors are highly trained helping professionals who assist individuals within the school environment, largely students, in developing and maintaining positive psychological health, excelling academically, and advancing career goals (American School Counselor Association, 2023). School counselors also assist students in developing their collaboration and cooperation skill sets, managing time, building resilience and perseverance, and developing self-motivation capacities and goals (American School Counselor Association, 2023).

Secondary School

Secondary schools in Jamaica are learning institutions that facilitate the educational development of children age 13 to 18 years. Secondary schools are also referred to as *high schools* (Ministry of Education and Youth Jamaica, n.d.).

Vicarious Traumatization

Vicarious traumatization (VT), which is also called *secondary trauma*, refers to psychological disturbance experienced by counseling professionals as a result of their

repeated exposure and close involvement in treating the trauma their clients present with (APA, 2023).

Vision 2023

Vision 2030 is Jamaica's long-term strategic development plan that outlines the country's sustainable development goals spanning 2009 to 2030. The plans and processes outlined in the Vision 2030 plan are directed towards making Jamaica the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business (Vision 2030, 2009).

<div align="center">

Assumptions

</div>

It was assumed that the counselors who will participate in the study offer psychological support to adolescents. This assumption was made against the background that not all counselors in high schools offer psychological support; for example, counselors who work as career counselors may not be primarily tasked with providing psychological support to adolescents. Establishing that all participating counselors offered psychological support to adolescents was consistent with the research question and further added to the alignment of the study. It was assumed that counselors would understand the critical importance of this study to their job function and, as a result, be encouraged to commit to full and meaningful participation in the study. It was assumed that the experiences that would be shared by the counselors would be shared without exaggeration and malice towards any individual or office. The current counselor–student ratio in Jamaica is 1 to 500, which is exceeded in most schools; this is a contentious matter between counselors and school administrators. It is also a contentious matter

between unions representing counselors and the government. It is possible that to reiterate their grouses, counselors may skew their responses. It was assumed that counselors would highlight their contentions but would be honest in the expressions of their experiences. Another assumption was that the study's findings would be transferrable to nonparticipating schools and counselors in Jamaica.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school. The focus of this study resulted from a lack of scientific information on the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. The target population for this study was Jamaican school counselors who work in high schools and are tasked with the role of providing psychological support. For this study, participants were required to be 18 and older for ethical reasons and to be school counselors in Jamaica working with adolescents. As is the standard procedure to engage subjects within government-owned schools, permission was sought from the Ministry of Education's Planning and Development Division. Once permission was obtained, school counselors were engaged. To create a profile of each participant, demographic information was collected prior to the interview. This information was collected through Google Forms. The demographic data that were collected included age, gender, confirmation of dealing with adolescents who report psychological distress, years of service, and their qualification(s). This information was

needed because it helped to define the population of interest. Counselors whose job roles did not include offering psychological support were excluded. All participants were above the age of 18 and had in excess of 2 years of experience in providing psychological support to adolescents in high school.

The qualifying counselors received a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants, and how their participation would benefit the scientific community, as well as procedures to ensure the confidentiality of both the individual and the institution. The transferability of the study findings was facilitated by providing a detailed description of the study settings, study participants, and verbatim reference to interview transcripts where necessary (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Potential transferability was also addressed through the careful inclusion of participants, in that variation in the types of schools where school counselors work will be considered. This allowed for greater diversity and the identification of common experiences among the diverse participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, irrespective of these efforts to establish transferability, it was acknowledged that the variations in experiences may not situate with the general populations of Jamaican high school counselors.

<center>**Limitations**</center>

Although the study provided insight into the experiences of Jamaica school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school, one noteworthy limitation was that the study did not include counselors from all education

regions. Consequently, even though the findings may be transferable, they may not be generalizable to all counselors across Jamaica.

<div align="center">**Significance**</div>

This study will contribute significantly to the field of psychology and counseling by providing a better understanding of the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high schools. The school counselor plays a critical role in helping adolescents navigate the psychological challenges stemming from their interactions within different environments (Collins, 2014). Despite their critical role, their experiences have never been captured and represented in the scientific community until the undertaking of this study. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development and Hang-Georg Gadamer's (1981) hermeneutic theory combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school.

The study has the potential to impact social change by providing insight into the challenges counselors face when they attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. The study also has the potential to initiate the development and implementation of interventions that can alleviate these challenges for more impactful mental health and social outcomes. The potential of this study to impact social change was further encouraged by the possibility of the formation of collaborative partnerships with relevant stakeholders to strengthen the counselor's output as well as address factors

within respective systems that hinder the efforts of the counselors to offer psychological support to adolescents in high school.

Understanding the experiences of school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents is vital to Jamaica achieving its Vision 2030 objectives. The Vision 2030 development plan contains sector plans that outline what each sector aims to achieve. Specific to the education sector is the aim to sustain guidance and counseling programs in schools that aim to promote good psychological health and promote awareness of the risk factors that threaten the psychological well-being of children (Vision 2030, 2009). School counselors are responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and internal evaluation of all counseling-related programs in schools. This highlights the critical importance of school counselors to Jamaica achieving its Vision 2023 objectives. This study is significant because the narratives of the high school counselors provided information on how much they understand their integral role in achieving Vision 2030. The study may help to identify the required human and nonhuman resources that high school counselors need to help them fulfill their responsibilities toward Jamaica achieving Vision 2030. Additionally, the study is significant because it has the potential to inform policies that inform the practice of school counseling and the provision of psychological support in schools.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the present study. Information was presented on the background of the study, which included insight into some of the issues

that are reflected in the experiences of psychological distress that Jamaican adolescents experience. Information was provided on the study's problem statement, which detailed the situation that influenced the pursuance of this study and why it was necessary for it to be conducted. The purpose statement also outlined why it was necessary to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support for adolescents in high school. The research question was presented to give a clear indication of the knowledge gap that existed and also reiterated the need for the present study to be conducted. Chapter 1 also provided an outline of the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework demonstrated the scientific frame of the study as well as demonstrated how the selected theories enhanced coherence in the present study. The nature of the study was articulated to justify the selected research design and also to further establish research alignment. To add further clarity to the study, Chapter 1 provided the definition of key terms that are specific to the present study. Disclosure of any possible influence on research outcome is important to enhance trustworthiness. Hence, the researcher's assumptions were also stated to indicate possible biases. The scope, delimitation, and limitations were also represented to give a clear understanding of what the study will cover, the boundaries set by the researcher, and the possible limitations that the researcher may encounter. Finally, this chapter presented the significance of the study, which demonstrated the potential benefits of conducting the present study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The existing literature indicates that adolescents experience many psychological challenges during this developmental stage. The WHO (2021a) reported that one in every seven adolescents aged 10 to 19 experience mental health challenges. Depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, and suicide are among the leading causes of mental health challenges among adolescents (WHO, 2021a). Numerous studies have been conducted to develop a better understanding of adolescent mental health challenges in Jamaica (Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013; Marks et al., 2023; Passard, 2023). However, the lack of information on the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents led to the pursuance of this study. Chapter 2 presents a review of studies that examine different aspects of adolescent mental health. Information is also provided on the keywords and databases used and the conceptual frameworks of the study, which are Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development and Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1981) hermeneutic theory.

Literature Search Strategy

Various peer-reviewed journals were used to obtain articles that provide an understanding of the existing literature on the experiences of school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high schools. The journals were accessed

via databases in the Walden Library and Google Scholar. These databases included Supplemental Index, ScienceDirect, Business Source Complete, ERIC, SocINDE, APA PsycInfo, Education Source, MEDLINE, Gale Academic OneFile Select, and Language. The key phrases related to my study were *qualitative research on Jamaican adolescent mental health, factors affecting adolescent mental health, the school and Jamaica adolescent mental health, Jamaica school counselors, adolescent, attitude, mental health help, school counseling, school counseling in Barbados, health psychology, Jamaica adolescent mental health, Jamaica and psychological control, children, Jamaica*, and *corporal punishment in the classroom.*

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study comprised two theoretical approaches: Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1981) hermeneutic theory. Two theoretical frameworks were selected for the present study because one theoretical framework did not sufficiently provide a scientific lens that could comprehensively guide the analysis of key concepts relating to systems in which psychological distress has etiology, as well as capture the school counselors' interpretation of their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school. The amalgamation of the two theoretical models provided a more robust theoretical framework that guided the exploration of key concepts.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) Bioecological Model of Human Development

Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development (Phase 1;
1973–1979) was originally referred to as an ecological model of human development and
explained development with regards to context (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Phase 2 (1980–
1993) culminated with more emphasis being placed on the individual and the process of
development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The third phase, 1993–2006, included the placement
of emphasis on factors that influence developmental outcomes (proximal process) at the
center of the bioecological theory and the addition of a research design called the
process-person-context-time (PPCT) model (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The change was
necessary to reflect Bronfenbrenner's acknowledgement of the child's biological
influences (Berk, 2010). Phase 3 of Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model was used
as one of the two conceptual frameworks for the present study.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2006) bioecological model of human development posits
that the child/individual develops within an intricate system of relationships that is
impacted by different aspects of the environment. These systems, also referred to as
nested structures, include the home but also extend to other spaces where the individual
invests time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The Microsystem

The microsystem is the innermost system and constitutes interactions within the
immediate environment—for example, the home (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). It is
the first and primary point of contact for the child. The microsystem facilitates exposure

to social roles, patterned activities, and face-to-face interpersonal interactions that provide physical, social, and symbolic features (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). *Proximal processes* is a term coined by Bronfenbrenner to explain the interactions between adolescents and their caregivers in the respective microsystems. For the individual to develop healthily, the proximal process across time and space must be consistent and physically responsive, provide a sense of security, and encourage exploration (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The quality of these interpersonal relations is a mediating factor in whether or not the child sustains engagement with others and advances to more complex interactions and activities in the particular environment. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's articulations on the microsystem provided insight into how the quality of interaction in the microsystem can lead to the psychological challenges for adolescents that school counselors may have to address.

The Mesosystem

The mesosystem is an interlink of two or more microsystems. For example, the home is a microsystem, and the school is a microsystem; the interactions of these two systems produce the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Conflicts can arise within the mesosystem due to differences in values and practices held by independent microsystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Furthermore, if the mesosystem is a collection of microsystems with inconsistent or unhealthy proximal processes, the quality of interaction within the mesosystem will compromise the individual's development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The mesosystem relates to the present study in that it provides perspective on how the experiences of school counselors may be shaped. For example, it could suggest that the counselor's efforts to provide psychological support to adolescents can be hampered by practices in the home or community environment, which translates into a challenging experience for the counselor. On the other hand, where values and practices are consistent within the interlink, the experiences of the school counselor are likely to be more favorable.

The Exosystem

The exosystem consists of links and processes that occur among settings, and in at least one of these settings, the individual is not an active participant but, instead, a recipient of the impact of activities happening in the system. For example, an upsurge of violence in the community may result in the adolescent not being able to attend school. The exosystem includes formal or informal social settings that can directly impact the individual's life experiences (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Similarly, when events have a direct impact on individuals with whom the adolescent has close interactions, the adolescent may experience a secondary impact because of the bond shared. The counselor's understanding of the exosystem's impact on the adolescent's psychological functioning can provide insight into secondary influences on adolescents' psychological health. It may also shape the way the counselor experiences and addresses these occurrences.

The Macrosystem

The macrosystem consists of interactions with social structures such as laws and traditions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The quality of interactions in the macrosystem directly affects the quality of interactions in the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The macrosystem comprises the laws and policies, political influences, economic structure, healthcare and educational resources, media influences, values, and symbolic forms of influence that determine the political, social, and financial context that drives development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The counselor's awareness, or lack of awareness, about the macrosystem's influences on the adolescent's development, may influence how the counselor experiences the process of providing psychological support to adolescents.

The Chronosystem

The chronosystem is the final system. The chronosystem identifies *time* as bearing equivalent importance to the environment in the process of human development. The chronosystem considers events and experiences that occur over time as factors that can lead to life changes for the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These events can be environmentally influenced, such as the transition into school, a new addition to the family, and nonnormal occurrences, such as the death of a loved one. Internal factors such as puberty or illness are also deemed life-changing events. These time-sensitive events and experiences are significant because they influence changes in relationships between individuals and the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). It is

imperative that the counselor understands how events and experiences that occurred and are occurring in an adolescent's life may influence how the counselor experiences the process of providing psychological support to adolescents.

Gadamer's (1981) Hermeneutic Theory

The theory of hermeneutics can be used both as a theoretical and a methodological framework (Gadamer, 1981); this study used it as a theoretical framework. As a theoretical approach, the hermeneutics theory informs the interpretive inquiry process to determine people's interpretation of their experiences (Gadamer, 1981). The hermeneutic theory holds three primary concepts.

The Whole-Part Concept

The whole-part concept is also called the "hermeneutic circle." The whole-part concept looks at the relationship between the micro and macro perspectives that inform the interpretation of the participant's story. The whole-part concept requires the researcher to understand the interplay of all systems (the whole) that affect the counselor's interpretation of their experiences stemming from offering psychological support to adolescents (Gadamer, 1981). The understanding of the whole-part process is necessary in order to understand the individual parts of the system that contribute to the counselor's experience and vice versa (Gadamer, 1981).

The whole-part concept was relevant to the present study because it demonstrated how the influence of different environments impacts the psychological health of adolescents and consequently shapes counselors' experience of providing psychological

support to adolescents. Furthermore, the whole-part concept was relevant to the present study because it provided a scaffold to assist in interpreting how each environment contributed to each counselor's unique experience of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school.

The Language Concept

The language concept outlines that the process of interpretive inquiry occurs through communication between the researcher and the participants, and language is the medium through which this occurs; language invokes the whole-part interpretation (Gadamer, 1981). The language concept requires the researcher to understand the dual role of language in the interpretation process (Gadamer, 1981). Gadamer articulated that language conveys both a surface and underlying meaning. In order to capture the true experiences of participants, the researcher must comprehend the participants' use of language to analyze their reality but simultaneously recognize the participants' use of language as a subjective restriction to meaning-making. To capture the experiences of secondary school counselors, keen observance of the overt and subtle use of language must guide the interpretation process.

The language concept was relevant to the present study because it facilitated the conveyance of the participants' stories as well as my interpretation of the participants' experiences. The language concept allowed for the understanding of underlying meanings that were subtly conveyed, not by what was spoken, but by how language was used, for example, the repetition of particular words or phrases. The language concept allowed for

me to capitalize on the overt and subtle use of language to engage the participants in deeper exploration of their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school. Additionally, the language concept took into account the influence of context and purpose or communication, which was critical to accurate meaning-making (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interpretation

The third concept, interpretation, is broken down into two subcategories, soft interpretation, which looks at universal interpretation, and hard interpretation, which involves attempting to uncover an experience when the respondent lacks the appropriate frame of reference to produce such interpretations (Gadamer, 1981). Soft interpretations are generally accepted understandings of events (Gadamer, 1981); for example, the counselor may interpret the presentation of psychological challenges among adolescents as an urgent cause for concern. On the other hand, hard interpretations require the researcher to use interpretive investigation to decipher meaning from the participants' articulations (Gadamer, 1981). Hard interpretation is necessary when the participants do not have the appropriate frame of reference to convey their experiences (Gadamer, 1981).

The concept of interpretation was relevant to the present study because it placed significant emphasis on the interpretation process, which was critical to answering the research question. The concept of interpretation was important to the current study because it guided the meaning-making process by ensuring that I interpreted exactly what the participants intended to communicate, ensuring that I had a clear interpretation of the

intended meaning and by ensuring that I placed the narratives in alignment with the participant's cultural context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The concept of interpretation is consistent with the constructivist characteristic of qualitative study, which focuses on how people make meaning of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2019).

Literature Review of Available Studies

The literature review for the current study is an aggregate of the main themes in the extant literature that were relevant to answering the research question. This literature review provides an overview of parenting practices that create the need for Jamaican secondary school counselors to provide psychological support to adolescents in high school, factors influencing adolescents' reluctance to seek psychological support from Jamaican secondary school counselors, and challenges faced by school counselors. In the literature review, I examine the literature specific to Jamaican secondary school counselors and also make reference to studies outside of Jamaica that relate to the concepts being reviewed.

Jamaican School Counselors

Jamaican school counselors are highly trained counseling professionals who carry out an extensive role in the school environment. According to the National Guidance and Counselling Policy of Jamaica (2016), the occupational profile of the school counselor comprises the following:

- *Counseling*: A minimum of 80% of the school counselor's annual workload should be the offering of counseling services and related activities. The counseling and related activities that should be undertaken by the counselor include group and individual counseling with students, home visits, and counseling sessions with staff and parents. In the event that clinical interventions are required, the school counselor is expected to refer these cases to the relevant helping professionals outside of the school environment. Despite this policy stipulation, school counselors are often forced to offer clinical interventions because of the case backlog in government-owned guidance clinics to which counselors are expected to refer clients for interventions by psychologists and psychiatrists (Wilson, 2018). Furthermore, school counselors are not able to dedicate a minimum of 80% of their annual workload to counseling and counseling-related activities; less is offered. Less than 80% of the school counselor workload is dedicated to counseling and related services because the school counselor's workload is extensive. In addition to counseling and related counseling activities and planning and implementing activities, counselors are still timetabled for weekly guidance sessions (Ferguson, 2023).

- *Guidance*: School counselors are expected to conduct annual needs assessments to identify the needs of the students and staff and plan accordingly to fill those gaps.

- *Career guidance*: School counselors are required to plan and execute the career guidance curriculum as per the identified needs emerging from the needs assessments, and the schools' available resources to facilitate the execution of the career curriculum. In recognition of the comprehensive nature of a career development program at the secondary school level, some high schools have employed counselors specifically to facilitate the career development of adolescents. Career counselors in Jamaican schools do not have primary responsibility for providing adolescents with psychological support.

- *Reporting*: In addition to implementing measures to protect and preserve the welfare of children, school counselors are also required to make reports concerning children's welfare as required by law. These reporting obligations are guided by the Child Care and Protection Act.

- *Planning*: In addition to planning activities specific to guidance and counseling, school counselors are expected to be involved in the general strategic planning activities within a school where necessary. The involvement of the school counselor in the school's general strategic planning is to facilitate alignment between the school improvement plan and the objectives of the guidance and counseling program.

- *Coordinating*: The management and coordination of responsibilities within the guidance and counseling department is the responsibility of more senior

counselors. Additionally, more senior counselors are responsible for coordinating other school support services. In general school counselors are responsible for coordinating the delivery of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum, and work closely with HFLE teachers.

- *Discipline*: Guidance counselors are not primarily concerned with disciplining children but are expected to promote students' compliance with school rules. Additionally, school counselors are expected to work closely with deans of discipline to ensure that whatever disciplinary measures are instituted are in the best interest of the students.

- *Teaching*: The school counselor's role also includes the scheduled delivery of weekly guidance classes not in excess of 8 hours per week. Additionally, the school counselor is expected to assist HFLE teachers with the delivery of lessons.

Parenting Practices Related to Adolescent Psychological Support

Harsh parenting practices necessitate the need for school counselors to provide psychological support to Jamaican adolescents. A prominent contributing factor to psychological distress among Jamaican adolescents is the impact of negative parenting practices, which have a significant impact on the mental health of adolescents. Burke and Kuczynski (2018) investigated the perception of Jamaican lower and upper-social-class mothers regarding the strategies their 8- to 12-year-old children used to resist rules and requests, how mothers regarded their children's resistance to their requests, and how

mothers responded to their children's resistance. Two themes each emerged for mothers' appraisal and mothers' disciplinary responses to children's noncompliance and resistance. The study concluded that Jamaican parents were authoritarian, primarily responded harshly to resistance expressed by their children, and also placed great emphasis on obedience (Burke & Kuczynski, 2018). Burke and Kuczynski also reported that mothers often employed harsh strategies such as psychological control and corporal punishment.

Harsh parenting practices such as corporal punishment are culturally accepted forms of punishment that is engrained in the Jamaican culture and family system. Smith and Mosby (2003) articulated that the practice of harsh parenting in Jamaica and the Caribbean is rooted in the Western region's history of enslavement, learned behavior, and the psychoanalytic concept of displacement, wherein anger or hostility is shifted from a more threatening recipient to someone less likely to retaliate. While researchers presented arguments that corporal punishment has negative effects on the psychological adjustment of children and adolescents, many Jamaican parents alluded to being recipients of corporal punishment, and they were not negatively affected; hence, their children are no exception (Smith & Mosby, 2003). Furthermore, Jamaican parents believe that it is acceptable for teachers to inflict corporal punishment on children as well (Smith & Mosby, 2003).

The use of corporal punishment by teachers is noted in the literature to have detrimental effects on the psychological and emotional development of children. Corporal punishment in the classroom may include flogging, hitting, pinching, forcing

children to kneel for extended periods, as well as restricting children's access to food or amenities such as bathroom use (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2011). Gershoff (2017) reported that Jamaica was listed among the top nine countries in the world with school corporal punishment rates of over 90%. Breen et al. (2015) found that the use of corporal punishment by teachers was associated with negative behavioral and emotional outcomes in children. The use of corporal punishment by teachers results in emotional distress in children, especially when the punishment is done in front of the entire class (Feinstein & Mwahombela, 2010).

