

Job Satisfaction and Values of Counselors in Private Practice and Agency Settings

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Abstract

Counselors work in diverse locations. Yet, very little is known about each setting's optimal person-environment match, which contributes to burnout and turnover in the field settings (Knudsen, Ducharme, Roman, 2006; Lawson, 2007; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1986; Rupert & Morgan, 2005; Watkins, 1983; Witmer & Young, 1996). One hundred and thirty-five counselors comprised the sample in a descriptive correlational study from a large city in the Southeastern region of the United States. Instrumentation included: the Schwartz Value Survey, the abridged Job Descriptive Index and Job In General Scale, and the Counselor History Questionnaire. Two one-way MANOVA's and four standard multiple regressions were performed for the analyses. Significant results ($F [2,133] = 9.88, p = .000$) supported practitioners rated a higher level of job satisfaction than their counterparts in agency settings, with 12.9% of the variance being accounted for by the variable of work location. The non-significant results of value priorities included that counselors possess similar value priorities. Implications for counselors and counselor educators are presented, along with areas of future research.

The field of counseling has grown and changed drastically over the past 40 years (Capuzzi & Gross, 2012). From the 1940s up until community counseling formed as a profession as we know it, counselors' work settings included mainly the school system and veterans affairs (Blocher, 2000). Now, numerous occupational settings exist for counselors, including hospitals, educational facilities, residential agencies, outpatient settings, private practice offices, and even wilderness adventure camp sites (Capuzzi & Gross, 2012). As Gambrell, Rehffuss, Suarez and Meyers (2011) stated it, "Counseling is a diverse and exciting field, but by no means it is a one size fits all" (p. 34).

In addition, counselors serve in varied roles, such as individual or family counselors, group facilitators, consultants, mediators, supervisors, and/or researchers (Kottler & Brown, 2004). Counselors in training focus the majority of their time on learning the craft of counseling (i.e., having a sense of presence with a client, learning active listening skills, etc.). However, many counselors know little about important differences in the potential occupational settings in which they will work. Additionally, graduating counselors face obstacles that include: (a) lack of self-awareness concerning their work values and priorities, (b) lack of knowledge about the variety of occupational environments and the values expressed in each, and (c) lack of mentorship during the transition from graduate school to the work world (King, 2007).

Therefore, applying career psychology theory to investigate person-environment fit indicators for counselors and the multiple possible environments could produce instructive information on optimal environments for counselors-in-training. Furthermore, trait-factor

theories, which began in the early 1900s, included linking a trait of the person and the work factor to job satisfaction. Frank Parson's (1909) book, *Choosing a Vocation*, broke new ground in trait-factor theory. Parson developed the 'goodness of fit' theory, which proposed people make poor vocational decisions when they are unaware of themselves (i.e. personality, values, and work-style) and unaware of the factors of the potential occupation (1909). In fact, a study by D'Aprix, Dunlap, Abel and Edwards (2004) researched students in the school for social work, who reported that they chose their degree because of the marketability of the degree and higher salaries obtained versus those of other helping professionals. No participants indicated choosing the degree because of a desire to help individuals or serve disadvantaged populations. The mismatch between what drew the students to enter the profession and the values that embody helping professions suggests a lack of awareness between individuals entering the profession and the factors necessary to succeed in the helping professions. For many in the counseling field, the struggle between desiring financial success and prestige could conflict with the values of altruism and compassion expressed in the job and contributes to job dissatisfaction.

In fact, counselors are often unclear about their motivations for entering the profession. The researchers, Sommers-Flannigan and Sommers-Flannigan, (2004) discussed the need for students to understand their motivations and values for entering the helping professional field. The authors cited the two most common motivations as (a) the prestige given those in our culture with advanced degrees, and (b) the sense of achievement and power of the title (2004). Both of these motivations involve work values that may not be in sync with the values necessary to become helpers in counseling-related settings. In the research conducted by Reh fuss, Gambrell, and Meyer (2012), it was confirmed that the person-organization fit ($p = .01$) and needs-supplies fit ($p = .00$) were both positively related to career satisfaction, while there was no relationship between demands-abilities fit and career satisfaction. It stands to reason that increasing knowledge for students on what traits or values counselors need to be a good fit with their environments would benefit the profession and increase retention.

