Burnout and Implications for Professional School Counselors

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To prevent school counselors from experiencing feelings of burnout, identifying relevant factors is important. The purpose of this article is to review studies investigating the constructs of burnout and occupational stress in school counseling samples. Eighteen published research articles fit the inclusion criteria for this review. The researchers identified external and internal variables relating to school counselor burnout, as well as protective and risk factors. The review identified that school counselors' higher level of burnout correlated with having non-counseling duties, being assigned large caseloads, working in schools that did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) status, experiencing a lack of supervision, possessing greater emotion-oriented stress coping scores, providing fewer direct student services, and having greater perceived stress. In contrast, feelings of burnout among school counselors were mitigated when counselors received supervision, possessed higher task-oriented stress coping strategies, scored at higher levels of ego maturity, reported greater occupational support at their schools, had greater grit scores, and worked in schools that met AYP.

Keywords: **burnout, occupational stress, school counselors, non-counseling duties, coping strategies**

There are multiple definitions of burnout (e.g., Burke & Richardson, 2000; Stalker & Harvey, 2002); however, the primary consistent aspect of burnout is that it is a psychological phenomenon associated with job-related stress (Maslach, 2017). Burnout occurs when professionals are unable to meet their own needs, as well as their clients' needs, in a high-pressure environment (Maslach, 2017). Freudenberger (1990) identified common symptoms of burnout, including negative changes in individuals' (a) attitudes and decision making; (b) physiological states; (c) mental, emotional, and behavioral health; and (d) occupational motivation. Burnout has significant consequences, including compromised physical health, increased risk of mental health disorders (e.g., depression, substance abuse), poor job performance, absenteeism, occupational attrition, and low self-esteem (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout can also cause symptoms such as fatigue, exhaustion, and insomnia (Armon, Shirom, Shapira, & Melamed, 2008).

Burnout in School Counseling

Morse, Salyers, Rollins, Monroe-DeVita, and Pfahler (2012) identified that 21% to 67% of mental health professionals reported experiencing high levels of burnout, possibly because of dealing with high client caseloads (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007) or overall job effectiveness (Stalker & Harvey, 2002). In addition, Oddie and Ousley (2007) found that 21% to 48% of mental health workers reported experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion. School counselors specifically are at risk for experiencing feelings of burnout because of their multiple job demands, including paperwork, parent conferences, school-wide testing, large caseloads, and requests from administrators (McCarthy & Lambert, 2008), and other factors such as role ambiguity and limited occupational support (Young & Lambie, 2007). The school counseling job environment, where "the demands of the work are high, but the resources to meet those demands are low" (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998, pp. 63–64), increases susceptibility to experiencing feelings of burnout (e.g., average student-to-counselor ratio being 491-to-1; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Stephan (2005) found that within a national

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sample of school counselors, 66% of middle school counselors scored at moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion. Further, Wachter (2006) found that 20% of the school counselors in her investigation (*N* = 132) experienced feelings of burnout; 16% scored at moderate levels of burnout, and 4% scored at severe levels of burnout. Thus, many school counselors experience feelings of burnout that may influence their ability to provide ethical and effective counseling services to the students they serve.

School counselors may experience chronic fatigue, depersonalization, or feelings of hopelessness and leave their jobs because of the rigidity of school systems and limited support (Young & Lambie, 2007). In fact, counselors experiencing significant feelings of burnout provide reduced quality of service to their clientele because burnout relates to lower productivity, turnover intention, and a lowered level of job commitment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Because of the importance of preventing the burnout phenomenon, the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA; 2016) ethical standards note that school counselors are responsible for maintaining their health, both physically and emotionally, and caring for their wellness to ensure their effective practice. The American Counseling Association's (2014) ethical standards also state that school counselors have an ethical responsibility to monitor their feelings of burnout and remediate when their feelings potentially influence their ability to provide quality services to their stakeholders. To monitor burnout, counselors need to understand the symptoms of burnout and prevent it from happening, while maintaining their psychological well-being.

School counselors face challenges with their significant job demands (McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzmán, 2010), such as large caseloads (Lambie, 2007) and extreme amounts of non-counseling duties (Moyer, 2011). In fact, school counselors report job stress and dissatisfaction when they are required to complete non-counseling duties, hindering their ability to work with their students (McCarthy et al., 2010). Examples of non-counseling duties include clerical tasks, such as scheduling students for classes; fair share, such as coordinating the standardized testing program; and administrative duties, such as substitute teaching (Scarborough, 2005). School counselors with large caseloads and high student-to-counselor ratios are more likely to experience increased feelings of burnout (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014). Although ASCA (2015) recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1, the U.S. average student-to-counselor ratio is almost double the recommended proportion (491-to-1; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Insufficient resources for school counselors and negative job perception increase their likelihood of experiencing feelings of burnout. Lower levels of principal support and lack of clinical supervision raise school counselors' occupational stress (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Moyer, 2011). For instance, school counselors with higher levels of role ambiguity are likely to experience burnout (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). School counselors experience role ambiguity when their responsibilities or the expected level of performance is not clearly identified (Coll & Freeman, 1997). As a result, school counselors report increased levels of stress (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005), leading to burnout and attrition from the profession (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). ASCA (2016) dictated that school counselors' responsibilities include providing counseling services to students to support their development, which distinguishes them from other school personnel. With the importance of preventing burnout in school counseling, the purpose of this review is twofold: (a) to present identified factors influencing school counselors' levels of burnout and (b) to offer strategies to assist school counselors in mitigating the feelings of burnout.

