The Struggle Between Self-Care and Burnout Among School Counselors

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School counselors strive to be well-adjusted in their personal and professional lives and hope to perceive their self-care practices accurately. However, school counseling is demanding, with members at risk of developing burnout. Professional demands and limited resources supporting their self-care and well-being are often related to impaired work performance. The relationship between self-care practices, educational settings, and burnout among practicing school counselors is reviewed. Suggestions for improved self-care practices and well-being are discussed.

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Burnout is a physical and emotional experience that often leads to a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. It has emerged as a significant problem among school counselors and other mental health professionals in school systems (Ray et al., 2013; Schiele et al., 2014). If left unattended, burnout can lead to significant career-related problems. Researchers cited that 36% of school counselors have suffered work performance issues due to burnout (Campbell et al., 2013; Gunduz, 2012). Many schools have reduced their staff budgets in recent years. These reductions often increase school counselor demands, and the position can become even more challenging, leading to higher staff stress levels (Cinotti, 2014; Morse et al., 2012). School counselors who experience burnout may resent their profession, leading to career changes and valuable employee loss (Singh et al., 2012; Smith, 2017; Wise et al., 2012). Job burnout develops from many factors, such as the inability to control the work environment, insufficient resources, lack of social support, work overload, and the profession's emotional demands (Coaston, 2017; Findik, 2015; Malinowski, 2013). In addition to daily stressors, school counselors may experience anxiety related to their organizational job expectations and intervention efficacy questions, which adversely affect their livelihood (Oser et al., 2013).

School counselors are significantly affected by professional and personal factors while caring for others (Cummings et al., 2007; Green et al., 2014). They often cope with professional pressures while balancing services with their students. They need help with a healthy work balance as they handle pressures related to managing paperwork and staying abreast of new professional developments. These pressures can cause stress and burnout (Bressi & Vaden, 2017; Fried & Fisher, 2016; Oser et al., 2013). Burnout

reduces productivity and depletes energy, leaving individuals hopeless, helpless, resentful, and cynical (Mullen et al., 2017; Shallcross, 2011; Smullen, 2012).

Generally, burnout emerges over time and is linked to work or home environment stressors. School counselors' high burnout levels are often due to work-related stress (Duli, 2016; Ray et al., 2013). The risk factors typically identified are high caseloads, personal histories of trauma, lack of adequate supervision, working excessive hours, lack of a supportive work environment, social isolation, lack of a supportive social network, and the inability to meet and recognize self-needs (Neff & Costigan, 2014; Ray et al., 2013). School counselors provide direct care to students with complex school issues requiring therapeutic support. Without proper supervision and support, they may experience nightmares, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and physical constraints, otherwise known as compassion fatigue (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Duncan et al., 2014). Compassion fatigue may have similar symptoms, but it is more related to working with trauma victims and the prolonged exposure a school counselor may experience.

Researchers contend that burnout has been a primary factor that negatively affects any work environment, not just school systems (Kusher, 2016; Maslach, 2017). The high demands specific to school counseling, including role conflicts, increased student-to-counselor ratios, lack of supervision, and the school's population, particularly in urban settings, place these individuals in a vulnerable position (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Maslach, 2017; McGeary et al., 2014). Unfortunately, limited literature exists on burnout among school counselors and utilizing self-care and other helpful practices to cope with burnout (Findik, 2015; Gibson Smith et al., 2016).

Recent career satisfaction surveys of school counselors showed that 76% were satisfied with their profession, 12% planned to quit or retire, and 13% were undecided about remaining in the profession (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Some predictors of lower job contentment and reason for leaving the profession were stress levels, unbearable caseloads, and vague duties (Hanna, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). While school counseling is susceptible to burnout, these large caseloads and diverse responsibilities have increased job ambiguity and stress (Gunduz, 2012; Knani & Fournier, 2013; Shin et al., 2014). Role confusion has been a critical factor in school counselor burnout because many counselors believe that no clear description or definition of their roles, tasks, and functions exists (Al-Abrrow & Abrishamkar, 2013; Barnett, 2014). Role ambiguity and increased caseloads impact the school counselor's perceptions of a lack of personal accomplishment (Bearse et al., 2013; Williams & Dikes, 2015).

