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Impact of Accountability Measures on Perceived Counselor Self-Efficacy and Student Outcomes

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the results of a study addressing the degree and frequency of American School Counseling Association (ASCA) members' usage of deliberate practice and accountability measures and their impact on school counselor self-efficacy, as well as perceived student outcomes. Using a listserv, 23,068 ASCA members nationwide were e-mailed the School Counselor Self-Assessment (SCSA) survey and 1,084 members completed the survey. Participants were of varying ethnicities, ages, work settings, and locations within the United States. Participants had different years of work experience and varying perceptions regarding the importance of using deliberate practice and accountability measures and how these variables influenced perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy and perceived levels of student academic success. Methodology, results, suggestions for future research, and implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: school counseling, school counselors, ASCA National Model, ASCA principles, accountability measures, deliberate practice, self-efficacy, student outcomes

Introduction

In response to the challenges to employ standards-based educational programs, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) released *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2012). This model was developed to standardize student learning objectives and outcomes as well as counselor practices. It now serves as a framework for school counselors to follow, providing greater uniformity, structure, and organization amongst counseling curricula nationwide (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model was also developed in response to the need for the National Standards for School Counseling programs to have a framework for the

implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program (ASCA, 2003). The ASCA National Model outlines the connection between school counselors' practices and student academic success.

ASCA principles refer to the use of accountability measures and deliberate practice. The use of ASCA principles are approaches at the forefront of the school counseling field today, as counselors are required to document the outcomes of the services they provide and substantiate their role as key stakeholders in the school setting. Accountability, in school counseling, is defined as the ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms (ASCA, 2012). School counselors utilize data in order to show the impact of their school counseling programs on school improvement and student achievement and to enhance the academic successes of all students. Deliberate practice is defined as a highly structured activity engaged in with the specific goal of improving performance. Deliberate practice involves intentionally practicing and mastering 'best practices' in order to elicit positive outcomes (Barr, 2012).

To be in compliance with the ASCA National Model, school counselors are required to collect data and implement programs based upon their data collection (ASCA, 2012). Yet not all school districts, Boards of Education, and/or administrators mandate that counselors follow the model. Moreover, although school counselors are cognizant of the importance of implementing accountability measures and deliberate practice, due to time constraints, role confusion, and other variables, these practices are less frequently utilized by counselors than they need to be (Topdemir, 2010). As a result, perceived counselor self-efficacy and perceived student academic success are negatively affected. The purpose of this paper is to add to existing literature and further substantiate that school counselors who engage in accountability measures more frequently (demonstrate accountability and use deliberate practice), perceive their students as having more positive outcomes, as well as report higher perceived levels of self-efficacy in comparison to counselors who do not utilize these principles as frequently (Paolini, 2012).

Literature

The ASCA National Model is synonymous with deliberate practice in that the model provides a framework for counselors to follow in order to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program. The model also includes specific academic, personal-social, and career competencies for K-12 students to achieve. School counselors have recognized the imperative to connect their work to the guidelines of the ASCA National Model in order to improve student outcomes (Dahir & Stone, 2009). The ASCA National Model places an emphasis on accountability, obtaining feedback, gaining data, and enhancing counselor self-efficacy in order to increase student achievement and outcomes. It strives to close the achievement gap, reform educational agendas, set uniform and formal learning objectives that are aligned with the student curriculum, establish measurable learning outcomes, and ensure that counselors must be accountable for all student outcomes (ASCA, 2012). Accountability is often seen as a catalyst to enhance school counselor credibility and a means to establish desirable outcomes for school counseling programs (Gysbers, 2010).