Research Examining Burnout in School Counseling

We began by conducting a formal search of electronic databases—PsycINFO, ERIC (EBSCOhost), and Academic Search Premiere—relating to school counselor burnout. The search term *burnout* was first used to analyze the research trend in the field. Both the search terms *burnout* and *school counselors* OR *school counseling* were used to collect any articles on the topic of school counselor burnout published between 2000 and 2018. An additional search was conducted with the terms *occupational stress* and *school counselors* OR *school counseling* to identify potential studies related to the topic in the same type of literature.

The following inclusion criteria were applied for our review: (a) investigations of school counselor burnout and occupational stress, (b) sample participants were school counselors in the United States, (c) the primary topic of the investigation was burnout and/or occupational stress, (d) articles were written in English, (e) articles were published in refereed journals, and (f) articles were published between 2000 and 2018. In addition, our review excluded literature reviews, editorials, and rejoinders. The abstracts of the articles meeting the criteria were examined and confirmed in order to be included in our review.

Our literature search based on the inclusion criteria produced 51 articles. As not all articles from the search satisfied the criteria, the articles were reviewed manually to evaluate whether they met the criteria, resulting in 35 articles not meeting criteria (e.g., conceptual articles, studies related to teachers) and 16 articles meeting all criteria. An additional literature search yielded two more studies meeting the inclusion criteria, identifying 18 studies in total. None of the identified research articles examined prevention or treatment interventions for burnout in school counselors. The 18 investigations had school counselor burnout or occupational stress as the constructs of interest. The research findings identified the positive relationships between school counselors' burnout or occupational stress scores and the following factors: (a) non-counseling duties, (b) large caseloads, (c) not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) status (i.e., the expected amount of students' academic growth per year based on the No Child Left Behind mandate [Minnesota House of Representatives, 2003]), (d) lack of supervision, (e) emotion-oriented stress coping scores, (f) grit, and (g) perceived stress.

Fourteen out of 18 articles provided information related to school counselor burnout (see Table 1 for quantitative studies and Table 2 for qualitative studies), and the other four studies investigated school counselors' occupational stress (see Table 3). Occupational stress refers to the strain a person experiences when the perceived stress in a workplace outweighs their ability to cope (Decker & Borgen, 1993). Quantitative research methods were employed in 15 of the investigations, two used mixed-methods, and one study utilized a qualitative approach. For all 18 articles, the participants were current school counselors, and the number of participants ranged from 3 to 926. Effect sizes were categorized depending on the analysis into three groups (i.e., small, medium, and large) based on the effect size matrix from Sink and Stroh (2006), offering a better understanding of the results. Specifically, the effect size from independent samples *t*-test (2 groups; Cohen's *d*) is interpreted as small for 0.2, medium for 0.5, and large for 0.8. For the effect size of other analyses listed in this review, including paired-samples *t*-tests (η^2), multiple regression (R^2), and analysis of variance (ANOVA; η^2), 0.01 is considered as small, 0.06 as medium, and 0.14 as large.

Table 1

Summary of Quantitative/Mixed Studies Related to Professional School Counselor (PSC) Burnout

Study	Sample	Variables	Findings
Bain, Rueda, Mata-Villarreal, & Mundy (2011)	PSCs in rural districts of South Texas (N = 27) Convenient Sampling	Mental health awareness, the amount of time spent on academic advising	Feelings of burnout were reported by the majority of the PSCs (89%) in the study and many of them spent the greatest amount of time on administrative duties and the least on counseling.
Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan (2014)	PSCs (N = 212) Random Sampling	Non-counselor duties, school factors, five subscales of the CBI	Non-counseling duties and school factors were associated with PSC burnout. Non-counseling duties explained the variance of the three burnout subscales: Exhaustion (11%; medium effect size), NWE (6%; medium effect size), and DPL (8%; medium effect size). Non-counseling duties and other factors (e.g., caseload, principal support) explained the variance of the four burnout subscales: Exhaustion (21%; large effect size), Incompetence (9%; medium effect size), NWE (49%; large effect size), and DPL (17%; large effect size).
Butler & Constantine (2005)	PSCs (N = 533) Random Sampling	Collective self-esteem, burnout, demographics	Collective self-esteem explained 3% of the variance of PSC burnout (small effect size). In particular, PRCS (2%) and PUCS (1%) accounted for PA (both small effect sizes), and IICS explained 1% of feelings of DP and PA (both small effect sizes). Higher collective self-esteem was associated with lower PSC burnout. PSCs working in urban settings tended to have higher levels of burnout than the counterparts in other environmental settings. PSCs with experience of 20–29 years reported higher levels of burnout than the counterparts with 0–9 years of experience. PSCs with experience of 30 or more years reported higher levels of burnout than those with less experience.
Gnilka, Karpinski, & Smith (2015)	PSCs (N = 269) Convenient Sampling	Five subscales on the CBI	Effect size differences were found between PSCs and other professionals in the counseling fields (Exhaustion, d = .26, small effect size; DC, d = -.50, medium effect size). Effect size differences were noted between PSCs and sexual offender and sexual abuse therapists (Exhaustion, d = .27, small effect size; DPL, d = -.23, small effect size; DC, d = -.82, large effect size).
Lambie (2007)	PSCs (N = 218) Random Sampling	Ego maturity, three subscales on the MBI-HSS	PSCs with greater levels of ego maturity tended to have a higher level of PA than those with lower ego maturity. Ego maturity predicted PA (3.3%; small effect size). Occupational support and the subscales of burnout were correlated. Reported occupational support predicted EE (16%; large effect size), DP (12%; medium effect size), and PA (7.2%; medium effect size).
Limberg, Lambie, & Robinson (2016-2017)	PSCs (N = 437) Random Sampling/ Purposive Sampling	Altruistic motivation, altruistic behavior, burnout	PSCs with greater levels of altruism had lower levels of EE and higher feelings of PA. PSC altruism explained 31.36% of the variance in EE (large effect size), and 29.16% of the variance in PA (large effect size). Self-Efficacy accounted for 14.4% of the variance in EE (large effect size) and 9% of the variance in PA (medium effect size).
Moyer (2011)	PSCs (N = 382) Convenient Sampling	Non-guidance activities, supervision, student-to-counselor ratios, five subscales of the CBI	Non-guidance–related duties and clinical supervision were significant predictors of PSC burnout. Non-guidance duties (7.3%; medium effect size) and supervision (9%; medium effect size) predicted burnout.