Other studies have also highlighted the dangers of school-based corporal punishment to the psychological health of children. Csorba et al. (2021) found that the use of corporal punishment in school was linked to increased reports of depression among children who received corporal punishment. Similarly, Naz et al. (2011) reported increased depression, hostility, and gloom in children who received corporal punishment at school. While Heckler et al. (2014) reported that children who experienced corporal punishment at school were less likely to display empathetic behaviors. The literature, therefore, indicates that the use of corporal punishment in school has a significant negative impact on the psychological health of children and adolescents.

The use of corporal punishment by Jamaican parents is not only culturally accepted but it is also linked to Jamaica's colonial history. A study conducted on corporal punishment in West Africa, a country from which slaves were transported to the Caribbean, revealed similar harsh parenting practices as those used by Jamaican parents

(Breen et al., 2015). These assertions highlighted that harsh parental practices are passed down from one generation to the next and are widely accepted in Jamaican culture. This indicates that high school counselors will have to contend with this largely culturally held view, which may hamper efforts to promote good psychological health among adolescents.

Harsh parenting practices have significant negative implications for the psychological health of adolescents. WHO (2021b) outlined that harsh parenting practices are linked to negative outcomes in children and adolescents irrespective of country or culture; among these negative outcomes are mental health challenges, increased aggression, and an inclination to perpetrate violence (WHO, 2021b). With regard to the inclination to perpetrate violence, JIS (2021) reported that 40% of murder perpetrators in Jamaica were adolescent males. WHO went further to outline that harsh parenting practices were also implicated in impaired cognitive and socioemotional development. Furthermore, harsh parenting practices such as corporal punishment violated the individual's right to respect and human dignity (WHO, 2021b).

Adolescent Reluctance to Seek Psychological Support

Studies indicated that several factors contribute to the reluctance of adolescents to seek psychological support from Jamaican school counselors. Del Mauro and Jackson Williams (2013) examined children's and adolescents' attitudes toward seeking professional counseling and how demographics relate to help-seeking behaviors. Their study found that while adolescents understood mental illnesses, the role of counseling

professionals, and the therapy process, they still indicated an aversion to seeking professional help (Del Mauro &Jackson Williams, 2013). Adolescents were not convinced that the matters they discussed with counseling professionals would not be shared with anyone else (Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013). As a result of this, adolescents were less inclined to seek psychological support from the school counselor.

Other findings also noted that Jamaican school counselors are not confidential. Similar to Del Mauro and Jackson Williams (2013) findings, Hutchinson (2023) reported that Jamaican adolescents have no confidence in their school counselors. It is the perception of Jamaican adolescents that school counselors sometimes share the matters discussed in counseling with other people, as well as gaslight students who do not feel comfortable sharing their problems with them (Hutchinson, 2023). Adolescents' view of the school counselor as not being confidential reduced their inclination to seek psychological support, which may result in an escalation of the presenting problem to more serious mental health problems. Adolescents' view of the school counselor as not being confidential may pose a significant challenge to school counselors because even when it is evident that the adolescent needs psychological support, the belief that they cannot confide in the school counselor will likely make the helping process more difficult, if at all possible. The reluctance of Jamaican adolescents to seek help for psychological challenges is a factor that may impact the way school counselors experience the process of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school.

Reluctance to seek help for psychological challenges is not limited to adolescents; the issue spans from the microsystem to chronosystem of the Jamaican society. James and Peltzer (2011) explored how religious, traditional, and cultural beliefs shape perceptions about the causes of mental illness in Jamaica and the use of traditional medicine to treat mental health conditions. Five related themes emerged from the study, these were: *Theme 1*, which involved possessed illness and belief in supernatural forces. Participants believed that the possession of evil spirits were the causes of mental illness (James & Peltzer, 2011). *Theme 2*, involved sinful or cursed illness. It was believed that mental illness resulted from being sinful of being cursed (James & Peltzer, 2011). *Theme 3*, referred to witchcraft or human made illness. Participants believed that witchcraft, which was human manufactured and, resulted in mental illness (James & Peltzer, 2011). *Theme 4* referenced traditional or alternative treatments. Participants believed that traditional or alternative treatments should be the first treatment option for mental illness, and medical facilities were a last resort (James & Peltzer, 2011). This was because of the stigma associated with mental illness, and seeking help through alternative medicine was less likely to result in the individual being labeled (James & Peltzer, 2011). *Theme 5* outlined barriers to seeking formal mental healthcare. Participants indicated that formal care was very expensive and they would prefer to avoid the associated stigma of going into a mental health facility for treatment (James & Peltzer, 2011). The study conducted by James and Peltzer (2011) demonstrated how cultural influences can thwart an individual's attitude toward seeking mental healthcare, as well as how cultural beliefs can

lead to the stigmatization of people who seek mental healthcare in Jamaica. It also provided insight into how cultural ideas can influence the counseling process, impacting both the experience of the adolescent and the school counselor.

Other researchers have also addressed the reluctance of Jamaicans to seek professional help for mental health conditions. Four major themes emerged from a study conducted by Arthur et al. (2010). These themes were: community members' definitions of stigma, emotional responses towards those with mental illness, behavioral responses towards those with mental illness, and other perceptions of and beliefs about mental illness. With respect to the theme *community members' definitions of stigma*, Arthur et al. pointed out that to be effective in offering mental health care, counseling professionals must develop a keen understanding of how the client's social context influences the clients' perception of mental health stigma. Consideration for the client's social context is necessary as what Jamaicans perceive mental health stigma to be may influence whether or not they seek help for mental health conditions (Arthur et al.,2010).

For the theme *emotional responses towards those with mental illness*, Arthur et al.(2010) articulated that Jamaicans' most frequent emotional response towards people with mental illness is fear. Fear emerged as the most dominant emotional response towards people with psychological challenges because the social context of the participants defined any individual with mental health challenges as someone who is mentally deranged or mad (Arthur et al., 2010). The Jamaican belief that people with psychological challenges are mentally deranged could help to explain the development of

stigmas towards people with mental health challenges; and could also explain the reluctance of Jamaicans to seek help for psychological challenges out of fear of being labeled. For the theme *behavioral responses towards those with mental illness*, Arthur et al. reported that avoidance was the most common behavioral response to people with mental health challenges. For the theme *other perceptions of and beliefs about mental illness*, it was found that participants, irrespective of demographics, believed that psychological challenges were enduring, and once an individual is known to experience mental illness, they will never be rid of it and will always be labeled as mad (Arthur et al., 2010).

Overall, Arthur et al. (2010) found that in order to eliminate mental health stigma, it was necessary to understand that the meaning of stigma varies by social setting; consequently, the clients' view of mental health and mental health stigma must be viewed from the client's social setting. Therefore, the counselor's experience of working with adolescents may vary depending on the microsystems in which the adolescent operates and the combined interactions of these microsystems. Like Del Mauro and Jackson Williams (2013), Arthur et al. also found that adolescents were responsive to someone who needed psychological support; however, adolescents affixed labels to these individuals; this tendency is a product of their perceptions of and beliefs about mental illness.

The likeliness of adolescents seeking help for psychological challenges is influenced by the systems in which they are socialized. As demonstrated by Del Mauro

and Jackson Williams (2013) and Arthur et al. (2010), both the microsystem and the mesosystem contributed to adolescents' beliefs and subsequent negative attitudes toward seeking help for psychological challenges. At the macrosystem level, the reluctance to seek help for mental health conditions is partly a response to the need for more visible and active policies that govern mental health services in Jamaica. The absence of these critical policies may create an absence of structure for the delivery of psychological services in the school environment. In general, the inadequacies occurring at each level of the system may negatively affect the experiences of counselors who attempt to assist adolescents with psychological challenges.

Challenges Faced by Jamaican Secondary School Counselors

Jamaican Secondary School Counselor Workload

Jamaican secondary school counselors are faced with many challenges in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. One of the challenges school counselors face is the high student to counselor ratio. The current recommendation for student to counselor ratio in Jamaica is 1 to 500 (Ferguson, 2023), which is twice the number of students per counselor in comparison to jurisdictions such as the United States, where the American Counseling Association recommends a counselor student ratio of 1 to 250 (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2023). One counselor to 500 students does not afford Jamaican school counselors to adequately provide psychological support to adolescents (CAPRI, 2021; Ferguson, 2023). Ferguson postulated that school counselors provide support for different aspects of health, which must be planned and

thoroughly conducted. The literature, therefore, indicates that Jamaica's current 1 to 500 counselor to student ratio is a high service load, which makes it challenging for school counselors to offer psychological support to adolescents.

The challenges imposed by the 1 to 500 counselor-student ratio are further compounded by additional responsibilities that school counselors must carry out in addition to providing one-on-one psychological support to adolescents. School counselors also provide psychological support to staff members, parents, and community members; and are also timetabled for weekly guidance classes (Ferguson, 2023). Additionally, school counselors conduct home visits for students, plan activities, develop and implement yearly guidance programs, and provide support for families of adolescents who are experiencing difficult periods (Coley-Nicholson, 2016; National Guidance & Counselling Policy, 2016). The literature, therefore, indicates that the counselor's workload compromises the quality of psychological support that is given to adolescents.

The heavy workload of the Jamaican secondary school counselor is a systemic challenge experienced by school counselors throughout the English-speaking Caribbean. Through ethnography, Griffin and Bryan (2021) studied guidance counselors in Barbados to get an in-depth understanding of their job roles and practices, as well as the challenges and demands of their job. Griffin and Bryan posited that counselors embraced their role to deliver health and family life education. However, they were conflicted about other roles; for example, there was often a conflict between what school administrators required of them and what the Ministry of Education required of them (Griffin & Bryan,

2021). The counselors also expressed a need for greater advocacy and representation from the Ministry of Education to clearly define their roles as counselors (Griffin & Bryan, 2021). The study revealed that the streaming of schools into high and low-performing institutions directly contributed to social and economic disparities that impacted students, families, and schools. This practice, which stemmed from British colonialism, also impacted the counselors, in that, counselors in older secondary schools (high-performing schools) had more resources to work with and a less demanding workload in comparison to their colleagues in the newer secondary schools (low-performing).

While Griffin and Bryan's (2021) study was not specific to Jamaica, it is noted that Barbados is Jamaica's Caribbean neighbor, sharing a similar British colonial history that still influences the structure of the Jamaican education system. Griffin and Bryan also shared that the findings of their study are transferable to small island states (like Jamaica) with similar colonial history, and urged for similar studies to be done that explore school counseling in the Caribbean, the experiences of school counselors and actions that can be taken to improve the practice of school counseling in the Caribbean. Hence, the current study aims to provide insight into some of the nuances that impact the effectiveness of secondary school counselors in the Caribbean in their attempt to offer psychological support to adolescents.

Lack of Support

Among the challenges that school counselors experienced is the lack of human resource support to conduct their daily duties. CAPRI (2021) reported that Jamaican school counselors lacked the human resource support needed to conduct their daily duties, which often resulted in the counselor's response to adolescents' need for psychological support being delayed. It is noted that Jamaican school counselors are in need of greater support to deal with the high volumes of trauma cases that they receive (Wilson, 2018). School counselors are expected to be first responders in trauma cases. These cases must be referred to a psychologist or psychiatrist for intervention; however, quite often, school counselors are the ones offering psychological support for trauma cases (Wilson, 2018).

One reason for school counselors having to provide services beyond their professional scope is the difficulty for adolescents to access psychological support outside of the school environment. Oversubscription to regional child guidance clinics often results in children waiting for many months to receive an appointment to see a psychologist (Wilson, 2018). Another reason for school counselors not receiving the support they need to respond to trauma cases is the high psychiatrist-to-patient ratio that exists in the public health system. Wilson reported that the psychiatrist to patient ratio in Jamaica is 1 to 1,582; this is significantly more than the international ratio, which is 1 to 150. As a result of the low number of helping professionals, school counselors are tasked

with trying to assist these adolescents who are in need of more advanced intervention than the school counselor is trained to provide.

Other studies have also highlighted the need for greater human resource support for school counselors. Particular to health psychology, which focuses on the connection between the individual's physical and mental health, Marks et al. (2022) argued that there is an urgent need for more health psychology practitioners in Jamaica. Their study highlighted that there is a need for more policies and legislation that will facilitate the growth of health psychology in Jamaica (Marks et al., 2022). Additionally, the lack of resources hampered the growth of health psychology, and combined efforts are needed to facilitate successful growth and recognition (Marks et al., 2022). The articulation of Marks et al. provided insight into school counselors' limited access to other helping professionals outside of the school environment. Also, considering that health psychologists focuses on how biological, social influences, and psychological factors affect physical and mental health, their expertise is an asset to the school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. Therefore, the lack of these helping professionals can negatively impact the counselor's efforts to provide psychological support to adolescents through consultation and or referral.

School Counselor Burnout

Job-related burnout is one of the challenges faced by Jamaican secondary school counselors. The high volume of cases and the types of cases that school counselors have to help students through contributed to the job-related burnout that school counselors

experience (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2016). As articulated by Ferguson (2023), the 1 to 500

counselor-to-student ratio workload forces school counselors to overextend themselves in

an effort to provide psychological support to as many students as possible. Additionally,

the Jamaican school counselor's job is made more stressful because of the shortage of

psychological health professionals to whom school counselors should be referring

students to for more clinical interventions. As a result, school counselors are assuming

duties beyond their level of expertise, which contributes to the burnout they reported

(Wilson, 2018).

Traumatic events that happen in the wider communities become cases for the

school counselor. Secondary school counselors reported that even while at home, they are

contacted by parents who seek their professional help to address matters arising with their

children (Wilson, 2018). With the resumption of face-to-face classes following the

COVID-19 lockdown, secondary school counselors experienced increased burnout

(Cross, 2022). During the lockdown, many adolescents were victims of sexual and

emotional abuse (Cross, 2022). At the reopening of schools, many adolescents exhibited

negative and violent behaviors, which became the responsibility of the school counselor

to address (Cross, 2022). The overwhelming number of cases coming out of the

pandemic resulted in secondary school counselors working overtime to find interventions

for emotional disturbances, violent behaviors, and anti-social behaviors that students

presented with (Cross, 2022). As a result, secondary school counselors reported

significant burnout from trying to provide psychological support to adolescents who

experienced abuse and psychological distress during the pandemic. It was also noted that as a result of the stress that school counselors are experiencing, an increased number of them are seeking mental health care (Wilson, 2018).

Burnout is implicated in the poor performance of school counselors. The Jamaica Association of Guidance Counselors in Education [JAGCE] (2023) reported that burnout is one of the most significant factors that resulted in school counselors' ineffectiveness. JAGCE asserted that counselors who experience burnout also experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. JAGCE went further to state that school counselors who experience burnout also experience a reduced sense of confidence in their capacity to be effective in offering psychological support to adolescents. Furthermore, the nature of the school counselor's job may result in the counselor experiencing continuous burnout without intervention (JAGCE, 2023).

School Counselor Trauma Exposure

School counselors are highly susceptible to VT. VT, which is also called secondary trauma, refers to psychological disturbances experienced by counseling professionals as a result of their repeated exposure and close involvement in treating the trauma their clients presented with (APA, 2023). By virtue of the roles of school counselors, they are often first responders to the trauma sustained by adolescents in the school environment (Parker & Henfield, 2012; The Jamaica Gleaner, 2016). The more counselors identify with the trauma that clients present with, the more they internalize the trauma and increase their risk of VT (Parker & Henfield, 2012). Symptoms of VT include

a shift in identity, decline in the quality of the counselor's interpersonal relationships, and post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms such as intrusive thoughts and imagery, anger and loss of interest in the job (Roberts et al., 2022).

Jamaican school counselors are not trained to respond clinically to trauma cases. However, school counselors are often forced to offer clinical interventions because of the case backlog in government-owned guidance clinics to which counselors are expected to refer clients for interventions by psychologists and psychiatrists (Wilson, 2018). Trying to provide clinical intervention in the absence of the required training increases the school counselor's susceptibility to VT. In fact, Adams and Riggs (2008) outlined that the counselors' level of education and training to deal with trauma cases can be a mediating factor in the prevalence of VT among school counselors. Adams and Riggs went further to state that counselors who do not possess the requisite trauma response qualifications, or those who are inexperienced in trauma response are more susceptible to VT. The articulations of Adams and Riggs imply that Jamaican school counselors' attempt to manage trauma cases increase their susceptibility to VT, which may consequently lead to a compromise in their ability to offer psychological support to adolescents.

The workload of the Jamaican school counselor and their susceptibility to mental health conditions such as VT place focus on self-care among school counselors. Self-care among school counselors is a topic that has been addressed by research. Şimşir Gökalp (2020), conducted a qualitative study to better understand the self-care practices of school

counselors. The study found that school counselors recognized the critical importance of self-care to their ability to provide effective service; however, there were barriers to self-care. Chief among the barriers was the heavy workload that counselors had. School counselors' ability to engage in self-care was also hampered by administrative and noncounseling related tasks that school counselors were required to undertake, taking home office work, personal obligations, and excessive tiredness (Şimşir Gökalp, 2020). The findings of Şimşir Gökalp highlight some of the barriers to effective self-care among Jamaican secondary school counselors.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In summary, the literature review for the present study explored the occupational profile of the Jamaican school counselor, parenting practices that necessitate the need for Jamaican secondary school counselors to provide psychological support to adolescents in high school, factors influencing adolescents' reluctance to seek psychological support from Jamaican secondary school counselors, and challenges faced by Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school.

The literature revealed that harsh parenting practices that resulted in psychological disturbances necessitated the need for Jamaican school counselors to provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The literature also revealed that harsh parenting practices resulted in psychological distress and is a violation of the individual's dignity (WHO, 2021b). Additionally, the literature revealed that harsh parenting practices such as corporal punishment is rooted in the culture and colonial

history of Jamaica (Breen et al., 2015; Smith & Mosby, 2003). The widespread

acceptance and practice of harsh parenting among Jamaican parents may indicate that

high school counselors will have to contend with this largely culturally held view, which

may hamper efforts to promote good psychological health among adolescents. With

respect to factors influencing adolescents' reluctance to seek psychological support from

Jamaican secondary school counselors, adolescents' perception that the school counselor

is not confidential was a recurring theme in the literature (Del Mauro & Jackson

Williams, 2013; Hutchinson, 2023). The Jamaican cultural aversion to seeking help for

psychological problems was also noted in the literature as a deterring factor in help-

seeking behaviors among adolescents (Arthurs et al.,2010; James & Peltzer, 2011).

The final concept discussed in the current literature review was the challenges

faced by Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to

adolescents in high school. The literature revealed that Jamaican school counselors

experienced challenges such as heavy workload (CAPRI, 2021; Coley-Nicholson, 2016;

Ferguson, 2023), lack of support (CAPRI, 2021; Wilson, 2018), and job-related burnout

(Cross, 2022; Ferguson, 2023; JAGCE, 2023). The literature indicated that Jamaican

secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high

school are experiencing burnout which affects their capacity to provide effective

psychological support.

While the extant literature examined adolescents' perceptions of the Jamaican

secondary school counselor, the roles and responsibilities of the Jamaican secondary

school counselor, and the challenges experienced by the Jamaican secondary school counselor, there is no known recorded scientific account of Jamaican secondary school counselors experience of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school. The present study aims to fill the gap in the current literature by exploring the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The present study aims to fill the knowledge gap by providing first-hand articulations of how Jamaican secondary school counselors experience providing psychological support to adolescents in high school. This information may help to inform the practice of school counseling in Jamaica, as well as form the foundation for future researches that explore the experiences of Jamaican school counselors.

Chapter 3 presents information on the research methods for the present study. Details are provided on the research design and rationale for selecting the design. The role of the researcher is detailed, and in-depth details on the methodologies are provided. Chapter 3 also addresses issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Data for the study were collected through semistructured interviews via the Zoom online platform. The data were collected from Jamaican school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school. Chapter 3 presents information on the research methods for the present study, the research design and rationale for selecting the design, the role of the researcher, the methodologies utilized, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Tradition and Question

The present study assumed the qualitative tradition and the narrative design. The research question for this study was the following: What are the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school? By collecting qualitative data through semistructured interviews and using the narrative research design to facilitate the exploration of the stories of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school, this study aimed to contribute to the scientific community by providing a deeper understanding of the meaning school counselors ascribe to their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents.