In addition, counselors face many issues finding gainful employment (King, 2007), including (a) lack of self-awareness of their work motivation, (b) not having a clear sense of what the occupations really involve, and (c) lack of mentorship during the transition from graduate school to the world of work. Skovholt and Ronnestad (2013) identified the ambiguity of professional work of counseling as a major stressor for the novice. The ambiguity included meeting the needs for licensure, finding a suitable job, and feeling confident in one's ability to help clients. The authors stated an acute need for positive mentors existed during this transition from graduate school to the workforce. Choosing the right work environment can overwhelm graduates, yet a wide variety of job settings offer the possibility of a suitable match for different individuals. King (2007) contended, "counseling training is a considerable investment in time and money but careers in counseling are neither well publicized nor researched" (p. 394). More research on the environments of counselors is therefore needed to assist future professionals in reducing ambiguity, providing useful information, and promoting well-informed decisions.

During their academic training and pre-licensure work, new counselors receive little information on the work environments that they will be entering (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2013). Parson's theory supports that workers in that situation, specifically those who are unaware of how their values relate to a particular job setting and how the characteristics of that setting might

affect their satisfaction, may choose poorly. An abundance of research previously linked job dissatisfaction to burnout and turnover in counselor work settings (Knudsen, Ducharme, Roman, 2006; Lawson, 2007; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1986; Rupert & Morgan, 2005; Watkins, 1983; Witmer & Young, 1996). Thus, the need remains for additional research to support counselors in this process of finding a good fit to assist decreasing burnout and turnover (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2013).

Job satisfaction is a common research construct used to test a “goodness of fit” between a person and their job environment. Investigating job satisfaction and values comprise a valid approach to guide one towards a profession (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Job satisfaction and values interact in occupations, as choosing ones’ occupation is a major avenue to express one’s values (Knafo & Sagiv, 2004). Additionally, individuals working in an environment that conflicts with their personal values are more likely to perform at sub-standard levels or leave the profession entirely (Huning & Thomson, 2011; Knafo & Sagiv, 2004). Job dissatisfaction and burnout underline a significant, current issue in counseling and spurred rigorous research examining organizational factors that have positive and negative influences on job satisfaction. (Deters, 2008; Knudsen, Ducharme, Roman, 2006; Lee, Cho, Kissinger & Ogle, 2010; Maslach, 2003; Lawson, 2007). Therefore, investigating personal values priorities and individuals’ level of job satisfaction remains important, as values can illuminate another hidden contributor to the level of burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Therefore, the overall goal of this study included investigating the relationships and influences of values on job satisfaction of counselors in two very disparate settings: private practice and agency. To achieve this goal, the author identified three research questions and six null hypotheses that warranted investigation. Research question one and two pose one hypothesis each and research questions three posits four hypotheses. The three research questions included; (a) Are there any differences between job satisfaction between counselors in private practice and agency settings? (b) Are there any differences between value priorities of self-transcendence and self-enhancement between counselors in private practice and agency settings?, and (c) Are there any relationships among the variables of job satisfaction and value priorities of counselors in private practice and agency setting? Analyzing these hypotheses and answering the research questions illuminated any relationships that existed between the job satisfaction and values variables among counselors in private practice and agency settings.

Method

Participants

The target population included professional counselors in a Southeastern state employed in public agencies or in a private practice setting. Professional counselors who identified their primary employment as agency or private practice and completed a minimum of 30 hours per workweek in efforts towards the agency or private practice were sampled. The counselors that volunteered to participate lived in a metropolitan city in the Southeastern region of the United States. This area represented a wide variety of agencies and private practice settings in that area.

The appropriate sample size was determined using Cohen’s (1992) power of sample size theory and equations. The final sample included 135, with 72 agency workers and 63 private

practitioners. The sample contained fewer participants than the predicted ideal amount, yet contained a large enough sample to run multivariate procedures and find a moderate to high effects size. The mean age reported for the 135 participants was ($M=45.19$, $SD = 12.70$), with the range from 24 to 74 years of age. One hundred and six (79.9%) were female, and the remaining 27 (20.6%) were male. Two (1.5%) had missing data for gender. One hundred and thirteen participants identified themselves as Caucasian (83.1%), 11 as Hispanic (8.1%), 6 as African-American (4.4%), 4 as Asian (2.9%), and 2 (1.5%) had missing data for ethnicity.

