EXPLORING SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOW POVERTY IMPACTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CAPACITY FOR ACADEMIC AND EMOTIONAL SUCCESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Latesha Dixon

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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Approved by:

Dr. Mollie Evans Boyd, Ed.D., Committee Chair

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate school counselors' viewpoints regarding poverty's influence on elementary school students' executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance. The impact of poverty on children's academic achievement is widely acknowledged, and school counselors' assistance to students from low-income families is considered paramount. The study provided a unique viewpoint regarding alleviating poverty by highlighting the crucial significance of education and skills. The guiding theory in the research study was the social cognitive theory that offers a conceptual structure for comprehending how school counselors' observations and experiences within the educational setting influence their perspectives regarding the effects of poverty on students. The theory interprets how these perceptions impact individuals' interventions, views toward policy interventions, and support strategies. The research employed a phenomenological approach to understand school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on self-regulation and executive function in elementary school students and the effectiveness of interventions put in place. The results will make a valuable contribution to the current body of literature by offering new perspectives on how school counselors perceive the effects of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance. Data collection was through interviews, whereas data analysis was through thematic analysis where common themes relating to the research phenomenon are identified, interpreted, and discussed.

Keywords: poverty, school counselors, executive functioning, self-regulation skills, academic achievement, interventions

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my family and friends that have supported me along the way. Thank you all for allowing me to discuss my ideas, research findings, and frustrations about the process with you all whenever I needed to. Your belief in my abilities to complete this process propelled me to work harder in times when I felt like giving up.

A special feeling of appreciation to my son, Tirra Dixon, for being my motivating factor to finish strong to show you that anything is possible when you put your mind, faith, talents and time into it.

Finally, I would like to dedicate my work to all the professional school counselors around the world that work tirelessly to meet the needs of all students no matter their economic background. May the work you do continue to shine through in the children you serve.

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The completion of this project would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of numerous individuals in my life. I would like to thank my professors, my chair Dr. Mollie Evans Boyd, and my reader Dr. Jennifer Roberts for their invaluable counsel. Their benevolent provision of guidance and counsel has resulted in the completion of this exact endeavor. I could not have done this without you all.

I am most profoundly appreciative of God. In regard to all that He does for me. The strength that He provided for me to complete this process was greatly needed and appreciated. His comfort in times of distress gave me the hope I needed to believe in myself which ultimately led me to the finish line. I truly believe that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

Using a variety of sources, Chapter One's purpose lies in detailing a framework to guide this research. Here, a foundation for the research problem and justification for the need to conduct this research is detailed. First, the chapter presents a comprehensive research background discussing the most relevant literature on the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of the research problem regarding poverty's impact on elementary school students. Over the years, the meanings and responses to the poverty concept have drastically changed. This is the case since many perspectives have informed discussions to investigate the poverty concept, such as through politics, individual experience, and consumer behavior (Atkinson, 2019). Nevertheless, as revealed in the chapter, there is a widening achievement gap in the United States between children from less fortunate and wealthy families (Raver, 2012). A factor contributing to the divide is socioeconomic differences, which has a huge impact on individuals' well-being and academic success.

Particularly, the effects on children's emotional awareness, behavior, and cognitive development are examined in the social context of poverty (Ursache et al., 2011). According to Johnson et al. (2022a), poverty is a social determinant of health that impacts individuals' physical and mental health. To address these problems, school counselors are expected to emphasize the significance of looking at poverty from deficit and systemic angles (Hutchison, 2011). The chapter also introduces the theoretical framework, influenced by Bandura's social cognitive theory, which provides insight into how poverty affects students' self-regulation, executive functioning, and academic achievement (Ozer, 2022).

Moreover, the chapter's situation-to-self section details the motivating factors that informed the decision to conduct the study and provides a discussion of the study's philosophical assumptions and research paradigm. In the research problem section, the focus is on outlining the context of the study and explaining the specific problem to be solved in the research. The research problem focuses on filling the literature voids on effective interventions to address the impact of poverty among students in elementary schools (Allee-Herndon & Roberts, 2019). This position is further emphasized in the research purpose section, which briefly states the intentions of this research. The significance of the research details the empirical, theoretical, and practical importance of the research.

Additionally, in the chapter, research questions were posed to get school counselors' perspectives on poverty's effects, methods, and barriers, as well as the suitability of their training. Understanding the implications of poverty and developing interventions to support students' academic and personal development, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, is the significance of this study. Lastly, key terms used in the research are defined, and the key points in Chapter One are highlighted in the summary section.

Background

This research background section summarizes past studies for existing knowledge that is essential to contextualizing and understanding poverty. Therefore, this crucial part of the research attempted to provide a solid basis upon which to explore the multifaceted causes, complexity, and consequences of poverty. Also, this section made it clear how ideas about what constitutes poverty have historically changed. Another important approach in this section was discussing how these new perspectives impact policy development, the delivery of social services, and how educational initiatives are implemented. This way, it was possible to reveal the

complex interaction between poverty, education, and societal institutions in relation to the research context. Overall, this section focused on the research's historical, social, and theoretical contexts, which revealed the complexities of poverty and the problems it has caused, especially in the educational context.

Historical

The essence of exploring the historical perspective of the research problem is to explain how the issue has evolved over time. The historical analysis reveals that there is no universally accepted way of defining the origin of poverty since it varies across cultures and regions. Nonetheless, various historical responses to poverty exist. People and political authorities may have diverse ideas about what constitutes poverty (Atkinson, 2019). Examples of different ways of thinking about the problem are "political" definitions, subjective evaluations, consumption-based metrics, capability-based measures, and minimum-rights-based measures. The poverty line is defined as "a level of personal or family income below which one is regarded as poor according to official standards," which the Merriam-Webster Dictionary uses to describe poverty (Atkinson, 2019, p. 29). The U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.) conducts an annual poverty count using two different indicators. Estimates of the minimum income necessary to meet basic necessities form the basis of both the official and supplementary poverty measures. People whose families have an annual income of less than that amount are said to be living in poverty (Creamer et al., 2022).

One of the most pressing societal issues affecting the United States today is the growing disparity between wealthy and poor children, both economically and academically. In 2010, more than 21% of United States children lived in poverty (Macartney, 2021). Perhaps even more shocking is the fact that, during the past 2 decades, there has been a 40%–50% widening of the

economic disparity between the children of the country's richest and poorest families (Raver, 2012). According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the poverty rate in the United States was 14.5%. However, it is important to note that this number was significantly higher for certain marginalized groups, including kids, women, people of ethnic minority groups, and the LGBT community (Clark et al., 2017).

More recently, about 20% of United States children live in poverty, with 41% living in households under 200% of the government's poverty line (Barry et al., 2021). Childhood poverty can lead to economic hardships, academic underachievement, cognitive deficits, health issues, and behavioral/social-emotional abnormalities. Therefore, these statistics emphasize the poverty trend in the United States and the need to address the underlying issues that are perceived as detrimental to elementary school students' academic achievement.

Social

Poor children and those with less educated parents are noted to have an increased risk for developmental delays in emotional awareness (Ursache et al., 2011). This relationship was somewhat mediated by children's pre-academic skills, self-regulation, and peer relationships. Ursache et al.'s (2011) research highlighted the need to consider contextual factors, such as parental education and poverty, when trying to understand how young children develop an understanding of emotions. These researchers also emphasized the need for targeted interventions to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds acquire the self-discipline, social skills, and intellectual preparation essential for academic achievement. Hosokawa and Katsura (2018) established a notable increase in behavioral concerns among elementary school kids from lower-income households as the academic year advanced. These concerns point to the need for

interventions to mitigate the behavioral challenges among students from low-income backgrounds.

Various scholars have linked financial difficulties to the problem of disparities often experienced in accessing educational opportunities. According to Francis et al. (2018), growing up in a poor household increases the risk of chronic stress and poor health. Allison et al. (2019) associated poor school attendance with issues relating to illnesses because when sick, most parents will seek medical help, but those who cannot afford these services take longer to recover and return to school. The longer students are away from school, the more their academic achievement is affected (Morrissey et al., 2014). Similarly, it has been observed that childhood poverty can impair emotion regulation, social connections, and behavior (Barry et al., 2021). The effects of this income disparity on children's educational chances are profound. The income disparity has made it more likely that low-income children may experience deteriorating educational environments, less secure neighborhoods, and fewer financial resources at home (Raver, 2012).

The function of school counselors in this development has been examined in research on educational reform, poverty, homelessness, and various social issues that impact families, communities, and kids (Johnson & Brookover, 2021). Johnson and Brookover (2021) noted that school counselors are professionals that create comprehensive programs using their knowledge, actions, and recommendations to help mitigate the challenges of students' physical and mental health as influenced by their living conditions. In a different study by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the findings indicated that school counseling programs positively impact students' educational, occupational, and social/emotional outcomes (Fye et al., 2020). The school counselors' perceptions of poverty and its impact on students influence

comprehension of disadvantaged learners' challenges and the efficacy of their support and treatment strategies for enhanced academic achievement (Hutchison, 2011). Thus, what these scholars suggested was that school counselors should perceive poverty as a deficit or as a systemic problem affecting students' academic achievement, where the scholars should help mitigate these issues.

Social determinants of health include living situations that affect mental and physical health (Johnson et al., 2022a). School counselors address many social determinants of the domain of economic stability, particularly poverty, through their comprehensive school counseling program, but there is little published literature on their knowledge, skills, and experiences in addressing students, families, and communities in relation to the economic domain social determinants of health (Johnson et al., 2022b). Consequently, these initiatives must place a high priority on both equity and access while also utilizing data to influence the development of forthcoming services and programs.

Theoretical

Haberman's (2010) "pedagogy of poverty" demonstrates that it is insufficient to provide low-income children with access to a safe and secure learning environment and adequate resources to achieve academic success (Terzi et al., 2023). According to this research, educators often have low expectations for and use certain teaching strategies with low-income children. Teachers' interactions with students suffer when they internalize harmful stereotypes and assume that poverty is caused by parents' actions.

The social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura asserts that personal, environmental, and cognitive aspects affect human behavior (Ozer, 2022). Bandura encouraged observational learning, where people copy others. Early development may lack positive role models for poor

children. Insufficient school and extracurricular resources hinder their ability to watch and learn from others (Treanor, 2020). This may reduce their learning motivation. The child's surroundings matter. Children learn healthy behaviors via family, friends, environment, teachers, and learning techniques. Bandura's social learning theory explains how society affects kids' learning. The theory predicts, shapes, and modifies behavior (Burns et al., 2018). School counselors use social cognitive theory to examine how poverty affects student executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic success. The assertion recognizes that school counselors' beliefs and experiences in school affect students' understanding of poverty, along with objective poverty data.

Situation to Self

As a school counselor who attended a school where the majority of the kids came from low-income families while growing up, the researcher related the difficulties these young people experience on a daily basis. My own experiences affected my perception of the particular challenges that poverty can place on a student's capacity for both academic and emotional success. The researcher has worked in similar educational environments where most of his students came from underprivileged homes and observed a repeating problem their inability to self-regulate and succeed in school as a result of the harsh reality of poverty.

The researcher has seen that many of these students lack the secure living arrangements and access to necessary resources that are required for building self-regulation abilities. According to Cuartas et al. (2022), children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrated lower levels of executive function and self-regulation skills. Both academic performance and social competence depend on having the capacity to control one's thoughts, pay attention, and regulate one's emotions (Cuartas et al., 2022). A further finding of the study was that children with lower executive function and self-regulation abilities demonstrated more

behavioral problems, including externalizing and internalizing behaviors. They frequently arrive at school weighed down by financial difficulties, which can cause worry, tension, and behavioral problems that impede their academic development. It is frustrating to see their potential strangled by events beyond their control, as these external variables make it extremely difficult for them to concentrate on their studies.

The researcher worked with educators, parents, and community organizations to offer the necessary systems of support so that these students can master self-control and accomplish their academic objectives. When treatments like self-regulated learning (SRL) are utilized to govern and regulate learning using cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational resources, students' academic performance and learning outcomes improve (Callan et al., 2020). By offering a variety of services and assistance customized to those requirements, school counselors like me may help children in high-needs schools succeed academically and socially/emotionally (Hines et al., 2017).

For me, solving this problem is a personal quest as well as a professional responsibility. The researcher related to these students through experiences and provided a secure environment for them to communicate their feelings and worries. However, not all school counselors and educators grew up having a similar experience to mine. This could limit their understanding of the effects of poverty causing educators to perceive poverty's effects on students in a negative light. The researcher realized that developing specialized interventions is necessary to meet the special requirements of students who are living in poverty. To inform such interventions, the philosophical assumptions guiding this research were primarily axiological. The axiological philosophical assumptions relate to the interpretation of doctrines of the good or values (Hamidi et al., 2022). Underlying values and beliefs shape a researcher's perspectives throughout the

research process (Shokhin, 2020). The researcher believed that all children deserve an equal opportunity to succeed in their schooling and that poverty should not be a barrier. Subsequently, listening to children's experiences in poverty settings is critical as their perspectives can be used to inform current practice and research. Thus, it is not sufficient to merely acknowledge their difficulties; we must work diligently to comprehend the impacts of poverty and learn about the tools and resources that enable them to self-regulate and succeed despite their circumstances. The researcher sincerely felt that these students deserved a fair chance of success based on the researcher's upbringing and experiences.

While carrying out this study, a constructivist paradigm was adopted. In using it, the role an individual plays in generating meaningful knowledge was recognized. This paradigm maintains that the transfer of knowledge is not simply from the researcher to the participants but is rather co-authored as a result of the interaction between the participants and the researcher (Fosnot, 2013). This paradigm was ideal for the study in that it provided room for in-depth exploitation of the research problem through the interaction of both subjects.

Problem Statement

The problem was that the effects of poverty on children's growth and academic achievement can be profound in many nations, including the United States. Recent statistics suggest that over nine million children in the United States live below the federal poverty line, which limits their access to basic needs such as healthcare, food, shelter, and education. As millions of these children have increased risk for academic achievement, their lifetime earnings are low, leading to generational poverty cycles (United Way NCA, 2022). Poverty keeps millions of elementary school students out of school, which affects their academic achievement (Lavalley, 2018). However, it was established that the ability to self-regulate and exercise executive

function, which heavily contributes to academic achievement and overall success is one area of development that poverty may impact among learners. Fortunately, according to Johnson and Brookover (2021) and Hutchison (2011), school counselors are uniquely positioned to study how poverty affects children's development and may have ideas for how to help students develop their executive function and self-regulation abilities.

Current research identifies many knowledge deficits regarding the effects of poverty on elementary school students' academic and personal development. Inadequate information regarding the development of self-regulation skills in children from low-income families has been noted to be a significant concern in addressing the underlying issues that threaten academic achievement (McClelland et al., 2015). Similarly, Allee-Herndon and Roberts (2019) established a lack of research assessing the efficacy of interventions to mitigate the impact of poverty on K–2 students' self-regulation, executive function, and learning. In addition, inequalities in academic achievement between poor and non-poor students have persisted over the past two decades (Paschall et al., 2018). Therefore, what stands in these studies is that the current interventions are ineffective in confronting the issue, thus, better strategies are necessary to improve elementary students' academic achievement.

Moreover, despite the initiatives previously implemented to curb the problem, the gaps in academic achievement between students from poor and wealthy backgrounds in the United States remain high. Thorson and Gearhart (2019) noted that although enhanced funding policies for low-income students have been implemented in the United States, it is uncertain whether these policies are closing the achievement gap. Murali and Oyebode (2018) identified a lack of research examining the efficacy of interventions designed to address the association between poverty and mental health. Murali and Oyebode (2018) discovered evidence of a link between

poverty and mental health problems, but there is a shortage of research regarding whether interventions can mitigate these problems. Generali and Foss-Kelly (2022) identified a gap in the literature concerning applying the Internally Reflect, Cultivate Relationships, Acknowledge Reality, Remove Barriers, and Engage in Advocacy (I-CARE) model in school counselor preparation to address student poverty. While there is evidence of the I-CARE model's efficacy in addressing poverty, there is not enough research examining the model's use in school counselor preparation. According to Blake (2020), although school counselors are expected to play crucial roles in supporting students based on the problems they faced that affect their academic performance, role conflict because of overlap with similar professions (i.e., counselors and educators), unclear job descriptions, and supervision by non-counseling professionals restricts the time counselors have with the students. These challenges limit how school counselors contribute to improving students' social and academic performance (Blake, 2020).

Based on these studies, various gaps were identified, including the ineffectiveness of interventions to reduce the effects of poverty on self-regulation, executive function, learning, academic achievement, and mental health. This study could address these gaps by helping others to understand the difficulties experienced by students who live in poverty and identifying efficient interventions to promote their academic and personal development from the viewpoints of school counselors, who are the main providers of mental health interventions in a school setting.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological investigation was to examine the perspectives of school counselors regarding the influence of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance of elementary school scholars, alongside the

efficacy of interventions implemented to tackle these concerns. The study sought to identify school counselors' perceptions regarding the influence of poverty on different factors defining children's development, including their self-regulation abilities, academic performance, and even their executive functioning. The study primarily relied on data from participants in Georgia. At this stage in the research, poverty was generally defined as estimates of the minimum income necessary to meet basic necessities, which formed the basis of both the official and supplementary poverty measures. Those whose families have an annual income of less than that amount are regarded to be living in poverty (Creamer et al., 2022). Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory asserts that personal, environmental, and cognitive factors influence human behavior (Ozer, 2022). Bandura promotes observational learning, in which individuals imitate others. Bandura's theory of social learning explains how society influences children's learning (Burns et al., 2018). The theory predicts, influences, and modifies behavior. School counselors utilize social cognitive theory to investigate how poverty impacts the executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic achievement of students.

Significance of the Study

The research has theoretical, empirical, and practical significance. The theoretical significance relates to the link between the study and other perspectives in the field. Empirical significance revealed how the study provided new knowledge, and the practical significance suggests the research findings' real-world applicability.

Theoretical

The significance of the study was in building theoretical knowledge that can inform specific and effective interventions that can support the learning and development of children from low-income households. The ability of children to regulate their behavior is a crucial aspect

of their holistic growth and achievement in various domains, such as academic performance, interpersonal abilities, and psychological well-being (Zakszeski et al., 2020). These processes manifest as individuals engage with their environment over a period of time. Also, the research comprehensively synthesized existing literature and debated on the impact of poverty on elementary school students' capacity for emotional and academic success, which is an opportunity to explore convergence between diverse perspectives, eventually enriching perspectives for future research. New perspectives and concepts that inform how poverty impacts elementary school students' performance will be unearthed for further studies in theoretical discourse. The diverse perspectives in the literature review in this study facilitated the clarification of inconsistencies and ambiguities Frankenhuis et al. (2023), which is critical in advancing professional knowledge in the counseling field.

Empirical

The study's findings may have empirical ramifications that can help better comprehend or invalidate current theories. Particularly, because the research explored and scrutinized theoretical propositions regarding counselor's perceptions of the impact of poverty on the capacity of elementary school students for academic and emotional success, this is crucial in increasing the credibility of existent theories. Likewise, the research introduced new knowledge and dimensions on the impact of poverty on elementary school students' capacity for academic and emotional success, which is key to informing the potential areas for future research. Also, although the context of the research was from Georgia, the findings could be generalized beyond this setting to similar contexts and populations.

