



Working adults' future occupational plans: the contribution of role characteristics, social support, and occupational self-efficacy

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Abstract

School counselors' occupational plans were investigated in terms of the mediating role of occupational self-efficacy including three antecedents (role clarity, role autonomy, social support) on three outcomes (life satisfaction, job satisfaction, occupational plans) among 483 female Israeli school counselors, aged 26–69. High levels of the three antecedents were associated with high levels of occupational self-efficacy, which in turn was associated with high levels of life and job satisfaction and with counselors' plans to remain in their profession. The antecedents also demonstrated direct effects with job satisfaction. This emphasizes the importance of occupational self-efficacy in counselor retention and its antecedents.

Keywords Occupational self-efficacy · Occupational plans · Social support

Résumé

Projets professionnels futurs des conseillères scolaires: La contribution des caractéristiques du rôle, du soutien social et de l'auto-efficacité professionnelle Les projets professionnels des conseillères scolaires ont été étudiés en termes de rôle médiateur de l'auto-efficacité professionnelle, comprenant trois antécédents (clarté du rôle, autonomie de rôle, soutien social) sur trois résultats (satisfaction de vie, satisfaction professionnelle, projets professionnels) parmi 483 conseillères scolaires israéliennes âgées de 26 à 69 ans. Des niveaux élevés des trois antécédents ont été associés à des niveaux élevés d'auto-efficacité professionnelle, qui à leur tour ont été

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associés à des niveaux élevés de satisfaction dans la vie et au travail et aux projets des conseillères de rester dans leur profession. Les antécédents ont également montré des effets directs sur la satisfaction au travail. Cela souligne l'importance de l'auto-efficacité professionnelle dans la rétention des conseillères et de ses antécédents.

Zusammenfassung

Zukünftige Berufspläne von Schulberatern: Der Beitrag von Rollencharakteristika, sozialer Unterstützung und beruflicher Selbstwirksamkeit

Die beruflichen Pläne von Schulberatern wurden im Hinblick auf die vermittelnde Rolle von beruflicher Selbstwirksamkeit einschließlich dreier Antezedenzen bzw. Einflussfaktoren (Rollenklarheit, Rollenautonomie, soziale Unterstützung) auf drei Outcomes (Lebenszufriedenheit, Arbeitszufriedenheit, berufliche Pläne) bei 483 weiblichen israelischen Schulberatern im Alter von 26–69 Jahren untersucht. Hohe Niveaus der drei Antezedenzen waren mit hohen Niveaus beruflicher Selbstwirksamkeit verbunden, die wiederum mit hohen Niveaus von Lebens- und Arbeitszufriedenheit und mit Plänen der Beraterinnen, in ihrem Beruf zu bleiben, verbunden waren. Die Antezedenzen zeigten auch direkte Effekte auf die Arbeitszufriedenheit. Dies unterstreicht die Bedeutung von beruflicher Selbstwirksamkeit für die Bindung von Beratern und deren Antezedenze.

Resumen

Planes ocupacionales de futuro en las orientadoras escolares: la contribución de las características del rol, del apoyo social y de la autoeficacia ocupacional

Los planes ocupacionales de las orientadoras escolares fueron investigados en términos del rol de mediador de la autoeficacia ocupacional, incluyendo tres antecedentes (transparencia de roles, autonomía de roles, apoyo social) sobre tres consecuencias (satisfacción en la vida, satisfacción en el trabajo, planes ocupacionales) entre 483 orientadoras escolares israelíes, de 26 a 69 años. Los altos niveles de los tres antecedentes se asociaron con altos niveles de autoeficacia ocupacional, lo que a su vez se asoció con altos niveles de satisfacción en la vida y en el trabajo y con los planes de las orientadoras para permanecer en su profesión. Los antecedentes también demostraron efectos directos con la satisfacción laboral. Esto enfatiza la importancia de la autoeficacia ocupacional en la permanencia de las orientadoras y sus antecedentes.

