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Asking school psychologists how job satisfaction can be increased

Justin S. Janssen
University of Northern Iowa

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ASKING SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS HOW
JOB SATISFACTION CAN BE INCREASED

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Specialist in Education

Justin S. Janssen
University of Northern Iowa

July 2012

ABSTRACT

School psychology faces retention issues due to a current and projected shortage of school psychologists and the large number of baby boomers getting ready to retire. Meeting this need becomes vital in order to prevent negative effects of the shortage from continuing. Research has supported a link between job satisfaction and retention in the school psychology research as well as in job satisfaction research in general. Much of the current literature on the job satisfaction of school psychologists, however, focuses only on the identification of correlates with job satisfaction and largely avoids asking practitioners *how* their job satisfaction can be increased. This study proposes to investigate how school psychologist's job satisfaction can be increased in Iowa.

This Study by: Justin S. Janssen

Entitled: Asking School Psychologists How Job Satisfaction Can be Increased

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Specialist in Education

6/7/11
Date _____
Dr. Kimberly Knesting-Lund, Chair, Thesis Committee

6-7-11
Date _____
Dr. Barry Wilson, Thesis Committee Member

6-7-11
Date _____
Dr. Tim Gilson, Thesis Committee Member

7/19/11
Date _____
Dr. Michael Licari, Dean, Graduate College

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School psychology is facing retention issues. This is due to a current shortage as well as a projected shortage of school psychologists through 2020 (Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2004b). Also, retention of school psychologists becomes even more important as large numbers of baby boomers prepare to retire (Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2004a). Therefore, addressing this need is vital in order to avoid situations in which services provided by school psychologists could be compromised (Davis, McIntosh, & Phelps, 2004). For example, research has suggested schools would be forced to hire unqualified individuals to fill school psychology positions who are more likely to make errant decisions regarding the children they're serving (Davis et al., 2004). To address this problem, research has supported a link between job satisfaction and retention in both school psychology literature and beyond (Iaffaldando & Muchinsky, 1985; Leonard, Margolis, & Keating, 1981; Levinson, Fetchkan, & Hohenshil, 1988; Peters, Bhagat, & O'Connor, 1981; Schneider & Snyder, 1975). Job satisfaction is defined as the amount an individual enjoys their position as well as their feelings about the various facets of their job (Spector, 1997). Much of the current literature on the job satisfaction of school psychologists, however, focuses only on the identification of correlates with job dissatisfaction. These correlates with job satisfaction will be described in order to provide context to the current study. For example, advancement and promotional opportunities of practicing school psychologists are commonly cited as an area in which they are dissatisfied (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1984; Ehly & Reimer, 1986; Hosp

& Reschly, 2002; Levinson et al., 1988; Moore, 1999; VanVoorhis, & Levinson, 2006).

What has been largely avoided in the current literature on job satisfaction of school psychologists is asking practitioners *how* their job satisfaction can be increased.

Discovering how job satisfaction be increased, rather than simply identifying the areas of dissatisfaction, could provide ways in which the retention issues can be addressed. What this study proposes is a two-part survey study of how school psychologist's job satisfaction can be increased in Iowa in order to address retention issues within the state.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

School psychologists have been providing valuable services to educational systems for quite some time. These services provide very beneficial support to both struggling and gifted learners and their families. School psychologists also assist teachers in many ways by helping them provide a more effective and enriched classroom for students performing at all levels. Principals and other school leadership also can gain valuable information and insight from practitioners regarding positive systematic change for their school or district. This literature review will describe the evidence for the increasingly important issue of the retention of practitioners as well as how to address this problem through increasing the job satisfaction of school psychologists.

Despite how vital school psychology services are to school districts, concerns exist about the retention of practitioners in the field. These concerns are twofold. First, there currently is a shortage of school psychologists (Curtis et al., 2004b). In many parts of the country it is not uncommon for a job opening for a school psychologist to go unfilled for lack of an applicant. What is even more concerning for school districts than the shortage of practitioners is the situation is not predicted to improve. Researchers speculate that this shortage of practitioners is likely to last for approximately the next decade. It has been estimated that through 2020 nearly 15,000 school psychologist positions could go unfilled (Curtis et al., 2004b). The second major concern is that a growing number of school psychologists who are considered “baby boomers” are now approaching retirement age. Thus, not only is there a shortage of practitioners entering

the field, many practitioners will also be leaving the field in the coming years. To illustrate this, from the early 1980's to the late 1990's, the average age of practitioners rose from 38.8 years (Smith, 1984) to 45.2 years (Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2002). Furthermore, nearly one out of every three school psychologists in this country is over the age of 50 (Curtis et al., 2004a).