Research Tradition

Exploring experiences is essentially an in-depth meaning-making process. Qualitative research grants the researcher more flexibility to explore the experiences of the participants to unearth meanings. Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined that qualitative research facilitates the use of open-ended questions and the identification of themes and pattern interpretations. These are characteristics of qualitative research that facilitate greater alignment with the present research question and purpose. Moreover, these characteristics of the qualitative approach were consistent with the theoretical framework of the present study. The quantitative approach was less suitable for the present study. Quantitative approaches are more aligned with the numerical representation of data and the testing of the relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which are less receptive to exploration and meaning-making. Furthermore, the rigidity of the quantitative approach does not allow the researcher the flexibility to explore participants' narratives for deeper insight, given that quantitative research methods are predetermined, and questions are instrument-based (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Narrative Design

The narrative design is concerned with the understanding of experiences, which are shared through stories, which are also referred to as narratives. The narrative inquiry constitutes two philosophical underpinnings, which are epistemology and ontology, which are also noted to inform the methodological principles of the meaning-making

process (Bamberg, 2012). Epistemology is the study of knowledge, particularly, what one can know through the application of scientific principles and methodologies (Burkholder et al., 2019). The essence of a narrative study is knowledge creation (Bamberg, 2012). Epistemology provides guidelines for asking questions to facilitate the creation of knowledge, as well as how one can become better informed (Burkholder et al., 2019). Epistemology aligns with the present study in that it creates alignment with the hermeneutics theoretical framework of the present study, particularly the language concept. Hermeneutics represents the postmodern age of epistemological interviews in which the central intent is to obtain knowledge through the posing of specific questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Additionally, epistemology aligns with the present study in that it regards the role of the researcher in the knowledge acquisition process as a facilitator of hermeneutical interpretations who can facilitate valid and shared understandings of meaning (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

Ontology refers to the philosophical study of reality and being and the desire to know if an objective, demonstrable reality exists outside of the researcher's understanding and appreciation of reality (Burkholder et al., 2019). Additionally, ontology is concerned with whether or not reality is the end result of interpretations or social construction (Burkholder et al., 2019). Within the present study, the research question and the purpose statement are overt representations of the ontological philosophy. My desire to know the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school (research question) was

an expression of intent to determine if an objective reality exists outside of my own appreciation of reality. Similarly, the research purpose, which was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support for adolescents, was a demonstration of intent to verify the existence of a reality outside of my understanding and appreciation of reality. The alignment of the ontological philosophy underpinning the narrative inquiry further validated that the narrative approach was suitable for the present study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a very critical role in a qualitative study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the role of the researcher within the qualitative design is to collect participants' meanings of the phenomenon under study. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. On the accounts of Creswell and Cresswell, and Merriam and Tisdell, my primary role was to be the chief collector and analyzer of the narratives posited by the participants. Following the issuance of my Internal Review Board approval number, 03-05-24-0424665, data for the study were collected using a semistructured interview guide. Semistructured interviews allowed for in-depth responses, seeking clarification, further probing, and capitalization on spontaneous responses that added more depth to the study. These benefits were particularly important because respondents were sharing their personal narratives.

Zoom was the platform on which the interviews were conducted. Zoom has a closed-captioning feature, which allowed for the recording of the interviews, which was necessary for later referencing and transcribing. Permission for conducting the study was obtained through the Ministry of Education's Planning and Development Division. All participating counselors received a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants, and how their participation would benefit the scientific community, as well as procedures to ensure confidentiality. Demographic information was collected prior to each interview in order to create a profile of each participant. This demographic information was collected through Google Forms. The demographic data that were collected included age, gender, confirmation of dealing with mental health/psychological distress cases, years of service, and qualification. The demographic information was needed because it helped to define the population of interest.

Before collecting data, I was situated as a researcher whose intent was to gather data on the participants' experiences. Subsequent to establishing my role as the chief instrument of data collection, I sought to build trust with the participants by reminding them of the purpose of the study, their roles and rights as participants, as well as how they would access the completed study. Participants also got the opportunity to seek clarification for any area that was mystifying. The process of building trust between the participants and me was facilitated by a qualitative interviewing style referred to as *responsive interviewing* (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Responsive interviewing also aligned

with the use of semi-structured interviews, as responsive interviewing allowed for a flexible pattern of questioning (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Through the utilization of active listening, I obtained rich and detailed narratives from the participants. Active listening was of particular importance in this narrative research because of its multifaceted interaction components that captured both verbal and nonverbal communication which added greater value to the interpretation of narratives (Tennant et al., 2023). The use of active listening allowed me to be fully present in the interviews, activated and sustained the responsive interviewing process, and allowed me to deduce interpretations from nonverbal communication cues. Tennant et al. outlined that nonverbal communication encompasses signals that transcend spoken language, such as vocal characteristics, including tone, intonations, rhythm, facial expressions, periods of silence, and gestures that all add greater value and richness to interpretations and the meaning-making process. Consistent with the hermeneutic conceptual framework, active listening allowed me to capitalize on both spoken and unspoken language cues, which sometimes led to further exploration of the participants' experiences to deduce rich and detailed narratives.

My personal and professional relationship with the present study was an affiliation with school counseling. I worked in the counseling department of a secondary school for a decade, where the primary job role was to develop and execute the school's career development program, in addition to managing other counselors who were tasked with providing psychological support to adolescents. By virtue of my past position as

department lead, I was aware of some of the systemic and social challenges that school

counselors faced in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents in the

school. My current professional focus is on the training of school counselors, which does

not have any relation to the supervision of school counselors in practice. However, I

maintained cognizance that my past professional experiences of working in school

counseling might elicit researcher biases. Also, I was cognizant that there might be

participants whom I supervised on internship, which might create a power imbalance. No

counselor whom I supervised in the past participated in the study.

Addressing Biases

Ethical standards were applied to address biases and possible power relationships.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that humans are not without biases; hence, instead

of concealing biases, researchers should identify any possible biases that might influence

the study and act accordingly to deter these biases from influencing the research process.

Engaging in reflective objectivity was one way that I managed biases during the research

process. Reflexivity is the active examination of one's own thinking, assumptions, and

beliefs to determine how they may influence the research process (Jamieson et al., 2023).

Reflexivity requires the researcher to self-reflect on their role as the researcher, their

motive and intention for conducting the study, the influence of their biases and

subjectiveness on the research process, and, very importantly, what the researcher does

with the knowledge obtained through reflection (Jamieson et al., 2023).

Practical approaches were taken to embed objective reflexivity in the present study. In addition to conducting self-reflections, Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) suggested that a second approach to managing biases in qualitative research is to engage in collaborative reflexivity. Collaborative reflexivity recognizes that the qualitative researcher, for the most part, networks with other researchers or research-associated practitioners who can offer insight into decisions and assumptions (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). The influence of biases in the qualitative research process is made more visible when feedback is given by people who do not necessarily share the research assumptions and or are not intimately involved in the research decision-making processes (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). To this end, I referred to the expertise of colleagues for assistance in determining if actions during the research process were biased.

Methodological reflexivity is a third approach that was taken to address biases in the present study. Methodological reflexivity acknowledges the boundaries imposed upon a study by the chosen paradigm and ensures that all methodological decisions are scrutinized before implementation as well as ethically and paradigmatically aligned (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). The present study ascribed to ontology and epistemology; therefore, all methodological decisions were aligned with these paradigms and not my ideas about methodological processes. Being guided by the principles of ontology and epistemology ensured that I adhered to standardized scientific principles for data collection and analysis. Additionally, methodological reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge that fixed, predetermined methodological decisions are not to be made at

the beginning of a study, as qualitative research is reactive to data (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). To this end, I appreciated the data as they emerged and applied the most suitable methodological principles consistent with ontology and epistemology to reduce the infiltration of biases that may be associated with making fixed, predetermined methodological decisions.

Power imbalances in the researcher–participant relationship were a noteworthy ethical consideration. Anyan (2013) pointed out that professional background is one factor contributing to power imbalance in the research interview process. The APA (2017) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct Standard 8.02, which addresses research and publication, outlined that the informed consent document that the participants receive must outline any foreseeable reasons that may affect their participation in the study. Therefore, the consent document outlined that participants could decline participation in the study if they thought that my positions or past supervisory post might skew their narratives. Additionally, APA (2023b) outlined that the consent form must indicate that participants can withdraw from the study even after the study has commenced. To this end, the consent document that participants received was consistent with these ethical requirements.

Other ethical issues that were considered in this study were informed consent and the need to protect research participants. Informed consent is critical to good ethical practice in research because it indicates that participants' involvement in research is voluntary and is informed by their understanding of the purpose of the study, and the

scope of their participation (Xu et al., 2020). For this study, informed consent was accounted for in accordance with the APA code of ethics (2017). Participants were provided with a consent form that was constructed in simple language and outlined the purpose of the study, expected procedures, their right to discontinue participation or refuse to answer questions that evoked unpleasant feelings, the possible impact of their withdrawal on the process, and outcome of the study, possible risks associated with their involvement, potential benefits affixed to their participation, and limits to confidentiality. Given that the interviews were conducted via the Zoom online platform, consent was sought to record participants' voices only for data collection and analysis purposes. Detailed information in the consent form helped participants make voluntary participation decisions from a point of knowledge.

Consistent with the ethical criterion to protect participants from harm, a debriefing interview was held with each participant at the end of each data collection interview. The debriefing session was necessary to obtain participants' feedback on their experience of participating in the study and to remind participants of how to access help if they believed they experienced any psychological distress from participating in the study (Burkholder et al., 2019). The APA (2017) outlined that the debriefing session should be promptly offered following the engagement of participants to minimize the duration or escalation of any possible distress experienced.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Population and Selection Criteria

The participants for this study were Jamaican secondary school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school. To be selected for the study, participants had to be trained secondary school counselors who were employed at a secondary school in Jamaica and were primarily tasked with providing adolescents with psychological support. The selection of Jamaican secondary school counselors to participate in the study was in alignment with the research question, which was, *What are the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school?* Additionally, the selection of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school to participate in the study, also aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to explore the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. Jamaican school counselors' daily interactions with adolescents in the school environment and their resulting experiences of providing psychological support positioned them to be rich sources of data who assisted in answering the research question; hence, they were the most appropriate participants for the current study.

Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy that was used for this study was purposeful sampling. Palinkas et al. (2015) posited that purposeful sampling allows for the most information-

rich participants to be selected for a study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) further added that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to choose a set of participants who are most likely to provide deep insight as well as enhance discovery and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Campbell et al. (2020) added that purposeful sampling adds to greater alignment of the research components, which in turn fortifies the trustworthiness of the study outcome.

For this study, purposeful sampling allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who assisted in answering the research question based on their experiences as Jamaican secondary school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school. The use of purposive sampling also enhanced the trustworthiness and rigor of the data that were collected because purposive sampling supported member checking (Guba, 1981). Member-checking is a type of triangulation in which participants who are knowledgeable and experienced with the phenomenon being studied are presented with the analysis and the results of their shared narratives, which they read and provide feedback on the accuracy of (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Additionally, purposive sampling enhanced the dependability of the research findings because of the eligibility attributes of the participants (Campbell et al., 2020). Altogether, purposive sampling allowed for data-rich participants to be selected, enhanced credibility, and promoted greater transferability of research findings.

Eligibility Requirements

All participants were required to meet the specific inclusion criteria. Participants were required to meet the basic qualifications required for employment. The Jamaica Teaching Council [JTC] (2024) stipulated that to be employed in schools, school counselors must be registered with JTC and the Ministry of Education Jamaica. With respect to qualifications, JTC outlined that individuals must be teacher-trained and must have at least a diploma in their content area to be eligible for employment. To verify that counselors met the basic requirement, only school counselors who were employed to government owned schools were invited to participate in this study. Additionally, an eligibility form was sent to participants, which captured more details on counselors' eligibility to participate in the study.

Another eligibility requirement was that participants must be currently employed in secondary schools and have the primary job of providing adolescents with psychological support. It was necessary to specify the job function of the participants as there are also career counselors who work in Jamaican secondary schools and may not be primarily tasked with providing psychological support to adolescents. The selection of counselors who were employed to offer psychological support was consistent with the research question and added greater cohesiveness to the study.

Sample Size

Ten participants were proposed to be recruited for this study. Determining the sample size in qualitative research is an ambiguous process because the researcher cannot

definitively say how many participants will provide enough data to satisfy the research

question. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), in purposeful sampling, which was

used for this study, sample size is determined by data redundancy. The relationship

between saturation and sample size is that whenever the researcher no longer gets new

information from the participants, the sample size is obtained (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016).

I aimed for 10 participants to begin with, which provided a reasonable starting point for

collecting data. To determine if 10 participants were sufficient, I engaged in simultaneous

data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I determined that data saturation

was achieved after the seventh participant was interviewed.

Permission to conduct the present study was sought through the Ministry of

Education's Planning and Development Division. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is

the governing body for government-owned educational institutions in Jamaica, and

hence, any study being undertaken within MOE-governed institutions must be first

approved by the MOE. Additionally, the MOE supports any research that aims to

improve any aspect of the education sector (MOE, 2013). Gaining permission from MOE

to conduct this study promoted transparency and further strengthened the trustworthiness

of the study because it indicated to participants that there was a legitimate intent to

improve the psychological support services offered by Jamaican secondary high schools.

Contacting Participants

Once permission was received from the Ministry of Education's Planning and

Development Division, I used the Directory of Educational Institutions in Jamaica to

contact secondary school counselors via telephone and/or email. To avoid harassing prospective participants, no more than three attempts were made to solicit their participation.

Counselors were sent an email invitation to participate in the study. Included in the email invitation was a Google Form link that captured the counselors' demographic and eligibility information. The Google Form link captured information on participants place of employment and level of education and training; this information was necessary to verify that counselors were employed and met the basic requirement for employment as stipulated by the JTC. Additionally, information on the counselor's job description and population served by the counselors was also collected to verify that counselors' primary role is to offer psychological support to adolescents. Counselors who expressed an interest in participating in the study were sent an email to schedule a Zoom interview for data collection.

Consistent with ethical standards, the eligibility form included a detailed consent form. The consent form, guided by standard 8.02 as outlined by APA (2017), outlined the purpose of the study, duration, and procedures; this was necessary to give the participants a clear understanding of what the study aimed to obtain, how long the study was likely to last and the procedures for participant engagement. The consent form included information on the right of the participants to withdraw from the study as well as the likely implications that their withdrawal may have on the study (APA, 2017). There is a possibility that research will pose risks to participants. To this end, the consent form

outlined possible risks and the measures that will be taken to minimize the impact of

risks. The consent form detailed the benefits to be derived from participating in the

present study as well as the extent to which the researcher can maintain confidentiality

(APA, 2017). Given that the interviews were proposed to be conducted via Zoom online

platform, consent was sought from participants for voice recording. The consent form

detailed how the recordings will be stored, who has access to them and how they will be

disposed of (APA, 2017). Additionally, the consent form also provided contact

information for the researcher, for in the event that the participants have other queries or

concerns about the study.

Instrumentation

The Researcher

Within the qualitative research design, the researcher is the primary instrument for

the collection and analysis of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Particular to

semistructured interviews, Pezalla et al. (2012) postulated that it is necessary for the

researcher to possess the required skillsets to maximize on data collection during the

interview process. Owens (2006) argued that the qualitative researcher must possess the

ability to foster facilitative interactions that allows for the interview to be converted into a

space in which participants feel safe to share their stories, and the researcher makes

meaningful interpretations of the stories that are shared. The researcher as an instrument

of data collection must also be able to use their sensory organs to capture data that is

spoken as well as data that is conveyed via body language and tone (Turato, 2005).

My experinces in counseling and psychology, as well as my experiences conducting qualitative assessment in career counseling provided me with the requisite skillset to effectively gather data from participants. My training in counseling provided knowledge about interview protocols, rapport, and trust building which I used to create an interview atmosphere that encouraged participants to share their stories. I utilized my counseling skills to maximize on data collection; these skills included probing, paraphrasing, clarifying and being observant of tones. My experiences of conducting qualitative career assessments helped to facilitate patience, appreciation of the stories of others as well as the capacity to interpret the stories told through active collaboration with clients. Altogether, my training and experiences aided my capacity to be an effective data collection instrument for this study.

Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from participants. A semistructured interview is a combination of structured and unstructured interview questions that have a particular focus (Jennings, 2005). The order in which questions were posed by the interviewer was dependent on how the participant responded to the previous question (Jennings, 2005). To this end, semistructured interviews allowed for in-depth responses, seeking clarification, probing, and capitalizing on spontaneous responses that added more volume and depth to the collected data. The use of semistructured interviews allowed for rapport building which was necessary for participants to be encouraged to share their stories.

The use of semistructured interviews allowed me to facilitate responsive interviewing which is the process of building trust between myself and the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Trust was an interpersonal factor that was important to the research process because it conveyed to the participants that I was an expert who acted with integrity and sincerity (Moorman et al., 1993). Given that participants were sharing their stories, which may have been embedded with personal information and emotions, it was important that I, the primary instrument of data collection, could facilitate the process of trust building. To this end, the use of semistructured interviews was appropriate for this study.

Another reason why the semistructured interviews were an appropriate data collection instrument for the present study was because semistructured interviews complemented the natural rhythm of storytelling. Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022) postulated that semistructured interviews are like natural conversations, and as a result, they encourage participants to share their stories with the associated emotions and less occupation with self-censorship. The characteristics of semistructured interviews were an asset to the data collection process in the present study since respondents were sharing their narratives. The flexibility to ask questions based on the responses provided by the participants, gave participants the opportunity to elaborate more on their experiences while simultaneously providing me with more opportunities to extract data from the shared narratives. Additionally, being able to probe responses also allowed for greater volume and more in-depth data to be collected from the participants.

Zoom Online Platform

The Zoom online platform was used to conduct the interviews. Zoom is a video conferencing platform that also has data capturing features. For this study, the voice recording feature of Zoom was used to record the interviews. Additionally, Zoom has a closed-captioning feature, which provided a transcript of all interviews. The use of Zoom allowed for greater access to participants, especially participants in remote areas who would otherwise be challenging to reach. Zoom also allowed for ease of data collection as both the participants and I were able to choose mutually convenient times for data collection.

Interview Questions

I developed the interview questions for the present study. The development of the interview questions was guided by the extant literature on the experiences of school counselors (Griffin & Bryan, 2021; Şimşir Gökalp, 2022), social issues that contribute to psychological distress among Jamaican adolescents (Arthur et al., 2010; Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013; Gershoff , 2017) and relevant scientific concepts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Establishing credibility was one approach to establishing trustworthiness in the present study (Forero et al., 2018) and one way that trustworthiness was enhanced was through the establishment of content validity. Content validity was established by conducting a field test of the interview questions and incorporating the feedback received to improve rigor and establish the sufficiency of the instrument.

Field Test

To establish the credibility of the interview questions a field test was conducted. The field test was necessary to ensure that the items had the capacity to maximize data collection. The field test determined if each interview question was clearly structured, if respondents shared similar interpretations of the questions, if the interview items were properly sequenced to build momentum during the interview, and in general, to determine the data sufficiency capacity of each interview item. I engaged field experts, colleagues, and family members to participate in the field test. The feedback received from the field test was used to guide the revision of the interview items to improve content validity.

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

This study aimed to explore the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Participants for the study were recruited through the Directory of Educational Institutions in Jamaica, which was used to locate participants who met the study requirements. Counselors who expressed an interest in participation were sent an eligibility form via Google Forms. To be eligible for participation in the present study, participants were registered with the JTC and MOE, were teacher-trained and had the minimum qualification of a diploma in school counseling or psychology, were employed in a government-owned secondary school, and had the primary job function of providing psychological support to adolescents.

In addition to screening information, the eligibility form contained a detailed consent form. The sampling strategy that was used for the present study was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed for the most information-rich participants to be selected for a study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Ten participants were recruited for the present study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) articulated that sample size is achieved when data saturation is achieved. To determine if 10 participants were sufficient, I engaged in simultaneous data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I determined that data saturation was achieved after the seventh participant was interviewed.

Participation

Participant inclusion in the present study was limited to Jamaican secondary school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school. Participants were registered with the JTC and MOE, were teacher-trained and had the minimum qualification of a diploma in school counseling or psychology, were employed in a government-owned secondary school, and had the primary job function of providing psychological support to adolescents.

The restriction on participant inclusion was necessary to maintain research alignment. The research question, research purpose and research scope were centered on better understanding the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Therefore, it was logical that only participants who met all the eligibility standards of the study were considered for participation. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants had the right to

withdraw from the study at any time. While participation in the study may benefit the improvement of school counseling services in Jamaica, no compensation was offered to individual participants. Participants' demographic information was not documented or shared in the present research report in an effort to maintain confidentiality.

Data Collection

A standard data collection protocol was established. Each counselor who met the eligibility criteria and consented to participate in the study received an email invitation for data collection. The invitation provided participants with a data collection schedule and a Zoom link to access the interview platform. Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from participants. Given the in-depth nature of qualitative interviews, the interviews lasted for 40.1 minutes on average. Participants were interviewd only once.

Interview Protocol

Before the interview questions were posed participants were reminded of the purpose of the study; this helped to establish the focus of the interview. Participants were reminded of how their involvement in the study can help to improve school counseling services in Jamaica. Likewise, in keeping with ethical practice, counselors were reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they reserved the right to refrain from answering any question that made them feel uncomfortable, or withdraw from the study if they believe it was best for them to do so. Participants were reminded of member checking and the importance of their participation in member checking to improve the trustworthiness of the study. All interviews were concluded after the interview questions

were answered and recording ceased. Following the interview, participants were informed that they will be contacted to verify the information recorded from the interviews.

