

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO BURNOUT
AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This study also investigated which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors. Data collected from 84 elementary school counselors were used to test four hypotheses. A significant positive relation was found between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were not related to elementary school counselors' self-efficacy. The correlations for counselor-to-student ratio with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were not significant. The correlations for counselors employed in a Title I school with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were not significant. Elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school predicted burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and counselor-to-student ratio were predictors of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment, with self-efficacy being the strongest predictor.

Descriptors: burnout, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, school counselor, self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, Title I school.

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE)

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

School counselor burnout and turnover rate has been a concern for several years. According to Lambie (2007), the number of counselors experiencing burnout is widespread, with the rate in 2007 at 39%. Educational demands and accountability have increased, creating higher stress levels (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, & Zlatev, 2009). Today, many schools have been forced to decrease their staff due to budget cuts, making the demands on school counselors even more challenging (Lee, Cho, Kissinger, & Ogle, 2010). Downsizing often results in increased responsibilities for school counselors, which may lead to higher levels of stress. Left unmanaged, stress can elevate, leading to burnout (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009). In addition, many school counselors who experience burnout begin to dislike their profession, and may consider changing career (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009). For these reasons, there is a need to understand what causes school counselors to experience burnout so that it can be prevented.

School counselors who elect to stay in their profession may not be committed to their job 100%. A study conducted by Baggerly and Osborn (2006) to determine the career satisfaction and commitment of school counselors showed that 76.4% of school counselors were planning to stay in their position, 10.6% were planning to retire or quit, and 13% were undecided. Stress level was one of the predictors of lower job satisfaction and the reason identified for leaving the profession. Burnout and turnover can negatively impact the counselor, students, and school; therefore, it is important for school counselors and administrators to find ways to increase job satisfaction and decrease elevated stress levels (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Burnout is defined as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 4). Burnout is confused with many other illnesses such as depression and stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Stress is not the same as burnout; however, a person can experience burnout if they do not effectively deal with the life situations that are creating elevated stress. According to Maslach & Leiter (2008), “Burnout has been associated with various forms of negative responses to the job, including job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, absenteeism, intention to leave the job, and turnover” (p. 499).

School counseling has been identified as a profession prone to burnout. The diverse duties and large counseling caseloads have been associated with increased stress and job ambiguity (Bardwell, 2010; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzman, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009). Role ambiguity is a key aspect of burnout among school counselors (Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) because many counselors feel that there is no clear definition or description of their role, functions, and tasks (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Increased caseload and role ambiguity has been linked to school counselors’ perception of a lack of personal accomplishment—this belief can lead to burnout (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009).

School counselors play a vital role in the school and the school community. A counselor’s primary goal is to meet the academic, career, personal, and social developmental needs of students in a manner that is focused, culturally sensitive, and

ethically and legally appropriate (Schellenberg, 2012; Wilkerson, 2009). Counselors work directly with students individually, in small groups, in the classroom with core school counseling curriculum, and indirectly through consultation, collaboration, and a variety of systems support programs.

School counselors often have other responsibilities in the school that vary depending on the school administrator and the grade level (e.g., elementary, middle, or high). Counselors may spend parts of their day performing noncounseling related duties including clerical work, disciplinary action, administrative tasks, tutoring, substituting for teachers, monitoring the cafeteria and the hallway, and making sure students get in and out of the bus safely (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2010). According to the ASCA (2012), school counselors should spend most of their day delivering the school counseling core curriculum, providing responsive services, engaging in individual student planning, and participating in system support activities and programming. Attempting to fulfill the responsibilities deemed essential to administering a comprehensive school counseling program coupled with the added responsibilities set by some school systems can be stressors that cause burnout among school counselors (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009).

Parents, teachers, and administrators rely on school counselors for support with student-related personal-social and emotional concerns (Sink, 2008; Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). School counselors provide parents, teachers, and administrators with resources and guidance. School counselors provide teachers and parents with

suggestions for intervention implementation in the classroom and at home, respectively. Teachers may request special programs related to school counseling core curriculum delivery. In addition, teachers may request assistance with students who may be in need of study skills, test-taking skills and motivation, along with students experiencing low self-esteem, or issues related to impulse control (Schellenberg, 2012; Sink, 2008; Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). Administrators look to school counselors to support student academic achievement and to create programs that aid in closing achievement gaps (Schellenberg, 2008, 2012). Administrators further rely on counselors to handle behavior issues and other tasks such as administering school wide testing, and serving on early intervention teams (Chata & Loesch, 2007).

School counselors, when called upon, must be prepared to handle emergencies and to provide crisis interventions (Daniels, Bradley, Cramer, Winkler, Kinebrew, & Crockett, 2007; Wachter, Minton, & Clemens, 2008). According to Daniels et al. (2007), “Crises at a schools include those made by humans and nature disaster, acts of terrorism, death of a member of the school community, sexual assault, hate crimes, armed hostage events, barricades, and homicide” (p. 483). Counselors must be prepared to manage stressful, unexpected situations effectively with little or no advanced warning. This requires a solid foundation of knowledge related to crisis intervention and the legalities associated with counseling minors in the schools (Schellenberg, 2012). School counselors are called to develop a crisis response plan that can be implemented school wide. The plan needs to include steps that can be taken during and after a crisis such as individual and group counseling, contacting mental health services and appropriate

school district professionals, and providing referrals for long-term professional counseling (Daniels et al., 2007; Wachter et al., 2008).

Clearly, the complexity of duties and level of responsibility inherent in the position of professional school counselor is enormous, requiring school counselors to be both educators and counselors. School counselors must be prepared to carry out these duties and responsibilities professionally, legally, ethically, and in developmentally responsible and culturally sensitive manner (Schellenberg, 2008, 2012). A lack of action or inappropriate action can result in litigation for the counselor, school, and school division, and—more importantly—cost a student’s life. Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to understand how the profession of school counseling can be stressful.

A school counselor’s personal characteristics and personality traits can also be a predictor of burnout. The following personal characteristics and personality traits can cause a higher level of burnout: age, years of experience, type a personality, idealism, rigidity, neuroticism, and coping style (Lent & Schwartz, 2012). Researchers have studied the effect of age and years of experience on school counselor burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Lent & Schwartz, 2012). Although there has been some inconsistency in the results of the research conducted on the relationship between age and years of experience, and burnout, the results of a study conducted by Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) indicated that school counselors with fewer years of experience were at higher risk of experiencing burnout.

Characteristics of the K-12 school setting can also play a part in a counselor’s feeling of burnout. The most significant institutional characteristics are the lack of clinical supervision and social support (Schellenberg, 2012; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Many schools, particularly elementary schools, have only one school counselor. Consulting is difficult when there are no other school counselors in the building bound by the same limits of confidentiality and a thorough understanding of the school counselors' unique role. In some cases, counselors lack the support of administrators who do not fully understand the roles and duties of the school counselor. In most school divisions, to date, clinical supervision by a division level school counselor supervisor is non-existent (Schellenberg, 2008). Lack of administration support and opportunities for clinical consultation can increase the likelihood of school counselor burnout.

A person's beliefs about their abilities have been connected to their performance and job success (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Job satisfaction has also been linked to a person's level of self-efficacy. "People with higher levels of self-efficacy in a particular area of their behavior set higher goals; exhibit stronger commitment, motivation, resilience, and perseverance; and are therefore more likely to meet their goals" (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010, p. 168). Research shows that a counselor with high self-efficacy performs higher than a counselor with lower self-efficacy (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Gündüz, 2012); although few studies have been conducted on school counselor burnout and self-efficacy (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). The theory of self-efficacy and the research conducted on the topic indicates that low self-efficacy can be a predictor of school counselor burnout. This study helps fill a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between elementary school counselor burnout and self-efficacy.

There are many possible factors that contribute to a school counselor's job performance, satisfaction, and stress level. One of these factors may include the

economic status of the students enrolled in the school. A counselor can be employed in a school where most of the students have a low economic status. A school where 40% of students are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program is known as a Title I school (“Title I,” 2004).

This study compares the level of burnout between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school in comparison to elementary school counselors in a *non*-Title I school. There is no research to date that examines the relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout. The results of this study adds to the literature and helps to fill the gaps regarding the negative emotional and physical impact linked to burnout of elementary school counselors working in a Title I school (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; O’Donnell, Lambert, & McCarthy, 2008; “Title I,” 2004). Since only teacher burnout has been studied in Title I schools, this study is the only one of its kind to study school counselor burnout in Title I schools. Some research has uncovered that teachers who work in a Title I school express having more job demands and stress than those who work in a *non*-Title I school (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). However, a study conducted by O’Donnell et al. (2008) revealed that there was no relationship between a Title I school and teacher stress level. Teachers in this study (O’Donnell et al., 2008) stated that *non*-Title I schools have more demands than Title I schools.

Another variable that can increase the probability of school counselor burnout is caseload. Research has revealed that school counselors with a higher caseload (counselor-to-student ratio) exhibit more signs of burnout (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). According to ASCA (2012), the

counselor-to-student ratio should be one school counselor to 250 students. Although the counselor-to-student ratio has been set by ASCA, most school counselors have a much higher caseload (Bardwell, 2010; Carrell, 2006; McCarthy et al., 2010). A goal of this study is to determine the effects of a high counselor-to-student ratio on elementary school counselor burnout. There is limited literature that proves that counselors who do not follow the recommended counselor-to-student ratio set by ASCA can experience burnout, specifically counselors in the elementary school level (Gündüz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

In the past years, researchers have tried to determine which variables might influence burnout among school counselors (Lambie, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009). Burnout is a serious problem that has many negative consequences on the school counselor, as well as students and school communities (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009). It is imperative that the potential contributors of school counselor burnout be identified so that strategies can be implemented to reduce or prevent burnout. If the factors that contribute to school counselor burnout are not identified, we could see an increase in the number of school counselors experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment, which, in turn, impacts the quality of service to students and school communities. This study begins this exploratory process with the elementary school counselor population.

Background of the Study

A school counselor's demanding and multifaceted roles alone can be a powerful contributor to burnout. School counselors have dual roles as both counselors and educators (Schellenberg, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) provides school

counselors with a framework from which to develop a comprehensive school counseling program around these dual roles. The model includes standards and competencies used by school counselors to guide developmentally appropriate services that contribute to students' career, personal/social, and academic development. Elementary school counselors implement a comprehensive counseling program by providing counseling services via school counseling core curriculum (e.g., classroom guidance lessons), responsive services (e.g., individual and small-group counseling, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, and referrals), system support (e.g., professional development, consultation, and collaborating with parents, teachers, administrators, and community), and individual student planning (e.g., meeting with student individually or in small groups for the purpose of career and academic planning) (ASCA, 2012; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Many school counselors have added responsibilities unrelated to ASCA-defined duties that can increase stress levels and susceptibility to burnout. Added duties may include administering academic tests, clerical work, disciplining students, assisting with administrative tasks, substituting for teachers, teaching core academic courses, and tutoring (ASCA, 2012; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). According to Lambie (2007), the number of counselors experiencing burnout is widespread, with the rate in 2007 at 39%. The great demand placed on school counselors clearly demonstrates why so many of them experience burnout. Some studies suggest that school counselors are prone to burnout as a result of role ambiguity, rigorous job demands, large caseloads, and high levels of responsibilities (Bardwell, 2010; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2010; Murray,

2010; Wilkerson, 2009). Therefore, it is important to find a way to decrease the number of counselors experiencing burnout symptoms (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

According to Murray (2010), there are physical, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and attitudinal symptoms related to burnout. Symptoms associated with burnout can be different depending on the person. Often, individuals who experience burnout do not have energy to fulfill all of their duties throughout the day (Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Murray, 2010). In addition, some have a feeling of exhaustion and do not feel effective about their job performance (Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Murray, 2010). Murray (2010) also noted that negative feelings have been identified as symptoms of burnout. The physical and emotional impairment associated with burnout may hinder the school counselor's ability to provide adequate services to students and the school community, causing the counselor to consider a career change.

School counselors experiencing burnout often lack enthusiasm, energy, and productivity (Murray, 2010). Absenteeism climbs and a dislike of supervisors may increase (Murray, 2010). Several researchers state that depersonalization and fatigue are symptoms of burnout (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Some counselors who experience burnout may depersonalize with students, and in turn, are more likely to harm student rather than help them improve (Lawson & Myers, 2011).

Problem Statement

Several studies have examined the contributors to burnout for teachers and health care professionals (Tatar, 2009); however, not many researchers have studied the effect of burnout on school counselors (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie,

2007; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Some studies suggest that school counselors are prone to burnout as a result of role ambiguity, rigorous job demands, large caseloads, and high levels of responsibilities (Bardwell, 2010; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; McCarthy et al., 2010; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009). Although there are some studies on factors that contribute to school counselor burnout, there is limited research on the relationship between burnout and school counselors' self-efficacy and counselor-to-student ratio (Butler & Constantine, 2006; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). High self-efficacy has been linked to success in service careers such as counseling and teaching (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). In contrast, a person with low self-efficacy may not be able to effectively perform their assigned duties. The results of a study conducted by Gündüz (2012) revealed that there is a negative relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and emotional exhausting and depersonalization; however, counselors with high self-esteem showed positive level of personal accomplishment. The findings suggest that counselors with low self-efficacy are at greater risk of job failure and experiencing burnout.