Self-efficacy is defined as a sense of accomplishment when carrying out tasks (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). Young and Kaffenberger (2011) conducted a study on counselor implementation of accountability in regards to increasing student performance and using data to close the achievement gap. The researchers emphasized the importance of using data to inform program decisions. The results of their study showed that counselors who have earned RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program) status understand the significance of using data to provide services to students, fostering program evaluation and improvement. The researchers also found that RAMP status has a positive impact on data practices, as well as on enhanced levels of self-efficacy and school counselors' perceptions about the importance of using data to guide practice (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). That is, counselors who used data to drive their practice experienced greater self-efficacy (i.e., had a stronger belief in their abilities and were more confident in their practices) than those who do not since they were able to demonstrate and document that their services were positively impacting the lives of their students.

Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, and Johnston (2009) explored school counselor dispositions that would predict data usage. The researchers found the 25% of the variance related to school counselor data usage was due to self-efficacy. One's level of self-efficacy impacts one's motivational, affective, and selection processes (Bandura, 1992). Therefore, it can be assumed that one's belief in oneself impacts one's behaviors and ultimately one's abilities. Topdemir (2013) found there to be a direct correlation between self-efficacy and use of accountability measures, in that counselors who had higher levels of self-efficacy were more likely to utilize accountability measures. Thus, adequate training at the graduate level and preparation is imperative in order for counselors to feel more comfortable and more self-confident in using data.

The ASCA National Model helps counselors be more prepared, providing a guideline and framework that incorporates and delineates their responsibilities and mandated duties. Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) found that counselors who received formal training in the ASCA National Model were more likely to implement the ASCA principles (deliberate practice and accountability measures) on a daily basis. The ASCA National Model outlines the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that counselors need to possess in order to meet the needs of all students. School counselors are viewed as school advocates, leaders, and collaborators who bring about systemic change as an integral part of the school community. Moreover, school counselor performance standards used for evaluation contain basic standards of practice expected of school counselors for implementing a comprehensive school counseling program.

The ASCA National Model (2012) provides guidelines for counselors to execute their duties in a more structured and effective manner, evaluate their services, and establish themselves as pertinent professionals who enhance students' academic, personal, social, and career outcomes. However, in spite of the ASCA National Model's template for activities that exemplify deliberate practice and use of accountability measures, it is not evident that school counselors nationwide are employing this model. Despite ASCA's efforts, counselors have been slow to transition to a programmatic orientation (Studer, Diambra, Breckner, & Heidel, 2011). Today, school counselors are being challenged to demonstrate the efficacy of their school counseling programs in measurable terms and to use accountability strategies to increase student performance and

close the achievement gap (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). In order to evaluate their programs, school counselors must collect and use data that tie their program to student achievement. Sharing accountability for school improvement with stakeholders is a driving force in transforming the work of school counselors in our nation's schools (Stone & Dahir, 2010). The ASCA National Model promotes counselor accountability to meet this timely and pressing need, as is consistent with the national educational standards (Dahir & Stone, 2009). As a result, professional school counselors are mandated to demonstrate how their role contributes to the academic success of all students. School counselors are encouraged to think in terms of what students are expected to know and be able to do as a result of implementing a standards-based comprehensive school counseling program (Dahir & Stone, 2009).

In order to be proactive change agents, school counselors must be committed to helping all students succeed, particularly in the academic arena. It can be assumed that using deliberate practice and accountability measures will not only help counselors to become more efficient and master their own professional skills and knowledge, but it will also enable them to bridge and narrow the achievement gap, ensure student success, improve their own practices and programs, improve student outcomes, and have students with higher graduation rates, standardized test scores, and grade point averages. Finally, these practices and measures will help counselors emerge as key participants in the educational transformation occurring across the United States.

Research Questions Guiding Study

There are two main research questions guiding this study. The first research question is, "What is the relationship between the level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures and perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy?" The second research question is, "What is the relationship between the level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures and perceived levels of students' academic success?"