Several negative implications of the shortage of school psychologists exist if the issue is not addressed. First, Davis et al. (2004) offer that the lack of practitioners may force schools to hire individuals who are from other professions. These professionals may not be qualified to make the decisions and to complete the tasks a school psychologist completes (Davis et al., 2004). Furthermore, schools are unlikely to even hire individuals to fill the open positions from the field of education as teachers, school social workers, and the like are also experiencing shortages (Davis et al., 2004). Curtis et al. (2004a) offered that individuals hired from other professions are not likely to be well trained in deciding the proper allocation of special needs services to children. Thus, children who should not be in special education may be assigned to such services and students who may be in need of educational support via special education may be left out due to erroneous decisions (Davis et al., 2004).

The second negative implication of the shortage of school psychologists is that it may produce ethical and legal difficulties because these persons hired to fill open school psychology positions from fields outside education are not likely to have appropriate training in these areas (Davis et al., 2004). Thus, they are even more prone to make incorrect, even illegal, decisions about the distribution of special education services.

Third, Davis et al. (2004) also suggested that the shortage may limit the services the school psychologist can provide to a school. This is due to many practitioners that are required to provide services in multiple schools or even entire districts. School psychologists, thus, tend to be stretched thin and their involvement can be limited to assessment and paperwork duties. They may have little time left over to provide consultation to teachers, observations of student behavior in the classroom, or systems-level improvement via interactions with the school/district administration about the system's educational policy.

Job Satisfaction's Link to Job Retention

Research has indicated job satisfaction of school psychologists, defined as the amount an individual enjoys their position as well as their feelings about the various facets of their job (Spector, 1997), is linked to retention. Levinson et al. (1988) suggested school psychologist's job satisfaction was related to practitioners leaving the field in their study of school psychologists in Virginia. Researchers outside of the field of school psychology have investigated this link and suggest the same connection exists between job satisfaction and retention in variety of different fields (Iaffaldando & Muchinsky, 1985; Leonard, et al. 1981; Peters et al., 1981; Schneider & Snyder, 1975). If school psychologists are more satisfied with their positions, they may be less likely to leave their positions. Therefore, negative effects of the current and projected shortage of school psychologists may be able to be avoided or lessened.

Areas of Dissatisfaction

Research on job satisfaction of school psychologist's has been positive in that the majority of studies have suggest that school psychologists are generally satisfied with their jobs (Anderson et al., 1984; Levinson, 1984; VanVoorhis & Levinson, 2006). Upon closer examination, however, several areas are revealed in which school psychologists tend to be dissatisfied.

Advancement Opportunities

One area of dissatisfaction consistently found in the literature is dissatisfaction with advancement opportunities within the field (Anderson et al. 1984; Ehly & Reimer, 1986; Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Levinson et al., 1988; Moore, 1999; VanVoorhis, & Levinson, 2006). Anderson et al. (1984) investigated the job satisfaction of school psychologists on a national level by having practitioners fill out the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The MSQ is generally regarded as a good measure of job satisfaction and has been used in numerous studies of job satisfaction. Anderson et al. (1984) found a primary source of job dissatisfaction to be from advancement opportunities. Hosp and Reschly (2004) looked for regional differences in the practice of school psychology by studying over 1,000 practitioners in nine regions of the country and they also found advancement opportunities to be the main source of job dissatisfaction. Levinson et al. (1988) looked for differences in job satisfaction between the state of Virginia and the national findings. They also found opportunities for promotion to be a large factor in the dissatisfaction of practitioners.

Job dissatisfaction because of advancement opportunities may have several causes. First, a large number of advancement opportunities for school psychologists who work in schools tend to be positions that no longer base the practitioner in the school. For instance, many practitioners tend to migrate to administrative positions in educational systems or universities (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Therefore, keeping school psychologists who are currently in the schools satisfied with their jobs, and thus more likely to stay in their job, becomes very important.

Educational Level

School psychologist's job satisfaction has also been shown to correlate with the educational level a practitioner has attained. Reschly and Wilson (1995) surveyed over 1,000 school psychologists during the 1992-1993 academic year. They found school psychologists with an educational specialist degree tended to experience less job satisfaction than their doctoral level counterparts. They did not collect any information on why this is might be but the researchers did speculate this discrepancy might have been due to three different factors. First, the promotion opportunities available to persons holding doctorate level degrees might be more desirable and available. Second, they suggested the general nature of the work school psychologists possessing PhD's completes may play a part in this satisfaction differences. Third, Reschly and Wilson (1995) offered that the experiences educational specialists have with individuals who supervise them might also be linked to lower job satisfaction.

