

Where We Are: Current Level of Burnout and Self-Compassion of School Counselors in a Private School in Quezon City for School Year 2018-2019

Giselle Antoinette O. Tejada, Miriam College, Philippines

The Asian Conference on Education 2021
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Counselors are expected to be physically and emotionally ready to assist their counsees. Because of these expectations, counselors are affected by the emotional demands of the profession. The current study focused on the current state of school counselors in a private institution. The participants are fourteen female counselors from the elementary to the tertiary level. To have an understanding of their experiences, the researcher made use of the Counselor Burnout Inventory and Self-Compassion Scale. Follow-up interviews were also conducted. Overall, the results showed that the school counselors have low levels of burnout and high levels of self-compassion. However, there are select participants who may be experiencing burnout and are not practicing self-compassion. Correlations show no significant relationship between burnout and self-compassion. Based on the findings, implications and recommendations were discussed.

Keywords: Counselor Burnout, Self-Compassion, Counselor Well-being

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

The counseling profession requires counselors to be involved with different kinds of people, and counselors are oftentimes expected to meet their counselee's needs and expectations. In the study of Barlow and Phelan (2007), they mentioned that the counseling profession is considered as emotional labor. They are expected to engage with their counselee's emotions, while balancing their personal emotions and experiences (Cummins, Massey, & Jones, 2007). With the exposure to the counselee's concerns coupled with the counselor's own circumstances, this helping profession can make an individual feel exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally. Due to the overwhelming demands of the profession, burnout is often associated with the field of counseling.

According to Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2009), burnout is another term for energy being drained. They describe burnout as fire being unable to continue burning, unless proper and appropriate resources are provided. In the helping profession, burnout is considered as the exhaustion an individual feels, which disables them from feeling empathy towards their clients (Burke, 1981).

Counseling is considered as a helping profession and it can be emotionally demanding and draining. Counselors are advocates of self-care and self-awareness. Therefore, striking a balance between their professional and personal lives is important. They should be able to understand their own physical, mental, and emotional states. That awareness should translate in finding ways to take care of themselves better. This self-awareness can be done through self-compassion.

Developing an attitude on self-compassion is said to be critical for counselors to avoid burnout (Coaston, 2017). Self-compassion is being mindful towards one's own suffering (Neff, 2004). Counselors are often compassionate towards their counsees. They are able to notice their counselee's discomfort and suffering, providing the counsees the assistance they need. According to Neff (2004), self-compassionate people are those who are aware of their own difficulties and sufferings. This awareness leads individuals to act on their struggles and find ways to make their situations better.

In field of counseling, professionals devote their time and energy in promoting the well-being of their counsees. The counselors become the emotional support of their counsees. In the counseling profession, counselors have to deal with emotionally-charged concerns from counsees (Coaston, 2017). They are exposed to different issues and concerns, whilst having their own. Because of the risk of being affected, the counseling profession pushes counselors to become more proactive in dealing with their own health and wellness.

Counselor wellness involves two domains: physical and emotional health (Bruck, Bruneau, Baker, & Ellison, 2014). Physical health involves exercise, nutrition, and recreational activities. On the other hand, emotional health involves the spirituality, mental well-being, social support, and relaxation. Physical health and emotional health go together to achieve wellness. The study done by Bruck and colleagues (2014) suggested that counselor wellness is not a singular model applicable to everyone.

Taking care of oneself is one of the professional and personal responsibilities of a counselor (Neswald-Potter, Blackburn, & Noel, 2013). Counselors will have difficulty to perform their functions and responsibilities if they are not physically and emotionally healthy. Therefore,

counselor wellness has been a subject of discussion in different researches (Coaston, 2017; Cummins et al., 2007; Hartwig Moorhead, Gill, Bario Minton, & Meyers, 2012; Neswald-Potter et al., 2013). Counselors who are able to balance their personal and professional lives are able to work efficiently and satisfactorily. Despite challenges, counselors who have balance are able to manage their emotions, without it affecting the way they interact with their counselees.

Empathy has always been the main aspect of counseling (Clark, 2010; Stebnicki, 2008; Sadler-Gerhardt & Stevenson, 2012). Not only are counselors expected to listen, they are also the receptors of their counselee's emotions, both positive and negative. Each counseling session is personal and after facilitating numerous sessions for different counselees, counselors will undeniably feel exhaustion (Cummins et al., 2007). Counselor self-care is important to be able to continue in providing quality counselee care. Once counselees start projecting their emotions, counselors are there to absorb.

Cummins et al. (2007) quoted Carl Rogers, stating "I have always been better at caring for and looking after others than I have in caring for myself." This underscores the importance of counselor wellness. Counselors end up getting emotionally drained at the expense of their counselee's peace of mind. According to Wilkerson (2009), counselors are able to feel satisfaction by being engaged with their counselees, despite the emotional exhaustion. However, being constantly exposed to their counselee's concerns put counselors at the risk of experiencing burnout.