Introduction

School counseling is a relatively newer domain of the mental health field that is often overshadowed by other mental health professions and often considered less prestigious (Pistole & Roberts, 2002). School counselors encounter multiple demands, low pay (despite requiring academic credentials), lack of role clarity, and lack of job security (Bernstrøm et al., 2019; Heled & Davidovich, 2019). In Israel, there is an extensive public school system and every school includes a counselor. Israel is a Western, industrialized nation, with a high level of education among its population (Israel Bureau of Statistics, 2019), and schooling is legally required from

three years of age. School counselors in Israel are required to obtain a Master's level degree in order to work. Complicating the difficulties of their role, in Israel and around the world, today's professional environment is characterized by technological and social changes that challenge job security and continuity and requires people to be active and flexible in the labor market throughout their careers (Chin & Rasdi, 2014; Savickas, 2011, 2012).

Research on school counselors has focused primarily on their satisfaction, without attending to their career changes or plans for the future (Mullen et al., 2018). Given the abovementioned characteristics of the job market, understanding occupational plans at later stages of career development has become critical, but has not been examined in the research on school counselors, especially not in Israel. Particularly for school counselors, who face uncertainty in their jobs and complicated work conditions, it is important to examine what will promote their future plans to remain in their field. This can ensure greater stability within the educational system, and more experienced counselors who can work with the children. This is particularly important in Israel, where there is often only a single counselor in elementary schools.

From the theoretical perspective, it is crucial to understand the mechanisms that describe and explain how individuals in more advanced stages of career development shape and construct their occupational plans, and whether this mechanism is also operative for subsequent stages of career development. This conceptual understanding may serve researchers and practitioners seeking to guide and support clients throughout life-long career planning, decision-making, and management. Hence, the current study aims to investigate counselors' occupational plans within the theoretical framework of the social cognitive model of job and life satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008).

Social cognitive model of job satisfaction

Social cognitive career theory ([SCCT] Lent et al., 1994, 2002) explains how people develop interests and make choices regarding their studies and their occupation. According to the theory, personal and environmental variables such as gender, ethnicity, and social support influence the development of self-efficacy and outcomes expectations, which in turn influence various outcomes, such as intentions to pursue a particular career path. Many studies have lent empirical support to this theoretical model (e.g., Lent et al., 2011; Sheu & Bordon, 2017), reporting findings that stress the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in explaining achievement and development in the general population (Lent et al., 2011).

Lent and Brown (2006, 2008) use social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) to explain work and life satisfaction as an outcome of the interaction between personality traits, work-related self-efficacy, perceived work conditions, and relevant environmental supports or obstacles. According to this expanded SCCT model, individuals are likely to be satisfied with their jobs when they feel competent to perform their major work tasks (self-efficacy), have satisfactory work conditions, perceive that they are making progress, and receive support. Job satisfaction

is also assumed to be mutually related to general life satisfaction. However, despite the potential importance of the expanded SCCT model to explain further job satisfaction and occupational plans of working adults, the model has been tested primarily on adolescents and young adults regarding their initial academic choices (e.g., Lent et al., 2016; Sheu & Bordon, 2017; Volodina & Nagy, 2016) and on individuals of retirement age (e.g., Wöhrmann et al., 2014), with relatively few studies having focused on working adults (Aristovnik & Jaklič, 2013; Lent et al., 2011). The current study examines a modified model, based on Lent and Brown, to specifically examine job satisfaction among school counselors and their future plans.

Work-related self-efficacy plays a critical and central role in individuals' future planning. Bandura described the association between self-efficacy and expectation of results, which can be perceived as an expression of future perceptions (Bandura, 1997). Several studies have demonstrated the relationship between self-efficacy and future perceptions (e.g., Michael et al., 2015). For example, Brown and Cinamon (2015) found that self-efficacy in choosing a high school major predicts clarity of future academic plans. The current study follows the above research studies and examines the relationship between career self-efficacy and future perceptions within the satisfaction model of the SCCT.

Another lacuna of the studies on the expanded SCCT model is that it has been tested on very few specific occupations (Demulier et al., 2013). However, we believe that each occupation has unique characteristics and distinctive factors that may affect the behavior and decisions in later life stages. For example, Cinamon (2009) studied the unique experiences of work-family conflict in the teaching occupation, demonstrating the importance of examining unique variables along with a general examination of the validity of models.