The increase in student caseload may have a negative impact on students' academic success as well as the overall health of school counselors (Carrell, 2006). School counselors play a vital part in the academic success of students by having a positive impact on improving students' academic performance (Carrell, 2006). This impact is reduced when school counselors are assigned to approximately 1,000 students, which is above the recommended 250 students per counselor (ASCA, 2012; Bardwell,

2010; Carrell, 2006; Gündüz, 2012). Carrell (2006) stated that reducing the counselor-to-student ratio to the recommended 250 students would decrease disciplinary problems and consecutively it can also decrease the risk of school counselors experiencing burnout.

At the present time there is no research on the relationship between burnout and employment in a Title I school for school counselors. Although, researchers have studied the effect of Title I on teachers (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2008), there is no research today examining the relationship between school counselor burnout and Title I schools. The researcher has conducted various database search (i.e., Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, ERIC [Ebsco], Education Research Complete) using several keywords (i.e., Title I, Title I school, school counselor and Title I school, counselor and Title I school, Title I school and burnout) and did not locate any research on the relationship between school counselor burnout and Title I school. Therefore, the results of this study adds to the literature by determining whether school counselors who are employed in a Title I school are at higher risk of experiencing burnout compared to counselors who are employed in a *non*-Title I school. Research on the relationship between teacher burnout and Title I school has been conducted (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2008), however, the results are contradicting. Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) states that teacher employed in a Title I school are at higher risk of experiencing burnout, while O'Donnell et al. (2008) discovered that there is no statistically significant relationship between a Title I school and teacher stress level. O'Donnell et al. (2008), however, concluded that additional research was needed in order to determine if Title I schools can increase teachers' stress level. Due to the number of limitations, a true determination could not be made. This study sought to fill in the

research gap on the relationship between elementary school counselor burnout and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout on the criterion variables of dimensions of 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) personal accomplishment, and the predictor variables of 1) self-efficacy, 2) counselor-to-student ratio, and 3) employment in a Title I school. This study also examined which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors.

The theories applied to this study were the Maslach's Development of Burnout and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Maslach's Development of Burnout was developed by social psychologist Christina Maslach in the mid-1970s, and it was used to study burnout in relation to emotions in the workplace (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). The theory indicates that burnout is the reaction that occurs after prolonged periods of stress in the workplace (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Maslach identified three dimensions to measure burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Maslach et al., 2001; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). As applied to the present study, this theory holds that the researcher would expect the independent variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) to explain the dependent variables (i.e., emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) because people with low self-efficacy tend to experience a lack of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion can occur when someone is overwhelmed by the demands imposed by other people or a high level of responsibilities at work. School counselors with a high counselor-to-student ratio may feel drained and exhausted. School counselors working in a Title I school may also feel defeated and may not have enough energy to successfully complete their duties. School counselor employed in a Title I school may feel overwhelmed because they work with at-risk students and low income families. Once school counselors become emotionally exhausted and lack personal accomplishment, they may be at risk of experiencing depersonalization. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment are the three components of burnout defined by Maslach (Lambie, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Maslach et al., 2001; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

The SCT was developed by Albert Bandura, and it was used to study self-efficacy in relation to the way a person behaves (Bandura, 1993). The theory indicates that efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs come from four sources: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). One aspect of the SCT that is studied in this research is perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy is the belief in one's personal capabilities (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Perceived self-efficacy influences a person's choice of activities, setting, effort, and coping efforts (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Adams, 1977). Perceived self-efficacy is a major key to being successful because it allows the person to believe in themselves, have the motivation needed to put effort into their choice of activity, and the

coping skills to handle stressful situations (Bandura, 1997, 2006). As applied to this study, the theory holds that the researcher would expect the independent variable (i.e., self-efficacy) to explain the dependent variables (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) because people with low self-efficacy may believe that they are incapable of performing a task or feel as though they do not have the necessary skills to be successful. Low self-efficacy is also associated with depression, anxiety, helplessness, and pessimistic thoughts about performance and personal development. These negative thoughts can lead to burnout because the person may begin to feel a lack of personal accomplishment.

Significance of the Study

Burnout has been mostly associated with human service professions, such as nursing, teaching, and mental health (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Over the years, researchers have been studying the factors that contribute to burnout among school counselors (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2010; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006); however, few studies explored burnout specifically among elementary school counselors. Among the studies that explored school counselor burnout, there is limited research on the relationship between burnout and school counselors' self-efficacy and counselor-to-student ratio (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). To date, there is no research on the relationship between burnout and employment in a Title I school for elementary school counselors.

An important goal of this study was to increase the level of knowledge and understanding of school counselors in relationship to burnout, specifically at the elementary level. Another goal of this study was to increase knowledge about symptoms related to burnout and methods to prevent or mediate burnout for elementary school counselors.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

RQ4: Which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors?

Research Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses:

H1a: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H1b: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H1c: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H2a: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H2b: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H2c: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H3a: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H3b: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H3c: There is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H4a: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H4b: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H4c: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Research Null Hypotheses

The following are the null hypotheses:

H₀1a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀1b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀1c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H₀2a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀2b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀2c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H₀3a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀3b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀3c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

H₀4a: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀4b: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀4c: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Identification of Variables

The independent variables in this study were the three factors that may contribute to burnout among school counselors in a large suburban public school system in Georgia: self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment at a Title I school. The dependent variables in this study were the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is beliefs about one's own ability to successfully perform a given behavior. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES) developed by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2004) was used to measure elementary school counselors' self-efficacy. The scale consists of 43 statements about school counselors' activities. The participants were asked to indicate their confidence in their current ability to perform each activity.

Counselor-to-Student Ratio

The counselor-to-student ratio is the number of students that each counselor should be assigned. According to ASCA (2012), the counselor-to-student ratio should be one school counselor to 250 students. Few schools are able to abide by the guidelines set by ASCA due to the school's budget. A demographic questionnaire was utilized to measure the effect of a high counselor-to-student ratio on elementary school counselor burnout.

Title I School

Title I school refers to schools that have 40% of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch program ("Title I," 2004). The free and reduced-price lunch program enrollment determines whether a student lives in a low-income household. Title I is a federal program that provides funds to schools in order to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach academic success regardless of their economic status (Center on Education Policy, 2011; Kress, Zechmann, & Schmitt, 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2008; "Title I," 2004).

Title I funds are allocated to schools to provide educational services to students in high poverty and at risk of failing (Center on Education Policy, 2011; Kress et al., 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2008; "Title I," 2004). At-risk students can include students with limited English proficiency, homeless students, students with disabilities, neglected

students, delinquent students, and migrant students. A student can also be classified as “at-risk” if he or she has a high number of absences, lives in a single-parent home, or has low-academic performance or low income. The goal of the Title I program is to improve the academic achievement of low-income students and close the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Each school is unique; therefore, the U.S. Department of Education allows the school administrator to determine the best use of their funds. Some schools use their funds to improve the curriculum, provide tutoring, purchase materials, increase staff, run parental programs, and manage counseling.

Title I schools also provide parents with workshops that focus on the academic needs of the students. Parents have the opportunity to participate in workshops geared towards their child’s curriculum. Parents are taught strategies to help their child master the curriculum. Non-English speaking parents can also attend English classes which will enable them to help their students achieve academic success.

Burnout

The dependent variables in this study were the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Burnout is the reaction caused by prolonged stressors in the workplace (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). There are three dimensions to measure burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Maslach, 2001; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1996) was used to measure burnout among elementary

school counselors. This tool is a 22-item questionnaire that measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

Definitions of Terms

Burnout – Burnout is the reaction caused by prolonged stressors in the workplace (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals that work with people in some capacity (Maslach et al., 1996).

Counselor-to-student ratio – The counselor-to-student ratio is the number of students that each counselor is assigned. According to ASCA (2012), the counselor-to-student ratio should be one school counselor to 250 students.

Depersonalization – Depersonalization is feeling an impersonal response toward the job and people (Maslach et al., 1996).

Emotional exhaustion – Emotional exhaustion is feeling emotionally strained and exhausted by one's work (Maslach et al., 1996); feeling defeated and not having enough energy to advance (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

High counselor-to-student ratio – High counselor-to-student ratio is any number exceeding the recommended 1:250 (ASAC, 2012).

Lack of personal accomplishment – Lack of personal accomplishment is feeling incompetent and incapable of achieving at work (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Personal accomplishment – Personal accomplishment is feeling competent and successful in one’s work (Maslach et al., 1996).

School counselor – A school counselor is an individual who is state-licensed in school counseling and possesses a master’s degree in school counseling (ASCA, 2012).

Self-efficacy – Self-efficacy is beliefs about one’s own ability to successfully perform a given behavior (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

Title I school – Title I school refers to schools that have 40% of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch program (“Title I,” 2004). Title I schools receive additional federal funding to provide high poverty and low performance students the necessary resources to attain academic achievement (The Center on Education Policy, 2011; Kress et al., 2012; O’Donnell et al., 2008; “Title I,” 2004).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Burnout among human service professionals is not a new concept (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). For decades, researchers have investigated the factors that contribute to burnout among professionals, specifically those who provide service to others (Butler & Constantine 2005; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). Over the years, researchers have tried to determine the factors that contribute to burnout among school counselors. It is crucial to find ways to keep school counselors from burning out so that they can better serve their students. Although few studies (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2010; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) have investigated burnout and school counselors, the existing research suggests that counselors are at risk of experiencing burnout due to their stressful and intense profession (Murray, 2010).

School counselors have increasing job responsibilities and expectations set by the school systems (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). School counselors are accountable for the academic, career, personal/social development of their students (ASCA, 2012). In addition, they handle situations in which students need immediate support such as suicide thoughts or attempts, child abuse, violence, substance abuse, and severe depression (Gündüz, 2012). Students and their families can count on the support and guidance of school counselors; however, school counselors themselves must first be able to identify and find ways to mediate their own stress levels in order to better serve their students (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

This study sought to discover if there was a relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This study also aimed to identify which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout among elementary school counselors on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This knowledge may be beneficial to elementary school counselors and administrators because it may guide them in finding strategies to prevent or reduce burnout so that they can continue to enhance the academic success and life planning of all of their students (Borders, 2002; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

The following literature review provides an overview of the theoretical literature and studies on the role of the school counselor, symptoms of burnout, and study variables that contribute to burnout. The theoretical framework begins with a brief overview of Maslach's Development of Burnout; the second section discusses Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which includes their sources. Next, are the studies of the literature on the role of school counselors; followed by a discussion of the symptoms of burnout; and ending with the study of variables that contribute to burnout.

Theoretical Framework

Maslach's Development of Burnout

Maslach is known as one of the major researchers in the field of job burnout. Maslach, a social psychologist, began studying burnout in relation to emotions in the workplace in the mid-1970s (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach

(2003) described burnout as the reaction that occurs after prolonged periods of stress in the workplace (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). After interviewing a large number of human service workers about their job stress, Maslach learned that the coping strategies had important implications for people's professional identity and job behavior (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach identified three dimensions to measure burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Maslach et al., 2001; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Emotional exhaustion can occur when someone is overwhelmed by the emotional demands imposed by other people. Emotional exhaustion is feeling defeated, drained or used up, and not having enough energy to move forward (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Depersonalization refers to the detachment of the job and people and usually occurs after emotional exhaustion sets in. People who are depersonalizing are trying to eliminate their stress by doing less at work or for others. The quality of their job begins to decline and they may do the bare minimum. One of the most serious risks of depersonalization is that it can result in loss of idealism and the dehumanization of others. The third dimension of burnout is lack of personal accomplishment. People who are experiencing lack of personal accomplishment feel incompetent and do not feel capable of achieving their work (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). This lower self-efficacy can be caused by lack of job resources, social support, or opportunity to grow professionally.

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's SCT provides an explanation of how individuals learn (Malone, 2002). The central theme in the SCT is self-efficacy. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a strong influence on the way a person behaves. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs come from four sources: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). Performance accomplishment is created through successful performance. A person, who has been successful in completing a task in the past, will be more confident in being able to be successful again. Repeated success will give the person a sense of accomplishment and motivation. Vicarious experience occurs when an individual learns from observing the behaviors of others (also known as modeling). Verbal persuasion happens when a person receives verbal praise or encouragement when completing a task. If a person receives positive praise, they will most likely repeat the behavior. On the other hand, if the person receives negative feedback she or he may not feel confident if they have to repeat the task. The fourth source, emotional arousal, occurs by using ones' moods and bodily sensations. If a person feels discomfort when performing a task, he or she may not want to perform it again.

