

AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR SELF-EFFICACY WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English language learners (ELLs) represent the fastest growing segment of the school-aged population in the United States (Capps et al., 2005; Kindler, 2002; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2011). School counselors have been described as essential in the success of these students (McCall-Perez, 2000). As schools become increasingly diverse, advocacy scholars indicate that counselors should be intentional in assuring that they equitably

Furthermore, the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012) charges school counselors to develop programs that ensure equitable access to opportunities and provide rigorous curriculum for all students. Researchers have discussed school counselors' roles in implementing interventions that focus on the social/emotional, academic, and career needs of ELLs (Cook, Pérusse, & Rojas, 2012; Villalba, Lewis, & Wachter, 2007). However, in other studies, school counselors reported having ineffective interactions with linguistically diverse students, expressed frustration with language differences, and raised concerns about the appropriate use of interpreters (Clemente

& Collison, 2000; Schwallie-Giddis, Anstrom, Sanchez, Sardi, & Granato, 2004). To gain a better understanding of how school counselors perceive their ability in working with ELLs, the current study explored the self-efficacy of school counselors who work with ELLs and how school counselor self-efficacy differed by contextual factors.

SELF-EFFICACY

Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as beliefs about one's own ability to perform a given task. Bandura further explicated that self-efficacy requires possession of skills and beliefs and the ability to use those skills effectively (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacious beliefs influence how people, think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy choose to engage in challenging tasks. Further, Bandura (1994) stated that these individuals recover quickly from setbacks and attribute failure to inadequate efforts or limited knowledge and skills, which can be acquired.

School Counselor Self-Efficacy

"Self-efficacy reflects an individual's confidence that he or she can achieve certain results" (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005, p. 15). Findings on school counselor self-efficacy support Bandura's (1994) argument that self-efficacy requires both possession of skills and beliefs in one's ability to use those skills effectively. Scholars found that school counselors with high overall school counselor self-efficacy or self-efficacy in a particular counseling-related area were more likely to engage in school counseling tasks such as incorporating the use of data into school counseling programs or facilitating school-community collaboration (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, & Johnston, 2009).

Other studies examined how levels of self-efficacy changed in response to new knowledge or experiences. Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, and

Johnston (2008) learned that school counselors who completed five to seven multicultural courses reported higher multicultural self-efficacy than counselors who completed one or two multicultural classes. Paredes (2011) found that school counselors who participated in simulation experiences related to ELLs increased their levels of ELL self-efficacy. These findings suggest that counselors are more likely to perform tasks when the needed knowledge and skills are combined with beliefs about the ability to complete the tasks (Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, & Johnston, 2008).

SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES FOR ELLs

School counselors provide individual counseling, group counseling, collaboration, consultation, and advocacy for ELLs (Cook et al., 2012; Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba, & Indelicato, 2006; Villalba et al., 2007). When working on behalf of ELLs, school counselors collaborated with teachers, made referrals for medical and mental health services, provided individual and group counseling for social/emotional

diverse students, non-White counselors were more likely to participate in school–family–community partnerships than their White peers.

their participation in the study. ASCA is divided into four regions: Southern, Midwestern, North Atlantic and Western. A random number generator

These studies suggest that school counselors can have a positive or negative influence on the academic outcomes of ELLs. Although some information about how school counselors work with ELLs is available, further research pertaining to counselor preparation and training and counselor readiness to work with ELLs is needed. More information is also needed on school counselors' beliefs about working with ELLs. Therefore, the questions guiding the present study included: 1) What is the self-efficacy of school counselors who counsel ELLs? 2) How does school counselor self-efficacy with ELLs differ by contextual factors (i.e., school level, U.S. region, size of the ELL population, school counselor race/ethnicity, and prior training with ELLs)?

METHOD

Participants

School counselors working in schools with ELLs were the target population for this study. Participants were sampled using three methods: oversampling, stratified sampling, and convenience sampling. Oversampling was implemented to yield representation from school counselors throughout the United States (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). To ensure representation from school counselors in each U.S. region, stratified sampling was implemented. Stratified sampling was used to “organize the population into homogenous subsets and then select appropriate numbers from each subset” (Babbie, 1990, p. 86). First, authors sent 1,000 members from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) membership directory an email to solicit

Differences in Self-Efficacy: Analysis of Variance

To determine how school counselor self-efficacy differed by contextual factors, the researchers computed four one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) to measure differences in SC-SELL scores. A one-way ANOVA calculated differences in SC-SELL scores between unrelated groups of participants. The research team measured differences between school level, school counselor

(= .65) suggested a medium practical significance.

language courses, English as a Second Language courses, experiences abroad, and participation at conferences and workshops. Some counselors cited their own experiences, either on the job or as ELLs themselves, as providing knowledge that helped them in their work with ELLs. Scholars have suggested that teacher, counselor, and counselor trainees' cross-cultural experiences with ELL training resulted in increased educator confidence and a better understanding of student needs (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega, 2005; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). The results of the current study support the prior literature. School counselors who pursued ELL related training were more confident in their ability to engage in specific behaviors related to these students.

