

Examining Individual and Organizational Factors of School Counselor Burnout



The Professional Counselor™
Volume 10, Issue 2, Pages 235–250
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>
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doi:10.15241/hjf.10.2.235

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Burnout is a statistically significant phenomenon for school counselors, correlated with various individual and organizational factors, which have been studied independently. Therefore, we investigated both individual and organizational factors of burnout conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon with 227 school counselors. Multidimensional burnout was measured by the five subscales of the Counselor Burnout Inventory, which included Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life. Using hierarchical regression analyses, we found individual and organizational factors accounted for 66.6% of the variance explained in Negative Work Environment, 38.3% of the variance explained in Deterioration in Personal Life, 36.7% of the variance explained in Incompetence, 35.1% of the variance explained in Exhaustion, and 14.0% of the variance explained in Devaluing Clients. We discuss implications of the findings for school counselors and supervisors. Identifying the multidimensions of burnout and its correlates, addressing self-care and professional vitality goals, communicating defined school counselor roles, providing mentoring opportunities, and increasing advocacy skills may help alleviate burnout.

Keywords: stress, burnout, job satisfaction, coping processes, school counselors

In addition to providing counseling services, school counselors are charged with performing multiple non-counseling duties in their schools (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). These multiple and competing demands place them at risk for experiencing burnout (Mullen et al., 2018). Accordingly, it is important to identify factors that contribute to burnout to promote school counselors' psychological well-being (Kim & Lambie, 2018), which in turn reinforces school counselors' ability to support students' well-being (Holman et al., 2019).

Burnout is a workplace-specific complex construct characterized by feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and detachment, and a lack of accomplishment and effectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Others have conceptualized counselor burnout as a multidimensional construct, featuring the interaction between the individual and work environment (Lee et al., 2007). Given the complex, multidimensional, and interactional nature of burnout, the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI) was developed to measure the construct with five subscales: Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life (Lee et al., 2007). Specific to school counselors, Kim and Lambie (2018) suggested that burnout occurs to varying degrees across individual and organizational factors. Individual factors include perceived stress (Fye et al., 2018; Mullen et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) and coping processes (Fye et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Organizational factors include perceived job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; Mullen et al., 2018) and role stress (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Culbreth et al., 2005).

Researchers of school counselor burnout have studied individual and organizational factors of this phenomenon using a unidimensional structure such as the CBI scale score (Mullen et al., 2018). Other

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researchers (e.g., Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Moyer, 2011) studied organizational factors, including caseload and administrative (non-counseling) duties, within the multidimensional structure of the CBI (Lee et al., 2007). However, researchers have not yet comprehensively studied these known individual and organizational factors within the context of a multidimensional structure of school counselor burnout. For example, Mullen et al. (2018) investigated the relationships between perceived stress, perceived job satisfaction, and school counselor burnout. However, they did not examine organizational factors such as role stress (e.g., clerical duties), which are also significant to understanding school counselor burnout (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Thus, we sought to extend the research findings by examining several individual factors (i.e., perceived stress, coping processes) and organizational factors (i.e., perceived job satisfaction, role stress) within a multidimensional structure of school counselor burnout.

Individual Factors

Individual factors related to school counselor burnout include psychological constructs and demographic factors (Kim & Lambie, 2018). The two psychological constructs included in the current study were *perceived stress* (Mullen et al., 2018) and *coping processes* (Fye et al., 2018). Researchers have previously found contradictory results for the relationship between years of experience and school counselor burnout (Mullen et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2009). Therefore, the factor of years of experience was included in the current study.

Perceived Stress

Perceived stress is theorized as an individual's ability to appraise a threatening or challenging event in relation to the availability of coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To that end, a transactional model of stress and coping suggests that stress is a response that occurs when perceived demands exceed one's coping abilities. For school counselors, perceived stress may occur regularly because of various factors, including non-counseling duties, excessive paperwork and administrative duties, and work overload (Bardhoshi et al., 2014).

Researchers have described a positive relationship between stress and burnout among school counselors (Mullen et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Specifically, higher levels of stress and burnout were related to lower levels of job satisfaction and delivery of direct student services (Mullen et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Others have reported increased emotional responses alongside increased burnout (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). For example, school counselors who attempted to deal with stress emotionally may be at greater risk for developing symptoms of burnout including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lower levels of personal accomplishment (Wilkerson, 2009). Additionally, school counselors reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion than other mental health professionals, which can negatively impact their delivery of school counseling services (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). The correlation between stress and burnout further highlights the importance of assessing the components of stress and the ways school counselors are coping with these factors.