Practical

The findings from the research will influence the making of informed decisions on targeted interventions perceived as effective in supporting elementary school students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement. According to Evans and Rosenbaum (2008), various interventions can potentially mitigate the adverse impacts of stress connected to poverty on self-regulation and academic achievement. These interventions include focused cognitive development, education for parents, and modifications to school environments. These findings and the findings from other studies convey the significance of educators, politicians, and caregivers who are actively working towards reducing educational disparities and enhancing academic achievements for children, irrespective of their socioeconomic status (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). The study has the potential to aid in developing effective screening tools, enhanced, targeted interventions for supporting children's development, and inform current policy on children's support programs and affirmative action. Overall, this study highlighted areas for improvement, seeking to introduce tailored interventions that met the diverse needs of elementary school students.

Additionally, because the study emphasized the significance of empowering communities for increased localized collaboration and multistakeholder engagement, this ensured that different stakeholders actively contribute to addressing the identified challenges. This is crucial for creating positive changes beyond schools' settings and into localized contexts. The study achieved this as it advocated for a multistakeholder approach among counselors, teachers, students, and other key actors in the education sector for resource mobilization, collective responsibility, and the design and implementation of interventions that are relevant to the localized context. Lambie et al. (2019) emphasized the significant value of the multistakeholder

approach involving families, counselors, educators, and community stakeholders in improving students' performance and achievements.

Lastly, the study findings in the long term will contribute to enhanced social justice and equity in Georgia as they will root out the disparities that have historically disadvantaged elementary school students' capacity for academic and emotional success. This is informed by the acknowledgment that based on the 2022 study published by the U.S. Census Bureau, it was found that approximately 14% of the population residing in Georgia experienced poverty in the year 2021. According to the data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), 20.5% of the population consisted of individuals under the age of 18, while 19.6% of this subgroup fell within the age range of 5–17 years. Besides, according to a survey conducted among school district administrators in Georgia, almost 70% identified poverty as the primary extracurricular factor hindering student learning (Suggs, 2017). Suggs (2017) noted that a substantial proportion of pupils in numerous schools in Georgia, over 500 in number, originate from low-income households, with this demographic being a noteworthy portion of students in several additional schools.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of elementary school students?

The research question explored the understanding of counseling professionals on the interrelation of research variables. Jensen (2009) stressed a theoretical understanding of the effects of poverty and their contribution to the student's stress and trauma. An understanding from a school counselor's perspective would be a validation or invalidation of these theoretical findings.

RQ 2: What strategies and interventions do elementary school counselors perceive as effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

The research question provided a more informed approach to the themes for counselor screening strategies and their subsequent intervention. While researchers such as Grothaus and Cole (2010), Bryan et al. (2020), and Eiraldi et al. (2019) discussed unique interventions for counselors in low-income schools, this research question validated the data with recent knowledge regarding how the research subjects helped their students deal with their problems effectively.

RQ 3: What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by elementary school counselors in addressing the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement among students?

This question explored the potential shortcomings of the present intervention strategies used by counselors in addressing the issue. Based on the shortcomings, improvement recommendations can be made. Generali et al. (2011) identified certain challenges for school counselors, which may even be more pronounced in a school with a high population of students from low-income families.

RQ 4: How do school counselors feel about their level of training regarding poverty and its effect on student achievement?

This question established whether skill gaps are potential hindrances to effective intervention. Syafril (2018) stressed the importance of counseling skills as opposed to experience as a prerequisite to effective counseling.

Definitions

1. *Academic Achievement* – a key product of the educational process and a predictor of many different short- and long-term outcomes (Hübner et al., 2022).

2. *Executive functioning* – a set of cognitive capabilities that also includes tasks like focus, control, memory, and quick thinking (Sutin et al., 2022).

3. *Poverty* – living with an annual income less than the estimated amount of the minimum income necessary to meet basic necessities (Creamer et al., 2022).

4. *School-Based Interventions* – strategies and programs that aim to improve students' psychological, behavioral, or social functioning (Frank et al., 2021).

5. *Self-Regulation* – the diligent management of prolonged efforts pursuing a goal and associated internal feelings (Dutra et al., 2022).

6. *Socioeconomic Status* – a mental construct that sums up one's place in the social hierarchy (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018).

Summary

Political, subjective, consumption-based, capability-based, and minimum-rights-based are only a few of the ways that poverty can be understood. An important social problem is the widening achievement gap between children from wealthy and poor families. Poverty can lead to problems with finances, academic underachievement, cognitive deficits, health problems, and irregularities in behavior and mood. Children from low-income families are disproportionately affected by academic and social problems, according to the literature. Changes in the classroom, poverty, homelessness, and issues within families and communities all highlight the importance of having a school counselor. Studies have shown that children benefit academically, professionally, and emotionally from access to school counseling programs. This study could

assist others to comprehend disadvantaged children's issues and discover appropriate solutions to

enhance their educational and personal growth using the viewpoint of school counselors, the key

mental health specialists in schools.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

Worldwide, poverty has been noted to be detrimental to children's growth and academic achievement. Most children from poor backgrounds experience vast and cumulative educational inequalities that slow their academic achievement and growth (Royce, 2022). The ability to self-regulate and exercise executive function, which are crucial abilities for success in school and beyond, is one area of development that poverty may impact. Fortunately, school counselors are trained professionals who understand how poverty affects children's development and may have ideas to support students develop their executive function and self-regulation abilities. Current research by scholars such as McClelland et al. (2015), Paschall et al. (2018), and Allee-Herndon and Roberts (2019), Thorson and Gearhart (2019), and Generali and Foss-Kelly (2022) indicated there are gaps on the effects of poverty on students' academic and personal development.

Moreover, policy interventions at the societal level are critical in tackling the fundamental causes of poverty and fostering academic accomplishments. Policies such as income support programs, affordable housing initiatives, and enhanced healthcare accessibility establish a conducive structure for individuals and households encountering adversities associated with poverty (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). These policies and programs ensure that factors that impede students' academic performance and development are identified and mitigated (Lederer et al., 2021). This makes sense since, a problem can only be addressed if its root cause(s) is understood. Thus, through the policies and programs, this is achievable because they provide monetary aid and guarantee affordable housing and healthcare, thereby reducing financial difficulties, mitigating stress factors, and setting an enabling environment for academic achievement. These policies reduce systemic disparities that cause destitution, facilitate more

equitable educational achievement, and increase the overall well-being of vulnerable students and their communities (Bower & Rossi, 2018).

The gaps in the literature identified by these studies include the effectiveness of interventions to reduce the effects of poverty on self-regulation, executive function, learning, academic achievement, and mental health. Also, the research looked into the significance of policy interventions at the societal level in mitigating poverty and their influence on academic success. The study intended to address these gaps by helping others understand the difficulties experienced by students who live in poverty and identifying efficient interventions to promote their academic and personal development. This was informed by the school counselors' perspectives, as these professionals provided mental health support and interventions to children in a school setting.

Thus, to accomplish this, the chapter has three main sections: theoretical framework, related literature, and a summary. These sections contribute to the current research as they provide context and justify its significance based on the identified literature gaps. The theoretical framework section details theories to guide this study and contextualize the findings. In the related literature section, a tight synthesis of the existing knowledge regarding the research focus is presented seeking to inform how to close the identified gaps. Finally, the summary section highlights key ideas discussed in the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

Different scholars have hypothesized theories that seek to establish the relationship between the causative factors to understand the impact of economic disadvantages on school-going children and their executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic performance. This section presents a framework that draws from different perspectives, cooperatively providing

insight into the known dimensions of the issue. Several theories, including the social cognitive theory, social reproduction theory, human capital theory, theory of the poverty cycle, and cognitive and sociological perspectives, are subsequently discussed.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory argues that personal, contextual, and cognitive factors influence human behavior (Ozer, 2022). Poverty hinders children's education through limiting finances, nutrition, and housing (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). These conditions can impede children's cognitive development, self-efficacy, and exposure to positive role models. Self-efficacy is a key factor in academic success, according to Bandura (Ozer, 2022). However, poverty can impair self-efficacy and hinder scholastic achievement in children. Bandura also promotes observational learning, where people learn by watching and copying others. Children in poverty may not have many positive role models during early development. Lack of sufficient resources for school and extracurricular activities worsens their abilities to observe and gain knowledge from others (Treanor, 2020). Because of this, their desire to learn and their enthusiasm for doing so may suffer. The child's environment matters.

Children learn healthy habits via their family, friends, environment, teachers, and learning methods. Bandura's social learning theory describes how social circumstances affect children's learning. The theory studies, predicts, shapes, and changes behavior (Burns et al., 2018). The social cognitive theory helps school counselors understand how poverty affects student executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic success. The declaration recognizes that school counselors' own views and experiences within the school setting have an impact on students' understanding of poverty, in addition to objective poverty indicators.

Sociological perspectives place significant emphasis on the impact of social structures and inequalities in the perpetuation of poverty. According to the tenets of structural functionalism, poverty is a consequence of social structures that engender and perpetuate disparities within society, such as restricted entry to educational and occupational prospects (Baker et al., 2020). The conflict theory claims that poverty results from power dynamics and imbalanced allocation of resources (Royce, 2022). In these circumstances, the vulnerable suffer, while the privileged groups benefit. Besides, the symbolic interactionism theory is based on the role of societal labels and stigmas linked with poverty in sustaining inequality and constraining social mobility. Hence, the theoretical viewpoints reiterate the need to implement comprehensive modifications at the systemic level. This could be established through initiatives such as social welfare programs, introducing fair policies, and curbing discriminatory behavior (Allee-Herndon & Roberts, 2019). The holistic approach effectively mitigated the root causes of poverty while at the same time advancing the principles of equal and fair communities.

Social Reproduction Theory

Pierre Bourdieu is one of the contributors to the social reproduction theory. This theory explains the process of poverty perpetuation from one generation to the other (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2014). Specifically, the theory reveals how social inequalities in institutions such as schools are perpetuated across societies (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2014). The relevance of "social reproduction" in the education sector is in describing how institutions such as schools contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities rather than working to mitigate these problems (Dóci et al., 2023; McFadden, 2023). Thus, with this understanding, it is clear that the social reproduction theory uncovers the recurring patterns of how people are disadvantaged in societies, whose implications are manifested in learners' cognitive and academic achievements (Cilesiz & Drotos,

2014). This is because inequality in the availability of institutional resources due to family social and financial standing and class is the primary determinant of educational achievement (Bourdieu, 1984). Based on the social reproduction theory, social institutions like schools and families establish and maintain social structures (Collins, 2009). When this happens, it inhibits innovation, prevents people from moving up or down in social status, and further entrenches existing inequalities (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2014). Students' sociocultural backgrounds shape and narrow the educational opportunities accessible to them. Hence, students' ability to make informed decisions is hampered by their own internalized frameworks for understanding and assessing opportunities and constraints (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2014).

However, recent studies indicate a lack of understanding regarding the reasons behind poverty (Brady, 2019). This underscores the importance of research as comprehending the causes of poverty within families and communities plays a crucial role in developing interventions aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty to support positive academic outcomes for students (Allee-Herndon & Roberts, 2019). This holds significance because children raised in poor conditions often lack the support and resources to cultivate executive functions, self-regulate, and achieve academic success. As a result, these children may struggle to develop executive functioning and self-regulatory skills essential for optimal academic performance, in school (Banaji et al., 2021). Here, the persistence of poverty is attributed to limited access to education, limited social connections, and challenges in transferring economic resources from one generation to another.

Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory provides a unique viewpoint regarding alleviating poverty through education and skills as sources of human capital (Aboobaker, 2020; Deming, 2022). The

theorists argued that when educated and trained, individuals' human capital and productivity for economic prosperity significantly increase. This is because human capital comprises the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that enable people to generate revenue and other beneficial effects for themselves, their employers, and society (Kuzminov et al., 2019). In other words, education empowers students for better opportunities to eventually end poverty cycles (Baker et al., 2020; Ekuma, 2019). Consequently, the theory accentuates the important role education has in supporting learners' positive change and facilitating improvement of their abilities, broaden their prospects, and facilitating social progression.

A strength with this theory is its emphasis on the significance of investing in education and training for a skilled and competent workforce (Deming, 2022). This is important amid rapid disruptions in the workplace as education, and training will ensure individuals are knowledgeable and competent. Besides, beyond formal education, the theory facilitates holistic learning, including improving behaviors and attitudes that optimize human capital (Baker et al., 2020; Ekuma, 2019). However, a potential limitation of the human capital theory is that it overlooks how underlying factors such as inequalities in the education sector, income, or job market deny the already disadvantaged opportunities and resources essential for social mobility (Marginson, 2019). In other words, the theory oversimplifies the complex relationship between different factors that lead to poverty in societies. With such limitations, Marginson (2019) argued that the theory fails the realism test.

Theory of Poverty Cycle

The theory of the poverty cycle underscores the self-sustaining characteristic of poverty. Often, students and families encounter difficulties breaking free from their poor conditions. The theory posits that poverty is not solely a matter of financial status. Rather, poverty is a

multifaceted network of interconnected factors perpetuating its persistence across generations (Malhotra, 2022). Further, this theory indicates that such economic constraints further lead to limited access to better education, health care, and opportunities for socioeconomic elevation (King et al., 2021). That would mean children born to low-income parents have very few opportunities and resources for social, academic, and economic elevation. Consequently, according to the theory, the perpetuation of poverty within social systems creates a deeply entrenched cycle. This poses significant challenges for students attempting to overcome its grip without external support and interventions. Thus, the theory is important in exploring the challenges students from poverty-stricken backgrounds face. However, it has been criticized for blaming victims for circumstances that are out of their control. The theory ignores factors such as access to good jobs, quality education, and quality healthcare that influence the cycle of poverty (Addae-Korankye, 2019).

Related Literature

Definition and Conceptualization of Poverty

Poverty is a complex phenomenon encompassing various dimensions, such as income poverty, material deprivation, social exclusion, and spatial inequalities (Ravallion, 2016). Income poverty pertains to the insufficiency of monetary means required to fulfill fundamental necessities. Often, the dimension is measured through poverty lines that impose a minimum threshold (Hagenaars, 2017; Ravallion, 2016). The material deprivation dimension focuses on the nonexistence of crucial commodities and amenities. Here, some families are secluded from the consumption of goods and services perceived norm to others, because the former cannot afford. This dimension gives factual information about the living condition in a family (Israel & Spannagel, 2019; Ravallion, 2016).

Additionally, the social exclusion dimension marginalizes students and restricts their access to social and cultural opportunities (Ravallion, 2016). This is because the marginalized have restricted resources and opportunities compared to other groups with easy access to these opportunities and resources (Tsolou et al., 2021). Finally, the spatial inequalities describe the uneven allocation of opportunities and resources in different regions (Gagne & Nwadinobi, 2018). Thus, with this understanding, focusing on the multifaceted dimensions of poverty is crucial. The goal will be on implementing policy interventions that address poverty to promote social equity (Hutchison, 2011).

Multidimensional Nature of Poverty

Scholars such as Burchi et al. (2020) and Das et al. (2021) acknowledged that poverty is multidimensional. This is evident in how health, education, social capital, and housing interact with poverty. A direct link exists between poverty and these factors. For example, the lack of adequate access to high-quality education aggravates poverty levels by limiting how students acquire knowledge and skills for social and economic progress (Hossain & Hickey, 2019). This also insinuates that in impoverished communities, social capital development is restrained as the required resources are unavailable. While this would be expected in developing countries that lack adequate resources for learners Hossain and Hickey (2019), it has been observed in developed countries such as the United States (Goodman, 2018).

Similarly, adverse health outcomes impede a student's capacity to engage in gainful employment and secure a consistent source of income (United Nations, 2022). Substandard housing conditions potentially exacerbate health issues and impede social advancement (Swope & Hernández, 2019). Hence, the interdependence of poverty dimensions causes a complex network of obstacles students and communities must surmount to break free from poverty

(Cuartas et al., 2022). To comprehensively address poverty, it is necessary to implement interventions that target the consistent dimensions of poverty while acknowledging their interdependence and the necessity for holistic strategies.

Therefore, multiple deprivations contribute to the persistence of poverty by establishing a self-perpetuating cycle of limited opportunities and disadvantages (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Multiple dimensions of deprivation such as income, education, health, and social capital are noted to compound, in ways that exaggerate the difficulties that learners and communities face (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Consequently, the implications are portrayed in restricted educational achievement, obstacles securing well-paying jobs, and challenges in accessing quality housing and essential health services. Combined, these occurrences contribute to a self-perpetuating poverty cycle. Hence, to disrupt the recurring patterns, a holistic strategy that acknowledges the interrelated nature of poverty and education is necessary.

Importance of Understanding Poverty Effects and Cognitive Abilities

There are many perspectives justifying the importance of research to comprehend the implications of poverty on cognitive abilities. As revealed in this section, poverty-related cognitive deficits have important ramifications for students, counseling professionals, learning institutions, communities, and society. First, for students, these shortcomings may impede academic achievement, limit professional growth, and perpetuate intergenerational poverty cycle. When this happens, mental health concerns and significantly reduced levels of self-confidence are potential problems that emerge (Gagne & Nwadinobi, 2018). Second, among counseling professionals, poverty affects shape knowledge regarding the nature of interventions to be implemented to support learners in developing their cognitive abilities (Galassi, 2017). This is crucial for learners' development and achievement. Also, as learning institutions understand the

link between poverty effects and cognitive abilities, they can strategize how best to mitigate these issues, especially among impoverished and most deserving students (Savitz-Romer & Nicola, 2022).

Moreover, in communities, a substantial population exhibiting cognitive impairments potentially burdens social welfare provisions escalates criminal activity and diminishes efficiency (Petersilia, 2000). At the same time, the societal implications encompass reduced economic expansion, heightened income disparity, and restricted social mobility (Bruns et al., 2022). Implementing targeted interventions and ensuring equitable access to quality education and resources is imperative to mitigate poverty-related cognitive deficits. This approach is essential for promoting student well-being, fostering community cohesion, and cultivating a more inclusive and prosperous society.

Interventions aimed at enhancing cognitive abilities have significant potential for disrupting the perpetuation of poverty. Interventions that target the cognitive deficiencies linked to poverty potentially enhance students' executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance, thereby empowering them (Heckman, 2006). Providing cognitive skills to students augment their likelihood of achieving academic success, accessing improved employment prospects, and experiencing heightened social mobility (Baker et al., 2020). By implementing focused interventions to improve cognitive abilities, it is possible to interrupt the cyclical nature of poverty and establish opportunities for students to flourish, ultimately resulting in a more equitable and prosperous society.

Contextual Factors

The experience and conceptualization of poverty are due to contextual factors, which include cultural, historical, and political aspects. The culture shapes a community's societal

norms, values, and beliefs. As a result, these factors impact the community's perceptions of poverty and the pursued response actions (Gagne & Nwadinobi, 2018). The idea of cultural value aids comprehension of inequality and impoverished conditions. It clarifies how parents from more privileged backgrounds can impart benefits upon their offspring by acclimating them to norms of conduct and thought prized by higher learning institutions (Small et al., 2010). Original cultural capital conceptualization, children from lower-income and working-class backgrounds are at a disadvantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This is because these children are not taught middle-class norms and values within the school settings (Small et al., 2010).

In addition, children from low-income and working-class families may experience "symbolic violence." This lowers their sense of self-worth and esteem as a result of judging themselves and their backgrounds based on the criteria of middle-class culture (Small et al., 2010). Historical factors, such as colonization, systemic discrimination, and economic policies, perpetuate structural inequalities that sustain poverty (Mosse, 2013; Stewart & Langer, 2008). Comprehending the contextual elements encompassing poverty is imperative in formulating efficacious interventions and tackling poverty's intricate and diverse characteristics.