Counselors who prioritize their wellbeing does not only improve personal life but help in increasing professional effectiveness as well (O'Donovan & O'Donovan, 2007). Being attuned to their current physical and emotional states promotes better work perception and reduce emotional exhaustion. This level of self-awareness is critical to counselors' wellbeing and attitude towards work.

In the present study, the researcher aims to look into the burnout and self-compassion level of school counselors. By doing so, the researcher wants to be able to promote wellness for counselors. Wellness involves conscious decisions in balancing different aspects of an individual's life, with the goal of prioritizing overall health (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Promoting wellness and preventing impairment starts with an honest appraisal of an individual's health, balance, and self-care.

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The participants of the study are guidance counselors and guidance associates from an exclusive school for girls in Quezon City. The participants are counselors for the school year 2018 to 2019. There are a total of fourteen participants, all females. The participants of this study comprises of guidance counselors in the institution. They are from the different departments: lower school, middle school, high school, and college. Each counselor is assigned to handle 250 to 300 students in their batch.

Demographics	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Age</i>		
25 years old and below	0	0%
26 to 30 years old	1	7%
31 to 40 years old	6	43%
40 to 49 years old	3	21%
51 years old and above	4	29%
<i>Department</i>		
Lower School	4	21%
Middle School	3	29%
High School	4	21%
College	3	29%
<i>Years of Experience</i>		
5 years and below	4	29%
6 to 10 years	3	21%
11 to 15 years	1	7%
More than 15 years	6	43%
<i>Highest Educational Attainment</i>		
Bachelor's Degree	1	7%
Master's Degree	12	86%
Doctorate Degree	1	7%
<i>Common Concerns Handled</i>		
Peer Relationships	10	70%
Academic Concerns	10	70%
Personal Concerns (Coping, Interests, Hobbies, Identity)	6	43%
Emotional and Mental Concerns	6	43%
Family Issues	4	29%

Table 1: Demographics of the Participants

Instruments

A demographic profile sheet was included in the set of questionnaires to gather necessary demographic information about the participants. The researcher utilized the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI) to measure the participants' level of burnout. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) was used to have an understanding of the counselors' level of self-compassion. For the current study, selected individuals were asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. A set of interview questions was used as a guide to have a deeper understanding of the participants' situation.

The demographic profile sheet includes items regarding the participants' age, years of experience as counselor, highest educational attainment, and licensure. The participants are also asked about the year level they are handling.

The Counselor Burnout Inventory is a 20-item self-rating scale that looks at burnout specifically for professional counselors by Lee and colleagues in 2007. The instrument is designed to assess 5 dimensions of burnout: Exhaustion ("Due to my job as a counselor, I feel

tired most of the time”), Incompetence (“I am not confident in my counseling skills”), Negative Work Environment (“I feel frustrated with the system in my workplace”), Devaluing Client (“I have become callous toward clients”), and Deterioration in Personal Life (“I feel like I do not have enough time to engage in personal interests”). The CBI asks the participants to describe how they feel by using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Never True) to 5 (Always True). The score is computed by averaging the all items. The CBI was cross-examined for the Philippines in the study of Puig, Yoon, Callueng, An, and Lee (2014). Below is the scale range of the CBI.

Scale	Range	Interpretation
5	5.00	Very High
4	4.00 to 4.99	High
3	3.00 to 3.99	Moderate
2	2.00 to 2.99	Low
1	1.00 to 1.99	Very Low

Table 2: Scale Range of CBI

The CBI scale was validated through factor analysis (Lee et al, 2007). The instrument’s internal consistency ranged from .73 to .85 and test-retest reliability from .72 to .85. Criterion validity was done by correlating the dimensions to the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). The strongest positive correlation to Emotional Exhaustion of MBI-HSS is the Exhaustion dimension of CBI at .73. The dimension of Devaluing Client is positively correlated to Depersonalization of MBI-HSS at .56. The Personal Accomplishment measure of MBI-HSS was negatively correlated with Incompetence dimension of CBI.

The Self-Compassion Scale is a 26-item self-rating scale that looks at an individual’s ability to become aware and respond to one’s own suffering by Kristine Neff. They are to score from 1 (“Almost Never”) to 5 (“Almost Always”) in each item. The subscales of self-compassion are Self-Kindness (“I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain”) vs Self-Judgment (“I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies”), Common Humanity (“When I’m down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am”) vs Isolation (“When I’m really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it”), and Mindfulness (“When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance”) vs Over-Identification (“When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong”).

These subscales are divided into two: positive and negative subscales. The positive subscales are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. The negative subscales are self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. The SCS scores are computed by averaging all items. For the total self-compassion score, the negative subscale items (Self-Judgment, Isolation, and Over-identification) are scored reversely before getting the average. The internal consistency of the scale is reported to be at .94 (Neff ,2004). Below is the scale range of the SCS.

Range	Interpretation
3.51 to 5.00	High
2.51 to 3.50	Moderate
1.00 to 2.50	Low

Table 3: Scale Range of SCS

The SCS was distributed to counselors of a co-ed senior high school in Quezon City, prior distribution of the questionnaire to the participants. This was done to have the scale validated for the Philippine set-up. The counselors were asked to answer the scale and to provide comments on items that are confusing or may need to be revised. No changes were made based on the vetting, as there were no comments or clarifications on the instrument.