Coping Processes

Coping processes are defined as the cognitive and behavioral processes used to manage stressful situations (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). There are several coping processes, including *problem-focused coping*, *active-emotional coping*, and *avoidant-emotional coping* (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). For example, *problem-focused coping* is defined as an action-oriented approach to stress in which one believes the stressors are controllable by personal action (Lazarus, 1993). *Active-emotional coping* is an adaptive response to unmanageable stressors and *avoidant-emotional coping* is described as a maladaptive response to those stressors (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Among school counselors, Fye et al. (2018) studied the relationship between perfectionism, burnout, stress, and coping. These authors found that maladaptive perfectionists engaged more frequently in avoidant-emotional coping and relatedly experienced higher levels of burnout. Moreover, adaptive perfectionists experienced less stress and burnout and reported higher levels of problem-focused coping. Overall, for school counseling professionals, emotional-focused coping is positively related to burnout (Wilkerson, 2009). Given these findings, it is imperative for school counselors to be aware of their coping processes, including the degree to which they are affecting their levels of stress and burnout (Wilkerson, 2009).

Organizational Factors

In addition to individual factors such as stress and coping (Fye et al., 2018; Mullen et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2009), school counseling researchers noted several organizational factors as contributing to school counselor burnout (Holman et al., 2019; Kim & Lambie, 2018). Accordingly, researchers in the current study examined organizational factors, including *perceived job satisfaction* and *role stress* (i.e., role ambiguity, role incongruity, and role conflict; Culbreth et al., 2005). Additionally, because previous researchers found a relationship between the organizational factor of school district (e.g., urban setting) and burnout (Butler & Constantine, 2005), this variable was included in the present study.

Perceived Job Satisfaction

Perceived job satisfaction refers to the degree of affective or attitudinal reactions one experiences relative to their job (Spector, 1985). Understanding the extent of school counselors' perceived job satisfaction may be one way to buffer the effects of stress and burnout. This is because, according to Bryant and Constantine (2006), job satisfaction predicted life satisfaction for school counselors.

Perceived job satisfaction and its relationship with stress and burnout have received increased attention in the school counseling literature (Mullen et al., 2018). Among the contributing factors, higher levels of role balance and increased perceived job satisfaction resulted in greater overall life satisfaction (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). Higher perceived job satisfaction has been aligned with school counselors engaging in appropriate roles. For example, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that school counselors who frequently performed roles aligned with comprehensive school counseling programs were more satisfied and more committed to their careers. Similarly, higher perceived job satisfaction was directly related to the school counselor's ability to provide direct student services within their schools (Kolodinsky et al., 2009). Conversely, school counselors who did not intend to return to their jobs the following year reported higher levels of demand and stress because of non-counseling duties, such as excessive paperwork and administrative disruptions (McCarthy et al., 2010). As a result, those who are not satisfied are at risk for disengagement (Mullen et al., 2018), while school counselors who are satisfied with their jobs may have increased student connections (Kolodinsky et al., 2009).

Role Stress

Role stress refers to the levels of *role incongruity*, *role conflict*, and *role ambiguity* experienced by school counselors (Culbreth et al., 2005; Freeman & Coll, 1997). *Role incongruity* may occur when there are structural conflicts, including inadequate resources for school counselors and engagement in ineffective tasks (Freeman & Coll, 1997). Several authors noted that inappropriate or non-counseling duties contributed to burnout, including excessive paperwork, administrative duties, and testing coordinator roles (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Moyer, 2011, Wilkerson, 2009). Moyer (2011) found that school counselors who engaged in increased non-counseling duties also had increased feelings of exhaustion and incompetence, had decreased feelings toward work environment, and were less likely to show empathy toward students. Furthermore, school counselors who were assigned inappropriate

roles reported higher levels of frustration and resentment toward the school system. Overall, authors emphasized the importance of educating administrators on the appropriate and inappropriate roles for school counselors to decrease burnout (Bardhoshi et al, 2014; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Moyer, 2011).

Role conflict occurs when school counselors experience multiple external demands from different stakeholders (Holman et al., 2019). Role conflict examples for school counselors include: (a) whether school counselors should focus on the education goals or mental health needs of students first (Paisley & McMahan, 2001) and (b) whether a school counselor should engage in an actual role given by an administration or supervisor (e.g., testing coordinator) or preferred role (e.g., classroom guidance activity; Wilkerson, 2009). As such, school counselors can feel overwhelmed and often engage in inappropriate duties, according to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2019). In turn, school counselors experience stress and burnout (Mullen et al., 2018).

