

Level of Job Satisfaction among School Counselors in Public Secondary Schools in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

It is no doubt that counselors are an important part of our school systems. The services of the school counselors are indispensable since they influence in no small measure the lives of adolescents and their future. Given the important part they play in helping youngsters cope with challenges of life, there is undisputed need to have highly productive and motivated counselors. Their productivity and motivation largely depends on their level of satisfaction with their work. However, few studies have focused on school counselors' level of satisfaction with their work yet information regarding job satisfaction is important in order to retain committed school counselors and ensure that students are receiving high quality services. This study was undertaken to establish the school counselors' levels of job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was a descriptive survey design. Participants included 48 guidance and counseling teachers, four from each school, randomly selected from twelve public secondary schools in Thika Sub-County. The main tool for primary data collection was a questionnaire that contained both open and structured questions. The statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data processing and analysis of quantitative data generated from the questionnaires. The results of the study revealed that although the school counselors are satisfied with their job, there are instances where they are only somewhat satisfied with some facets of their counseling work. Specifically they are satisfied with work environment, support provided, the counseling profession and the clients (students), but somewhat satisfied with work load, time allocated for counseling and counseling resources available in the schools. Tests using ANOVA revealed significant differences on the school counselors' overall level of satisfaction on the basis of age and school category. The study recommends that since the level of satisfaction range from satisfied to somewhat satisfied there is need for school administrators and other stakeholders in education to strive to improve particularly availability of counseling resources in the schools, reduce the work load of school counselors and set adequate time and sessions for counseling. In addition the work environment should further be improved and more support provided to the school counselors. This could lead to highly motivated counselors and thus improved delivery of counseling services for the benefit of the students.

Key Words: Job Satisfaction, School Counselors, Public Secondary Schools, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The school counselor plays a very important role in shaping the lives of students under their care (Onderi & Makori, 2013; Maithya, 2009; Rahman, Zubaidah, Jais, & Isa, 2014). School counselors work with students, teachers, parents, and administrators to help ensure that students' educational, vocational, and emotional needs are being met. According to Eduwen, Aluede and Ojugo (2014), one of the tasks of school counselors is to educate and assist students in their overall development. However, effective performance of the school counselor depends on their job satisfaction (Bacharach, Bamberger & Mitchell, 1990; Spector, 1997). Many studies also indicate that job satisfaction influences the emotional and physical well-being of an individual (Ducharme & Martin, 2000; Pugliesi, 1999). Conversely, job dissatisfaction is associated with stress and burnout (Kesler, 1990; Lobban, Husted, & Farewell, 1998; Martin & Schinke, 1998) which is detrimental not only to the health of the individual, but also affects work performance and professionalism (Coll & Freeman, 1997; Schuler, 1977; Van Sell, Brier, & Schuler, 1981). According to Olson and Dille (1988), counselors' mental health and the quality of their work are related. It has also been pointed out that job satisfaction of school counselors is directly related to how they use their time within school settings (Kolodinsky, 2010). Thus, high motivation in form of job satisfaction is necessary to ensure that school counselors offer continuous and high quality services to students (Brown, Hohenshil & Brown, 1988).

However, according to Bane (2006), although job satisfaction has been widely studied in the past, few studies have focused on school counselors or guidance and counseling teachers in particular yet information regarding job satisfaction is important in order to retain committed school counselors since improvements can be made and ensure that students are receiving high quality services. This study investigated the levels of job satisfaction of school counselors in public secondary schools in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

The objectives of the study were:

- (a) To find out the school counselors' level of satisfaction with work environment in public secondary schools in Thika District
- (b) To find out the school counselors' level of satisfaction with the support provided by school administration and other teachers
- (c) To establish the relationship between school counselors' professional and academic qualifications, age, gender and years of experience and their level of job satisfaction

Hypothesis:

H01: There is no significant difference between demographic traits of the school counselors and their overall level of job satisfaction