Data Analysis Plan

Consistent with the narrative research design, the inductive narrative analysis method was employed to analyze data. Narrative analysis is concerned with exploring the stories people tell of their experiences with a phenomenon in a particular context. Rubin and Rubin (2011) outlined that narrative analysis places focus on how people make meaning of their stories, how people interpret their own stories and how they share their stories; and the stories shared are rich with themes. The transcripts derived from the Zoom online interviews were transferred to Microsoft Word documents and then manually coded. I chose to conduct manual coding because the algorithms used to develop qualitative data analysis software may depend on factors such as word frequency and word pairing to identify codes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). As a result, qualitative data analysis software may omit qualitative analysis requirements such as attention to variation in expressions, expression of meanings, and allocation of emphasis (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Therefore, manual coding was more inclined to being thorough. As outlined by Nasheeda et al. (2019) the inductive narrative analysis method consists of distinct steps. Adherence to the outlined steps facilitated an in-depth understanding of the counselors' narratives and identified consistent themes and patterns across their stories. The steps are outlined below:

Step 1: Familiarization with the transcripts

Step 2: Storying the transcript

Step 3: Cocreating the transcript

Step 4: Meaning making

Step 5: Developing the story

Familiarization with the transcript required that I read the interview transcripts and listen to the audio recording several times to become well acquainted with the content (Nasheeda et al., 2019). Storying the transcript refers to the emplotting of the stories that the participants shared (Nasheeda et al., 2019). To story the transcripts, I paid keen attention to the characteristics of each story, to include the roles played by the participants, individuals who helped to shape the participants' experiences, as well as paying attention to the time, and place of occurrences regarded as important by the participants. Cocreating the transcript means that the researcher actively collaborates with the participants to ensure that the reports emerging from each interview represent the participants' intended posits (Nasheeda et al., 2019). To cocreate the transcript, I engaged in member-checking with each participant to ensure that the interview report was in alignment with the stories the participants intended to share. Member checking was done by presenting each participant with the analysis and the results of their shared narratives, which they read and provide feedback on the accuracy of the report (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

Meaning making refers to the perusal of the cocreated transcript to capture the meanings that participants ascribe to their stories (Nasheeda et al., 2019). I engaged in the meaning making process by keenly listening to the participant's spoken words and the participants' nonverbal communication, such as tone, pitch, and silence. Developing the story refers to the use of a scientific process to develop a comprehensive report on the participants' narratives. For this study, I used narrative analysis to identify codes, themes, and concepts within each participant's story.

<div align="center">**Issues of Trustworthiness**</div>

Subjectivity is a prevailing characteristic of qualitative research. Bumbuc (2016) argued that subjectivity is always present in qualitative research, and the subjectivity is manifested from the point of participant selection to the point of reporting research findings. Nonetheless, the subjective nature of qualitative research is not necessarily detrimental to study outcomes (Bumbuc, 2016); as there are measures that researchers can employ to ensure data trustworthiness (Forero et al., 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022; Stahl & King, 2020). Data trustworthiness for the present study will be established through, journaling, member checking, and maintenance of an audit trail.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research finding can be regarded as true (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I ensured the credibility of the data that were collected for this study by confirming that data saturation was achieved, conducting reflexive

journaling and engaging in respondent validation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The inclusion of the aforementioned strategies improved data collection rigor which ultimately improved the trustworthiness of the study findings.

Transferability

While qualitative studies cannot be replicated as quantitative studies can, transferability in qualitative studies can be facilitated by the extent to which the study can inform practice in contexts outside of the environment in which the study was conducted (Stahl & King, 2020). The transferability of the study is dependent on the reviews of its intended audience; therefore, sufficient information must be provided for the intended audience to make an informed decision about the extent to which the study can be transferred to their own context. This study attempted transferability by engaging in a consistent audit trail. The audit trail is a detailed record of the study procedures and explanations of the decisions made during data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Dependability

Establishing dependability was another approach that was used to establish trustworthiness in the present study. Dependability is concerned with the extent to which the study procedure can be relied upon to yield similar findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Korstjens and Moser postulated that an effective way to establish dependability in qualitative research is by promoting transparency through maintaining an audit trail. For this study, which aimed to explore the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school, an audit trail

was maintained to capture detailed information on the research procedures including sampling, reflective practice, data collection and analysis and reporting of findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to objectivity in the reporting of research findings. Nyirenda et al. (2020) postulated that confirmability aims for neutrality in the manner in which the researcher reports the findings of the study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) added that confirmability is rooted in facts and not what the researcher thinks to be true and hence the data and interpretations of the data can be corroborated by other researchers. To ensure confirmability was represented in this study I engaged in reflexive journaling to help with identifying possible influence of biases in data collection and analysis. Reflexive journaling was effective in helping me to identify and curtail the influence of biases in data collection and analysis (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Additionally, the researcher used member checking to ensure that the reports on the participant's narratives were correct.

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

</div>

Several ethical considerations were factored into the present research to protect participants. This study, which aimed to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school, did not include the use of deceit as a part of the research design. Therefore, to deter possible perception of deceit (APA, 2017), permission was sought from the MOE to conduct the study. This indicated to the participants that the governing body for education in Jamaica

was aware of the study and supported its undertaking. A detailed consent form was provided to participants that outlined the purpose of the study, participants' roles and rights, and the scope of confidentiality. Additionally, to deter the perception of exploitation, the consent form outlined that no compensation was offered to participants, and participation was voluntary. The provision of a detailed consent form at the beginning of the study helped to reduce uncertainties about the procedures and processes of the study.

Another ethical issue that was addressed in this study was the protection of participants' privacy. The target population for the present study was Jamaican secondary school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school. It was anticipated that participants may share personal and or confidential information, or share information about their place of employment. It was important that I protected the confidentiality of participants. The names and places of employment of participants were not shared. I was also cognizant that the rich descriptive nature of qualitative data may lead to deductive disclosure. Kaiser (2009) explained that deductive disclosure occurs when descriptive details of participants' traits make them identifiable in research reports. To this end, to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants, data was reported anonymously, and no specific traits of counselors were shared. Additionally, limited details were provided on the participants' education regions, and no specific details on schools were provided. Furthermore, the collected data were password protected and codes or pseudonyms were assigned to transcripts. However, for quality

control and to determine if I adhered to institutional guidelines for data collection and

analysis, the pseudocoded transcripts may be shared with committee members or IRB

board members. The identity of participants and the information that participants shared

will only be known by me. The data will be stored for 5 years, and within that time, the

data may be used for other research purposes (Berenson, 2018). The use of the data for

other research purposes is detailed in the consent form that participants received. Hence,

no further contact will be made with participants to request permission for data usage.

After the expiration of the five-year period, the data will be destroyed. The data will be

deleted and then erased from the storage device.

Limits to confidentiality were detailed in the consent form that was provided to

participants. Under Jamaican law it is required to report any case of child abuse.

Additionally, if participants present a danger to themselves or others, it is mandatory that

it is reported to the relevant authorities. Consistent with the aim to promote beneficence

and nonmaleficence in research (APA, 2017), as part of the interview protocol for the

present study, participants were informed that they could refrain from answering any

question that made them feel uncomfortable. Additionally, I was cognizant that the

participants may experience psychological distress from their participation in the study.

Therefore, to protect the dignity of participants, contact information for psychological

support services was provided to participants.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the methodologies that guided the present study. It was outlined that the present study assumed the qualitative tradition and the narrative design as both aligned with the research question and general scope of the study. My role as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis was discussed, which amplified the need for me to address potential biases that could affect data collection, data analysis, and the reporting of research findings. In addition to me being the chief instrument of data collection, Chapter 3 also outlined that the Zoom online platform was used to facilitate the semistructured interviews that were used to engage the participants in the data collection process. Additionally, it was discussed that the interview questions that were used in the semistructured interviews were developed by me. A field test was conducted to ensure the interview questions met content validity and data sufficiency standards, and the feedback received was incorporated to improve the rigor of the interview questions.

Chapter 3 detailed the population, selection criteria, sample and sample size, eligibility requirements, and strategies that were used to contact participants. The decision to only include Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school was justified by the purpose of the study, which was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. The justification was also made for the initial aim to include 10 participants in the present study with the view to retain, increase, or decrease this number based on the relationship between sample size and data

sufficiency. Purposeful sampling was articulated to be the most suitable sampling strategy for the present study because it allowed for the most information-rich participants to be selected for a study. To be eligible for participation in the present study, participants were registered with the JTC and MOE, teacher-trained and had the minimum qualification of a diploma in school counseling or psychology, employed in a government-owned secondary school, and had the primary job function of providing psychological support to adolescents. Participants who met the eligibility requirement received a detailed consent form outlining the study's purpose, the scope of their participation, and their rights as participants.

With respect to the data analysis plan, Chapter 3 outlined that the inductive narrative analysis method was employed to analyze data. The interview transcripts were hand-coded for maximum data retention, and through a five-step process, the collected data was analyzed to identify codes, themes, concepts, and recurring patterns. Data trustworthiness was also discussed in Chapter 3. To ensure data trustworthiness, actions such as reflexive journaling, member checking, and maintenance of an audit trail were carried out to boost the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study.

The final topic discussed in Chapter 3 was ethical procedures. In addition to the provision of a detailed consent form, Chapter 3 also outlined other ethical practices that were adopted in the present study to protect participants. Participants' identities were not disclosed or included in any report. In the event that interview transcripts must be seen by

my committee or IRB members, the submitted transcript will be pseudocoded. To promote beneficence and nonmaleficence, participants were not required to answer any interview questions that made them feel uncomfortable or distressed. Furthermore, it was possible that participants may experience psychological distress from their participation in the study. To minimize the potential impact of harm, and protect the dignity of participants, contact information for psychological support was provided to participants in the event they experienced any psychological distress resulting from their participation in the interviews. Altogether, Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the methodologies that were carried out to advance the current research aim, which was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school.

Chapter 4 provides details on the data collection and analysis process. Details are provided on how the data was collected, the specific codes, categories, and themes that emerged, as well as clear articulations on how the data was handled. Additionally, evidence of trustworthiness is addressed, including how the study established credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to better understand the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The study had one research question which was, *What is the experience of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school?* Data for the study were collected through seven semistructured interviews via the Zoom online platform. The data were collected from Jamaican secondary school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school. Chapter 4 presents information on the study participants, participants' demographic information, and data collection and analysis procedures. Additionally, Chapter 4 presents data on the procedures I carried out to ensure data trustworthiness.

Demographics

Participants of the study were seven secondary school counselors who provided psychological support to adolescents in high school. The sample consisted of six female counselors and one male counselor. Participants had an average of 6.4 years of experience providing psychological support to adolescents, with a standard deviation of 1.6 and a variance of 2.5. The invitation to participate in the study was initially sent to 10 school counselors. The first two counselors who were scheduled for the interview withdrew as a result of time constraints, and one did not complete the demographic survey. Hence, an additional four counselors were recruited to mitigate against attrition.

Participants were employed at different schools and were spread across five parishes. Data saturation was obtained after the seventh participant was interviewed; hence, data collection ceased thereafter. At the time of the study, no personal or organizational conditions influenced participants or their experience. All study participants were actively employed at a Ministry of Education-owned and operated secondary school as school counselors responsible for providing psychological support to adolescents. Four participants had a bachelor's degree in counseling, while three had a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected from seven participants. The study proposal indicated that 10 participants would be recruited for the study. However, data saturation was determined after seven participants were interviewed. All data collection interviews were conducted online via Zoom at a time mutually convenient to the participants and I. All participants engaged in one data collection session and one member checking session. On average, the interviews lasted 40.1 minutes with a standard deviation of 3.0 and a variance of 9.2. Each member checking session lasted 17.2 minutes on average, with a standard deviation of 2.3 and a variance of 5.6. The data collection sessions were recorded via Zoom. Data collection was consistent with the proposed plan outlined in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Consistent with the study proposal, the inductive narrative analysis was used to analyze the collected data. As articulated by Rubin and Rubin (2011), narrative analysis places focus on how people make meaning of and interpret their stories, and the stories shared are rich with themes. The transcripts derived from the Zoom online interviews were manually coded. Manual coding was most appropriate for the present study because, in comparison to qualitative analysis software, it is highly effective in capturing the finer details expressed in the experiences of study participants, such as attention to variation in expression, expression of meaning, and allocation of emphasis (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The inductive narrative analysis method outlined by Nasheeda et al. (2019) was used to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the counselors' narratives and identify consistent themes and patterns across their stories. The narrative analysis steps I took are outlined below.

Narrative Analysis Steps

Step 1: Familiarization With the Transcript

I extracted the interview transcripts from the Zoom closed caption file and placed them in individual Microsoft Word documents. During data collection, I observed that Zoom closed caption occasionally recorded words and phrases that were not uttered by the participants. To ensure that accurate transcripts were produced, I replayed the audio recording for each transcript and granularly made the corrections on each transcript to

ensure consistency between text and audio. Each corrected transcript was read twice to foster deeper familiarization with the content (Nasheeda et al., 2019).

Step 2: Storying the Transcript

Storying the transcript refers to the emplotting of the stories that the participants shared (Nasheeda et al., 2019). I inductively assigned codes to the data by reading and rereading the corrected transcripts. As I corrected the transcripts, the first round of coding was simultaneously done. The codes were assigned based on the information contained in the data. Codes were assigned to data that emerged on the roles played by the participants, individuals who helped to shape the participants' experiences, attention was also paid to the time and place of occurrences regarded as important by the participants (Nasheeda et al., 2019). For example, in one transcript, one section of data was coded *Parents*, because the counselor mentioned, "*Number one, it would be lack of parental support. So, the parents are not there for them emotionally and mentally. So they tend to come to the office just to get that support.*" I engaged in a second reading of each transcript to code data that might have been missed in order to conduct a more in-depth inductive coding, refine the identified codes, and create categories. Additionally, the second reading of the transcript assisted me in preparing the interview report for validation through the member-checking process with each participant.

Step 3: Cocreating the Transcript

To cocreate the transcript, I actively collaborated with the participants to ensure that the reports emerging from each interview represented the participants' intended

posits (Nasheeda et al., 2019). Each participant was engaged in one member-checking session. An interview report that was generated from each corrected transcript was presented to the respective participants. The interview report summarised the participant's main points about their experiences regarding the research topic. Participants were asked to confirm whether or not the reports were accurate. No major discrepancies were identified.

Step 4: Meaning Making

To begin the meaning-making step, the corrected transcripts were perused to capture the meanings that participants ascribed to their stories (Nasheeda et al., 2019). In an iterative process, I used previously generated categories to develop themes consistent with the confirmed experiences of the participants. The themes were developed to communicate the identified patterns in the experiences of the counselors. I reviewed each theme to ensure that it was consistent with the meaning of the participants' stories, as articulated by the participants.

Step 5: Develop the Story

To develop the story, I developed a comprehensive report on the participants' narratives. I elaborated on each theme supported by the identified codes, categories, exemplar quotes, as well as scientific evidence to support the findings (Nasheeda et al., 2019). By developing the story, I created an understanding of the counselors' experience of providing psychological support to adolescents as a result of the roles played by the counselors, individuals who help to shape the counselors' experiences, as well as paying

attention to the time and place of occurrences regarded as important by the participants (Nasheeda et al., 2019).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility for the present study was established by ensuring that data saturation was obtained before the data collection ceased. Consistent similarities in the collected data were observed after the fourth interview was conducted. After conducting the seventh interview, I determined that full data saturation was achieved. Obtaining data saturation was necessary to ensure that an adequate sample was utilized and that the data had adequate depth and diversity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Obtaining data saturation for the present study also ensured that the collected data could be regarded as true (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Respondent validation was utilized to ensure that the collected data were consistent with the experiences that the participants intended to share. I also engaged in reflexive journaling, which aided in revealing possible biases that might have influenced data collection and analysis (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Transferability

The transferability of the present study is dependent on reviews of the intended audience. To ensure sufficient details are provided for the intended audience to make informed reviews, details of the codes, categories, and themes generated from the interviews are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Interviews were conducted at least 1 day apart

to ensure that sufficient time was available for the thorough perusal of each interview

transcript for the inductive identification of the presented code, categories, and themes.

The limitations of Zoom's closed captioning feature, which compromises the

accuracy of the closed captioning scripts it produces (Zoom Video Communications,

2023), necessitated that I verify the content of each transcript by listening to the Zoom

recording of the interview to ensure that the correct articulations were captured by

Zoom's closed caption feature. Audit trail entries were made following each interview.

Dependability

An audit trail for the present study was done to maintain consistent documentation

of all decisions that I made during the data collection and analysis process. The

documentation of all actions I took concerning sampling, data collection, and analysis,

engagement in reflective practice, and reporting of the study provided transparency for

the present study. The audit trail that was maintained for the present study further

enhanced the trustworthiness of this research and the possibility of yielding similar

findings should the documented steps be repeated (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability

To ensure the confirmability of the present study, I engaged in reflexive

journaling with the aim of identifying any biases that might influence the data collection

and analysis process (Nyirenda et al., 2020). The reflexive journaling I undertook

promoted the objective reporting of the research findings. The member checking that was

conducted to ensure that the reports on the participants' narratives were correct also

bolstered the confirmability of the present study. No influential biases were noted.

Results

Table 1

Codes, Categories, and Exemplar Quotes Identified From the Interviews With Jamaican