School counseling is an evolving profession that responds to environmental conditions and undergoes constant change. These characteristics make it a suitable profession for studying the validity of the expanded SCCT model. Exploring the relevance of the suggested investigated model for school counselors can help us achieve an understanding of the considerations important to them upon choosing to remain in their current position or leave it. This deeper understanding may also provide insights into the work circumstances as well as contextual factors that influence decisions made by counselors regarding their future work plans.

School counselors

In many countries around the world, most school counselors are women who provide services to educational institutions ranging from nursery through high school. Counselors are required to perform multiple roles and engage in a multitude of tasks ranging from working with students, parents, and teachers to running intervention programs and helping students with special needs (Heled & Davidovich, 2019). Additionally, they interact with multiple populations within the school (e.g., principals, coordinators) and outside the school (e.g., psychologists, social workers).

Despite guidelines for best practices, in addition to providing counseling services, school counselors are charged with performing multiple non-counseling duties in their schools, contributing to job stress (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016). As they often do not engage in the classic tasks of counseling, school counselors experience a lack of clarity in their role, which impacts on their desire to remain in the field (Fye et al., 2020).

In the Israeli context, the role of the school counselor is particularly complex. At the primary school level, only a single counselor is typically assigned to serve an entire school (Erhard, 2014). Counselors are required to have a master's level degree as well as a teaching certificate. Moreover, they are also required to spend a certain number of weekly hours teaching in addition to their counseling duties (Erhard). Regarding the terms of their jobs, school counselors must renegotiate annually and are granted no tenure within the system (Heled & Davidovich, 2019).

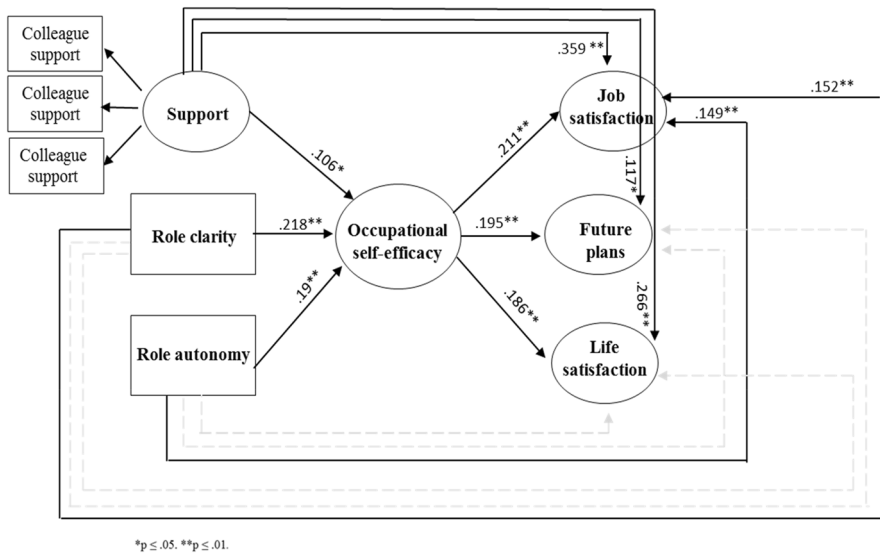
The lack of clarity, complexity, and uncertainty of the school counselor's job raise critical questions about their impact on counselors' job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and occupational planning. Enhancing our insight into the work experiences and decision-making processes of this population is essential for teachers and supervisors of school counselors for designing training programs and adapting their role to various educational settings. Greater understanding can impact the resources invested in counselors' professional development. Additionally, it can facilitate greater efforts to keep counselors in the field. Using Lent and Brown's (2006, 2008) integrative SCCT model we explored how aspects of the counselors' role impact upon how they contend with the unstable work environment prevalent today, what influences their future occupational plans, and how work conditions may influence these decisions.

Proposed model

The current study examines a proposed theoretical model, based on Lent and Brown's (2006, 2008), with occupational self-efficacy as a mediating variable between the antecedents of role clarity, role autonomy, and social support and the outcome variables of future career plans, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction (see Figure 1). We thus posit the first hypothesis (**H1**) of the current study, that the research model will be found to be significant and valid with an acceptable index.