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 48 teachers in-charge of guidance and counseling from 12 public secondary schools in Thika Sub-County. The 12 schools represent over 10% of the total number of secondary schools in the sub-county. Thika Sub-County was chosen because it combines both urban and rural environments which present a wide range of situations that are likely to have an impact on job satisfaction level of school counselors and their output. The study was carried out between June and July 2011. Piloting was done to determine the reliability and validity of the instruments. Piloting helped in modifying and removing any ambiguous items in the instrument. The selection of the schools was done through first stratified sampling followed by random sampling. The schools were first divided into three strata, that is, boys, girls and mixed schools. The schools from each stratum were then selected using simple random technique. Each school was assigned a number. The numbers were written down on small pieces of paper, which were then folded and placed in three containers representing each stratum. The researchers then picked at random four schools from each container. From each sampled school at least four teachers in charge of counseling or in counseling committee were randomly sampled. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967) was modified and utilized in measuring job satisfaction level of the school counselors. An often used and widely researched job satisfaction measure (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Spector, 1997), the MSQ is a self-report instrument and have been found to be effective in capturing level of job satisfaction. The MSQ provides an overall index of job satisfaction. The questionnaires were administered to the teachers. Before administering the questionnaires the researcher sought informed consent from the participants who read and signed a consent form. The questionnaires were used to gather information from the teacher counselors on their demographic traits, their level of satisfaction with their work environment, time allocation, work load, support, counseling profession and resources available for counseling. The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction according to five categories on the scale 1 to 5 that include extremely satisfied (5), very satisfied (4), satisfied (3), somewhat satisfied (2) and not satisfied (1). The statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data processing and analysis of quantitative data generated from the questionnaires. The Anova test was used to determine whether there were any significant differences between the observed means.

RESULTS

Demographic Traits of the Respondents

Based on the survey (Table 1), it was observed that majority of the sampled respondents were female (62.5%). This may imply that mostly women are chosen or prefer to be members of the school guidance and counseling team. In terms of age, majority of school counselors were aged above 41 years (58.3%). This means that mature teachers were preferred as school counselors. It was also observed that most of the school counselors were bachelor or post-graduate degree holders (79.2%) and had teaching experience of over 10 years (87.5%). This may be attributed to the fact that

the long experience equips them with better ability to handle students' problems. It can also be observed that majority of the school counselors had counseling experience of 1-5 years (47.9%) after being appointed into guidance and counseling committee. However most of the school counselors did not have any additional qualification in guidance and counseling (62.5%) that could place them as professionals in the field. Similar findings were reported by Kirui, Mbugua and Sang (2011) in their study of public secondary schools in Kisii County in Kenya. They noted that, 88.9% of the schools confirmed that they had a guidance and counselling department but most of them did not poses necessary qualifications to run the departments. Therefore, there is need for stakeholders in education to focus on training school counselors to become professional counselors so that they can be more effective in guiding students to become better and responsible people in future. Nyaegah (2011) reiterate the fact that counseling is a profession and as such it requires competence, knowledge and skills which cannot be acquired unless one undergoes specific relevant training. Thus, the current finding implies that in order to improve competencies the school counselors need to be exposed to specialized relevant training.

Table 1. Demographic traits of the respondents

Demographic Traits	N	%
Gender		
Male	18	37.5
Female	30	62.5
Age		
Below 25	1	2.1
25-30	4	8.3
31-40	15	31.3
41 and above	28	58.3
Academic qualification		
Diploma	10	20.8
Bachelor's Degree	24	50.0
Post-graduate Degree	14	29.2
Teaching experience		
Below 5 years	3	6.3
5-10 years	3	6.3
Over 10 years	42	87.5
Number of years of experience as a school counselor		
Below 1 years	7	14.6
1-5 years	23	47.9
Over 5 years	18	37.5
Additional Qualification in Guidance and Counseling		
Yes	18	37.5
No	30	62.5

School Counselors' Level of Satisfaction with Work Environment

The survey sought to establish from the school counselors their level of satisfaction with their work environment. Ten items were used to assess the working environment (Table 2). Based on the survey most school counselors were satisfied with the work environment as indicated by the different items measuring the work environment, that is; being able to do things that do not go against their conscience (56.3%), satisfaction