Secondary School Counselors (N = 7)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
Critical	How counselors describe the importance of their role	"My role is critical. It is something that is necessary in secondary schools" (Sun)
		"I describe my role as a counselor as a critical one. My support is critical to helping them overcome some of the challenges" (Light)
		"My role as a counselor in high school is super important" (Rain)
		"I describe my role as very vital" (Wind)
		"I can be support for students who probably don't have that kind of support"(Cloud)
		"My role is to actually ensure that I am able to provide them with support as it relates to handling different stressors" (Sky)
		"You have to be there to provide support not only for parents and students but also for teachers" (Moon)
Hopelessness Disciplinary actions Friend Lack of parental support Relationship Awareness	Factors that encourage adolescents to seek psychological support from school counselors	"When it becomes overbearing it starts to show in various ways" (Rain)
		"It becomes too much for them and they tend to lose hope, and so seeking help from the guidance department is like their way of finding hope and solutions to the problems they face." (Sky)
		"There are times when teachers maybe their issue so they come to me to see if They were wrong in a particular step that they took or if the teacher is wrong so they want some recommendation or suggestions as to how to move forward". (Cloud)
		"Factors such as disciplinary actions being taken against them will force them to come" (Wind)
		"Students who I have helped would have recommended other students to come to me and say, hey, you know, check with the counselor because you know you can help with that; the counselor made me feel comfortable." (Cloud)
		"The quality of the relationship I have with my adolescent clients encourages them to seek psychological support from me." (Light)
		"I check in just to find out, it also helps to build a relationship to find out the client is doing on a day to day basis if we don't have assigned counseling " (Moon)
		"I think with the education of the importance of mental health to our society I think that they have become more comfortable." (Moon)
Culture Distrust	Factors that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support from school counselors	"Culture, Jamaicans believe psychological problems are nonexistent and they can handle it without professional help" (Wind)
		"We know how it is with Jamaicans and the taboo of mental health, thinking that once you go to the guidance counselor something is wrong with you." (Cloud)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"There is a general culture, nowadays, especially on social media, where you are encouraged to trust nobody because they will betray you in the end." (Sky)
		"They feel more comfortable going to a peer or a student because you know adults probably will speak down to them, be disappointed and be all judgmental." (Moon)
		"I know they still don't like it but coming to a guidance counseling for counseling was a label, like something wrong with you" (Moon)
		"They have a stigma towards it to say you are mad, it's mad people who go to a psychologist. The government needs to do more to enlighten people that it's not mad people that seek help for psychological issues, social issues, it's persons who don't want to become mad" (Wind)
		"So there's a stigma attached to students or anybody who goes to a guidance counselor. It's always oh you must be a rude person or bad" (Cloud)
		"The stigma that counselors chat people's business" (Rain)
		"They don't want to share anything because they believe that it's going to go back to their parents." (Rain)
		"They don't have to worry that the students will call their parents or you know inform on them to their parents" (Moon)
		"So they have a sort of a trust factor in it where they don't believe that the confidentiality part will be kept." (Sun)
		"I've heard a lot of them say that they have no faith in adults." (Cloud)
		"They will not seek the help because of one, they are not sure if it is that you can be trusted" (Sky)
		"So they really don't trust the process and sometimes you do a little background check you realize that it may be because of something that they experience in the school previously, whether prep school or primary school" (Cloud)
		"The job is demanding and sometimes I would have a student who come to me probably 4 times and say counselor, every time I come you are busy." (Moon)
		"I think the bad experiences of sharing their situations with others may cause adolescents to be less willing to share information with me." (Light)
Community Social media	Social influences that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support from school counselors	"Keeping secrets is usually a social norm within volatile communities. When you talk you end up getting into problems. So that kind of spills over into how they view the school counselors who is designated to help them" (Sun)
		"Most of my students come from volatile communities where you find the Don and badman and gangs, and there is no shame in it how the Don handle issues; adolescents are drawn to these persons. That's what causes them not to want to seek professional help" (Wind)
		"There is an expectation of the ones that live in the ghetto areas, you know that their mindset is different, their environment and their culture is much different" (Cloud)
		"Students who are from the more volatile communities may not be as ready to seek help because you know coming from these communities you should be tough" (Sky)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"We find is that, those who come from the volatile communities these parents are not so keen on counseling because that's not something that they are really accustomed to" (Moon)
		"If you are from the inner city, you can't make nobody knows that you are going to see a counselor. You have to thug it out, especially the boys."(Rain)
		"So a song that says, when I am stressed I smoke my spliff or drink my liquor. It doesn't emphasize mental health practitioner, mental health services, it doesn't tell them in any form of healthy ways how to deal with their stresses or problems." (Sun)
		"If their role model is an entertainer, whatever the DJ tells them to do, they will do." (Wind)
		"Social influence can have a positive influence on adolescents seeking psychological support. Sometimes adolescents have friends who refer them to me for psychological support" (Light)
		"We have one government psychologist for the entire region and it's hard to get an appointment sometime. Our students need more clinical support, which would normally cost about $8,000 per hour. Those who can't, unfortunately, have to wait on the one government psychologist." (Moon)
		"Families from the upper SES are more open to seeking help but there still may be a level of pride, so you might find that because of their status, they may not readily admit that my child may have this issue or may be in need of help." (Sky)
		"In the low strata single parents have to work to ensure financial support so grandparents are left with the responsibility of raising a teenager who is exposed to a lot of extreme variables and what is out there on social media, TikTok, and what they see on a day to day basis" (Moon)
		"There is a bit of pride when it comes to those who are at the higher end of the socioeconomic status. They don't feel their children have a problem." (Cloud)
		"Some on the lower end say I don't want the guidance counselor to help me because the guidance counselor is going to go into my business and even to do home visits. I don't want the guidance counselor to know where I am because they're going to judge me." (Cloud)
		"Whoever they are following on Instagram and all the others platform. Whatever is streaming whatever the person is glorifying the students will follow. So social media have a very strong influence on them" (Wind)
		"Anything at all you want to know about anything in the world, just type it on TikTok, something will come up. Many persons on social media share things that they would do such as self-harming and then it becomes gospel. And adolescents mimic this instead of actually seeking help." (Rain)
		"They're constantly watching videos that tells them to self-mutilate, to do drugs, they're just watching these videos and that's all they watch. That's all they share with each other on TikTok and Instagram and WhatsApp." (Sun)
		"After COVID, we saw a rush of self-harming and this was what they saw on social media. Seeing self-harming on TikTok and social media and then after a while we saw a surge of persons just self-harming and cutting themselves and we never really had that." (Moon)
		"And they think that, I guess when they look at social media too, it doesn't help with positive mental health." (Cloud)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"They join the unregulated online groups for their self-diagnosed depression, and they just share negative or incorrect content in their little group. So in this way, you realize that it's almost like they're locked into the negative perception, because that's what social media is sharing. Their situation gets worse because of it and starts to change their frame of mind." (Sun)
		"That's why they go and they search for these online groups and they're searching for help. And they see a form off medication in what these people are doing." (Rain)
		"We are impacted by the culture of Blacks or Caribbean. It is not really common for our culture to actually seek help as it relates to psychological help because it is deemed as a sign of weakness." (Sky)
		"The different ministries have come out and spoken about mental health and counseling. Even the police come and talk about it, so it is a shift in paradigm. People are seeing that sometimes it is better to get an outsider to hear the children to listen to their views" (Moon)
		"It is more of an individualized family setting these days, I grow my child how I want to, it's what I say goes. Also you find Mommy at work Daddy at work so less support is given to the child" (Wind)
		"Adolescents may not see it's really necessary to go seek the help of a counselor because they have developed a strategy or the skill of handling things at home and on their own." (Sky)
Challenging Twofold Rewarding	Counselors' experiences of proving psychosocial support	"One word. Challenging. Their world is always changing. It's evolving quickly, and sometimes catching up is kind of difficult." (Rain)
		"So even some of our programs, we had to depend on sponsorship to help us out. Because there is no support when it come to that from the school." (Cloud)
		"My principal will support me, but then there are other people who are naysayers, and that makes my experience a little bit more challenging." (Cloud)
		"It would have opened my eyes to the true issues that are faced by adolescents. You will be surprised by the number of students who would have experienced trauma and would not have had the opportunity to deal with these traumas." (Sky)
		"Some persons from that group of low economical status they are not so much aware of the help that is there and the importance of the help and where to get help." (Wind)
		"I find it rewarding. But then on the other end sometimes they expect us to be miracle workers, and they don't want to set boundaries." (Cloud)
		"I would say that it has proven to be a challenge. But with what is happening it tells me that I need to do it because it is needed so badly." (Wind)
		"My experience has been rewarding. I take pleasure in providing psychological support to adolescents." (Light)
		"I've had almost a decade of working as a school counselor and it has been a phenomenal experience. It is something that is absolutely necessary." (Sun)
Internal support Delayed support	Counselors access to support system	"I am a counselor, and yes, I have to provide psychological support, but the demand was not so much, I think from COVID the demand is more." (Moon)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"I think one thing for sure is that as conselors there sometimes isn't sufficient time to really assist children with these issues because we are still timetabled for classes. We still have other events that we need to plan." (Sky)
		"You have to be there to provide support, not only for parents and the students, but also for the teachers as well."(Moon)
		"Sometimes you have session or meetings with parents or whoever but you have class and according to admin you need to go to your class, you can't have your class unattended so it was a bit of an issue"(Rain)
		"Internally I depend on our homeroom teachers, they see the students consistently every day. If a client has been referred to me, collaboration has to be done with the homeroom teachers depending on what information that I need. "(Moon)
		"I'm seeing a lot now where admin is really on board with counselors. Even to the point where sometimes they will tell a parent that the student can't come back to school without something in writing from a counselor."(Rain)
		" I work with the grade coordinators, form teachers , other members of the administrative staff and the dean of discipline."(Sky)
		For internal support I network with other school counselors because even though I have been in this system for a while, sometimes there are cases that are challenging or new, and I may need the experience of a colleague who dealt with a similar case." (Light)
		"The PTA also help me to provide psychological support. Not only for the students but for the parents because I get an avenue, to speak to them about some concerns that we have. And these are various strategies that we use."(Moon)
		"Only when they want help with a situation, but to invite us to the table where the decision should be made for the benefit of our students we don't get that support."(Cloud)
		"Teachers playing their role of encouraging the process of the sessions by encouraging positive values and attitude by, modelling it themselves."(Wind).
		"Schools can do more to help counselors carry out their counseling roles instead of having them doing so many other things.Allow HFLE teachers to teach health and family life education, allow counselors to focus on the preventative and interventive approach to psychological support." (Sun)
		"Parents don't really have that bird and bees talk or to be more specific talk about sexual orientation or what happens when you start to feel these urges."(Sun)
		"And we find that parents becoming overwhelmed and sometimes they just can't be bothered and leave everything up to school and hoping for the best."(Moon)
		"Teachers have a part to play but you can never substitute for their parents. The children need them more than they can imagine."(Wind)
		"So you find that as a counselor like you are the one that is pushing. When you do your part at work and that child goes home where the parent is supposed to pick up from where you left off. And then that parents is on a different note, it poses a challenge and therefore you'll find that whenever you may think that, okay, I'm reaching somewhere, then you realize that, oh, I'm really not anywhere at all as it relates to this."(Sky)
		"I seek out nongovernment practices like psychologists who have their own businesses and stuff. Most of the time those are the persons that I reach out to for help to help my students." (Rain)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"When it comes to restorative justice, if we have to implement anything I also have connections with field officers at the Ministry of Justice.So I do know that if there is something that I find that is a little bit challenging for me I can always tap into those sources and talk to fellow counselors to see how they deal with something."(Cloud)
		"So if we have adolescents who are self-mutilating or contemplating suicide I can refer them to the child guidance clinic. I can refer to Child Protection And Family Services Agency if the child is in need of care and protection." (Sun)
		"There are lots of government agencies that I've tapped into over the years to assist my students. But my biggest goto is usually the parents and sometimes they're the hardest go to because they do not want to have anything to do with that."(Rain)
		"They may be referred to Child Diversion where they are assisted in developing anger management strategies. Child guidance clinic assist with counseling aspects of it. We utilize the CPFSA to deal with family structure issues."(Sky)
		"I receive external support from the Child Protection and Family Service agency. I receive assistance from the Ministry of Education appointed social workers and The Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse." (Light)
		"I have my education officer, the one that is directly, in charge of our school."(Cloud)
		"For external support, we have various government agencies like the Child Protection and Family Services Agency and the Probations Office." (Moon)
		"It is really inadequate. For example, in the child guidance clinic, for suicidal cases, if the referred child did not consume something, they are given a date to return. Sometimes the issue is not being dealt with right away because of how long the students have to wait to go back."(Wind).
		"There are external facilities, but I don't think it is at the level that is actually needed. The time span in which these situations are being dealt with, you may find that the situation with that student might spiral out of control." (Sky)
		"There is no equity in access to external agencies, most of these places are based in the town areas. Psychological health services are not easily accessible everywhere, and that can pose a problem for adolescents and families who are located in extremely remote places." (Sun)
		"We need some more personalized centers just for adolescents where a quick turnover of appointment dates are being done; and, a follow-up by social workers and whoever else to ensure that the appointments are kept." (Wind)
		"We need more, probably more human resources, additional persons to be employed in these organizations so that the matters can be dealt with and be dealt with in a timely manner because some of these situations, they are emergencies."(Sky)
Positive impact Negative impact	Impact on counselors psychological health	"Some of the issues that I've had to deal with are serious issues that I have never imagined myself having to provide support for. Whenever this happens, it is psychologically strenuous for me." (Light)
		"I guess that is why they say counselors need counselors because there are times when the situations that are brought before you are extremely heavy and after dealing with our clients, it can leave you with a burden mentally." (Sky)
		"Every now and then, even though you know that the problem is not yours and that you should be able to separate yourself from it, every now and then, it cross

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		paths. That's why there is a saying that every counselor needs a counselor."(Wind)
		"I used to bring those emotions home wondering why someone would think that way about children and you're in an institution were we are supposed to impart knowledge but also be role models. That was heavy on my heart." (Cloud)
		"When I just started, it used to mad me, it used to really stress me out at first because then I used to bring work home a lot. I'd come home and I'd still have that student or those students, that case on my mind and, it used to really burn me out." (Rain)
		"Sometimes depending on the case, I get emotional or I internalize the case, and I think as counselors we also need counseling, we need as avenue or somebody that we can relate to." (Moon)
		"It kind of breaks into your own personal life, so there's a difficulty in sort of creating that boundary between professional and personal at times because of how school counselors operate." (Sun)
		"It is inevitable because I am going to go home and think about these things. It takes some amount of practice and experience to understand how to not allow it to burden you mentally, but it tends to do that a lot at times."(Sky)
		"I am sometimes shaken by these situations . When this situation presents itself, I really have to dig deep , and sometimes, it affects the way I think."(Light)
		"You find yourself being burnt out and overwhelmed to the point that you know you come to despise the job and amount of work and how overwhelming it is." (Moon)"
		"Because of the nature of school counseling is a little bit different from therapy where you are able to establish really strong boundaries between you and your client. You are consistently engaging with parents and children every day in some cases even on the weekend. I end up becoming less like a counselor and actually end up becoming more like an adoptive parent or guardian." (Sun)
		"Covid , would have had an impact too because there were no boundaries, you know our job I guess increased during that time."(Cloud)
		"I also think that providing psychological support has a positive impact on my psychological health, in that each difficult situation challenges me to find a new way to help my client."(Light)
		"You know, you get a certain sense of completion. A certain sense of purpose. When you're able to help someone in need".(Sun)
Poor practices Healthy practices	Self-care practices among counselors	"I don't even know if self-care exists. I guess it's because of the institution that I'm as well, you find that they will have a lot, a lot of issues, traumatizing issues as well."(Sky)
		"I often try to make everybody feel comfortable and sometimes I tend to forget about taking care of myself."(Light)
		"I won't even limit it to counseling, the helping profession in general, but for me, yes, providing support severely interferes with self-care, getting time to break, to drink water, to eat lunch, and even use the bathroom."(Sun)
		"I might not eat something and just go throughout the day, dealing with issues at lunchtime, meetings pop up, sometimes parents walk in. I may neglect myself during that time."(Cloud)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"I have my other counselors. I will not reveal who the client is or the details of the case, but I can express certain aspects of it to get from them methods and strategies that can be used to deal with that situation; it makes the burden lighter for me."(Sky).
		"Its about having a positive mindset. I listen to music in my car on my way to school, I have my colleagues, that I work very close with, so we have check ins and check outs." (Moon)
		"I have a group of students who come by my office, once they are at school they come by my office. Sometimes taking a few minutes and just chat and laugh with them it changes the day."(Wind)
		"I'm a lover of music, so if it is that a day becomes heavy once I find even a few minutes to myself I tend to have some amount of music playing within the office area and that helps to debrief me and relieve me and lighten my burden, but there's a lot of work that needs to be done as it released the self-care."(Sky)
		"There are times if I feel overwhelmed, I take a walk . I try not to have my lunch inside my office just to give myself a little me time because as I said the job can be demanding, just to ensure I am alive and well."(Moon)
		"I'll take a walk . I'll just close the office and go somewhere else on the compound." (Wind)
		"But when it gets tough at work, fortunately for me, I have an office that I can close the door and I have my lunch."(Rain)
		"On the weekend, I try to do a lot of things that I enjoy."(Moon)
		"When I go home that's where the self-care actually starts."(Cloud)
		"I have started to do a little exercise. I also watch what I eat because I am getting older. So that is what I have been doing and I realize that it has been working because what I consume will determine and how energized I am and once I am energized, then I know that I can achieve more out of my day." (Light)
		"As my colleagues always say, you can't pour from an empty cup. Self-care for me is consistent prayer and consistent meditation to build myself up. Especially if you are having a day where you are going from session to session to session."(Sun)
		"I treat myself to something. I go somewhere. And for me, what I do also is church. I go to church, I worship, I pray and I study the Bible and that helps."(Wind)
		"And I watch a series of some sort and I laugh a little bit and I relax , and when I'm relaxed and I feel like yes, I can continue and I opened my door and then I continue on the way. I leave work at work."(Rain)
		"You have to break in between because it really does deplete your emotional bank. So prayer is how I recharge. That's the main way I would typically practice self-care, in addition to having my family."(Sun)
Formal assessment Informal assessment	How counselors assess the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide	"So when they are able to function using the various life skills to function and the various best practices, then you know you have done something to affect that child in a positive way."(Wind)
		"So I can access short term by behavioral changes or by observations from parents or teachers. Tthe changes actually do take some time." (Sun)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		"Basically it's observation and feedback from the students themselves, teachers and parent."(Rain)
		"I would assess the clients behavior , look at how they are now adapting and changing and dealing with situations in a better way. This would be an indication to you to say that this has been effective." (Sky)
		"It depends on the client . It depends on how the client responds and what you are getting from the client . So it is the sessions that I have and how the client responds. That is how I determine the effectiveness."(Moon)
		"Based on the verbal feedback I receive from clients and also the client's attitude toward honoring appointments."(Light)
		"When the dean can say that this child is now the one they are looking at to give most improved student award. When a parent will say to you he is behaving now. When a teacher will say the student stays in class now or is not really in much fights again. When the child will come to you and I am behaving myself now." (Wind)
		"This is based on feedback. So you'll find that maybe it is that teachers will express that they have seen a change. Parents may express this. Students too will return to stay these sessions would have helped me, I am feeling better. I am better able to manage my situations." (Sky)
		"I don't really use any assessment tool to really measure the changes that happen post counseling."(Sun)
		"I don't have a form to say that if all of these boxes are checked, then I've done what I'm supposed to do. But it's when you can see the changes for me that you know that something has taken hold."(Rain)
		"When we have their files, you know, we have their intake forms and have our programs for that particular student. Our school also has behaviour monitoring forms. So really its paperwork and we are very strategic because one cap doesn't fit everyone."(Cloud)
		"I would have spoken to the supervisor and say, hey, look over this person. And then I ask them for a student profile so throughout the school term, first term, I will ask them to track the student's behavior."(Cloud)
Human resource Facilities Support	Counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their experience	"They don't have money for a lot of things so it is very hard to implement some program. I wish sometimes they could say sure, we will put this money aside just in case."(Cloud)
		"Teachers and administration are not aware of the role of the guidance counselor. I would love to have a meeting were staff members are apprized of the roles of a guidance counselor." (Cloud)
		"Teachers and other staff members need to be reminded of the fact that it takes a network to really assist the children in what they are facing in order to get better results. And get them to buy into the approach that counselors may use."(Sky)
		"Teachers playing their role of encouraging the process of the sessions by encouraging positive values and attitude by modelling it themselves."(Wind)
		"Maybe this is from the guidance department, we need to ensure that we continually educate students on the services that are offered, and things that we can assist them with because we may take it for granted that they know, but sometimes they really and truly do not know that the situations that they are facing can be taken to a guidance counselor."(Sky)

Codes	Categories	Exemplar quotes
		" I think we need more counselors in the school system. The ratio is now1 counselor to 500, and it is a lot. We don't get to address all the concerns of all the students. They need to lower the ratio of student to counselor and provide more psychologists for external referrals."(Moon)
		"And for me personally at my school, a psychologist, be stationed there , whether that person is going to come in two days a week or stay there for the five days or three days that we would really help. And also, a one or two added to the staff of special education teachers"(Wind).
		"I think my school needs to employ a psychologist. That's one of the biggest things for me, every single school needs to employ psychologists. It's not enough to have us as counselors. A lot of these issues are bigger than us."(Rain)
		"My school needs a psychologist to be stationed there , whether that person is going to come in 2 days a week or stay there for the 5 days or 3 days that we would really help. And also a 1 or 2 added to the staff of special education teachers."(Wind)
		"All incoming students must do a psychological assessment which will help us to know the students who we need to work with prior to the beginning of the term."(Moon)
		"We can ensure that we provide refresher courses as it relates to probably fundamental level of psychology so that teachers can really understand that sometimes the maladaptive behaviors are coming from a deeper place."(Sky)
		"The Ministry of Education needs to provide opportunities for school counselors to benefit from professional development and capacity building sessions." (Light)
		"A therapy room that has equipment, furniture and atmosphere that a therapy room should have."(Wind)
		"Ensuring that the departments are given the necessary resources and any materials that they need and where there are opportunities for the advancement of education and information or additional training, ensure that the counselors are given the opportunity to do so."(Sky)
		"Having more parenting seminars and workshops and making them mandatory." (Moon)
		"When schools have certain things to be done, or Ministry has certain things to be done they'll just dump it on the counselors, I observed that in COVID a lot. Ministry dumps it on the school, and it's passed to the school counselor."(Sun)
		"I think one thing for sure is that as counselors, there sometimes isn't sufficient time to really assist children with these issues because we are still timetabled for classes. We still have other events that we need to plan. And so time is an issue."(Sky)
		"So with planning of events, counseling, teaching, I feel like there should be some level of conversation and standard set out to say let counselors counsel because the counseling aspect is suffering under the weight of everything else. Counselor are barely finding time to do counseling."(Sun)
		"Allow Health Family Life Education teachers to teach and allow counselors to focus on the preventative and interventive approach to psychological support." (Sun)

Table 2

Themes and Categories Emerging From the Interviews on the Experiences of Jamaican Secondary School Counselors Who Provide Psychological Support to Adolescents in High School

Themes	Categories
School counselors describe their role and experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents	How counselors describe the importance of their role
	Counselors' experiences of providing psychosocial support
Counselors' experiences of factors that influence and factors that discourage help-seeking behaviour among adolescents.	Factors that encourage adolescents to seek psychological support from school counselors
	Factors that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support from school counselors
Counselors' experiences of social media and social class as deterrents to adolescents seeking psychological support.	Social influences that impact counselors' experience of providing support to adolescents.
Counselors experience high workload and the need for more internal support and additional human resources.	Counselors' access to support systems.
Counselors' experiences working with external government psychological support services	Counselors' access to support systems.
Counselors' experience of psychological impact and self-care practices.	Impact on counselors' psychological health
	Self-care practices among counselors
Counselors' experiences of determining the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide	How counselors assess the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide
	Counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their experience

Findings

For this study, qualitative data were collected from seven Jamaican secondary school counselors, six females and one male. All participants had an average of 6.4 years of work experience as secondary school counselors with the responsibility of providing psychological support to adolescents. All participants had at least a first degree in counseling or psychology and were employed at a government-owned secondary school in Jamaica. To protect the identity of each participant, they were all assigned a pseudoname. Elements of the weather and geographic features were used because they are less likely to give ideas as to who the participants are. Table 1 outlines the codes, categories, and exemplar quotes that emerged from the interviews that were conducted with the participants to gather data. Table 2 consists of categories and themes that were developed from the collected data. The generated themes are summarized below.

Theme 1: School Counselors' Description of Their Role and Experiences of Providing Psychological Support to Adolescents

Theme 1 was developed from two categories, *How counselors describe the importance of their role* and *Counselors' experiences of providing psychological support.* The category, *How counselors describe the importance of their role,* represents the aggregate of coded data that describes counselors' experiences of their role of providing psychological support to adolescents. All participants regarded their role of providing psychological support to adolescents as important and necessary. All participants felt that they played a supportive role in helping adolescents to navigate the challenges of the

adolescence developmental stage. It was a common narrative among the counselors that they had a responsibility to the holistic development of adolescents, with a view to helping them become meaningful contributors to their own self-development. Exemplar quotes emerging from the data that demonstrated counselors' view of their role are, *"My role is critical. It is something that is necessary in secondary schools"* (Sun*),"I describe my role as a counselor as a critical one. My support is critical to helping them overcome some of the challenges"* (Light), *"I describe my role as very vital "* (Wind), and*"My role as a counselor in high school is super important"* (Rain).