The researcher used a self-made interview guide containing six questions. All participants who were interviewed were asked the exact same questions. No deviation from the interview guide was made. The purpose of having a follow-up interview with some of the participants is to provide an in-depth viewpoint of how the counselors are faring in their profession. This will give the researcher a concrete idea as to why the counselors are feeling the way they do.

Data Gathering Procedure

In the current study, mixed methods was used to be able to examine the current level of burnout and self-compassion among the participants. Quantitative data was collected through the use of the Counselor Burnout Inventory and Self-Compassion Scale. Follow-up interviews were also done to be able to gather qualitative data and provide support to the data derived from the CBI and SCS.

The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaires containing the demographic profile, Counselor Burnout Inventory, and Self-Compassion Scale were given to the guidance supervisors of each department, to be distributed to the guidance counselors and guidance associates. A period of one week was given to the participants before all questionnaires were collected for data analysis. The responses from the questionnaires were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics. The mean scores and standard deviation were computed for each CBI dimension and SCS subscale through the use of Microsoft Excel. Correlation of the CBI and SCS was also done by using the program SPSS Statistics.

A participant from each department was randomly selected for interviews and were scheduled individually. The researcher held the individual interviews at a date and time most convenient to the participants. Prior the start of each interview, the participants were informed that the session will be recorded through a voice recorder. The interview responses served as supplementary data to the results from the CBI and SCS. Meaningful responses from the interviews were lifted to make sense of the results.

Results and Discussion

	f	Mean	Interpretation
Counselor Burnout Inventory	14	1.90	Very Low
Self-Compassion Scale	14	3.49	Moderate

Table 4: Overall Results of the CBI and SCS

As can be seen in Table 4, it can be said that the counselors in this study are reported to have low levels of burnout and high levels of self-compassion. This result is backed by the study of Thurlow (2010), where the participants who were reported to have high levels of self-compassion have lower levels of burnout. Counselors who are able to practice self-compassion may be able to avoid burnout (Coaston, 2017). However, it is still noted the correlations of this study showed no significant relationship between burnout and self-compassion.

This result is favorable towards the institution because it shows how the counselors are satisfied with their current states. The participants have not viewed their profession as detrimental to their personal lives. Reports of satisfaction in their field have been reported despite being exhausted because of work. They also view their work environment and their colleagues as a positive contributor to their work lives. The results show that the counselors are also aware of what self-care routines work best for them (i.e. journaling, breathing exercises, eating out).

It is evident that the participants of this study is satisfied overall in their work and are self-compassionate towards their struggles. Albeit majority had promising results, there are still individuals who scored higher in terms of burnout and lower in terms of self-compassion. Negative experiences were reported and some participants have expressed how their profession has been affecting them. These information shows us that it is still important to take note of the outliers in the study.

CBI Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
<i>Exhaustion</i>	2.48	1.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mean score shows that the participants may feel occasionally tired due to work. - Based on the standard deviation, the responses are relatively close to the mean.
<i>Incompetence</i>	2.09	0.59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mean score can mean that the participants rarely feel internal incompetence as a counselor. - The standard deviation shows that the responses are not that spread out.
<i>Negative Work Environment</i>	1.77	0.36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mean score shows that the participants do not perceive their working environment as negative. - The responses of the participants are not dispersed, therefore more closer to the mean.
<i>Devaluing Client</i>	1.29	0.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participants' perception of their relationship with their clients is negative. - The spread of the responses of the participants are very minimal.
<i>Deterioration in Personal Life</i>	1.82	0.73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participants do not view their work as detrimental to their personal lives based on the mean score. - The responses of the participants are not dispersed.

Table 5: Results of the CBI

As can be seen in Table 5, the mean scores of the participants in all five dimensions of the CBI are quite low. Having low mean scores in these dimensions mean that the participants are able to avoid being affected by these dimensions. However, it can be noted that the dimension on exhaustion had the highest mean score of 2.48. The standard deviation of all dimensions also show minimal dispersion of the participants' responses.

In the field of counseling, low levels of burnout imply counselor productivity (Cummins et al., 2007; Neswald-Potter et al., 2013). Because counselors are able to balance their emotions, they are able to work effectively, without personal circumstances and work exhaustion affecting their output. This is a positive result considering the high-touch nature of counseling work. Counselors are able to work effectively despite the challenges they face and exhaustion they experience because of their profession. Despite the low level of burnout reported among the participants, it does not guarantee that burnout will not manifest at all, as it may still manifest within the duration of a counselor’s profession (Lee et al., 2007).

The overall result of the CBI showed positive results for the counselors. Although that is the case, there are participants who scored high in some of the dimensions after looking at the individual mean scores. In Table 6, a specific participant has a mean score of 4.25 for exhaustion, which is relatively high. Counselors’ may experience exhaustion due to the nature of their profession being emotionally-charged (Barlow & Phelan, 2007; Copley, 2013). The interviews support this as participants have reported to feeling drained at the end of a work day.