Brown, Swigart, Bilen, Hall, and Webster (1998), however, suggested from a smaller sample of school psychologists that there was little difference in job satisfaction

when comparing practitioners with doctoral and non-doctoral degrees. The authors did mention job satisfaction could be different from time to time and this may explain why no difference was found in comparison to other studies that suggest a difference exists.

Member of Professional Organizations

Becoming a member of professional organizations has also been found to have a link with job satisfaction. Researchers have suggested school psychologists who did not have continued participation in professional organizations (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], American Psychological Association Div. 16 [APA], etc.) also tended to be less satisfied with their jobs (Levinson et al., 1988; Moore, 1999). Levinson et al. (1988) examined the job satisfaction of 267 school psychologists in Virginia using the MSQ and found practitioners who were associated with a professional organization were more satisfied with their position than those who were not. They did not examine why this was the case but they did suggest that this difference might be due to practitioners who are involved in organizations feeling as if they have a voice in the advocacy endeavors of the organization. Additionally, Levinson et al. (1988) suggested school psychologists who are members of professional organizations may be more satisfied with their positions because they feel more informed of the latest news in the field.

Involvement in School/District Policy

Research has suggested that school psychologists are dissatisfied with school or district policies (Anderson et al., 1984; Levinson, 1991; Levinson et al., 1988; Moore, 1999; VanVoorhis & Levinson, 2006). Anderson et al. (1984) found, in a national study

of 391 school psychologists, that practitioners were generally dissatisfied with the policies and procedures of their schools. Two similar studies (Boulazreg, 1998, Moore, 1999) found school psychologists who have a greater amount of input into the tasks they need to perform on a daily basis or autonomy in their role are more satisfied with their positions.

Co-workers

Boulazreg (1998) found school psychologists who were less involved at their workplaces (less involved with their co-workers) were also not as satisfied with their jobs. This study asked questions related to the number of interactions a practitioner had with other school and local area education agency personnel. On a similar level, Levinson (1991) found the number of coworkers a school psychologist has might be negatively correlated to job satisfaction. This was found through a survey employing a modified version of the MSQ as job satisfaction measure and compared it's results to various demographic characteristics of 362 school psychologists.

Role in Schools

Additionally, Levinson (1990) found job satisfaction may have a link with several discrepancies he found between desired time spent and actual time spent by school psychologists completing certain tasks. Levinson (1990) utilized a modified form of the MSQ to measure job satisfaction. The discrepancies the researcher found were between the actual and desired time spent on research, assessment, and clerical activities. Other researchers have found school psychologists who have discrepancies between the ideal and actual role they play in schools tend to experience lower levels of job satisfaction

(Boulazreg, 1997, Hughes, 1979). Furthermore, Levinson (1990) found that the perceived amount of control that a practitioner has over their role in the school is correlated with job satisfaction.

Additionally, a number of researchers have suggested that a decreased role diversity is negatively correlated with job satisfaction. (Jerrell, 1984; Levinson, 1990, 1991). Researchers have suggested school psychologist would like to increase their role's diversity but are constrained by policies and regulations emphasizing the practitioners responsibility for psycho-educational assessment as well as the large number of students they are responsible for (Jerrell, 1984; Smith, 1984). Furthermore, Jerrell (1984), who completed a study of job satisfaction of school psychologists in Pennsylvania, purports boundary-spanning activities may increase job satisfaction of school psychologists. Such activities may include community involvement outside of the school walls as well as other activities not necessarily school related.

Setting

Few studies have investigated if job satisfaction is different between elementary and secondary educational settings. Boulazreg (1998) investigated if job satisfaction is different depending on school setting (K-6, high school, etc.). The study found school psychologists who practice in K-6 settings tended to be significantly less satisfied with their jobs than those other settings.

Job satisfaction between rural and urban practitioners has, however, been compared frequently by researchers but little agreement exists. In a study by Ehly and Reimers (1986), 231 school psychologists were surveyed in a Midwestern state. Vast

similarities between the groups were found but they did find rural practitioners to be slightly more satisfied with their jobs on the 260 items participants were asked to complete. Conversely, Reschly and Connally (1990) examined a national sample of 502 school psychologists by asking them to answer 4 questions related to job satisfaction and found no differences between the groups. Others still propose school psychologists who work in rural settings are less satisfied with their jobs (Hughes, 1986; Solly & Hohenshil, 1986). These researchers reported this finding having asked a rather small number of participants from the Virginia and West Virginia, respectively, to answer questions on survey about their job satisfaction. Additionally, Ehly and Reimers (1986) reported rural school psychologists are more satisfied with their policies and regulations they are required to follow by their area education agency. Rural school psychologists also appeared to be more satisfied with their compensation.