Mullen, Blount, Lambie, & Chae (2017)	PSCs (*N* = 750) Random Sampling	Perceived stress, burnout, job satisfaction	Perceived stress predicted burnout positively (large effect size) and job satisfaction negatively (large effect size). Perceived stress and burnout predicted job satisfaction (large effect size). Burnout mediated the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction.
Mullen & Crowe (2018)	PSCs (*N* = 330) Convenient Sampling	Grit, stress, burnout	Grit was negatively related to burnout (small effect size) and stress (small to medium effect size).
Mullen & Gutierrez (2016)	PSCs (*N* = 926) Random Sampling	Burnout, perceived stress, direct student services	Burnout attributed to direct counseling activities (12%; medium effect size), direct curriculum activities (5%; small to medium effect size), and percentage of time at work providing direct services to students (6%; medium effect size).
Wachter, Clemens, & Lewis (2008)	PSCs (*N* = 249) Random Sampling	Demographics, stakeholder involvement, lifestyle themes, burnout	Burnout and lifestyle themes were associated. Perfectionism subscale was negatively related to burnout, and the Self-Esteem subscale was positively related to PSC burnout. About 15.1% of the variance in burnout was accounted for by the lifestyle themes of Self-Esteem and Perfectionism (large effect size).
Wilkerson & Bellini (2006)	PSCs in northeastern U.S. (*N* = 78) Systematic Random Sampling	Demographics, intrapersonal, and organizational factors; three subscales on the MBI-ES	Demographic (age, counseling experience, supervision, and student/counselor ratio), intrapersonal, and organizational factors significantly accounted for the amount of the variance in each subscale of burnout, including EE (45%; large effect size), DP (30%; large effect size), and PA (42%; large effect size).
Wilkerson (2009)	PSCs (*N* = 198) Random Sampling	Demographic and organizational stressors and individual coping strategies; three subscales on the MBI-ES	Demographic factors (years of experience and student/counselor ratio), organizational stress, and coping styles explained the variance of each subscale of burnout including EE (49%; large effect size), DP (27%; large effect size), and PA (36%; large effect size).

Table 2

Summary of Qualitative/Mixed Studies Related to Professional School Counselor Burnout

Study	Sample	Topic	Identified Themes
Bain, Rueda, Mata-Villarreal, & Mundy (2011)	PSCs in rural districts of South Texas (*N* = 27) Convenient Sampling	Helpful ways to better provide mental health services at school	Having access to additional staff and additional education and awareness in terms of helpful ways to provide mental health services at their school.
Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan (2014)	PSCs (*N* = 252) Random Sampling	a) Their experience of burnout b) The meaning of performing non-counseling duties	a) Lack of time, budgetary constraints, lack of resources, lack of organizational support, etc. b) Adverse personal/professional effects, a reality of the job, reframing the duties within the context of the job.
Sheffield & Baker (2005)	Female PSCs (*N* = 3) Purposive Sampling	Burnout experience	Important beliefs, burnout feelings, burnout attitude, (lack of) collegial support.

Table 3

Summary of Quantitative Studies Related to Professional School Counselor Occupational Stress

Study	Sample	Variables	Findings
Bryant & Constantine (2006)	Female PSCs (*N* = 133) Random Sampling	Role balance, job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, demographics	Multiple role balance ability and job satisfaction positively predicted overall life satisfaction. Role balance and job satisfaction explained the variance of life satisfaction (41%; large effect size).
Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon (2005)	PSCs (*N* = 512) Stratified Random Sampling	Role conflict, role ambiguity, role incongruence, demographics	Perceived match between the job expectations and actual experiences predicted role-related job stress, including role conflict (7.6%; medium effect size); role incongruence (19.7%; large effect size); and role ambiguity (8.3%; medium effect size).
McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzmán (2010)	PSCs in Texas (*N* = 227) Convenient Sampling	Demographics, job stress, resources and demands	Job stress was different between the resourced, balanced, and demand groups. The effect sizes were large in the differences between the demand group and the resourced group (1.62; large effect size) and the balanced group (0.70; large effect size).
Rayle (2006)	PSCs (*N* = 388) Convenient Sampling	Demographics, mattering, job-related stress	Thirty-five percent of the variance in overall job satisfaction was explained by mattering to others at work and job-related stress (large effect size). Mattering to others (19.36%; large effect size) and job-related stress (16.81%; large effect size) explained the variance in overall job satisfaction.

Three instruments were used to measure levels of school counselor burnout, including: (a) the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), (b) the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI; S. M. Lee et al., 2007), and (c) the Burnout Measure Short Version (BMS; Malach-Pines, 2005). Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout with three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA). *Emotional exhaustion* is to exhaust one's capacity to continuously involve with clients (R. T. Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Not being able to respond to clients' needs may cause counselors to distance themselves from their job emotionally and cognitively, which is defined as *depersonalization*. Lastly, having a lower sense of effectiveness may reduce feelings of *personal accomplishment* (Maslach et al., 2001). Four studies used the MBI-Education Survey (MBI-ES), which was designed for the education population, and another study utilized the MBI-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), in which the word *students* from the MBI-ES is substituted with *recipients* in a third of the items (Sandoval, 1989).