CBI Dimension	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Exhaustion</i>	1.5	4.25

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

There was a time that we had a flood of students in the office because of an issue that arose in their grade level. We had to do debriefing for a lot of students the whole day. Counselees flooded our office with the same concerns. Even though I was the level counselor, other counselors already had to help. I was really stressed that time. I had to eat my lunch for 15 minutes and the rest of my time was focused on counseling. It didn’t stop in one day. It overspilled to the coming days and we had to work overtime. At that time, it was really physically and emotionally exhausting. It was the first time in my years of experience that I cried.

Table 6: Extreme Scorer for CBI Dimension Exhaustion

Counselors have to deal with different kinds of concerns from counselees and the profession requires direct counselee services. This high-touch profession makes counselors become more vulnerable to exhaustion (Cummins, et al., 2007). This makes physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion in the counseling profession inevitable. According to Wilkerson (2009), counselors are aware of the physical and emotional exhaustion attributed to their work. However, this awareness does not stop them in performing what is expected of them. Counselors are aware of their responsibilities and know the importance of their work in helping their counselees.

For the incompetence subscale, participants who underwent interviews shared how they felt whenever they handle difficult cases. These participants would often question their abilities as counselors. They started doubting and questioning themselves if counseling is the right fit for them.

CBI Dimension	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Incompetence</i>	1.25	3

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

I had one particular case in my previous school that I found really difficult. I didn't know how to handle it and had to ask help from my fellow counselors. It really made me ask myself if I was an effective counselor. It made me ask if I am still being helpful and if I knew enough as a counselor.

Table 7: Extreme Scorer for CBI Dimension Incompetence

Counselors are expected to offer emotional assistance and help to those who need it (Sadler-Gerhardt & Stevenson, 2012). Counselors can get affected negatively because of the expectations of being helpful towards their counselees. Self-imposed expectations would often be about being able to help and make the counselees feel better. Once these expectations are not met, counselors would feel inadequate in helping their counselees (Copley, 2013). Counselors shoulder the burden of being helpful towards their counselees and would often feel like they have failed if counselees are unable to show improvement.

Negative Work Environment received a low mean score, 2.5 being the highest among the participants. This shows that the participants do not perceive their working environment as detrimental to their experience as counselors. The participants mentioned how thankful they are for the work environment, which fosters camaraderie within the counselors. They have shared that their colleagues are their source of strength in doing better as counselors. Their colleagues become a support system whenever they start feeling exhausted. This result shows how important the work environment is for a counselor (Lee et al., 2007).

CBI Dimension	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Negative Work Environment</i>	1	2.5

Verbatim Responses:

When I had a difficult case before, my supervisor was very much helpful and involved. The other counselors were also very supportive and they would assure me that it wasn't my fault that these things happened. They also told me that they see my effort.

Table 8: Extreme Scorer for CBI Dimension Negative Work Environment

As part of the work environment, supervision plays an equally important part in helping counselors avoid burnout. In the study of Merriman (2015), counselor supervision is said to contribute to counselors feeling safe in their work environment. A participant shared in her interview that her supervisor plays an important role whenever she encounters difficult cases. Having an effective supervisor helps counselors feel at ease in handling cases without the fear of being judged. Supervision allows counselors to be able to consult their cases and get opinions about them, without making them feel incompetent by doing so (Merriman, 2015). Instead, supervisors enable counselors to feel empowered in evaluating and handling their difficult situations.

Counselors are often exposed to cases ranging in difficulty. Despite difficulties, counselors may still be able to maintain their professional relationship with their counsees, without the perceptions of their counsees getting affected (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). However, their accumulative negative experiences as counselors may contribute to the change of counselee perception (Lee et al., 2007). In the current study, the participants' perception towards their clients have not been affected even with the exhaustion brought by work.

CBI Dimension	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Devaluing Client</i>	1	2.25

Verbatim Responses:

Being able to help the students is what I enjoy. That is the heart of counseling. Just knowing that the student who comes here, who probably had a bad day, will feel a little better at the end of our session makes me feel good about what I do.

Table 9: Extreme Scorer for CBI Dimension Devaluing Client

During the interviews, participants would often mention that they enjoy being present for their counsees. They shared that helping their counsees is one of the things they like best about being a counselor. As counselors, they find satisfaction and fulfillment in being exposed to different individuals. Even with the stress and exhaustion because of work, counselors are still able to perform their responsibilities to their counsees. This shows how these counselors embrace their roles and how highly they think of their counsees.

In the last dimension, the highest mean score of a participant is 3.25. Deterioration in personal life pertains to how a counselors' work affect their personal lives (Lee et al., 2007). Because of their work as counselors, they have the tendency to forget about their own needs.

CBI Dimension	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Deterioration in Personal Life</i>	1	3.25

Verbatim Responses:

Sometimes, I tend to neglect myself even when you want to take care of yourself. I always tell my students that they have to take care of themselves but in reality, I don't do it as well. I feel so guilty about it.