with appreciation of work done (47.9%), satisfaction with confidentiality provided for counseling cases (41.7%), the chance to try own methods of doing the job (41.7%), school counselors usually participate in the administration and running of the school (39.6%), the chance to work alone on the job (39.6%) among others. However, among the working environment variables that were rated on the scale very satisfied by most school counselors were; schools counselors are given a sense of belonging in the school activities (39.6%) and chance to do different things from time to time (33.3%). In general, the items that had the highest frequency on extremely satisfied scale in comparison to other items include; the freedom to use own judgment (14.6%) and school counselors have sufficient freedom to plan their work as they like (10.4%). While those that had the highest frequency on not satisfied include, school counselors usually participate in the administration and running of the school (22.9%), school counselors have sufficient freedom to plan their work as they like (14.6%), satisfaction with appreciation of work done (12.5%), the chance to do different things from time to time (12.5%) and the chance to try own methods of doing the job (10.4%). On the scale extremely satisfied (4.50-5.0), very satisfied (3.50-4.49), satisfied (2.50-3.49), somewhat satisfied (1.50-2.49) and not satisfied (0.0-1.49) all the facets measuring satisfaction with work environment registered a mean of 2.6 to 3.3 which can be interpreted as satisfied based. The school counselors least level of satisfaction was with participation in the administration and running of the school. This could be attributed to the fact that most school administrators may not be alive to the fact that school counselors are important ingredients of good administration of the school as they are able to diagnose, report symptoms and prescribe solutions to students' problems that at times lead to violence. In many situations, the administrators simply send students who already have serious problems to the counselors and wait for changes. Nyaegah (2011) argues that the success of the guidance and counselling services in schools require the support of the principal who is a key player in the initiation and organization of good guidance and counselling. The school principal must in turn integrate school counselors in different aspects of school administration.

Table 2 School counselors' level of satisfaction with work environment (N=48)

Working Environment	Level of Satisfaction										Mean
	Extremely Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Not satisfied		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Satisfaction with confidentiality provided for counseling cases	4	8.3	13	27.1	20	41.7	87	16.7	33	6.3	3.1
The freedom to use my own judgment	7	14.6	13	27.1	17	35.4	76	14.6	43	8.3	3.3
School Counselors are given a sense of belonging in the school activities	3	6.3	19	39.6	16	33.3	93	18.8	11	2.5	3.3
Satisfaction with appreciation of work done	4	8.3	87	16.7	23	47.9	76	14.6	6.5	12.5	3.0
School Counselors have sufficient freedom to plan their work as they like	5	10.4	13	27.1	15	31.3	83	16.7	7.6	14.6	3.0

School Counselors usually participate in the administration and running of the school	2	4.2	7	14.6	19	39.6	9	18.8	11	22.9	2.6
The chance to work alone on the job	1	2.1	1	20.0	19	39.6	1	29.4	4	8.3	2.8
The chance to do different things from time to time.	1	2.1	1	33.6	17	35.4	8	16.7	6	12.5	3.0
The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.	2	4.2	1	29.4	20	41.7	7	14.6	5	10.4	3.0
Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience	3	6.3	1	27.3	27	56.3	3	6.3	2	4.2	3.3

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with Time Allocated for Counseling

The survey revealed that majority of the school counselors were mainly somewhat satisfied with items measuring time allocated for counseling such as appropriate time, duration and number of counseling sessions available (Table 3). This implies that the school administration should rethink on time allocated for counselling so that appropriate time, duration and number of sessions should adequately be provided.

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with Support Provided

The survey reveals that the school counselors were generally satisfied with the given authority and encouragement to do the job well, praise given for doing a good job, support from other teachers, degree of cordiality between counselor and principal and implementation of suggestion provided, but somewhat satisfied with regular provision of in-service training and parents' support (Table 4). Oluwatimilehin (2010) in his study of psychological correlates of job satisfaction among selected secondary school counselors in Ogun State, Nigeria noted that the provision of in-service was rated low together with pay. However, he underscores the importance of in-service training which is meant to improve the competence and knowledge of school counselors and hence make them serve students better

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with Work Load

The survey revealed that a slight majority of the school counselors were satisfied with the work load as a teacher and counselor (41.7%), and number of students to be counseled (35.4%), but were somewhat satisfied with the frequency of counseling (31.3%). However, over 39% were not satisfied with their work load as a teacher and counselor (Table 4). This points to the fact that juggling the two responsibilities of teaching and counseling could be overworking the teacher counselors. Bane (2006) has indicated that excessive number of duties unrelated to counseling could be the greatest impediment to school counselors' work. Kendrick, Chandler, and Hatcher (1994) in a study on school counselors with respect to stressors and job demands working at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels in seven urban and rural North Carolina school districts reported that most of the counselors felt the job demands were too great due to additional responsibilities.