The sample was also categorized by licensure status and years of experience. Registered Mental Health Counselor Interns' (RMHCI) clinical experience included the lowest mean of 21.5 months (under two years of experience), with a standard deviation of 27.2 months. RMHCIs' experience ranged from 1 to 120 months. Furthermore, nine reported working in private practice (6.6%) and 26 in an agency (19.1%). Registered Marriage and Family Therapist Interns' (RMFTI) experiences included a mean of 50.0 months (over 4 years) with a standard deviation of 66 months. RMFTIs' clinical experience ranged from 2 to 144 months. Three (2.2%) reported working in private practice and one (.7%) in an agency. Licensed Mental Health Counselors' (LMHC) experience included a mean of 116.48 months (over 9 years) with a standard deviation of 85.27 months. The range of the years of experience for the LMHCs spanned from 5 to 468 months. Forty-four (32.4%) reported working in private practice and 41 (30.1%) in an agency. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists' (LMFT) experience included the highest mean of 134.8 months of experience (over 11 years), a standard deviation of 119.65 months, and a range of 6 to 324 months of experience. Six (4.4%) reported working in private practice and four (2.9%) in an agency. There was only one case in each of the categories for Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC), with 24 months experience in an agency, and the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), with 168 months of experience in private practice.

Instruments

This study used the *Counselor History Questionnaire (CHQ)*, developed by this researcher, to obtain respondents' demographic information. The CHQ gathered information on the (a) participants' demographics (e.g., age, marital status, and ethnicity), (b) academic degrees and counseling jobs held until present, and (c) questions about career mentoring upon graduation. The demographics' placement at the end of the survey was to increase response rate, as research has shown people are more willing to answer personal information after filling out less personal questions (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2008). Three counselor educators that are professionals in field placement and survey research experts helped streamline the questions. Furthermore, ten doctoral students reviewed the questionnaire to enhance reliability through addressing any major issues present in the layout, wording, or relevance.

Schwartz Values Survey (SVS)

The *Schwartz Values Survey (SVS)*; Schwartz, 1992) contained 57 items categorized into ten values: (a) power, (b) achievement, (c) hedonism, (d) stimulation, (e) self-direction, (f) universalism, (g) benevolence, (h) tradition, (i) conformity, and (j) security. Respondents rated the importance of each value item "as a guiding principle in my life" on a 9-point Likert-type scale (SVS; Schwartz, 1992, p. 1). Specifically, the answers were labeled 7 (of supreme importance), 6 (very important), 5 (unlabeled), 4 (unlabeled), 3 (important), 2 (unlabeled), 1 (unlabeled), 0 (not important), and -1 (opposed to my values) (Schwartz, 2006). Sample items

included “Equality (equal opportunity for all)” as one of the *universalism* items and “Pleasure (gratification of desires)” as one of the *hedonism* items (Schwartz, 2006). Schwartz Value Theory stated that if someone rated certain values higher than other values, then it was the respondent’s value priority. Furthermore, value priorities conflict with one another. Two orthogonal sets of conflicting “higher order” values exist in the assessment: *self-enhancement*, which included the values of *power* and *achievement*, versus *self-transcendence*, which included the values of *benevolence* and *universalism*. In summary, if a respondent held one of these values in high priority it would mean that the value was ‘naturally’ at odds with the other value set.

Schwartz reported that across 212 different nationally representative samples of teachers and students at universities, the alpha reliabilities of the 10 values averaged .68, ranging from .61 for tradition to .75 for universalism (Schwartz, 2006). The lower coefficient related to the value of *tradition*, Schwartz stated was due to the low numbers of questions (three) that make up that domain. Cross-cultural validation of this instrument is strong. In this study sample, the Schwartz Value Survey reliability coefficients included .58 for benevolence, .81 for universalism, .65 for power, and .69 for achievement with an average of ($M=.68$). These results are similar to Schwartz (2006), at a .68 average of all ten values.