Methods

Description of Sample

The researcher conducted a national survey. Participants in this study were composed of school counselors within the Northern Atlantic, Southern, Midwestern, and Western regions of the United States (see table 1). There were a total of 23,068 possible participants in this study and an actual sample size of 1,084 participants. All participants were chosen using the ASCA member directory and listserv that disclosed the e-mail addresses of working school counselors who are members of the American School Counselor Association.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of the survey was conducted prior to its use. Its purpose was to address the clarity and comprehensiveness of the survey questions, as well as to address any errors of omission or commission. Upon receipt of feedback from six expert reviewers, the majority of changes made to the survey were technical (grammatical and

syntax related) rather than content based. Upon making revisions, the national survey was sent out to 1,084 participants.

Table 1
Participant Demographic and School Experience Variable Characteristics

Age	N	%
20-24	16	1.5
25-29	161	14.9
30-34	147	13.6
35-39	119	11.0
40-44	154	14.2
45-49	117	10.8
50-54	141	13.0
55-59	144	13.3
60-64	75	6.9
65 + years old	10	.9
Total	1,084	100.0

Ethnicity	N	%
American Indian	8	.7
Asian	19	1.8
Black	91	8.4
Hispanic	47	4.3
White	879	81.1
Pacific Islander	5	.5
One or more races	23	2.1
Other	12	1.1
Total	1,084	100.0

Gender	N	%
Male	177	16.3
Female	907	83.7
Total	1,084	100.0

Type of school setting	N	%
Urban	239	22.0
Rural	342	31.5
Suburban	407	37.5
Charter	24	2.2
Other	72	6.6
Total	1,084	100.0

Instrument: SCSA Survey

The survey was titled, “Deliberate Practice and Accountability Measures: Impact on Perceived Levels of Self-Efficacy and Student Outcomes.” The abridged title of this survey was School Counselor Self Assessment (SCSA). There were a total of 34 questions. Each domain in the survey was developed by the principal investigator (PI), with the exception of the Self-Efficacy Scale, which was developed by Goldberg (2000). It was assumed that the survey would take approximately 30 minutes to complete based on the pilot study participants’ responses. The SCSA consisted of five separate topics (demographic information, questions regarding frequency and use of accountability measures, questions regarding frequency and use of deliberate practice, questions regarding self-efficacy, and counselor perceptions of the degree to which their services impacted student outcomes).

The first 15 questions addressed the demographic information of potential participants, including reporting their age, whether or not they are currently employed, whether or not they have received formal ASCA training, gender, ethnicity, years of professional school counselor experience, grade levels in which they worked (elementary, middle, high school, K–12), region in which they lived, socioeconomic status of their school, and percentage of time they spent doing various counseling activities. The PI obtained information on respondents’ ethnicity based upon the standards established by the Office of Management and Budget and implemented by the U.S. Census Bureau’s Racial and Ethnic Classifications in Census 2000 and Beyond (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The racial categories that were used in current surveys and other data collections included American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. Participants were asked to delineate their years of work experience which was grouped into the following categories: 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, and 16+, which was based upon the School Counselor Multicultural Self-Efficacy Scale (SCMES; Holcomb-McCoy, Harris, Hines, & Johnston, 2008).

Questions 16 through 22 consisted of questions that assessed participants’ frequency and degree of use of accountability measures and deliberate practice and how those entities influenced perceived levels of self-efficacy and student outcomes, particularly academic success. Questions 23 through 27 addressed whether or not counselors had a school counseling mission or philosophy statement and if they implemented either on a daily basis. Question number 28 was broken up into ten different parts that assessed participants’ perceived levels of self-efficacy. The Self-Efficacy Scale being utilized in this study was drawn from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) Web site, which was intended as an international effort to develop and continually refine a set of personality inventories whose items were in the public domain and whose scales could be used for both scientific and commercial purposes. All measures are free and researchers do not need special permission to use them. Question numbers 29 through 34 addressed the degree to which counselors believed that their services benefitted and impacted student outcomes.

Presentation of Formal Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 states that there is a direct and positive relationship between counselors who received formal training in the ASCA principles and use of deliberate

practice and accountability measures. That is, counselors who received formal training (in graduate school or continuing education) in ASCA principles were significantly more likely to utilize ASCA principles in comparison to counselors who did not receive formal training.