Based on the current and previous research findings, counselors and educators from dominant culture or counselors from particular regions with small ELL populations may experience less self-efficacy, which can impede their ability to be culturally responsive and address the cultural needs of ELLs efficiently (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012). These findings highlight the need for school counselors to seek out professional development and school-based programs that intentionally address the gaps in multicultural skills and self-efficacy with ELLs.

LIMITATIONS

Among this study's limitations, the researchers sought to recruit a representative sample of school counselors; however, only members of ASCA were solicited. ASCA members may have more knowledge and interest in ELLs than non-members and in their profes-

sional development, in general.

Sample representation was further influenced by the attempt to increase the size of the sample. In an effort to generate a larger sample, the first author attended the ASCA annual conference in the Midwestern region of the United States. The overall response rate was 16.5%. This convenience sampling may have influenced the composition of the sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) because the conference took place within the Midwestern region and the majority of conference attendees were from this region. Consequently, nearly half of participation included school counselors from Midwestern states ($n = 90$). This sample, therefore, may not reflect the diversity of the overall school counseling population and findings may not be generalizable to all practicing school counselors (Johnson &

Christensen, 2008). Stratified sampling methods might have ensured that both regions with large and small ELL populations were equally represented. Further, variations in cell size may have increased the chances of Type I or Type II error (Salkind, 2007).

The majority of school counselors who participated in this study reported small ELL populations. These counselors' SC-SELL scores were compared with those of a smaller number of school counselors who reported larger ELL populations. These comparisons produced statistically significant results but must be viewed with caution due to the differences in the number of participants. Furthermore, the data collected in this study occurred via a self-report questionnaire. Johnson and Christensen (2008) noted that self-reported measures are always subject to contamination, as self-reported information may not reflect how participants actually behave. Counselors may have altered their responses in efforts to demonstrate favorable activities

with ELLs. One final limitation is that several participants spoke a second language and/or had prior training or professional development working with ELLs. The experience of speaking a second language and obtaining professional development related to ELLs may have attributed to higher self-efficacy beliefs and may not be representative of all school counselors. o/MCID

port needed to address the needs of ELLs. Through the development of the annual agreements and an advisory council, school counselors can seek out school stakeholders that represent the needs of the ELL population. Furthermore, using data such as school profile data, program results reports, and closing-the-gap action plans allows school counselors to ascertain the achievement challenges for ELLs and identify current deficits in their counseling and engagement efforts as reflected by student success.

According to this study's findings, the delivery system component can be central to helping school counselors improve their self-efficacy, as experiences with ELLs can have a significant impact on multicultural self-efficacy. For example, school counselors can use individual and group counseling, core curriculum lessons, consultation, and collaboration to purposefully address achievement gaps and barriers with ELLs. Specifically, collaborating with allies in the school and the community, such as ESOL teachers, to identify oppressions and inequities in the current curriculum can help school counselors address systematic issues and develop action plans to meet the needs of ELLs.

Using the accountability component, school counselors can analyze the school data profile and closing-the-gap data quarterly. In particular, using responsive service outcome data, such as core curriculum results data and small group data, can allow counselors to identify ELL sub-populations (e.g., living with one parent, teen parents, 504 or IDEA qualified, gifted) who may need additional services. Specifically, providing results reports to stakeholders would not only help school counselors address the needs of ELLs and their families, but also allow school counselors and stakeholders to see the how effective school counselors are in their interactions with ELLs.

School Counselor Training

School counselors with relevant or meaningful experiences with ELLs had

higher self-efficacy scores than school counselors without those experiences. While preparing school counselors in need of students with ELLs, opportunities for meaningful experiences with these students

considered how school counselor self-efficacy with ELLs differed based on contextual factors (i.e., school level, school counselor race/ethnicity, U.S. region, size of the ELL population, language, and training with ELLs). Findings suggest that school counselors with exposure to and experiences with ELLs and their families have higher levels of self-efficacy. This research also indicates that opportunities for relevant engagement with this student population and targeted professional development about ELLs are necessary to address the discrepancies among school counselors from various backgrounds and regions. n

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