Four studies used the CBI, which is a 20-item instrument with five subscales, including: (a) Exhaustion, (b) Incompetence, (c) Negative Work Environment (NWE), (d) Devaluing Client (DC), and (e) Deterioration in Personal Life (DPL). *Exhaustion* is the condition of being physically and emotionally exhausted by the duties of a counselor, and *incompetence* focuses on counselors' feelings of being incompetent. While *negative work environment* refers to the stress caused by the working environment, *devaluing client* is related to being unable to establish emotional connectedness with clients. Finally, *deterioration in personal life* assesses the level of deterioration in a counselor's personal life. Sample items include "I feel exhausted due to my work as a counselor," and "I feel I have poor boundaries between work and my personal life." The internal consistency of the CBI ranged from .73 to .85 (S. M. Lee et al., 2007). In addition, three studies used the BMS (Malach-Pines, 2005), a 10-item scale in which participants rate their answers to the question "When you think about your work

overall, how often do you feel the following?" in seven prompts, including: "Trapped," "Hopeless," and "Helpless." The BMS is adapted from the original version of the Burnout Measure (Pines & Aronson, 1988). The internal consistency of the BMS ranged from .85 to .87 (Malach-Pines, 2005).

Researchers investigated different factors relating to school counselor burnout within the 18 published articles. One of the studies provided descriptive statistics of school counselor burnout, comparing school counselors to other mental health professionals and showing how burnout symptoms may emerge (*N* = 269; Gnilka, Karpinski, & Smith, 2015). School counselors had greater levels of Exhaustion (*d* = .26; small effect size) and lower levels of DC (*d* = -.50; medium effect size) than mental health professional participants. Furthermore, school counselors had greater levels of Exhaustion (*d* = .27; small effect size) and lower levels of DC (*d* = -.82; large effect size) compared to the mental health professional participants working with sex offenders and clients that have been sexually abused. Therefore, school counselors score higher in exhaustion as compared to other mental health professionals and score lower on devaluing their clients.

Individual Factors Related to Burnout

The two categories of individual factors relating to school counselor burnout were (a) psychological constructs and (b) demographic factors. The psychological constructs included ego maturity (Lambie, 2007), collective self-esteem (Butler & Constantine, 2005), altruism (Limberg, Lambie, & Robinson, 2016– 2017), lifestyle themes (Wachter, Clemens, & Lewis, 2008), coping styles (Wilkerson, 2009), perceived stress (Mullen, Blount, Lambie, & Chae, 2017), and grit (Mullen & Crowe, 2018). The definitions of these psychological constructs related to school counselor burnout follow.

Ego maturity refers to the fundamental element of an individual's personality, encompassing components of self, social, cognitive, character, and moral development (Loevinger, 1976). When individuals' egos develop, they become more individualistic, autonomous, and highly aware of themselves (Loevinger, 1976). *Collective self-esteem* is individuals' perception of their identification with the social group they belong to (Bettencourt & Dorr, 1997). *Altruism* is the behavior driven by values or goals individuals possess or their concerns for others, aside from external rewards (Eisenberg et al., 1999). A lifestyle is an individual's way of perceiving self, others, and the world (Mosak & Maniacci, 2000), and *lifestyle themes* refer to common patterns people possess in relation to their lifestyles (Mosak, 1971). Coping is defined as cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with specific demands that take up or exceed individuals' resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and *coping styles* refer to individuals' relatively stable patterns in handling stress (Heszen-Niejodek, 1997). *Perceived stress* represents the extent to which individuals evaluate their situations as stressful (Cohen, 1986). *Grit* is "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). Specifically, grit refers to efforts to achieve a goal despite challenges. In addition to psychological constructs, the demographic factors category included years of experience in school counseling (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) and age (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Psychological constructs. Seven studies identified that psychological constructs relate to school counselors' feelings of burnout. Five of seven factors had large effect sizes, including ego maturity, altruism, lifestyle themes, coping styles, and grit, and three of the factors with large effect sizes were associated with Emotional Exhaustion (EE) among the MBI (Maslach et al., 1996) subscale scores (i.e., ego maturity, altruism, and coping styles).

Specifically, Lambie (2007) examined the directional relationship between school counselors' (*N* = 218) burnout and ego maturity, identifying that those counselors with higher levels of ego maturity

were likely to have greater feelings of Personal Accomplishment (PA; $R^2 = .033$). The researcher also investigated the relationship between the school counselors' reported occupational support and their MBI burnout subscales scores (Maslach & Jackson, 1996), identifying that each MBI subscale relates to the participants' levels of reported occupational support; EE (large effect size; $R^2 = .167$); DP (medium effect size; $R^2 = .120$); and PA (medium effect size; $R^2 = .072$). The results indicated that school counselors scoring at higher ego maturity levels had lower feelings of burnout, and counselors experiencing high levels of occupational support had significantly lower burnout scores.