Table 10: Extreme Scorer for CBI Dimension Deterioration in Personal Life

Without personal self-care, counselors will not be able to maintain their motivation to work. In the study of Skovholt et al. (2001), it was emphasized that counselors need to focus on the need to have personal self-care. It is central for counselors to address their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. Counselors are used to always providing help towards their counsees. However, counselors must acknowledge the need to provide personal self-care (Cummins et al., 2007). These self-care routines will help counselors maintain better work-life balance.

In the SCS, the participants were able to get a mean score of 3.49, which is a moderate level. The mean score indicates a moderate level of self-compassion among the school counselors. According to Neff (2004), having self-compassion enables individuals to become more empathic towards themselves despite their struggles. In the field of counseling, having self-compassion will help counselors in accepting their negative experiences and challenges the face at work without being self-critical (Germer & Neff, 2015). There is acceptance and knowledge of what needs to be addressed without putting the blame to oneself.

SCS Subscales	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
<i>Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgment</i>	4.06 2.46	0.62 0.79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mean scores show that the participants are not self-critical towards their own challenges. - The standard deviation shows that the responses are not that spread out.
<i>Common Humanity vs Isolation</i>	4.04 2.14	0.53 0.77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The results indicate that the participants may consider their suffering as common with others. - The standard deviation shows that the responses are not polarized.
<i>Mindfulness vs Over-identification</i>	4.02 2.54	0.71 1.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The results show that the participants practice mindfulness when experiencing challenges. - The responses of the participants are not as spread out, which can be seen in the standard deviation.

Table 11: Results of SCS

The subscales of the SCS are divided into two: positive and negative subscales. The positive subscales are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. On the other hand, the negative subscales are self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. The results are leaning more towards positive subscales. Higher mean scores in the positive subscales imply higher levels of self-compassion (Neff, 2004).

The participants have a mean score of 4.06 in self-kindness, a higher mean score compared to self-judgment, which is 2.46. This result suggests that whenever the counselors are faced with challenges, they are able to handle it without being self-critical. These counselors have the ability to be more understanding of their flaws instead of berating themselves because of their mistakes. However, despite scoring high in self-kindness, there are select participants who still scored high in self-judgment. This result shows that there are participants who are self-critical towards themselves. These participants are more prone to stress and frustration, which may eventually lead to burnout.

The same trend can be seen in subscales common humanity (4.04) and isolation (2.14). This result indicates that the participants feel that their concerns are also experienced by people outside of themselves. The counselors are able to acknowledge that other counselors may be experiencing the same challenges they are going through (Neff, 2004). Having a higher mean score in common humanity will help counselors in avoiding feeling self-pity. Despite having a higher mean score for common humanity, there are still outliers who scored high in isolation.

These outliers indicate that there are counselors who may still have the tendency to feel that they are shouldering the burden by themselves.

For mindfulness vs over-identification, the results show that mindfulness (4.02) is higher compared to over-identification (2.54). Overall, the participants are able to practice mindfulness. According to Neff (2004), mindfulness involves an individual assessing their negative experiences by acting appropriately, instead of perceiving it in an exaggerated manner. The participants in this study are able to objectively look at their problems and act on them rationally. However, there are some outlying participants who may be having a hard time in managing their negative experiences and emotions. Instead of being aware of what they are going through, they tend to see things as bigger as what it is supposed to be.

SCS Subscales	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Self-Kindness</i>	3.4	5

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

The other counselors were also very supportive and they would always reassure me. They tell me that I'm not incompetent and I can only do so much as a counselor.

<i>Self-Judgment</i>	1	3.6
----------------------	---	-----

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

I felt exhausted on my initial years as a counselor, as a newbie. I would get affected by cases that are emotionally trying. I couldn't eat and enjoy my dinner. If I will describe, I started questioning myself. Is this really my field? Is this really meant for me? Is this the work I really want to have for myself for the long haul?

Table 12: Extreme Scorer for SCS Subscales Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgment

For the SCS, the extreme scorers for the subscales the were also noted. For self-kindness vs self-judgment, the highest mean scores of participants are 5 and 3.6, respectively. A participant shared that she feels reassured about herself with the help of her colleagues. The assurance from her colleagues helped her put things into perspective and not berate herself with her mistakes. However, a participant also shared her situation when she was just starting as a counselor. She mentioned the difficulty in adjusting and handling cases. Counselors who undergo stressful situations in their field have the tendency to doubt their abilities and question if the field is a right fit for them (Copley, 2013).

SCS Subscales	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Common Humanity</i>	3.25	5

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

It helped me greatly that I can be with my fellow counselors. You can consult with them about their take on your case because there may be things that I haven't considered implementing. My co-counselors are very supportive. We usually hangout and eat at the end of a stressful day. Whenever we do that, it helps me feel that I'm not alone in feeling like this.

<i>Isolation</i>	1.5	3.5
------------------	-----	-----

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

I'm like the catch-basin of their concerns so it can be very draining. There was a time that we had a heavy case, I was still talking to a student but I wasn't feeling well anymore. However, I still tried my best because she's already crying. Who else can she talk to?