Role ambiguity is the discrepancy between actual and preferred counseling duties (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Role ambiguity has been linked to burnout because of school counselors' stress from lacking an understanding of their professional roles and being misinformed about the realities of the job (Culbreth et al., 2005). For example, school counselors face challenges of navigating mixed messages about role expectations across stakeholders (Coll & Freeman, 1997). This confusion may lead to school counselors experiencing role ambiguity (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). When school counselors interact with stakeholders who have conflicting ideas about their roles, it creates stress. It is especially difficult for school counselors when stakeholders' conceptualization of their roles clashes with what school counselors learned during graduate training (Culbreth et al., 2005). When school counselors are assigned duties that conflict with their own understandings of their roles, they are not able to operate in alignment with their professional mandates (Holman et al., 2019). Overall, school counselors experiencing role ambiguity also report higher levels of stress, both of which have been linked to burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Purpose of the Present Study

Despite prevalence in the school counseling burnout literature regarding individual and organizational factors of burnout, we were unable to locate a study that holistically researched these variables. To align our findings with a theoretical understanding of school counselor burnout, we examined these phenomena as a multidimensional construct. Additionally, we controlled for years of experience (Mullen et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) and school district (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Therefore, we answered the research question: What is the relationship between individual (i.e., perceived job stress, problem-focused coping, avoidant-emotional coping, and active-emotional coping) and organizational (i.e., perceived job satisfaction, role incongruity, role conflict, and role ambiguity) factors after controlling for years of experience and school district, with the subscales of school counselor burnout: (1) Exhaustion, (2) Incompetence, (3) Negative Work Environment, (4) Devaluing Clients, and (5) Deterioration in Personal Life?

Method

Sample

A total of 227 school counselors participated in the study. Ages ranged from 26 to 69 ($M = 46.21$; $SD = 10.26$; four declined to answer). The sex of participants included females ($n = 166$, 73.1%) and males ($n = 61$, 26.9%). The race and ethnicity of participants included White ($n = 185$, 81.5%), African American/Black ($n = 20$, 8.8%), Hispanic ($n = 7$, 3.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 3$, 1.3%), American

Indian/Alaskan Native ($n = 1$, 0.4%), and Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 9$, 4.0%), and two participants (0.9%) declined to answer. Participants held a master's degree in school counseling ($n = 175$, 77.1%), a PhD or EdD ($n = 33$, 14.5%), or a master's degree in another counseling or mental health specialty area ($n = 19$, 8.4%). The years of experience ranged from 2 to 41 years ($M = 13.68$, $SD = 7.49$). Participants reported working in suburban ($n = 97$, 42.7%), rural ($n = 76$, 33.5%), and urban ($n = 54$, 23.8%) settings. Regarding level of practice, participants worked in an elementary school (i.e., grades K–6; $n = 80$, 35.2%), middle school (i.e., grades 7–8; $n = 14$, 6.2%), high school (i.e., grades 9–12; $n = 59$, 26.0%), or multiple grade levels (e.g., K–8, K–12, etc.; $n = 74$, 32.6%). A power analysis was completed in G*Power 3.1 before beginning the study (Faul et al., 2009). The necessary sample size was determined to be at least 200, with a power of .80, assuming a moderate effect size of .15 in the multiple regression analyses, and with an error probability or alpha of .05 (J. Cohen, 1992).

Procedures

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained prior to beginning the study. The first author sent recruitment emails to 4,000 school counselors who were professional members of the ASCA online membership directory. Specifically, approximately 20% of school counselors in each of the 50 states and District of Columbia were chosen from the membership directory to receive the recruitment emails. The emails included a brief introduction to the study and an anonymous link that took potential participants to the online survey portal in Qualtrics. Potential participants first reviewed the informed consent. Once they consented to the survey, participants completed the demographics questionnaire and instruments. A convenience sample was obtained based upon voluntary responses to the survey (Dimitrov, 2009).

Instruments

The first author constructed a brief demographics survey to gather information about the participants (e.g., age, sex, race and ethnicity, degree, and years of experience) and their work environment (e.g., school district, grade level). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; S. Cohen et al., 1983) and Brief COPE (Carver, 1997) were used to measure individual factors. The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS; Spector, 1985) and Role Questionnaire (RQ; Rizzo et al., 1970) were used to measure organizational factors. The CBI (Lee et al., 2007) was used to measure the dimensions of school counselor burnout.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The PSS (S. Cohen et al., 1983) is a 14-item inventory designed to measure an individual's perceived stress within the past month. In the present study, we used the PSS-4, which is a subset of items from the original 14-item scale. The PSS was normed on a large sample of individuals from across the United States (S. Cohen et al., 1983). Participants responded to a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Scores on the PSS-4 ranged from 0 to 20. An example question of the PSS-4 is: "In the past month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?" The PSS-4 was determined to be a suitable brief measure of stress perceptions, based upon adequate factor structure and predictive validity (S. Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Reliability has been upheld (e.g., S. Cohen & Williamson, 1988) with test-retest reliability at .85 after 2 days (S. Cohen et al., 1983). For the present study, the internal consistency reliability was calculated at $\alpha = .76$. Correlations between the perceived stress total score and CBI subscales ranged from $r = .19$ to $.55$.