The relationship between burnout and collective self-esteem was investigated within a sample of school counselors ($N = 533$; Butler & Constantine, 2005). The Collective Self-Esteem Scale has four subscales (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), including (a) Private Collective Self-Esteem (PRCS), (b) Public Collective Self-Esteem (PUCS), (c) Membership Collective Self-Esteem (MCS), and (d) Importance to Identity Collective Self-Esteem (IICS). These subscales measure individuals' perception of social groups they belong to, including how they feel about the group (PRCS), how they perceive others feel about the group (PUCS), how they perceive themselves being a good member of the group (MCS), and how important their social group is to their self-concept (IICS). These four Collective Self-Esteem Scale subscales explained 3% of the variance in the burnout subscales (Pillai's trace = .08, F [12, 1584] = 3.48, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_M = .03$; Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

In general, higher collective self-esteem relates to lower levels of burnout, and different dimensions of collective self-esteem relate to different components of burnout. Higher PRCS was associated with higher feelings of PA ($\eta^2 = .02$), and higher PUCS was related to lower levels of EE ($\eta^2 = .01$). The school counselors' IICS subscale scores were related to their lower feelings of DP ($\eta^2 = .01$) and greater feelings of PA ($\eta^2 = .01$). Although a small amount of variance in burnout scores (.01–.02) was explained by the components of collective self-esteem, the positive relationship between higher PRCS and higher feelings of PA identified that positive perceptions of the group school counselors belong to might reduce their feelings of burnout. For instance, having a sense of pride as a school counselor by observing other school counselors' hard work and good relationships with students may promote their sense of PRCS, which may lead to higher feelings of PA. Taken together, promoting school counselors' collective self-esteem may decrease their feelings of burnout.

Limberg and colleagues (2016–2017) investigated the directional relationship between school counselors' ($N = 437$) levels of altruism and burnout. The school counselors with greater levels of altruism had lower levels of EE and higher feelings of PA. Specifically, the altruism subscales of Positive Future Expectation (PFE) and Self-Efficacy from the Self-Report Altruism Scale (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981) and two subscales of burnout (MBI) correlated ($\chi^2 = 403.611$, $df = 216$, χ^2 ratio = 1.869, $p < .001$). PFE and Self-Efficacy accounted for 31.36% of the variance in the EE subscale (large effect size), and 29.16% of the variance in the PA subscale (large effect size). The Self-Efficacy subscale, which involves individuals' perceived competence in a certain skill, explained 14.4% of the variance in EE subscale scores (large effect size), and 9% of the variance in PA subscale scores (medium effect size). Therefore, the results identified that school counselors' levels of altruism negatively contribute to their burnout scores.

Burnout was related to lifestyle themes among school counselors ($N = 249$; Wachter et al., 2008). Two subscales of lifestyle themes from the Kern Lifestyle Scale (Kern, 1996), Self-Esteem and Perfectionism, accounted for 15.1% of the variance in burnout (large effect size; $R^2 = .151$). Specifically, the Perfectionism subscale was negatively related to school counselor burnout scores (Burnout Measure: Short Version; BMS; Malach-Pines, 2005), and the Self-Esteem subscale was positively

related to school counselor burnout. As a result, these findings identified school counselors' personality factors relating to their risk of burnout, supporting that higher levels of perfectionism and lower levels of self-esteem may increase the likelihood of experiencing burnout.

Two studies employed hierarchical regression analyses to examine what factors may predict burnout subscale scores of the MBI, and one of the predicting variables was coping styles (Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Wilkerson (2009) used four-step hierarchical regression models that included demographics, organizational stressors, and coping strategies, such as task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented coping ($N = 198$). The models with large effect sizes explained all three MBI burnout subscales. Specifically, 49% of the variance in the EE subscale was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = .49$); 27% of the variance in the DP subscale was accounted for (large effect size; $R^2 = .27$); and 36% of the variance of the PA subscale was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = .36$). The results identified school counselors' stressor scores both at the individual and organizational levels; intrapersonal coping strategies contributed to feelings of burnout with large effect sizes in the final model. In other words, demographic factors (e.g., more school counseling experience), coping styles (e.g., more emotion-oriented and less task-oriented coping strategies), and organizational variables (e.g., lack of decision-making authority, role ambiguity, role incongruity, and role conflict) positively predicted the level of burnout among school counselors.

Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) used three-step hierarchical regression models including demographic, intrapersonal, and organizational factors to examine the relationship between the variables and burnout among school counselors ($N = 78$). The school counselors' demographic data (e.g., age, counseling experience, supervision, and student/counselor ratio), and intrapersonal (i.e., coping strategies) and organizational factors (e.g., role conflict, role ambiguity, and counselor occupational stress) significantly accounted for the variance in their burnout subscale scores on the MBI. Specifically, 45% of the variance in the EE subscale was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = .45$), 30% of the variance in the DP subscale was accounted for (large effect size; $R^2 = .30$), and 42% of the variance in the PA subscale was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = .42$) by the final three-step model with the variables (i.e., counselor demographics, intrapersonal factors, and organizational factors). The findings indicated that school counselors' emotion-oriented coping style predicted their three MBI subscale scores, supporting the importance of utilizing helpful strategies (i.e., task-oriented coping) to mitigate counselors' feelings of burnout.

Another study examined how school counselors' perceived stress and job satisfaction relate to burnout (Mullen et al., 2017). Specifically, perceived stress measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) explained 52% of the variance in burnout ($F (1, 749) = 808.55$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .52$) and 25% of the variance in job satisfaction ($F (1, 749) = 243.36$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .25$). When both perceived stress and burnout were examined in order to test the relationship with job satisfaction, they explained 40% of the variance in job satisfaction ($F (2, 747) = 246.48$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .40$). In addition, the results indicated that burnout mediated the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction ($z = -21.47$, $p < .001$), and burnout ($r_s = .99$) predicted job satisfaction better than perceived stress ($r_s = .79$). Overall, perceived stress predicted burnout positively (large effect size) and job satisfaction negatively (large effect size). Both perceived stress and burnout predicted job satisfaction (large effect size).