Table 3. School counselors' level of satisfaction with time allocated for counseling

Time allocated for Counseling	Level of Satisfaction										Mean
	Extremely Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Satisfaction with appropriate time allocated for counseling	1	2.1	5	10.4	11	22.9	16	33.3	15	31.3	2.2
Satisfaction with duration of time allocated for counseling	2	4.2	7	14.6	9	18.8	17	35.4	13	27.1	2.3
Satisfaction with numbers of counseling sessions available	2	4.2	5	10.4	13	27.1	15	31.3	13	27.1	2.3

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with the Counseling Profession

Based on the survey (Table 4), majority of school counselors were satisfied with the feeling of accomplishment they got from their job and the counseling profession when compared with other professions (39.6% and 27.1% respectively) and not satisfied with chances of career advancement (promotion) and with their pay and the amount of work they do (35.4% and 39.6% respectively). These findings are consistent with those of Banes (2006) who in his study of Virginia middle school counselors reported that most were satisfied in the area of social service and least satisfied in the amount of compensation received for the work performed.

Table 4. School counselors' level of satisfaction with support provided, work load and counseling profession

Support provided	Level of Satisfaction										
	Extremely Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Mean
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Satisfaction with the given authority and encouragement to do the job well	7	14.6	11	22.9	16	33.3	10	20.8	4	8.3	3.1
The praise I get for doing a good job	3	6.3	8	16.7	14	29.2	16	33.3	7	14.6	2.7
Satisfaction with other teachers' support in counseling	1	2.1	12	25.0	15	31.3	14	29.2	6	12.5	2.8
Satisfaction with the degree of cordiality between the counselors and principals	0	0.0	15	31.3	18	37.5	12	25.0	3	6.3	2.9
Satisfaction with implementation of	0	0.0	8	16.7	20	41.7	12	25.0	8	16.7	2.6

suggestions provided to school administration arising from guidance and counseling												
Satisfaction with regular provision of in-service training	3	6.3	6	12.5	9	18.8	11	22.9	19	39.6	2.2	
Satisfaction with parents' support	0	0.0	5	10.4	12	25.0	13	27.1	18	37.5	2.1	
Work Load												
Satisfaction with the workload as a teacher and counselor	0	0.0	2	4.2	20	41.7	7	14.6	19	39.6	2.1	
Satisfaction with number students to be counseled	0	0.0	7	14.6	17	35.4	11	22.9	13	27.1	2.4	
Satisfaction with frequency of counseling	0	0.0	9	18.8	14	29.2	15	31.3	10	20.8	2.5	
Counseling Profession												
Satisfaction with the counseling profession when compared with other professions	9	18.8	11	22.9	13	27.1	8	16.7	7	14.6	3.1	
My pay and the amount of work I do	1	2.1	0	0.0	16	33.3	12	25.0	19	39.6	2.0	
The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	5	10.4	13	27.1	19	39.6	9	18.8	2	4.2	3.2	
Satisfaction with chances of career advancement (promotion)	0	0.0	7	14.6	13	27.1	11	22.9	17	35.4	2.2	

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with their Clients (students)

The results on school counselors' level of satisfaction with their clients (students) (Table 5), show that most were satisfied with trust and confidentiality of counseling (43.8%), students' cooperation in counseling (41.7%) and students' willingness to seek counseling services (37.5%).

Table 5. School counselors' level of satisfaction with their clients (students), counseling resources

Clients	Resources										Mean
	Level of Satisfaction										
	Extremely Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Satisfaction with students cooperation in counseling	0	0.0	15	31.7	20	41.7	8	16.7	5	10.4	2.9
Satisfaction with students' willingness to seek counseling services	0	0.0	8	16.7	18	37.5	1	2.9	11	22.9	2.5
Satisfaction with trust and confidentiality of counseling	3	6.3	11	22.9	21	43.8	6	12.5	7	14.6	2.9
Counseling Resources											
Adequate provision of counseling materials	3	6.3	4	8.3	13	27.1	1	2.9	16	33.3	2.3
Adequate provision of resource persons	3	6.3	10	20.8	18	37.5	7	14.6	10	20.8	2.8
Availability of counseling room with accompanying facilities favorable for counseling	2	4.2	5	10.4	13	27.1	1	2.9	16	33.3	2.3

School Counselors' Level of satisfaction with Resources Available in the Schools

The survey (Table 5) revealed that majority of the school counselors were not satisfied with the statement that there was adequate provision of counseling materials (33.3%) and availability of counseling room with accompanying facilities favorable for counseling (33.3%), but were satisfied with adequate provision of resource persons (37.5%). Resources such as reference materials and counseling rooms are very essential to effective, confidential and informed counseling. These should not be ignored by school administration.