Brief COPE

The Brief COPE (Carver, 1997) is a 28-item inventory designed to measure coping responses or processes and includes 14 subscales. We followed previous researchers' (e.g., Deatherage et al., 2014) grouping of the 14 subscales into three coping processes (i.e., problem-focused, active-emotional, and avoidant-emotional). Therefore, problem-focused coping contained the Active Coping, Planning,

Instrumental Support, and Religion subscales. Active-emotional coping contained the Venting, Positive Reframing, Humor, Acceptance, and Emotional Support subscales. Avoidant-emotional coping contained the Self-Distraction, Denial, Behavioral Disengagement, and Self-Blame subscales. For the present study, the items pertaining to participants' alcohol and illegal drug use as coping responses were omitted because of their sensitive nature. Therefore, 26 items were included in the present study. The inventory uses a 4-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 0 (*I haven't been doing this at all*) to 3 (*I've been doing this a lot*). A sample item on the Brief COPE is "I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things." Construct validity has been upheld with the three coping processes (e.g., Deatherage et al., 2014). Test-retest reliability for the three subscale groups has been upheld over a year timespan (Cooper et al., 2008). For the present study, the internal consistency reliability was calculated for problem-focused coping at $\alpha = .84$, avoidant-emotional coping at $\alpha = .70$, and active-emotional coping at $\alpha = .81$. Correlations between problem-focused coping and the CBI subscales ranged from $r = .00$ to $.13$, correlations between avoidant-emotional coping and CBI subscales ranged from $r = .20$ to $.48$, and correlations between active-emotional coping and CBI subscales ranged from $r = .01$ to $.16$.

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)

The JSS (Spector, 1985) is a 36-item inventory intended to measure an individual's perceived job satisfaction or attitudes and aspects of the job. The JSS contains nine subscales: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Procedures, Coworkers, Nature of Work, and Communication. The inventory uses a 6-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 6 (*agree very much*). Total scores range from 36 to 216 with the higher the score, the higher job satisfaction experienced. An example item on the JSS is "My job is enjoyable" (Spector, 1985, p. 711). The JSS was constructed for, and normed on, social service, education, and mental health professionals (Spector, 1985, 2011). Spector (1985) established convergent validity with the Job Descriptive Index (Smith et al., 1969), and produced scores ranging from $.61$ to $.80$. Strong reliability has been established for the JSS, including a Cronbach coefficient alpha of $.91$ for all factors combined, and at 18 months, the test-retest reliability score was $.71$ (Spector, 1985). For the present study, the internal consistency reliability was calculated for the total scores at $\alpha = .91$. Correlations between the perceived job satisfaction total score and CBI subscales ranged from $r = -.13$ to $-.75$.

Role Questionnaire (RQ)

The RQ (Rizzo et al., 1970) is a 14-item inventory designed to measure the level of role conflict and role ambiguity an individual has about a job. The RQ has been factor analyzed with school counselors (Freeman & Coll, 1997) and found to have three distinct factors (i.e., role incongruity, role conflict, and role ambiguity). The inventory uses a 7-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 1 (*very false*) to 7 (*very true*). Role incongruity refers to conflicts with the structure of the system and allocation of resources (Freeman & Coll, 1997). The role incongruity factor comprises items 1–4. Total scores range from 8 to 32, with the higher the score, the higher role incongruity experienced. A sample item for role incongruity is "I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it." Role conflict refers to the contradictory requests of work expectations with varying groups (Freeman & Coll, 1997). The role conflict factor comprises items 5–8. The higher the score, the higher role conflict experienced, which can range from 8 to 32. A sample item for role conflict is "I receive incompatible requests from two or more people." The role ambiguity factor, which measures a lack of clarity on the job, is negatively worded; therefore, the lower the score, the higher the role ambiguity experienced. The role ambiguity factor comprises items 9–14, and total scores range from 6 to 42. A sample item for role ambiguity is "Explanation is clear of what has to be done." Construct validity for the three factors with school counselors was established by Freeman and Coll (1997). Reliability of the three factors have been upheld for school counselor participants

(Culbreth et al., 2005; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). For the present study, the internal consistency reliability was calculated for role incongruity at $\alpha = .82$, role conflict at $\alpha = .79$, and role ambiguity at $\alpha = .90$. Correlations between role incongruity and CBI subscales ranged from $r = .14$ to $.65$, correlations between role conflict and CBI subscales ranged from $r = .14$ to $.53$, and correlations between role ambiguity and CBI subscales ranged from $r = -.22$ to $-.56$.

Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI)

The CBI (Lee et al., 2007) is a 20-item inventory designed to measure counselors' burnout levels. The CBI includes five subscales, with four questions for each subscale: Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life. The CBI uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*). Total scores on each subscale range from 5 to 20, with the higher the score, the higher level of burnout. A sample item from the Exhaustion subscale is "Due to my job as a counselor, I feel tired most of the time." A sample item from the Incompetence subscale is "I am not confident in my counseling skills." A sample item from the Negative Work Environment subscale is "I am treated unfairly in my workplace." A sample item from the Devaluing Clients subscale is "I am not interested in my clients and their problems." A sample item from the Deterioration in Personal Life subscale is "I feel I have poor boundaries between work and my personal life." Two independent samples composed of counselors from a variety of settings across the United States were used to explore and confirm the factor structure (Lee et al., 2007). Gnilka et al. (2015) upheld the CBI five-factor structure with a confirmatory factor analysis in a sample of school counselors. Cronbach's alpha for the total CBI was $.88$, with scores ranging from $.73$ to $.85$ for the subscales (Lee et al., 2007). For the present study, internal consistency reliability for the CBI subscales were calculated and ranged from $\alpha = .78$ to $.89$.

Results

Prior to conducting the primary analyses, we used SPSS (Version 25.0) to clean the data, impute missing data values, and test the assumptions of the primary analyses (i.e., hierarchical regressions), as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). We used expectation-maximization (EM) to impute missing data (Cook, 2020), after we tested the randomness of the missing values with Little's missing completely at random (MCAR). All missing values were determined to be MCAR, except for the active-emotional coping of the Brief COPE and the JSS: $\chi^2(40, N = 227) = 79.13, p = .000$, and $\chi^2(671, N = 227) = 836.57, p = .000$, respectively. Because the missing values for the active-emotional coping and JSS were less than 1%, expectation-maximization was an appropriate imputation method (Cook, 2020). Less than 5% of values were imputed for the PSS-4, the factors of the RQ (role ambiguity, role incongruity, and role conflict), and the five subscales of the CBI (Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life), and less than 1% of the values were imputed for the problem-focused and avoidant-emotional processes of the Brief COPE.

To answer the research question, we used three-step hierarchical regression models to analyze the individual and cumulative contributions for demographic, individual, and organizational factors with each subscale of the CBI. Qualities of the instruments are provided in Table 1. In Step 1, we entered the demographic factors (i.e., years of experience and school district). In Step 2, we entered the individual factors (i.e., perceived stress, problem-focused coping, avoidant-emotional coping, and active-emotional coping). In Step 3, we entered the organizational factors (i.e., perceived job satisfaction, role incongruity, role conflict, and role ambiguity). Completed assumption checks showed no outliers or influential data points, as concluded by an examination of the Q-Q plots, histograms, scatterplots, and Mahalanobis

distance. We checked multicollinearity and found it to be an issue for school district (tolerance < .01). Therefore, we removed the school district variable and reentered years of experience in Step 1. To control for Type I error, we used the Bonferroni method to adjust the family-wise alpha (Darlington & Hayes, 2017), which resulted in .01 as the cutoff for statistical significance for Step 2 (i.e., individual factors) and .0056 as the cutoff for statistical significance for Step 3 (i.e., organizational factors). Results for each of these models are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Qualities of Instrumentation

Instrumentation	Scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Perceived Stress Scale-4 Total Score	4–19	8.24	2.86	.76
Problem-Focused Coping	8–32	22.55	5.29	.84
Avoidant-Emotional Coping	8–24	12.48	3.03	.70
Active-Emotional Coping	10–38	25.74	5.56	.81
Job Satisfaction Scale Total Score	82–204	143.25	25.28	.91
Role Ambiguity	7–42	29.67	7.25	.90
Role Incongruity	4–28	15.47	5.77	.82
Role Conflict	4–26	15.18	5.58	.79
Exhaustion	4–20	11.54	3.97	.89
Incompetence	4–17	8.77	2.96	.78
Negative Work Environment	4–20	9.87	3.75	.85
Devaluing Client	4–13	5.61	2.08	.80
Deterioration in Personal Life	4–19	8.65	3.32	.78

Table 2*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses of School Counselor Burnout*