The category, *Counselors' experiences of providing psychological support* represents the aggregate of coded data that discusses the descriptors that counselors used to refer to their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents. Similarly, all participants shared stories of experiencing challenges in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. Counselors shared stories of being unable to catch up with the ever-evolving world of adolescents and trying to implement relevant and meaningful interventions for them. For example, one counselor shared, "*One word, challenging. Their world is always changing. It's evolving quickly, and sometimes catching up is kind of difficult*" (Rain). Stories of contending with naysayers about their roles as school counselors and teachers who believe that they are not effective were among the experiences that respondents shared. Providing psychological support to adolescents with compounded trauma was also among the challenging experiences that counselors shared. Narratives of working with limited resources, unrealistic expectations

of counselors by stakeholders, and lack of awareness about the benefits of seeking psychological help also added to school counselors' challenges. Other exemplar quotes that referenced the challenges that counselors faced are, *"My principal will support me, but then there are other people who are naysayers, and that makes my experience a little bit more challenging"* (Cloud), *"It would have opened my eyes to the true issues that are faced by adolescents. You will be surprised by the number of students who would have experienced trauma and would not have had the opportunity to deal with these traumas"* (Sky), and "*So even some of our programs, we had to depend on sponsorship to help us out. Because there is no support when it come to that from the school*"(Cloud).

Twenty-eight percent of the participants mentioned that although they experienced challenges, their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents had been a rewarding experience. Exemplar quotes of counselors describing rewarding experiences are, *"I find it rewarding. But then on the other end sometimes they expect us to be miracle workers, and they don't want to set boundaries"* (Cloud), *"My experience has been rewarding. I take pleasure in providing psychological support to adolescents"*(Light), and*"I've had almost a decade of working as a school counselor and It has been a phenomenal experience. It is something that is absolutely necessary"* (Sun).

Theme 1 provides details on how counselors experienced their role of providing psychological support to adolescents and the descriptors that counselors used to refer to their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents. In summary, counselors regarded their role as important and necessary. They largely described their

role of providing psychological support to adolescents as challenging because of factors such as lack of support and unrealistic expectations. To a lesser extent, counselors had rewarding experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents.

Theme 2: Counselors' Experiences of Factors That Influence and Factors That Discourage Help-Seeking Behaviors Among Adolescents

Theme 2 was developed from two categories, *Factors that encourage adolescents to seek psychological support from school counselors* and *Factors that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support from school counselors.* The theme, *Factors that encourage adolescents to seek psychological support from school counselors,* represents the sections of data that address counselors' experiences of factors that encourage adolescents to seek psychological support from them. All counselors shared stories of factors that influenced adolescents to seek psychological support from them. Fifty-seven percent of the participants shared stories of providing psychological support to adolescents who have reached a point of hopelessness, which propelled them to seek psychological support. Counselors shared that sometimes adolescents try unsuccessfully to manage their psychological challenges on their own, which leads them to a state of hopelessness, and it is after this has occurred that they will call upon the counselor for assistance. For example, one participant mentioned, "*It becomes too much for them and they tend to lose hope, and so seeking help from the guidance department is like their way of finding hope and solutions to the problems they face*" (Sky). Similarly, another participant shared, "*When it becomes overbearing, it starts to show in various*

ways" (Rain). Disciplinary action taken against adolescents was another factor that was mentioned by 71% of the study participants. Counselors shared stories of adolescents being suspended from school, with one of their readmittance criteria being mandatory psychological support from the school counselor. Exemplar quotes on disciplinary actions are, "*Factors such as disciplinary actions being taken against them will force them to come*" (Wind), and "*There are times when teachers may be their issue so they come to me to see if they were wrong in a particular step that they took or if the teacher was wrong so they want some recommendation or suggestions as to how to move forward*" (Cloud).

All participants indicated that peer recommendation was another factor that encouraged adolescents to seek psychological support from them. Eighty-five percent of respondents shared narratives of how providing psychological support to one adolescent led to the client recommending other students to them for psychological support. Exemplar quotes on recommendations are, "*Students who I have helped would have recommended other students to come to me and say, hey, you know, check with the counselor because you know you can get help with that; the counselor made me feel comfortable*" (Cloud), and "*Sometimes adolescents have friends who refer them to me for psychological support*" (Light). Lack of parental support was noted by 57% of the counselors to be a contributing factor to adolescents seeking psychological support. Participants shared stories of adolescents living on their own, stories of parents who only provided financial support, and stories of home environments that were void of affection.

All of these contributed to adolescents being psychologically distressed, hence seeking psychological support from the school counselor. Exemplar quotes on lack of parental involvement are, "*Number one, it would be lack of parental support. So the parents are not there for them emotionally and mentally. So they tend to come to the office just to get that support* (Cloud), "*I have students who the only time they see their parents is on weekends. The parents work late, so sometimes, when they are leaving early in the morning, they only see the lunch money in the kitchen or in the bedroom. So they don't have that one on one check in on a day-to-day basis*" (Moon).

Twenty eight percent of participants had experiences of adolescents seeking psychological support as a result of the mental health awareness campaigns that were initiated by the Ministry of Health Jamaica. For example, one counselor shared, "*I think with the education of the importance of mental health to our society, I think that they have become more comfortable*" (Moon). All participants shared stories of adolescents seeking psychological support because of the relationship that they developed with their students. Exemplar quotes of counselors' relationship with their students are, "*The quality of the relationship I have with my adolescent clients encourages them to seek psychological support from me*" (Light), and "*I check in just to find out, it also helps to build a relationship to find out how the client is doing on a day to day basis if we don't have assigned counseling*" (Moon).

The category, *Factors that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support from school counselors,* was also used to develop Theme 2; it represents sections

of data that provide narratives of counselors' experiences of factors that discourage adolescents from seeking psychological support. All counselors shared experiences of students refusing to seek psychological support because of distrust. Counselors mainly shared stories about adolescents believing that counselors will inform their parents about any problem they come to them with, hence refusing to seek or accept help. Respondents shared stories of adolescents seeking psychological support from their peers because they believe that their peers will not tell their parents as would the counselors. Exemplar quotes that reference distrust are, "*They don't want to share anything because they believe that it's going to go back to their parents*" (Rain), "*So they have a sort of a trust factor in it where they don't believe that the confidentiality part will be kept*"(Sun), "*They will not seek the help because of one, they are not sure if it is that you can be trusted*" (Sky), and "*They feel more comfortable going to a peer or a student because you know adults probably will speak down to them, be disappointed and be all judgemental.*"(Moon). Similarly, all counselors shared experiences of adolescents refusing to seek psychological support because seeking psychological help within the Jamaican culture attracts stigmatization. Counselors shared that the Jamaican culture has caused adolescents to believe that only people who are weak seek psychological support; hence, to avoid being perceived as weak, some adolescents will avoid seeking psychological support from the school counselor despite the need. Exemplar quotes that referenced stigmatization are, "*They have a stigma towards it to say you are mad, its mad people who go to a psychologist*" (Wind), "*So there's a stigma attached to students or anybody*

who goes to a guidance counselor. It's always, oh, you must be a rude person or bad"

(Cloud), and "*The stigma that counselors chat people's business*"(Rain).

In summary, Theme 1 explored school counselors' experiences of factors that

encouraged adolescents to seek psychological support and factors that discouraged

adolescents from seeking psychological support. Among the factors that encouraged

adolescents to seek psychological support were: personal struggles, mental health

awareness campaigns, disciplinary actions, good rapport with students, peer

recommendations, and lack of parental support. Factors that discouraged adolescents

from seeking psychological support were: distrust, stigmatization, and lack of parental

support.

Theme 3: Counselors' Experiences of Social Media and Social Class as Deterrents to Adolescents Seeking Psychological Support

Theme 3 was developed from the category, *Social influences that impact*

counselors' experience of providing support to adolescents, which represents the

aggregate of data that provides narratives on counselors' experiences of the influences of

social media and socioeconomic status as hindrances to adolescents seeking

psychological support. Eighty-five percent of respondents shared experiences of social

media and social class deterring adolescents from seeking psychological support.

Counselors explained that because adolescents can obtain any content they want from

Instagram and TikTok, they are less inclined to seek professional psychological support

from their school counselors. Counselors shared stories of adolescents consulting TikTok

and Instagram for psychological support, which resulted in them engaging in self-harming behaviors such as cutting. For example, one participant shared, "*Anything at all you want to know about anything in the world, just type it on TikTok, something will come up. Many persons on social media share things that they would do such as self-harming and then it becomes gospel. And adolescents mimic this instead of actually seeking help*" (Rain). Similarly, another participant shared, "*They're constantly watching videos that tell them to self-mutilate, to do drugs, they're just watching these videos and that's all they watch. That's all they share with each other on TikTok and Instagram and WhatsApp*" (Sun).

Respondents shared stories of adolescents resorting to smoking and alcohol consumption to deal with their psychological challenges because those behaviors were promoted by the dancehall entertainers whom they idolize. Exemplar quotes that referenced music are, "*So a song that says, when I am stressed I smoke my spliff or drink my liquor. It doesn't emphasize mental health practitioner, mental health services, it doesn't tell them in any form of healthy ways how to deal with their stresses or problems*" (Sun), and "*If their role model is an entertainer, whatever the DJ tells them to do, they will do*" (Wind). Counselors shared stories of finding out that adolescents joined online communities for depression support, and these online communities were operated by people with no training in psychology; as a result, the adolescents plunged into further despair. One participant shared, "*They join the unregulated online groups for their self-diagnosed depression, and they just share negative or incorrect content in their little*

group. So in this way, you realize that it's almost like they're locked into the negative

perception, because that's what social media are sharing. Their situation gets worse

because of it and starts to change their frame of mind"(Sun), and "*That's why they go*

and they search for these online groups and they're searching for help. And they see a

form off medication in what these people are doing" (Rain).

Similarly, 85% of the respondents indicated that low socioeconomic status was a

deterrent to adolescents seeking psychological support from them. Counselors indicated

that communities on the lower socioeconomic rung are often plagued by violence, and in

these environments, people are expected to be tough, especially males. Consequently,

adolescents from these communities were less likely to seek psychological support.

Counselors also shared that in volatile communities, people do not provide information to

anyone who is perceived to be in authority because of likely consequences, and some

adolescents from volatile communities are reluctant to seek psychological support

because they are fearful that family members will get into trouble if the counselor has to

report the case to higher authorities. Additionally, counselors indicated that adolescents

from volatile communities often view counselors as a person in authority. Exemplar

quotes that referenced social class are, "*Students who are from the more volatile*

communities may not be as ready to seek help because you know coming from these

communities you should be tough" (Sky), "*We find is that those who come from the*

volatile communities these parents are not so keen on counseling because that's not

something that they are really accustomed to" (Moon), and "*If you are from the inner*

city, you can't let anyone know that you are going to see a counselor. You have to thug it

out, especially the boys" (Rain).

Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that pride is a deterrent to parents of

the upper socioeconomic class admitting that their children have psychological

challenges. Counselors shared experiences of parents denying that their children need

psychological support, and objected to their children getting psychological support from

school counselors. Exemplar quotes that referenced pride are, "*Families from the upper*

SES are more open to seeking help, but there still may be a level of pride, so you might

find that because of their status, they may not readily admit that my child may have this

issue or may be in need of help" (Sky), and"*There is a bit of pride when it comes to those*

who are at the higher end of the socioeconomic status. They don't feel their children have

a problem" (Cloud).

In summary, Theme 3 highlighted counselors' experiences of social media as

deterrents to adolescents seeking psychological support because of the easy access to

online influence, psychological support content, and support groups. Theme 4 also

covered counselors' experiences of community characteristics as deterrents to

adolescents seeking psychological support, in that adolescents from the lower rung are

largely stigmatized for seeking help, while adolescents from the upper rung are largely

deterred by pride.

Theme 4: Counselors Experience High Workload and the Need for More Internal Support and Additional Human Resources

Theme 4 was developed from the category *Counselors' access to support systems,* which captures data on school counselor workload and available support systems. Eighty-five percent of the counselors indicated that their workload was very heavy. Counselors shared experiences of having the majority of their workday taken up by Guidance classes, even though the school employed a Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) teachers who teaches the same topics that are taught in Guidance classes. One participant shared, "*Schools can do more to help counselors carry out their counseling roles instead of having them doing so many other things. Allow HFLE teachers to teach health and family life education, allow counselors to focus on the preventative and interventive approach to psychological support*" (Sun). Counselors shared stories of being responsible for almost all events hosted by their schools, irrespective of some of these events being guidance related, for example, sports day. Counselors shared that guidance classes and event planning significantly reduced the amount of time they had to provide students with psychological support. Another participant indicated, "*I think one thing for sure is that, as counselor*s, *there sometimes isn't sufficient time to really assist children with these issues because we are still timetabled for classes. We still have other events that we need to plan*" (Sky). Additionally, counselors indicated that their workload is not limited to students as they are also required to provide psychological support to staff members and

parents. For example, one participant mentioned, "*You have to be there to provide support, not only for parents and the students but also for the teachers as well*"(Moon).

Fifty-seven percent of the counselors shared experiences of not having adequate parental support. Counselors indicated that some parents were absent from their children's lives, not engaging their children in meaningful conversations about developmental challenges, and often relinquishing their parental responsibilities to the school. Exemplar quotes that referenced lack of parental support are, "*Parents don't really have that bird and bees talk, or to be more specific, talk about sexual orientation or what happens when you start to feel these urges*"(Sun), "*And we find that parents becoming overwhelmed and sometimes they just can't be bothered and leave everything up to school and hoping for the best*" (Moon), "*Teachers have a part to play but you can never substitute for their parents. The children need them more than they can imagine*" (Wind), and "*So you find that as a counselor like you are the one that is pushing. When you do your part at work and that child goes home where the parent is supposed to pick up from where you left off and then that parent is on a different note, it poses a challenge and therefore you'll find that whenever you may think that, okay, I'm reaching somewhere, then you realize that, oh, I'm really not anywhere at all as it relates to this*" (Sky).

Forty-two percent of the counselors shared experiences of their workload expanding exponentially during COVID, as both the school and the Ministry of Education consistently dumped tasks on them. Counselors shared that some of the

additional duties they received during COVID were not sent by the Ministry with specific instructions for counselors to execute; however, school administration passed them down to the counselors. Exemplar quotes that referenced COVID are, "*I am a counselor, and yes, I have to provide psychological support, but the demand was not so much, I think from COVID the demand is more*" (Moon), "*So with planning of events, counseling, teaching, I feel like there should be some level of conversation and standard set out to say let counselors counsel because the counseling aspect is suffering under the weight of everything else*" (Sun), and "*When schools have certain things to be done, or Ministry has certain things to be done they'll just dump it on the counselors, I observed that in COVID a lot. Ministry dumped it on the school, and it's passed to the school counselor*" (Sun).

Fifty-seven percent of the counselors expressed that they received internal support. Counselors shared experiences of collaborating with homeroom teachers to obtain information about students who need psychological support. Additionally, counselors shared that school administration provided support by referring students who exhibited signs of needing psychological support to the counselor, as well as supporting programs hosted by the counseling department. Counselors also indicated that internal support is received from fellow counselors who provide guidance on how to approach challenging cases. Exemplar quotes of internal support are, "*Internally I depend on our homeroom teachers, they see the students consistently every day. If a client has been referred to me, collaboration has to be done with the homeroom teachers depending on*

what information that I need " (Moon), "*I'm seeing a lot now where admin is really on board with counselors. Even to the point where sometimes they will tell a parent that the student can't come back to school without something in writing from a counselor*" (Rain), and "*For internal support I network with other school counselors because even though I have been in this system for a while, sometimes there are cases that are challenging or new, and I may need the experience of a colleague who dealt with a similar case*" (Light).

All counselors expressed the need for additional internal support to improve their experience of providing psychological support to adolescents. The counselors shared that subject teachers need to play a more active role in supporting the efforts of the counselors by promptly making referrals when they perceive that a student is in need of psychological support and checking on the well-being of students who are in their care. For example, one counselor mentioned, *"Teachers and other staff members need to be reminded of the fact that it takes a network to really assist the children in what they are facing in order to get better results"* (Sky). Counselors shared that school administrations need to involve them in the decision-making process, instead of making decisions about their roles and department without consulting them. Counselors expressed the need for school administration to invest in their capacity building and professional development instead of waiting on Ministry of Education workshops. One counselor shared, "*Ensuring that the departments are given the necessary resources and any materials that they need, and where there is opportunities for the advancement of education and information or additional training, ensure that the counselors are given the opportunity to do so*" (Sky).

Forty-two percent of the respondents indicated that they need to play a more active role in building awareness about the services offered by their department so that students and teachers can better understand their roles and functions. Other exemplar quotes that referenced the need for support are, "*Only when they want help with a situation, but to invite us to the table where the decision should be made for the benefit of our students we don't get that support*" (Cloud), and "*Teachers playing their role of encouraging the process of the sessions by encouraging positive values and attitude by modeling it themselves*"(Wind).

Eighty-five percent of the counselors expressed the need for their school to employ additional specialists. Counselors shared that their schools need to employ at least one psychologist because some of the cases that they are presented with are beyond their capacity, and the employment of a psychologist would make their workload lighter. Also, employing a school-based psychologist would prevent adolescents from waiting for extended periods to see the one psychologist at the child guidance clinic in their education region. Exemplar quotes that referenced the need for specialists are, "*I think my school needs to employ a psychologist. That's one of the biggest things for me, every single school needs to employ psychologists. It's not enough to have us as counselors. A lot of these issues are bigger than us*" (Rain), "*The MOH is trying to lobby for more psychologists to be available for our schools across Jamaica*"(Moon), and " *I think we need more counselors in the school system. The ratio is now 1 counselor to 500, and it is a lot. We don't get to address all the concerns of all the students. They need to lower the*

ratio of student to counselor and provide more psychologists for external referrals"
(Moon). Counselors recommended the employment of special education teachers within
their traditional school environments because there are many adolescents with special
needs who are often referred to them for psychological support. Respondents also shared
stories of adolescents with social adjustment challenges and learning disabilities who are
referred to them for psychological support when in fact, the adolescent needs to be in a
special education program. For example, a respondent shared, "*And for me personally at
my schoo*l, *a psychologist, be stationed there, whether that person is going to come in two
days a week or stay there for the five days, or three days that would really help. And also
a one or two added to the staff of special education teachers*"(Wind).

Theme 4 covered counselors' experiences of heavy workload and a need for
additional support. Counselors' workload included providing psychological support to
students, parents, and staff. Additionally, counselors are required to teach guidance
classes and plan events. With respect to additional support, counselors shared experiences
of needing additional counselors in schools as well as specialist support to alleviate their
workload. Counselors also expressed the need for additional internal collaboration and
support from teachers and school administrators.

**Theme 5: Counselors' Experiences of Working With External Government
Psychological Support Services**

Theme 5 was also developed from the category, *Counselors access to support
system*, which captures data on school counselor workload and available support systems.

Eighty-five percent of the counselors expressed the need for improvement in the psychological support services offered by the government. Counselors shared that most of the external referrals for psychological support are sent to government-owned child guidance clinics as parents are seldom able to afford private psychological services for their children. However, the wait time for adolescents to get psychological intervention from government-owned clinics is too long. For example, one counselor articulated, "*We have one government psychologist for the entire region, and its hard to get an appointment sometimes. Our students need more clinical support which would normally cost about $8,000 per hour. Those who can't, unfortunately, have to wait on the one government psychologist* " (Moon). Counselors also shared that the government needs to increase the number of psychologists assigned to regional child guidance clinics, as one psychologist is not sufficient to serve an entire region. One counselor mentioned, "*We need some more personalized centers just for adolescents, where a quick turnover of appointment dates is being done, and a follow-up by social workers and whoever else to ensure that the appointments are kept*" (Wind).

Counselors shared stories of referring adolescents for external psychological intervention and the date they were given to see the psychologist was so far away that the situation spiraled out of control before the adolescent was seen by the psychologist. One participant shared, "*There are external facilities, but I don't think it is at the level that is actually needed. The time span in which these situations are being dealt with, you may find that the situation with that student might spiral out of control*" (Sky). Respondents

shared experiences of referring adolescents to external government clinics because of suicidal ideations, and once it was confirmed that the client did not make suicidal attempts, they were given a date to return to see the psychologist. One counselor shared, "*It is really inadequate. For example, in the child guidance clinic, for suicidal cases, if the referred child did not consume something, they are given a date to return. Sometimes the issue is not being dealt with right away because of how long the students have to wait to go back*" (Wind).

Counselors also expressed concerns about the accessibility of government-operated psychological services, because the government services to which they would refer adolescents for external support are located in towns and cities, and this poses a challenge for families in rural areas with limited financial resources. As a result of the distance and the cost of traveling, some adolescents do not get the external psychological support that they need. One counselor shared, "*There is no equity in access to external agencies; most of these places are based in the town areas. Psychological health services are not easily accessible everywhere, and that can pose a problem for adolescents and families who are located in extremely remote places*" (Sun).

Theme 5 reported counselors' experiences of working with external agencies. Counselors largely expressed challenges with working with the child guidance clinics to which they make external referrals for adolescents to receive further psychological support. The challenges that counselors experienced resulted from limited psychologists

employed at the clinics, the backlog of cases, and the locations of the clinics, which resulted in adolescents having to wait for extended periods before seeing a psychologist.