Bandura later changed the four sources of self-efficacy to mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological states and indexes (Pajares, 2002). The first two sources are the same as Bandura's previous sources. Mastery experience affects a person's self-efficacy based on their experience. If a person has a

positive experience, they will be willing to repeat the action. Failure lowers a person's self-efficacy. Mastery experience is the most influential to self-efficacy beliefs.

Vicarious experience is affected by the actions of others. Social comparison is a key component in vicarious experience; therefore, in order for vicarious experience to be successful, the person who is modeling should be similar to the observant. Peer pressure can also play a part in vicarious experience, thus, it is important to have a positive role model.

Social persuasion is affected by the social messages one receives from others. The verbal comments individuals receive, positive or negative, play a part in our self-efficacy. Positive social persuasion will give us confidence, but negative persuasion will lower our self-efficacy. Social persuasion can have a lasting effect on a person; most people's thoughts about their abilities are influenced by what others think of them.

Physiological state is how we feel emotionally and physically. Individuals have the ability to influence the way they feel with their thoughts. If we are nervous about how we will perform during a presentation, our performance may be weak because we will become too anxious to think clearly. People with high self-efficacy have higher aspirations and are more positive. They do not focus on what could go wrong; instead they work hard at being successful. High self-efficacy is also necessary in order for someone to be motivated to accomplish a goal. Motivated people see themselves crossing the finish line. People who believe in themselves and their ability to meet their goals have high self-efficacy. A person's mood or affect can be affected by their self-efficacy. People with high self-efficacy tend to be able to handle more stress and are less depressed.

According to Bandura (1993, 1997), efficacy beliefs regulate emotions in the following ways: people who believe they can handle threats are less distressed, but those who have low self-efficacy are more likely to increase risks; people with high self-efficacy have lower stress and anxiety because they act in ways that make their surroundings less threatening; self-efficacy helps people cope and have control over troubling thoughts; low self-efficacy can contribute to depression. People who have low self-efficacy are more likely to be depressed because they do not think they are capable of preventing depressive thoughts. Once these depressive thoughts take hold these individual believe they cannot turn their thoughts around and change their mood which impact their ability to accomplish their goals and often lead to depression. People with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to have a lack of social relationship satisfaction. Because of their social inefficacy they have limited social support, making them more likely to be vulnerable to stress and depression.

One aspect of the SCT is perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy is the belief in one's personal capabilities (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Perceived self-efficacy influences a person's choice of activities, setting, effort, and coping efforts (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Adams, 1977). People with strong perceived self-efficacy will take risks and attempt activities that may not be safe. They will not allow fear to limit their experience. Perceived self-efficacy gives people the motivation to try something new even if they may not succeed or master the activity. Perceived self-efficacy does not measure a person's skills, it looks at the belief one has about what one can do with the skills they possess (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy alone is not enough for someone to be successful; they must also have some knowledge and skill. However,

perceived self-efficacy is a major key because it allows the person to believe in themselves, have the motivation needed to put effort into their choice of activity, and the coping skills to handle stressful situations (Bandura, 1997, 2006). The way we view ourselves and our belief of our ability plays a vital part of how effective we are in all the things we attempt in life.

Studies of the Literature

Role of the School Counselor

The ASCA National Model (2012) defines school counselors as a state-licensed school counselor who possesses a master's degree. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with a framework for their school counseling program which includes three domains: academic, career, and personal/social development. ASCA has created a set of standards and competencies that indicates what students need to know and be able to do as a result of the school counseling program. School counselors deliver the program through two major components: direct and indirect student services. ASCA provides the following description for each component:

Direct services are in-person interaction between school counselors and students and include the following: school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services. School counseling core curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to help students attain the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-12

classroom and group activities. Individual student planning are ongoing systemic activities coordinated by school counselors designed to assist students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans. Responsive services are activities designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns. Responsive services may include counseling in individual or small-group settings or crisis response. Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including referrals for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations (p. xiv).

Some experts have suggested that the effectiveness of the counseling program can be determined by the amount of time spent on each component (ASCA, 2012; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008); therefore, ASCA has provided school counselors and administrators with a guide to determine the time needed to spend in each delivery component for an effective program. ASCA recommends that elementary school counselors spend 35%–45% on guidance curriculum, 5%–10% on individual student planning, 30%–40% on responsive services, and 10%–15% on system support. ASCA recommends that middle school counselors spend 25%–35% on guidance curriculum, 15%–25% on individual student planning, 30%–40% on responsive services, and 10%–15% on system support. ASCA recommends that high school counselors spend 15%–25% on guidance curriculum, 25%–35% on individual student planning, 25%–35% on responsive services, and 15%–20% on system support.

Another added responsibility to the role of the school counselor is involvement in Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is a fairly new method of delivering instruction and

intervention, recommended by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) to students identified as at-risk of poor academic outcome, students with behavior problems or both (Ryan, Kaffenberger & Carroll, 2011). RTI requires that before a student is identified with a learning disability or other disabilities, schools must intervene by putting appropriate interventions in place and monitoring student progress. The intensity of the intervention can be adjusted depending on the student response. If the interventions are not effective, then students can be evaluated for a learning disability.

In many schools, the role of the school counselor involves providing early counseling interventions and providing insight into students' needs (ASCA, 2012; Ryan et al., 2011; Walsh, Barrett & DePaul, 2007). School counselors also have the opportunity to be involved in student placement in order to find the best teacher placement that will meet the needs of the student. School counselors' involvement in RTI not only provides them with the opportunity to assist students in early intervention, but it also allows counselors an opportunity to work collaboratively with teachers (Ryan et al., 2011). Research shows that a strong teacher-counselor relationship is the key to a successful counseling program (Sink, 2008). Once a student is identified as needing special education, school counselors are also involved in the Individualized Education Plan process (Geltner & Leibforth, 2008).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (2002) has increased accountability in education. Every professional working in a school is responsible for improving student achievement. Though the NCLB has not directly stated that counselors are also accountable for student achievement, it is imperative that school counselors begin to prove how valuable and effective they are in enhancing academic

performance and total student development (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; Schellenberg, 2008). With the enormous amount of funding reduction, school personnel who do not influence student achievement are at risk of losing their job. Policy makers and school board members may view the counseling program as an ineffective use of resources if it does not positively impact students' academic success (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; Schellenberg, 2012). ASCA (2012) encourages counselors to help in achieving their schools' educational mission and to work more closely with teachers as they assist students in meeting academic success (Sink, 2008). For this reason accountability has become the focus for transforming and reframing the school counselors' dual role of educator and counselor (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; Schellenberg, 2008, 2012).

The main role of the school counselor is to promote student personal/social, career, and academic development. School counselors care for students' mental health needs and emphasize wellness and optimal development across the grade levels (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). In addition to their roles, school counselors take on a broad range of noncounseling duties including administrative and clerical tasks (Kolodinsky et al., 2009). The information presented in Table 1 and 2 includes a list of appropriate and inappropriate activities for school counselors identified by ASCA (2012). Although ASCA has clearly stated the role of the school counselor, many administrators still designate inappropriate duties to their counselors making it difficult for them to be able to have a comprehensive and effective counseling program. The following are suggestions from ASCA on the appropriate and inappropriate activities that school counselors should perform in schools:

Table 1

Appropriate Activities for School Counselors

Individual student academic program planning.

Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests.

Counseling students who are tardy or absent.

Counseling student who have disciplinary problems.

Counseling students as to appropriate school dress.

Collaborating with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons.

Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement.

Interpreting student records.

Providing teachers with suggestions for better management of study hall.

Ensuring that student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations.

Assisting the school principal with identifying and resolving student issues and needs.

Working with students to provide small- and large- group counseling services.

Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards.

Disaggregated data analysis.

Note. Source: ASCA, 2012.

Table 2

Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors

Registration and scheduling of all new students.

Coordinating or administering cognitive, aptitude and achievement test.

Responsibility for signing excuses for student who are tardy or absent.

Performing disciplinary actions.

Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed.

Teaching classes when teacher are absent.

Computing grade-point averages.

Maintaining student records.

Supervising study halls.

Clerical record keeping.

Assisting with duties in the principal's office.

Working with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode.

Preparation of individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards.

Data entry.

Note. Source: ASCA, 2012.

Burnout has been mostly associated with human service professions, such as nursing, teaching, and mental health (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Maslach et al., 1996). School counseling is a human service profession that provides both education and mental health support. School counselors and other health care professionals are at high risk of developing burnout because their job requirements are emotionally demanding. Every

day school counselors try to assist students, families, teachers and staff members in resolving and coping with life's challenges. Burnout can develop when a school counselor is experiencing a high level of stress and frustration that is beyond their tolerance (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). A school counselor can be at risk of chronic stress due to their long working hours, lack of social support and relaxation, number of students served, and noncounseling duties assigned. According to Bardwell (2010), "School counselors today are overwhelmed. The demands on and expectations of us continue to grow, including mandated testing, paperwork and other accountability measures, yet nothing seems to be taken off our plates" (p. 30). According to Bryant and Constantine (2006), due to the countless roles undertaken by school counselors, two of the main stressors affecting school counselors are role conflict and role ambiguity.

Symptoms of Burnout

Burnout has been identified as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Burnout has become a serious health issue for school counselors due to "their many responsibilities, the various roles that school counselors inhabit, the importance of the work they do with students, and the complicated nature of the U.S. educational system" (McCarthy et al., 2010, p.146).

Burnout is defined by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2001; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Some of the symptoms of emotional exhaustion are tiredness and feeling overwhelmed by job demands. This may lead to school counselors experiencing depersonalization by developing negative attitudes and

feelings toward students, and in turn, becoming indifferent when responding to students. A symptom of reduced personal accomplishment may include feeling incompetent and helpless toward helping students (Murray, 2010).

Prolonged stress contributes to burnout (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008); therefore, it is important to identify the phases of stress that lead to burnout. There are four phases of stress reaction that can lead to burnout: warning signs, mild symptoms, entrenched symptoms, and debilitating symptoms (Schneider, 2007). According to Schneider (2007), warning signs can include anxiety, fatigue, boredom, apathy, and disinterest with the job. Schneider's study also notes that most warning signs are emotional rather than physical. The second phase, mild symptoms, is escalated warning signs. Additional mild symptoms include difficult sleeping, body aches, loss of energy, and nausea. Entrenched symptoms occur when stress is unaddressed. The symptoms in this phase are more visual and extreme (Schneider, 2007). A person with prolonged stress can have a skin rash, severe migraines, loss of appetite, loss of sexual appetite, complete social withdrawal, high blood pressure, muscle weakness. Some people might consume excessive amounts of alcohol, which can lead to health issues and other consequences. People in the entrenched phase may feel ill and may make several visits to the doctor. During this phase an individual's career, personal, and family are at risk (Schneider, 2007). The last phase is debilitating symptoms according to Schneider. Symptoms in this phase can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes, heart attack, tension, suicidal feelings, asthma, and hostility. At this point, the individual has burnout and may exhibit

emotional, mental, and physical distress. Burnout symptoms and stress symptoms may be similar but differ in intensity.

Murray (2010) has identified the following five burnout symptoms categories: physical, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and attitudinal. Fatigue, low energy, physical exhaustion, sleep difficulties, headaches, colds and flu, and gastrointestinal problems are the most common physical symptoms (Lambie, 2007; Murray, 2010). Emotional symptoms are feelings of helplessness, anxiety, irritability, guilt or depression (Lambie, 2007; Murray, 2010). A person, who is exhibiting unproductive behaviors such as poor job performance, excessive absenteeism, drugs and alcohol consumption, and change in profession, may be experiencing burnout (Lambie 2007; Murray, 2010). In the interpersonal symptoms category, the individual may withdraw from clients, friends or family members. Attitudinal symptoms are related to lack of work ethic. The individual may begin to be tardy, absent, does not meet deadlines or avoid clients. Negative attitudes and cognition toward clients, family members, oneself, and life are signs of attitudinal.

Study Variables that Contribute to School Counselor Burnout

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been linked to success in service careers such as counseling and teaching (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). Self-efficacy is one's own belief that we have the ability to accomplish a task. In the workforce, self-efficacy can be the key to performing the assigned duties effectively. On the other hand, a person with low self-efficacy may think they are incapable of performing a task or feel as though they do not have the necessary skills. Low self-efficacy is associated with depression, anxiety, helplessness, and pessimistic thoughts about performance and

personal development. In contrast, people with high self-efficacy can strive at decision making and life performance (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Gündüz, 2012). High self-efficacy makes people think, feel and act confident.

There is a relationship between career behavior and self-efficacy. Career self-efficacy is the key to performing duties with competence (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). In the research by Baggerly and Osborn (2006), it was found that there is a positive relationship between high self-efficacy and job satisfaction, and stress reduction. Therefore, counselors with low self-efficacy are at greater risk of job failure and experiencing burnout.