Executive Functioning and Self-Regulation Skills

Components of Executive Functioning

Executive functioning pertains to a collection of cognitive processes that facilitate students' ability to efficiently regulate their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions (Diamond, 2013). The construct comprises various constituent parts, such as the ability to focus, retain and manipulate information, suppress irrelevant stimuli, adapt to changing circumstances, and resolve complex tasks (Generali & Foss-Kelly, 2022). Additionally, Blair and Raver (2016) suggested that the cognitive process of attention enables students to concentrate on pertinent

information while disregarding irrelevant stimuli selectively. The concept of working memory

pertains to the cognitive ability to retain and manipulate information for immediate utilization

temporarily (Blair & Raver, 2016). The ability to suppress impulsive or irrelevant responses is

facilitated by inhibitory control in students. Cognitive flexibility identifies a cognitive ability

such that learners can adjust their thinking and transition between perspectives or tasks (Blair &

Raver, 2016). As a measure of executive function, cognitive flexibility informs understanding of

how individuals develop higher mental order (Logue & Gould, 2014). This is important since the

process of problem-solving entails the examination of varying circumstances, the creation of

strategies, and assessing possible resolutions. Overall, comprehending the diverse constituents of

executive functioning is critical in facilitating grasp for potential interventions to eradicate

poverty, and at the same time promote educational achievement.

       Moreover, it has been revealed that the interplay of executive functioning components

plays a pivotal role in fostering the growth of self-regulatory skills. In classroom settings, self-

regulatory skills are vital in preparedness and for future academic achievement (Liew, 2012).

Key aspects involved in individuals' self-regulation ability are cognitive processes and

behavioral processes. The ability to regulate oneself heavily relies on attention, enabling students

to concentrate on pertinent objectives and duties. As a result, the cognitive ability enables

learners to acquire knowledge, retain it, and retrieve it for application in real-world, such as

through guiding behaviors and cognitive processes (Spiro et al., 2013).

       The ability to regulate impulses, resist distractions, and inhibit impulsive behaviors are

facilitated by inhibitory control. Cognitive flexibility is a cognitive ability that enables students

to modify their thoughts and actions in response to varying situations, thereby promoting

effective self-regulation (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). The ability to solve problems is a crucial

component of effective self-regulation, as it empowers students to identify and resolve any issues they may face. The constituents above cumulatively facilitate the capacity of students to manage their cognitive processes, affective states, and conduct, thereby fostering self-restraint, the accomplishment of objectives, and comprehensive self-regulatory proficiencies.

Development of Executive Functioning

Executive functioning significantly changes between early childhood and adolescence. For instance, the most fundamental executive functions, such as attention, working memory, and inhibitory control, appear and start building up in the first years of childhood (Baker et al., 2020). More complex ones develop later, during adolescence, when these processes are usually fully ended, signifying their maturation into advanced ones in which higher-order cognitive functions like goal-directed behavior, problem-solving, and mental flexibility are enabled (Kievit, 2020). Development of executive function follows an ordered sequence where the lower-order cognitive control and self-regulatory skills gradually improve as the student matures from early childhood to adolescence. Genetic, neurological, and environmental interactions influence executive functioning. Genetics plays a general role in the neurological design and functioning of executive functions, where genetic variation in individuals at least dictates efficiency and effectiveness in these cognitive processes (Diamond, 2013). The part of the brain most associated with executive functions generally, in cognitive maturation, is the prefrontal cortex (Kievit, 2020). This process happens significantly in the ages between childhood and adolescence.

In adolescent development, research concerning the complex relationship between the onset of puberty and the maturation of executive functioning skills has gained significant interest (Boelema et al., 2014; Chaku & Hoyt, 2019). This is based on the acknowledgement that adolescence is a period of rapid biological, social, and cognitive developments (Boelema et al.,

2014; Hofmann et al., 2012). Hofmann et al. (2012) echoed that the distinction between "hot" executive functioning, which is engaged by emotional or motivational contexts, and "cold" executive functioning, often activated in non-affective circumstances, is crucial. Aligned with the "dual systems" perspective of exploring adolescent behavior, Chaku and Hoyt (2019) emphasized the distinct developmental trajectories in adolescence.

These findings point to a reorganization happening in the prefrontal cortex. In this brain section, it cold executive functions like attention and cognitive control are controlled and managed. Similarly, it is here, where the prefrontal cortex brain region governs how pubertal hormones influence this process (Chaku & Hoyt, 2019). Another crucial finding in this research was the potential overactivation of subcortical brain regions, which are responsible for overseeing hot executive functions such as self-control. When this happens, it could lead to a decline in self-control and an increase in impulsivity and propensity for risk-taking (Chaku & Hoyt, 2019; Collado et al., 2014). Such disruptions are detrimental to students' ability to pay attention and cognitive control, which inhibit their academic achievement. On the positive side, Duell and Steinberg (2019) noted that these risk-taking habits among adolescents could promote socially acceptable and constructive behaviors to support development and achievement, including in school.

Implications for Daily Functioning

Executive functions are crucial in a person's daily life, as they represent the diversity of cognitive processes needed in managing tasks, choice-making, and the regulation of behavior. The study by Cuartas et al. (2022) explained executive function during the early years of life and its importance for developing self-regulation abilities and behaviors. When applied in real-world settings, executive functioning, specifically working memory, is needed to temporality hold and

manipulate information. This cognitive ability is helpful for tasks in following multi-step instructions and solving complex problems. Besides, inhibitory control is a sub-component of executive function. It involves the ability to stop or withhold impulsive actions (Cuartas et al., 2022). This can be further specified as stopping an impulsive action or response. When one has inhibitory control, individuals can resist being tempted or distracted by something else while sustaining attention at work or within a budget. The Cuartas et al.'s (2022) study reiterates on how executive functioning skills, since childhood, affect different realms of daily functioning, increase self-regulation, facilitate adaptability, and allow for smooth interactions with the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, in a critical view of the traditional methods of assessment regarding executive functions, Camerota et al. (2020) made important empirical additions. The discussion in the measurement of executive functioning is essential since it is an added motivation that has been made to guide practitioners in evaluating and supporting executive functioning in everyday life. This is important in the accurate measurement of executive function abilities since the measure is associated with an assessment of the revelation of specific domains of deficiency in these skills that require further development. An individual who is well developed in executive functioning skills in planning and organization can always have an extremely high ability to manage time, evident in how time is effectively allocated to commitments and activities in daily life. However, those who have weaker executive functioning skills in inhibitory control may experience more of an issue with resisting distractions in task demands or in showing self-regulation in social situations. The study that Drigas and Karyotaki (2019) conducted is a reminder of the practicality of executive functioning effects in real life and the importance of improving understanding of executive functioning to better focus on its impact on everyday

functioning. Enhanced executive functioning abilities are associated with superior academic achievement, heightened levels of involvement, and superior problem-solving proficiencies (Zelazo & Carlson, 2020). The cultivation and augmentation of executive functioning abilities are imperative for students' achievement, contentment, and holistic well-being.

Relationship Between Poverty and Executive Functioning

Impact of Poverty on Executive Functioning

The existing body of empirical research has consistently shown that poverty hurts executive functioning abilities, affecting both children and adults. McClelland and Cameron (2011) further pointed out that children from less wealthy socioeconomic statuses are likelier to present relatively reduced executive function capacities that include attention, working memory, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving. Chronic stressors associated with poverty—such as unstable housing, limited resource access, and violence—compromise the development and functioning of the prefrontal cortex, the seat of executive functions. McNeilly et al. (2021) also stated that the executive functioning abilities of low-income students are compromised primarily by chronic stress and environmental factors, with available resources in the environment being compromised in constant, stressed environments. It is obvious that the prefrontal cortex, with all its executive processes, would be compromised through unremitting stressful conditions that involve, but are not limited to, financial uncertainty, neighborhood violence, and family turmoil.

New studies by Sutin et al. (2022) revealed the complex interplay between adolescents' behavior, their socioeconomic status, and their ability to exercise executive function. Sutin et al.'s (2022) study revealed that children from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds portrayed worse executive functioning skills and a greater incidence of internal and externalized behaviors.

This meant that executive functioning is essential in the management of emotional and social behaviors, especially among teenagers from poor backgrounds (Sutin et al., 2022). Therefore, the study findings suggest the need for executive functioning training to be incorporated into the relevant interventions. The goal of this training is to ensure the counselors have what it takes to help and support these teenagers in their life journey (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2021).

Relationship Between Poverty and Self-Regulation Skills

Development of Self-Regulation Skills in Impoverished Contexts

Learners from poor backgrounds encounter unique obstacles in developing and sustaining self-regulatory capabilities (Mousavi & Gharibzadeh, 2021). Within impoverished settings, individuals lack the economic resources to facilitate the acquisition of self-regulatory abilities. Besides, in financially deprived backgrounds, there are no consistent parenting practices and stable routines, which are barriers that have been identified to impede the development of self-regulation capabilities (Hines et al., 2017). As children from such backgrounds are persistently stressed, their inadequate mindset hinders their capacity to strategize, pay attention, and execute choices, affecting their development with respect to self-regulation abilities (Lambie et al., 2019).

Role of Environmental Factors

The influences for the development of self-regulation concerning communities with lower incomes include parenting styles, family relations, the local environment, and the learning environment. This can also have a significant effect on self-regulation development in low-income families. Financial stress can lead parents to find it challenging to offer regular discipline and emotional support, which significantly contributes to the training of self-regulation skills (Mousavi & Gharibzadeh, 2021). For instance, it has been established that more affectionate,

attention-giving, equal rule and regulation implementation subsequently result in the development of self-regulatory skills among children (Roskam et al., 2014). Hence, positive family dynamics as manifested by increased interaction of parents and children in the supportive family settings, creates ground for self-regulatory skills (Lo et al., 2021).

The development of self-regulation is facilitated or hindered by neighborhood characteristics such as safety, access to resources, and community support. Children may develop hypervigilance or unhelpful coping methods as a result of neighborhood and peer pressures in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The places are characterized by a lack of social support and exposure to violence (Rogoff et al., 2018). In such contexts, individuals from poverty-stricken backgrounds are susceptible to environmental inputs, which make them vulnerable to multiple hazards that hinder self-regulation (Palacios-Barrios & Hanson, 2019). This happens since children's behaviors have been noted to adapt to the context in which they are happening (Brandes-Aitken et al., 2019). Besides, it is generally acknowledged that although access to quality nutrition and healthcare services is important for children's brain development and the development of self-regulation capabilities, those from impoverished backgrounds are disadvantaged (Noble et al., 2015). Therefore, with the notable impact environmental factors have on learners' self-regulation, this points to a need to consider context-specific aspects while introducing relevant interventions to support these students' academic attainment.

The Link Between Academic Achievement and Poverty

Academic Outcomes and Poverty

Poverty and academic success have been extensively investigated, a perspective that has revealed the many disparities learners from financially disadvantaged backgrounds face as they pursue academic opportunities. The challenges in academic achievement among these learners

are a result of a lack of access to quality healthcare, inadequate educational resources, higher

stress levels, and instability with respect to respective living conditions (Willoughby et al.,

2019). Other concerns include that learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds live

in less conducive home environments, are easily exposed to violence and trauma, few enroll in

higher learning institutions, and many of them are most likely to drop out of school (Senior et al.,

2022; Sutin et al., 2022). With such limitations, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are

unable to meet expectations for academic performance. In the long-term, social and economic

disparities are sustained, and since these learners have limited opportunities for social mobility, a

cycle of poverty is perpetuated.

Mediating Factors

The achievement gap refers to a visible, pervasive gap in academic performance and

achievement between low-income learners and those more economically advantaged (Whilby,

2020). According to Rudd et al. (2021), low-income learners face several challenges that derail

their academic success. Students from low-income backgrounds typically show lower test scores,

higher dropout rates, and lower post-high-school college-going rates than children from wealthy

families (Carter et al., 2019; Nance, 2021). This achievement gap exacerbates socioeconomic

disparity and the cycle of poverty. Such an imbalanced situation is, however, rectifiable within

the competence of a holistic measure by equalizing all opportunities, supporting mechanisms,

and means for leveling the grounds so that each student gets a fair chance at performing well in

their studies.

Interventions and Their Potential Effectiveness

Early Childhood Interventions

Existing literature suggests that initiatives in early childhood education can effectively counter the negative implications of poverty on children's academic performance and cognitive development (Cuartas et al., 2022). Particularly, when such initiatives are presented to children from an early age, this prepares them for formal education and accelerates cognitive development. Güler and Çapri (2019) explored the significance of counseling programs to preschoolers. The researchers found that such programs add value to learners' academic achievement. Similarly, research has established the potential for early childhood intervention to promote children's socio-emotional competence, and, ultimately, academic attainment (Dias Rodrigues et al., 2022). Socio-emotional competence is a key factor that influences academic achievement (Portela-Pino et al., 2021). Hence, according to these studies, related programs that target children from poor backgrounds close the achievement gap and foster prospects for sustained academic attainment.

Parenting Interventions

Parents can play an important role in bolstering children's cognitive development. One way this is achievable is through interventions that increase parental involvement and improve parenting practices. The interventions should be introduced including among children from poor backgrounds, to support their self-regulation abilities and cognitive development (Alperin et al., 2020). Such interventions are noted to provide parental assistance and guidance to cultivate an enriching family setting for their children (Gagne & Nwadinobi, 2018). Parental guidance and assistance could be in the form of parental therapies geared towards equipping parents with knowledge, skills, and resources for an atmosphere to support children's positive development

(Huston & Bentley, 2010). Such a family setting is characterized by improved communication, enhanced parent-child interactions, and redefining parenting tactics. In the long term, such interventions will contribute to children's cognitive and self-regulation development, which will be depicted in enhanced academic success.

Additionally, enhancing the ability of the parents to self-regulate is another alternative that may address those challenges posed by poverty to parents as they raise their young ones. For example, a study by Mistry et al. (2009) found that economic hardship is sometimes depended on parents' emotional regulation skills, and this works against their ability to be sufficiently resilient in demonstrating and sharing these skills with their children appropriately. Mindfulness-based parenting programs, as found in the literature, have been effective interventions to help parents develop methods of emotional self-regulation (Creswell & Lindsay, 2014). The programs are geared to equip the parents with relevant skills in the appropriate management of stress and emotions. This builds a stable emotional basis for children's growth, not only for personal well-being. Therefore, the focus on parental self-regulation allows the treatments to indirectly develop such skills in children from the most disadvantaged families (Lengua et al., 2023).

In addition, community-based interventions and treatments have received significant attention due to acknowledging the seriousness of addressing the expansive socio-environmental conditions in which disadvantaged parents and children reside. According to Ebrahim (2023), the nurse-family partnership is a good example of a program that delivers home services to underprivileged families. This program provides effective services such as observing and providing feedback to parents about their techniques, providing emotional support when needed, and assisting parents with obtaining the necessary resources for their families. These helpful services aid in developing nurturing and caring environments that better cultivate self-regulation

skills in children by helping parents overcome the difficulties associated with living in poverty (Castillo et al., 2019). Integrating factors such as parental support, stress relief, and access to essential resources could possibility disrupt the cycle of poverty's impact on parenting techniques and facilitate positive executive functioning outcomes in children.

School-Based Interventions

School-based interventions are important in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access resources and opportunities for academic achievement. The school-based interventions identify strategies that schools introduce with intentions to improve students' health, well-being, and academic performance (Jacob & Parkinson, 2015). Potential school-based interventions could include after-school programs, targeted academic help and support, and extending school learning programs. These interventions provide personalized assistance, supplementary educational resources, and other support, often lacking among learners' (Hines et al., 2017). Fortunately, these interventions foster academic achievement as learners are exposed to diverse educational perspectives and experiences. For instance, Galassi (2017) established that school-based counseling interventions on teenage pregnancies have been noted to promote learners' development and achievement. Also, Gagne and Nwadinobi (2018) created school-based interventions to teach learners on self-control, which had significant benefits in improving their executive functioning and academic achievement.

School Based Counseling

Students with emotional and behavioral difficulties can benefit from treatments implemented at school (Senior et al., 2022). Certain aspects of mental health were enhanced by the intervention, but it did little to address the root causes of anxiety and depression, demonstrating the necessity of more specific therapies. These findings suggest that school-based

therapy can boost children's social and emotional health; nevertheless, more study is needed to develop individualized interventions to deal with children's unique emotional and behavioral challenges (Senior et al., 2022).

Behavior Support Coaching

The successful use of behavior support coaching as an intervention strategy has been observed in an urban elementary school characterized by high poverty levels. Alperin et al. (2020) examined the involvement of paraprofessionals in resolving disruptive behavior problems among first-grade students. The researcher's objective was to unearth ways to improve their professional competency and capacity to effectively handle and manage such behaviors. The primary objective of the coaching intervention was to enhance the educational setting by providing paraprofessionals with the necessary training to enhance how they support students. Such an approach has been noted to improve learners' on-task behaviors and academic achievement (Alperin et al., 2020). Thus, findings from the study echo that initiatives such as behavior support coaching could shape the establishment of desirable behaviors to improve academic performance.

However, while Alperin et al. (2020) primarily focused on behavior assistance, the researchers briefly mention the function of school counselors. Specifically, to these researchers, counselors play an important role mitigating disruptive behaviors that inhibit self-regulation. This is achievable when school counselors and paraprofessionals partner to address problematic behaviors identified among low-income students. The approach places special emphasis on how self-control and academic success are intertwined. Nonetheless, it is evident that to gain a deeper knowledge of school counselors' contributions to the assistance of low-income kids, additional research to investigate school counselors' perspectives is necessary.

SRL

More recently, SRL has been considered an incredibly successful pedagogical practice, and it has been highly praised as one of the determining factors that affect learners' academic achievements and performances. Psychologists and teachers have adapted and are exploring many forms of SRL in class settings (Callan et al., 2020). SRL is the process by which students are accountable for their learning. As learners actively participate in the learning environment, this has been noted to drive academic achievement and performance (Aji & Khan, 2019). This is achievable through SRL since students have an array of strategies to be better at learning and performing academically; these include metacognition, time management, and motivation. By using this tool, there will be an improvement in the performance of students academically, and this ensures that, over time, the students continue participating in the learning process. The SRL design is such that it inherently becomes sensitive to the different socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and various levels of aptitude, thereby showing the very inclusive nature and potential for being effective against broader educational inequities holistically (Callan et al., 2020).

School Counselors' Origin in Education

The origin of school counseling programs has a long history that can be traced back to over a century ago. Particularly, in the last century, multiple instances have shaped the roles and responsibilities of school counselors. The significant transformations have been aimed at providing assistance to children who are not meeting their academic potential. The requirement for school counselors in education has varied across different eras, since the introduction of vocational advice in the early 1900s (Wingfield et al., 2010). The issue became highly debated between the 1960s and 1970s as a potential model to be adopted in school counseling. This

concept started taking form in this period and continued advancing through the 1980s, 1990s,

and into the 21st century (Gysbers, 2019). The most recent accomplishment in school counseling

is the establishment of a comprehensive school counseling program in 2003 (Wingfield et al.,

2010). Specifically, in 2003, ASCA launched a national school counseling program model, which

introduced a standardized model for schools throughout. Amid the changing education

landscape, the counseling model has occasionally been adjusted to reflect the current state of

education (Gysbers, 2019).

Vocational Guidance

The vocational school counseling paradigm was formulated and used between the years

1900 and 1950 (Maree, 2019). The initiation of vocational coaching has been ascribed by

researchers to the social reform movement of the 19th century, which aimed to combat child

labor and address the growing need for workers in factory settings. Frank Parsons, widely

recognized as the pioneer of vocational advice, called for the incorporation of vocational

guidance by trained professionals into the educational framework of public schools (Wingfield et

al., 2010). Counselors provided guidance to students in identifying suitable career paths by

aligning the individual's personal attributes with the requisite abilities for a certain occupation.