Occupational self-efficacy

Within the SCCT model, *occupational self-efficacy* serves as a primary predictor of worker satisfaction. Occupational self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to successfully fulfill the contextual tasks in their work (e.g., Higgins et al., 2008), such as the ability to persevere at work and cope with the challenges and difficulties that work presents along the way. This is an important variable in terms of handling the complexity of the occupational world and is not bound to the features of a specific profession. The focus of this variable is related to the developmental



Note. Broken lines indicate theoretical links that were non-significant in the results.

Figure 1 The research model with significant paths

stage characteristics of professionals who are already working in their chosen profession—a stage that has yet to be sufficiently studied.

Individuals with high occupational self-efficacy are likely to set higher career-related goals for themselves, invest more effort in their careers, persist longer on various success-related tasks (Abele & Spurr, 2009; Bandura, 1997; Lent et al., 1994), and report high levels of job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2003). Thus, the current study seeks to clarify what predicts counselors' occupational self-efficacy, and how this variable relates to their future occupational plans and work and life satisfaction.

In the current study, three environmental antecedents of occupational self-efficacy that have been found to be significant predictors of this variable are examined: role clarity, role autonomy, and social support (e.g., Caillier, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalviks, 2014).

Role clarity

Role clarity refers to how well an employee understands the standards to which the job must be executed (Whitaker et al., 2007), as opposed to ambiguous roles that stem from vague or unclear expectations of their performance (Fouad et al., 2016). Role clarity enables the employee to better execute his or her role as well as aiding in the performance of contextual tasks (e.g., Salamon & Deutsch, 2006). Studies revealed that role clarity is significantly and positively associated with job performance (Gilboa et al., 2008) and employee satisfaction (Hassan, 2013; Kim et al., 2013), and is an important direct predictor of self-efficacy (Caillier, 2016). School

counselors often face a lack of clarity in their role (Mullen et al., 2018). Those facing greater ambiguity generally report greater stress and higher levels of burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen et al., 2018). In light of this, our second hypotheses (**H2a**, **H2b**) are that role clarity will be positively associated with counselors' occupational self-efficacy, and role clarity will be positively associated with each of three outcome variables: counselors' future occupational plans, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Autonomy

Autonomy, the ability to embed personal perceptions and individual decisions within a specific mission or task, is a fundamental and universal psychological need that contributes greatly to human motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In an employment context, autonomy is related to employee well-being, job satisfaction, degree of involvement at work, and self-efficacy (e.g., Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Similarly, a lack of autonomy is associated with work burnout and emotional distress (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013). Wheatley (2017) found that among women, autonomy at work enhances leisure and life satisfaction. School counselors often feel overwhelmed and worn out by conflicting and multiple demands from various factors in the system. Requirements that are in conflict with how they perceive their role and want to perform contradict the model for the counselor role that they've learned about and in which they believe (Fye et al., 2020), resulting in low autonomy. Following these studies, our third hypotheses (**H3a**, **H3b**) are that role autonomy will be positively associated with counselors' occupational self-efficacy and that role autonomy will be positively associated with each of three outcome variables: counselors' future occupational plans, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Social support

Social support comprises a central resource that helps individuals integrate life roles (e.g., Cinamon, 2009; Michael et al., 2015; Van Daalen et al., 2006) and as such, may serve as an antecedent for occupational self-efficacy. Social support can be provided to individuals at work, at home, or through their social life. Various studies have found that social support at work has a direct and beneficial effect on workers' psychological well-being (e.g., O'Brien et al., 2014). Social support has also been found to be associated with increases in self-efficacy and, in turn, with enhanced performance (Rees & Freeman, 2009). Employees encountering a supportive climate at work will be more satisfied and committed to their jobs and less likely to consider leaving their organizations (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Family support has been found to have both a direct and an indirect effect (through self-efficacy) on job and life satisfaction (Lee & Shin, 2017). Women, in particular, have reported that support in their social and nuclear family environment (spouses and parents) influence their professional choices (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Fouad et al., 2016).

Relating to specific professions, Cinamon (2009) stressed the importance of support accorded to teachers from supervisors, while Cancio et al. (2013) found that

administrative support correlated with job satisfaction among teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

School counselors who receive professional support display more positive attitudes toward counseling and higher levels of self-efficacy. On the flip side, those who do not receive support report lower levels of self-efficacy (Gunduz, 2012).