Although school counseling is a human service profession that provides education and mental health support, few studies have been conducted on school counselor burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2010; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Butler and Constantine (2005) examined the relationship between burnout and a counselors' collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem is defined by the authors as "the extent to which school counselors possess favorable perceptions of their professional or social group" (Butler & Constantine, 2005, p.55). In addition, Butler and Constantine (2005) looked for any significant difference in burnout due to sex, geographic location, and years of experience of the school counselors they surveyed ($N = 533$). The instruments used included a demographic questionnaire, the Collective Self-esteem Scale, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educational Survey. Results revealed that collective self-esteem had a negative relationship with school counselors. School counselors working in a suburban area reported a higher level of burnout, and counselors

with more than 20 years of experience displayed a higher level of burnout than counselors with less than 10 years.

Gündüz (2012) conducted a recent study to determine the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout. One hundred ninety-four school counselors were surveyed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the SCSES. The results of the study revealed that there is a negative relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and emotional exhausting and depersonalization; however, counselors with high self-esteem showed positive level of personal accomplishment (Gündüz, 2012). The findings suggest that self-efficacy contributes to burnout among school counselors.

Counselor-to-student ratio. Education is the key to success for many people and opens the door to the American dream; therefore, it is highly valued in the United States. Every educator has a common goal, to help each child achieve the highest level of academic achievement; school counselors are among those educators. It is the goal of school counselors to help each child achieve academic success. School counselors, however, contribute to a child's school success in a different manner than teachers. Counselors not only assist students on how to succeed academically but also on how to deal with their personal and emotional issues. Unlike teachers, counselors are in charge of hundreds of students daily. On a regular day, school counselors may see over 100 students while conducting classroom guidance lessons, small group counseling and individual counseling. This number does not include "drive-by" students that may need a quick answer in the hallway. According to ASCA (2012), the counselor-to-student ratio should be one school counselor to 250 students. In addition to the numerous amounts of

counselor-to-student interaction on a daily basis, school counselors are also responsible for continuous collaboration with parents and teachers.

School counselors play a vital part in the academic success of students. School counselors can have a positive impact on improving students' academic performance (Carrell, 2006). This impact is reduced when school counselors are assigned to approximately 1,000 students, which is the case in many elementary schools (Bardwell, 2010; Carrell, 2006; Gündüz, 2012). Carrell (2006) stated that reducing the counselor-to-student ratio to the recommended 250 students, would decrease the number of disciplinary occurrence in a school. Reducing the counselors' caseload can also decrease burnout. Studies have shown that counselors with larger caseloads exhibit more signs of burnout (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Education has been tremendously affected by the downfall in the economy. School funding has been cut, resulting in a cut in personnel. This in turn has led to a higher counselor-to-student ratio. The decrease in funding is causing school systems to reduce the amount of programs provided. School systems are eliminating programs such as: art, physical education and music, as well as counselors, psychologist, social workers and nurses (Carrell, 2006).

The increase in student caseload, in addition to other duties (counseling and noncounseling) may increase the stress level among school counselors and in turn contribute to burnout. School counselors are vulnerable to harmful levels of stress due to their many responsibilities (Gündüz, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2010). Chronic stress can contribute to occupational burnout (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010).

Employment in a Title I school. In our educational system there has been and still is an achievement gap between different groups of students. The federal government has tried to narrow the gap by providing school systems with additional funds to obtain the necessary resources needed to assist high poverty, low performance students. Title I is a program that was created to provide at-risk students with a fair and equal opportunity to achieve academic success. The Title I program is one of the largest federally funded programs used for school improvement. Title I was established in 1965 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was rewritten in 1994, in order to include the guidelines of the NCLB (2002).

Title I funds are allocated to schools to provide educational services to students in high poverty and at risk of failing (Center on Education Policy, 2011; Kress et al., 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2008; "Title I," 2004). The goal of the Title I program is to improve the academic achievement of low-income students and close the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students. "The purpose of Title I, as stated in the authorizing legislation, is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (Center on Education Policy, 2011, p. 3).

Title I provides billions of dollars to schools across the country who have students at risk of failing and who are living in or near poverty. A school is considered Title I if 40% of their students are enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch program because enrollment in this program determines whether a student lives in a low-income household ("Title I," 2004). At-risk students can include students with limited English proficiency,

homeless students, students with disabilities, neglected students, delinquent students, and migrant students. A student can also be classified as “at-risk” if he or she has a high number of absences, lives in a single-parent home, or has low-academic performance or low income. Each school is unique; therefore, the U.S. Department of Education allows the school administrator to determine the best use of their funds. Some schools use their funds to improve the curriculum, provide tutoring, purchase materials, increase staff, run parental programs, and manage counseling.

According to NCLB (2002), schools receiving Title I funds must also make adequate yearly process (AYP) on state testing in order to continue receiving funds. If a school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, it is considered a “needs improvement school.” Students enrolled in a needs improvement school are given the opportunity to transfer to a school that has met AYP using the Title I funds, until their designated school makes adequate process. In addition to providing funds for low income students, Title I also holds states, districts, and schools accountable for implementing standards-based education (“Title I,” 2004). Some of the federal requirements are to have academic standards, test students in math in grades three to eight, report student achievement by average, ensure that all students are proficient by 2014, and achieve AYP (“Title I,” 2004).

Research conducted to establish the success of the Title I program suggest that Title I is responsible for closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, while others found that Title I only has a short-term effect on the students’ achievement (“Title I,” 2004). Although Title I schools receive additional funding, some people may argue that *non*-Title I schools may still have more funds than

Title I schools. Regardless of the funds received by the government, some Title I schools may still be at a disadvantage in comparison to *non*-Title I schools. *Non*-Title I schools receive funds from parent associations, private foundations, and business partnerships which are used to improve the school and instruction (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010).

Additional factors that may hinder Title I students that cannot be fixed with the federal funds are: few teachers seek jobs in Title I schools (which in some situations leaves principals with limited options of hiring an exceptional teacher); and some principals find that the turnover rate in a Title I school is greater because teachers experience burnout and leave as soon as an opportunity arises—while others stay but may not be as effective (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). O’Donnell et al. (2008) conducted a study to compare the stress level of teachers in Title I and *non*-Title I schools. The result of the study discovered that there was no statistically significant relationship between a Title I school and teacher stress level. O’Donnell et al. (2008), however, concluded that additional research was needed in order to determine if Title I schools can increase teachers’ stress level. Due to the number of limitations, a true determination could not be made.

Although, researchers have studied the effect of Title I on teachers (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; O’Donnell et al., 2008), there is no research today examining the relationship between elementary school counselor burnout and Title I schools. The results of this study adds to the literature by determining whether school counselors who are employed in a Title I school are at higher risk of experiencing burnout compared to counselors who are employed in a *non*-Title I school.

Summary

Further research on the factors that may contribute to burnout among elementary school counselors is needed, specifically on the relationship between burnout and school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school. There is a limited amount of literature on the relationship between burnout and self-efficacy, as well as student-to counselor ratio (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). There are no current studies on the relationship between burnout and employment in a Title I school for school counselors. The results of the study may help us to identify how these variables correlated to elementary school counselor burnout.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between school counselor burnout on the criterion variables of dimensions of 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) personal accomplishment, and the predictor variables of 1) self-efficacy, 2) counselor-to-student ratio, and 3) employment in a Title I school. This study also examined which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. A correlational matrix was created using Pearson product-moment correlation, to determine if there was a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school. A series of multiple regression analyses were used to determine which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors.

Research Design

A quantitative approach using a correlational research design was chosen to examine the relationship between school counselor burnout and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school. A correlational design was best suited for this study because it determined the statistical relationships between a criterion variable and two or more predictor variables (Howell, 2008). A correlational research design is appropriate for nonexperimental research where variables are not manipulated.

The purpose of this study was to discover the relationship between school counselor burnout on the criterion variables of 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) personal accomplishment, and the predictor variables of 1) self-efficacy, 2) counselor-to-student ratio, and 3) employment in a Title I school.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

H₀1a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀1b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀1c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

H₀2a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀2b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀2c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Research Question 3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

H₀3a: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀3b: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀3c: There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Research Question 4: Which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors?

H₀4a: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion.

H₀4b: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization.

H₀4c: Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

Participants

The study population consisted of all elementary school counselors in a suburban public school system in Georgia. The elementary school counselors in this school system serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade. This is a convenience sample as the researcher is an employee of the school system whereby 120 elementary school counselors were invited to participate in the study. All elementary school counselors in this school system were encouraged to participate but were allowed to decline if they chose. A total of 84 (70%) elementary school counselors participated in the study by completing an online survey.

Ninety-two percent of the elementary school counselors were female ($n = 77$) and 8.3% were male ($n = 7$). The race/ethnicity consisted of 59 Caucasian (70.3%), 17 African American (20.2%), and 8 other/multi-racial (9.5%). The highest education reported was 32 masters (38.1%), 48 specialist (57.1%), and 4 doctorate (4.8%). The most common category was married ($n = 68$, 81.0%) for partner status. The school counselors' main primary support systems were spouse ($n = 58$, 69.0%) and family member ($n = 12$, 14.3%). The percent of elementary school counselors with prior teaching experience was 53.6% ($n = 45$), while 46.4% ($n = 39$) did not have any teaching experience. The majority of the elementary school counselors were employed in a Title I school ($n = 44$; 52.4%).

The elementary school counselors who participated in this study ranged in age from 25 years old to 67 years old ($M = 41.99$, $SD = 9.75$). The number of students in the school ranged from 560 students to 1830 students ($M = 1,127.89$, $SD = 315.38$). The total of hours counseling a week ranged from 20 hours to 60 hours ($M = 42.89$, $SD =$

8.74). Years of Title I experienced ranged from zero years to 25 years ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 5.07$). The counselor-to-student ratio ranged from 1-to-250, to 1-to-1,060 ($M = 637.27$, $SD = 142.44$). The total years as a school counselor ranged from less than 1 year (0.10) to 26 years ($M = 9.66$, $SD = 5.87$).

Setting of the Study

The study took place in a large suburban public school system in Georgia. There were 77 elementary schools. Thirty-seven of the elementary schools in the school system were designated as Title I schools. There were approximately 164,000 students in this school system. The demographics represented in the school system include White (29.3%), Black (30.5%), Hispanic (25.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (10.4%), Multiracial (3.6%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.3%), English Language Learners (16.2%), special education (11.4%), gifted (14.9%), and free and reduced-priced lunch (55.9%). The school system is one of the largest systems in the United States. Many schools in this system earn state and national awards for academic excellence. The school system has been selected as a top functioning suburban school system in the United States and has been awarded the Broad Prize, a one million dollar prize awarded each year to honor urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income and minority students (Broad Prize, 2013).

Instrumentation

The instruments that were used in this study include a researcher-created demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E), the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (see Appendix F), and the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (see

Appendix G). These instruments were administered to 120 elementary school counselors; however, only 84 counselors completed the survey.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire was created by the researcher. It asked the participants for information related to gender, age, race, number of students enrolled in their school, number of hours worked per week, employment in a Title I school, highest degree earned, counselor-to-student ratio, years of counseling experience, prior teaching experience, partnered status, and support system. The following are the questions included in the demographic questionnaire: What is your gender? What is your age? What is your race? Approximately how many students are enrolled in your school? How many hours per week do you work as a school counselor? Do you work in a Title I school? What is your highest earned degree? What is your student to counselor ratio? How long have you been a professional school counselor? Do you have prior teaching experience? What is your partnered status? Please identify who you consider to be your primary support system? The questions related to the predictors were: Do you work in a Title I school? and What is your student to counselor ratio?

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey

The MBI-HSS was created by Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1996). This tool is a 22-item questionnaire that measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The emotional exhaustion subscale assesses feelings of emotional exhaustion by one's work. The depersonalization subscale measures impersonal response towards recipient of one's service. The personal accomplishment subscale measures feelings of successful achievement in one's work (Maslach et al.,

1996). The scores on the MBI-HSS range from low to high. The score ranges for emotional exhaustion are high (27 or above), moderate (17-26), or low (0-16). The depersonalization score ranges are high (13 or above), moderate (7-12), or low (0-6). The score ranges for personal accomplishment are high (0-31), moderate (32-38) or low (39 or above). A high score on the emotional exhaustion (27 or above) and depersonalization (13 or above) and a low score on the personal accomplishment (39 or above) indicate a high level of burnout. A low score on emotional exhaustion (0-16) and depersonalization (0-6) and high score on personal accomplishment (0-31) indicate a low level of burnout. An equal average on all three areas indicates a moderate level of burnout. The MBI-HSS scores can be correlated with other information such as demographic data and can best predict factors that can affect the MBI-HSS scores by multiple regression techniques (Maslach et al., 1996).

The 22-items in the MBI-HSS were written in statements about personal feelings. There were nine items in the emotional exhaustion subscale, five items in the depersonalization subscales, and eight items in the personal accomplishment subscale. A sample emotional exhaustion item included “I feel emotionally drained from my work.” A sample depersonalization item included, “I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects.” A sample personal accomplishment item included, “I can easily understand how my recipients feel about things.”