Vocational guidance counselors were employed throughout both World Wars I and II to evaluate

soldiers based on their skills and assign them to tasks that were considered effective for their

abilities during the war (Picchioni, 1980). The provision of vocational advice in the region was

deficient in adequately addressing the mental health requirements of the student population. This

phenomenon facilitated the transition from the vocational paradigm to the mental health

paradigm of school counseling during the mid-1900s (Picchioni, 1980).

Mental Health Guidance Counselor

The integration of the mental health movement into school counseling services took place over the period spanning the 1950s to the 1960s. The model's origin is traced back to a renowned psychologist, Carl Rogers. Rogers often adopted a non-directive approach to counseling that would later inform models for mental health counseling (Parrow et al., 2019). During the 1950s, school counselors underwent specialized training in remedial counseling. This was aimed at upskilling these professionals to address the increasing demands of pupils grappling with societal shifts, including but not limited to divorce, the civil rights movement, and escalating crime rates (Wingfield et al., 2010). In the era, counselors were expected to assume leadership roles within educational institutions, deliver counseling services, and engage in collaborative efforts with community stakeholders. This was strengthened after the enactment of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. The legislation renewed efforts among school counselors to address occupational requirements among their students. The Department of Defense initiated a directive mandating counselors to actively promote the pursuit of vocational pathways in science and mathematics among students (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Wingfield et al., 2010). This directive aimed to address the pressing need for skilled professionals to support various outer space initiatives. Recognizing the significance of addressing both the scholastic and psychological well-being of kids to enhance academic performance, school counselors collaborated to establish the developmental model (Wingfield et al., 2010). Today, it has increasingly been acknowledged that school counselors have shifted their focus from conducting assessments for career placements to addressing children's mental health needs (Wingfield et al., 2010). While there are many cases to justify this, the recent COVID-19 pandemic outbreak is more relevant. Pincus et al. (2020) noted that since the pandemic had detrimental effects on youths and adolescents and

implications expected to persist in the long-term, school counselors rose to the rescue. These counseling professionals-initiated interventions to support learners in overcoming the mental challenges students faced.

Development School Counseling Model

The developmental model is a theoretical framework that seeks to explain the process of human growth and change across time. The implementation of the developmental model took place during the 1960s. During this period, school counselors fulfilled the role of providing preventive services not only to high school students, but also to students across all grade levels. According to Wingfield et al. (2010), the primary responsibilities of school counselors encompass enhancing student achievement, delivering equitable assistance to all students, facilitating career and student development, and fostering a secure and conducive school atmosphere. In response to a concern that more learners are failing to meet academic expectations, government authorities are now imposing school counseling programs to strict evaluations. The school counseling profession has been shaped by legislations such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, the American Disabilities Act in 1990, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Wingfield et al., 2010). With such legal requirements, school counselors are mandated to ensure the implementation of effective interventions to mitigate disparities in academic achievement. Thus, in response to these requirements, school counselors collaborated to establish the ASCA Model and the National Standards. This proactive measure aimed to mitigate the risk of widespread elimination of school counselor employment. The evolution of developmental guiding led to the creation of a complete school counseling model that continues to be implemented in present times (Wingfield et al., 2010).

Comprehensive School Counseling Model

The Comprehensive School Counseling Model is a framework that encompasses several components and strategies to provide effective counseling services in educational settings. The comprehensive school counseling model adheres to the parameters set forth by the ASCA National Standards to effectively cater to the academic, social/emotional, and career-related requirements of students. In addition to systemic change, cooperation, and advocacy, the ASCA National Model designates leadership as one of the fundamental elements of a school counseling program. According to Curry and DeVoss (2009), school counselors assume leadership responsibilities in various aspects of a school counseling program, including its design, implementation, management, and accountability. Additionally, they take the lead in facilitating the educational process to enhance student learning, vocational development, and personal/social growth. School counselors examine data from schools and school counseling programs in order to identify the necessary actions to effectively involve kids in their educational journey. Alger and Luke (2015) asserted that the model school counselor facilitates the preparation of kids for college or career readiness by engaging in collaborative efforts with students, teachers, and parents to strategically select courses that align with their desired career trajectories.

Training for School Counselors on Poverty

Training school counselors should not be overlooked as this is an opportunity to equip them with knowledge and skills to ensure that their interventions meet the clients' interests and demands (Supriyanto et al., 2020). Besides, the I-CARE Model, an acronym for Internally reflecting, cultivating relationships, acknowledging realities, removing barriers, and expanding strengths, functions as a systematic framework to equip school counselors with the necessary skills to effectively support students experiencing poverty (Generali et al., 2011). This model

highlights the importance of school counselors engaging in self-reflection to gain insights into their prejudices and beliefs. This way, the counseling professionals can effectively provide more empathetic and effective support to learners. When students are facing the difficulties of poverty, it is extremely important to develop trusting and friendly relationships with them. The first step in addressing the consequences of poverty on students is for counselors to recognize the reality of the problem. Another benefit of this model is that it pushes counselors to eliminate hurdles to their clients' intellectual, social, and emotional development. Ultimately, the I-CARE Model guides school counselors in assisting students and families in identifying and enhancing their strengths. As a result, the school counselors promote resilience and effective coping strategies (Generali et al., 2011).

School Counselors' Perception of Poverty

The school counselors significantly contribute to students' academic achievement. These professionals provide academic and social/emotional support to facilitate learners' academic progress and achievement (Hines et al., 2017). Lambie et al. (2019) reiterated the importance of Title I schools possessing sufficient resources to address the mental health requirements of their scholars, and the necessity for school counselors to communicate effectively with families, educators, and community stakeholders. The research conducted by Lambie et al. (2019) revealed noteworthy enhancements in students' mental health, academic performance, and attendance. The effectiveness of school counselors' interventions and support strategies and their assistance to students experiencing difficulties is paramount. However, although school counseling is identified as a profession that supports students in academic development, the challenge of uneven access to these services in United States public schools persists. In many of these schools, a high student-to-counselor ratio, especially among students from low-income

communities, indicates that these most deserving learners are unlikely to receive counseling support (Savitz-Romer & Nicola, 2022). This points to a need for better interventions targeting these most deserving students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Thus, comprehending and acknowledging the impact of poverty on students is imperative for educational counselors. This measure will equip individuals with the necessary skills to provide adequate support and advocacy for these students (Generali & Foss-Kelly, 2022). Generali and Foss-Kelly (2022) noted that including poverty-related training and interventions in school counselor preparation programs can enhance the ability of counselors to tackle the distinctive difficulties encountered by students residing in poverty and foster their general welfare and academic success. Generali and Foss-Kelly (2022) highlighted the significance of adopting a holistic approach that considers the academic requirements, and the socio-emotional and psychological dimensions of students impacted by poverty. Graduate students in counseling reported a notable decrease in their perceived competence and training to work with clients experiencing destitution or substance use compared to clients seeking self-growth (Tucker et al., 2021). The comprehension of poverty, cooperation with stakeholders, and implementation of evidence-based interventions by school counselors are crucial elements in promoting students' academic achievement and overall welfare. As a result, poverty-related training and interventions in counselor preparation programs are crucial. The goal is to augment their ability to provide adequate assistance and advocacy for learners impacted by poverty.

Summary

The chapter has revealed that poverty is a common problem in most countries, and the United States is no exception. Within these countries, poverty has a significant impact on children's development and academic achievement. Specifically, an area of development that

may be affected by poverty is self-regulation and executive function. These are important skills for success in school and beyond. Fortunately, school counselors are equipped and trained to observe the effects of poverty on children's development. Consequently, these professionals may have valuable insights into strategies for supporting students' self-regulation and executive function skills.

As revealed in the chapter, this topic warrants further investigation due to the mounting evidence indicating that poverty substantially impacts children's self-regulation abilities. Self-regulation pertains to a collection of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms that empower individuals to manage their thoughts, emotions, and conduct to pursue their objectives. Children coming from economically disadvantaged households are prone to encounter stress, exposure to environmental pollutants, and precarious domestic circumstances, adversely influencing their capacity for self-regulation.

As revealed above, there are research gaps that underpin this research. For instance, Allee-Herndon and Roberts (2019) examined contemporary empirical studies on poverty, self-regulation, executive function, and learning in K–2 classrooms through a systematic literature review. The researchers discovered that although there is an expanding amount of literature on the influence of poverty on children's self-regulation and executive function abilities, there is still a shortage of research in this domain, particularly on the efficacy of interventions that foster self-regulation skills among children from low-income households. Similarly, the study conducted by Baker et al. (2020) assessed the distinct effects of parental financial strain on children's hot and cool executive functions. The findings revealed that exposure to poverty-related stressors adversely affected children's executive function skills.

There is a correlation between self-regulation and achievement gaps in different individuals. Self-regulation abilities substantially impact academic success, and children from low-income households are at a higher risk of encountering deficiencies in self-regulation skills, ultimately resulting in inferior academic performance (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Henry et al.'s (2017) study assessed the impact of a counselor-led, faith-based, school-family-community partnership on students' academic performance in an urban elementary school characterized by high poverty. It revealed that the implemented intervention positively affected students' academic performance. Poverty is associated with neurobehavioral consequences, particularly in children from low-income households (Marston, 2013). These consequences manifest as deficiencies in brain development, adversely affecting their self-regulation capacity. McClelland et al. (2015) examined the literature on development and self-regulation and concluded that acquiring self-regulation skills is paramount for children's academic and social achievements. Raver (2012) contended that effective interventions must consider the various levels of influence on children's self-regulation abilities, such as individual, family, and school factors, even though further investigations are necessary to understand the development trajectories of self-regulation abilities.

This study examined the experiences and points of view of school counselors in order to investigate the impact that poverty has on a person's capacity for self-regulation and executive function skills. The findings will provide vital insights into how poverty affects kids' abilities to self-regulate and demonstrate executive function, both of which are essential for academic achievement. In addition, the research intended to discover treatments and strategies that school counselors might use to assist adolescents who originate from low-income homes in the development of these skills. It is possible for educators to promote equality in education and

increase academic achievement for all kids, regardless of their socioeconomic background, if

they focus on tackling the problems that are linked with poverty.

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

The phenomenological study evaluated the perspectives of school counselors regarding the effects of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic achievement of primary school students, as well as the efficacy of interventions aimed at addressing these difficulties. Individual interviews with school counselors from various elementary schools around the state of Georgia to obtain their comments were conducted. The following categories made up the subsections that were included in the chapter: design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, interviews, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The purpose of the study was to contribute to the existing body of research on education and poverty by illuminating how school counselors understand the effects of poverty on children and the types of solutions they think to be successful.

Design

A hermeneutic qualitative design was applied to inform the phenomenological study. Qualitative researchers use an interpretive method to learn about and describe people's worldviews (Thorne, 2016). This results in the creation of intricate explanations for social occurrences. A qualitative method is preferable because it allows for the incorporation of the experiences and insights of individuals on the front lines of the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design adopted for the study was phenomenological. People, rather than the researcher, are the primary focus of phenomenology (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). In undertaking a phenomenological study, the researcher sought to establish the experiences of these young children based on their economic living conditions. The hermeneutic

phenomenology process defines the core of this study as it justifies how to explore the lived experiences and interpretations among the school counselors regarding their perceptions of the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, the academic achievement of elementary school students, and the effectiveness of interventions (Ramsook, 2018). The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with school counselors working in elementary schools across Georgia who implement interventions and were aware of the resource and other interventions for children living in poverty and its effects on executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic achievement. To meet the requirements of hermeneutic qualitative research, the researcher asked unique open-ended questions regarding the study topic. Data were then coded to identify key themes and describe them for a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon. Through statistical analysis, the researcher identified patterns among respondents. This exploration took into account the educational and cultural environment in which these students were situated.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of elementary school students?

RQ 2: What strategies and interventions do elementary school counselors perceive as effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

RQ 3: What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by elementary school counselors in addressing the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement among students?

RQ 4: How do school counselors feel about their level of training regarding poverty and its effect on student achievement?

Setting

The preferred setting for this research undertaking was online. Since the study involved collecting data from counseling professionals, an online setting was preferred as it was easier to coordinate and secure requisite schedules for the participants who may be time-constrained and geographically dispersed (Jack & Glover, 2021). With the availability of online tools such as Zoom to facilitate such sessions, it was anticipated that the data collection process would be smooth and ideal for both the researcher and the participants. Notably, research participants were identified through professional sites, including LinkedIn and other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram) through common communities where the counselors are active members.

Participants

Sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be small on purpose, with the aim of gathering as much in-depth information as possible from the participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Specifically, using a criterion-based sampling strategy, 8 veteran elementary school counselors with a minimum of 5 years of work experience with low-income students was recruited for this study. Criterion sampling incorporates individuals who meet a predetermined criterion of importance (Pract, 2018). Here, collaboration with school administration and professional counseling groups was sought to identify suitable participants. By targeting experienced school counselors, the recruitment approach ensured the collection of detailed and reliable data for the research. Nevertheless, a thorough explanation of the research purpose, objectives, and confidentiality safeguards was provided to interested school counselors.

Voluntary engagement was stressed. To achieve this, each participant's informed consent was sought prior to their participation in the research (Nijhawan et al., 2013). Such an approach was important to ensuring ethical guidelines guided the research for trustworthy and reliable process and findings.

Furthermore, for diverse participants' perspectives, the study population was drawn from a diversity of elementary schools and school districts in Georgia. The recruitment process relied on social media tools, where the researcher reached out to school counselor's social media groups on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. These social media platforms were a great source of pools of professionals who could be readily contacted to support such causes. To ensure gender diversity, the sample also included both male and female counselors. Ethnically and racially diverse individuals were recruited for this study to guarantee that the data collected is representative of the population at large.

Procedures

Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) described research procedures as the steps researchers are expected to take in research. The significance of these procedures is increasing research validity and reliability. The researcher undertook various steps that were critical for successful, valid, and reliable research. The process initially involved obtaining an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix B). This was necessary to ascertain that the adopted research design is ethical (McEvenue et al., 2016). The researcher then searched for participants who met the study criteria and recruited them. Following the recruitment, informed consent was obtained (see Appendix A). The participants had to sign the consent form to indicate that they were willing to take part in the study. The data collection process then began through the scheduled in-depth online interviews. Participants had passwords to access the Zoom sessions,

which was a way to ensure privacy and confidentiality in the research process. Besides, the participants were required to select pseudonyms to ensure that their personal information was not captured in the research process (Allen & Wiles, 2016). The researcher then, with consent from the participants, audio-recorded the interviews for accurate data collection. Next, the data were transcribed verbatim to begin an analysis of the common themes emanating from the study. Ultimately, the obtained data informed the findings of the research.

The Researcher's Role

The role as a researcher entailed the creation of a bias-free environment from which the research participants could meaningfully share their lived experiences (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Befitting interview questions were formulated by the researcher that guided the information-sharing process. The IRB was asked for permission to post recruitment announcements in social media groups for school counselors. After obtaining approval from the IRB, the researcher posted a recruitment announcement in several public social media groups for educators and school counselors (see Appendix D). A recruitment email was also sent out to interested individuals from those social media groups that requested a recruitment email with the details of the study (see Appendix C). While engaging with the participants, it was critical to build a rapport with them to ease any uneasiness associated with first-time interactions. The researcher ensured the safety, confidentiality, and anonymity of all research participants and the collected data. The investigator was an attentive listener during the interview process which fostered better collaboration, data collection, and information sharing with the participants. Ultimately, the data were objectively analyzed, and findings and conclusions were presented as established through the research.

Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered and transcribed from the lived experiences of elementary school counselors who served low-income communities. To comprehend school counselors' impressions of how poverty affects self-regulation and executive function in primary school students, this qualitative study took a phenomenological method. This informed understanding of the human experiences regarding the study phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Data were collected online through Zoom, where the participants were engaged and interviewed. The information gathered during these in-depth conversations was kept completely private and confidential.

Interviews

Data collection from participants consisted of semi-structured individual interviews with 25 open-ended questions (listed below and in Appendix E). The following interview questions were used to collect data from the participants.

Interview Questions

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. What is your race and ethnicity?

4. What district do you work in?

5. What city do you work in?

6. How many years have you been a school counselor?

Five Questions About Counselors Knowledge

7. How would you describe the relationship between poverty and executive functioning, based on your experience and knowledge as a school counselor? What are some specific examples or observations you have made regarding this impact?

8. Based on your understanding, what are the main ways in which poverty affects students' self-regulation skills?

9. Based on your understanding, what are the main ways in which poverty affects students' academic achievement? Are there any particular subjects or areas of academic performance that are more strongly influenced by poverty?

10. From what you know, what are some long-term effects of poverty on students' executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

11. Do you think you know a lot about how poverty affects children? Explain why or why not.

Five Questions About Perception

12. How do you perceive the relationship between poverty and executive functioning skills based on your experience with students from low-income backgrounds?

13. From your perspective, how do you believe poverty influences students' academic achievement, and are there any particular subjects that are more strongly impacted?

14. How much do you think the role of outside factors, such as community resources or access to support services, play in mitigating the impact of poverty on students' executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

15. How do you perceive the relationship between poverty and self-regulation skills based on your work with students from low-income backgrounds?

16. From your perspective, how do students' home environments and family circumstances influence their ability to develop and demonstrate executive functioning skills in an academic setting?

Four Questions About School Counselor Interventions

17. In your role as a school counselor, what support, interventions, or resources do you provide to students affected by poverty to help improve their executive functioning and self-regulation skills?

18. In your role as a school counselor, what support, interventions, or resources do you provide to students affected by poverty to help improve their academic skills?

19. What collaborative efforts have you engaged in with teachers and other educators to address the impact of poverty on students' executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

20. As a school counselor, what strategies or interventions have you found effective in supporting students affected by poverty to improve their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

Three Questions About Barriers and Challenges

21. What are the most common challenges you face as a school counselor in supporting students affected by poverty in developing and enhancing their executive functioning skills?

22. What kinds of resource limitations or restrictions do you face when working with low-income students, and how do these affect your ability to help them with executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic success?

23. How do you advocate for policy changes or more resources that could help low-income students improve their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic success?

Two Questions About Training

24. What specific training or chances for professional development have you had to help you learn more about how to help students from low-income families improve their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

25. What additional training or resources, in your opinion, would aid school counselors in effectively addressing the effects of poverty on students' executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

The interviews took between 60 to 90 minutes. However, with consent from the participants, the time was extended if needed to ensure that all research questions were adequately addressed. Also, the interview questions was comprised of six questions that requested demographic information. The demographic information yielded important context relating to the research participants, such as their experiences and knowledge as research subjects. The interview was as follows, where the questions linked to the research questions: five questions assessed the knowledge of the effects of poverty on self-regulation, executive functioning, and academic performance; four were queries about the perceived effects of poverty on self-regulation, executive functioning, and academic achievement; five were queries relate to the prevention and intervention efforts of school counselors; three inquiries were about the perceived barriers school counselors perceive to assisting low-income students; and two questions were related to school counselor training.