More research is needed to define effective school-counselor ratios because there are few credible studies in this area (Liebhaber, 2022). The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2019) has found that the average school counselor-to-student ratio in the United States is nearly double the recommended ASCA proportion of 250 students to each school counselor. Only two states, Vermont and New Hampshire, have regulations that meet these proposed ratios. There is a significant discrepancy between what is effective versus the reality of everyday workloads for many school counselors. California, in the past, has been particularly neglectful of student mental health needs and has the fifth worst school counselor-student ratio of 571 students to one counselor. In the early 2000s, California's ratio was well over 1000 students to one school counselor. The state recently committed to hiring 10,000 new school counselors within five years. On the

other hand, Arizona, Illinois, and Michigan have school counselor-student ratios larger than 600 students to one counselor.

School counselor role ambiguity may be related to the lack of consistency of duties for school counselors from school to school and district to district (Hanna, 2012). Also, school leaders have lacked knowledge about school counselor roles for decades, and school counselors usually have responsibilities not listed in their job descriptions. These responsibilities may vary depending on grade level (elementary, middle, or high school) or the expectations of the school administration. They may spend large parts of their day performing non-counseling duties, such as initiating disciplinary actions, handling clerical work, tutoring, fulfilling administrative tasks, substituting for teachers, monitoring hallways and the cafeteria, or bus duties (Astramovich et al., 2013). In addition to many of these non-counselor duties, school counselors must be prepared to handle emergencies and implement crisis intervention strategies (Knight, 2012; Schellenberg et al., 2013). Crises at a school can vary widely and include natural disasters, sexual assault, hate crimes, acts of terrorism, a school community member's death, barricades, armed hostage events, and homicide. (Astramovich et al., 2013; Bamonti et al., 2014; Schellenberg et al., 2013). School counselors must be ready to handle unexpected and stressful situations with little or no preparation. These situations require solid knowledge of crisis intervention and flexibility (Blau et al., 2013; Schellenberg et al., 2013; Steinlin et al., 2017).

The Impact of COVID-19 on School Counselor Roles

In 2020, ASCA commissioned a study examining the impact of COVID-19 on the role of school counselors. Many 7,000 school counselors interviewed were assigned

duties far beyond their typical core responsibilities. Some of these duties included

temperature checks, COVID-19 contact tracing, substitute teaching, additional

administrative work, coordinating student testing, and lunch duty. Even with some

reduction of COVID-19 protocols, the same school counselors relate that these other

duties have not decreased mainly due to large staff and teacher shortages throughout the

country. This workload, combined with a significant school counselor shortage predating

the pandemic, has begun to create an outcry about what is and is not an appropriate use of

a school counselor's time and training. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics

has determined that youth mental health is a national emergency that particularly impacts

children of color. A recent article (Pincus et al., 2020) indicated that school counselors

are the only mental health providers who can identify, manage, and provide interventions

for at-risk students. When school counselors are not allowed to do their jobs, students

ultimately suffer, especially during the current mental health crisis that affects many

children in the United States.

Stages of Professional Burnout and the School Counselor

The term *professional burnout* is frequently referenced in the fields of counseling

and psychology as a multi-dimensional experience composed of cynicism, exhaustion,

and reduced professional efficacy that can emanate from organizational dissatisfaction in

the context of a job position (Germer & Neff, 2015; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Dating

back as early as 1970, Freudenberger characterized burnout primarily by physical

symptoms, such as fatigue and exhaustion, sleeplessness, shortness of breath, frequent

gastrointestinal disturbances, and headaches (Bakker et al., 2014). Burnout necessitated

regular doctor visits due to fatigue, nervousness, anxiety, headaches, insomnia, and

backaches (Bamonti et al., 2014; Green et al., 2014). This multifaceted process was an individual's unique stress-related experience, and he discovered three phases or areas that defined burnout symptoms through his work (Malinowski, 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These included emotional exhaustion, which indicates feeling emotionally and physically drained; depersonalization, which describes negative attitudes towards others; and reduced self-efficacy (Carter & Barnett, 2014; Maslach, 2017; Oser et al., 2013; Ray et al., 2013).