The MBI-HSS was self-administered and took approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. The participants received instructions on how to complete the MBI-HSS. The instructions read, “On the following pages are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job.

If you have never had this feeling, write the number “0” (zero) in the space before the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by writing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way (Maslach et al., 1996). The following statements represent the scoring scale from 1 to 6: 1 = *a few times a year or less*, 2 = *once a month or less*, 3 = *a few times a month*, 4 = *once a week*, 5 = *a few times a week*, and 6 = *every day* (Maslach et al., 1996).

The score of the MBI-HSS was generated by adding the numbers of the “how often” response to the questions in each subscale (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). Emotional exhaustion scores of 27 or more were considered high; 17–26 moderate, and 0–16 low. Depersonalization scores of 13 or more were considered as high, 7–12 moderate, and 0–6 low. Personal accomplishments scores of 0–31 high; 32–38 moderate; and 39 or more is low (Maslach et al., 1996). A high score on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and a low score on the personal accomplishment indicate a high level of burnout. A low score on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and high score on personal accomplishment indicate a low level of burnout. An equal average on all three areas indicates a moderate level of burnout.

Validity. The convergent validity of the MBI-HSS was determined by correlating the individual’s scores on the MBI-HSS with behavioral ratings from an independent person who knew the individual, as well as certain job characteristics and various outcomes that had been hypothesized to be related to burnout (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The correlations proved the validity of the MBI-HSS.

Reliability. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal reliability of the scores on the instrument. Cronbach's alpha is used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability of test scores for a sample population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The reliability coefficients for the subscales (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) were: .90 for emotional exhaustion; .79 for depersonalization; and .71 for personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). The standard error of measurement for each subscale was: 3.80 for emotional exhaustion, 3.16 for depersonalization, and 3.73 for personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). All reliability coefficients exceeded the value of .70. The MBI-HSS assessment proved to be reliable.

School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

The SCSES was created by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2004). The scale is a unidimensional measure of school counselors' self-efficacy level to perform counseling task (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). The SCSES consisted of 43 statements about school counselors' activities. The participants were asked to indicate their confidence in their current ability to perform each activity by using a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (*not confident*) to 5 (*highly confident*) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). A high score represents high self-efficacy.

The participants received instructions on how to complete the SCSES. The instructions read:

Below is a list of activities representing many school counselor responsibilities. Indicate your confidence in your current ability to perform each activity by circling the appropriate answer next to each item according to the scale defined

below. Please answer each item based on your current school, and based on how you feel now, not on your anticipated (or previous) ability or school(s).

Remember, this is not a test and there are no right answers. (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2004, "Instructions on SCSES")

Sample statements include, "Effectively deliver suitable parts of the school counseling program through large group meetings such as in classrooms;" "Incorporate students' developmental stages in establishing and conducting the school counseling program;" and "Understand the viewpoints and experiences of students and parents who are from a different cultural background than myself."

Validity. A validity study was conducted to determine the validity of the SCSES. One hundred sixteen master's-level students completed a survey to determine the relationship between their ratings on the SCSES, the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE), and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

The COSE, developed in 1992, has been used in 43% of studies on counseling self-efficacy. It measures micro skills, process, understanding the impact of values, dealing with difficult client, and exhibiting (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Internal consistency ranges from .65 to .93 and has a test-retest reliability of .87 for a 3-week period. The COSE scores have a positive correlation with counselor performance and with years of experience. A negative correlation with scores from the STAI and an increased level of self-efficacy after completion of a course in counseling proves the validity of the COSE. The STAI is a widely used scale that determines anxiety level. Test-retest reliability for state anxiety was low, .16-.62 and for the trait anxiety it was moderate to high, .65-.86. The median alpha coefficient was .90.

Reliability. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal reliability of the scores on the instrument. Cronbach's alpha is used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability of test scores for a sample population (Gall et al., 2007). The reliability coefficient alpha for the SCSES was .96, the mean of the item responses is 3.91 (with standard deviation of .77), the range mean score was from 3.4 to 4.7, the mean scale for the group of student was 168.07 (with standard deviation of 23.83) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The reliability coefficients exceeded the value of .70 which indicated that the SCSES is a reliable assessment tool.

Procedures

The researcher requested approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C) to conduct the study and also requested permission from the school system (see Appendix D) to survey their elementary school counselors. Once permission was granted, the researcher began to collect the data.

After receiving permission from Liberty University and the school system, data was collected by surveying all elementary school counselors. Participants were recruited via e-mail invitation. The initial e-mail contained a letter describing the purpose of the research, confidentiality information, contact information for the researcher, and survey information (see Appendix I). The e-mail invitation directed participants to the online survey, where they provided consent before beginning the survey. The survey included a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E), the MBI-HSS (see Appendix F), and the SCSES (see Appendix G). Each instrument contained clear instructions. The participants took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete the survey. A due date was set for the completion of the survey; however, a reminder e-mail was sent out one and

two weeks after the initial contact (Dillman, 2007). All potential elementary school counselors were encouraged to participate but were allowed to decline if they chose.

The researcher ensured that the data would be kept secured and that all participants and schools will remain unidentified. The data collected from the survey were stored on a password- and firewall-protected computer. The participants, school names, and school district's name does not appear in any data collected for the study. The school district was identified in the research paper as "a large suburban public school system in Georgia." All files collected throughout the research study will be kept for 3 years in a locked fireproof file cabinet located in researcher's home office. After 3 years, the researcher will shred and discard all related documentation.

Monetary incentives were not utilized in exchanged for filling out the survey; however, participants could opt to add their names and contact information at the end of the survey to be entered into a random drawing of \$50, \$30, or \$20 USD gift card from a vendor of their choice. The data from the drawing were removed to ensure anonymity of participants.

Data Analysis

The data from the surveys and questionnaire were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Then the data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed. The variables include scores from the MBI-HSS, SCSES, and information from the questionnaire (counselor-to-student ratio and employment in Title I school).

A correlational matrix was created using Pearson product-moment correlation, to determine if there was a significant relationship between school counselor burnout on the

dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school. A series of multiple regression analyses were used to determine which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors.

A standard multiple regression was chosen to measure the strength of the relationship between elementary school counselor burnout and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school (Howell, 2008). Multiple regression is a statistical procedure used to identify the relationship between a criterion variable and two or more predictor variables (Gall et al., 2007; Howell, 2008). Multiple regressions are the most widely used statistical techniques in educational research (Gall et al., 2007). It can be used to analyze data from correlational research. Sometimes relationships are found between two variables after the influence of a third variable has been removed. Standard multiple regression was a suitable choice for this study because the variables were entered into the regression equation at the same time. The researcher did not manipulate the variables. The choice of hierarchical or stepwise multiple regressions were not appropriate for this study. Stepwise regression requires adding and subtracting one variable at a time from the regression equation and it removes any variable(s) that is not statistically significant (Howell, 2008). Hierarchical regression allows the researcher to decide the order to enter the variables and allows variables to be controlled (Gall et al., 2007).

To minimize the likelihood for Type I errors (over-interpretation of the data) due to running many correlations, a Bonferroni adjustment was performed on the overall alpha for this study. The Bonferroni procedure is a multiple comparison in which the family-wise error rate is divided by the number of comparison (Howell, 2008). Essentially, this study had three independent variables (i.e., counselor self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) and three dependent variables (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). Given a total of nine primary correlations were calculated for this study, the decision was made to divide the original study alpha level of $\alpha = .05$ by ten so that the new corrected alpha level will be $\alpha = .005$. The table shows data that are significant at lower levels of probability ($p < .05$), however, those results were yield with caution and not emphasized in the same degree in the discussion chapter.

The minimum number of participants required to ensure appropriate power was 80. A significance level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance. The assumptions of normality, outlier, linearity, reliability of measurement, and homoscedasticity were tested. Normality was examined using frequency histograms. Univariate outliers were tested for using box plots while the potential for multivariate outliers were tested using the Manhalanobis distance test. Linearity was examined via residual plots. The reliability of the measures was examined using Cronbach alpha. Homoscedasticity was examined via bivariate scatterplots. The results of these analyses found these assumptions to have been met in an acceptable manner.

Summary

Chapter Three contains the research methodology and research design for this study. School counselors play an important role in the academic, career and personal/social life skills of students, ensuring that students' educational, career, and personal needs are met. Through individual counseling and classroom guidance, school counselors provide students with the necessary tools to achieve academic success and learn the appropriate personal/social life skills. School counselors also encourage positive home and school communication, so that parents and school personnel can work together to meet every students' needs. School counselors cannot effectively fulfill their role if they are not mentally and physically healthy. School counselors who experience burnout may not be able to assist their students effectively.

The results from this study provided data on factors that can contribute to school counselor burnout. Being aware of some of the variables that may influence burnout can help school counselors and administrators find a way to prevent or reduce burnout. This study was conducted with elementary school counselors from a large suburban public school system in Georgia. The researcher sought to find a relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school, and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The data collected from the surveys determined if there was a statistically significant relationship and whether the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This study also examined which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors. A total of 84 elementary school counselors participated in this study. The descriptive statistics (see Table 3) and frequency counts (see Table 4) for selective variables are displayed below. Elementary school counselors' responses to the MBI-HSS, the SCSES, the demographic questionnaire and the results of the analysis of four research questions are presented in this chapter.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Selective Variable (N = 84)

Score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High
Age	41.99	9.75	25.00	67.00
Number of Students	1,127.89	315.38	560.00	1,830.00
Hours a Week Counseling	42.89	8.74	20.00	60.00
Years of Title I Experience	4.88	5.07	0.00	25.00
Student-to-Counselor Ratio	637.27	142.44	250.00	1,060.00
Years as a Counselor	9.66	5.87	0.10	26.00

Table 4

Frequency Counts for Selected Variables (N = 84)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	77	91.7
	Male	7	8.3
Race/Ethnicity	African American	17	20.2
	Caucasian	59	70.3
	Other/Multi-Racial	8	9.5
Employed in a Title I School	No	40	47.6
	Yes	44	52.4
Highest Education	Masters	32	38.1
	Specialist	48	57.1
	Doctorate	4	4.8
Prior Teaching Experience	Yes	45	53.6
	No	39	46.4
Partner Status	Single	6	7.1
	Single with a Significant Partner	4	4.8
	Married	68	81.0
	Divorced	4	4.8
	Widowed	2	2.3
Primary Support System	Spouse	58	69.0
	Family Member	12	14.3
	Partner	3	3.6
	Colleague	6	7.1
	Other	5	6.0

Reliability of the Scales

The computed scales were analyzed calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients to determine the reliability of each scale. Cronbach's alpha is used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability of test scores for a sample population (Gall et al., 2007). The values obtained from this analysis are presented in Table 5.

The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the three subscales of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) were: .92 for emotional exhaustion; .73 for depersonalization; and .67 for personal accomplishment. The MBI-HSS proved to be reliable, although the score for the personal accomplishment subscale was below the .70 value. A score below .70 indicates that the personal accomplishment subscale is minimally acceptable (DeVellis, 1991). Although the alpha for personal accomplishment was .67, it is similar coefficient to the original alpha of .71 and it is consistent with research (Maslach et al., 1996). The Maslach Burnout Inventory is recognized as the leading measure of burnout and never discredited for its validity (Maslach et al., 1996). One possible explanation why there is lack of reliability in this particular sample can be because personal accomplishment may be difficult to measure for school counselors. School counselors provide the best advice possible; however, the student may or may not agree with the counselor's recommendations. In addition, some school counselors may not receive feedback on the effectiveness of their counseling sessions.

Maslach et al. (1996), developers of the MBI-HSS, reported alpha coefficient reliability values ranging from .71 to .90. The reliability coefficients for the subscales (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) were: .90

for emotional exhaustion; .79 for depersonalization; and .71 for personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996). This supported the MBI-HSS to be reliable.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient values obtained for the SCSES was similar to the one reported by the authors of the scale. The SCSE reliability value reported by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) was .96. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the SCSES in this study was .97. The reliability coefficient exceeded the value of .70, which indicated that the SCSES is reliable.

Table 5

Psychometric Characteristics for Summated Scale Scores (N = 84)

Score	Number of Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	Alpha
Emotional exhaustion	9	21.46	11.07	1.00	53.00	.92
Depersonalization	5	4.24	3.95	0.00	19.00	.73
Personal Accomplishment	8	40.94	4.48	26.00	48.00	.67
Counselor Self-Efficacy	43	4.14	0.53	2.50	4.98	.97

Analysis of the Research Questions

Research Question 1 asked, “Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors’ self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?” The null hypotheses tested by the data were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors’ self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between

elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

To test each null hypothesis, a Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relation between counselor self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (see Table 6). The correlations for counselors' self-efficacy with the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion ($r = -.09, p = .44$) and depersonalization ($r = -.08, p = .49$) were not significant, failing to reject the null hypotheses. There was a significant positive relationship between counselors' self-efficacy and the burnout dimension of personal accomplishment ($r = .49, p = .001$). School counselors with higher self-efficacy had a higher level of personal accomplishment, rejecting the null hypothesis for personal accomplishment.