Age

Anderson et al. (1984) found a positive correlation between school psychologist job satisfaction and age. This was found through a national survey of 391 participants and used a modified version of the MSQ to measure job satisfaction. The researchers state, “school psychologists...eventually succeed in effecting the development of job satisfaction through changes in their own aspirations and needs, or in the job itself” (p. 229).

Supervision

Supervision has also been examined as a correlate with job satisfaction.

Boulazreg (1998) found positive supervision experiences are positively correlated with

job satisfaction. In other words, school psychologists who are not satisfied and content with their supervisors are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Boulazreg, 1998). Interestingly, researchers have also suggested school psychologists who are lower in satisfaction with their respective supervisors tend to be more satisfied with pay (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Hosp and Reschly (2002) state that this may be due the fact that practitioners who experience low amounts of satisfaction with their supervisors may be coming from areas of the country where salary is more likely to be higher than the national average.

Salary, and Psychologist-to-Student Ratio

Hosp and Reschly (2002) conducted a national survey of 1,056 school psychologists and found regions averaging higher salaries tended to have more satisfied school psychologists. Psychologist to student ratio has also been examined as it relates to school psychologists' job satisfaction. Scholars have found school psychologists who have higher practitioner-to-student ratios may experience lower levels of job satisfaction (Anderson et al. 1984; Moore, 1999).

Future in the Field

Boulazreg (1995) asked practitioners in a survey if they intended on being a part of the field of school psychology for the next five years. School psychologists who planned on leaving the field in the next five years tended to be less satisfied with their positions than those who planned on staying in the field. Levinson, et al. (1988) found similar results in a survey study of Virginia school psychologists.

Additional Concerns for Job Satisfaction

Up to this point, an argument has been made for the research of school psychologist's job satisfaction because of its link to retention in light of the current and projected shortage of practitioners. Because the job satisfaction of practitioners is important, certain areas of job satisfaction literature are important to address. For instance, research on the job satisfaction of practitioners is necessary because previous studies have tended to focus on a single state or region and had small numbers of participants. Additionally, research on the topic seems to disagree in a variety of places. For example, Reschly and Wilson (1995) found a practitioner's educational level to be associated with job satisfaction while Brown, Hohenshil, and Brown (1998) found no difference in their study. Finally, not all studies have used well-established job satisfaction measures, leading to possible inaccuracies in their findings.

Conclusion

Research on job satisfaction has focused almost solely on the identification of areas of job dissatisfaction for school psychologists. What has generally been left out is how to increase school psychologist's job satisfaction. Doing so may provide ways in which the current and projected shortage of school psychologists could be addressed. The purposed research seeks to ask school psychologists in Iowa: How could your job satisfaction be increased?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study was a two-step survey that sought to understand how the job satisfaction of school psychologists in Iowa could be increased. Step one was a short survey of a small number of school psychologists, asking them through an open ended question how their job satisfaction could be increased. In the second step, the results of the first survey, along with the literature on job dissatisfaction, was used to create a 21-item survey asking school psychologists to respond to Likert-type items about possible ways of increasing job satisfaction. This second survey was sent to all school psychologists working in Area Education Agencies in Iowa.

Instruments

The instruments used for this study were two separate online surveys. The purpose of the first survey was to gather information about job satisfaction from a small pool of currently practicing school psychologists to guide development of the second survey that was administered to all school psychologists in the state. Because the research literature primarily focuses on reasons for job dissatisfaction, the researchers wanted to include feedback from practitioners in the reframing of the question to focus on increasing job satisfaction.

Survey Part One

The survey that was used for part one consisted of one open-ended question: “As a school psychologist’s in Iowa, how can your job satisfaction be increased?” This

question allowed practitioners the opportunity to share any ways in which their job satisfaction could be improved. Answers to this open-ended question were used to develop an inventory of ways that practitioners could be made happier on the job. For a copy of survey part one, see Appendix A.