	Exhaustion	Incompetence	Negative Work Environment	Devaluing Clients	Deterioration in Personal Life
Step 1					
Years of Experience	-.038	-.233*	-.072	-.190*	-.047
R^2	.001	.054	.005	.036	.002
F	.323	12.89**	1.17	8.46*	.500
Step 2					
Years of Experience	.030	-.151**	-.042	-.155	.001
Perceived Stress	.392**	.184	.283**	.093	.491**
Avoidant-Emotional Coping	.160	.360**	.025	.180	.103
Active-Emotional Coping	.030	.087	.026	.131	.151
Problem-Focused Coping	-.043	-.151	.081	-.229**	-.105
R^2	.240	.284	.109	.116	.323
ΔR^2	.239	.229	.104	.080	.321
ΔF	17.34**	17.69**	6.43**	4.98**	26.24**
Step 3					
Years of Experience	.056	-.097	.052	-.125	.025
Perceived Stress	.303 [†]	.150	.057	.070	.437 [†]
Avoidant-Emotional Coping	.170	.338 [†]	.025	.165	.077
Active-Emotional Coping	.034	.126	.050	.151	.155
Problem-Focused Coping	-.064	-.180	.042	-.243 [†]	-.127
Perceived Job Satisfaction	-.198	.080	-.489 [†]	.032	.029
Role Ambiguity	.014	-.276 [†]	-.122	-.147	-.029
Role Incongruity	.207	.190	.220 [†]	.069	.172
Role Conflict	-.014	-.096	.106	-.018	.188
R^2	.351	.367	.666	.140	.383
ΔR^2	.111	.092	.652	.024	.060
ΔF	9.29**	8.03**	90.43**	1.51	5.26**

Note. $N = 227$

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. [†] $p < .0056$.

Exhaustion

The hierarchical regression model for Exhaustion revealed that years of experience was not statistically significant: $F(1, 225) = .323, p > .05$. Introducing individual factors explained 23.9% of the variation in Exhaustion, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(5, 221) = 13.96, p < .001$. The inclusion of organizational factors explained an additional 11.1% of the variation in Exhaustion, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(9, 217) = 13.05, p < .001$. However, the β values revealed that the only statistically significant factor of Exhaustion was perceived stress ($\beta = .303, p < .001$). Together the independent variables accounted for 35.1% of the variance in Exhaustion.

Incompetence

For Incompetence, years of experience explained 5.4% of its variation and was significant: $F(1, 225) = 12.89, p < .001$. Adding individual factors explained an additional 22.9% of the variation in Incompetence, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(5, 221) = 17.50, p < .001$. Including organizational factors explained an additional 9.2% of the variation in Incompetence, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(9, 217) = 14.53, p < .001$. The statistically significant factors of Incompetence were avoidant-emotional coping ($\beta = .338, p < .001$) and role ambiguity ($\beta = -.276, p < .001$). Together the independent variables accounted for 36.7% of the variance in Incompetence.

Negative Work Environment

For Negative Work Environment, years of experience was not statistically significant: $F(1, 225) = 1.17, p > .05, R^2 = .005$. Adding individual factors explained 10.9% of the variation in Negative Work Environment, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(5, 221) = 5.40, p < .001$. Including organizational factors explained an additional 65.2% of the variation in Negative Work Environment, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(9, 217) = 48.05, p < .001$. In the final model, perceived job satisfaction ($\beta = -.489, p = .000$) and role incongruity ($\beta = .220, p = .000$) significantly explained Negative Work Environment. Together the independent variables accounted for 66.6% of the variance in Negative Work Environment.

Devaluing Clients

For Devaluing Clients, years of experience contributed significantly to the model and accounted for 3.6% of its variation: $F(1, 225) = 8.46, p < .05$. Including individual factors explained an additional 8.0% of the variation in Devaluing Clients, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(5, 221) = 5.80, p < .01$. Adding the organizational factors in the third step was significant: $F(9, 217) = 3.92, p < .001, R^2 = .140$. However, the inclusion of the organizational variables did not explain a significantly different equation: $\Delta F(4, 217) = 1.51, p > .05, \Delta R^2 = .024$. Therefore, we interpreted the β values of the second step, and the statistically significant factor of Devaluing Clients was problem-focused coping ($\beta = -.229, p = .009$).

Deterioration in Personal Life

Finally, for Deterioration in Personal Life, years of experience was not significant: $F(1, 225) = .500, p > .05, R^2 = .002$. Including individual factors explained 32.1% of the variation in Deterioration in Personal Life, and the change in R^2 was significant: $F(5, 221) = 21.14, p < .001$. Including the organizational factors explained an additional 6.0% of the variation in Deterioration in Personal Life, and this change in R^2 was significant: $F(9, 217) = 14.98, p < .001$. An examination of the β values revealed that only perceived stress was a statistically significant variable for Deterioration in Personal Life ($\beta = .437, p = .000$). Together the independent variables accounted for 38.3% of the variance in Deterioration in Personal Life.