Research Question 2 asked, "Is there a statistically significant relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?" The null hypotheses tested by the data were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

To test each null hypothesis, a Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relation between counselor-to-student ratio and the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (see Table 6). The correlations for counselor-to-student ratio with the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion ($r = -.10, p = .37$), depersonalization ($r = -.02, p = .83$), and personal accomplishment ($r = .15, p = .18$) were not significant, failing to reject the null hypotheses for Research Question 2.

Research Question 3 asked, “Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?” The null hypotheses tested by the data were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

To test each null hypothesis, a Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relation between elementary school counselors who were employed in a Title I school and the burnout dimensions of exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (see Table 6). The correlations for counselors employed in a Title I school with the dimensions of emotional exhaustion ($r = .19, p = .08$), depersonalization

($r = .02$, $p = .85$) and personal accomplishment ($r = .10$, $p = .37$) were not significant, failing to reject the null hypotheses for Research Question 3.

Table 6

Correlations for Selected Variables (N = 84)

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Counselor Self-Efficacy	-.09	-.08	.49 ****
Counselor-to-Student Ratio	-.10	-.02	.15
Employed in a Title I School ^a	.19	.02	.10

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$. **** $p < .001$.

^a Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes

Research Question 4 asked, “Which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors?” The null hypotheses for multiple regression tested by the data were: (a) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

To answer Research Question 4, a series of standard multiple regression models were examined for their ability to predict burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion (see Table 7), depersonalization (see Table 8), and personal accomplishment

(see Table 9). In Table 7, the model which included three variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) was not significant ($p = .28$) and did not predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion; thus, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis for emotional exhaustion. In Table 8, the three variable (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) model was not significant ($p = .28$) and did not predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization; thus, the researcher, failed to reject the null hypothesis for depersonalization. In Table 9, the prediction of personal accomplishment, the model was significant ($p = .001$) and accounted for 28.9% of the variance. Inspection of the beta weights found school counselors' personal accomplishment higher when the counselor had higher levels of self-efficacy ($\beta = .50, p = .001$; see Table 9) and those who worked in schools with a higher counselor-to-student ratio ($\beta = .21, p = .04$; see Table 9). Although employment in a Title I school did not significantly contribute to the model, self-efficacy ($p = .001$) was a predictor of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment. Counselor-to-student ratio ($p = .04$) was also a predictor although the relationship was weak, rejecting the null hypothesis for personal accomplishment.

Table 7

Prediction of Emotional Exhaustion Based on Selected Variables (N = 84)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>
Counselor Self-Efficacy	-1.78	2.29	-.08	.44	-.78
Counselor-to-Student Ratio	0.00	0.01	-.06	.61	-.51
Employed in a Title I School ^a	3.87	2.49	.18	.12	1.56

Full Model: $F(3, 80) = 1.31, p = .28. R^2 = .047.$

^a Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes

Table 8

Prediction of Depersonalization Based on Selected Variables (N = 84)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>
Counselor Self-Efficacy	-0.58	0.84	-.08	.49	-.70
Counselor-to-Student Ratio	0.00	0.00	-.02	.84	-.21
Employed in a Title I School ^a	0.11	0.91	.01	.90	.12

Full Model: $F(3, 80) = 1.66, p = .10. R^2 = .007.$

^a Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes

Table 9

Prediction of Personal Accomplishment Based on Selected Variables (N = 84)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>
Counselor self-efficacy	4.23	0.80	.50	.001	5.28
Counselor-to-student ratio	0.01	0.00	.21	.04	2.13
Employed in a Title I school ^a	1.43	0.87	.16	.10	1.64

Full Model: $F(3, 80) = 4.58, p = .001. R^2 = .289.$

^a Coding: 0 = *No* 1 = *Yes*

Summary

Data collected from 84 elementary school counselors were used to analyze four research questions. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and personal accomplishment. School counselors with higher self-efficacy had a higher level of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were not statistically significant related to elementary school counselors' self-efficacy. The correlations for counselor-to-student ratio with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were not significant. The correlations for counselors employed in a Title I school with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were not significant. The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that self-efficacy and counselor-to-ratio are predictors of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment, with self-efficacy being the strongest predictor. The results are discussed and conclusions are drawn in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This study also examined which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout among elementary school counselors. A sample population of 120 elementary school counselors in a large suburban public school system in Georgia were surveyed. Data from 84 respondents who provided information were analyzed. In addition to creating a correlational matrix using Pearson product-moment correlation, a series of multiple regression analyses and the Bonferroni procedure were used to interpret the results.

Summary of Findings

The researcher used a correlational research design to conduct this quantitative study. The findings from this research were driven by four research questions. The four research questions were answered by determining if the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

Research Question 1 asked, "Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment." The null hypotheses tested were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c)

There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

This study demonstrated that there is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The results of this research contradict with other studies (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Gündüz, 2012). According to Gündüz (2012), there is a relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Gündüz's findings suggest that self-efficacy contributes to burnout among school counselors. The results of the present study may differ from prior research due to the instrument utilized to collect the data. The instrument used in this study to determine the school counselors' level of self-efficacy was the SCSES developed by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2004). The instrument used by Gündüz (2012) was the SCSES created by Yiyi in 2010. Although both studies analyzed the data using a correlational and multiple regression method, the difference in the instrument may have affected the results. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) also found that there is a relationship between high self-efficacy and burnout reduction. Baggerly and Osborn's (2006) analyzed their data by conducting a correlational test and an one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs). The difference in the data analyses may have changed the results of the study. To date, there is no research that shares the present findings which indicates that there is no relationship between elementary school counselor's self-efficacy and burnout. There is limited research on the relationship between burnout and school counselors' self-efficacy (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Butler & Constantine, 2006; Gündüz, 2012); therefore, this study contributes to filling the research gap on factors that contribute to

elementary school counselor burnout, specifically the relationship between counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The results of this study found no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which contradicts with prior findings (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Gündüz, 2012).

The findings of this study showed that self-efficacy is related to personal accomplishment. Elementary school counselors with a high level of self-efficacy had a high level of personal accomplishment. These results of the present study are consistent with other researchers who state that counselors with low self-efficacy are at higher risk of experiencing burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). Research shows that high self-efficacy is associated with job satisfaction, stress reduction, decision-making skills, confidence, and achievement (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Gündüz, 2012). Previous studies have also found a relationship between career behavior and self-efficacy; it is the key to performing duties with competence (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). The results of this study agrees with prior research that indicates that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). This study adds to the body of literature on the relationship between self-efficacy and the burnout dimension of personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors.

Research Question 2 asked, "Is there a statistically significant relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment." The null hypotheses

tested were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

This study established that there is no statistically significant relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. These findings conflict with Wilkerson's (2009) study that revealed that school counselors with larger caseload exhibit more signs of emotional exhaustion. McCarthy et al. (2010) also found that burnout was related to caseload size. Counselors with more responsibility were vulnerable to a higher level of stress, which led to occupational burnout. The results of the findings may be contradictory to Wilkerson (2009) and McCarthy et al. (2010) due to the different research design, instrument, and data analysis method. There is limited research on the relationship between burnout and counselor-to-student ratio (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). This study adds to the body of literature and fills the research gap on factors that contribute to elementary school counselor burnout, specifically the relationship between burnout and counselor-to-student ratio.

Research Question 3 asked, "Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment."

The null hypotheses tested were: (a) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) There is no statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

The results of this study suggested that there is no significant positive relationship between employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. To date, there is no research on elementary school counselor burnout and employment in a Title school; therefore, this study is linked to research conducted on teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school. The findings in this study are similar to O'Donnell et al. (2008) who reported that there is no statistically significant relationship between a Title I school and teacher burnout. O'Donnell et al. (2008) conducted a study to compare the burnout level of teachers in Title I and *non*-Title I schools, and through the study discovered that there was no statistically significant relationship between employment in a Title I school and teacher burnout. O'Donnell et al. (2008), however, concluded that due to the number of limitations, a true determination could not be made and additional research was needed in order to determine if employment in a Title I school can contribute to teacher burnout.

Jimenez-Castellanos' (2010) study contradicts with the present research. According to Jimenez-Castellano, there is a higher turnover rate in a Title I school because teachers experience burnout and leave. Some principals state that the turnover

rate in a Title I school is greater because teachers experience burnout and leave as soon as an opportunity arises, while others stay but may not be as effective (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). The results of the findings may differ from Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) due to the research design and the data analysis method. Jimenez-Castellanos' (2010) study used a mixed-method approach, and a descriptive and multivariate inferential analyses. The present study used a quantitative method, and a correlational and multiple regression analyses. At the present time there is no research on the relationship between burnout and employment in a Title I school for elementary school counselors; therefore, this study contributes to the body of literature and fills the research gap on the relationship between school counselor burnout and employment in a Title I school. The results of this study are contradictory to prior research conducted on the relationship between teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school. Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) found a significant relationship between teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school; however, the present study did not find a statistically significant relationship between the school counselor burnout and employment in a Title I school. This research agrees with the findings of a study conducted by O'Donnell et al. (2008), which demonstrated that there is no relationship between teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school.

Research Question 4 asked, "Which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors." The null hypotheses tested were: (a) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of emotional exhaustion. (b) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor

employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of depersonalization. (c) Self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, nor employment in a Title I school will predict burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

A series of multiple regressions were conducted to determine which factor(s) (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, or employment in a Title I school) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. To minimize the likelihood for Type I errors due to running many correlations, a Bonferroni adjustment was performed on the overall alpha for this study. The results of the multiple regression analyses revealed that self-efficacy and counselor-to-student ratio did not predict burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; however, they were predictors of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment. The multiple regression analysis indicated that employment in a Title I school did not predict burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. To date, there are no research that has examined all three variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) simultaneously to determine which factor(s) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors; therefore, the results of this study adds to the body of literature and fills the research gap.

The findings in this study suggested that elementary school counselors with a high level of self-efficacy had a high level of personal accomplishment. These findings are consistent with other researchers that have associated self-efficacy with personal accomplishment (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007). Gündüz's study revealed that school

counselors' self-efficacy beliefs had a positive significant relationship to personal accomplishment. According to Lambie (2007), people who are experiencing lack of personal accomplishment may feel incompetent and inadequate at performing their work; this can be caused by lack of job resources, social support, and opportunity to grow professionally. Further, Lambie (2007) concluded that higher levels of ego development maintain a positive feeling toward their work. A person, who has been successful in completing a task in the past, will be more confident in being able to be successful again. Repeated success will give the person a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

In the present study, school counselors with higher counselor-to-student ratio exhibited a high level of personal accomplishment. These findings conflict with Wilkerson's (2009) study which suggests that counselors with larger caseloads tend to experience burnout. McCarthy et al. (2010) also stated that school counselors are at risk of experiencing burnout due to their many responsibilities, which include the number of students they serve. Other studies suggest that school counselors with a high counselor-to-student ratio are more vulnerable to burnout and do not feel a sense of accomplishment (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

The results of the multiple regression analyses indicated that employment in a Title I school does not predict burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This coincides with a study conducted by O'Donnell et al. (2008) which discovered that teachers working in a Title I school were not experiencing burnout. On the contrary, Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) stated that teachers working in a Title I school have a higher level of burnout; therefore, there is a

greater turnover rate in Title I schools. The lack of statistical significance between employment in a Title I school and burnout in this study is inconsistent with other research (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2008).

Theoretical Implications

This study used two theories, Maslach's Development of Burnout and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). According to Maslach (2003), prolonged stressors in the workplace may contribute to burnout (Lee et al., 2010; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Maslach identified three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is feeling defeated, drained or not having enough energy to advance (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Depersonalization occurs when people become detached from their job or other people (Lambie, 2007; Maslach, 2003; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Lack of personal accomplishment is the feeling of incompetence or inability to achieve at work (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). The present study contradicts with some of the theories of burnout identified by Maslach. This research examined elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school in relation to the three dimensions (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) of burnout. A positive relationship between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment was found, which concluded that counselors with higher self-efficacy had a higher level of personal accomplishment. There was no relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and employment in a Title I school and personal accomplishment. The data collected revealed that there was no

statistically significant relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The present study does not reflect Maslach's Development of Burnout theory in the areas of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; several causes may have affected the results of the findings. A non-significant relationship between the three variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization may have been due to the time of data collection. The study was conducted during the first month of the school year when school counselors are connected and engaged in preparing lessons, visiting classrooms, developing programs, and meeting with teachers and administrators. Therefore, the counselors may not be experiencing factors that lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The design chosen to conduct this study may have influenced the results. A qualitative research design may have established a more comprehensive understanding of how the variables (i.e., self-efficacy, school counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) affect elementary school counselor burnout. A qualitative approach may have allowed elementary school counselors the opportunity to express their feelings and perspectives on self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school, and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Bandura's SCT is described as a person's belief in their personal capabilities (Bandura, 1997, 2006). According to Bandura (1993) high self-efficacy is needed in

order for someone to be motivated to achieve their goals. Self-efficacy plays an important role in how effective people are in all the things they attempt. This study supports Bandura's self-efficacy belief in that the results suggest that people with high self-efficacy have a higher sense of personal accomplishment.