Survey Part Two

This survey was developed from the responses to the first survey, as well as through review of the research literature on job satisfaction among school psychologists. First, participants were asked to answer several questions pertaining to demographic information. Those questions addressed: sex, age, number of students served, professional organization membership, career plans 5 years in the future, schools served, educational level and location of graduate training. Next, participants were asked to describe on a 5-point Likert scale how likely it would be that each action would increase their job satisfaction. A copy of survey part two is provided in Appendix B.

Participants

Survey Part One

Part one of the survey was sent to 30 school psychologists practicing in Iowa. These school psychologists were randomly chosen from each Area Education Agency (AEA) in Iowa. This was done by putting all of the school psychologists in groups according to their AEA. Then 3 were chosen from 6 of the agencies and 4 from 3 agencies. Of these thirty who received invitations to participate, 16 responded for a response rate of 53%. The responding school psychologists represented each of 9 AEA's in Iowa with an average of two respondents per AEA with a range of 1-3. The majority of the

respondents were female (75%) and in the 31-35 years old (25%) age range. The majority of the respondents: served 1,200-1,599 student (40%), had their Educational Specialist Degree (80%), were trained in Iowa (69%), served an elementary school as part of their assignment (94%), were members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP;53%) and planned to be in the field in five years (81%). Table 1 provides a summary of those completing survey part one.

Survey Part Two

Every school psychologist in Iowa was invited to participate in this part of the survey. Names of these school psychologists were retrieved from their respective AEA's website. There were 294 email addresses obtained but 21 of them were non-functioning addresses thus making the total number of invited to participate in the research 273. A total of 174 school psychologists responded to the survey but 10 of these respondents only completed the demographic information. Thus, there were 164 usable responses and a final response rate of 60%. Each AEA in Iowa was represented. The majority of the respondents were female (71%) and in the 31-40 age range (30%). The majority of respondents: served 800-1,199 students (28%), had their Educational Specialist degree (68%), were trained in Iowa (42%), served an elementary school as part of their assignment (83%), were members of NASP (52%), and planned to be in the field in five years (80%). Table 1 provides a summary of those completing survey part two.

Procedures

Survey Part One

After the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), part one of the survey was distributed via email in February 2011. A link to the survey was accompanied by an email sent to each participant. If participants chose not to give their consent to participate in the study, they simply did not click on the link in the email. Participants were asked to provide their name but the identifying information was destroyed after all data were collected. After responses were collected, the researcher looked through the responses and identified actions that were reported to increase job satisfaction. Some of the responses were expected (i.e. smaller caseloads). Other responses, however, were not expected (i.e. fewer non-school psychologists practicing school psychology and larger support at the state level for the field.)

Survey Part Two

Survey part two was distributed in the same manner as part one and it was sent out in March of 2011. Similar to part one, if participants chose not give their consent to participate in the study, they simply did not click on the link in the email. Again, participants were asked to provide their name but the identifying information was destroyed after all data were collected.

Table 1.

Demographic Information

	Survey One		Survey Two	
	n = 16		n = 164	
Sex	n	%	N	%
Male	4	25	46	28
Female	12	75	117	71
Educational Level				
Master's Degree	1	6.7	30	18
Educational Specialist	12	80	112	68
Doctoral Degree	Did not ask	Did not ask	15	9
Other	2	13.3	7	4
Age				
20-30	3	19	44	26
31-40	5	31	50	30
41-50	3	19	25	15
51-60	4	25	36	22
61-65	1	6	8	5
66+	0	0	1	<1
Students Served				
<799	2	13	30	18
800-1,199	3	20	46	28
1,200-1,599	6	40	37	23
1,600-1,999	2	13	21	13
2,000-2,399	1	7	16	10
2,400-2,799	1	7	7	4
2,800-3,199	0	0	2	1
3,200-3,599	0	0	0	0
3,600-3,999	0	0	0	0
4,000-4,399	0	0	2	1
4,400 or more	0	0	3	2

Table Continues.

Setting Served				
Elementary	15	94	137	84
Middle School	9	56	106	64
High School	50	8	94	57
Special Setting	4	25	27	16
Professional Organization				
NASP	9	56	85	51
ISPA	5	5	49	30
APA	1	1	5	3
Other	0	0	11	7
None	4	25	59	36
Will Be in the Field in 5 Years				
Yes	13	81	131	80
No	0	0	12	7
No because I will be Retiring	3	19	20	12
Trained in Iowa				
Yes	11	69	69	42
No	5	31	95	58

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Survey Findings

This study sought to answer the question: How can school psychologist job satisfaction be increased in Iowa? Survey part one gave school psychologists in Iowa a chance to answer one open-ended question in narrative form: How can school psychologists job satisfaction be increased in Iowa? The actions identified in these responses, along with the results of a literature review on the job satisfaction of school psychologists, were used to develop the items that were asked in survey part two. Respondents were asked to respond to the items on this second survey using a Likert-Type scale (1 - *This item would not increase my job satisfaction as all*, 2, 3 – *This item would somewhat increase my job satisfaction*, 4, 5 - *This item would increase my job satisfaction very much*).

