

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)

Apr 11th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Are You Satisfied: A Qualitative Study on Job Satisfaction in Rural School Psychologists Roles and Functions

Madison L. Evans

University of Montana - Missoula, madisonevans@hotmail.com

Jessica Skipper

University of Montana - Missoula, jessica.skipper@umconnect.umt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

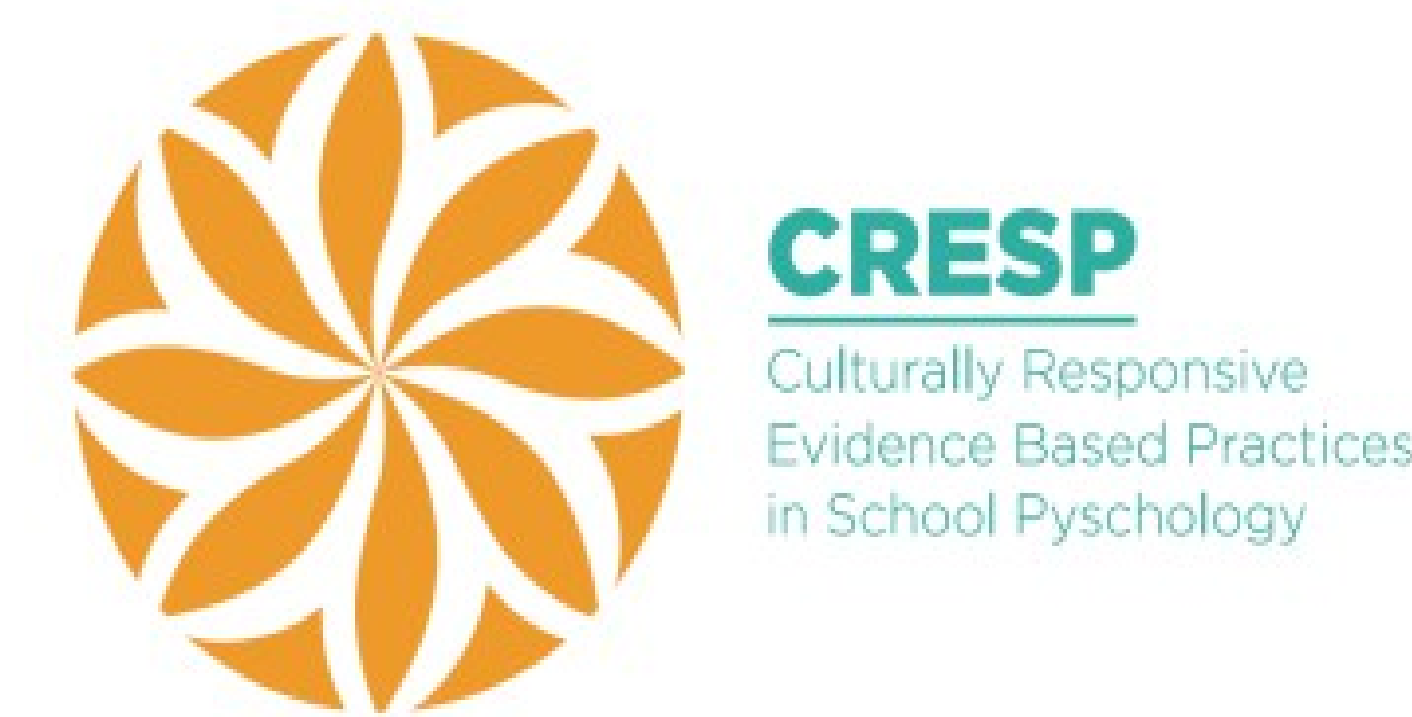
Evans, Madison L. and Skipper, Jessica, "Are You Satisfied: A Qualitative Study on Job Satisfaction in Rural School Psychologists Roles and Functions" (2014). *University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR)*. 25.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umcur/2014/poster_1/25

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Conference on Undergraduate Research (UMCUR) by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Are You Satisfied: A Qualitative Study on Job Satisfaction in Rural School Psychologists Roles and Functions

Madison Evans & Jessica Skipper
Department of Psychology, The University of Montana



Introduction

As early as kindergarten, children in rural areas are at greater risk for experiencing emotional, behavioral, social and adaptive problems (Girio-Herrera, Owens, Langberg, 2013). School psychologists are the closest network for children within the school, providing assessment, intervention, and consultation services (Reschly, 2000). From the limited research available, rural school psychologists face unique barriers in their work such as a lack of resources to support children and experiencing professional isolation (Clopton & Knesting, 2006; McLeskey, et al., 1983). These challenges could negatively affect a rural school psychologist's professional life and job satisfaction; however, this has yet to be thoroughly researched. Previous analyses of variance suggested a significant difference in self-reported job satisfaction between rural (M= 5.89) and suburban (M=5.4) school psychologists, but not urban school psychologists.

The goal of this study is to closely examine the current roles and job satisfaction of rural school psychologists through an in-depth qualitative research methodology.