Abridged Job Descriptive Index and Job in General Scales

The *Abridged Job Descriptive Index and Job in General Scales* is comprised of two scales, the *abridged Job Descriptive Index* (aJDI; Stanton et al. 2001) and *abridged Job in General scale* (aJIG; Russell et al., 2004). The aJDI measures facets of job satisfaction and the aJIG evaluates overall job satisfaction. The aJDI has 25 items broken into five subscales: (a) work on present job, (b) present pay, (c) opportunities for promotion, (d) supervision, and (e) people on your present job, and was successfully validated to the lengthier original JDI assessment (Stanton et al., 2001). Russell et al. (2004) employed the scale reduction technique developed by Stanton, Sinar, Balzer, and Smith (2002) to reduce the 18 questions on the JIG to an eight-item test to and to save time while maintaining reliability. A sample question on the JIG test is; “Think of your job in general, All in all, what is it like most of the time?” The adjectives they rate (yes, no or,?) include (a) good, (b) desirable, (c) better than most, (d) disagreeable, (e) contentment, (f) excellent, (g) enjoyable, and (h) poor. The three validation studies produced high internal reliability consistency of .85. In this study, the scale reliability coefficient of the aJIG measure was slightly higher .91 than reported by the manual of .85 (Stanton, Sinar, Balzer & Smith, 2002). The aJDI reliability was reported by the authors as having the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for the five subscales ranging from .7 to .9. In this sample, the five subscales had coefficients of (1) .77 work; (2) .72 people; (3) .79 promotion; (4) .92 supervision; and (5) .88 for the people subscale. The author of the assessment provided a sheet for this researcher to recode the original scores to numbers that produce a higher score for satisfied answers and a lower score for less satisfied responses.

Sample and Procedure

Upon Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) approval, this researcher contacted organization leaders, agency supervisors, and continuing education unit (CEU) providers to establish onsite data collection dates. Two administration approaches were utilized to collect the data; group and email administration between March 2010 and May 2010. The researcher provided participants with a ticket to a free CEU event held in the summer of 2010.

The researcher contacted the clinical directors of agencies, private practitioner groups, professional organization presidents, and CEU event coordinators in Florida by phone and e-mail. Next, the researcher introduced the study, the exempt status informed consent, explained the purpose and mechanics of group administration and discussed e-mail administration capabilities. Then, data collection dates and non-work related e-mail addresses were exchanged. One metropolitan city in the Southeastern region of the United States comprised the majority of the sample and a group from a nearby city also contributed data. However, the participants listed that they lived in a variety of locations all over the southeastern state. Counselors from 11 agencies, six private practice groups, three professional organization monthly meetings, and three CEU events participated, either by group administration or e-mail.

The majority of the data collected utilized the group administration approach. At the arranged meeting time, this researcher introduced the purpose of the study and handed out a manila envelope with three data collection instruments: (a) the abridged job descriptive index (aJDI) and job in general scale (aJIG), (b) the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), and (c) the Counselor History Questionnaire (CHQ). Participants returned the instruments to this researcher upon completion. The IRB summary of exempt research and ticket to the free CEU event for participating were also included in the packet, which they retained. When the researcher identified missing data, an e-mail attempt was made to collect the missing data. If the participant responded, the information was then added to the data set.

A small sample of Clinical directors, professional organization leaders, or private practitioners opted for the e-mail administration. Participants that chose the e-mail administration provided their non-work e-mail addresses to decrease risk of breach of confidentiality. Participants received an e-mail introducing the study with the Summary of Exempt Research, the SVS, the aJDI and aJIG, the e-mail answer sheet for the aJDI and aJIG, the Counselor History Questionnaire (CHQ), and a ticket to a CEU event. The IRB Summary of Exempt Research informed participants that completion and submission for the assessments and questionnaire indicated their consent for participation in the study. The participants e-mailed the results to the researcher, usually within one week. If a missing portion was found upon review of the data, an e-mail attempt was made to collect the data. If the participant responded, it was then added to the data set. In a few cases, the participants were contacted twice to increase the response rate (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2008).

Results

Research question one concerned the differences of job satisfaction for professional counselors in two settings and to test the stated null hypothesis that there were no significant difference in job satisfaction scores for counselors in agency and private practice settings; a one-way Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The variables of interest were the independent variables (work setting) of private practice or agency, and the dependent variables, which were the scores for the aJDI (Stanton et al., 2001) and aJIG (Russell et al., 2004).