Table 2 provides a summary of the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of responses for each of the items on survey two. School psychologists felt that their job satisfaction could be improved through more direct involvement with students (M=3.99, SD=1.09), more involvement in the development of their role within their AEA (M=3.99, SD=.96), more ability to use skills learned in graduate school and through professional development trainings (M=3.77, SD=1.17), increased support from their AEA when they are asked to communicate an unpopular message to a school (M=3.73, SD=1.18) and more state level support for the profession (M=3.48, SD=1.11). The four responses that appeared to reveal the items least likely to provide an increased level of job satisfaction

were fewer non-school psychologists practicing school psychology ($M= 2.47, SD=1.42$), being mentored by a high quality mentor ($M=2.66, SD=1.28$), being a mentor to another school psychologist ($M=2.64, SD=1.05$), and changes in No Child Left Behind (NCLB; $M=2.74, SD=1.00$).

It was hypothesized that participants' responses would differ based on the service delivery model in which they work and based on their future career plans (5 years in the future). The researcher thought there was a benefit to comparing these two groups because the comparisons might allow for a better, more specific picture to be drawn of the ways job satisfaction could be increased. Knowing if the actions to increase job satisfaction could be increased differed between these two groups, would allow efforts by AEA administration and Department of Education personnel to be more targeted and efficient.

Service Delivery Model

In AEA's in Iowa, school psychologists typically work in one of two general service delivery models: team representative or building representative. In a team representative role, the school psychologist is the primary link between the AEA and the school building. The school psychologist may be asked to perform a more generalist type of role than what might be expected of a person working within a building representative model. In a building representative model, a school psychologist might have an increased ability to consult and work closely with other AEA personnel (i.e. school social workers, educational consultants) assigned to that school. Thus, the work that a school

psychologist might be asked to do may be less broad than that of a practitioner practicing in a team representative service delivery model.

The responses of psychologists working in these two delivery models were significantly different on these items at the .05 level: *More Involvement in Systems Level Decisions in My Schools*, $t(139) = -1.99$, $p = .048$, CI [-.875,-.003], *More State Level Support for My Profession*, $t(140) = -2.12$, $p = .035$, CI [-.874,-.032], *More Support When Asked to Deliver Unpopular Messages to My Schools*, $t(140) = -1.974$, $p = .05$, CI [-.879,.001], and *More Work Directly with Students*, $t(137) = -2.29$, $p = .023$, CI [-.891,-.066]. In response to all of the above items, means for school psychologists serving in team representative models were significantly higher than for those working in building representative models.

Future Career Plans

A comparison was also made between those practitioners who reported that they would be working in the field in five years and those who reported that they would not be in field in five years. Those who reported that they would be leaving the field due to retirement were excluded from the comparison. School psychologists who reported that they would be leaving the field in 5 years were statistically more likely to say that *More Ability to Use the Skills Learned in Graduate School and Professional Development Trainings* would increase their job satisfaction than those who reported they would be staying in the field, $t(141) = -2.63$, $p = .009$, CI [-1.528,-.219].

Table 2.

Survey Results

Item	N	Mean	SD
Changes in NCLB	164	2.74	0.996
		1=13%, 2=17%, 3=48%, 4=17%, 5=5%	
Changes in Child Find	164	3.30	1.099
		1=9%, 2=13%, 3=28%, 4=35%, 5=16%	
More State Level Support for Profession	164	3.68	1.112
		1=2%, 2=14%, 3=27%, 4=29%, 5=29%	
More Involvement in my Role in my AEA	164	3.99	0.962
		1=2%, 2=5%, 3=21%, 4=36%, 5=35%	
Change in Service Delivery Model	163	3.36	1.341
		1=13%, 2=11%, 3=24%, 4=23%, 5=30%	
More Narrow Job Description	163	3.00	1.310
		1=16%, 2=17%, 3=23%, 4=30%, 5=14%	
More Support When Asked to Deliver Unpopular Messages	164	3.73	1.178
		1=7%, 2=7%, 3=26%, 4=23%, 5=36%	
More Ability to use Skills from Graduate School and Professional Development	164	3.77	1.174
		1=3%, 2=9%, 3=22%, 4=27%, 5=39%	
More Autonomy in Assessment Choice	164	3.19	1.363
		1=17%, 2=21%, 3=23%, 4=17%, 5=22%	
More Recognition for the Work I do	163	3.44	1.198
		1=9%, 2=15%, 3=28%, 4=26%, 5=23%	
More Involvement in Systems Level Decisions in My School	163	3.03	1.152
		1=12%, 2=26%, 3=31%, 4=18%, 5=13%	
More Work Directly with Students	161	3.99	1.087
		1=4%, 2=4%, 3=19%, 4=27%, 5=49%	
Providing More Counseling Services	162	3.05	1.405
		1=14%, 2=26%, 3=18%, 4=16%, 5=26%	