Bandura's SCT also suggests that people with higher self-efficacy tend to handle more stress, which lowers their risk for experiencing burnout (Bandura, 1997). People with high self-efficacy have lower stress and anxiety because they are able to cope and have control over troubling thoughts (Bandura, 1993, 1997). This research study found that there was a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of personal accomplishment. This coincides with Bandura's SCT (Malone, 2002) that states that low levels of self-efficacy correlates with lack of personal accomplishment, which may cause burnout.

Practical Implications

This study provides evidence that self-efficacy is associated with high personal accomplishment. The data suggests that elementary school counselors' sense of personal accomplishment can be enhanced by increasing self-efficacy. Gündüz (2012) suggested that high self-efficacy is associated with job satisfaction and burnout reduction because people with high self-efficacy can have higher levels of decision-making skills and achievement. Increasing the level of self-efficacy can make some people think, feel and act with more confidence. Gündüz (2012) discovered that there is a relationship between career perception and self-efficacy and that school counselors who have a positive perception of their job have higher self-efficacy and experience less burnout. This

supports the present study that states that school counselors' self-efficacy correlates with positive personal accomplishment.

The data collected in this study showed no relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. To date, there is no research that shares the present findings which indicate that there is no relationship between elementary school counselor's self-efficacy and burnout efficacy (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Butler & Constantine, 2006; Gündüz, 2012); therefore, additional consideration should be given to increase school counselors' self-efficacy.

One possible way to increase school counselors' self-efficacy is for the school district to provide staff development that will cover topics such as the role of the school counselor and ways to strengthen the school counseling program. This may include (a) developing lessons designed to assist students in achieving the competencies; (b) creating strategies to provide all students the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level; (c) planning individual activities designed to assist the individual student in establishing personal goals and developing future plans; (d) building activities to meet students' immediate needs; and (e) providing outside resources for counseling, consultation, referral, or peer mediation. The staff development meetings should provide the opportunity for school counselors to consult and collaborate with their colleagues in order to develop and share activities that establish, maintain and enhance the school counseling program.

The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation indicated that the relationship between counselor-to-student ratio and the three dimensions (i.e., emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) of burnout were not significant, which contradicts with other studies. The multiple regression analysis established that counselor-to-student ratio was a predictor of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment; however, the relationship was weak. The multiple regression revealed that school counselors with higher counselor-to-student ratio exhibited a high level of personal accomplishment. The findings in this study in relation to counselor-to-student ratio and burnout conflict with other research. Several studies contended that reducing the counselors' caseload can also decrease burnout (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Wilkerson's (2009) study revealed that school counselors with larger caseload are at higher risk of experiencing burnout. McCarthy et al. (2010) also found that burnout was related to caseload size. Counselors with more responsibility were vulnerable to a higher level of stress, which led to occupational burnout. There is limited research on the relationship between burnout and counselor-to-student ratio (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006); therefore, it is recommended that additional research is conducted to make a true determination on the effect of counselor-to-student ratio on school counselor burnout.

Although the present study did not confirm that large caseload can have a significant impact on burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, ASCA (2012) recommends that the counselor-to-student ratio should be one school counselor to 250 students. It might be beneficial for school districts to reduce the caseload so that it can increase the time counselors spend with students, teachers, and administrators in providing guidance.

There are services that cannot be provided adequately if school counselors have a high counselor-to-student ratio such as small group and individual counseling.

The present study did not demonstrate that elementary school counselors working in a Title I school experience burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. To date, there is no research on elementary school counselor burnout and employment in a Title school; therefore, this study is linked to research conducted on teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school. The research on teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school is inconsistent. According to Jimenez-Castellanos (2010), some administrators believe that the turnover rate in many Title I schools are greater because some teachers experience burnout and leave as soon as an opportunity arises, while others stay but may not be as effective. Conversely, O'Donnell et al. (2008) discovered that there was no statistically significant relationship between employment in a Title I school and teacher burnout. O'Donnell et al. (2008), however concluded that additional research was needed in order to determine if employment in a Title I school can increase teachers' burnout level. Due to the number of limitations in O'Donnell et al.'s (2008) study, a true determination could not be made.

While there was no relationship found between employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, previous research suggest that there may be a relationship (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). Some Title I elementary school counselors have greater demands put on them such as working with students living in high poverty areas, working with students who are at risk for failing academically, and dealing with the lack of parent

involvement (The Center on Education Policy, 2011; Kress et al., 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2008; "Title I," 2004), which may increase their risk of experiencing burnout. School systems could provide staff development training to school counselors employed in a Title I school, geared towards working with students living in high poverty and at risk of academic failure. This additional support may help elementary school counselors feel more confident, and in turn increase their self-efficacy and sense of personal accomplishment.

A standard multiple regression was utilized to measure the strength of the relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. To minimize the likelihood for Type I errors due to running many correlations, a Bonferroni adjustment was performed on the overall alpha for this study. The results of the multiple regression indicated that self-efficacy and counselor-to-student ratio are predictors of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment, with self-efficacy being the strongest predictor. The three variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) did not predict burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. To date, there is no research that has examined all three variables (i.e., self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school) simultaneously to determine which factor(s) predicts burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among elementary school counselors.

This study provides empirical evidence that self-efficacy has a statistically significant relationship to burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment. The findings also indicate that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment. Elementary school counselors with a high level of self-efficacy had a high level of personal accomplishment. These findings concur with other researchers who state that counselors with low self-efficacy are at higher risk of experiencing burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). Research shows that high self-efficacy is associated with job satisfaction, stress reduction, decision-making skills, confidence, and achievement (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Gündüz, 2012). There is also a relationship between career behavior and self-efficacy; it is the key to performing duties with competence (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012). It is evident, due to the results of this and previous studies, that there is a need to increase elementary school counselors' self-efficacy in order to reduce and/or prevent burnout on the dimension of personal accomplishment.

School counselors with higher counselor-to-student ratio exhibited a high level of personal accomplishment. These findings conflict with Wilkerson's (2009) study which suggests that counselors with larger caseloads tend to experience burnout. McCarthy et al. (2010) also stated that school counselors are at risk of experiencing burnout due to their many responsibilities, which include the number of students they serve. Other studies suggest that school counselors with a high counselor-to-student ratio are more vulnerable to burnout and do not feel a sense of accomplishment (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Although it was not a focus of the study, it was interesting to discover that nonmarried counselors exhibited a higher level of emotional exhaustion. A possible cause for this result can be that nonmarried counselors may have lower emotional support, especially those who are the only counselor at the school. A school system counselor support group might be created so that every school counselor in the school district can meet to support each other.

Another interesting discovery was the positive relationship between personal accomplishment and older counselors. A possible explanation can be that older counselors may have more counseling experience. In order to increase the self-efficacy and feeling of personal accomplishment for younger school counselors, school districts may assign a veteran mentor to all new school counselors. This might increase their on the job knowledge, skills, and confidence level which may reduce their chances of experiencing burnout.

Although this study did not focus on finding strategies to reduce or prevent burnout, previous researchers have presented some recommendations. Research suggests that burnout can be influenced by an individual's lack of coping skills; therefore, it is important that school counselors continually develop effective techniques to help them work through difficult situations (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Coping strategies, problem solving skills, social and organizational support, and other prevention/intervention activities have been identified as promising ways in which to mediate or ward off burnout (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Taking care of one's self physically and emotionally, having a balance between work and life, and creating and maintaining a personal and professional support system

can also assist in preventing burnout (Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). In the field of school counseling stress is inevitable, thus, school counselors need to arm themselves with the right coping tools to prevent emotional and physical burnout. While change can be difficult, it is important to remember that in order to be effective and able to help others, you need to be well physically and emotionally.

Limitations

There are several limitations that were considered when interpreting the results of this study. There are three external validity threats of concern in this study due to this being a single group descriptive study with all measurements taken at one point in time. One threat is the extent to which one can generalize from the sample to a defined population and the number of participants. Due to the respondent's right to decline participation, the researcher did not obtain 100% participation. The second threat is the Hawthorne effect which may have occurred because the participants were aware that they were part of a research study. The third threat is the measurement of the dependent variable (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment). Participants may have believed that they would be slanted in some way due to the possibility of socially desirable responses. It is unknown to what extent the participants answered the instruments in a truthful manner.

The sample size and population was a limitation. All 120 elementary school counselors in a large suburban public school system in Georgia were encouraged to participate, however, only 84 participated. Although the sample size was enough to provide valid results for the study, it only represented 70% of the elementary school counselors. The limited number of Title I and *non*-Title I elementary school counselors

who participated in the study may have affected the results. A larger sample size would have increased the statistical power. Participants in this study were not randomly selected and were limited to elementary school counselors in a public school system in Georgia who volunteered to be in the study; therefore, generalization of the results was limited to school counselors in similar roles, levels, geographic locations, and school settings.

The survey responses may have been influenced by the participants' assumption that their job performance was being assessed despite the participant completing the informed consent form. Participants may have been biased or dishonest and may have attempted to create an impression that their job is causing them to experience burnout or they may have wanted to create a favorable impression when responding to questions regarding their performance. Furthermore, the participants' responses may have been influenced by other people or any unknown factor.

The instruments that were utilized to determine the dimension of burnout can be a threat to internal validity. The study was limited to the dimensions (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) of burnout described in the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey. Burnout dimensions may be different with other instruments.

The result may have varied depending on the time of the year the survey was conducted. The school counselors were surveyed during the first month of the school year. It is possible that the school counselors were not experiencing stress or feeling overwhelmed; therefore, they did not report any symptoms of burnout. Perhaps the

results would have been different if the school counselors were surveyed at the middle or end of the school year.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study suggest that there is a need for further research in the area of elementary school counselor burnout. Several findings in the present study contradict with previous research on self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school; therefore, this study could be replicated using a different research design. According to this correlational research study, self-efficacy had no significant relationship to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Counselor-to-student ratio and employment in a Title I school were not associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. These findings conflict with previous research which states that there is a statistically significant relationship between burnout and self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Gündüz, 2012; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2008; Wilkerson, 2009).

The data collected from the multiple regression indicated that school counselors with a high counselor-to-student ratio have a feeling of high personal accomplishment. This finding also contradicts with previous research that suggests high counselor-to-ratio can contribute to burnout (McCarthy et al., 2010; Wilkerson, 2009). Due to the inconsistency in the findings, it is recommended that additional research is conducted. A specific recommendation would be to implement a different research design such as a qualitative study.

This study was limited to elementary school counselors in a public school system in Georgia who volunteered to be in the study; therefore, generalization of the results was limited to school counselors in similar roles, levels, geographic locations, and school settings. Future research could be conducted using a state or national sample population, and school counselors in every level (i.e., elementary, middle, high) to enhance the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample population may also minimize the likelihood for Type I errors.

The findings in this study revealed that nonCaucasian counselors and unmarried school counselors were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. Additional research could be conducted to determine why these factors contribute to emotional exhaustion. A specific recommendation would be to implement a qualitative research design in which counselors are asked precise questions that may lead to a clear explanation of the findings.

A qualitative research design could be employ in order to establish a more comprehensive understanding of how the variables of self-efficacy, school counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school affect elementary school counselor burnout. A qualitative approach would allow elementary school counselors the opportunity to express their feelings and perspectives on self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school, and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Conclusion

For decades, researchers have investigated the contributors of burnout among service professionals. Although burnout has been mostly associated with service

professions such as nursing, teaching, and mental health (Butler & Constantine, 2005), in the past few years, researchers have become interested in the factors that may contribute to burnout among school counselors (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Lent & Schwartz, 2012; Murray, 2010; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). The results of this study contributes to the body of literature and fills the research gap on the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, employment in a Title I school, and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

High self-efficacy has been linked to job satisfaction, and burnout reduction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Although this research did not find a relationship between elementary school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, it does indicate that elementary school counselors with high self-efficacy had a higher level of personal accomplishment. This study conflicts with other studies that found a relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhausting and depersonalization (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Gündüz, 2012).