Theme 6: Counselors' Experiences of Psychological Impact and Self-Care Practices

Theme 6 was developed from two categories, *Impact on counselors' psychological health* and *Self-care practices among counselors*. The category, *Impact on counselors' psychological health,* represents data on counselors' experiences of psychological impact resulting from their role of providing psychological support to adolescents. All counselors indicated that providing psychological support to adolescents had negative impacts on their own psychological health. Counselors shared experiences of being burnt out and overwhelmed to the point of despising the job because of the demands of providing psychological support. Respondents shared experiences of being psychologically strained because of the compounded nature of some of the cases they provided support for. One participant reported, "*You find yourself being burnt out and overwhelmed to the point that you come to despise the job and amount of work and how overwhelming it is*" (Moon). Similarly, another counselor shared, "*I guess that is why they say counselors need counselors because there are times when the situations that are brought before you are extremely heavy, and after dealing with the clients it can leave you with a burden mentally*" (Sky).

Frustration with limited internal support and the slow response time in government-owned psychological support clinics also negatively impacted counselors' psychological health. Counselors also shared experiences of getting emotional after

psychological support sessions with adolescents. Other exemplar quotes that referenced psychological impact are, "*I am sometimes shaken by these situations . When this situation presents itself, I really have to dig deep, and sometimes, it affects the way I think*" (Light); "*Every now and then, even though you know that the problem is not yours and that you should be able to separate yourself from it, every now and then, it cross paths. That's why there is a saying, every counselor needs a counselor*" (Wind), and "*Some of the issues that I've had to deal with are serious issues that I have never imagined myself having to provide support for. Whenever this happens, it is psychologically strenuous for me*" (Light).

Respondents also shared that their personal time was also affected by adolescents' needs for psychological support. Given the nature of school counseling, counselors explained that they are not able to establish strong boundaries, which added to their feeling overwhelmed as students and parents will sometimes reach out to them for assistance even when they are out of the office. One participant shared, "*Because of the nature of school counseling, it is a little bit different from therapy, where you are able to establish really strong boundaries between you and your client. You are consistently engaging with parents and children every day, in some cases even on the weekend. I end up becoming less like a counselor and actually end up becoming more like an adoptive parent or guardian*" (Sun). Fifty-seven percent of the respondents disclosed that even though they know that they are to mentally disassociate themselves from the cases, they still go home with the students' situations on their minds. For example, one respondent

shared, "*It is inevitable because I am going to go home and think about these things. It takes some amount of practice and experience to understand how to not allow it to burden you mentally, but it tends to do that a lot at times*" (Sky).

Twenty-eight percent of the counselors shared that providing psychological support to adolescents also had a positive impact on their psychological health because the challenges have helped them to craft new approaches to providing psychological support, which makes them feel a sense of accomplishment. Exemplar quotes of positive psychological impact are: "*I also think that providing psychological support has a positive impact on my psychological health, in that each difficult situation challenges me to find a new way to help my client*" (Light), and "*You know, you get a certain sense of completion. A certain sense of purpose. When you're able to help someone in need*" (Sun).

The second category that was used to develop Theme 6 is *Self-care practices among counselors*. The category, *Self-care practices among counselors*, represents sections of data that share narratives about how counselors care for themselves. Counselors shared instances of neglecting to practice self-care. For example, one counselor shared, "*I don't even know if self-care exists. I guess it's because of the institution that I'm as well, you find that they will have a lot, a lot of issues, traumatizing issues as well*" (Sky). Another counselor mentioned, "*I often try to make everybody feel comfortable, and sometimes I tend to forget about taking care of myself*" (Light). A third counselor mentioned, *"I won't even limit it to counseling, the helping profession in*

general, but for me, yes, providing support severely interferes with self-care, getting time to break, to drink water, to eat lunch, and even use the bathroom" (Sun). Eighty-five percent of the counselors indicated that self-care takes place when they get home. The counselors shared that sometimes their work day is very hectic to the point where they neglect to eat, and it is only when they get home that they are able to take a break. Exemplar quotes that referenced self-care at home are, "*I treat myself to something. I'll get my hair done, go somewhere. I find my safe place and it might sound to somebody, might sound boring but my home is my safe place*" (Wind); "*When I go home that's where the self-care actually starts*" (Cloud), and "*And like I said, on the weekend, I try to do a lot of things that I enjoy . I try to get a lot of laughter in and spending time with good friends and family, that works for me*" (Moon).

Counselors indicated that when self-care does take place at school, it usually involves taking a walk from the office, closing the office door for a few minutes, or deciding to have lunch at a place where they are not accessible to students. Exemplar quotes that referenced self-care at work are, "*There are times if I feel overwhelmed, I take a walk. I try not to have my lunch inside my office just to give myself a little me time because, as I said, the job can be demanding, just to ensure I am alive and well .*" (Moon), "*I'll take a walk. I'll just close the office and go somewhere else on the compound *" (Wind), and"*But when it gets tough at work, fortunately for me, I have an office that I can close the door and I have my lunch*" (Rain).

Theme 6 explored counselors' experiences of psychological impact and self-care practices among counselors. Counselors largely had experiences of negative psychological impact resulting from being burnt out and overwhelmed, lack of support, and difficulties establishing strong boundaries. Similarly, counselors reported poor self-care practices due to the demands of their daily tasks, which resulted in them being unable to affect self-care practices while on the job.

Theme 7: Counselors' Experiences of Determining the Effectiveness of the Psychological Support They Provide

Theme 7 was developed from two categories, *How counselors assess the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide* and *Counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their experience.* The category*, How counselors assess the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide,* represents data on the strategies that counselors use to determine the effectiveness of the psychological support that they provide to adolescents. Eighty-five percent of the counselors indicated that they assess the effectiveness of the psychological support that they provide based on the feedback they received. Counselors shared experiences of adolescents returning to express gratitude for the psychological support they received, and the provided self-report was regarded as an indication that the psychological support was effective. Reports provided by teachers and parents were also used by counselors to determine the effectiveness of the psychological support that they provide. Additionally, counselors shared that they also do their own observation of the client, and where they observe improvements in the

client's behaviors and attitudes, they confirm that the support they provided was effective. Exemplar quotes that referenced feedback and observation are, "*It depends on the client. It depends on how the client responds and what you are getting from the client. So it is the sessions that I have and how the client responds. That is how I determine the effectiveness*" (Moon); "*Based on the verbal feedback I receive from clients and also the client's attitude toward honoring appointments* " (Light), and "*When the dean can say that this child is now the one they are looking at to give most improved student. When a parent will say to you he is behaving now. When a teacher will say the student stays in class now or is not really in much fights again. When the child will come to you and say I am behaving myself now*" (Wind).

Twenty-eight percent of the counselors indicated that the assessment of effectiveness was done through documented behavior monitoring reports. For example, one counselor shared, "*When we have their files, you know, we have their intake forms and have our programs for that particular student. Our school also has behaviour monitoring forms. So, really, it's paperwork, and we are very strategic because one cap doesn't fit everyone*" (Cloud). While another counselor shared, "*I would have spoken to the supervisor and say, hey, look over this person. And then I ask them for a student profile so throughout the school term, first term, I will ask them to track the student's behavior*" (Cloud).

The Category, *Counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their experience,* captures data on counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their

experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents. Counselors made recommendations for capacity-building workshops, financial resources, reduced class schedules, greater collaboration with staff members, and the employment of counselors and psychologists to reduce the current student to counselor ratio. Exemplar quotes that referenced recommendations are, "*Ensuring that the departments are given the necessary resources and any materials that they need. Where there are opportunities for the advancement of education and information or additional training, ensure that the counselors are given the opportunity to do so*" (Sky), "*Teachers and administration are not aware of the role of the guidance counselor. I would love to have a meeting where staff members are apprized of the roles of a guidance counselor*" (Cloud); "*I think one thing for sure is that as counselors, there sometimes isn't sufficient time to really assist children with these issues because we are still timetabled for classes. We still have other events that we need to plan. And so time is an issue*" (Sky), " *I think we need more counselors in the school system. The ratio is now one counselor to 500, and it is a lot. We don't get to address all the concerns of all the students. They need to lower the ratio of student to counselor and provide more psychologists for external referrals*" (Moon). Additionally, counselors acknowledged that they need to be more active in building awareness about their role. For example, one counselor shared, "*Maybe this is from the guidance department, we need to ensure that we continually educate students on the services that are offered and things that we can assist them with, because we may take it*

for granted that they know, but sometimes they really and truly do not know the situations that they are facing can be taken to a guidance counselor" (Sky).

Theme 7 covered how counselors assesse the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide and counselors' recommendations for the improvement of their experience of providing psychological support to adolescents. Counselors mainly assessed the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide through verbal feedback from students, parents, and staff. With respect to recommendations, counselors made several recommendations, including reduced class schedules, additional human and nonhuman resources, and capacity-building opportunities.

Summary

This study aimed to answer the research question, *What is the experience of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents*? The data emerging from the interviews with participants indicated that Jamaican secondary school counselors largely had negative experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents. While counselors appreciated their job, found fulfillment in being able to assist adolescents, and acknowledged the support they received, there are many factors that contributed to counselors experiencing significant challenges in their efforts to provide psychological support to adolescents.

The data emerging from the interviews indicated that social factors contributed to challenges that school counselors experienced. Counselors revealed that factors such as stigmatization, community characteristics, and social media influence created deterrents

for adolescents to seek or accept psychological support. Adolescents' perceptions that school counselors are not confidential were noted as another challenge experienced by counselors . Counselor shared that adolescents were of the view that counselors would report to their parents and also that counselors casually discuss students situations. Lack of or limited support was another challenge that counselors experienced. Counselors experienced challenges to accessing needed resources to conduct their duties, lacked parental support, and desired more support and cooperation from teachers and school administrations. With respect to external support, counselors experienced significant challenges in providing support for adolescents through external referrals to the child guidance clinics.

Heavy workload as a challenge was a shared narrative among the counselors. In addition to providing psychological support to adolescents, counselors also provided support to parents and staff as well. Furthermore, they are timetabled for weekly guidance sessions in addition to being responsible for the planning and execution of multiple events. Another source of negative experiences for counselors was the negative psychological impacts of providing psychological support to adolescents and poor self-care practices. Counselors reported often feeling overwhelmed, emotional, and frustrated. Furthermore, counselors indicated that they often neglect to practice proper self-care in an effort to meet the demands of providing psychological support to adolescents.

Chapter 5 presents articulations on how the findings of the present study are comparable, disconfirmed, or add greater value to the current literature on the

experiences of school counselors. Chapter 5 also presents an analysis and interpretation of the present research findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. The limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications for social change are also discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. The data were collected from seven Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school through semistructured interviews via Zoom online platform. The sample consisted of six female counselors and one male counselor.

Using narrative analysis, seven themes were generated from the data that were collected from study participants. The identified themes were as follows:

- Theme 1: School counselors describe their role and experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents

- Theme 2: Counselors' experiences of factors that influence and factors that discourage help-seeking behavior among adolescents

- Theme 3: Counselors' experiences of social media and social class as deterrents to adolescents seeking psychological support

- Theme 4: Counselors experience high workload and the need for more internal support and additional human resources

- Theme 5: Counselors' experiences working with external government psychological support services

- Theme 6: Counselors' experiences of psychological impact and self-care practices

- Theme 7: Counselors' experiences of determining the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide

Chapter 5 presents articulations of how the findings of the present study are comparable to, disconfirm, or add greater value to the current literature on the experiences of school counselors. Chapter 5 also presents an analysis and interpretation of the present research findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented in Chapter 2. The limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications for social change are also discussed in Chapter 5.

Interpretation of Findings

Theme 1: School Counselors Describe Their Role and Experiences of Providing Psychological Support to Adolescents

The counselors viewed their role of providing psychological support to adolescents as important and necessary. They embraced the belief that they played an integral role in helping adolescents maneuver through the challenges associated with the adolescence developmental stage. Additionally, counselors believed they had the personality, capacity, and professionalism required to effectively provide adolescents with psychological support. The finding about counselors' experiences of their role and capacity to provide psychological support to adolescents is consistent with Forbes and Hutchinson (2020), who posited that the themes identified from their study presented a

positive reflection of the quality of culturally responsive counseling present within Caribbean schools. The finding of this study regarding counselors' experiences of their role and capacity to provide psychological support to adolescents also extends knowledge in the discipline because it provides information on how Jamaican school counselors regard their role of providing psychological support to adolescents.

However, while counselors viewed their role of providing psychological support to adolescents as important and necessary, they found their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents to be challenging. Counselors experienced challenges from the high student-to-counselor ratio, which prevented them from providing psychological support to as many students who presented with the need. Counselors' workload was also a factor that contributed to challenging experiences, as in addition to providing psychological support, counselors are required to teach guidance classes, plan events, and provide support to staff and parents. Particularly during COVID-19, counselors experienced significant increases in their workload as a result of the demand for psychological support. The finding of this study regarding counselors' experience of the high student-to-counselor ratio is consistent with previous findings reported by Ferguson (2023) and CAPRI (2021) that 1 counselor to 500 students does not afford the school counselors the ability to adequately provide psychological support to adolescents. Also consistent with the finding of this study regarding counselors' workload are findings reported by Ferguson (2023) and Coley-Nicholson (2016), who

stated that school counselors' workload is very heavy and extends beyond the immediate school environment.

Theme 2: Counselors' Experiences of Factors That Influence and Factors That Discourage Help-Seeking Behavior Among Adolescents and Theme 3: Counselors' Experiences of Social Media and Social Class as Deterrents to Adolescents Seeking Psychological Support

Cultural attitudes toward seeking help for psychological challenges contributed to the challenges counselors experienced. While some counselors indicated that the mental health campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Health encouraged some adolescents to seek psychological support, the stigma that Jamaicans place on talking about psychological issues or seeking professional assistance for psychological challenges contributed to the challenges school counselors faced in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. The counselors' narratives on adolescents being fearful of seeking psychological support are consistent with the articulations of Arthur et al. (2010), who found that fear was the most dominant emotional response towards people with psychological challenges, because Jamaica's social context defines any individual with psychological challenges as someone who is mentally deranged or mad. Similarly, the finding of this study regarding Jamaicans' negative attitude toward seeking psychological help is supported by Arthur et al., whose study also demonstrated how cultural influences can thwart an individual's attitude toward seeking psychological

support and how cultural beliefs can lead to the stigmatization of people who seek mental healthcare in Jamaica.

This study found that socioeconomic status and community characteristics impacted the help-seeking attitudes of adolescents. While both upper and lower socioeconomic classes were sometimes averse to seeking psychological support, their reasons for not seeking help varied. The challenge that counselors experienced while working with adolescents from low socioeconomic communities, which are often volatile communities, is that these adolescents are less inclined to provide information to people perceived to be in authority because of the culture and structure of these communities, as well as perceived consequences. Adolescents from volatile communities are socialized to be tough and deal with their problems on their own, especially the males. This study also found that the stigma that volatile communities place on people who seek psychological support was a deterrent for adolescents to seek support from school counselors.

Research has demonstrated that Black communities are less inclined to seek and accept psychological support. The finding of this study regarding socioeconomic status and community characteristics is comparable with several other studies that addressed socioeconomic status and community characteristics as a deterrent to help-seeking behaviors among Black communities. For example, Conner et al. (2010) found that Black communities stigmatized and discriminated against other Blacks who sought professional psychological support. Alvidrez et al. (2008) and Thompson et al. (2004), found that Blacks perceived themselves as strong and capable of dealing with their psychological

challenges, and must not let their vulnerabilities be seen. Similarly, Njiwaji (2012) and Waldron (2002), found that Black communities distrust the health systems, and hence, the distrust also created a deterrent to seeking or accepting psychological support from mental health professionals.

The challenge counselors had with providing psychological support to adolescents from the upper socioeconomic class was the issue of pride. Pride at times caused parents to deny that their children had psychological challenges. Some parents from the upper socioeconomic class refused to allow their adolescents to see the school counselor, and instead opted for private intervention. The finding of this study extends knowledge in the discipline by further advancing Arthur et al. (2010) postulations that for counselors to be effective in offering mental health care, they must develop a keen understanding of how the client's social context influences the client's perception of mental health stigma.

Counselors felt that social media were a contributing factor to the challenges that they experienced in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. Counselors found that adolescents were consulting online platforms for advice on how to deal with whatever psychological challenge they were having instead of seeking help from their school counselors, and sometimes, the information they received in the online space resulted in their situations getting worse. Similar to the finding of this study regarding adolescents' inclination to seek psychological support through social media platforms, Vaingankar et al. (2022) indicated that this inclination is likely because adolescents can instantly connect with people who are going through the same situation

and social media is an outlet for self-expression. Additionally, counselors found that

adolescents were using substances to deal with their psychological challenges, as these

behaviors were promoted by dancehall music that they listened to on social media

platforms. The counselors' views on the influence of dancehall music on adolescents'

approach to coping with psychological challenges through the use of substances were

consistent with the articulations of Mundle (2022), who postulated that the glorification

of drug use through dancehall music has led to an increase in substance abuse among

Jamaican teens.

　　　Distrust was another challenge the counselors experienced in their efforts to

provide psychological support to adolescents. Counselors had experiences of adolescents

refusing to seek psychological support because they feared that the counselor would tell

their parents about the matter they discussed with the counselor. Also, some adolescents

believe that school counselors casually discuss their situations with others. As a result,

some adolescents were more inclined to seek psychological support from their peers. The

finding of this study regarding the distrust of Jamaican school counselors is consistent

with the findings of Del Mauro and Jackson Williams (2013), whose study puts into

perspective the image of counseling professionals as a possible deterrent for adolescents

to seek their help, in that, they are not viewed by adolescents as confidential.

Additionally, Del Mauro and Jackson Williams reported that adolescents preferred to

seek help from individuals with whom they are familiar and share a history and trust. The

findings of Del Mauro and Jackson Williams may help to explain why adolescents seek

psychological support from their peers. Distrust of counselors as a possible deterrent to adolescents seeking psychological support was also reported by Hutchinson (2023), who found that Jamaican adolescents had no confidence in their school counselors as it is their perception that school counselors sometimes shared the matters discussed in counseling with other people, as well as gaslighted students who did not feel comfortable sharing their problems with them.

Theme 4: Counselors Experience High Workload and the Need for More Internal Support and Additional Human Resources and Theme 5: Counselors' Experiences Working With External Government Psychological Support Services

Lack of support was another factor that contributed to the challenges that school counselors experienced. Counselors experienced challenges that stemmed from a lack of internal and external human resources. Internally, counselors collaborated with homeroom teachers to obtain information for cases they were working on. However, counselors have a need for additional specialist support, such as school-based psychologists and special education teachers, to assist them in their efforts to provide psychological support to adolescents, especially in cases that are beyond their professional capacity. The need for these specialists was in addition to the need for the employment of more school counselors to reduce the 1-to-500 student-to-counselor ratio. The finding of this study regarding counselors' needs for additional internal specialist support is consistent with the findings of Wilson (2018), who articulated that Jamaican

school counselors were in need of greater support to deal with the high volumes of trauma cases that they receive.

Delays in access to psychological support for adolescents through the child guidance clinics contributed to the challenges counselors experienced. When counselors refer adolescents to the child guidance clinics for clinical interventions, the adolescents are given extended wait time even if the case is critical. The long wait time is attributed to the backlog of cases in these clinics and the shortage of psychologists to carry out assessments and interventions for the referred adolescents, which then left counselors to provide psychological support for cases that are beyond their professional capacity. The finding of this study regarding delayed support from the child guidance clinics is consistent with findings by Wilson (2018), who reported that Jamaican school counselors often have to provide services beyond their professional scope because of the difficulty they face in accessing psychological support outside of the school environment. Additionally, Wilson found that the regional child guidance clinics were oversubscribed, which resulted in children waiting for many months to receive an appointment to see a psychologist, and the wait time was further extended by the high client–psychologist ratio that existed within child guidance clinics.

Lack of parental support was one reason adolescents sought psychological support from school counselors, but it was also a factor that contributed to the challenges that Jamaican secondary school counselors experienced. Sometimes, parents neglected their duty to provide parental support for their children in the hope that teachers and schools

would provide the needed support. The finding regarding the lack of parental support in this study is consistent with the articulations of Williams (2015), who postulated that the lack of parental support was responsible for many of the problematic behaviors that Jamaican children exhibited. Similarly, Jamaica Observer (2011) reported that many Jamaican children who enter high school lacked parental support from the primary level.

Theme 6: Counselors' Experience of Psychological Impact and Self-Care Practices

Providing psychological support to adolescents negatively impacted counselors' psychological health. While a small percentage of counselors experienced a psychological boost from being able to provide adolescents with psychological support, the majority of counselors had negative psychological experiences. Counselors experienced burnout, frustration, feeling overwhelmed, and not being able to establish proper boundaries between themselves and their clients. The negative psychological impact resulted from counselors having a heavy workload that required them to teach guidance classes, provide psychological support to students, staff, and parents, as well as plan multiple events. The negative psychological impact also resulted from the nature of the cases that counselors provide psychological support for. Counselors sometimes have to deal with cases that are beyond their professional capacity, which resulted in a negative psychological impact. Additionally, counselors experienced negative psychological impacts that also resulted from limited support from school administration and teachers. The finding of this study regarding counselors experiencing negative psychological impact is consistent with the finding of Jamaica Gleaner (2016). The

Jamaica Gleaner reported that the high volume of cases, and the types of cases that school counselors have to provide support for, contributed to the job-related burnout that school counselors experienced. Similarly, Ferguson (2023) reported that the 1-to-500 counselor-to-student workload forced school counselors to overextend themselves. Also, Wilson (2018) reported that the Jamaican school counselor's job is made more stressful because of the shortage of psychological health professionals to whom school counselors should be referring students to for more clinical interventions; as a result, school counselors are assuming duties beyond their level of expertise, which contributed to the burnout they experience.