Hypothesis 2 states that there is an inverse relationship between years of experience and reported level of implementation of the ASCA National Model (accountability measures and deliberate practice). That is, counselors working for longer periods of time were significantly less likely to implement this model in comparison to counselors working for shorter periods of time.

Hypothesis 3 states that there is a significant positive relationship between the level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy. That is, school counselors who utilized ASCA principles (deliberate practice and accountability measures) reported higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in comparison to counselors who did not use the ASCA principles.

Hypothesis 4 states that there is a significant positive relationship between level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of student academic success. That is, school counselors who utilized ASCA principles (deliberate practice and accountability measures) perceived and reported that their students attained higher levels of academic success compared to counselors who did not implement ASCA principles.

Data Analysis

In regards to analyzing Hypothesis 1, the relationship between receipt of formal ASCA training (via graduate school or continuing education) and the implementation of the ASCA National Model, a Multiple Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. In regards to analyzing Hypothesis 2, the relationship between years of experience and implementation of the ASCA National Model, Pearson Product correlations among years of experience, use of deliberate practice, and accountability measures were calculated. Pearson Moment correlations were used to measure the strength of linear dependence between three variables (years of experience, use of deliberate practice, and accountability measures). In regards to analyzing Hypothesis 3, to examine the relationship of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy, Linear Regression analysis was performed. In regards to analyzing Hypothesis 4, the relationship between level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of students' academic success, Linear Regression analyses were performed.

Results of the National Study

In regards to respondents' knowledge of the ASCA National Model, 63.1% of the respondents received formal training regarding the national model as a part of their graduate program and 17.9% received formal training about the ASCA National Model via continuing education. The main findings (percentage of time spent on various activities) can be found below:

- 20.71% was spent on conducting individual, small group, or peer crisis counseling sessions
- 15.2% was spent on individual student planning, appraisal, and advisement
- 14.1% was spent on conducting classroom presentations and workshops
- 12.7% was spent on consulting, collaborating, and teaming with other school stakeholders
- 10% was spent on monitoring student progress, evaluating student success, and data analysis
- 9.8% was spent on helping students with career and college planning
- 9.0% was spent on course selection and scheduling
- 5.0% was spent on making school or agency-wide referrals
- 3.4% was spent on ‘other’ tasks, including test administration, disciplinary issues, or lunch duty

These findings are significant for counselors in training, as well as working counselors, as they demonstrate the amount of time that counselors allocate to specific counseling tasks. The findings show that, nationwide, most counselors spend their time conducting individual, small group, or peer counseling; crisis counseling; individual student planning and advisement; and classroom presentations and workshops.

Summary of SCSA Survey Results

In regards to SCSA survey results, 35.3% of counselors ‘sometimes’ and 19.7% of counselors ‘frequently’ collect data to assess the effectiveness of their services; 43.3% of counselors nationwide reported that they ‘frequently’ engage in utilizing evidence-based practices. Additionally, 38.6% of school counselors nationwide reported that they ‘frequently’ initiate activities that are designed to meet the needs of underserved and underperforming students to help close the achievement gap. In utilizing deliberate practice, 36.3% of counselors reported that they ‘sometimes’ utilize deliberate practice, in that they obtain baseline feedback, practice and master interventions that elicit positive outcomes, and implement feedback to ensure that students feel validated.

Furthermore, 37.6% of counselors nationwide reported ‘sometimes’ utilizing accountability measures (collecting and obtaining data) at their schools. Of counselors nationwide, 63.7% reported that they ‘almost always’ advocate for students in their school, and 34.4% of counselors nationwide reported that they ‘frequently’ get involved in the implementation of procedural and policy changes at their school. When questioned about feedback, 37.6% of school counselors nationwide reported that they ‘sometimes’ obtain feedback from stakeholders at their school. When asked about career readiness, 43.7% of school counselors nationwide reported that they ‘frequently’ help students understand the relationship between their personal qualities, education, training, and careers.