The multivariate tests for significance for the overall model were significant ($F [2,133] = 9.88, p = .000$) with Pillai's trace at .129, Wilk's Lambda at .87, Hotelling's trace at .15, Roy's Largest Root at .15, and partial eta squared at .129. Therefore, 12.9% of the variance was accounted for by the variable and was a moderate to large effects size (Cohen, 1992). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommended using Pillai's Trace to evaluate significance when assumptions are violated. Furthermore, the significance values were set more conservatively at .015 instead of .05 due to the violation of normality and the equality of variances on one of the variables, the aJIG (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Research Question two concerned the differences between the values of (a) *self-transcendence* (SVSST) and (b) *self-enhancement* (SVSSE) between counselors in private practice and counselors in agencies. Therefore, this null hypothesis was tested: (1) No differences exist between *self-enhancement* and *self-transcendence*, as measured by the SVS (Schwartz, 1992), between counselors in private practice and agency settings. A MANOVA was also conducted for this research question. The variables of interest were the independent variables (work setting) of private practice or agency, and the dependent variables included the SVSST and the SVSSE value priority scores.

Multivariate tests for significance for the overall model were not significant, $F (2,133) = .061, p = .941$, with Pillai's Trace at .001, Wilk's Lambda at .999, Hotelling's Trace at .001, Roy's Largest Root at .001, and the partial eta square at .001. Using the Bonferonni adjusted alpha level of .025 to account for two variables in the model, non significance existed with both variables when considered separately. The data suggested that there were no differences between private practitioners and agency workers on the value priorities SVSSE and SVSST.

Research question three queried the predictive capability of value priorities and work location on job satisfaction. For this question, the four standard multiple regressions conducted investigated relationships among the values priority scores for *self-transcendence* and *self-enhancements* on the SVS (Schwartz, 1992) and the mean scores for the aJDI/aJIG measure (Stanton et al., 2001; Russell et al., 2004) for private practitioners and agency workers. The variables of interest for the four possible relationships were the values priority scores of *self-enhancement* and for *self-transcendence* from the SVS and the mean scores for the aJDI and the aJIG for agency workers and private practitioners. SPSS 18 statistical software was used for all the procedures.

As a part of research question three, a total of four variable interactions were tested using multiple regression analyses in order to investigate relationships among value priority variables and job satisfaction for the two locations of agency and private practice workers. All four hypotheses were not significant in predicting relationships. The first null hypothesis tested that no relationships existed among the value priority variables of self-transcendence and self-enhancement, as measured by the SVS (Schwartz, 1992), and job satisfaction, calculated from the total score of the aJDI (Stanton et al., 2002), for counselors in private practice. The overall model was not significant in predicting job satisfaction of private practitioners, $F (2, 60) = 1.15, p = .32$; thus, failure to accept the null hypothesis that the value priorities of SVSSE and SVSST do not predict job satisfaction (aJDI score) for private practitioners. The second null hypothesis examined the relationship among the value priorities of *self-enhancement* (SVSSE), *self-*

transcendence (SVSST), and the abridged Job Descriptive Index (aJDI) for counselors in agencies. The overall model was not significant, $F(2, 69) = .169$; $p = .84$, failing to accept the null hypothesis that the value priorities of SVSSE and SVSST do not predict job satisfaction (aJDI score) for agency workers. The third null hypothesis tested if no relationships existed among the value priority variables of *self-transcendence* and *self-enhancement*, as measured by the SVS (Schwartz, 1992), and the abridged job in general (aJIG) scale score (Russell et al., 2004) for counselors in private practice. The overall model was not significant, $F(2, 60) = .683$; $p = .51$, failing to accept the null hypothesis that the value priorities of SVSSE and SVSST do not predict job satisfaction (aJIG variable) for private practitioners. And finally, the fourth null hypothesis tested if no relationships exist among *self-transcendence* and *self-enhancement*, as measured by the SVS (Schwartz, 1992), and job satisfaction, using the total score of the abridged Job in General (aJIG) scale (Russell et al., 2004) for counselors in agencies. A non-significant finding resulted for the overall model, $F(2, 69) = 1.65$, $p = .20$; failed to accept the null hypothesis that the value priorities of SVSSE and SVSST do not predict job satisfaction (aJIG variable) for agency workers.