Data Analysis

After the conclusion of the interviews, the collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis technique involved identifying common themes and trends in the participants' perceptions and experiences in relation to the study phenomenon (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Lochmiller, 2021). The data were coded at first, and then specific themes were constructed from them. Following the initial coding technique, line-by-line coding was done to generate additional details based on the participant narratives obtained (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This information was then categorized according to its fundamental subjects. The main themes were then assessed and divided into sub-categorical themes to provide feedback and perspectives (O'Kane et al., 2019). Consequently, using the identified key themes from the research, the data were interpreted, seeking to give meanings to this data in relation to the study phenomenon (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The themes facilitated the interpretation of the data, analysis of the statistics, and proficient communication of the perspectives held by school counselors regarding the influence of poverty on the self-regulation and executive function of students in elementary school. Finally, a detailed discussion was developed that is presented as a report, presenting the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Trustworthiness

Because this research was phenomenological, it was necessary to ensure that the data collection and analysis process was rigorous to obtain accurate findings. Therefore, to establish trustworthiness, the researcher undertook rigorous measures to recruit a wide base of participants with unique experiences. The data collection process was also as rigorous as possible to ensure meaning and a better understanding of the participant's experiences was obtained. In qualitative studies, trustworthiness demonstrates the validity and dependability of the study's findings

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), trustworthy measures are used in qualitative research, even while tools for measurement are not. Additionally, this research involved a participant validation process, also referred to as member checking, whereby the research findings were shared with the participants for their feedback. Birt et al. (2016) noted that this step is critical to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of the findings is accurate. While seeking to enhance trustworthiness in research, as discussed below, the focus of the study was on aspects such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility is the extent of the research's accuracy in representing the research participants' experiences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This demands a truthful presentation of the participants' experiences. Credibility in the study was enhanced through member-checking and source triangulation that ensures that the research uses multiple options for data collection and researchers where possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Motulsky, 2021). The data were collected and analyzed, engaging some of the participants for member checking which helped determine the accuracy of the identified themes and research conclusions (Motulsky, 2021).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is the consistency of research findings with time and by different researchers (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). To ensure that the study reflected this, the researcher used two methods. First, the researcher ensured that the collected data presents an accurate and detailed account of the school counselors' lived experiences in relation to the study phenomenon. Second, the researcher ensured that the research method used for the study was accurately described so other researchers can replicate the study where required for similar findings.

On the other hand, the aspect of confirmability points to research that is devoid of the researcher's bias and assumptions to ensure that truthful information is presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, to improve the study's confirmability, the researcher ensured reflection while examining the potential impact of personal bias on the research outcomes. A complete account of the participant's perspective on the impact of poverty on elementary school students in relation to their executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance was presented.

Transferability

Research findings must be transferable to other research contexts (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Subsequently, this research guarantees transferability by defining the context in detail. These were captured in the study's problem statement and situation-to-self sections. Upon an analysis of the research findings, this study presented the limitations and potential gaps for future research based on the researcher's view, which can be applied to other studies.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations factored in for this study were largely general to research. Firstly, transparency is key throughout the research process. As such, the researcher was transparent about the research and research process by constantly sharing important research information with the participants. An informed consent form (Appendix A) explained the nature and purpose of the research for the participants to make voluntary decisions to be part of the research (Karbwang et al., 2018). Also, the investigator strived to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants. For instance, participants attended online interview sessions using a unique password and identified using aliases. Besides, the audio-recorded data and other research data are stored in password-protected electronic devices. This implies that the participants and collected data were kept confidential and were not shared with anyone without consent.

Additionally, the researcher recognized the sensitive nature of the research topic, which involved studying children and low-income families who may be particularly vulnerable to many conditions. Therefore, the role of the researcher was to ensure that they are protected from any implications resulting from their engagement in the research process. Finally, the researcher remained objective and had no conflict of interest in the research study.

Summary

This chapter outlined a qualitative research process to underpin its design through a phenomenological approach. Such a process relied on the lived experiences of the research participants as the source of the research data. The process governing the selection of research participants and data collection through semi-structured interview questions is also proposed. A data analysis process that involved the identification of the major themes for the study was also described, which formed the basis for the research findings (thematic analysis). Highlighted in this chapter were the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness that relied on the input of other researchers to eliminate any known biases and a member-checking process whereby the research findings were relayed back to the participants for validation. Potential ethical considerations have also been stipulated, which narrow down to confidentiality, secure storage of the research data, transparency, protecting the vulnerable nature of the research subjects, and limiting potential bias.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

The main aim of this study was to explore school counselors' perceptions of how poverty impacts elementary school students' capacity for academic and emotional success. The specific focus was on the students' executive functioning, academic performance, and self-regulation abilities. The study would additionally rely on school counselors to establish how effective the implemented intervention strategies to address any poverty-related challenges would be. As earlier proposed in the methodology section, using a phenomenological methodology with a hermeneutic qualitative design, data were collected through interviews from a total of eight participants (i.e., elementary school counselors). The four guiding research questions this study sought to answer included:

RQ 1. What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of elementary school students?

RQ 2. What strategies and interventions do elementary school counselors perceive as effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

RQ 3. What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by elementary school counselors in addressing the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement among students?

RQ 4. How do school counselors feel about their level of training regarding poverty and its effect on student achievement?

This section details the analysis of the findings drawn from the collected data. It incorporates an analysis of the participant's profiles, research findings, and a summary. The research findings (results) are presented as themes and responses to the four research questions. From this data, four themes, including academic underachievement, family dynamics, collaboration, and resource scarcity, were identified. Further analysis of these themes provided valuable insights essential to answering the four research questions and fulfilling the research purpose.

Participants

This section provides a detailed summary of the respondents in the study, where pseudonyms are used to identify the eight participants. The respondents comprised elementary school counselors from Georgia with different underlying demographics. The age bracket for the participants was between 32 and 60 years, with their experience levels ranging between 5 and 17 years. While the study strived to attain a gender balance, there was only one male participant in the entire study. The table prepared below outlines a summary of their demographic overview.

Table 1

Respondent's Demographic Overview

Participant	Age	Years of experience	Geographical location	Gender	Ethnicity
Tonya	32	7	Roberta, Georgia	Female	African American
Angel	42	7	Macon, Georgia	Female	African American
Naomi	39	15	Macon, Georgia	Female	African American
Dana	33	5	Newton, Georgia	Female	African American
Jordan	60	17	Macon, Georgia	Female	Caucasian
Jacob	36	7	Twiggs County, Georgia	Male	African American
Sally	32	5	Houston County, Georgia	Female	African American
Shelly	34	6	Henry County, Georgia	Female	African American

Shelly

Shelly is a 34-year-old African American female. She has been a school counselor for 6 years, where she served 3 years in primary school, and has now worked for 3 years in elementary school. Shelly highlighted the interconnectedness of poverty and executive functioning by pointing out that elementary school students from low-income backgrounds tend to struggle more. A good example of such struggles is in their memory challenges and their emotional

control, which she tied to the unstable home environments or domestic problems that result from poverty. For instance, Shelly acknowledged that she did handle a case of a student who had bad emotional control "…he got angry, real upset. And I feel like he did that because of the household he was in."

Similarly, Shelly acknowledged that poverty also affects self-regulation skills in that it can lead to effects such as anger, difficulties in expressing emotions, or even substance abuse problems that would make it difficult for the student to effectively regulate their behavior. Further, Shelly noted that while the effects of poverty may span differently across these student populations, the most common challenges remain poor emotional connections and control of one's anger.

Shelly noted that the same negative effect can be seen in the academic achievement of these students. According to her, high poverty levels result in poor reading levels, especially where parents are constantly engaged at work to provide an income that only meets the basic needs, unable to support the student's academic needs. Such financial pressures and work commitments can negatively affect the ability of the student to fully focus on their education or take part in school activities.

Some of the long-term effects that Shelly noted include the inability of the students to find value in their education or even effects such as illegal work or school absenteeism by the students to make a living, subsequently contributing to a perpetual cycle of poverty and illiteracy. She reported,

> It's a dollar general factory there and the students, they will be working there kinda illegally cause some of them, they were going to work during school hours and they was like, well, I gotta help my mom with my younger siblings.

Shelly's unique experience further draws from the fact that she identified as one who has grown up in low-income households and thus could understand and describe the experience firsthand. Such experience has shaped her understanding of its effects on students, and therefore, she was well poised to intervene and provide necessary support where required.

In reducing the effects of this poverty, Shelly acknowledged the contribution that community resources and other support services have on students from these low-income backgrounds. Other interventions include a focus on small groups that would help these students learn skills such as emotional learning and organizational skills. Another form of intervention is academic support through collaboration processes with teachers to help address the academic challenges that may be prevalent.

Shelly additionally pointed out that some physical interventions would be appropriate in emotional regulation, including physical touch that can help calm the students, taking brain breaks, or even doing breathing exercises. However, in implementing these exercises, some challenges are bound to transpire and may include resource limitations and even resistance from the students themselves. For these reasons, Shelly emphasized the need for implementing policy changes and even further professional development that can build a counselor's ability and proficiency in effectively supporting and helping students from poor backgrounds.

Jacob

Jacob described himself as a 36-year-old Black male. He works as a school counselor in Jeffersonville, a remote rural location in Georgia. Overall, Jacob has been working as a school counselor for the past 7 years. As an experienced contributor, Jacob stressed the need to understand poverty's complex nature within Georgia's school districts. Ideally, he pointed out that poverty is not only about the financial constraint that results from it but may also include the

environmental or socio-economic consequences that could prevent a student's learning experiences. While Jacob may have limited personal experience with poverty issues, he stressed the need for understanding and empathy.

Jacob championed proactive steps that can be used to counteract the effects of poverty, especially unique or tailored support measures. For example, this could include the creation of curriculums that can help students manage their emotions, speak out, and eventually overcome hurdles in their way. One of the key traits that Jacob advocated for is the need to build trust and rapport between the students and their families, thereby offering an environment where the students can feel supported and valued. He mentioned, "We have to address their basic needs first before we can even begin to talk about academic success." Subsequently, effective learning can only be best attained where the learner's crucial needs have been met.

An assertion on the need for collaboration also stood out in Jacob's interview. Such collaboration is mainly between three entities: external organizations, schools, and communities. According to Jacob, where such community resources are effectively leveraged, they can complement other school efforts and extend support to students stricken by poverty. "It's about creating a network of support around these students" Jacob stated. In uttering these words, the need for collective responsibility as a poverty alleviation measure becomes apparent.

Another key input from Jacob's interview is the role of policy changes and systemic reforms in combating poverty effects in schools. Subsequently, educators ought to advocate for fair policies that prioritize the provision of resources to the communities stricken by poverty. He stated, "We need to be at the table, advocating for policies that address poverty head-on."

Thus, from Jacob's interview, it is evident that poverty hurts elementary school learners' executive functioning, self-regulation, and academic achievement since it results in a lack of

exposure to resources and experiences that other students from better backgrounds may have. The most affected academic fields are speech, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. To develop these skills, Jacob believed that the solution lies in exposure and role models who can help steer the student.

Sally

Sally is a 32-year-old African American female. She is from Warner Robins, Houston County, Georgia, and has been a school counselor for over 5 years. From the interview, she is well-versed in her understanding of the research context and, in particular, the different interventions in use to support student's executive functioning and the challenges associated with their executive functioning. As an experienced collaborator, especially with other educators and teachers, much can be drawn from her responses.

Sally noted that poverty indeed has negative effects, including its ability to negatively affect the critical skills of any student, including their problem-solving ability, time management, and their emotional control. That would be like their problem-solving skills, or their ability to recover. It can also affect their organization, emotional control, and time management. She also narrowed down other effects on the student's abilities to control their behavior and even effectively manage their academic work.

In the interview, Sally emphasized that external factors to the student, such as mentorship programs and community engagement, stood out in reducing the effects of poverty. She stated,

> And then there are also mentors that come into the school. We have the Big Brother Big Sister program and those mentors while they might not as specific, but saying hey today we're gonna talk about self regulation and executive functioning skills. It's still something they provide whether it's through just discussing it.

Therefore, for the students' executive functioning, there is a need for extra support that draws from these factors, such as after-school programs and even tutoring. These, in addition, help learners from low-income households excel academically.

While addressing these students' needs, Sally was particular to bringing out some of the challenges confronting them as counselors or educators, including being able to bridge the gap that separates the students' academic environments and their home environments. These differences result in difficulty for the students reconciling the coping mechanisms that they learn at home and the behavior expectations that the school mandates. Sally also acknowledged that constraints are common as they are limited from a resourcing perspective on the requisite materials that they need to intervene. However, even as resources may be limited, Sally mentioned that some efforts can be wittingly made to address the issue. For example, they have been using games as intervention measures that aid the students' learning. She stated, "I have found turning these interventions into some sort of games or play to be effective… it's teaching them a new skill, but also something fun."

Tonya

Tonya is a 33-year-old African American female working as a school counselor in the Crawford County School District in Roberta, Georgia. She has been a school counselor for the last 7 years. Based on her experience, Tonya provided critical insights for students from low-income backgrounds.

To begin with, Tonya noted that there is a strong link between poverty and executive functioning, observing that students from these backgrounds normally lack crucial skills that their peers from wealthier backgrounds have. Specifically, she noted,

… I feel that executive functioning and poverty are closely related because students that are impoverished, they lack the executive functioning skills that they need to be, let's say, productive citizens of society as opposed to the other population that is not impoverished.

Additionally, Tonya pointed out that poverty's impact on self-regulation could be characterized by examples of students exhibiting frustration or anger, because of their home setting or their economic situations.

Tonya also spoke to the effects of poverty on academic achievement, specifically observing that most of the parents within the community paid less attention to education, especially because of their own negative experiences in their schooling. She reported, "And I, I'll just be frank, a lot of the parents in my school… They don't really care about student achievement." Additionally, she noted that the most impacted subject by poverty was reading, as most of the students from low-income households exhibited a reading proficiency that was lower than their grade level. When these poverty effects are prolonged, the students end up engaging in criminal activities, dropping out of school, and even perpetuating the same poverty cycle in their subsequent generations.

Tonya has used several intervention techniques in her efforts as a school counselor to assist the students affected by poverty. These include individual counseling, small group sessions, and even whole group lessons, whose focus is to improve the student's academic performance and executive functioning skills. The small groups and the individual sessions offer a safe space for the students to interact without fear or hesitation. Thus, according to Tonya, such sessions are ideal for fostering better self-regulation and academic achievement. She also mentioned an additional effort involving community coordination and collaboration, such as with

the Backpack Buddy program and local food shelters that have assisted in meeting the student's core needs, thereby giving them room to focus on other items.

Tonya acknowledged that while the resources are limited, she remained committed to providing intervention and support that can help the students overcome most, if not all, the challenges associated with poverty. Such limitations are not only related to the student's basic needs but, in some cases, also touch on their ability to find counseling services. In turn, such limitations hinder the students' ability to build their self-regulation and academic achievement, with the overall effect of contributing to mental health problems. Some other challenges confronting school counselors include the inadequate time associated with their role and even possible misunderstanding of the extent of their responsibilities, as well as barriers that limit their ability to extend substantial support.

In rooting for effective strategies that can address these challenges, Tonya advocated for data-driven policy improvements. She mentioned, "… right now I show them the data, I keep data on everything I do." Such data is relevant in showing how effective the implemented interventions are and where there is insufficiency, so use it to leverage more resources that can help these disadvantaged students. Tonya also voiced the need for counselors to be trained and professional development, a process that will equip them to address poverty-related issues. Where training is lacking, the counselors are inhibited from performing their roles.

Angel

Angel is a 42-year-old African American female school counselor. She works in the Bibb County school district in Macon, Georgia. Angel is well experienced in working with students from low-income households. Angel has 7 years of work experience as a school counselor.

Angel observed that poverty affects students' executive functioning in different ways, with its main observable effects being the challenges with focusing, memory, and self-regulation. Based on these challenges, other notable effects could include the misdiagnosis of certain mental conditions, such as ADHD, and even dependency on medication to address these issues. Angel also reported that poverty's impact on self-regulation skills, which ideally resulted in the absence of resources and structures within the student's home environments, consequently leading to poor development of critical skills such as conflict resolution and self-control.

Angel also noted that poverty is bound to affect the student's academic achievement, based on its effect on a learner's learning readiness, due to their limited resources, insufficient preparation for school, and even a lack of parental involvement (for instance, the parents are under a significant amount of stress or even). The skills that are most impacted by poverty are reading and writing, especially as these students struggle to build up their literacy skills and language development. Angel mentioned, "Reading and writing are highly impacted due to students coming out of poverty. Due to like I said before, like not having the dialogue of being able to talk and speak."

Generally, from Angel's perspective, the effect of poverty is significant, even as students contend with issues such as their chaotic backgrounds, parental stress, and absence leading to an absence of an ideal home structure and even absence of the very support that they need to attain their learning outcomes. The effect is that these students may find it difficult to control or regulate their behavior and emotions or even effectively react to their stress levels.

Angel further believed supportive or safe environments are crucial to the student's development. For example, external factors, including community resources and even support programs like the 504-education plan for some students, play a critical role in alleviating the

effect of poverty on the student's performance and their executive functioning skills. They achieve this by offering extra support, oversight, monitoring, and even the necessary intervention for these students. Additionally, other forms of interventions would be ideal for these students, including mindfulness training, group therapy, and even lobbying for extra resources. Collaboration can also be another key intervention whereby the teachers and educators can work together to address these known effects of poverty.

While these effects and workable interventions may be known, Angel noted that the counselor's role is not without its fair share of challenges. They especially face challenges to championing school policy changes that could help low-income students and even limited resources that would have otherwise offered them better access to supporting programs and technology. Amidst these challenges, the significance of school counselors undergoing training that can help them address these poverty effects on students stands out as a key component of the students' academic performance and their general well-being.

Naomi

Naomi is a 39-year-old African American woman from the Bibb County School District in Macon, Georgia. Having served as a school counselor for the past 15 years, Naomi provided critical insights into the effect of poverty on a student's academic prospects and their executive functioning and self-regulation. According to Naomi, poverty's impact on executive functioning skills could be linked to challenges such as attention deficit, low cognitive abilities, and even poor problem-solving skills among the students. For instance, she stated, "…I have some students who lack problem-solving skills at my school. And I can tell that they are not taught these skills at home." Naomi drew this conclusion based on her experience with both students

from stable households and those from low-income households. For the latter, they tended to lack certain skills that would typically be present in students from stable homes.

Naomi also noted that there is a significant relationship between poverty and self-regulation skills, pointing out that due to the absence of role models and good examples in low-income households, most students struggle to self-regulate. The absence of self-regulation inferred that these students often exhibited behavioral challenges in their schooling.

Naomi also reported that poverty additionally contributed to low academic success. According to her, these students from low-income households lack critical thinking. They and their families do not perceive academic attainment as being important and, for this reason, will tend to perform poorly. English language arts and reading were the culprits of such poor achievement, which Naomi recognized might be because of the low cognitive capabilities that these students bear.

Nonetheless, for these problems, Naomi acknowledged that solutions and interventions may exist to support these students affected by poverty. Some of her recommendations included individual counseling, psychoeducational classes, small group sessions, and even partnerships and collaborations with external agencies that would help address such academic and emotional needs.

While these interventions and solutions may be implemented, they are not devoid of specific challenges tied to the student's environment. Other challenges, such as limited resources, could be identified. For instance, once a student lacks basic resources, such as clean clothes, due to poverty, they are less likely to pay attention to their education. Naomi additionally identified other challenges, such as teacher education, that would be relevant in helping address the gaps created by the effects of poverty. In resolving these challenges, Naomi called for policy changes

that would help boost school resources within the school district and, therefore, help effectively address the students' needs. She also stressed the need for continuous training and development for school counselors to help them identify and deal with cases of poverty more effectively.

Dana

Dana is a 34-year-old African American woman from Newton County, Georgia. She has been a school counselor for 5 years. According to Dana, poverty has a significant effect on the executive functioning of the students, as it creates certain environmental factors such as chaotic households and even inadequate parental support due to tight work commitments or even exposure to the criminal world. Thus, the effect on the students is impacting on the development of the skills linked to their executive functioning, such as their emotional regulation, memory, and even impulse control.