Table Continues.

Providing More Mental Health Services	162	3.07	1.379
	1=13%, 2=24%, 3=22%, 4=14%, 5=28%		
Be Mentored	161	2.66	1.275
	1=24%, 2=24%, 3=23%, 4=19%, 5=11%		
Become a Mentor	163	2.64	1.046
	1=17%, 2=23%, 3=43%, 4=15%, 5=2%		
Providing More Prevention Related Services	163	3.52	1.074
	1=5%, 2=9%, 3=40%, 4=27%, 5=19%		
Smaller Caseloads	162	3.31	1.287
	1=7%, 2=25%, 3=34%, 4=14%, 5=20%		
More Involvement in General Education Interventions (GEI)	164	3.18	1.220
	1=12%, 2=14%, 3=31%, 4=23%, 5=20%		
More Work with Other AEA Professionals	164	3.17	1.112
	1=7%, 2=16%, 3=38%, 4=25%, 5=13%		
Less Non-School Psychologists Practicing School Psychology	164	2.47	1.420
	1=36%, 2=23%, 3=16%, 4=16%, 5=9%		

Table 3.

Comparisons Between Building Representative Model and Team Representative Model

	N	T	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
More Involvement in Systems Level Decisions in My school	141	-1.992	139	0.048
More State Level Support for the Profession	142	-2.129	140	0.035
More Support When asked to Deliver Unpopular Messages	142	-1.974	140	0.050
More Work Directly with Students	139	-2.296	141	0.023

Table 4.

Comparisons Between Those Who Will be in the Field in Five Years and Those Who Will Not

	N	T	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
More Ability to Use the Skills I Learned in Graduate School	143	-2.638	141	0.009

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Previous research has suggested a link between school psychologist's job satisfaction and retention of practitioners (Iaffaldando & Muchinsky, 1985; Leonard et al., 1981; Levinson et al., 1988; Peters et al., 1981; Schneider & Snyder, 1975).

Correlates with school psychologist's job dissatisfaction have been explored in this previous research. What has not been previously investigated, however, is how school psychologist's job satisfaction can be increased (Anderson et al., 1984; Ehly & Reimer, 1986; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Levinson et al., 1988; Moore, 1999; VanVoorhis, & Levinson, 2006). This issue becomes important in light of the current shortage of school psychologists and as the baby boomer generation is getting ready to retire (Curtis et al., 2004a).

The results of this two part survey study suggested several ways in which school psychologists job satisfaction can be increased in Iowa. Two of the top ways school psychologists reported their job satisfaction could be improved is through increased support for their profession at a state level and increased participation in the development of their role within their respective AEA. This may indicate that school psychologists feel that their opinions, thoughts, and/or views about how their role in schools should be performed are not incorporated into the rules and mandates passed down by their AEA's and the state of Iowa Department of Education as much as they would like. This may reveal that school psychologists job satisfaction could be increased by individuals in the Department of Education and AEA administrative offices finding creative ways to

discover the role that practitioners feel they should play in schools and incorporating what they find into their rules and mandates to greatest extent reasonable. A further consideration for such administration personnel is that these measures would be relatively low in cost. These two survey items appear to reveal that allowing school psychologists to feel that they have a voice in their role in schools is important to them and is highly valued.

School psychologists also reported that another top way in which their job satisfaction could be increased is through increasing their ability to work directly with students. This may reveal a significant discrepancy between the amount of time that school psychologists work with students directly and the time they desire to. Increasing school psychologist's ability to work directly with students might allow for practitioners to develop relationships with students, thus, helping the students resist against risk factors present in their lives.