Discussion

Previous research supported these major findings that private practitioners report more job satisfaction than their agency counterparts. Fortener's (2000) research with 208 licensed professional counselors found that work setting contributed the most to therapist burnout. One of the major differences between private practice and agency was the level of choice or freedom that counselors had in different aspects of their work. Private practitioners chose caseload size, length of time for services, therapeutic interventions, and levels of paperwork more often than agency counselors (Jayaratne, Siefert, & Chess, 1988). Even though private practitioners struggled to keep their businesses viable and exerted a great deal of energy to find referrals for their practices (Hellman, Morrison, & Abramowitz, 1987), the ability to limit number of clients and adjust their caseloads in response to other life demands remained a possibility. Agency employed counselors have a different experience as the administration of the agency decided the amount of clients seen per week. Furthermore, funding and agency policies drove decisions concerning caseload rather than the preferences of each counselor. Therefore, agency counselors may provide services to an excessive number of clients, which could lead to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Maslach, 1983).

The second research question investigated the differences of value priorities for counselors in private practice and agency settings, and the findings rejected the null hypothesis. The Schwartz Value Survey (SVS; Schwartz, 1992) assessed the values of counselors. Schwartz (1992) stated *self-transcendence* and *self-enhancement* compete with one another. For this study, *self-transcendence* involved the values of universalism and benevolence, and *self-enhancement* involved the values of power and achievement. Overall, the Schwartz Value Theory supports that people in different occupations hold varying value priorities. Elizur and Sagie (1999) reported that counselors rated the value priority for *self-transcendence* highly, which included the desire to help others (benevolence) as well as values equality, peace, and beauty (universalism). Conversely, Schwartz (1992) suggested that business entrepreneurs ascribe to the value priority of *self-enhancement*, which includes the desire for social status and power over resources and

people (power) and includes enjoying the positive gains and outcome from achieving goals from personal effort (achievement).

This researcher hypothesized that counselors struggle internally with wanting to help others and achieve social justice, altruism, and beneficence (self-transcendence) yet also desire social prestige offered to other professionals with graduate training and/or crave a sense of achievement via financial achievement or success with clients (self-enhancement). This study examined differences in the value scores and priorities of counselors in the two different work locations, and the overall model was not statistically significant. This finding supported that counselors' values match in both settings. In this study, the mean scores were equal for the value priority of self-transcendence (SVSST) for both private practitioners and agency counselors ($M = 1.1$, $SD = .9$). The self-enhancement mean (SVSSE) for private practitioners was higher at ($M = -1.2$, $SD = 1.1$) than for agency counselors ($M = -1.3$, $SD = 1$). The slight variation in the means supports further research with a larger national sample might find self-enhancement values carrying less importance for agency workers than private practitioners.

Value priorities are theorized to guide the career choice to become a counselor (Berings, Fruyt, & Bouwen, 2004). However, the findings do not support a difference in value priorities of counselors at different work settings; instead, all the findings could be supporting that the counselors share the value of helping others over gaining prestige or power for themselves. The findings of this study can add to the overall picture of values for counselors and, as Hanna and Bemak (1997) stated, help to create "a recognizable identity" for counselors. In a national survey of counselors, Kelly (1995) found similar means for the values that were reported in this study. The means in Kelly's national survey of counselors included: Benevolence ($M = 5.27$), Universalism ($M = 4.89$), Power ($M = 2.09$), and Achievement ($M = 4.63$). In this study, the means included: Benevolence ($M = 5.42$), Universalism ($M = 4.73$), Power ($M = 3.08$), and Achievement ($M = 4.81$). Of note, the Power value was slightly higher in this researcher's sample than in Kelly's research. Kelly's research was performed in 1995 during a time of economic prosperity, whereas the economy during this study was in a recession, which may have influenced counselors' values towards materialistic concerns (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). More research is needed assessing counselors' values using Schwartz Value Survey assessment.