Additionally, Dana noted that academic performance is also impacted by poverty. This is because the students largely face challenges, including the lack of basic needs, school absenteeism tied to issues such as homelessness, and even a scarcity of resources that could be ideal for supporting education at home. In such cases, the most affected subjects would be math and reading, which are further aggravated by language and communication challenges, especially for students from immigrant communities.

Generally, these effects of poverty are long-term and contribute to poor academic performance and attainment, lower executive functioning, and even reduced self-functioning skills. The overall effect of this is the reduced quality of life that confronts the students. Specifically, Dana noted a regenerative pattern characterized by a low level of education, resulting in a lower number of available job opportunities and further perpetuation of the effects of poverty in different generations.

To mitigate this impact, Dana affirmed the role that community resources and other support programs play in reducing the impact of poverty on school children. She affirmed, "I think it plays a huge role from after school programs to like community summer camps." These children access after-school programs, mental health services, or even community camps, they can build greater executive functioning skills and better stability for them.

Based on Dana's personal experience, the poverty problem and its effects can be attributed to the generational challenges that confront minority communities, disparities in school resources, and even the systemic challenges notable in education. She pointed out, "You know, black people struggle the way we do. It is tough to see us as the stereotypes that they… paint us to be. I think that you know, it's the way the system is designed." Nonetheless, while many efforts have been made to resolve the issues around poverty, Dana acknowledged that the issues are not as simple as may be perceived and may require larger systemic reforms to address.

Some of the interventions that Dana proposed include individual counseling and community mental health programs (virtual or in-person) to support the affected students. Dana mentioned that through individual intervention, counselors can help build self-esteem and confidence and even create a sense of accountability in support of students with financial hardships. Subsequently, such efforts empower the students by fostering an environment where they can be heard and respected. Another form of intervention is the collaboration between the school counselors and other professionals, such as social workers or even school psychologists, whereby their interactions can be used to address issues such as absenteeism, academic shortcomings, and even emotional issues. According to Dana, close collaboration is critical for the best form of support for those struggling.

In offering intervention, Dana pointed out that some of the challenges that school counselors face includes resource constraints and even time limitations. She stated, "I feel I have a lot of duties and I don't have as many as I had last year at all because I complained so much to my school counselor supervisor." Such insufficiency of time has posed significant challenges in carrying out the critical tasks necessary for supporting low-income students, such as facilitating group sessions and even championing policy changes. While there may be obstacles in championing policy changes and extra resources, Dana's commitment was to herself and her students, seeking to grow professionally and meet her students' needs.

Jordan

Jordan is a 60-year-old White woman. She has worked as a school counselor in the Bibb County School District, Macon, Georgia, for the last 17 years. Based on her extensive experience, she shared valuable insights on the effect of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of the students. One of the effects of poverty on executive functioning identified by Jordan is its ability to deter brain development due to the potential exposure to trauma and limited stimulation. She mentioned, "… the brains are not stimulated enough in the very beginning to form these poor connections, one thing that I have witnessed with poverty." Such limited development is bound to result in poor emotional skills. Such children from low-income households may also lack the basic resources for their development, such as good nutrition, which may further hinder their cognitive development. Jordan further acknowledged that generational poverty may also cause certain behaviors to be propagated down family lines and result, resulting in academic challenges.

With academic skills, Jordan stressed the need for the students' immersion into early intervention measures as well as exposing them to the relevant resources that could build their

academic prowess. In stressing this intervention, Jordan builds on the effect of poverty on academic performance, noting that it could contribute to conditions such as absenteeism and even poor skill development for subjects such as math and reading. These effects may be long-term, whereby the extent of student dropout grows bigger, and the effect is behavioral problems where no interventions are effective. Additionally, Jordan stressed the societal changes that have led to the persistent poverty cycle and, hence, the need for comprehensive support to help break this cycle.

Jordan identified multiple challenges confronting elementary school counselors in executing their roles. One challenge she contended with is the inconsistent roles and responsibilities that define their work outcomes in the schools. For instance, she noted that school counselors are sometimes expected to perform administrative functions instead of focusing on their actual work. She mentioned, "… a lot of times, school counselors are busy doing administrative types of work." With such ambiguity in their scope of responsibility, the counselors may ineffectively provide the necessary intervention to students, and the effect is that they focus more on reactive approaches to deal with the issues at hand rather than being proactive about the interventions.

Jordan was also particular to point out that elementary school counselors are sometimes confronted by resource limitations that hinder their ability to address the challenges faced by students from low-income families. In particular, she stated that community resources that may be used for individualized support, such as one-on-one instruction, may be insufficient. Further, the absence of parental involvement or prioritization of more pressing and long-term needs over the students' educational goals is bound to affect their educational attainment. Jordan was also keen to voice her uncertainty about the ineffectiveness of measures such as policy changes or

extra resources in addressing the needs of these students from poor backgrounds. To support this, she looked back on her own experience, rooting for young pregnant girls to stay in school and finish their education.

Results

Theme Development

A thematic analysis of the transcript data revealed four common underlying themes and sub-themes. These themes are tabulated in Table 2 below. These themes are further delineated to provide perspective on the effects of poverty and the effective interventions the school counselors have implemented based on their experience.

Academic Underachievement

The respondents affirmed that poor academic performance is a common problem attributed to elementary school students' household poverty levels. Poor performance is linked to the inability of the student to attain their full academic potential or even excel in the subjects taught in school. Academic underachievement is a pervasive concern among the students from these low-income households, and that has gained consensus among all the participants. While such performance could be tied to a student's cognitive abilities, all eight participants agree that poverty negatively affects their academic performance, regardless of their cognitive abilities. Poverty contributes to poor performance as it creates hurdles for these students, impacting their surrounding factors such as their home environments, as Jacob stated,

> …So, I will say like home environment when they come to school, they may be tired because they had to stay up all night to take care of a baby sister. And so that home environment does play a big role because usually when they are living in poverty and that home environment is not structured or stable…

Poverty additionally limits access to learning resources, as Angel put it "… I feel that yeah, my perception is that poverty impacts their academic success a lot of times because they don't have the resources that they need…" This effect of poverty also stretches to even their emotional well-being, well put in the words of Naomi, "…but I have been in maybe a couple of trainings that talk specifically about poverty and how it affects our students with their academics and with their social-emotional learning as well."

From the analyzed data, it is also evident that the poor performance can be specifically linked to two subjects: math and reading. For instance, Tonya mentioned, "…I would say both reading and math … because in science and social studies, you have to read. But if I had to rank them, I would say reading is number one." Angel echoed this statement with a similar assertion "… reading and writing are highly impacted due to students coming out of poverty." Similarly, Naomi stated, "… I see a lot of kids that like math and like science and other subjects. But for some reason, reading is the subject where they struggle the most."

While poverty may affect the academic performance of the students, one common consensus among the participants is the holistic approach that can be used to address the problem. The holistic approach recognizes the need to provide additional support to the students to address all potential barriers, academic and non-academic. In meeting academic needs, the significance of individualized focus and attention stands out as an effective strategy. The school counselors mentioned that individualized programs are effective in addressing the academic struggle of these students from low-income households. These programs may come in the form of differentiated instruction, academic coaching, or even additional tuition programs designed to address or complement the students' unique learning styles by identifying their needs and the potential areas that need improvement. These efforts ensure that they receive the necessary

support to enable them to succeed academically. For example, Shelly mentioned an effective

intervention that they have implemented for their students

> …We work with them to find out, who are these students that may not have done so great
>
> on their map test? Who are the students that went down, went up… to kind of identify the
>
> kids that may need to be in a group or may need further assistance, or to see, hey, is
>
> everything okay? Is something going on at home? I noticed that your map score dropped
>
> from the score that you previously had before. Did you not get good rest that night…

Shelly further deemed such interventions effective since, in their efforts, they could establish that

one of the students performed poorly because they were tired during the test, since on the

previous night, they had spent the night in their mother's Toyota with their siblings and both

parents. They were squeezed into their mother's car, did not get enough sleep, and had to

complete the test the following day.

Academic underachievement is also significantly influenced by external factors. For this

reason, the counselors stress the need to proactively address and resolve these challenges. Some

of the challenges contributing to the student's poor performance include differences in the

learning resources that the students can access. For instance, Shelly mentioned families

confronted by inadequate resources. She stated,

> …It was a family. The mom was just like, I need, I need some help on my rent, or they
>
> are going to kick us out… she wanted us to give money out of our pockets to help her
>
> with her rent money.

 In addressing these challenges, the elementary school counselors' task is to ensure that the

students gain access to the same educational opportunities and link up families with the

necessary resources to help them address some of the socioeconomic challenges.

Another subtheme tied to poverty and addressing academic success is the level of parental involvement in the success of their children. For instance, Angel acknowledged the need for parental involvement as a requisite for the student's success. She stated, "My perception is that poverty impacts their academic success because a lot of times they don't have the resources that they need… and the parental supervision and support at home to be successful." Additionally, Jordan made similar sentiments based on her perception of the need for parents to value education. She stated,

> …But if you grow up in a household where, and I'm seeing this more and more, where
>
> education is not valued, it's not a priority… then it's not going to be a priority for the
>
> child, and it's not going to be something that the parent stresses for the Children to do or
>
> achieve. So, they are not going to take it seriously either.

Therefore, from the interview data, one thing that stood out is the need for guardians and parents to establish positive relationships with their children. The need for them to get more involved in their children's learning becomes even more apparent, whereby they provide them with the necessary support to prosper academically. In fostering a collaborative environment between school and home environments, the counselor successfully ensures that the student has a supportive system that promotes their academic growth.

Most importantly, by looking into these concerns, the counselors can appreciate the significance of creating a mindset of resilience and individual growth in the students. They can steer the student to embrace some of these challenges, learn from their setbacks, or even learn from their adversities. Some counselors, for instance, spoke about how such efforts have been successful in their own experiences. Jordan, for example, mentioned,

My parents grew up very poor, but education was valued in their home and education was

promoted… and they had the internal drive to achieve education. They did not achieve

the education that me and my sister and brother have been able to achieve because they

kind of got out of poverty and they left us in… getting us to the next level.

Therefore, in promoting a positive attitude toward learning while instilling confidence in the

student's ability to attain their academic goals, counselors and parents can enable these students

to overcome the challenges confronting them and, in turn, succeed academically.

Family Dynamics

The complexity brought about by the different family dynamics also emerges as a

consistent theme in the data collected from the interviews. The theme sheds more light on how

relationships between family members and their surrounding home environments can affect

elementary school students' academic performance, self-regulation, and executive functioning.

As the data from the respondents reveals the different ways through which family members

interact with each other, the dynamics surrounding parent-child relationships, and even the

availability of family support structures, the real effect of family complexities becomes more

apparent.

The collected data shows that the engagement between family members and students is

essential to their success. Naomi was particularly able to note that such relationships govern the

extent of the interaction and the learnings the students pick from them, subsequently determining

their success. In support of this, Naomi noted, "… the way parents self-regulate is similar to how

the children regulate." Tonya further substantiated this statement by noting that

…The home environment plays a huge role in a lot of things, especially in executive

functioning. Because of the simple fact that the parents lack executive functioning skills,

… they don't know who would teach their child if they don't have it.

Therefore, these counselors indeed asserted that parents and guardians play a crucial role in the

development of their children. Subsequently, such development calls for effective collaboration

between the school and home environment. To attain this, they proposed different strategies that

could be used by these families to ensure that there is productive engagement. One proposed

method is open communication. In advocating such communication, Jacob asserted that

…One of the things we use is how to communicate with adults and how to be an

advocate for yourself. Just teaching those students how to be advocates for themselves,

ask questions, and… not to be afraid to ask questions.

Another method is through parental workshops and outreach activities geared towards ensuring

parents are involved in their children's learning. Sally justified such an initiative as an effective

intervention. She pointed out that

…I work with teachers and other educators as a part of the intervention team, where we

are constantly discussing what interventions are being used to help the students

academically… when there are students who are specifically struggling with maybe self-

regulation skills, we might have a parent meeting together where we discuss what we are

seeing and how we can help and things like that. That includes executive functioning too.

Similarly, Angel spoke about the 504 programs designed to help students eliminate their barriers

to learning. In the program, "they are constantly putting goals in place and having meetings with

the parent to get that parent involved and to increase their involvement." Additionally, Angel

mentioned an initiative within the school where they

…Have a social worker who can be able to work with their parents or find some type of

outside counseling or programs that can come into the home, to work with the family, to

teach the mother and help the mother understand the importance and how it all connects

and how they need it to be able to be successful.

The participants in the study further emphasized the diversity involved in different

families, establishing that they may be unique, and therefore, their weaknesses and strengths may

be different. For this reason, it becomes imperative that these family, cultural, and socioeconomic

differences are respected while trying to help these families. Dana was more specific in

highlighting these differences. For instance, she identified language as a cultural barrier

…We have quite a few non-English speaking families at our school. So, if mom and dad

don't speak English and we are sending home the homework in English, how are they

supposed to help their children complete the homework? If they can't even communicate

in English?

Other families contend with resource challenges

…A lot of times some families don't have access to certain activities because they don't

have the funds… a lot of our families are in poverty. You know, a lot of them are

struggling in some way, form, or fashion.

Other families contend with homelessness "…and I'm thinking about those families that are

homeless. And I had a few this year who were struggling to get into a shelter." Angel also

substantiated these differences by describing the stress and chaos surrounding low-income

households,

And it is just like disorganized households. And so, a lot of times, the parent is under a lot

of stress because, you know, the parent is trying to take care of their children or keep the

lights on…the parent is always in survival mode. So, with all the high intensity of anger, frustration, sadness, and doubt, students are affected by that.

Therefore, in developing effective interventions, counseling professionals must factor in these diverse differences and uphold a cultural sensitivity that helps them respect the different structures and values that these families represent. Family dynamics are also characterized by the level of parental involvement in the overall well-being and success of their children. Where there is a positive influence, the chances of these students becoming more academically successful and emotionally sound are higher. On the flip side, as evidenced in Dana and Angel's assertions, when parents struggle or are disengaged from the process, their effects descend down to their children's academic performance and emotional well-being.

The family dynamics are also characterized by a fair share of challenges despite these families being from low-income backgrounds, which may aggravate the scenarios confronting the children. For instance, some are confronted by divorce, as attested to by Dana "… I don't get involved as much if it just concerns their academics, if it's like a student failing, only if there is like an emotional or social concern, like maybe mom and dad just got a divorce." Other families are confronted by a substance abuse menace. Jordan pointed out her experience with substance use "I do think that one of the big things um in poverty is drug use." Similarly, Shelly observed a substance abuse problem too in these students' families

> …And so I feel like those students had problems with self-regulating, of course, they were angry quick, they didn't know how to express their emotions because they were in poverty and domestic issues. From my experience, there is a lot of drug usage in that environment as well.

The consensus among the respondents on these and other stressors defining the family dynamics lies in early intervention and provision of access to critical support services that will support these families in their challenges.

Collaboration

Collaboration between the school counselors and other professionals additionally stands out as a perspective that has gained consensus amongst all the interviewed participants. From the counselors' perspective, collaboration involves the creation of teams between the school counselors and professionals, such as teachers, social workers, or even parents, to help better identify the students who may be struggling in school because of poverty and its effects on self-regulation, academic performance, and executive functioning. In collaborating and brainstorming, the working team can come up with the best way possible to help the students.

From the interviews, the participants proposed different ways of addressing collaboration. Jacob, for instance, addressed collaboration from an internal (school perspective) between the counselors and the teachers. According to Jacob, counselors work with teachers to identify students from low-income families. In brainstorming together, they can identify the best ways to help, for instance, by finding resources outside the school that can support or even provide after-school tutoring. For example, he stated,

> We have collaborated with our community partners, such as providing our students with resources over the weekend, like say they don't have food. We also have these resources available at our school, where students can come in. If they don't have clean clothes, …washing powders to wash clothes, we have those things available for them…and those are community efforts that we have partnered with each other.

Another form of collaboration is the collaboration between professionals in different disciplines. The elementary school counselors have admitted to having worked closely with other

professionals, such as psychologists and other support specialists, in their bid to address students'

issues. These efforts speak to the significance of collaborative participation in offering effective

interventions for the socially, behaviorally, and academically affected by the effects of poverty.

This is well evidenced in Dana's assertion where she mentioned, "…I work hand in hand with a

multitier support specialist. She and I work closely for the kids who are struggling. So, she has a

meeting every week, and I attend if I can." Such sessions involving meetings and common

efforts have proven resourceful for children with academic challenges. These consistent

meetings, as in Dana's assertion, "… I meet with the social worker almost monthly," further,

stress the significance that the counselor attests towards collaborative commitment as a tool for

addressing students' needs. Additionally, in these multi-tiered efforts, the need for a synergy of

the roles within the school environment stands out since the counselors also collaborate with

administrators and other teachers. Dana further asserted,

> … I do have the teachers check in with me once a month to give me all their attendance
>
> concerns. Any other concerns and then we just have an open-door policy. If you notice a
>
> change in one of your students, you know, bring it to my attention so that I can figure out
>
> what's going on.

As counseling professionals embrace a collaborative strategy, the sense of shared responsibility

for their students' success stands out among them, driving further the need for effective

coordination with all involved stakeholders.

　　　　While these collaborative efforts may be implemented, the necessity of student-centricity

is a major requirement. This involves the school counselor's use of unique and tailored

interventions that meet students' needs to be based on their strengths. This involves the

counselors adopting holistic perspectives based on the students' environmental, academic, and

emotional backgrounds. While addressing the interventions for these students, one of the counselors, for instance, advocated for the need to build confidence and self-esteem in the student. As a student-centered approach, this involves the creation of supportive environments for the students that empower them to voice out their issues. As Dana stated, "… when students, especially in the elementary level, feel better about themselves, they perform better, and when they feel empowered or they feel like they have a voice and their voice is heard, they do better…" Angel gave further weight to the impact of the absence of such interventions

> … You know they don't have any self-motivation. It's hard because they feel so insecure.
> After all, at some point, they know that they are behind either because they have been
> told or they kind of can see it because some of their peers are moving ahead of them.

Sally additionally described how they have leveraged student-centered approaches to address student issues. She mentioned,

> …At my school, we use this curriculum called the second step. And what the second step
> is teaching those kids about their feelings, how to handle those feelings, how to overcome
> obstacles that may come in their life and how to express and handle conflict.

These strategies have proven effective in empowering students and are thus ideal for creating a positive environment within the school setup.

Furthermore, the collected data shows that elementary school counselors can engage with external stakeholders. These stakeholders include agencies, community organizations, or even families that can help offer the requisite support that students require to thrive. For instance, Naomi acknowledged that

> …Community involvement is helpful... and when the students see people from outside
> agencies coming in, and helping them with those executive functioning skills, it just helps

to kind of close the gap with educators for them. It helps us as educators increase our

ability to help the child more.

Therefore, even as the counselors recognize the effect of external factors on homelessness and

poverty, the assurance that they can engage the community helps them connect and better engage

with the students and their families to resolve the issues emanating from poverty and its

associated shortcomings.

Resource Scarcity

The collected data also pointed to some aspects of resource scarcity that affect the

effectiveness of the elementary school counselors' interventions. This resource scarcity is a major

challenge in addressing the overall support they can provide to the students affected by poverty.

Tonya stated, "… because we are in such a small community, there's not really many resources."

Similarly, Angel affirmed, "… because we have so many students there that are also affected by

poverty, that makes the lack of resources more scarce. And so, it's harder to give them what they

need when they come to school…" One key challenge that defines the counselors' efforts is the

financial constraints that they are confronted with as they provide programs and support services

to these students. They are forced to work within limited budgets and, occasionally, will have to

choose between competing options and make difficult decisions as to how they can allocate the

limited resources to these interventions.