Method

An online questionnaire was completed by 188 school psychologists in rural ($n = 94$) and suburban ($n = 94$) areas in the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain regions of the United States. A "snowball" technique was used in which an online questionnaire was sent to participants who then forwarded the survey. Consequently, a response rate was unable to be obtained.

Participants answered demographic questions as well as questions pertaining to their current and desired roles and responsibilities as school psychologists. Qualitative analyses using Nvivo Software was used to conduct a content analyses of these open-ended responses; evaluating both common and differing themes in why rural or suburban school psychologists are satisfied or unsatisfied in their roles and functions. Also analyzed were open-ended responses to the questions: *If you could change anything about your current role, what would you do?* and *How would your new role serve children families schools better?*

One researcher separated the rural and suburban responses, then each researcher was responsible for either rural or suburban coding. From there, the responses were coded individually for major themes surrounding their current roles and job satisfaction.

Results

After each researcher coded for rural or suburban psychologists responses in the two open ended questions, main themes were identified and put into separate subcategories for further investigation.

The frequency of the themes were calculated and from there the researchers compared the responses between rural and suburban psychologists roles and functions. Based off the frequencies, the top three most common responses were compared and contrasted. Each answer was dissected by highlighting the concerns and attitudes in each suggestion. Bringing to light the possible differences in job satisfaction between the rural and suburban psychologists.

Table 1 - Rural Responses

	Most Common Responses	Quote	Frequency
If you could change anything about your current role, what would you do?	More Time	"It would be nice to have more time in each school, to spend more time getting to know the students and being able to monitor their progress more closely."	45
	Collaboration	"Since I am the only school psychologist I would appreciate having other psychologist that I could quickly accessible if I need to consult about a particular issues."	37
	Interventions	"I would love to be more involved with behavioral and academic prevention activities (implementation of RTI and PBS practices on a school-wide level)."	31
How would your new role better serve the students and their families?	Interventions	"We would be able to bring in an increasing number of new interventions, and better knowledge about new directions of the field of education."	36
	Staff Support	"I do feel that I work more directly with the school administrators and can see the differences that makes."	27
	Direct Contact	"Any time you can have more direct contact with students, the better off the students are."	23

Table 2 - Suburban Responses

	Most Common Responses	Quote	Frequency
If you could change anything about your current role, what would you do?	Increase Student Time	"I would have more of me to less of a population of students! There are 560 students in my school and there is a lot of need for intervention and counseling. I am only a half-time School Psychologist and a half-time Guidance counselor."	29
	Reduce Work Load	"The fact that we have to deal with more paperwork in this district than I have ever had to deal with and there seems to be more pressure to be a team leader here but I do not complete the evaluations of the members and they do not have to follow my lead if they do not want to."	24
	Communication	"I would like to change other people's knowledge of what a school psychologist can do."	23
How would your new role better serve the students and their families?	Increase Time with Students	"I would have a greater knowledge of the students in my school. Parents would have a greater understanding of special education and their child's needs and program."	27
	Increase Performance	"It would allow me to have more contact, see the real issues, and connect with teachers and administrators more to offer consultation and suggestions."	25
	Improve Student Health	"Children who are mentally healthy and demonstrate behavioral competence are able to succeed academically."	24

Results

Table 1 denotes the top three common roles in the rural psychologists responses in both open ended questions. The top three roles reported for question one were; *More Time*, *Collaboration*, and *Interventions*. The main roles reported for the second question as: *Interventions*, *Staff Support*, and *Direct Contact*. The most frequent themes *More Time* (45), *Collaboration* (37), *Interventions* (31), *Interventions* (36), *Staff Support* (27), and *Direct Contact* (23) were identified in the responses for each question.

Table 2 indicates the top three common roles in the suburban psychologists responses in both open ended questions. The top three roles reported for question one were; *Increase Student Time*, *Reduce Work Load*, and *Communication*. The top roles reported for the following question were: *Increase Time with Students*, *Increase Performance*, and *Improve Student Health*. The most frequent themes *Increase Student Time* (29), *Reduce Work Load* (24), *Communication* (23), *Increase Time with Students* (27), *Increase Performance* (25), and *Improve Student Health* (24) were identified in the responses for each question.

Q: If you could change anything about your current role, what would it be?

A: It would be nice to have more time in each school, to spend more time getting to know the students and being able to monitor their progress more closely.

-Rural School Psychologist

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth qualitative examination of job satisfaction among rural and suburban school psychologists. Our results show that:

- There were similarities and differences on the perception of job satisfaction between groups. The majority of participants had high ratings of job satisfaction

Key findings from rural responses:

- Rural seems to have higher emphasis on spending more time working with the families and school staff.
- Rural school psychologists strive for collaboration amongst staff and families about the children's medical and behavioral history, interventions, and educational progress.
- Interventions- More or new interventions to support and prevent current problems.
- Direct Contact- More one-on-one and direct contact with the children and their parents.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Erin Yosai, M.S., Zachary Shindorf, B.A., Aaron Collette, Jordan Gregory, Zoe Potter, Margaret Beebe-Frankenburger, Ph.D, and our mentor Anisa N. Goforth, Ph.D.