More recently, Shillingford and Lambie (2010) investigated school counselors' priorities; the results indicated school counselors in Florida also ranked *self-transcendence* higher than *self-enhancement*. These researchers also looked at the other two priorities, *openness to change* and *conformity*. The school counselors' values aligned more with *conformity*, or following the rules and protecting customs, than they did with *openness to change*, which includes more risk taking and self-direction type behaviors (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). In accordance with the previously noted 2010 research, Pyne (2011) confirmed the importance school counselors place on the implementation of traditional written standards to avoid role ambiguity, and ultimately increase and maintain job satisfaction in a school district.

The final research question investigated the relationships among value priorities and job satisfaction of counselors in private practice and agency settings. The two work settings include very different day-to-day activities, and this researcher hypothesized that the values held by each counselor could influence level of satisfaction. Optimally, a 'goodness-of-fit' profile could be

created such that counselor educators could direct graduates to an optimal work setting based on their value priorities. However, these findings did not support the research question.

However, values are a good career research tool and a core predictor of job satisfaction (Berings, Fruyt, & Bouwen, 2004). Furthermore, researchers suggested more work is needed using values in Person-Organization/Environment fit research (De Clercq, Fontaine, & Anseel, 2008; Knafo & Sagiv, 2004; Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999). Brill and Levine (2005) posited that when values were in conflict with a job setting, job dissatisfaction ensues. Findings from the current study indicate that the values that the counselors held as priorities matched previous research (Kelly, 1995), but these values did not relate in a predicted way to satisfaction levels at the two work settings. However, following Parson's 'goodness of fit' theory, these findings can be interpreted in a different way. His theory posits that a satisfied worker results from knowledge of self and knowledge of work setting, which leads to a good match and more satisfaction. Therefore, the results of this study support that counselors' values have a better match to private practice than to agency settings.

Alternatively, Decelles (2007) argued that the reason values and job satisfaction research has produced contradictory or weak results to job behavior is due to singular values encompassing only one factor of the person, which does not capture the entire picture. Schwartz Value Theory posits values are in conflict or in opposition with one another. In Decelles' (2007) study, which investigated conflicting value sets, the researcher hypothesized and the results validated that values could be held simultaneously and produce positive work attitudes. Therefore, the values linked to job satisfaction may not fit neatly into clear-cut categories such as, value priority 'x' is more satisfied in this setting, and value priority 'y' is more satisfied in that work setting. In fact, there are many other ways to gauge values in relation to the work setting.

Values can be assessed for each organization using the Organization Climate Scale (OCS: Lehman, Greener, & Simpson, 2002.). The OCS assesses the fit between the worker's values and the organization's values. For this study, agency workers comprised one variable; therefore, the effects of each agency were unknown. The results of this study suggested that agency workers reported less satisfaction as a whole, yet missing data exists concerning the value match of each employee to each agency. For example, in Carmeli and Freund's (2009) study, the researchers found that agencies held in high esteem by a community correlated with the job satisfaction of its employees. Furthermore, studies found that employees at agencies lacking a clear mission, which is based on a set of values, also reported less satisfaction (Garner, Knight, & Simpson, 2007).

Implications for Counselors

Increasing one's knowledge of personal values, career settings, and the self in relation to work increases the chance of finding a suitable location to provide therapeutic services. Examining the job market and average salaries in the different locations can arm the counselor with realistic expectations. Often, the type of location will decide the salaries, and awareness can lessen later frustrations leading to burnout and turnover. It is essential that new counselors gather a support group to discuss their careers. Support groups give novice counselors a place to share, receive support, gain ideas, and network. Experiencing a variety of settings in both practicum and internship sites will grant the opportunity to have hands-on experience in the different

settings before entering the field. Finally, gaining career knowledge about oneself through taking career inventories, exploring work history, examining work values, and thinking about one's best work environment will increase the chances of finding optimal employment. Gambrell, Rehfuss, Suarez, and Meyer (2011) discussed using weekly journal reflections in the career class to promote thoughts on various work environments, and an exercise developed by Rehfuss (2009) called "the Future Career Autobiography" where the students predict their future day in the life of a counselor.