Moreover, 28.4% of school counselors nationwide reported that they ‘frequently’ conduct classroom lessons on topics such as bullying, study skills, career development, and college readiness. Of school counselors nationwide, 38.2% ‘sometimes’ conduct student/parent workshops to address the needs of the school community, and 35.5% of school counselors nationwide reported ‘sometimes’ analyzing feedback that they received

regarding the delivery of school counseling services; however, only 8.9% of school counselors nationwide ‘almost always’ did this. In regards to analyzing data, 43.4% of school counselors nationwide felt ‘moderately comfortable’ analyzing data, 9.2% felt ‘moderately uncomfortable,’ and 1.7% felt ‘very uncomfortable.’ When asked about disaggregating data, 29.6% of school counselors nationwide ‘sometimes’ disaggregate data based on gender, race, and SES status to make sure all students achieve high academic standards; however, only 7.6% of school counselors nationwide ‘almost always’ do this. In terms of assessing outcome data, 32.3% of school counselors nationwide ‘sometimes’ assess outcome data (how students are measurably different) as a result of their counseling services, whereas only 5.8% of school counselors nationwide reported ‘almost always’ doing this. Regarding program audits, 33.9% of school counselors nationwide reported ‘rarely’ conducting program audits to assess if their counseling program is aligned with the ASCA National Model. Lastly, 40.4% of school counselors nationwide reported ‘frequently’ engaging in self-reflection in order to gain an understanding of underserved populations at their school

Reliability of Scales Within SCSA Survey

The Deliberate Practice, Accountability Measures, and Counselor Perceptions Scales were scored via averaging, while the Self-Efficacy Scale was scored via summing the items. All of the scales had strong reliability with alphas ranging from .81 to .90. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) stated that one should strive for reliability values of .70 or higher. According to the Deliberate Practice scale’s reliability of .86, the Accountability Scale had a reliability of .90, the Self-Efficacy scale had a reliability of .81, and the Counselor Perceptions had a reliability of .90; all of the scales had strong reliabilities.

Hypothesis 1

In regards to analyzing Hypothesis 1, the relationship between receipt of formal training in the ASCA National Model (via graduate school or continuing education) and the implementation of the ASCA National Model, a Multiple Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was performed. Hypothesis 1 was supported in that findings showed that respondents who received formal training in the ASCA National Model (learned in graduate school or via continuing education) engaged in deliberate practice and accountability measures more frequently than those who did not receive training.

The researcher conducted multivariate tests. The results of the analysis revealed there was a significant multivariate effect, per Wilk’s Lamda. Therefore, there was a statistically significant effect upon receipt of formal training in the ASCA National Model (Wilk’s Lambda = .968, $F(2,1078) = 17.72$, $p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = .029) for both dependent variables (deliberate practice and accountability measures). Thus, it would be beneficial to have formal training on the ASCA National Model be integrated into counseling programs and continuing education workshops so that all counselors have the opportunity to learn about the importance of engaging in accountability measures and deliberate practice once they start working.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 addressed the relationship between years of work experience and implementation of the ASCA National Model. Pearson Product correlations were

calculated to examine the relationship between years of work experience and use of deliberate practice and accountability measures. There was a small positive significant correlation between years of accumulative school counseling experience and deliberate practice ($r = .15, p = .00$), indicating that as years of accumulative school counseling experience increased, use of deliberate practice also increased. This accounts for 2.25% of the variance. Similarly, there was a small positive significant correlation between years of accumulative school counseling experience and accountability measures ($r = .13, p = .00$), indicating that as years of accumulative school counseling experience increased, use of accountability measures also increased. This accounts for 1.69% of the variance. As per Cohen (1988), these correlations can be considered small. Hypothesis 2 was not supported, in that the results revealed that instead of the hypothesized inverse relationship, there was a significant positive relationship found between years of experience and use of deliberate practice and accountability measures.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 addressed the relationship between implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy. A simultaneous multiple linear regression with forced entry was used. The model as a whole was statistically significant ($F(4,1081) = 45.40, p = .00$). The regression model explained 14.0% of the total variance of counselor self-efficacy ($R^2 = .14$). The test of the regression model indicated that years of accumulative school counseling experience ($B = .05, p = .00$) and accountability measures ($B = .24, p = .00$) are significantly and positively associated with counselor self-efficacy. Based on regression coefficients, with all other variables being held constant, as years of accumulative school counseling experience increased, counselor self-efficacy increased. In addition, when accountability measures increased, counselor self-efficacy increased.