The finding of this study regarding the negative psychological impact and the burnout that counselors experienced is consistent with the findings of Parker and Henfield (2012), who iterated that counselors are highly susceptible to vicarious trauma (VT), which resulted from the nature of their job. The finding also extends the postulations of Adams and Riggs (2008), who expressed that counselors are not clinical interventions or trauma response specialists , andas a result, providing clinical intervention in the absence of the required training increased the school counselor's susceptibility to VT. Furthermore, the finding of this study regarding the negative psychological impact and the burnout that counselors experienced is consistent with the articulations of JAGCE (2023), which found that burnout was one of the most significant factors that resulted in school counselors' ineffectiveness, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Theme 7: Counselors' Experiences of Determining the Effectiveness of the

Psychological Support They Provide

This study found that counselors largely did not have formal processes in place to

collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of the psychological support they provide.

Counselors mainly assessed the effectiveness of their psychological support through

informal verbal exchanges with students, parents, and staff. The findings of this study

regarding counselors' experiences of determining the effectiveness of the psychological

support they provide are further explained by Kiper Riechel et al. (2020) who explained

that challenges such as lack of support, and limited access to professional development

opportunities to promote familiarization to program evaluation are contributing factors to

school counselors not engaging in structured data collection and analysis. Theme 4 and

Theme 5 of this study provided detailed articulations on the challenges that counselors

faced, which included the need for stronger support and the need for school

administration to invest in their capacity building and professional development, instead

of waiting on Ministry of Education workshops. Additionally, articulations by Lambie

and Williamson (2004) extend the findings of this study by emphasizing that counselors

must take the initiative to improve their own practice by aiming to improve their output

by capturing and utilizing data.

In summary, the findings of this study demonstrated alignment, or further

extended the existing literature that explored the occupational profile of Jamaican school

counselors, parenting practices and community characteristics that necessitated the need

for psychological support for adolescents, challenges faced by counselors in their attempt

to provide psychological support to adolescents and the psychological impact that

counselors experience from providing psychological support to adolescents. The

alignment of this study with the existing literature may be attributed to the similar nature

of school counseling across jurisdictions. Also, the methodological principles used to

obtain data from the participants may have also contributed to the study bearing

alignment with the existing literature.

Analysis and Interpretation of Findings in the Context

of the Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study also demonstrated relation to the conceptual framework

articulated in Chapter 2. The finding of this study regarding counselors' experiences of

their role and capacity to provide psychological support to adolescents aligned with the

microsystem and mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) bioecological model

of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris the microsystem

facilitates exposure to social roles, patterned activities and face-to-face interpersonal

interactions that provide physical, social, and symbolic features, while the mesosystem is

an interlink of two or more microsystems. The counselor's view of their role as important

is an indication that they understand the impact of both systems on the psychological

health of the adolescents, and their provision of psychological support is a response to the

adolescents' need for help. For example, the finding of this study regarding the lack of

parental support being a contributing factor to adolescents seeking psychological support

from school counselors is an indication of how the failure of parents to carry out their parental responsibilities within the home (which is nested in the microsystem) negatively impacted the experiences of the school counselor. Conversely, the counselor's view of providing psychological support to adolescents as important and necessary is an indication of the counselors' active involvement in facilitating proximal processes, which are necessary for adolescents to develop healthily (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The finding of this study regarding counselor's need for additional internal specialist support is consistent with the exosystem as detailed by Bronfenbrenner and Morris. The exosystem consists of links and processes that occur among settings, and in at least one of these settings, the individual is not an active participant, but instead a recipient of the impact of activities happening in the system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Counselors shared narratives of not having the requisite resources and specialist support, such as school-based psychologists and special education teachers, to assist them in their efforts to provide psychological support to adolescents. Similarly, counselors shared narratives of experiencing delays in access to external psychological support for adolescents. Schools network with other government agencies to facilitate the provision of psychological interventions for students (Wilson, 2018); while counselors do not play an active role in determining the structure and the pace of processes or the provision of needed human resources. The lack of these professionals and related services negatively affected school counselors' ability to provide adequate and timely psychological support to adolescents, consequently resulting in negative experiences for the school counselors.

Findings emerging from this study are also consistent with the macrosystem and chronosystems that Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) articulated. The microsystem consists of interactions with social structures such as traditions, media influences, and values (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The quality of interactions in the macrosystem directly affects the quality of interactions in the microsystem such as the schools (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). One finding of this study is that cultural attitudes toward seeking help for psychological challenges contributed to the challenges counselors experienced. Another finding is that socioeconomic status and community characteristics impacted the help-seeking attitudes of adolescents. Likewise, social media was found to be a contributing factor to the challenges that counselors experienced in their attempt to provide psychological support to adolescents. These findings indicated the macrosystem's influence on the experiences of school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school.

The chronosystem identifies *time* as bearing equivalent importance to the environment in the process of human development. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) explained that the chronosystem considers events and experiences that occur over time as factors that can lead to life changes for the individual. This study found that school counselors' experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents were negatively affected by adolescents' past experiences of a confidante violating their trust. Consequently, adolescents were less inclined to seek help from the school counselor. Similarly, this study found that adolescents were more inclined to seek psychological

support from their peers, which is consistent with the chronosystem's reference to internal time-sensitive factors such as developmental stages that influence behaviors. Adolescence is a period of development in which the individual is more inclined to seek peer support (Del Mauro & Jackson Williams, 2013). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner and Morris's articulations on the chronosystem's influence on behavior are consistent with the findings of this study regarding adolescents' reluctance to seek the counselor's help because of trust factors, as well as adolescents being at a developmental stage where they are more inclined to seek peer support.

Gadamer's (1981) theory of hermeneutics facilitated my understanding of this study's findings. The whole-part concept, which looks at the relationship between the micro and macro perspectives that informed the interpretation of the participants' stories, assisted me to develop an understanding of the interplay of all systems that affected the counselor's interpretation of their own experiences stemming from offering psychological support to adolescents (Gadamer, 1981). The narratives shared by counselors facilitated my understanding of the micro and macro perspectives held by the counselors that shaped their interpretation of their own experiences. For example, the macro perspective held by counselors that their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents would be better if they were provided with additional support services, helped me to better understand each participant's unique micro perspective on the psychological impact they experience as a result of providing support to adolescents with limited support. The macro perspective on large-scale inadequacies impacting

counselor output, and the resulting individual counselor's psychological health, supports

the finding of this study that providing psychological support to adolescents negatively

impacted counselors' psychological health.

Similarly, the language concept helped to inform my interpretation of the

participants' narratives by facilitating my understanding of underlying meanings that

were subtly conveyed, not by what was spoken but by how language was used.

Consistent with the language concept articulated by Gadamer (1981) and this study's

epistemological and philosophical underpinning, I capitalized on the opportunity to

further probe respondents' repetitive use of words and phrases to facilitate further

knowledge creation (Bamberg, 2012), through hermeneutical interpretations (Brinkmann

& Kvale, 2018). Furthermore, Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics whole part concept and

the language concept informed my interpretation of how the nested structures articulated

by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) influenced the psychological challenges that

adolescents experienced and the resulting experiences of school counselors who provide

psychological support to adolescents in high school.

In summary, the findings of this study were analyzed and interpreted in the

context of the study's conceptual frameworks, which were Bronfenbrenner and Morris

(2006) bioecological model and Gadamer (1981) theory of hermeneutics. The conceptual

frameworks further helped to inform the interpretation of the study findings by providing

a scientific scaffold to build an understanding of how interactions between adolescents

and various environments, as articulated by Bronfenbrenner and Morris, shaped the

experiences of school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents. The analysis of the result in the context of the study's conceptual frameworks further demonstrated that the themes emerging from this study are rooted in scientific principles, as was demonstrated by my ability to show alignment between study findings and the theoretical frameworks of the study.

The analysis and interpretation of the research findings in the context of the study's conceptual frameworks captured the reality of the counselor's experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents, by interpreting their shared narratives through the analysis of the whole-part concept, language concept, and the interpretation concepts as outlined by Gadamer (1981). Furthermore, reference to Gadamer supported the ontological philosophy of this study, which was to understand the reality of the counselors by interpreting their shared narratives about their experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents (Burkholder et al., 2019). Altogether, the analysis and interpretation of the research findings in the context of the study's conceptual frameworks demonstrated alignment with the scope of the study, which essentially was to better understand the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school.

Limitations

Although the study provided insight into the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school, one noteworthy limitation was that the study did not include counselors from all education

regions. Consequently, even though the findings may be transferable, they may not be generalizable to all counselors across Jamaica.

Recommendations for Future Research

A strength of this study is that it highlights the psychological challenges that school counselors experience in an effort to provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Future research could extend the findings of this study regarding the psychological well-being and self-care practices of Jamaican school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high schools. This study found that counselors were offering support for cases that were beyond their professional capacity, such as trauma cases, and were largely not engaged in healthy self-care practices due to high workload volume. The related literature indicated that Jamaican school counselors are not trained to respond clinically to trauma cases (Wilson, 2018), and the attempt by Jamaica secondary school counselors to manage trauma cases in the absence of the requisite trauma response qualifications increased counselors' susceptibility to VT, which may consequently lead to a compromise in their ability to offer psychological support to adolescents. Future research could further explore Jamaican school counselors' experiences with vicarious trauma and the resulting impact on their ability to provide effective psychological support to clients.

Future research may also expand the findings of this study by considering a mixed-method approach to obtaining scientific information on the psychological health and self-care practices of Jamaica school counselors. Furthermore, future research could

expand the recommendation of this study to encourage counselors to acknowledge self-care and the preservation of their psychological health as a responsibility to their overall well-being, and also an ethical responsibility to the counseling profession. This could be done by using the pre and post-test methodological approach to obtain comparable data on the effectiveness of counselors' output, pre and post-self-care intervention.

Based on the limitation of this study, future research could seek to capture the experiences of a more diverse population, which would enhance the generalizability and transferability of the research findings. Hence, future research could consider a quantitative survey to obtain a larger sample. The existing literature indicated that administrative and non-counseling-related tasks that school counselors were required to undertake negatively impacted their ability to be effective (Şimşir Gökalp, 2020). The quantitative approach can also facilitate independent examination of variables that impact counselors' experiences of providing psychological support to determine where interventions are most needed.

Implications

This study has implications for the establishment of stronger support systems for Jamaican school counselors, and the development and enforcement of policies governing the operation of school counselors. At the school level, the findings of this study have implications for the improvement of support services available to the counselors within the school, such as the employment of additional specialists. Furthermore, the study has

implications for the revision of school counselors' workload to allow counselors to have more time to provide psychological support to adolescents.

With respect to social change, the findings of this study have implications for the improvement of school-based psychological support services offered to adolescents, by way of improving the experiences of school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents. Through greater access to support services and requisite specialists and the restructuring of their workload, school counselors can dedicate more time to providing psychological support to adolescents and subsequently promoting better psychological health among Jamaican adolescents. Additionally, the findings of this study have implications for social change by improving adolescents' perceptions of school counselors. This improvement can be facilitated by way of implementing the recommendation to institute school-based sensitization programs that educate adolescents about the roles of counselors, limits to confidentiality, and services offered by counselors.

The findings of this study have methodological implications for the pursuance of future research that seeks to explore aspects of the school counselor's experiences of providing psychological support. While the study cannot be replicated, the provision of a detailed description of the study settings, study participants, research methods, and design, as well as verbatim references to interview transcripts where necessary, was provided to foster transparency and encourage similar qualitative inquiries.

Although the study's findings are derived from a small sample size, they can provide useful insight for improving the experiences of school counselors who provide

psychological support to adolescents in high school. Based on the findings of this study I suggest the following recommendations for practice:

1. The employment of psychologists in schools who will work on cases that are beyond the school counselor's professional capacity. The employment of psychologists in schools will also reduce school counselors' exposure and susceptibility to vicarious trauma. Additionally, the employment of psychologists in schools will reduce school counselors' dependence on child guidance clinics for support.

2. The employment of adequate staff in child guidance clinics to reduce wait time and for referred cases to be addressed by a psychologist. This will also reduce the likeliness of counselors attempting to remedy psychological cases that are beyond their professional capacity.

3. Revision of the school counselor's job description to streamline the counselors' focus on providing psychological support, instead of counselors being largely engaged in delivering lessons and planning events. This will allow counselors more time to provide adequate psychological support to adolescents.

4. Encourage counselors to acknowledge self-care and the preservation of their psychological health as a responsibility to their overall well-being and also an ethical responsibility to the counseling profession.

5. The implementation of school-based sensitization programs that educate adolescents about the roles of the counselor, limits to confidentiality, and services offered by counselors. This will help adolescents to understand how counselors operate, and reduce their inclination to believe that school counselors are not confidential.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Jamaican secondary school counselors who provide psychological support to adolescents in high school. Emerging themes from the collected data revealed that counselors experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents was impacted by the school counselors' views of their role, factors that influence and factors that discourage help-seeking behavior among adolescents, social media and social class deterrents to adolescents seeking psychological support, high workload and the need for more internal support and additional human resources, negative experiences working with external government psychological support services, and negative personal psychological impact and poor self-care practices. By using a qualitative approach to capture the narratives of participants, this study was able to add value to the scientific community by providing insight into the challenges counselors faced when they attempted to provide psychological support to adolescents, and provided a foundation for the development and implementation of interventions that can alleviate these challenges for more impactful mental health and social outcomes.

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Appendix A: Recruitment

Email invitation

Subject line:
Interviewing Jamaican Secondary School Counselors Who Offer Psychological Support to Adolescents in High School (Add Month)

Email message:
For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents in high school.

About the study:
- One 30-to-90-minute Zoom interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording).
- Your participation is voluntary and no form of compensation will be provided.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.
- Included in this email is a Google Form link which will capture our demographic and eligibility information.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:
- Teacher trained
- Have at least a diploma in counseling or psychology
- Currently employed in Jamaican secondary schools
- Have the primary job function of providing psychological support to adolescents.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Onnica Morris a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during (Add Month).

Please email onnica.morris@waldenu.edu to let the researcher know if you have any questions.

Google Form

Participant Demographic and Eligibility Information

The information provided on this form will only be used to determine your eligibility for participate in the present study. Only the researcher has access to this information and it will **NOT** be shared with anyone.

Name: _____

School of employment: _____

Government owned school ▢ Private owned school   ▢

Parish of employment: _____

Educational Qualification

Please check the box that applies to you

Discipline: Counselling ▢   Psychology ▢

Certification

PHD   ▢

Master's degree ▢

Bachelor's degree ▢

Diploma   ▢

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Protocol

Hello. Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in this study. I do appreciate

your time and commitment to this research process. The goal for today is to have a

conversation about your experiences of providing psychological support to adolescents,

but before we get to the interviews please allow me to reiterate some of the ethical

guidelines that were outlined in the consent form. This interview will be recorded only

for transcribing purposes. Your identification information will not be shared with anyone.

Please feel free to ask for clarification or to notify me of any discomfort with answering

any questions asked during the interview.

The general flow of the interview is that I will ask question for which you provide

answers as per your experiences. At the end of the interview, I will end the recording and

take you through a debriefing exercise to ensure that any impact of distress arising from

your participation in the interview is identified and addressed. As also outlined in the

consent form, I will need your assistance to ensure that the themes I identify from your

interview are consistent with what you intended to communicate. At the end of the study,

you will receive a copy of the research findings. Before we begin the interviews, do you

have any queries or concerns?

Interview Questions

1. How do you describe your role of providing psychological support to adolescents?

2. What factors do you think contribute to adolescents seeking/not seeking your help for their psychological challenges?

3. In what ways do you think that social influences on the adolescent's perception of seeking psychological help influence their output during counselling sessions?

4. What has been your experience of providing psychological support to adolescents?

5. Could you describe the support systems that you can access when providing psychological support to adolescents?

6. Share with me your assessment of the impact of providing psychological support to adolescents on your own psychological wellbeing.

7. Tell me about your daily self-care routine.

8. How do you assess the effectiveness of the psychological support that you provide to adolescents?

9. What do you think can be done at the school level to improve your experiences of proving psychological support to adolescents?

Debriefing Questions

1. What was your experience of participating in the just concluded interview?

2. How do you think your participation will improve the experiences of Jamaican school counselors who offer psychological support to adolescents in high school?

3. Did you experience any form of distress while engaging in the interviews?

4. If you need psychological support following this interview, do you have access to a counsellor/ psychologist?

If you do not have access to a counselor/psychologist, I can provide you with a referral should you need psychological support as a result of your participation in this study. I will also provide you with my contact information for post-interview questions or help accessing psychological services. Pease do not hesitate to make contact if you need help.

Appendix C: Sample of Audit Trail and Journal Entries

Audit Trail Entry

March 25, 2024

The interview was conducted on Zoom as planned using the outlined interview protocol. There were no major decisions to be made as the interview proceeded as planned. As soon as the interview ended, I copied the transcript to a Word document. I verified the content of the transcript by listening to the audio and making the necessary corrections. I took the decision to edit the transcripts because Zoom's closed caption does not always capture the correct spoken words. Removing the incorrect captions and repeated lines made the transcript easier to read and code.

Journal Entry

March 25, 2024

I did my first data collection today. It was not so bad after all. The participant was very direct and calm in answering the interview questions. I think the interview lasted for about 30 minutes. Quite smooth I must say. Interestingly, I never had any compelling thoughts or feelings about anything the participants said. In fact, I felt quite detached from the process. I was actively collecting the data but that was about it. I am not sure what influenced my state of detachment. The data I collected was sufficient, however, going forward I think I can probe a bit more where the opportunity presents itself for more depth in the data collection.

Audit Trail Entry
March 27, 2024

The interview was conducted on Zoom as planned using the outlined interview protocol. There were no major decisions to be made as the interview proceeded as planned. As soon as the interview ended, I copied the transcript to a Word document. As with my initial interview I took the decision to edit the transcripts because Zoom's closed caption does not always capture the correct spoken words. Removing the incorrect captions and repeated lines made the transcript easier to read and code. I began verification of the content of the transcript by listening to the audio and making the necessary corrections but had to stop midway because another participant who was scheduled for the 29th but had a change in personal schedule so I had to facilitate the interview at short notice.

NB: I completed the transcript verification for this interview (Cloud) a day after the interview was conducted as a result of having to facilitate an unscheduled interview.

Journal Entry

March 27, 2024

My second interview was more in-depth. I did more probing and clarifying where the opportunity presented. The participant seemed eager to share.   This interview took longer than my first interview however it was quite engaging. Already I am beginning to see similarities in the data. I guess that is not surprising given similar nature of the school

counselor's job. In comparison to my first interview, I think I did I a much better job with this interview.

Audit Trail Entry

March 27, 2024

This interview was the second interview I conducted today. In addition to the interview not being planned for today, the participant indicated that he/she would not be able to participate in the member process due to an unforeseen personal situation. As a result, I had to summarize the responses after the participant answered each interview question to ensure that what I understood was what the particpanbt, in fact, intended to articulate. The interview took a longer time but it was very engaging.

Journal Entry

March 27, 2024

This was a more "eventful interview". Firstly, it was not planned for today so I was a bit thrown off by the sudden change in schedule. I was tired. Nonetheless, I was not going to let the opportunity pass to gather data especially since the client was nice enough to inform me of the change in schedule and offered to participate in the interviews at an earlier date. Secondly, the interview was longer than the previous two interviews because the member checking was done at the same time. This interview was more thoroughly processed and the participant poured into the interview. Honestly, I like

that the member checking was done at the same time because the clarity was instant, and in some parts, I got more data from the participant. The content coming from the interviews is becoming more similar. This participant repeated a lot of what the other two participants mentioned. I proposed for 10 participants for this study but let's see what data saturation has in store

Journal Entry

March 29, 2024

I have been coding the data so far. I think I might reach out to my chair for some direction on how to present the data in tables. It is tedious! It is not just coding its reading and reading the transcript and coding. Creating the categories and identifying the theme is a bit mind boggling. I am going ot give it a try and see what my Chair says.

Audit Trail Entry

April 1, 2024

The interview was conducted on Zoom as planned using the outlined interview protocol.There were no major decisions to be made as the interview proceeded as planned. As soon as the interview ended, I copied the transcript to a Word document. I verified the content of the transcript by listening to the audio and making the necessary corrections. I took the decision to edit the transcripts because Zoom's closed caption does not always capture the correct spoken words. Removing the incorrect captions and

repeated lines made the transcript easier to read and code. No major decisions were made during this interview.

Journal Entry

April 1, 2024

This interview flowed. The participant was very direct and comprehensive in responding to the questions and the probes. I gather a wealth of data. I think I have been on a steady path in terms of being actively engaged in guiding the interview to elicit as much data as possible to help in answering the research question. Altogether, I think my interviews have been smooth and fruitful so far. I take what I learn from each interview and use that knowledge to maximize my data collection in the next interview.

Journal Entry

April 4, 2024

I received feedback from my Chair today. I need to work on my categories and my themes. I will use the next 2 days to make the adjustments for resubmission but I think I will resubmit after I have reached data saturation. From my coding, I can now safely say that the collected data demonstrates strong similarities. However, data trustworthiness requires depth of data and diversity of participants; hence, I will continue the data collection to ensure full data saturation is achieved.