Finally, Mullen and Crowe (2018) investigated the relationship between grit, burnout, and stress among school counselors ($N = 330$). The researchers found that grit was negatively correlated with burnout ($r = -.22$, $p < .001$) and stress ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$). Specifically, perseverance of effort, one of the subscales from the Grit-S (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), was negatively related with burnout ($r = -.12$,

$p < .05$) and stress ($r = -.19$, $p < .001$). Therefore, school counselors' level of grit may be a protective factor for burnout and stress.

Demographic factors. School counselors' individual factors, such as age (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) and years of experience (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Wilkerson, 2009), correlate with feelings of burnout. Age was negatively correlated to the DP subscale ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$); therefore, older school counselors were less likely to experience burnout as compared to younger counselors (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Nevertheless, the correlation between school counselors' years of experience and burnout was inconsistent. Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) indicated that years of experience negatively correlated with the EE ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$), and DP ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$) subscales, while Butler and Constantine (2005) identified that school counselors with more years of experience scored at higher levels of burnout (MBI scores). Specifically, school counselors with 20–29 years of experience had greater DP subscale scores than those with 0–9 years of experience ($F (3, 529) = 3.38$, $p < .05$); and counselors with 30 years or more of experience had lower PA subscale scores than those with less than 20 years of experience ($F (3, 529) = 3.39$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, Wilkerson (2009) also reported that the years of experience positively correlated with the EE ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$) and DP ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$) MBI subscales in the hierarchical regression models whose variables included counselor demographics and organizational and intrapersonal variables to explain the variance of the burnout scores. Possible reasons behind the incongruent results may relate to school counselors' role ambiguity, as counselors with less experience may experience or perceive large workloads compared to more experienced counselors. The conflicting results also may be related to other school counselor factors, such as the level of social support counselors experience at their schools. The findings identified the need for more inquiry to increase our understanding of the relationship between school counselors' years of experience and their feelings of burnout.

Organizational Factors Relating to School Counselors Levels of Burnout

Eight organizational factors appear to correlate with school counselors' levels of burnout, including (a) workplace (Butler & Constantine, 2005), (b) non-counseling duties such as administrative and clerical tasks (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Moyer, 2011), (c) caseloads (Bardhoshi et al., 2014), (d) AYP (Bardhoshi et al., 2014), (e) level of principal support (Bardhoshi et al., 2014), (f) clinical supervision (Moyer, 2011), (g) student-to-counselor ratio (Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), (h) perceived work environment (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), and (i) direct student services (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). We categorize these organizational factors into two domains: (a) job responsibilities and (b) work environment factors.

Job responsibilities. Two studies examined the relationship between school counselors' non-counseling duties and their burnout scores. First, Bardhoshi and colleagues (2014) examined school counselors' ($N = 212$) non-counseling duties and identified a significant relationship between three of the CBI subscales: (a) 11% of the variance in Exhaustion was explained (medium effect size; $R^2 = 0.11$); (b) 6% of the variance in NWE was explained (medium effect size; $R^2 = 0.06$); and (c) 8% of the variance in DPL was explained (medium effect size; $R^2 = 0.08$). Taken together, the results identified that school counselors' non-counseling duties positively predict their burnout scores.

Moyer (2011) examined how school counselors' ($N = 382$) non-counseling duties (non-guidance duties) were correlated to their levels of burnout as measured by the CBI. School counselors' non-counseling duties accounted for 7.3% of the variance in the burnout score (medium effect size; $R^2 = .073$, $\beta = .27$, $p < .01$). Receiving supervision accounted for additional variance in school counselors' burnout scores after controlling the variance explained by non-counseling activities (medium effect size; $R^2 = .09$, $\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$). As a result, school counselors with more non-counseling duties and

less clinical supervision had higher burnout scores. The findings identify the importance of clinical supervision to reduce burnout among school counselors, helping them improve their quality of counseling, which in turn may increase their sense of competence in the workplace.

Bain and colleagues (2011) investigated the mental health of school counselors in a rural setting and their percentage of workweek spent on counseling and administrative duties in South Texas ($N = 27$). Within this sample of school counselors, 89% had experienced feelings of burnout at least sometimes when trying to provide mental health services; specifically, 41% reported feelings of burnout, and 48% sometimes experienced burnout when providing mental health services to their students. School counselors also reported that they spent the greatest amount of time completing administrative duties and the least amount of time providing counseling services. About 48% of the counselors used more than 50% of their time completing administrative duties, such as organizing facts to report to administrators and preparing for assessments of knowledge and skills, and more than 70% of the participants spent less than 50% of their time providing counseling services. The sample size for this study was small; nevertheless, the results identified that approximately 90% of the school counselors experienced some levels of burnout and spent less time providing counseling services to their students and other stakeholders than completing administrative duties.

Finally, Mullen and Gutierrez (2016) investigated the relationship between burnout and direct student services of school counselors ($N = 926$). The results indicated that burnout negatively contributed to the frequency of direct counseling activities ($ß = -.35, p < .001$), direct curriculum activities ($ß = -.22, p < .001$), and percentage of time at work providing direct services to students ($ß = -.24, p < .001$). The findings suggest that school counselors experiencing feelings of burnout are likely to have lower numbers of direct counseling activities and curriculum activities, and spend less time offering direct services to students.

Work environment factors. School counselors' levels of burnout may be different depending on the location of their workplace (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Specifically, school counselors working in urban settings scored higher on the EE subscale as compared to counselors in suburban, rural, and other settings ($F (3, 529) = 24.66, p < .001$). In addition, counselors in urban settings had higher DP subscale scores than those in other environmental settings ($F (3, 529) = 13.67, p < .001$). The results may relate to unique stressors school counselors in the urban settings face, including their expected proficiency in working with diverse students (Constantine et al., 2001). Overall, school counselors in urban settings were likely to experience greater feelings of burnout than those counselors in other settings, suggesting that more research is warranted to better understand possible contributors to these educators having higher MBI scores.