Shelly gave an example of how it is difficult to work with limited financial resources, "a

parent wanted us to give her the money immediately because she needed it that day… and I told

her, you know I can call some churches, so of course I called some churches and they had no

money…" Tragedies do strike quickly, but the turnaround time for some of the resources can be

a little challenging. These limited resources, in fact, influence the staffing levels and the

effectiveness of their output. For example, Shelly further mentioned, "… and then a lot of people do need help. So, I would say finding people to help support can be slim because funds ran out." To support the resource scarcity, she further attested that "…we only had a part-time social worker that would come once a month, and it was like we need somebody in here every day to help assist."

Resource scarcity is further evidenced by the disparities existing in their allocations in the different school districts represented by the counselors. There appear to be larger inequalities in resource allocation, which stretches their access to support services and even educational funding. One school counselor highlighted the difficulty of working with schools with extensive needs and limited resources. Dana stated,

> …The only thing that comes to mind is because we live in such a small town, and I say we because I live in a town where I work. It is such a small community. It's not many resources like you would have to go to the next town over or the next town over.

Additionally, Angel pointed out, "…and usually, it's just not one school, it's the whole zone. So, the whole zone is affected and there's just not enough support to go all the way round." In these cases, the students face more barriers to their success. These challenges, as outlined by the elementary school counselors, only further stress the need for equitable resource distribution that addresses the different needs of all students.

This theme is further justified by the present limitations on the different service delivery models and support provisions and their lack of addressing the student's needs. To bring this to perspective, the counselors pointed out the gaps represented in support services. These may include the challenges in accessing mental health services and disability. Shelly justified this position in the statement,

…As far as financially, as well as like mental health issues also because having

conversations in some of the meetings that we have with other counselors in my district,

it will sometimes come across, as they are not as self-aware or culturally competent.

This creates a gap and a further need to ensure that the counselors are "… culturally aware and

that they know how to work with and talk to students who are different from them," such as

those with disability or mental health issues.

While the resources may be limited, the counselors pointed out that they continuously

strived to optimize the available resources and to ensure that they obtained as many resources

from partners as possible, which would help them in attending to the student's needs. Such

optimization draws back to the collaboration between counselors and other professionals. This

emphasizes how critical partnerships and collaboration with other external stakeholders are

necessary for a low-income background student's holistic development.

Table 2

Underlying Themes from Collected Data

Themes	Description	Quotation
Academic underachievement	Poverty results in poor academic performance in subjects like reading and math. Some approaches to it include individualized attention and extra support.	"I feel that yeah, my perception is that poverty impacts their academic success a lot of times because they don't have the resources that they need…" Angel "I see a lot of kids that like math and like science and other subjects. But for some reason, reading is the subject where they struggle the most." Naomi "… we work with them to find out, who are these students that may not have done so great on their map test?" Shelly
Family dynamics	The family environment and how the individual members relate affect the student's emotional well-being and performance. Issues such as divorce and substance abuse have been identified as significant influences. Parental support and involvement are critical for success.	"… the way parents self-regulate is similar to how the children regulate." Naomi "… if mom and dad don't speak English and we are sending home the homework in English, how are they supposed to help their children complete the homework?" Dana "… a lot of times, the parent is under a lot of stress because, you know, the parent is trying to take care of their children or keep the lights on…the parent is always in survival mode." Angel

Themes	Description	Quotation
Collaboration	Collaboration between teachers, parents, school counselors, and other professionals is essential for addressing student needs. Student-centered approaches would essentially include tailored programs that students can use to build their confidence and improve their self-esteem.	"… we have collaborated with our community partners, such as providing our students with resources over the weekend, like say they don't have food…"Jacob "… when students, especially in the elementary level, feel better about themselves, they perform better…" Dana "… community involvement is helpful... and when the students see people from outside agencies coming in, and helping them with those executive functioning skills…" Naomi
Resource scarcity	Limited resources, such as financial constraints and differences in resource allocation, create barriers to effective interventions. Additionally, access to some support services, such as disability support and mental health services, can be thwarted by scarcity. This calls for a need for the optimization of the available resources to ensure strategic partnerships are fostered for effective intervention.	"… because we are in such a small community, there's not really many resources." -Tonya "… and then a lot of people do need help. So, I would say finding people to help support can be slim because funds ran out." …" Shelly "… the only thing that comes to mind is because we live in such a small town…" Dana

Research Questions Responses

RQ 1: What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of elementary school students?

Overall, the collected data details the elementary school counselors' perceptions of poverty and its impact on learners' functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement, which can be used to answer the first research question. From the data, it is evident that the

school counselors indeed affirm that poverty can greatly impact elementary students' self-regulation, executive functioning, and academic performance, subsequently building barriers to their learning and development. The analyzed data revealed that it is evident that poverty affects the students' executive functioning by introducing behaviors and conditions that impact their development. They suffer from trauma, as Jordan asserted,

> …If you have a traumatized child, then you know executive functioning is considered higher up on the hierarchy of need. So, you know, if they are just trying to survive that executive functioning while it may develop, it will develop in ways for them to survive more so than in ways to be educated.

Some children living in poverty have shown that they are unable to plan their tasks, effectively manage their time or even define their goals as justified by Sally when asked about the specific examples of the negative impact of executive functioning. She mentioned that poverty affects "their problem-solving skills or their ability to recover information. It also can affect their organization or emotional control time management." These children certainly have a limited extent of exposure to activities that enhance their executive functioning, such as specific enrichment activities or even structured habits and routines.

The collected data attributed poverty to emotional instability and even increased stress levels, which may affect the student's ability to control their behavior. The counselors attest that the students will struggle with behavioral challenges such as frustration tolerance as Angel affirmed, "with all the high intensity of anger, frustration, sadness, and doubt, students are negatively affected by that in the area of impulse control and even coping strategies." These frustrations make it extremely difficult for them to focus on their learning outcomes or even

uphold positive interactions, thus introducing a third dimension to the effect of poverty on academic performance.

The research data also links poverty to lower academic attainment. This has been linked to factors such as insufficient study resources, high absenteeism, and unstable home environments. Poverty makes these children perform poorly and struggle with subjects such as math and reading, and they even exhibit characteristics such as anger and emotional instability. Angel justified this position by claiming that "if you can't read or write, you can't do math at some point either because you have word problems and other different things." Challenges such as external environment stresses, insufficient resources, and even a lack of access to support services all aggravate the effect that poverty has on students.

RQ 2: What strategies and interventions do elementary school counselors perceive as effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

According to the collected data, the school counselors pointed out that different strategies and interventions have been effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds. The elementary school counselors have supported the effectiveness of small group sessions that build on different critical skills of the student, such as organization and time management. For instance, Tonya noted the use of small groups. She asserted, "…I do small groups with those students that lack the executive functioning skills… also when I go in and do my classroom lessons, I try to incorporate those skills in with my lessons." This has proven effective in developing their executive functioning skills.

Another form of intervention includes their involvement in academic support groups. The counselors have been keen to create support groups that can be used to address the different

challenges confronting the students, including study skills, math, and comprehension skills. The advantage that these groups offer is their ability to provide practice and instruction that builds on the student's gaps. Sally attested to these groups, mentioning that

> …As a school counselor, I am a part of the team that looks at tier three interventions for students giving them extra support in reading, writing and math as well as behavior because behavior does affect your ability to stay in class and learn.

Individual counseling has also proven to be effective as an intervention strategy. This involves the counselor having sessions with the students exhibiting behavioral challenges and emotional distress associated with poverty. The advantage that such sessions bring is that the counselor can understand how the student copes, manages their stress, and solves any problems affecting their academic performance, emotional functioning, and self-regulation. Dana attested to its use, claiming that "…individual counseling is for those who need it the most." Additionally, Angel asserted, "…I do teach them those executive functioning and self-regulation skills through guidance, classroom guidance, through small groups and individual sessions."

Most importantly, as the counselors seek to address the root of the problem, the findings point to the effective use of outreach activities and parental workshops that involve both parents and children. In the workshops, the parents are provided with the key resources and educated on the effort needed to create a conducive environment that will enable them to thrive socially and attain academic success. When implemented consistently and based on student feedback, these interventions are bound to improve student outcomes.

RQ 3: What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by elementary school counselors in addressing the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement among students?

In executing their duties, elementary school counselors have certain common challenges that can be identified from the research data. Resource limitation stands out as one of the major challenges, characterized by financial constraints and the availability of critical services that would benefit the students. Such insufficiency is well described by Shelly in her bid to help a struggling family, "…and I was like, you know, I can call some local churches to help a parent with financial difficulties. So of course I called some churches, and they have no money."

Another common challenge is the overwhelming work the counselors must handle in elementary schools, making it difficult to give individualized attention. The high demand for counseling requests and the little time available make it difficult for the counselors to attend to the client's needs. Shelly mentioned, "even though I do have a co-counselor, it does get a little difficult when its two of you and some 800 kids." Counselors are also tasked with doing more administrative work than counseling related interventions at times. Jordan states,

> ... Um, a lot of times school counselors are busy doing administrative types of work. So, to think that a school counselor, you know, when I went to school and I learned all the theories and all of that, that was not really what school counselors did, you know, um school counselors are seen as quasi administrators. I mean, I've done everything from whole classes for the day because the sub didn't show up to, you know, I do all duty.

Additionally, one challenge that found consensus among the counselors is the insufficient knowledge and skills that demanded more training and professional development. The counselors felt that they were inadequately prepared to meet the unique needs of the students, therefore calling for more professional training opportunities that specifically address poverty issues. Naomi acknowledged that while she has attended specific training focusing on poverty, "… I have been in maybe a couple of trainings that specifically talk about poverty and how it

affects our students with their academics and with their social-emotional learning as well…"

there is still need for further training, and that

> … School districts could do a better job in making sure school counselors have the
>
> trainings that they need. Sometimes counselors are put on the back burner for things like
>
> that, but making sure that, they have those types of trainings that talk specifically about
>
> students in poverty and how to help them with specific skills.

RQ 4: How do school counselors feel about their level of training regarding poverty and its effect on student achievement?

The fourth research question informed about the counselors' perceptions of their level of

training and the need for training on poverty and its effects on student achievement. While the

counselors acknowledge that, to some extent, they may have the requisite training, they all

perceived the need for additional training, especially on matters dealing with poverty scenarios.

For example, when asked about what kind of training they would need, Jordan mentioned, "I

think that if counselors had more knowledge of exactly what develops in the brain… and what

literature says about poverty and executive functioning then it would be ideal in helping students

with their achievement challenges."

The elementary school counselors further stressed the need for cultural awareness,

knowledge of mental health problems, and even the understanding of the different

socioeconomic factors that may be dominant in low-income households, which would further

affect these students. In emphasizing the need for training on cultural awareness, Shelly noted,

"So I would definitely say, just making sure that everyone knows how to talk with and work with

students that are different from them." Additional knowledge and training would thus focus on

building their perception and effectiveness of their intervention.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the data collected from eight elementary school counselors representing different demographics in an effort to analyze their perceptions of the effect of poverty on self-regulation, executive functioning, and academic performance of elementary school students. Participant profiles and summaries have been provided, which have built an in-depth knowledge of the counselors' perceptions. From these summaries, at least four major themes emerge. The first is academic underachievement, whereby school counselors affirmed that poverty hinders elementary school students' capacity for academic and emotional success. The second theme revolves around the complexities governed by different family dynamics, which worsens the effects of poverty among elementary school students. The third theme builds on the aspect of collaboration as an effective intervention. The fourth theme further emphasizes the scarcity of resources as a challenge confronting these counselors in developing an effective intervention. These themes culminate in the responses to the research questions, upon which the findings will be discussed in the next chapter for a succinct conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

This chapter provides a synthesis of the research findings that have been presented in the prior sections. The aim is to discuss poverty's influence on the academic performance, executive functioning, and self-regulation skills of elementary school-going children based on counselor perceptions. Therefore, the chapter will begin by presenting a summary of the research findings and providing responses to the research questions. It will then seek to discuss these results by considering the theoretical frameworks adopted for the study and pointing out areas of congruence and the novel contributions the study will make to the field. The implications of these findings will then be addressed alongside the delimitations and limitations that may have been encountered in the process, therefore offering a personal reflection on the possible research constraints. Finally, recommendations for future research will be made. Ultimately, the chapter aims to yield significant contributions to academic discourse by offering workable interventions to a long-standing problem.

Summary of the Findings

This study embarked on understanding elementary school counselors' perceptions of the effect of poverty on students' self-regulation skills, academic achievement, and executive functioning. Based on the collected and analyzed data from eight school counselors, crucial findings were established, outlining the common issues facing the students and the common interventions and strategies used by the counselors to address the associated effects. From the collected data, the impact of poverty significantly affects the student's ability to excel academically, especially in reading and math. From the data, the counselors attain a consensus in that they attribute these difficulties to the different factors linked to poverty, including limited

parental involvement that could be tied to economic stressors, unstable home environments resulting from effects such as drug abuse, and even limited access to learning resources. In addition, the counselors note that poverty not only bears an effect on academic outcomes but also limits the students' executive functioning skills, including their problem-solving abilities, emotional control, and even memory control. The counselors further noted that these students from low-income households did indeed lack the critical support structures such as present role models who would be ideal for building these skills. Their limitations in executive functioning further aggravated the behavioral challenges that the students exhibited within the school setting. The overall effect was the poor overall experience of the students.

Major themes emerged from the study. The first major theme identified in this research was academic underachievement. As revealed above, the school counselors agree that poverty significantly impacts the student's academic achievement. The problem in academic achievement was linked to the student's inability to attain their full potential because of the constraints coming from their poor backgrounds. As revealed, some of the constraints are home disruptions, responsibilities to take care of younger siblings, and inadequate learning resources, which hinder access to a decent education. Consequently, these obstacles make it extremely difficult for the students to focus solely on their academic goals. Besides, these challenges imputed on the student's emotional health issues that also affected their academic journeys, as the students identified as being stressed and emotionally overwhelmed most of the time. In particular, the main subjects impacted by the student's poor performance were reading and math. Despite these issues, some counselors noted that interventions like individualized attention and additional student support were essential in alleviating the potential distress and lagging that most learners

identified with. In addition, the initiatives that provided extra tuition and instruction were relevant in bridging the gap created by the specific disadvantages.

The second theme that gained consensus was the different family dynamics introduced by poverty. The home environment and the interaction of its different members were identified as a critical component of the student's academic performance and emotional well-being. Family dynamics characterized by relationships between siblings and parents and support structures were identified as relevant in influencing the student's executive functioning and self-regulation skills. One way this was apparent was in how parents self-regulated, imitated, and replicated among their children. In addition, parental executive functioning was also identified as a determinant of the executive functioning skills of their children. Therefore, in addressing these shortcomings, the counselors mentioned that open communication between parents and their children was a key determinant. Nonetheless, stressors such as homelessness, substance abuse, divorce, and stress stood out as key factors that aggravated the complexity of family dynamics, subsequently affecting the student's academic performance negatively. Most importantly, the counselors mentioned that effective intervention could only be best attained through outreach initiatives and parental workshops that were aimed at ensuring that parents get involved in their children's learning.

The third theme originating from the research findings was collaboration between the school counselors and other professionals. In their responses, the counselors stressed the need for multifaceted teams of psychologists, social workers, teachers, community partners, and other professionals to address the complex challenges confronting students from poor backgrounds. The advantage of such collaboration lies in their ability to provide students with the crucial resources that the students may require during their academic journeys.

In executing such collaborations, the counselors acknowledged that they should be more student-centered. This means that the approaches are uniquely tailored to ensure that they factor in both students' strengths and individual needs. Overall, counselors seek to achieve outcomes such as improving the students' self-esteem, a crucial component of their well-being and academic performance. A good example of such a student-centered approach would be the second-step curriculum provided by one counselor, whose main goal was to help the students overcome their obstacles and control their emotions.

Finally, resource scarcity was the last theme that gained consensus among the counselors. Their scarcity was characterized by financial challenges and difficulties in accessing support services, which in turn affected the effectiveness of their intervening strategies. To the counselors, working in communities that had financial constraints proved problematic, typical of how families in poverty proved problematic, as it introduced additional struggle to the counselors and the inability to help. Some cases were characterized by an inequitable distribution and allocation of resources, which further aggravated the situation. Such inequitable distribution presented the counselors with the difficult option of where, how, and which logic to use to allocate the resources made available to the students. Further, the limited access to mental health services that would be ideal to support students with disabilities worsens the issue. While such limitations would be present, there was consensus among the counselors that they make the best use of the available resources and work with other partners to provide much needed support to the students.

Research Questions

A summary response for the four key research questions guiding this study is provided below.

RQ 1: What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of poverty on the executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement of elementary school students?

The counselors perceive that poverty negatively affects students' self-regulation skills, executive functioning, and academic performance. They note that the students from these low-income households will struggle to develop key skills such as problem-solving, memory control and emotional control. These shortcomings are further tied to limited resources, parental absenteeism, and unstable households. The counselors also noted that poverty creates emotional instability, heightens stress levels, and results in behavioral changes that potentially affect student's academic growth and performance. Academic performance was also observed to be affected by students confronting challenges such as the inability to comprehend math and reading.

RQ 2: What strategies and interventions do elementary school counselors perceive as effective in supporting students from low-income backgrounds in developing executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement?

The emphasis from the school counselors is more holistic in that it incorporates both the academic and the emotional needs of the student. Some strategies that the counselors noted to use in addressing students' issues include individual counseling, small group sessions that focused mainly on time and organization management, parental workshops, and even academic support groups. These interventions were relevant in helping to meet the student's unique mental and academic needs by providing them with much-needed support for their emotional and academic development. In addition, the counselors stress the need for community engagement, mentorship programs, and access to the crucial educational resources that would aid in mitigating poverty effects.

RQ 3: What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by elementary school counselors in addressing the impact of poverty on executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement among students?

The key barriers that were derived from the study include increased workloads, resource constraints, and inadequate training for the counselors. Additionally, they face financial challenges, continuously increasing the need for counseling sessions by students despite having inadequate support resources. These challenges make it difficult to offer individualized attention to the students.

RQ 4: How do school counselors feel about their level of training regarding poverty and its effect on student achievement?

The consensus among all the counselors is that additional training is crucial for the effectiveness of their work. They identified gaps in training for mental health, poverty-related issues, and cultural awareness. They all acknowledged the need for professional growth and development, which would help them effectively meet the specific needs of learners from low-income households.

From the analyzed themes and responses to the research questions, the school counselors note that poverty has serious effects on the learners' emotional well-being and their academic performance. As they use different strategies to counter the effects, they are not without their challenges, especially due to resource constraints and insufficient training. To address these students' complex needs, the role of collaboration among different professionals and student-centered intervention approaches stands out.

Discussion

The effect of poverty on the academic success and emotional development of school-going children has been well theorized. Theoretical frameworks, including Haberman's pedagogy of poverty and Bandura's social cognitive theory, were identified as the main theories underpinning the study. Both theories give insights into how poverty influences educational outcomes and the relationship between students, parents, and teachers in the child's learning process.