Exhaustion defines burnout's primary and initial stress component, which includes feelings of being overextended and depleted of energy resources emotionally and physically (Hanna, 2012; Maslach, 2017; Oser et al., 2013). Difficulties in building good relationships and expressing empathy to students are common symptoms (Fried & Fisher, 2016; Morse et al., 2012). This area is particularly relevant to school counselors who may believe they cannot stay current with student needs, draining their ability to provide for them adequately (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2015; Shealy, 2014). These thoughts may lead to the purposeful experiences of cognitive and emotional distancing from their job. The impact of exhaustion can affect school counselors in many ways. Professionally, fatigue could result in impaired performance and decision-making ability, low morale, absenteeism, decreased concentration and attention, and a high turnover of school counselors (Morse et al., 2012; Webber et al., 2015). The exhaustion experienced by school counselors could lead to compassion fatigue, where symptoms may often mirror those of post-traumatic stress disorder (Barnett, 2014; Ray et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, burnout could affect school counselors emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually and school counselors' quality of service (Findik, 2015; Fried &

Fisher, 2016). An increased level of detachment can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion that often triggers a sense of depersonalization (Green et al., 2014; Morse et al., 2012; Ray et al., 2013). Over time, school counselors may see themselves having decreased productivity and a lack of achievement (Morgan et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2013). The confidence that their work is beneficial to students may diminish. This lack of confidence, in most cases, can become a crisis for school counselors since the job will have no purpose. These feelings further result in disconnection and sometimes depersonalization (Morgan et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2013).

Organizational characteristics may also significantly determine disconnection and depersonalization (Pattyn et al., 2015; Ray et al., 2013). School districts can contribute to depersonalization by providing minimal resources to meet school counselor goals and allotting too little time for completed tasks. The organization's efforts to reduce costs can impact school counselors in many ways, such as decreasing their sense of control and adversely affecting community building (Pollack et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2013). A positive work environment is critical for all school employees (Khalatbari et al., 2013; Morse et al., 2012). For example, Morse et al. (2012) encouraged organizations to establish manageable caseloads for school counselors. A recent study by Maslach and Leiter (2016) noted the variables that led to school counselors' depersonalization. These included long working hours, high caseloads, chronic staff shortages, lack of support from management, poor relationships with fellow staff and supervisors, and an aggressive administration.

Regarding self-efficacy, many school counselors can unknowingly use negative coping techniques to deal with their work (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This type of coping

can become more prevalent when school counselors lose self-meaning. They become

worn down and do not believe they can make a difference in their work with students

(Chang et al., 2012; Shealy, 2014). School counselors may lose interest in their work

because of excessive non-counseling duties, impacting their ability to do quality work

with students. In one study, Limberg et al. (2016) found that 13% of school counselors

reported alcohol use or disorder problems. In other studies, 20% of school counselors

surveyed admitted to the daily abuse of alcohol in the past, and 15% admitted to currently

abusing alcohol (Di benedetto, 2015; Carter & Barnett, 2014). When overwhelmed by

students who may not be doing as well as the school counselor had hoped, or when facing

other challenges, the school counselor may seek unhealthy or destructive ways to cope. A

lack of self-efficacy and burnout has a complicated relationship with health (Chang et al.,

2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). For instance, constant fatigue, frustration, a lingering

cold, insomnia, headaches, hypertension, gastrointestinal disturbances, and ulcers were

some of the physical symptoms noted by those struggling with self-efficacy related to

burnout (Luken & Sammons, 2016; Rupert et al., 2012). Feelings of inadequacy can lead

to internal disputes with family, colleagues, and friends. In finding ways to cope with

these physical symptoms, school counselors sometimes turn to harmful or destructive

coping methods (Rupert et al., 2012).

Difficulties in Establishing Self-Care for the School Counselor

Self-care represents how individuals maintain and establish health and deal with

and prevent illness (Knight, 2012; Webber et al., 2015). Individuals must embrace their

health and well-being, including the care given to their children, family, loved ones, and

friends in their neighborhoods and local communities (Bamonti et al., 2014; Blau et al.,

2013; Webber et al., 2015). Self-care means maintaining good mental and physical health that meets psychological and social needs. Examples include taking care of minor ailments, preventing illness and accidents, and establishing care for long-term conditions (Burton, 2012; Maslach, 2017; Webber et al., 2015). Self-care consists of self-regulation, self-awareness, and balance (Burton, 2012; Wicks & Buck, 2014). Discussing self-care among school counselors and counselors in training is far less likely to lead to effective coping behaviors (Duncan et al., 2014; Hanna, 2012).

Self-care practices can reduce the likelihood of work-related burnout. School counselors should first take care of themselves before venturing to help others. A school counselor engaging in practice under challenging conditions significantly limits providing students' services (Pakenham & Stafford-Brown, 2012). School counselors who neglect their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual lives often ineffectively assist their students. While school counselors are familiar with *self-care ideology* and may teach these concepts to students, they often find it herculean to put the ideas into practice in their own lives (Shallcross, 2011). School counselors who ignore their self-care could diminish their professional progress and jeopardize their job security (Hamric et al., 2012). Those counselors who have quit or left the profession due to burnout often indicate that self-care negligence was a factor in their ineffectiveness in performing their job duties (Hamric et al., 2012; Hanna, 2012).