An additional way in which psychologists reported their job satisfaction could be increased was through support by their respective AEA when psychologists are asked to convey unpopular messages to schools. This item was particularly interesting as previous research did not indicate this issue to be a concern when it comes to job satisfaction of school psychologists. This item suggests that school psychologists are given information from their AEA's and are asked to pass this information on to schools. This item may have an important implication, again, for AEA administration when they ask school psychologists to complete this task as AEA administration may help school psychologists by giving them ways in which they can best deliver these unpopular messages. It may

also be beneficial for AEA administration to find ways in which they can portray their support of these team and building representatives to school officials and staff.

Several items had relatively low scores compared to their counterparts. Thus, these items may indicate areas in which improvement efforts of school psychologist job satisfaction should not be focused. Two of those items pertained to mentoring (i.e. being a mentor or being mentored by another school psychologist). This may indicate school psychologists do not feel they would benefit from a mentoring outside of the mentoring and induction programs that are frequently adapted by AEA's in Iowa for new school psychologists. Another interesting item which respondents appeared to not feel that it would increase their job satisfaction was decreasing the number of non school psychologists practicing school psychology. This may reveal that school psychologists either do not feel that this is an issue or that there are not enough non school psychologists performing school psychology tasks for there to be a concern.

Limitations

There was one limitation of this study as the study did not incorporate school psychologists working in academic settings or school psychologists employed outside of AEA's. To increase the scope of the investigation of school psychologist's job satisfaction, it may be helpful to incorporate such persons into subsequent studies. This may then allow for comparisons to be drawn between practitioners in academic or clinical settings and those who work in schools.

Future Research

An area for future research building on this study lied within the question regarding psychologists desire to work directly with students more than they currently do. In Iowa, the Department of Education recently asked school psychologists to be involved with general education students less and special education students more. Given this change, it may be helpful to investigate whether school psychologists would like to work more directly with students receiving special education services or students in the general curriculum.

An additional area in which there lies an implication for future research is in the need for continued study regarding school psychologist's job satisfaction. There are many different factors which impact school psychologists (i.e. state and federal legislation, the specific demands of school psychologist's school). Thus, ways which school psychologist's job satisfaction could be increased may also change. Therefore, consistent study of psychologist job satisfaction is necessary and might allow for those making decisions which may impact school psychologist's job satisfaction to make those decisions with the most current data.

Conclusion

Research has indicated that improving school psychologist's job satisfaction has a link to retention of practitioners. This study provided several ways in which school psychologist's job satisfaction can be improved which is different than previous research which has primarily explored correlates with job dissatisfaction. Several of these ways to improve job satisfaction were tied to the role school psychologists play in schools. These

ways provide important information to AEA and state Department of Education personnel who may make decisions about the role of school psychologists in the state of Iowa.

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APPENDIX B
SURVEY PART TWO

How likely is it that each of the following could increase your job satisfaction? (1 - Not at all, 7 - Very Likely)

Not at All

Very Likely

1. Changes in federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind

1 2 3 4 5

2. Changes in state education policy and procedure such as Child Find

1 2 3 4 5

3. More support at the state level for the profession of school psychology

1 2 3 4 5

4. More involvement in decision making about the role of school psychologists in my AEA

1 2 3 4 5

5. Changes in the service delivery model of my AEA

1 2 3 4 5

6. More narrow description of your job responsibilities

1 2 3 4 5

7. More support from AEA administration when unpopular policies or procedures are communicated to school staff

1 2 3 4 5

8. More support to use more of the skills I learned in graduate school and professional developments

1 2 3 4 5

9. More autonomy when choosing appropriate assessment instruments when completing individual evaluations

1 2 3 4 5

10. More recognition for the contributions I make and the work that I do

1 2 3 4 5

11. More opportunities to be involved with systems level decisions in my schools (i.e. choosing curriculum

1 2 3 4 5

12. More opportunity to work directly with students

1 2 3 4 5

13. More opportunities to provide counseling services to students

1 2 3 4 5

14. More opportunities to provide mental health services to students

1 2 3 4 5

15. More opportunities to work with a high quality mentor

1 2 3 4 5

16. More opportunities to provide mentoring support to someone else

1 2 3 4 5

17. More opportunities to provide prevention services to students and schools

1 2 3 4 5

18. Smaller caseload (i.e., serving fewer schools)

1 2 3 4 5

19. Increased involvement in the General Education Intervention process

1 2 3 4 5

20. More collaboration opportunities with other professions, such as school social workers or speech/language pathologists

1 2 3 4 5

21. Decrease in the number of non-school psychologists providing psychological services in the school(s) in which I work

1 2 3 4 5