The findings in the study indicate that high counselor-to-student ratio does not increase elementary school counselors' risk of experiencing burnout. The result of this study contradicts with previous research. Gündüz (2012) discovered that school counselors may suffer from burnout due to the increasing demand and expectations put on them by the school system. Several studies indicate that school counselors with larger caseloads exhibit more signs of burnout; therefore, school counselors with a large counselor-to-student ratio are at risk of experiencing burnout due to their many

responsibilities (Gündüz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

There is no research to date on the relationship between elementary school counselor burnout and employment in a Title I school. The literature included in this study investigates teachers employed in a Title I school. The results of this study concluded that there is no relationship between elementary school counselors employed in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The research on teacher burnout and employment in a Title I school is inconsistent. According to Jimenez-Castellanos (2010), there is a high turnover rate in many Title I schools because some teachers experience burnout and leave as soon as an opportunity arises. O'Donnell et al. (2008), on the other hand, stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between a Title I school and teacher burnout. O'Donnell et al. (2008), however concluded that due to the many limitation in their study, additional research was needed in order to determine if employment in a Title I school can increase teacher burnout.

The results of this study suggest that there is a need for more research to determine the factors that contribute to elementary school counselor burnout. Several findings in the present study contradict with previous research on self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school; therefore, it is necessary to conduct additional investigation. Several recommendations for future research have been provided. Although a more comprehensive examination is needed, this study has contributed to filling the research gap on elementary school counselor burnout.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey Approval



This is to confirm that upon purchase of a license to reproduce/administer, Yesenia Lopez will have our permission to use the MBI in her thesis or dissertation.

With any questions, please feel free to email us at info@mindgarden.com

Best,

Valorie Keller

Mind Garden, Inc.

Appendix B: School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale Approval

RE: School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale
Bodenhorn, Nancy <nanboden@exchange.vt.edu> Wed, Jan 4, 2012 at 7:55 PM
To: Yesenia Lopez <ymlopez18@gmail.com>

Hello Yesenia, this sounds like an interesting study, and you certainly have my permission to use the scale. I have attached a clean copy of it for your convenience.

Thank you for your interest!
Nancy

Nancy Bodenhorn
Associate Professor and Program Leader
Counselor Education
Virginia Tech

From: Yesenia Lopez [ymlopez18@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2011 2:13 PM
To: Bodenhorn, Nancy
Subject: School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

Mrs. Bodenhorn,

My name is Yesenia Lopez and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University. I am currently working on my dissertation and would like to use your School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale to collect my data. In my research I will be looking at the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout. Would you please give me permission to use your instrument in my research?

Thank you,
Yesenia Lopez

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval

June 12, 2012

Yesenia Lopez
IRB Approval 1340.061212: Factors that Contribute to Burnout among Elementary
School Counselors

Dear Yesenia,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling

Appendix D: School System Approval

June 4, 2012

Re: File ID 2012-89

Dear Ms. Lopez:

This is to advise you that your revised research proposal, "Factors That Contribute to Burnout Among Elementary School Counselors" (File ID 2012- 89), has been approved with the following comments and limitations:

The proposed study may suggest factors associated with stress experienced by elementary school counselors. It is designed to learn what factors might predict burnout among elementary school counselors.

Research Question 4, which employs a dichotomous independent variable, is improperly formed as a correlation.

Please note that schools and teachers may elect not to participate in your research study, even though the district has granted permission.

Important: When contacting schools regarding this research, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of this approval letter to the principal. In addition, it is your responsibility to provide your sponsors and project officers or managers with a copy of this approval letter. Be sure to use the file ID number issued above when contacting schools or district level personnel regarding this research study.

Please forward a copy of your results to me when they are completed. Also, we would appreciate you providing us with feedback on the research approval process by completing the enclosed survey and returning it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete this questionnaire and the attached Human Services Survey and Self-Efficacy Scale.

1. What is your gender? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. What is your race? _____
4. Approximately how many students are enrolled in your school? _____
5. How many hours per week do you work as a school counselor? _____
6. Do you work in a Title I school?
Yes _____ If yes, how long have you worked in a Title I school? _____
No _____ If no, have you ever worked in a Title I school? _____
7. What is your highest earned degree?
Masters _____ Specialist _____ Doctorate _____
8. What is your student to counselor ratio? _____
9. How long have you been a professional school counselor? _____
10. Do you have prior teaching experience? _____
11. What is your partnered status?
Single _____ Single with a significant partner _____
Married _____ Divorced _____
Widowed _____ Other (please specify) _____
12. Please identify who you consider to be your primary support system? (please select one)
Wife/Husband _____ Family Member _____
Partner/Significant Other (e.g. girlfriend, boyfriend) _____
Colleague/Coworker _____ Other (please specify) _____

Appendix F: Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey

Sample Items

The purpose of this survey is to discover how various persons in the human services or helping professionals view their job and the people with whom they work closely. Because persons in a wide variety of occupations will answer this survey, it uses the term recipients to refer to the people for whom you provide your service, care, treatment, or instruction. When answering this survey please think of these people as recipients of the service you provide, even though you may use another term in your work.

Instructions: On the following page there are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way *about your job*. If you have *never* had this feeling, write a "0" (zero) in the space before the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate *how often* you feel it by writing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

How often:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or Less	A few times a month	Once a Week	A few times a week	Every day

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

From the *Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey* by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. Copyright 1988 by CPP, Inc. All rights reserved. Further reproduction is prohibited without the Publisher's consent.

Appendix G: School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

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

Use the following scale:

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

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

1. Advocate for integration of student academic, career, and personal development into the mission of my school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Recognize situations that impact (both negatively and positively) student learning and achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Analyze data to identify patterns of achievement and behavior that contribute to school success	1	2	3	4	5
4. Advocate for myself as a professional school counselor and articulate the purposes and goals of school counseling.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Develop measurable outcomes for a school counseling program which would demonstrate accountability.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Consult and collaborate with teachers, staff, administrators and parents to promote student success.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Establish rapport with a student for individual counseling.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Function successfully as a small group leader.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Effectively deliver suitable parts of the school counseling program through large group meetings such as in classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Conduct interventions with parents, guardians and families in order to resolve problems that impact students' effectiveness and success.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Teach students how to apply time and task management skills.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Foster understanding of the relationship between learning and work.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Offer appropriate explanations to students, parents and teachers of how learning styles affect school performance.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Deliver age-appropriate programs through which students acquire the skills needed to investigate the world of work.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Implement a program which enables all students to make informed career decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teach students to apply problem-solving skills toward their academic, personal and career success.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Evaluate commercially prepared material designed for school counseling to establish their relevance to my school population.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Model and teach conflict resolution skills.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Ensure a safe environment for all students in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Change situations in which an individual or group treats others in a disrespectful or harassing manner.	1	2	3	4	5

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

21. Teach students to use effective communication skills with peers, faculty, employers, family, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Follow ethical and legal obligations designed for school counselors.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Guide students in techniques to cope with peer pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Adjust my communication style appropriately to the age and developmental levels of various students.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Incorporate students' developmental stages in establishing and conducting the school counseling program.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I can find some way of connecting and communicating with any student in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Teach, develop and/or support students' coping mechanisms for dealing with crises in their lives – e.g., peer suicide, parent's death, abuse, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Counsel effectively with students and families from different social/economic statuses.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Understand the viewpoints and experiences of students and parents who are from a different cultural background than myself.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Help teachers improve their effectiveness with students.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Discuss issues of sexuality and sexual orientation in an age appropriate manner with students.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Speak in front of large groups such as faculty or parent meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Use technology designed to support student successes and progress through the educational process.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Communicate in writing with staff, parents, and the external community.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Help students identify and attain attitudes, behaviors, and skills which lead to successful learning.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Select and implement applicable strategies to assess school-wide issues.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Promote the use of counseling and guidance activities by the total school community to enhance a positive school climate.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Develop school improvement plans based on interpreting school-wide assessment results.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Identify aptitude, achievement, interest, values, and personality appraisal resources appropriate for specified situations and populations.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Implement a preventive approach to student problems.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Lead school-wide initiatives which focus on ensuring a positive learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Consult with external community agencies which provide support services for our students.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Provide resources and guidance to school population in times of crisis.	1	2	3	4	5

Developed by Bodenhorn and Skaggs, 2004

Appendix H: Informed Consent

You are invited to be in a research study that is examining the relationship between school counselor burnout and school counselor's self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school. You were selected as a possible participant because you fit the criteria for this study, burnout among elementary school counselor. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Yesenia Lopez, Liberty University

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between school counselor's self-efficacy, counselor-to-student ratio, and employment in a Title I school and burnout on the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. This study will also see which of these particular factors may predict burnout among elementary school counselors.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey consists of: a demographic questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) and the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES). The length of time needed to complete the survey is estimated at 15–20 minutes.

Participation is voluntary. The researcher will take precautions to protect the participants' identity by not using the names of participants, school, and school district in the results or writing. The researcher will use the survey results for publications and presentation purposes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

There are no foreseeable risks for taking this survey more so than what you would encounter on a daily basis. It might be possible, as a result of participating in this survey, that you would have more of an awareness of unpleasant thoughts associated with burnout. The study may involve additional risks to the participant, which are currently unforeseeable.

Benefits:

Participants may benefit from increased understanding of factors that can contribute to elementary school counselor burnout. Participants may gain further understanding and practical information that may be applicable to future comparable experiences. The potential publication of the findings of this study may prove beneficial in the training of school counselors and school administrators. The results may encourage counselors and school administrators to find techniques to minimize burnout among elementary school counselors. It can also help improve training techniques, reduce counselor-to-student ratio, increase counselors' self-efficacy, improve counselors' techniques for working with at-risk students, and establish a burnout prevention program in the school system.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive any financial compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The researchers will take precautions to protect participant identity by not linking survey information to participant identity. The researcher will not identify participants by name. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Hard copies of the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and shredded at the end of three years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Yesenia Lopez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact the researcher at or ylopez2@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s advisor, Dr. Rita Schellenberg, rcschellenberg@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or e-mail at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understand the description of the study and contents of this document. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that I must be **18 years or older to sign this informed consent and participate** in this study. I understand that should I have any questions about this research and its conduct, I should contact one of the researchers listed above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I: Participant Letters

Initial E-mail to Participants

Dear [Elementary School Counselor],

Burnout is a problem for many counselors in the elementary school. School counselors take conflicting roles which may increase the risk for job stress and eventually face burnout. Surprisingly, however, not a lot of research has been conducted on elementary school counselor burnout.

I am writing to ask your help in advancing the research on elementary school counselor burnout, specifically in a study of factors that contribute to elementary school counselor burnout. You were selected as a possible participant because of your position as an elementary school counselor. The potential publication of the findings of this study may prove beneficial in the training of school counselors and school administrators. The results may encourage counselors and school administrators to find techniques to minimize burnout among elementary school counselors. It can also help improve training techniques, reduce counselor-to-student ratio, increase counselors' self-efficacy, improve counselors' techniques for working with at-risk students, and establish a burnout prevention program in the school system.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey consists of: a demographic questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) and the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES). The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. All answers are completely anonymous. This survey is voluntary and is part of my doctoral dissertation. Participants may withdraw at any time without penalty. This study is being conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Rita Schellenberg, rcschellenberg@liberty.edu

To participate, please go to:

The survey will close in three weeks on _____.

As a small token of my appreciation, participants may respond by having their names entered into a random draw for a \$50, \$30, or \$20 USD gift card from a vendor of their choice.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at ylopez2@liberty.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yesenia Lopez
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
School of Education

Second E-mail to Participants

Dear [Elementary School Counselor],

I am writing to ask your help in advancing the research on elementary school counselor burnout, specifically in a study of factors that contribute to elementary school counselor burnout.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey consists of: a demographic questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) and the School Counselor Self-Efficacy (SCSES). The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. All answers are completely anonymous. This survey is voluntary and is part of my doctoral dissertation. Participants may withdraw at any time without penalty. This study is being conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Rita Schellenberg, rcschellenberg@liberty.edu

To participate, please go to:

The survey will close in three weeks on _____.

As a small token of my appreciation, participants may respond by having their names entered into a random draw for a \$50, \$30, or \$20 USD gift card from a vendor of their choice.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at ylopez2@liberty.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yesenia Lopez
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
School of Education

Final E-mail to Participants

Dear [Elementary School Counselor],

I am resending this e-mail as I have received feedback that some of my initial e-mails did not reach their intended recipients.

I realize that this request comes at a very busy time of the year, but I believe this study will be beneficial because burnout is a problem for many counselors in the elementary school.

A number of surveys have been completed and we believe the results will be useful in the training of school counselors and school administrators. The results may encourage counselors and school administrators to find techniques to minimize burnout among elementary school counselors. It can also help improve training techniques, reduce counselor-to-student ratio, increase counselors' self-efficacy, improve counselors' techniques for working with at-risk students, and establish a burnout prevention program in the school system.

To participate, please go to:

The survey will close shortly on _____.

All answers are completely anonymous. This survey is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty.

As a small token of my appreciation, participants may respond by having their names entered into a random draw for a \$50, \$30, or \$20 USD gift card from a vendor of their choice.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at ylopez2@liberty.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yesenia Lopez
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
School of Education