Given the results of this study, the hypothesis that there would be a significant positive relationship between the level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy was only partially supported. The results indicated that a positive correlation existed between years of work experience, use of accountability measures, and perceived levels of self-efficacy. However, no significant relationship was found between use of deliberate practice and self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 examined the relationship between level of implementation of deliberate practice and accountability measures on perceived levels of students' academic success. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed. The model as a whole was statistically significant ($F(4,1079) = 40.54, p = .00$). The regression model explained about 13% of the total variance of perceived levels of students' academic success ($R^2 = .128$). The test of the regression model indicated that years of accumulative school counseling experience ($B = -.004, p = .005$) was significantly and negatively associated with perceived levels of students' academic success; accountability measures ($B = .173, p = .000$) was significantly and positively associated with perceived levels of students' academic success; deliberate practice ($B = .081, p = .016$) was significantly and positively associated with perceived levels of students' academic success. Based on the

regression coefficients with all other variables being held constant, as years of accumulative school counseling experience increased, perceived levels of students' academic success decreased. In addition, when accountability measures increased, perceived levels of students' academic success increased. In addition, results indicated that when deliberate practice increased, perceived levels of students' academic success increased.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is that the findings are based upon counselors' perceptions of student success in regards to using ASCA principles (accountability measures and deliberate practice) rather than on actual data documenting the impact that the ASCA principles have on student success. Generalizability is another limitation in that these findings are only applicable to school counselors working in a K–12 setting. Another limitation is that the survey was only completed by ASCA members, so working school counselors who are not active ASCA members were not given the opportunity to provide responses. Additionally, the SCSA Survey did not have a question regarding the length of time participants have followed the ASCA National Model or if they felt that following the framework enhanced their performance.

Another limitation was the accuracy of self-reporting in that responses may have been biased to reflect a respondent's belief system rather than actual practice. It can be assumed that participants may have reported having stronger beliefs than they actually do, in order to protect and enhance their self-esteem and self-worth. Furthermore, the format of the survey was a limitation. Even though all questions were mandatory to answer, participants did not respond to all parts of each question due to skip logic on Survey Monkey. Skip logic is a feature that changes what question or page a participant sees next and is based upon how the participant answers a particular question. Skip logic creates a path through the survey that changes depending upon the participant's responses.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine counselors' frequency and degree of utilization of accountability measures and deliberate practice and their impact on perceived levels of school counselor self-efficacy, as well as perceived levels of student academic success. This study adds to the current literature in that it further substantiates the fact that implementing accountability measures is a 'best practice' for school counselors (Fall & Van Zandt, 1997) and that it fosters student achievement.

There are several relevant findings that the SCSA Survey rendered. Specifically, it would be advantageous for school counselors nationwide to be trained to conduct program audits so that they can assess the degree to which their programs are aligned with the ASCA National Model. It would also be beneficial to train counselors to analyze data so that they feel more comfortable as data-driven practitioners. Moreover, it would be valuable for school counselors to engage in deliberate practice and accountability on a more frequent basis in order to be seen as necessary rather than ancillary stakeholders.

Finally, it would be useful to train school counselors nationwide in disaggregating data based on gender, race, and SES status in order to close the achievement gap.

