

## Abstract

Burnout among educators has risen sharply in recent years. Globally, in particular in school counselors (SC), high levels of burnout have been reported. Studies indicate that nearly 90% of all SCs experience some level of burnout. In Israel, high levels of burnout have also been observed. One of the most its serious consequences is intention to leave (Heled & Davidovitch, 2020; Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Intention to leave and turnover among teachers are also prevalent. Research has found that 8% of all teachers leave the profession each year and in general, the turnover rate for educators stands at 16%. Data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics show that the number of SCs leaving the education system is higher than the number of new counselors entering the system (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Noy, 2023).

SCs play a key role in educational institutions. They are responsible for the emotional, social and academic wellbeing of the students, support them, identify students at risk and provide advice, guidance and assistance to parents, teachers and staff. Burnout adversely impacts the quality of counseling services and leads to intention to leave. Intention to leave undermines the workplace, can result in poor job performance, negative attitudes toward work, and may be predictive of leaving the profession entirely. In general, when an employee leaves an organization, it loses its financial and other investments in the employee, and the system as a whole loses knowhow and experience. In the school counseling profession, leaving is particularly deleterious because hiring a new counselor entails the mobilization of numerous resources and the learning curve is steep before the new counselor is sufficiently familiarized with the students and staff to adapt and integrate into the school community (Hemi & Maor, 2023; Mello, 2014). Despite the serious consequences of burnout and intention to leave among SCs, to the best of my knowledge, no studies have examined these effects with a longitudinal design in the context of motivation at work while applying a robust theoretical framework.

In order to better understand the motivational components of burnout, the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), a dominant theory in educational research, was

implemented. EVT defines 3 aspects of motivation: Expectations for success, Subjective task values and Perceived cost (Eccles, 1983; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to investigate the relationship between motivational components, exhaustion dimension of burnout and intention to leave in SCs. It was hypothesized that exhaustion would mediate the relationship between expectations, subjective task values, perceived cost and intention to leave. To examine the long-term effects of motivation on exhaustion and intention to leave, a longitudinal study was conducted in which 3 measurements were collected over a 3-year period: one measurement each year. This study is the first of its kind to adapt the EVT model to SCs, which has previously been tested on students and teachers. For this reason, the perceived cost component was conceptualized specifically for the SC role and a new dimension was added to capture the economic aspect of the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2012; Eccles, 1983). In addition, since mattering was found to moderate negative influences in the workplace (Gui et al., 2022), it was examined as a potential moderator of the relationship between exhaustion and intention to leave. For control purposes, level of SC wellbeing was also assessed, to clarify the unique contribution of motivation to the explanation of exhaustion and intention to leave.

A sample of 335 SCs from across Israel was recruited. Most were women with MA degrees who work in elementary, middle or high schools. The instruments consisted of six questionnaires measuring (1) Motivation (2) exhaustion dimension of burnout, (3) Intention to leave, (4) Mattering, (5) Wellbeing and (6) Demographics.

The data analysis strategy was based on a Structural Equation Modeling approach. To evaluate the long-term effects of the predictor variables, when possible, a statistical control (cross-lagged analysis) was performed on the variables at the early time points (Kenny, 1975). The significance of the mediation hypotheses was tested using bootstrapping in longitudinal arrays (Mackinnon & Fairchild, 2009; Maxwell & Cole, 2007).

The Structural Equation Analysis showed good fit with the model. The main finding emerging from this study was a positive relationship between perceived cost (task effort, loss of valued alternatives, emotional cost, economic cost) at the first time point and

burnout at the second time point, which in turn was related to intention to leave at the third time point. The mediation tests were significant, indicating that burnout fully mediated the association between perceived cost and intention to leave.

Expectations for success directly and negatively predicted intention to leave. In other words, SCs who expected to succeed in their role were less eager to leave. These results were obtained while controlling for burnout and intention to leave at the first time point. This model was also examined while controlling for wellbeing and background variables such as seniority, job scope and type of educational framework. Even in these controlled models, the associations remained significant. However, contrary to predictions, expectations for success and subjective task values did not negatively predict intention to leave as mediated by burnout. Furthermore, mattering did not moderate the link between burnout and intention to leave.

This study makes several theoretical and applied contributions. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to examine the relationship between the EVT model (Eccles, 1983) of motivation, burnout and intention to leave in SCs. While burnout is often tested according to the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), it has no theoretical framework for conceptualizing a motivational component. The current study attempted to bridge this gap and used the EVT, an established theoretical framework, to probe the factors that may lead to burnout and intention to leave among SCs. To do so, perceived cost was redefined in the context of the school counseling profession and by adding a new dimension that represented the economic aspect of the role.

The findings provide a broad, in-depth understanding of the factors that may generate intention to leave among SCs. An examination of the reasons for intention to leave among SCs may make it possible to intervene before they actually do so. The findings can provide valuable insights for decision-makers and policy-makers who lead the school counseling profession, and suggest that resources should be allocated to streamline and improve their role and wellbeing to reduce burnout and intention to leave. The objective is to promote optimal school consulting services in the education system and preserve the human assets of the school consulting profession.