Factors relating to school counselors' work correlating with their feelings of burnout include counselors' caseloads, AYP status, principal support, and non-counseling duties. Specifically, school-related factors for counselors explained the variance of four burnout subscales of the CBI (Bardhoshi et al., 2014): (a) 21% of the variance in Exhaustion scores was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = 0.21$, $p < .001$); (b) 9% of the variance in Incompetence scores was explained (medium effect size; $R^2 = 0.09$, $p < .01$); (c) 49% of the variance in NWE scores was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = 0.49, p < .001$); and (d) 17% of the variance in DPL scores was explained (large effect size; $R^2 = 0.17, p < .001$). As a result, both school counselors' work-related factors, such as caseloads and non-counseling duties, and their school environment (support from school staff and AYP status) correlate to their feelings of burnout. Therefore, providing sufficient support for school counselors, meeting the AYP, and reducing caseloads and non-counseling duties might mitigate feelings of burnout among school counselors.

Student-to-counselor ratio (Wilkerson, 2009) and perceived work environment (e.g., role conflict; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006) were identified as predictive factors for school counselor burnout. Wilkerson (2009) found that the hierarchical regression models with variables of demographic data (e.g., years of experience), organizational stressors (e.g., counselor–teacher professional relationships), and coping strategies (e.g., task-oriented coping) explained all three subscale scores of the MBI in a sample of school counselors (N = 198): EE (R^2 = .49; large effect size), DP (R^2 = .27; large effect size), and PA (R^2 = 36; large effect size). Similarly, Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) identified that school counselors' demographic, intrapersonal, and organizational factors accounted for variance in all three MBI subscale scores, including the EE, DP, and PA subscales (45%, 30%, and 42%, respectively; all large effect sizes). The findings from these studies support that environmental factors relate to school counselor burnout.

Identified Themes From Qualitative Studies

One qualitative study and two mixed-methods studies explored themes relating to school counselor burnout and ways to improve their service, which may offer ways to prevent burnout. Bardhoshi and colleagues (2014) examined how school counselors experienced burnout. Specifically, the emergent themes identified for school counselors' feelings of burnout organized around four areas including (a) lack of time, (b) budgetary constraints, (c) lack of resources, and (d) lack of organizational support. When school counselors were asked about the meaning of performing non-counseling duties, they stated adverse personal and professional effects, the realities of practice, and reframing the duties within the context of the job. One participant described burnout stating, "It means that I am no longer helpful to my students. I feel like I'm extremely tired and overworked and consequently my effectiveness as a school counselor is negatively impacted" (p. 437).

These themes aligned with existing qualitative research examining school counselors' feelings of burnout (N = 3; Sheffield & Baker, 2005), including (a) important beliefs, (b) burnout feelings, (c) burnout attitude, and (d) lack of collegial support. One of the participants stated, "I didn't think I was doing any good for anybody . . . I just can't go on this way" (p. 181). Another participant stated, "You get to the point where it is no longer fun coming to work or when you are just tired [and] don't want to deal with anyone" (p. 182). Finally, Bain and colleagues (2011) explored helpful ways to better provide mental health services at school with 27 school counselors in rural districts of South Texas. The results identified that having access to more staff and additional education and awareness of mental health services at their school was needed. Overall, these studies identified common themes of school counselors' need for collegial support and resources, such as a school climate encouraging collaboration, and identifying gaps in the needs and realities of school counselors (Bardhoshi et al., 2014), as well as reducing the amount of stressful, non-counseling–related work they perform.

Occupational Stress

Researchers examined which factors may influence school counselors' job stress or job satisfaction, including (a) counselors' perceived match between job expectations and their actual experiences (Culbreth et al., 2005), (b) the amount of resources in their work environment (McCarthy et al., 2010), (c) mattering to others (Rayle, 2006), and (d) role balance ability (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). Perceived match between initial expectations of the job and actual experiences as a school counselor was the most significant predictor of lower role stress demonstrated by each subscale score of the Role Questionnaire (N = 512; Culbreth et al., 2005): role conflict (medium effect size; R^2 = .076); role incongruence (large effect size; R^2 = .197); and role ambiguity (medium effect size; R^2 = .083). School counseling students reported not feeling trained enough because of the significant amount of non-counseling–related duties, which increased their sense of role conflict.

Graduating from a program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs accounted for 1.2% of the variance in school counselors' perceived readiness for the job (small effect size; $r = .111$, $p < .05$; Culbreth et al., 2005). School counselors' balance between job demand and resources was another important factor for their job stress. Moreover, McCarthy and colleagues (2010) identified that perceived job stress and work environment in terms of demands and resources were correlated ($N = 227$; $F (2, 206) = 44.77$, $p < .001$). School counselors with resources, such as other counselors in general or as mentors, and support from administrators scored lower on levels of job stress. The effect size for the difference between the demand and the resourced groups was 1.62 (large effect size), and between the demand and balanced groups was 0.70 (large effect size). In other words, school counselors with more work-related resources were likely to experience lower levels of job stress.

Several factors are related to job satisfaction for school counselors. Rayle (2006) investigated the relationship between school counselors' ($N = 388$) mattering to others at work scores and job-related stress scores, and their overall job satisfaction scores. The School Counselor Mattering Survey developed for this study included seven items asking participants to rate their perceived mattering to others, including their students, administrators, and the parents and teachers they worked with. School counselors' mattering to others at work scores and job-related stress scores explained 35% of the variance in their overall job satisfaction (large effect size; $\eta p^2 = .62$). Specifically, school counselors' job satisfaction correlated with mattering to others at work scores (large effect size; $r = .44$, $p < .001$) and their job-related stress scores (large effect size; $r = -.41$, $p < .001$). In addition, school counselors' mattering to others scores were negatively associated with their job-related stress scores ($r = -.54$, $p < .001$; large effect size). The findings suggest that school counselors' perceived mattering to others at work and job-related stress predict their overall job satisfaction, and mattering to others at work relates to their job-related stress.