The lack of coping strategies and self-care was essential in school counselor burnout. While recognizing self-care as one of the most critical factors in being a healthy school counselor, they provide good empathy for students while often having large caseloads (Findik, 2015; Green et al., 2014; Shallcross, 2011). While compassion is

paramount to the profession, being emotionally involved and available to students increases school counselors' vulnerability. This balancing act involves finding ways to stay connected to students while maintaining a deep and strong bond with oneself (Fries, 2013; Limberg et al., 2016; Shallcross, 2011).

It is essential to recognize that self-care practices aim not to eradicate uncomfortable feelings, self-doubt, or exhaustion but to promote resiliency (Lee & Miller, 2013; McGeary et al., 2014). School counselors can often embark on self-care plans that are the source of the problems they have tried to avoid. These plans can be unrealistic and create the idea of a perfect counselor. This goal of perfectionism is often a trait of a highly successful professional, but it can have serious consequences. The perfectionistic school counselor begins to believe that the ideal school counselor is always wise, calm, highly evolved, and an expert in the subject (Malinowski, 2013; Rupert et al., 2012; Wise et al., 2012). When those goals become unreachable, school counselors may attend various continuing education training programs that they believe will solve their image problems. This endless cycle includes chastising themselves for ineffective self-care regimens (Fried & Fisher, 2016; Hanna, 2012). At this stage of discontentment, school counselors are more likely to become highly dissatisfied with themselves (Wicks & Buck, 2014). In essence, self-care becomes self-demeaning and self-defeating if done incorrectly.

Challenges Within the School Environment

Researchers have explored burnout in high-stress helping professions, even in favorable work environments. One recent study examined burnout and work environments among hemodialysis nurses and found that these nurses had elevated

burnout levels despite positive work environments (Hayes et al., 2015). While most of the

individuals in this study viewed their work as essential and valuable, they also reported

significant burnout and fatigue. Interestingly, while their supervisors and hospital

leadership often discussed work fatigue problems, they provided few resources to combat

it.

Similarly, school counselors may see their work environments as positive yet

experience significant stress that could hinder self-care (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Puig et

al., 2012). For example, school counselors can struggle to get through their average day,

and self-care is not a priority due to fatigue and limited time. Some work environments

can limit self-care and make it even more difficult for the school counselor due to huge

caseloads or long or unusual work hours with little support from school leadership (Puig

et al., 2012; Zeman & Harvison, 2017). School counselors may want to believe they

should feel comfortable in their discomfort even though their work environments

contribute to fatigue, stress, resentment, and anger. They may still feel safe because they

know what to expect (Puig et al., 2012; Steinlin et al., 2017).

Changing such an environment could be challenging because school counselors

may want to stay in their comfort zones. School counselors must ask themselves, "If I am

in the business of helping others, who is helping me?" It can be challenging for school

counselors to observe boundaries, including a commitment to self while enabling balance

and a distinction between personal and work life (Germer & Neff, 2015; Puig et al., 2012;

Smullen, 2012). Maintaining boundaries is an essential component of self-care. School

counselors who experience role conflict and employ emotion-oriented coping skills

increase their feelings of burnout (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Mullen et al., 2017). They

and other researchers contend that lacking professional boundaries creates bitterness, anger, and being overwhelmed (Leiter et al., 2014; Smullen, 2012). Some school counselors may need to practice setting effective boundaries, as demonstrated by taking numerous calls or meeting students outside school or during office hours (Di benedetto, 2015; Hamric et al., 2012; Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014). When they fail to set office hours and work parameters, they place students ahead of their needs and family and friends. School counselors work unusually long hours and have enormous caseloads with many challenging students (Hanna, 2012). This combination leads to burnout and an unhealthy mind, body, and soul. Eventually, these conditions affect students' quality of care (Hanna, 2012; Rupert et al., 2012).

The environment in which school counselors work has a decisive influence on burnout. School counselors in urban K-12 educational settings report more stress symptoms, psychological distress, and work dissatisfaction than their counterparts in other settings, such as community mental health or private practice (Di benedetto, 2015; Green et al., 2014). School counselors report frequent emotional exhaustion and infrequent feelings of personal accomplishment compared to their other counseling counterparts (Green et al., 2014; Mullen et al., 2017). School districts often need more financial resources, leading to less training, heavy caseloads, and supervision deficiencies (Di benedetto, 2015; Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014).