Thus, we posit our fourth hypotheses (**H4a**, **H4b**): Social support will be positively associated with counselors' occupational self-efficacy, and social support will be positively associated with three outcome variables: counselors' future occupational plans, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Future occupational plans

Future plans refer to how individuals subjectively relate to their future (Seginer & Mahajna, 2018). This is a broad concept that comprises many variables, including those relating to future orientation, future perceptions, future time perspective, and future expectations. Future plans have been studied primarily among adolescents, as dealing with the future is perceived as a central task in that life stage (e.g., Nurmi, 1991). We did not find research that related specifically to school counselors' future plans. Nonetheless, given the importance of the concept in general career-related aspects, we included it in the current model.

Previous studies have demonstrated that gender, SES, ethnicity, and social conditions relate to adolescents' and young adults' future plans (Bellare et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Michael et al., 2017; Seginer & Mahajna, 2018). Furthermore, most of the studies about future plans address several life domains simultaneously—family, work, leisure, and community future plans (e.g., Bellare et al., 2018; O'Brien et al., 2014). In this study, we focus on counselors' occupational future plans, a variable that has not received sufficient empirical attention. We investigate counselors' plans to continue in the same occupation as well as their plans to continue further study for advanced specialization within the occupation.

Since high levels of self-efficacy are positively related to the investment of efforts on the job (Abele & Spurk, 2009) and to work engagement and job satisfaction (e.g., Dicke et al., 2014), we posit the next hypothesis (**H5**): Occupational self-efficacy will be positively associated with job perseverance and profession development and negatively with thoughts of leaving the profession.

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads (Veenhoven, 1996). Life satisfaction indicators have been associated with a wide spectrum of functions and life outcomes in the emotional, behavioral, social, environmental, and psychological domains (for a general overview, see Busseri & Sadava, 2011). Among counselors, research indicates that their ability to balance multiple roles, as well as job satisfaction both predict overall life satisfaction (Bryant & Constantine, 2006).

Job satisfaction

While well-being has often been studied as a context-free construct reflecting overall life satisfaction, there has also been much interest in domain-specific aspects of subjective well-being, such as job satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2008). Job satisfaction among school counselors has primarily been examined in the context of stress and burnout. Research shows that counselors with lower levels of job satisfaction reported higher levels of stress and burnout (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Additionally, counselors' satisfaction impacts upon the quality of their work and their willingness to provide effective counseling services (Kolodinsky et al., 2009). Mullen et al. (2018) note that counselors with lower levels of job satisfaction are at greater risk for leaving the field. Given the importance of examining counselors' life satisfaction and future plans, we used the expanded SCCT model, which is a broad model that has not been used yet to examine school counselors. Consequently, we posit the following hypotheses (**H6a**, **H6b**): Occupational self-efficacy will be positively associated with life satisfaction and occupational self-efficacy will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Method

Participants

The study participants were 483 Israeli Jewish female school counselors (comprising 10.73% of all school counselors in Israel), ranging in age from 26–69 ($M_{\text{age}} = 43.68$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.32$). Most participants (89.4%) were born in Israel. Most (91%) had completed a master's degree, eight participants (1.7%) were doctoral candidates, and four participants (0.8%) held a doctorate. Eleven participants held a bachelor's degree, seven had completed counseling certification, and twelve (2.5%) were enrolled in a master's degree program. Job experience ranged from 1 to 35 years, with an average of 10.07 ($SD_{\text{years}} = 7.29$). Most participants (90.9%) reported being in a relationship, and 87.8% of participants reported having children.

Measures

Validated and reliable Hebrew versions were used for all of the study's measures. For each measure, the construct was calculated from the mean of its items. Higher values indicated higher levels of the named construct. We examined the reliability of each scale for the current sample by inspecting the correlation of item-total scores, means, and standard deviations. We also inspected skewness and kurtosis for each variable in order to meet the assumption of normality, a matter of particular importance in structural equation modeling (Hong et al., 2003). We used Google Forms to collect data, requiring all questions to be completed before advancing to the next

one. As such, we had no missing data. At the item level, the form was treated using the full-information maximum likelihood method with Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2004).