The study also found a correlation between use of accountability measures and student outcomes in that those counselors who engaged in accountability more frequently reported having higher self-efficacy and also perceived their students to have more positive outcomes. Using accountability measures allows school counselors to demonstrate that they are key players in the academic success of students (Dahir & Stone, 2003). This study substantiated that, given the current emphasis on school counselor accountability and student performance, it is important to note school counselors' critical contributions to student success. Therefore, recognition of the impact that accountability measures and deliberate practice have on perceived levels of counselor self-efficacy and student academic success is paramount to the counseling field. Using these ASCA principles (accountability and deliberate practice) had a significant and positive impact on levels of perceived competency, as well as on counselors' beliefs regarding the degree to which they impact student outcomes. It was found that counselors who utilized accountability measures and deliberate practice were more likely to be able to document and validate their importance in the school setting and show that their counseling services and interventions helped students to be more academically successful.

Counselors must demonstrate how their programs contribute to student achievement and positive school behaviors. This study showed that counselors who used accountability measures and deliberate practice had empirical evidence to substantiate that their counseling program enhanced student achievement and school behaviors/climate. Counselors who used accountability measures and deliberate practice assessed their program more frequently, obtained and implemented feedback more regularly, and made program revisions to meet the needs of students and stakeholders.

The findings of this study showed that counselors who received formal training in the ASCA National Model, either in their master's program or via continuing education workshops, were more likely to engage in and utilize deliberate practice and accountability measures on a daily basis, thereby experiencing enhanced self-efficacy and perceiving their students to have better outcomes.

Implications for the Field

The findings of this study are beneficial to counselor educators at the university level, as well as to practicing school counselors nationwide. In terms of graduate school training, counselor educators need to incorporate and educate students about the importance of utilizing ASCA principles (accountability measures and deliberate practice) as to the positive impact that these practices have on counselor self-efficacy and counselor perceptions of student academic success. By engaging in deliberate practice, counselors are working smarter rather than harder by using and mastering evidence-based practices that have been shown to enhance student growth. This not only leads to more positive perceptions of student success but, more importantly, leads to actual gains being made. Counselors must be accountable, data driven, and able to demonstrate that their services are eliciting positive outcomes for their students so they are seen as necessary rather than ancillary stakeholders. Further, courses on data analysis need to be integrated into graduate counseling programs so that counselors feel more comfortable and

competent to analyze and disaggregate data rather than avoid using data in their practice. It would be beneficial for courses including Research Methods and Tests and Measurements to incorporate a data analysis component so that students have the opportunity to run data (hypothetical or actual data obtained) in statistical analysis software such as SPSS, as well as to evaluate, assess, and interpret what the data means. By integrating data analysis and interpretation into graduate level coursework, students will have the opportunity to be more prepared to be data-driven counselors in their future work settings. Purely obtaining data is ineffective; feedback and findings must be implemented in order for changes to be made.

With regard to working school counselors, these professionals are now cognizant of the degree and frequency in which their peers engage in deliberate practice and accountability measures. This study provided a baseline measure as to the degree and frequency of using deliberate practice and accountability measures. Although many counselors do engage in accountability measures and deliberate practice, there is work to be done as there are still major deficits that exist due to time constraints and having a myriad of other responsibilities to address. Thus, counselors nationwide must be urged to make a conscious effort to utilize these principles more frequently in order to further close the achievement gap and help all students succeed. Even though deliberate practice did not significantly influence levels of perceived counselor self-efficacy, it did influence the degree to which counselors perceived their services to positively impact their students' academic success. Therefore, it is incumbent upon counselors to engage in deliberate practice more frequently, as their services will render improved student outcomes since they will be utilizing best practices. Using deliberate practice will enable counselors to accomplish a multitude of tasks in a comprehensive manner since they will be following a methodical framework and will be using empirically proven techniques that elicit positive student outcomes. School counselors will then be able to substantiate that their actions positively make a difference in the lives of their students, since they will gain expertise as to the techniques that elicit the most positive student outcomes.