School counselors with a supportive environment are more satisfied with their employment (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). When school counselors reveal their difficulties to colleagues, they are more likely to seek help. An individual's coping strategies often coincide with burnout prevention measures (Lawson

& Myers, 2011; Rupert et al., 2012). School counselors who use healthy coping strategies experience lower burnout levels (Vicentic et al., 2013; Webber et al., 2015). As a result, those coping strategies manifest as an advantage that helps with burnout symptoms. Peer support significantly impacted other research studies, helped improve growth and wellness, and supported self-awareness (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Webber et al., 2015). These researchers also contended that creating a personalized wellness goal with colleagues helped school counselors realize their dreams by turning their plans into reality (Webber et al., 2015). Self-care can sometimes look complicated, but the process starts with the first step (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Webber et al., 2015). In most cases, the slightest effort can make a significant impact. For example, having lunch with a friend and taking Saturday or Sunday off to play and rest can help individuals regroup for the next week.

The challenging interventions for school counselors' health and self-care are organizational interventions that include structural changes, such as changes to work patterns or increases in the workforce and the recognition of excellence at work (Lee & Miller, 2013). Ironically, a significant roadblock to these changes may be that school administrators are just as likely to feel unvalued by a school district as their school counseling counterparts. Nearly 75% of school administrators are unhappy with their districts' support, and many principals also suffer from burnout. Almost one in three principals indicate severe mental distress, and nearly 42% want to leave their positions (Dewitt, 2020). In addition, school leadership graduate programs rarely include training and coursework in mental health or self-care practices.

Clinical supervision is a formal process of organizational, professional learning, and support that enables individuals to develop knowledge and competence. One limitation for school counselors, frequently discussed, is peer supervision in the educational setting. The lack of clinical supervision in one's professional career as a school counselor could be a significant source of burnout (Hanna, 2012). Unfortunately, many school counselors are not required to receive supervision from experienced counselors, as is necessary for an independent clinical counseling license. Furthermore, despite the lack of evaluative studies, supervision in almost any organization is a good strategy for alleviating and preventing burnout symptoms (Leiter et al., 2014).

Recommendations to Reduce School Counselor Burnout

There is no single strategy to lessen the impact of burnout, but several interventions could be practical to find successful and usable interventions for typical school counselors (Leiter et al., 2014). Stress is a normal part of life, leading to burnout when left unchecked (Smullen, 2012). School counselors' ability to cope with external stressors could be contingent upon their experience in practical, cognitive evaluation of the stressor involved, which was intrinsic to self-care (Maslach, 2017; Wise et al., 2012). School counselors live in a complex world, working with students with complicated problems, coping with paperwork requirements, experiencing their own financial or family issues, or dealing with other chronic and acute life stressors and challenges (Epstein & Bowwer, 2016). Daily routines are stressful and could result in severe health conditions and job dissatisfaction if not addressed.

The roadblock to eliminating burnout for many school counselors is leadership and organizational-based (Rupert et al., 2015). First, the student load for many school

counselors could be more manageable. In many states, there are no mandates for elementary school counselors. Without any guidelines, states can have school districts where the student ratio will range from 600 to 1300 students per counselor. There are very few legal standards in many states that require school counselors' reasonable work standards. In fact, in the four largest cities in the U.S., school security officers easily outnumber the employment of school counselors. Houston has 1175 students per school counselor versus 785 for every security officer. Until the load issues are changed, school counselors will invariably face increasing burnout.

The biopsychosocial model of mental health may benefit school counselors coping with the early stages of burnout. This model focuses on three aspects of human development relative to mental health:

1. Biological include genetics, disease, injury, hormones, diet, drugs, exercise, and stressors.

2. Psychological include beliefs, emotions, resilience, coping skills, emotional intelligence, cognitive bias, and behavior.

3. Social factors include family history, peer relationships, poverty, school, media, work, culture, trauma, and discrimination.

According to the biopsychosocial model, mental health results from many forces occurring at different times in a person's life. These forces can be positive or negative, but unfortunately, negative factors can significantly impact stress and eventually develop mental illness. Understanding this model can be a first step toward better managing stress and mental health. This model can be incorporated into a school environment, mainly if

the leadership is knowledgeable, such as stress reduction exercises, meditation, yoga, physical exercise, and compassion training.