Discussion

The present study illustrates an expanded understanding of individual and organizational factors associated with the subscales of school counselor burnout (i.e., Exhaustion, Incompetence, Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life; Lee et al., 2007). We intended to control for years of experience but found that before adding the individual and organizational factors, it was a statistically significant variable and negatively related with Incompetence and Devaluing Clients. School counselor researchers have reported contradictory findings between years of experience and burnout. Similar to our findings, Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) and Mullen et al. (2018) reported a negative relationship between years of experience and burnout—essentially describing that those earlier in their careers have a higher risk of experiencing burnout. In contrast, Butler and Constantine (2005) and Wilkerson (2009) reported burnout happening over time (i.e., a positive relationship between years of experience and burnout). Our study underscores the vulnerability school counselors may experience earlier in their careers (Mullen et al., 2018). Our results also provide a unique finding in that fewer years of experience as a school counselor is associated with the burnout dimensions of Incompetence and Devaluing Clients.

In the present study, we found individual factors (i.e., perceived stress, problem-focused coping, and avoidant-emotional coping) significantly related to Exhaustion, Incompetence, Devaluing Clients, and Deterioration in Personal Life. School counselor scholars (e.g., Mullen et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016) reported a statistically significant positive relationship between school counselors' perceived stress and burnout. Our results provide unique findings in that stress was positively related with the Exhaustion and Deterioration in Personal Life dimensions of burnout. Other school counselor scholars (e.g., Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Moyer, 2011) found the stress-related variable of engagement in non-counseling duties was significantly related to Exhaustion and Deterioration in Personal Life.

For the coping processes, avoidant-emotional coping was positively related to Incompetence and problem-focused coping was negatively related to Devaluing Clients. These findings provide two distinct understandings of school counselor burnout. First, and notably, school counselor participants who were experiencing Incompetence were also engaging in increased avoidant-emotional coping. This finding is similar to those of Fye et al. (2018), who found maladaptive perfectionists were more frequently engaging in avoidant-coping processes. We did not research perfectionism in the present study; however, our findings may expand an understanding of a positive relationship between avoidant-emotional coping and burnout dimensions for school counselors regardless of perfectionism types. Second, we discovered school counselor participants' problem-focused coping was negatively related to Devaluing Clients. This is a promising finding from our study because participants were likely to incorporate increased problem-focused coping alongside valuing students. As previously discussed, it appears that these school counselor participants were maintaining high levels of positive regard and empathy for students (Gnilka et al., 2015; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Engaging in problem-focused coping may be beneficial to their engagement in student care and maintaining professional vitality.

The organizational factors of role ambiguity, role incongruity, and perceived job satisfaction were significantly related to the Incompetence and Negative Work Environment dimensions of burnout. Specifically, role ambiguity was positively related to Incompetence. Our results confirm that when school counselors' roles are increasingly unclear, they are experiencing higher levels of burnout (Mullen et al., 2018), and specifically Incompetence. Perceived job satisfaction was negatively related to Negative Work Environment, while role incongruity was positively related to Negative Work

Environment. Consistent with previous research, our findings support the significant relationships between organizational factors (i.e., administrative and clerical duties contributing to role stress) and Negative Work Environment (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Other scholars have studied perceived job satisfaction as an outcome and potential preclusion to school counselor burnout (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bryant & Constantine, 2006). School counseling scholars have found that burnout mediated the relationship between perceived stress and perceived job satisfaction (Mullen et al., 2018). In the present study, the perceived job satisfaction factor had the highest β at $-.489$. It appears that perceived job satisfaction is an important factor alongside school counselors' specific experiences of Negative Work Environments. Perceived stress was a statistically significant factor in Step 2 with Negative Work Environment, but insignificant in the context of the organizational variables. This is an important finding because burnout, by definition, is a function of one's work context (Lee et al., 2007; Maslach & Leiter, 2017), and we found that organizational factors explained a large amount of the variance (i.e., 65.2%) for the Negative Work Environment dimension of burnout. Overall, our findings support the complex and multidimensional nature of school counselor burnout.

Limitations and Future Research

We attempted to research multidimensional burnout with a nationally representative and diverse sample of ASCA member school counselors. Despite our efforts, the response rate was 5.68%. The majority of our participants identified as White and female, which is similar to the reported demographics of professional school counselor members (ASCA, 2018). However, caution may be warranted when generalizing our findings to all school counselors. Expanding research efforts (i.e., qualitative methods) to increase understanding of the burnout experiences of school counselors unrepresented by our participant sample is warranted. Last, it is unknown whether or not participants answered sensitive questions, such as those about burnout, in a socially desirable manner.