Limitations

A few limitations included the sample, instruments and design of the study. The study sample included professional counselors from one metropolitan city in the Southeastern region of the United States. Therefore, the ability to generalize the findings outside of these cities is limited. Another limitation concerned the gender and ethnicity imbalance of the population: (79.9%) female and (83.1%) Caucasian. Even though the sample's demographics are representative of the national demographics for counselors (Lawson, 2007), minorities and males are not robustly represented. Another factor impacting this study included the licensure status. A large portion of the RMHCIs and RMFTIs in this sample worked in agency settings (20%) versus in the private settings (9%). Registered Mental Health Counselor Interns are less able to choose their work location than licensed counselors, which may have skewed the findings. Also, participants volunteered, and research shows that this attribute alone can distinguish the participants from those in the target populations who are not willing to fill out the data collection instruments (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2008).

This study employed a descriptive correlational design with a survey and assessment data collection method. Because the career path of the counselor is of interest in this study, assessing values and job satisfaction at one point in time does not capture how values influence job satisfaction for counselors' choices over time. Furthermore, an inherent limitation of correlational design includes the inability to determine causality. Therefore, correlational research comprises a weaker methodology than true experimental design. However, correlational research is still a viable methodology when a true experiment is not ethical or cost effective (Thompson, Diamond, McWilliam, Snyder, & Snyder, 2005).

Concerning the instruments and psychometrics; the lower variability in scores for the job satisfaction measures weakens the ability to make a fine distinction in the relationships between the variables. The mean reliability for all ten values for the Schwartz Value Survey is listed at a moderate .68 (Schwartz, 1992). Reliability optimally should be in the range of .7 to .9, with .8 or higher being preferred (Shrout, 1979). Although, SVS is a widely used instrument, a .68 does raise questions about the measures' reliability. A perfect correlation can only be as high as the reliability of the instruments used (Lomax, 2001). Therefore a lower reliability weakens the overall ability to make associations between variables. Furthermore, the reliability of the four values used in this study also averaged a .68. Also, assessing only one aspect of values can lead to weak results (Decelles, 2007). Finally, a confounding variable such as the influence of the current economy could exert influence on job satisfaction scores.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study included investigating goodness-of-fit indicators, from a trait-factor and person-organizational theoretical standpoint, for graduating counselors to be able to make an informed choice for a work place setting. This study employed the constructs of job satisfaction and value priorities to investigate differences and relationships among two specific work settings hypothesized to be different in key areas. The key areas of work place difference included the entrepreneurial aspects of private practice versus the altruistic desires to help underserved populations in the agency settings. The value priorities of self-enhancement and self-transcendence were hypothesized to have relationships for the two settings, with job satisfaction levels reflecting the good-fit. These hypotheses were not supported.

However, this study's findings supported previous research on counselors' value priorities. This conclusion suggests that counselors have an overall identity, which is more stable than the different value aspects at each work location. Values priorities could not predict any relationships of job satisfaction or provide good-fit indicators for either location. This non-significant finding is relevant in values research. Basically, counselors are more similar to each other than people in other occupations, and hold the same values even in very different environments. This finding strengthens the identity of counselors through providing a clear value priority of this group that can be researched further. However, the question remains, is there another trait or factor that could provide a guide to graduates to their optimal work setting?

The job satisfaction measures successfully gauged varying levels of job satisfaction for counselors in the two locations. The findings supported previous research that private practitioners report higher levels of job satisfaction. Clear findings exist that certain factors added stress to counselors (i.e. centralized decision making, heavy paperwork, low income) and led to counselor burnout, turnover, and intention to leave. These previous empirical findings could guide improvements in the structure of agencies to improve job satisfaction for counselors. A theme that emerged in reviewing the literature included exercising choice and control as a facet that increased satisfaction for the private practitioners and the lack of decreasing satisfaction for agency workers. Choice of therapeutic services, length of services, caseload amount, paperwork, and setting are all facets that private practitioners can decide; whereas these same facets are most often out of the agency counselor's control.

Counseling students have a variety of choices in where to work upon graduation. The goal of this study included adding empirical knowledge for counselor educators to guide counselors to an optimal work setting. This study merely separated counselors into private practice and agency. A large piece of information missing included each agency administrations' effect on employees involved in the study. Furthermore, there are many work settings not included in this study, including in-home counseling and outdoor experiential counseling settings. This study acted merely as a beginning. More research is needed for counselor educators to assist counselors in the transition from graduation to the work.

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