Additionally, obtaining stakeholder feedback provides counselors with knowledge about the effectiveness of their services, which can result in maintenance or modification of practice. Obtaining feedback also works to increase student outcomes by determining the services that produce the most positive outcomes and targeting the services that require change or are ineffective. For example, collecting evaluation data after conducting parent workshops, faculty presentations, and classroom guidance lessons provides immediate feedback regarding the effectiveness of these services.

Counselors should be encouraged to assess student outcome data on a consistent basis in order for interventions and services to be determined to meet student needs. Specifically, disaggregating data, according to students' gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status is used to ensure that each student has equity and opportunity to achieve academic success. Furthermore, it is vital to have counselors assess outcome data more frequently in order to measure the impact their program has on students' academic success and the degree to which students benefit from their services. From an instructional perspective, it would be beneficial for student outcome data to be evaluated in order to assess for students' strengths and deficits. Doing so will provide counselors with insight regarding which students may need additional help in specific subjects, as well as which students should be placed in more rigorous and challenging courses.

It is vital for counselors to conduct program audits to ascertain if their counseling program is aligned with the ASCA National Model or other state counseling framework, as these models include structured guidelines for comprehensive school counseling programs to follow. Neglecting to conduct program audits jeopardizes student outcomes, as students may not be exposed to all of the mandated expectations, which can impede career readiness. Further, based on written feedback from respondents, counselors reported that role confusion was still prevalent and that there was a lack of time and funding to accomplish their duties. In order for counselors to establish themselves as critical stakeholders, it is imperative for them to become more assertive by advocating for their profession and by following the guidelines stipulated in the ASCA National Model. This in turn will enable them to complete mandatory rather than extraneous duties, further clarifying their significant role in the school setting.

In addition, it is imperative for research to be conducted on utilizing deliberate practice in the school setting. Since 18.4% of participants reported that they ‘seldom’ engage in deliberate practice, and 7.7% reported that they ‘rarely’ engage in deliberate practice, it would be beneficial to conduct trainings on deliberate practice in order to explain to counselors in training and working school counselors the concept of deliberate practice (practicing and mastering best evidence based practices), what it entails, and how it can be utilized in schools. Lastly, there is a imminent need for graduate programs to educate school counseling students about how to analyze and interpret outcome data so that, as they become working professionals, they are able to develop their respective counseling programs around the needs of their student populations. Moreover, graduate students would benefit from training addressing how to execute counseling services and interventions based on student outcome data in order to improve student success.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should be conducted on the degree to which using accountability measures actually enhances student academic success. Although Paolini (2012) found that counselors who engaged in accountability measures perceived their students to have better outcomes, the researcher did not determine the extent to which using accountability measures actually improves student success. Thus, determining this information would be advantageous so that there is concrete evidence supporting the use of accountability measures and their impact on student outcomes.

Furthermore, according to ASCA (2012), school counselors must regularly evaluate their program’s effectiveness in order to assist in student achievement. However, in accordance with Topdemir (2013) and Whiston (1996), many counselors do not demonstrate accountability due to their lack of interest and ability to evaluate their counseling services, as well as their lack of confidence, and feel ill prepared to collect data and select proper analyses to evaluate data. Thus, it would be beneficial to conduct research on counselor education programs nationwide to assess the courses they have in data analysis, research, and accountability in order to get a baseline assessment of current teaching practices, as well as necessary modifications, in order to better prepare counseling students to become data-driven practitioners.

Additionally, future research needs to be conducted to determine the obstacles that counselors face that impede their ability to follow the ASCA National Model

guidelines, which result in their limited use of deliberate practice and accountability measures. Based on the research findings, counselors can discuss with administrators and other school stakeholders the challenges with which they are confronted so that program revisions can be considered to both align with the ASCA National Model and meet the needs of their specific student population. Ultimately, using accountability and data allows school counselors to advocate for their profession, as well as augment their professional development skills (Stone & Dahir, 2010; Topdemir, 2010).

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