Table 13: Extreme Scorer for SCS Subscales Common Humanity vs Isolation

For the subscales common humanity vs isolation, the highest mean scores are both 5 and 3.5, respectively. According to one participant, she finds comfort in having her colleagues around. This response shows that having fellow counselors around helps other counselors in understanding that they are not alone in their plight. They are able to find an outlet to release all the tension and stress they received because of work. This realization helps counselors in coping with the stress and exhaustion cause by their profession (Patsiopoulos & Buchanan, 2011). However, there are still counselors who may feel isolated in their experiences as counselors.

SCS Subscales	Individual Scores	
	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>Mindfulness</i>	3	5

Verbatim Responses:

Counselors have our own batteries. We have our physical and emotional health batteries. As counselors, our emotional health batteries can get depleted because we constantly talk to our students who have concerns. It's really important to have self-care routines because we will be rejuvenated. We can bring our batteries back to 100%.

<i>Over-Identification</i>	1	4.5
----------------------------	---	-----

Translated Response from Filipino to English:

Since it happened every day, I ended up crying every morning because I really didn't know what to do anymore. In addition to that, I know that the teachers and the adviser were also expecting something from me. The expectations added burden on me because nothing was working.

Table 14: Extreme Scorer for SCS Subscales Mindfulness vs Over-Identification

The subscales mindfulness vs over-identification has 4 and 4.5, respectively, as the highest mean scores. Mindfulness enables counselors to become aware of their own emotional states (Germer & Neff, 2015). In one interview, a participant used batteries as a way to describe counselors' awareness of their welfare. The response shows proper practice of mindfulness and awareness of what needs to be done when counselors reach emotional exhaustion.

However, counselors may still over-identify to their negative experiences. Because of issues at work, counselors tend to have certain expectations of themselves (Copely, 2013). This becomes a burden, pressuring them to do better with work. Their perceptions of what is happening becomes clouded and they begin to think irrationally. These irrational thoughts end up becoming bigger than what is actually happening.

		Self-kindness	Self-judgment	Common Humanity	Isolation	Mindfulness	Over-identification
Exhaustion	Correlation	-.046	-.309	-.209	-.383	.189	-.214
	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.876	.283	.472	.176	.518	.462
Incompetence	Correlation	-.198	-.427	-.192	-.389	.302	-.290
	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.497	.128	.510	.169	.294	.315
Negative Work Environment	Correlation	-.181	-.236	.153	-.164	.233	-.047
	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.536	.417	.602	.574	.422	.873
Devaluing Client	Correlation	-.151	-.285	.088	-.348	.316	-.232
	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.606	.323	.765	.223	.271	.424
Deterioration of Personal Life	Correlation	-.236	-.325	-.078	-.349	.236	-.310
	Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.416	.256	.790	.221	.416	.281

* $p < .05$

Table 15: Correlation Between CBI and SCS

The correlation between counselor burnout and self-compassion was taken into consideration. Based on the results, there is no significant relationship between burnout and self-compassion. This means that the level of burnout may not necessarily be attributed to the level of self-compassion. Although there is no significant relationship, it cannot be concluded that self-compassion and burnout have no statistical relationship. Studies have shown the relationship of self-compassion and burnout. Self-compassion enables individuals to have healthier mindsets towards their struggles (Germer & Neff, 2015). Counselors who practice self-compassion become mindful of their emotions, which makes them less likely to develop burnout (Yip et al., 2016). In this study, the result of the weak relationship of self-compassion and burnout may be due to the small sample size. There are only 14 participants in this study and small sample size may have contributed to this result (Pallant, 2005).

Age	<i>f</i>	CBI Average	SCS Average
25 years old and below	0	0	0
26 to 30 years old	1	2.05	4.01
31 to 40 years old	6	1.87	3.18
40 to 49 years old	3	2.42	3.47
51 years old and above	4	1.49	3.84

Table 16: Results Based on Age

Aside from the interviews, the age group and years of experience of the counselors were also taken into consideration. Burnout may affect counselors from different age groups (Copley, 2013; Mullen et al., 2018). In the current study, it can be seen that all of the mean scores are low for the CBI. However, it can be noted that certain age groups (26 to 30 years old and 40 to 49 years old) have higher mean scores compared to the others. The results suggest that the participants in this study have no difference between what new counselors and seasoned counselors may be experiencing in terms of burnout.

Years of Experience	<i>f</i>	CBI Average	SCS Average
5 years and below	4	1.81	3.40
6 to 10 years	3	2.28	3.35
11 to 15 years	1	2.00	2.88
More than 15 years	6	1.73	3.72

Table 17: Results Based on Years of Experience

Looking at the years of experience, it can be seen that there is minimal difference between the less experienced counselors and the more experience counselors when it comes to burnout. This finding is supported by the study of Wilkerson (2009), which states that years of experience is negatively correlated to burnout. In the SCS, all groups show high levels of self-compassion.