Future research should seek to understand additional individual and organizational variables related to the burnout dimensions for school counselors (Lee et al., 2007). For example, the Devaluing Clients dimension has been viewed by school counseling scholars as a complicated construct that has functioned differently from the other dimensions of burnout (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Additional research is needed to understand this burnout dimension with school counselors. Kim and Lambie (2018) discussed the need for research to focus on burnout interventions. We concur and believe the distinction of individual and organizational factors within the dimensions of school counselor burnout should be considered when constructing these interventions, which may be important because burnout may not be an end state; instead, it may be a mediator of other important outcomes, such as work and health (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). It may be helpful to expand research that studies relationships between school counselor burnout and physical and mental health outcomes.

Implications for the School Counseling Profession

Our findings have implications for school counselors, school counselors-in-training, and counselor educators and supervisors. They illustrate the importance of conceptualizing the ecological relationship between individual and organizational factors with school counselor burnout. School counselors may have more control over individual factors, and supervisors may have more control over organizational factors. Despite these considerations, it is important to share the responsibility of burnout prevention within the school system. This is important because despite one's efforts to increase helpful coping, self-care, or wellness practices, it appears that continued exposure to negative work environments will continue to place school counselors at risk for burnout.

Because school counselors are responsible for providing counseling services that align with professional and ethical standards (Kim & Lambie, 2018), it is imperative for them to recognize, monitor, and address their symptoms of burnout (ASCA, 2016). Therefore, it may be helpful for school counselors and supervisors to identify and understand the dimensions of burnout experienced and their relationships with individual and organizational factors. By using the instruments from this study, school counselors can identify contributions of individual and organizational factors with their burnout scores. This would allow supervisees to understand the relationships between these factors and burnout dimensions. During supervision, time could be dedicated to setting personal goals for maintaining self-care and professional vitality. This may be important, especially in identifying and decreasing avoidant-emotional coping, alongside increasing problem-focused coping processes. In general, school counselors should monitor their own self-care in relation to work context stressors and perceived job satisfaction. Our results may provide support to the potential limitations that wellness practices have on decreasing burnout within the Negative Work Environment (Puig et al., 2012)—meaning, wellness practices may be important in alleviating the individual factors related to burnout (i.e., high perceived stress, coping responses) but may have limited ability to decrease factors out of school counselors' control (i.e., work context practices and policies).

Despite best practice guidelines, the reality remains that school counselors engage in various non-counseling duties (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016), which contributes to role stress. To lessen organizational stressors, as early as graduate school, counselor educators and supervisors should allow space in the learning process for students to learn the various counseling and related duties expected of school counselors within the school environment. Providing learning contexts for graduate students to explore these various roles may set the stage for lessened role stress. Specifically, assignments should be included in the curriculum that allow graduate students to explore school counselors' professional identity and the real and ideal roles of the school counselor. These discussions should be engaged in along with conversations of how these varying roles can affect burnout (specifically role incongruity and role ambiguity), especially for those earlier in their careers. These dialogues should be reinforced during the practicum and internship experiences and include personal sources of perceived job satisfaction. In schools, supervisors can help to facilitate school counselors' competence by clearly defining expectations through measurable outcomes. For example, school counselors and supervisors can use the ASCA National Model's (ASCA, 2019) Annual Administrative Conference Template (p. 60) and Annual Calendar Template (p. 70) to open communication between the school counselors and their supervisors and document their duties. This discussion may additionally open communication regarding the adequacy of funding, resources, materials, and staff available to school counselors (Freeman & Coll, 1997). If inadequate, school counselors may use the opportunity to advocate for increased support from supervisors and administrators.

It is important to note that in the present study, school counselors earlier in their careers reported higher levels of Incompetence and Devaluing Clients. School counselor supervisors should understand these relationships. Mentoring of school counselors who are earlier in their careers by those with significant experience may help the younger professionals build their professional identities and student-focused work. Last, recognizing dimensions of burnout in relation to individual and organizational factors may not be enough to maintain professional vitality. The school counseling profession may find it helpful to train school counselors and graduate students in advocacy skills. Trusty and Brown (2005) outlined advocacy competencies for school counselors, which include dispositional statements, knowledge, and skills necessary to becoming effective advocates. The self-advocacy model prepares school counselors to have the communication (oral and written) necessary to maintain effective advocacy roles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our results provide an expansion of findings related to relative contributions for individual and organizational factors with school counselor multidimensional burnout. In short, burnout dimensions are uniquely related to personal and work context factors. It is difficult to conceive of burnout absent its relationship to some aspect of the work setting. School counselors and supervisors can use our results to conceptualize burnout from a multidimensional perspective, which may in turn help them find new ways to remain professionally vital to themselves, their students, and their school community.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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