Empirical and Theoretical Literature

Haberman (2010) argued in the pedagogy of poverty that sufficient resources and a safe learning environment are barely sufficient in helping children attain academic achievement. The role of the theory lies in highlighting the negative effects of reduced expectations and set teaching models adopted by teachers when dealing with students from less privileged backgrounds. Further, Terzi et al. (2023) did note that educators will most of the time adopt such poor stereotypes, with the assumption that poverty comes about because of parental outcomes and will subsequently lead to reduced expectations and reduced interactions between the teachers and students. By considering the study's results in line with the pedagogy of poverty, it is evident that Haberman's assertions hold true. For instance, from the study, it is evident that most students from these low-income households' struggle with academic underachievement, especially in math and reading subjects. Some participants' home environments lacked the necessary resources and home environment stability, which profoundly affected the student performance. Further, as emphasized by Haberman's (2010) recommendation for a more empathetic and all-inclusive pedagogy that transcends stereotypical methods, the solution lies within the school counselors even as they attempt to individualize their attention and intervention to the students. Therefore,

this means that the solution lies not in resolving academic-related challenges, but rather in addressing the psychological challenges that confront the students.

Bandura's social cognitive theory stresses the interaction of human, environmental, and cognitive factors in influencing human behavior (Ozer, 2022). Bandura further stresses that people learn through observation, and children will learn by imitating and learning the behavior of others (Bandura, 1978). Therefore, for children in impoverished environments, the lack of positive role models and critical learning resources may hinder their ability to effectively participate in observational learning. This will affect their behavior and motivation.

Corroboration to Prior Research

The study's findings show that family dynamics are bound to affect both the students' performance and self-regulation skills. Participants, for instance, have stressed the need for parental involvement as a crucial component of the learner's development. In low-income households, such involvement may be lacking due to reasons such as substance abuse, dysfunctional families, etc., and hence, the positive role models from whom the learners may emulate may be lacking. This, in turn, would lead to the student's inability to develop critical self-regulation and executive functioning skills. Their motivation and self-efficacy are also improved.

In further advocating for collaboration between professionals, the home, and schools, this study further attains an alignment with Bandura's theory. This is achieved through its advocacy for parental workshops and communication endeavors, which create environments that can foster and reinforce positive behavior among the students (Ozer, 2022). The effect would be a better mental and academic outcome for the students. Similarly, Haberman's theory can be envisioned

in collaboration, which steers away from deficient approaches and further leverages common resources that could build into students' strengths and those of their families.

Study Contributions

Most importantly, this study has brought to light some challenges that school counselors face in the execution of their duties, including resource constraints, minimal training on poverty-related concepts, and even huge workloads. These issues best reflect the larger systemic challenges supported in Haberman's pedagogy of poverty, which points out the minimal resources available in low-income settings that are relevant in supporting and serving students (Haberman, 2010). Even as the counselors champion additional training for their professional development, Bandura's highlighting of the need to comprehend and address the cognitive and environmental factors that affect human behavior becomes more apparent. Therefore, when counselors are more equipped with the skills and knowledge for addressing poverty-related challenges, then they can provide more effective interventions for their student's academic and mental challenges.

While the study found congruence with existing theoretical frameworks on the effects of poverty in highlighting the perceptions of school counselors, this study provides a novel contribution to effective interventions that have worked in such situations. Individualized attention, small group sessions, parental workshops, and collaboration are identified as key measures that equip both parents and students to transcend the limitations introduced by their socioeconomic status. Subsequently, these can be adopted and introduced on a broader scale to training and development curriculums for school counselors.

Implications

The study's findings create significant practical, theoretical, and empirical implications that would be essential to all stakeholders involved in the welfare of students living in less privileged socioeconomic conditions, including teachers, parents, ministers, policymakers, and counselors. The findings implicate poverty as bearing an adverse effect on academic performance, executive functioning, and self-regulation skills. Hence, there is a need for improved and targeted interventions and collaboration. These implications are further delineated.

Theoretical Implications

These findings build further on the theoretical knowledge of how less privileged socioeconomic conditions influence learners' cognitive and emotional development. It supports the different theories that have associated poverty with poor academic performance through high stress levels, less stable households, or inadequate resources. Bandura's social cognitive theory which argues that the environment, personal, and cognitive factors affect human behavior and that learning is by imitation, is well justified by the research data. For example, the social learning theory's reciprocal determinism maintains that environmental influences, behavior, and personal factors interact to cause different outcomes (Bandura, 1978). According to the research data, environmental factors such as a stressful home environment can result in emotional distress (a personal factor), which subsequently can affect behavioral factors such as school performance. Therefore, the implication that stands out would be a holistic approach to these three factors, ensuring that schools can work together with the family and community to create a network of support for resolving environmentally stressful conditions and offer both academic and emotional support to the learners.

The findings also align with other theories, such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which argues in favor of the effect of a child's development based on their environment and its interactions with the indirect environment, culture, and changes over time (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). For instance, the effect of poverty, which has been well established by the research data, is congruent with the interaction of factors with the immediate environment as presented by the theory. Poverty affects the child's environment, introducing constraints such as unstable households, which result in stressful learning conditions for the child. Thus, the implication would be an intervention's focus on improving the immediate environment for the learner through supporting the family and introducing adequate learning resources.

Empirical Implications

Empirical evidence from the study has presented different areas where academic performance is impacted by poverty, specifically in reading and math subjects. The analysis of the major themes emanating from the research data points to the different barriers that students face in their learning journey, including insufficient sleep, insufficient resources, and even poor emotional health due to the instability of their households and family dynamics. The empirical evidence deduced further emphasizes the significance of holistic approaches both in interventions and educational processes. These should take into consideration both academic and non-academic components. In addition, the research findings stress the crucial role that school counselors play in identifying and resolving these challenges among the students, thereby emphasizing a greater need for additional research into how counseling in the context of learners from less privileged households can be made more effective.

Practical Implications

These findings further provide insights that can be used to improve the situation of learners from low-income households. It has stressed the significance of tailored intervention measures such as personal tutoring, individual counseling, and academic support groups which can reduce the effects that poverty bears on academic performance. It has also stressed the need for better self-regulation skills by parents, from whom the children learn, and hence the need for parental workshops that could focus on addressing such issues. Subsequently, what stems from the present findings is the need for robust support systems that blend in the collaboration of different professionals, stakeholders, and the community at large to ensure that the interventions are thorough and all-inclusive.

Stakeholder Recommendations

These implications present options for recommendations that can be adopted by different professionals involved in children's academic and emotional development. They are presented below.

School Counselors

School counselors mainly interact with children from low-income households in the school setting. Therefore, the recommendation for school counselors would be to strive to create tailored support initiatives that address their students' needs. They also ought to root for and create more small group sessions that can be used to enhance student self-regulation and executive functioning. Most importantly, they are to strive to build their professional development and subsequently venture deeper into understanding the effects of poverty and how to effectively implement intervention strategies.

Policymakers

Policymakers are at the forefront of transforming educational policy. The recommendations that emanate from the study findings include allocating extra funding to zones with less privileged households, ensuring that educational resources and requisite support services are easily accessible to those in need. They should also seek to create policies to reinforce student counselor efforts, for instance, the minimum number of counselors for a certain number of students. The policymakers could also root for community programs focused on supporting less privileged households and addressing the larger issues that influence their children's academic and emotional development.

Administrators

As the school administrators run their school environments, their focus ought to be providing a conducive environment that fosters effective learning for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. It is therefore recommended that the school administrators foster a collaborative environment between teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders, which will ensure that these professionals convene and implement intervention strategies that better support the learner. The administrators should also strive to ensure that their schools are well-equipped with critical resources to support both students and counselors, such as study materials, counseling programs, food programs, etc. Most importantly, the administrators can foster greater involvement of parents in their children's learning through opportunities such as outreach programs and parent-student and teacher workshops in support of their children's learning and emotional health.

Teachers

As individuals with a direct influence on student learning, teachers should strive to ensure that they use different methods to meet the learning objectives for all students. Where individualized attention may be required for students from less privileged households, then teachers should focus on providing as much effort as they can. The teachers should also strive to be vigilant and note any indications of behavior or emotional change among their students and subsequently collaborate with the school counselors to ensure that they effectively address the challenges.

Parents

Parents are the ultimate influence on their children's emotional well-being and academic performance. In promoting this well-being, this study recommends that parents ought to be actively involved in their student's learning journey. This includes their participation in parent workshops, school meetings, etc. Most importantly, regardless of their economic status, they ought to focus on providing a supportive and stable household that gives priority to their children's wellbeing. Their priority therefore lies in ensuring that their children are well catered for to meet their learning demands. As the bible instructs in Titus 2:7 they should "set them an example by doing what is good" (New International Version, 2011).

Delimitations and Limitations

Certain boundaries were applicable to the study that could be identified as potential delimitations. For instance, the study was geographically constrained to the school counselors in Georgia, and therefore, its findings may be limited to this context. While poverty and its effects may be universal, this delimitation introduces recommendations that may be geographically constrained.

Another delimitation is the study's focus on elementary school children, which may have failed to capture the extended effects of poverty on middle school or senior school students. The school counselor's perception of such students would have been a great perspective to capture, seeking to establish whether the effects persist throughout the student's journey.

One of the key limitations of this study that may have been beyond the researcher's control would be the small sample size of eight counseling professionals in comparison to the targeted 10. Subsequently, it would be far-fetched to note that the data from the study may have attained saturation. Additionally, with such a small sample size, it would not be feasible to conclude that their views represent the views of the larger counseling professionals within the region.

Finally, the study's reliance on interviews and self-reported data additionally introduces a limitation on the potential bias. Such bias could be a result of a counselor's inclination to provide responses that may be socially acceptable while discussing a sensitive issue or simply due to inaccuracies in how they recount the noted issues. Potential bias in the study could mean that the accuracy of its findings could be impacted.

Recommendations for Future Research

Poverty is a complex issue that has been associated with challenges among school children, including poor academic performance, executive dysfunction marked by poor interaction with others, and even family dynamic complexities. With such challenges, school counselors have been instrumental in helping these children from low-income households mitigate some of the grievous effects introduced by poverty and the associated scarcity of resources. From the findings driven by school counselor's perceptions, certain recommendations

for future research into the issue can be made, which will contribute to an enhanced

understanding of the pertinent issues affecting children.

      One key recommendation would be to extend the study period on the research subjects.

This could be attained in the form of a longitudinal study on the effect of poverty on children's

academic attainment, self-regulation skills, and executive functioning. The longitudinal study

could also incorporate the counselor's perceptions while dealing with specific children over

extended periods, for instance, their entire elementary school cycle. Longitudinal studies are

ideal as they offer the researcher a long-term view of the phenomenon under study Caruana et al.

(2015), from which some findings that may not be apparent in the study could be revealed.

Therefore, these findings would be ideal for providing more enhanced insights into the effects

that prolonged exposure to poverty may bear. As such, a longitudinal study could present

different conditions for the children over time, and it may subsequently yield more enhanced

interventions that could be used based on the rapidly changing students' needs.

      Another research gap presents itself in the assessment of the effectiveness of the

interventions implemented by school counselors in addressing the effects of poverty. This could

also be implemented from a longitudinal research perspective, where the long-term utility of the

interventions could be addressed. Further research could also focus on the identified

interventions, which include small group sessions, academic support groups, and individual

counseling. Areas of inquiry that could cover future research include assessing the interventions'

manageability in terms of applicability in wider school contexts and even their sustainability

across different demographics and poverty statistics. The study's outcome would therefore

validate which measures are effective and how they can be replicated on a larger student

demographic and scale.

The study additionally presented gaps in resource availability and allocation. One challenge that is common to all counselors has been identified as the availability of resources to help them attain their supportive objectives. Further research could focus on studying different contexts with different levels of resource allocation to establish their impact in addressing the challenges linked to poverty. Future research could also identify which resources are crucial in enhancing intervention efforts, including material, emotional, or even financial resources. The findings of such research could prove relevant in that they could be used to effectively inform educational policy and help administrators prioritize resource allocation and distribution to more deserving measures or interventions.

From the study, it was additionally evident that all school counselors identified the need for additional training to effectively address their students' poverty implications. Subsequently, the training programs, gaps, and future training needs demand further investigation to establish where possible gaps may exist in helping students. Future studies could assess the effect that targeted training, for instance, would have on the counselor's ability to address their student's poverty-related issues. These studies could also evaluate the effectiveness of the present training models in helping counselors address constant and evolving issues. The results from these study findings could then be used to modify educational material, training models, and delivery methods to help the counselors better implement their supportive interventions.

The identified gaps are just a few areas upon which future research could focus. Even as different studies embark on these gaps, their findings could prove relevant in offering crucial insights and practical solutions that would be beneficial to students from poverty-ridden backgrounds. The overall impact would be to improve their physical and mental wellbeing, and

their academic performance, enabling them to better establish themselves, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Summary

This chapter focused on discussing the research findings, considering the theories adopted for the study. Key themes on academic underachievement, family dynamics, collaboration, and resource scarcity have been identified as the major issues surrounding elementary education for low-income households. Further, these theories and their underlying contexts have been identified as corroborating Haberman's pedagogy of poverty and Bandura's social cognitive theory, with new insights on the specific interventions of individualized attention, parental workshops, and collaboration as effective interventions. While the study has been effective in yielding this information, delimitations and limitations on the geographical scope, sample size, and bias have also been identified as major constraints to the study. Nonetheless, future research could focus on addressing these limitations and extending the period of the study to cover a much larger timeframe. Most importantly, this study has been relevant in offering critical insights to educators, counselors, administrators, and policymakers in providing insights that could help improve the outcomes of their low-income students. Future research could focus on studying similar dynamics in different contexts and establishing the long-term effects of counselor interventions on their students' success.

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EXPLORING SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring School Counselors' Perceptions of How Poverty Impacts Elementary School Students' Capacity for Academic and Emotional Success: A Phenomenological Study.
Principal Investigator: Latesha Dixon, a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a professional school counselor working in the state of Georgia with five or more years of experience serving elementary school students living in poverty. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research or not.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to investigate school counselors' viewpoints regarding poverty's influence on elementary school students' executive functioning, self-regulation abilities, and academic performance.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
1. You will be asked to participate in a video conferencing interview, through Zoom, that is no more than 60 to 90 minutes long answering 25 interview questions.
2. You will be asked to be available for a follow-up interview if needed.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, benefits to society include the potential to improve counseling procedures, including how school counselors serve students from economically disadvantaged households. Furthermore, the study's findings may have an impact on larger educational practices and improve community awareness of the issues these students face. The study's goal is to break the cycle of impact of poverty on student achievement through increased education, resulting in long-term societal benefits for people, families, and communities while also contributing to social and economic growth.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Participants will have unique passwords to attend Zoom sessions. Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer throughout the research process, where only the researcher and faculty chair have access to these files, and will be deleted after 5 years.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Latesha Dixon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email xxxxxx@liberty.edu. You may also contact her faculty chair, Dr. Mollie Boyd at xxxx@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the IRB. The physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is xxx-xxx-xxxx, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers

are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix B: IRB Approval Request

13 November 2023
Latesha Dixon
xxxxxx@liberty.edu

IRB Details

Re: IRB Approval Request - Exploring School Counselors' Perceptions of How Poverty Impacts Elementary School Students' Capacity for Academic and Emotional Success: A Phenomenological Study.

To the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB),

My name is Latesha Dixon. I am a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University. I am writing to seek the IRB's approval for my research project dubbed "Exploring School Counselors' Perceptions of How Poverty Impacts Elementary School Students' Capacity for Academic and Emotional Success: A Phenomenological Study."

This study will entail a process of data collection through interviewing elementary school counseling professionals in Georgia. The counselors are expected to have at least 5 years' experience working with students from poor backgrounds. Participants will be recruited through community groups on social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The interviews will be carried out through collaboration the tool Zoom. The collected data will then follow a thematic analysis technique that will be used to identify the common themes/patterns. The findings in the research will discover new knowledge that can be used to improve the current intervention measures in place to confront the current challenges brought about by poverty among young learners.

The informed consent form and interview questions that will be used for this study are attached to this form. These ensure that the research is well aligned with the research policies, regulations, and ethics that guide ethical research. Subsequently, where change needs to be made, I am willing to accommodate it to ensure that the research process is as smooth as possible.
Thank you in anticipation for your kind feedback.

Sincerely,
Latesha Dixon

Appendix C: Recruitment Email to Potential Participants

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Latesha Dixon, a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University, is conducting research titled "Exploring School Counselors' Perceptions of How Poverty Impacts Elementary School Students' Capacity for Academic and Emotional Success: A Phenomenological Study." In the research, I am hoping to conduct online interviews through Zoom that are estimated to last between 60 to 90 minutes, answering 25 questions. Thus, your participation in the interview will enable me to research how poverty affects elementary school students.

As a school counselor who attended a school where the majority of the kids came from low-income families while growing up, I can relate to the difficulties these young people experience on a daily basis. My own experiences have affected how I perceive the particular challenges that poverty can place on a student's capacity for both academic and emotional success. Now that I am working in a similar educational environment where most of my students come from underprivileged homes, I have observed a repeating problem that genuinely worries me: their inability to self-regulate and succeed in school as a result of the harsh reality of poverty. Consequently, I intend to use this research to help identify effective interventions to mitigate related issues. By being part of the research, you will make tremendous contributions to addressing issues affecting our society, particularly the vulnerable groups. Besides, as a counseling professional, the research is an opportunity for you to have a new perspective on how poverty impacts elementary school students.

In this research, participants will voluntarily decide to be part of the research and can withdraw without repercussions, as long as they fulfill the criteria; at least five years' experience as elementary school counselors working with students from lo backgrounds. Besides, I do not intend to collect personal information in the research, but I will refer to you using a pseudonym that you select. I have attached an informed consent form that you should sign as an agreement to voluntarily be part of the research. I intend to conduct the interviews as soon as possible, with your permission.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, you can contact me through xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxxxx@liberty.edu. Also, you could contact my Chair, Mollie Evans Boyd, through email at xxxxx@liberty.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Latesha Dixon

Appendix D: Social Media Recruitment Post

Facebook
Attention Counselors: I am a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University, conducting research in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education. My focus is on exploring elementary school counselors' perception of the implication of poverty among elementary school students on their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement. The targeted participants are elementary school counselors in Georgia with a minimum of five years' experience working with students living in poverty. You will participate in a 60-90-minute interview consisting of 25 questions. If you meet the criteria and are interested in being part of the research, please direct message me or contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxxx@liberty.edu. I will share an informed consent form that you will sign expressing willingness to be part of the research.

Instagram
Are you an experienced elementary school counselor in Georgia with a minimum of five years of work experience with low-income students? Are you eager to participate in a research focusing on the impact of poverty among elementary students? If interested, I am conducting related research for my Doctorate project. Please direct message me for additional information relating to the research study and how you will participate.

LinkedIn
Dear Counselor,
I am a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University, conducting research in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. My focus is on exploring elementary school counselors' perception of the implication of poverty among elementary school students on their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement. I am currently looking for research participants for my research project. The targeted participants are elementary school counselors in Georgia, like yourself, with a minimum of five years of experience working with students living in poverty.

You will participate in a 60-90-minute interview consisting of 25 questions. If you meet the criteria and are interested in being part of the research, please direct message me or contact me through xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxx1@liberty.edu. I will share an informed consent form that you will sign expressing voluntary agreement to be part of the research and could withdraw at any time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Latesha Dixon

Appendix E: Social Media Recruitment Flyer

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

Attention Counselors: I am a Doctorate student in the School of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University, conducting research in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education.

THE STUDY

My focus is on exploring elementary school counselors' perception of the implication of poverty among elementary school students on their executive functioning, self-regulation skills, and academic achievement.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE ?

The targeted participants are elementary school counselors in Georgia with a minimum of five years' experience working with students living in poverty.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

You will participate in a 60-90-minute interview consisting of 25 questions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you meet the criteria and are interested in being part of the research, please direct message me or contact me at _____ or by email at _____@liberty.edu. I will share an informed consent form that you will sign expressing willingness to be part of the research.