For SCS, all age groups have high mean scores, which indicates high levels of self-compassion. This finding shows that the counselors are able to practice self-compassion across age groups. There is no specific age group that shows a noteworthy difference with the other age groups.

		Years of Experience	Age
Exhaustion	Correlation Coefficient	-.211	-.356
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.468	.211
Incompetence	Correlation Coefficient	-.181	-.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.537	.417
Negative Work Environment	Correlation Coefficient	.312	.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.277	.568
Devaluing Client	Correlation Coefficient	-.142	-.248
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.628	.393
Deterioration of Personal Life	Correlation Coefficient	-.096	-.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.744	.417

* $p < .05$

Table 18: Correlation Between CBI and Years of Experience, and CBI and Age

		Years of Experience	Age
Self-kindness	Correlation Coefficient	.308	.321
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.283	.262
Self-judgment	Correlation Coefficient	.494	.546*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.072	.044
Common Humanity	Correlation Coefficient	.457	.127
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.101	.664
Isolation	Correlation Coefficient	.360	.382
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.207	.178
Mindfulness	Correlation Coefficient	-.441	-.381
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.114	.179
Over-identification	Correlation Coefficient	.093	.288
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.753	.318

* $p < .05$

Table 19: Correlation Between SCS and Years of Experience, and SCS and Age

The participants' years of experience and age were also correlated to the CBI and the SCS. Based on the results, there is no significant relationship between these factors, except for age and the SCS subscale self-judgment. This indicates that years of experience and age may not necessarily explain the participants' level of burnout and self-compassion. The study of Copley (2013) indicates that both new and seasoned counselors may experience burnout because they have different experiences as counselors. New counselors may experience burnout because of their idealism about the profession and lack of professional experience (Mullen et al., 2018). Season counselors are also vulnerable to burnout because of their many experiences in dealing with counselees throughout the years (Butler & Constantine, 2005).

Scale	Range	Lower School (n = 4)	Middle School (n = 3)	High School (n = 4)	College (n = 3)
5	5	0	0	0	0
4	4.00 – 4.99	0	0	0	0
3	3.00 – 3.99	0	0	0	0
2	2.00 – 2.99	1	2	2	1
1	1.00 – 1.99	3	1	2	2

Table 20: Results of CBI Based on Each Department

Range	Lower School (n = 4)	Middle School (n = 3)	High School (n = 4)	College (n = 3)
3.51 – 5.00	1	1	2	2
2.51 – 3.50	3	2	2	1
1.00 – 2.50	0	0	0	0

Table 21: Results of SCS Based on Each Department

Frequencies of the range of scores were analyzed for each department. This was done to show if certain department received higher or lower scores for the CBI and SCS. Overall, it can be seen that no department had a glaring difference in terms of scoring high or low for both the CBI and the SCS.

Self-care Routines	
• Walking	• Watching movies/TV shows
• Gardening	• Eating out
• Cooking	• Spa (i.e. nail spa, massage)
• Reading	• Hanging out with friends
• Deep breathing exercises	• Sports (i.e. swimming)
• Journaling	

Table 22: Reported Self-care Routines from Interview Responses

Based on the interviews, the participants of the current study show awareness of self-care routines that contribute to their wellbeing. They shared different activities which help them in de-stressing whenever they feel overwhelmed. The participants acknowledge the importance of these self-care activities as part of being counselors. According to Skovholt et al. (2001), that personal nourishment is needed for counselors to be able to last long in the profession. Self-care routines can be these personal nourishments.

the study of Bruck et al. (2014), wellness strategies differ from one person to another. These strategies depend on the counselor’s preferences and interests. A counselor may prefer more physical activities, while other counselors may prefer a more social activity. With these self-care routines, counselors are able to relieve their stress and exhaustion from work.

Conclusion

The current study examined the current level of burnout and self-compassion of school counselors. Burnout has always been linked to the helping profession, counseling being one. With the increasing attention on mental health, it is only appropriate for counselors to also

understand and become more aware of their own well-being, instead of only focusing on their counselees.

It is evident in this study that counselors are able to capable of avoiding burnout. Counselors may feel physical and emotional exhaustion from the nature of their work. Even with the exhaustion, this does not prevent them from performing their tasks and finding motivation in helping their counselees. Undergoing stress and frustrations is normal in the field of counseling.

However, counselors who are unable to realize their own plight and fatigue are more likely to experience burnout. By becoming aware of their level of burnout, counselors may be able to practice self-care and seek help if needed (Sadler-Gerhardt & Stevenson, 2012).

According to Germer and Neff (2015), one way to attain this awareness is by becoming more self-compassionate towards their experiences as counselors. Self-compassion does not only entail awareness of an individual's suffering. It involves being proactive in resolving the challenges that they face in an appropriate way. Self-compassion will enable counselors to be more attuned with their conditions and react in the best possible way.

The current study was able to profile the school counselors of a specific institution in terms of burnout and self-compassion. However, the results cannot be generalized for all school counselors because of the study's limitations. These limitations include having a small sample size, having only one gender (females), and gathering data for one specific institution. These limitations can be addressed and explored in further studies.