In addition, Bryant and Constantine (2006) investigated the relationship between female school counselors' ($N = 133$) role balance, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. After controlling for demographic information (age, years of school counseling experience, and location of school), role balance and job satisfaction scores correlated with their satisfaction with life scores (large effect size; $R^2 = .41$). As a result, school counselors' multiple role balance ability and job satisfaction scores positively predicted their overall life satisfaction scores. In sum, these findings identified factors related to school counselors' job satisfaction, including mattering to others at work, job-related stress, and life satisfaction.

Discussion

Because of the dearth of literature examining school counselor burnout or occupational stress, we reviewed 18 investigations based on the inclusion criteria and included articles focusing on the topic that were published between 2000 and 2018 in refereed journals and identified internal and external factors relating to the phenomena. Specific factors were identified relating to school counselor burnout or stress and their environment, including responsibilities not related to counseling, large caseloads, AYP status, and role confusion. The findings suggest the importance of school counselors asserting themselves to focus on mandated tasks (i.e., counseling) in order to experience less burnout. In addition, it is imperative to train school counseling students to understand the reality of practice, such as other job responsibilities and school climates, and inform them on the necessity of counselors advocating for themselves in order to overcome role confusion and avoid large caseloads. Furthermore, several resources were identified to mitigate burnout among school counselors. Clinical supervision from a competent supervisor is essential for school counselors to get support and learn how to intervene with their clients effectively. In addition, peer supervision or consultation from colleagues may benefit school counselors in sharing their difficulties and gaining other professionals' perspectives (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Task-oriented

coping skills which can be learned in the school counseling programs were also related to a reduced level of burnout among school counselors.

Limitations

Our review needs to be interpreted with some caution, as it is limited to the 18 published studies meeting the inclusion criteria. Therefore, additional research investigating school counselor burnout is needed to further our understanding of this significant construct that may influence the services school counselors provide to their stakeholders. In addition, the reviewed studies include methodological limitations (e.g., sample size, self-report data), further supporting the need for increased research examining the construct of burnout in school counseling. Moreover, no research was identified examining interventions to possibly reduce counselor feelings of burnout.

Implications for School Counseling

Although no studies were identified that investigated treatments for school counselor burnout, research from other similar professions may provide insight for developing coping strategies for school counselors addressing their feelings of burnout. Awa, Plaumann, and Walter (2010) reviewed 25 intervention studies for burnout prevention whose participants included employees from diverse occupations. Seventeen out of 25 studies employed person-directed interventions and indicated the positive effects of the interventions, including cognitive behavioral training (Gorter, Eijkman, & Hoogstraten, 2001), psychosocial skill training (Ewers, Bradshaw, McGovern, & Ewers, 2002), and recreational music making (Bittman, Bruhn, Stevens, Westengard, & Umbach, 2003). Two studies used organization-directed interventions, and one of the studies reduced burnout by using cognitive behavioral techniques, management skill training, and social support (Halbesleben, Osburn, & Mumford, 2006). The other six investigations explored the effects of combined (person- and organization-directed) interventions in reducing burnout. The examples of combined interventions to mitigate counselors' feeling of burnout include professional supervision (Melchior et al., 1996); work schedule reorganization and lectures (Innstrand, Espnes, & Mykletun, 2004); and participatory action research, communication, social support, and coping skills (Le Blanc, Hox, Schaufeli, Taris, & Peeters, 2007). Overall, Awa and colleagues (2010) identified positive impacts of burnout intervention programs, suggesting potential benefits of these treatment programs for school counselors.

In addition, Krasner and colleagues (2009) reported the effectiveness of their continuing medical education program for physicians to reduce burnout, which involves mindfulness, self-awareness, and communication skills. Educating for mindfulness strategies, self-awareness, and communication skills also may be helpful for school counselors. Providing a supportive environment and acknowledging school counselors' work may help them increase their sense of matter in their workplace. Lacking empirical studies identifying treatment outcomes for burnout in school counselors, research on decreasing the level of school counselor burnout should be examined both deeply and extensively. Furthermore, intervention programs to prevent and intervene with school counselors' burnout and occupational stress at the individual and organizational levels are warranted. The efforts to prevent burnout may lead to school counselors providing better quality of services, benefitting the counselors and the students they serve.

Our review indicated that school counselors' responsibilities, such as non-counseling duties and dealing with large caseloads, hindered counselors from maintaining their wellness. Additionally, experiencing role conflict and employing emotion-oriented coping skills increased their feelings of burnout. Therefore, school counselor preparation programs need to incorporate into their curriculum the characteristics of their future work environment that may involve potential risk factors for

burnout. Furthermore, developing school counselors' own strategies and practicing beneficial skills such as task-oriented coping skills may be helpful for them in decreasing their likelihood of experiencing burnout.

Conclusion

Preventing and reducing school counselors' feelings of burnout is important to ensure counselors' ability to provide ethical and effective services to their stakeholders. Failure to address work-related stress in school counselors may cause reduced quality of their service and increased counselor attrition from the profession. Although more investigations examining burnout in school counselors are warranted, this manuscript is the first systematic review of burnout in school counseling, offering increased insight into this significant job-related psychological phenomenon.

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