Another major organizational issue for school counselors, mainly those new to the profession, is a need for more supervision provided by school districts (Corey et al., 2018; Dewitt, 2020). Clinical counselors typically enter organizations required to receive supervision for one to two years from experienced personnel after receiving a graduate degree. It is often very different for the newly degreed school counselor. It is not atypical for a school counselor to be alone in a building without a colleague or anyone familiar with mental health or counseling standards. Too many school administrators need to gain more knowledge of the skills and duties of an effective school counselor (Corey et al., 2018). Rarely does an administrative or leadership graduate training program require a counseling course for developing administrators. This lack of knowledge may be one of the reasons that school counselors complain that they are assigned administrative tasks unrelated to their job description. Many school counselors are marginalized and need help using the skills they learned in their graduate training programs (Savitz-Romer, 2019). School districts may need proper or effective school counseling evaluation procedures. While several relevant school counseling evaluation instruments are available, more research is needed on whether these instruments improve performance. One suggested method of resolving the issue of ineffective evaluations and using school counselors is to revitalize and change school counseling programs so that students are trained alongside administrators, teachers, and policymakers so that schools can reflect a better team effort and collaboration (Savitz-Romer, 2019).

In addition to organizational issues, the school counselor's job is inherently tricky, even in optimal circumstances. Specific data regarding burnout and job performance or dismissal is lacking, and evidence-based practices decrease burnout among school counselors. The connection between burnout and suicide is also worthy of examination and discussion (ASCA, 2019). Symptoms of helplessness and hopelessness are both connected to burnout and depression. The American Medical Association has made a concerted effort to gather and disseminate data regarding suicide among physicians, who have nearly double the rate of suicide than any other profession (Stehman et al., 2019). However, surprisingly, the American Counseling Association (ASCA) provides no information regarding suicide rates among its members. Suicide data and rates among school counselors are unavailable. Suicide information about helping professionals, in general, is sorely lacking. The American Psychological Association has not released any data regarding suicide and its members, including school psychologists, since 1970. It appears reluctant to inform the public regarding the number of troubled psychotherapists (Epstein & Bowwer, 2016).

Conclusion

We recognize that school counselors must take the personal initiative to reduce this severe problem and combat burnout. Indeed, more education in this area may be helpful. In recent years, following the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs standards, wellness plans have been recommended and required to reduce burnout. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence-based data to support their effectiveness. A study of wellness plans across school districts in Missouri found they were poorly designed, ineffective, and lacked staff support. These programs have

potential, but effective programs must be developed nationally and made available to school counselors. An effective program would be to create professional cohorts with supervisors who meet regularly (Kovac et al., 2017). These groups would support and share issues related to the profession, develop professional relationships and friendships from a common purpose in these cohorts, and provide needed validation.

One of the most effective methods of reducing burnout among school counselors is to support what they do. Most importantly, several significant issues related to school counselor burnout begin with administrators, including principals and superintendents, who must understand effective school counselors' roles and duties. Most of these individuals have been trained as teachers and have competent instructional practices. However, they often need to improve their understanding of a school counselor's job and miss vital opportunities to help and support them (Savitz-Romer, 2019). Secondly, philanthropic investment in school counseling reform must be redefined and reimagined as professional roles. Recently, the Lily Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation supporting the causes of religion, education, and community development, donated 30 million dollars to school counseling reform in Indiana, primarily to help prepare students for the workforce (Hatcher, 2017). The school counselor's role would expand, with investment and support to the 1.7 million students in the U.S. who presently have police staff but no counseling services (Blad & Sawchuk, 2020). Moreover, most importantly, continued and broader investment in school counseling has the potential to solidify the 250 students to one school counselor ratio recommended by ASCA but only met and practiced in two states.

Lastly, students' mental health in our nation's public schools is at a crisis level. These issues are even more prevalent for students of color. Trained school counselors help students but are limited in providing the services in too many incidences. In addition, the number of students assigned to typical school counselors creates an untenable position where the school counselors will never be able to meet the mental health needs of many of their students. The nature of school counselors is to be caring and compassionate, which is why these individuals are in the profession. Creating a school district climate where school counselors are overwhelmed and stretched to their limits leads to dissatisfaction and burnout. Ultimately, the present structure and organization in many schools are not helpful for the mental health needs of students and the school counselors who help and guide them.

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