School Counselors' Overall Level of Job Satisfaction

Finally the survey sought to establish the overall job satisfaction of the school counselors based on the 33 items. Based on the likert scale, the highest and therefore the most satisfied score should be (33 x 5) 165 points, while the least satisfied (not satisfied) should score should be (33 x 1) 33 points. According to the results presented in Table 6, the school counselors' overall level of job satisfaction was satisfied. This finding concurs with those of Solly and Hohenshil (1986) who in their study of job satisfaction of school psychologists working in West Virginia noted that about 65% of psychologists reported overall job satisfaction. Similarly Bane (2006) in his study of job satisfaction among professional middle school counselors in Virginia reported that the majority (92%, n = 237) of respondents expressed being overall satisfied or very

satisfied in their current middle school counseling positions. The same findings were reported by Eduwen, Aluede and Ojugo (2014) in their study of secondary school counselors in Midwestern Nigeria.

On the basis of the counselors demographic traits the study however, found overall job satisfaction to vary significantly only according to age and school category but not on the basis of gender (Table 7 ANOVA results). This disagrees with Hanson's findings (1967) in his study of primary school counselors in the state of New York that found that women were more satisfied with their jobs than men (Hanson, 1967).

Table 6. School counselors' overall level of job satisfaction

Demographic Characteristic	Overall Mean Score	Decision
Gender		
Male	84.0556	Satisfied
Female	91.4667	Satisfied
Age		
Below 25 years	62.0000	Somewhat satisfied
25-30 years	106.2500	Very satisfied
31-40 years	80.5333	Somewhat satisfied
41 years and above	91.5000	Satisfied
School Category		
District	76.1667	Somewhat satisfied
Provincial	89.5500	Satisfied
National	97.0000	Satisfied
Academic Qualification		
Diploma	84.1000	Satisfied
Graduate	88.9167	Satisfied
Post-graduate	91.5714	Satisfied
Teaching Experience		
Below 5 years	106.0000	Very satisfied
5-10 years	94.6667	Satisfied
Over 10 years	87.0238	Satisfied
Additional Qualification in C&G		
Additional qualification in C&G	88.0000	Satisfied
No additional qualification in C&G	89.1000	Satisfied
Number of years as a Counselor		
Below 1 year	97.0000	Satisfied
1-5 years	82.9565	Satisfied
Over 5 years	92.7778	Satisfied
Overall Satisfaction	88.6875	Satisfied

Table 7. ANOVA results on the school counselors' overall level of job satisfaction

Contextual Characteristic		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	3164.829	3	1054.943	2.405	0.050*
	Within Groups	19297.483	44	438.579		
	Total	22462.313	47			
	Between	3001.696	2	1500.848	3.471	0.040*
	Within					

School Category	Groups					
	Within	19460.617	45	432.458		
Number of years as counselor	Groups					
	Total	22462.313	47			
	Between	1540.245	2	770.122	1.65	0.260
	Groups					
Teaching experience	Within	20922.068	45	464.935		
	Groups					
	Total	22462.313	47			
	Between	328.151	2	164.075	0.334	0.718
	Groups					
	Within	22134.162	45	491.870		
	Groups					
	Total	22462.313	47			

* Significant at 0.05

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study show that:

1. The school counselors were satisfied with their work environment, support provided in the schools, the counseling profession and their clients (students).
2. The school counselors were somewhat satisfied with time allocated for counseling, work load as counselors and teachers and the counseling resources available in the schools.
3. In overall school counselors were satisfied with their job
4. Among variables tested age and school category indicated some significant influence on the school counselors' level of job satisfaction.

The study therefore concludes that although most school counselors are satisfied with their job, there is need to increase time allocated for counseling, reduce their teaching workload, provide enough resources for counseling and frequently carry out in-service training for the counselors in order to up-date their skills so that they are effective in their job. School counseling could be made more efficient by relieving school counselors of their teaching load or employing counselors whose job is only counseling and availing more resources.

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BIO-DATA

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