References

- Barlow, C., & Phelan, A. (2007). Peer collaboration: A model to support counsellor self-care. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 41*(1), 3–15.
- Burke, R. J. (1981). Increasing the professional effectiveness of school guidance counselors. *School Guidance Worker*.
- Butler, S. K., & Constantine, M. G. (2005). Collective self-esteem and burnout in professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 9*, 55–62.
- Clark, A. J. (2010). Empathy: An Integral Model in the Counseling Process. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 88*, 348-356.
- Copley, L. (2013, March). Checking Yourself for Burnout and Compassion Fatigue. *The College of Education Newsletter, 7*, 1-3.
- Coaston, S. C. (2017). Self-Care Through Self-Compassion: A Balm for Burnout. *The Professional Counselor, 7*(3), 285-297. doi:10.15241/scc.7.3.285
- Cummins, P. N., Massey, L., & Jones, A. (2007). Keeping Ourselves Well: Strategies for Promoting and Maintaining Counselor Wellness. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development, 46*, 35-49.
- Germer, C. K., & Neff, K. D. (2015). Cultivating self-compassion in trauma survivors. In V.M. Folle e, J. Briere, D. Rozelle, J. W. Hopper, & D. I. Rome (Eds.), *Mindfulness-oriented interventions for trauma: Integrating contemplative practices* (pp. 43–58). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Hartwig Moordhead, H. J., Gill, C., Barrio Minton, C. A., & Myers, J. E. (2012). Forgive and Forget? Forgiveness, Personality, and Wellness Among Counselors-in-Training.
- Lee, S. M., Baker, C. R., Cho, S. H., Heckathorn, D. E., Holland, M. W., Newgent, R. A., Powell, M.L., Quinn, J. J., Wallace, S. L., & Yu, K. (2007). Development and initial psychometrics of the Counselor Burnout Inventory. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 40*, 142–154.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981a). *MBI research edition manual*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Mullen, P. R., Blount, A. J., Lambie, G. W., & Chae, N. (2018). School Counselors' Perceived Stress, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction. *Professional School Counseling, 21*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1177/2156759X18782468
- Mullen, P., & Gutierrez, D. (2016). Burnout, Stress and Direct Student Services Among School Counselors. *The Professional Counselor, 6*(4), 344-359. doi:10.15241/pm.6.4.344
- Myers, J. E., & Sweeney, T. J. (2005). *Counseling for wellness: Theory, research, and practice*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

- Neff, K. (2003a). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2, 85–101. doi:10.1080/15298860309032
- Neff, K. D. (2003b). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.
- Neff, K. D. (2004). Self-compassion and psychological well-being. *Constructivism in The Human Sciences*, 9, 27-37.
- Neswald-Potter, R. E., Blackburn, S. A., & Noel, J. J. (2013). Revealing the Power of Practitioner Relationships: An Action-Driven Inquiry of Counselor Wellness. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 52, 177-190. doi:10.1002/J.2161-1939.2013.00041.x
- O'Donovan, S. M., & O'Donovan, A. (2007). The Advantages of the Mindful Therapist. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 13(4), 46-53.
- Pallant, J. (2005). *SPSS Survival Manual: a step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows (version 12)*. Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Patsiopoulou, A. T., & Buchanan, M. J. (2011). The Practice of Self-Compassion in Counseling: A Narrative Inquiry. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 42(4), 301-307.
- Portnoy, D. (2011). Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Watch for the Signs. *Health Progress*, 47-50.
- Voon, S. P., Lau, P. L., Leong, K. E. (2017). A Review on Self-Compassion and Psychological Well-Being among Counselors in Malaysia. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 2(6), 46-56.
- Sadler-Gerhardt, C. J., & Stevenson, D. L. (2012). When it All Hits the Fan: Helping Counselors Build Resilience and Avoid Burnout. *VISTAS - American Counseling Association*, 1, 1-8.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2009). Burnout: 35 years of research and practice. *Career Development International*, 14(3), 204-220. doi:10.1108/13620430910966406
- Skovholt, T. M., Gier, T. L., & Hanson, M. R. (2001). Career Counseling for Longevity: Self-Care and Burnout Prevention Strategies for Counselor Resilience. *Journal of Career Development*, 27(3), 167-176.
- Stebnicki, M. A. (2008). Empathy Fatigue: Healing the Mind, Body, and Spirit of Professional Counselors. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 10, 317-338. doi:10.1080/15487760701680570
- Thurlow, J. (2010). An examination of the relationship between self-compassion and burnout in practicing psychotherapists: A project based upon an independent investigation. *Smith Scholar Works*.

- Wilkerson, K. (2009). An Examination of Burnout Among School Counselors Guided by Stress-Strain-Coping Theory. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 87, 428-437.
- Yip, S. Y., Mak, W. W., Chio, F. H., & Law, R. W. (2016). The Mediating Role of Self-Compassion Between Mindfulness and Compassion Fatigue Among Therapists in Hong Kong. *Springer Science Business Media*. doi:10.1007/s12671-016-0618-5