Social support questionnaire (Cinamon & Rich, 2002)

This 14-item scale measures participants' perceptions of managerial support (5 items; e.g., "I feel supported from my manager at work"), family support (5 items; e.g., "I feel that I receive a lot of support from my family"), and colleague support (4 items; e.g., "I feel supported from my colleagues"). Participants were asked to respond to the statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The average of the 14 items served as the total support score. Reliability for the scale was Cronbach's $\alpha=0.76$ for the original scale and 0.92 for the current sample.

Role clarity and role autonomy

Job clarity and role autonomy were examined through two questions that were developed for the purposes of the present study. The subjects were required to respond to the following questions on a scale from 1 (very little) to 5 (to a great extent).

Role Clarity: To what degree do you feel your job description clarifies your role?

Role Autonomy: To what degree do you feel you have space to operate freely within your role as a counselor?

Occupational self-efficacy scale (Rigotti et al., 2008)

The Hebrew version of this six-item scale (Ran et al., 2018) measures participants' confidence in their ability to successfully fulfill everyday tasks at work (e.g., "I find several solutions when I am faced with a problem at work"). Participants responded to items on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*absolutely true*). The questionnaire's reliability was reported as Cronbach's $\alpha=0.84$ for the original Hebrew version and $\alpha=0.87$ for the current sample.

Life Satisfaction Scale

The Hebrew version (Anaby et al., 2010) of Diener et al. (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to measure participants' life satisfaction. Participants were required to rate five items relating to their life satisfaction (e.g., "I am satisfied with my life") on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*fully agree*). The questionnaire's reliability was reported as Cronbach's $\alpha=0.87$ in the original Hebrew version and $\alpha=0.86$ for the current sample.

Job Satisfaction Scale

The Hebrew version (Michael et al., 2020) of the five-item Job Satisfaction Scale ([JSS] Judge et al., 1998) was used to measure how satisfied participants were with

their current jobs. Participants responded to four items (e.g., "Most of the time, I am enthusiastic about my work") on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). Internal reliability for both the original scale and for the current sample was Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$.

Occupational plans questionnaire

Four statements were formulated for the present study to assess occupational plans: "I plan to progress and develop in the field of school counseling"; "I am considering leaving the field and specializing in a different profession"; "I would like to continue specializing in school counseling and become an expert in the field"; and, "I am considering pursuing advanced study in the area of counseling." Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*highly disagree*) to 5 (*highly agree*). Internal consistency reliability for the current sample was Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$.

Demographic questionnaire

This questionnaire tapped age, family status, and occupation. Participants also were asked about their role clarity ("To what extent do you think that your role is defined clearly?") and role autonomy ("To what extent do you feel that you have leeway at work to act as you see fit?").

Procedure

The online questionnaires were initially circulated at a professional forum for school counselors and through personal connections. Additionally, the head of the Ministry of Education's Department of School Counseling forwarded the questionnaire to all school counselors listed in the department's registry, inviting them to participate. Of 4500 female school counselors in Israel, 483 returned completed questionnaires after receiving two requests to do so, reflecting a 10.7% response rate.

Data analysis

We tested the proposed theoretical model (Figure 1) with an SEM procedure, using AMOS 20 (Arbuckle, 2011). The SEM consists of two main parts: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model specifies the posited relationship of the observed items to the underlying constructs, and the structural model examines the potential causal dependencies between endogenous and exogenous variables. The substantive model includes five latent constructs, two of which had single-item indicators (role clarity and autonomy). Given that these constructs were relatively concrete, we fixed the factor loading at 1.0 and measurement error to 0.0. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability coefficients. We used the CFI, the TLI, and the RMSEA. CFI and TLI values of > 0.90 and RMSEA value of < 0.08 were used as indicators that represent an acceptable fit, whereas values of > 0.95 and < 0.06 represent a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Bias-corrected

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables ($N=483$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Social support	–							3.79	.76
2. Occupational self-efficacy	.21***	–						4.93	.72
3. Life satisfaction	.33***	.24***	–					5.63	.98
4. Work satisfaction	.40***	.30***	.33***	–				5.96	.86
5. Future plans	.18***	.22***	.22***	.43***	–			3.88	.97
6. Role clarity	.29***	.30***	.19***	.30***	.16**	–		3.53	.99
7. Role autonomy	.23***	.27***	.14**	.33***	.09*	.32***	–	3.81	.91

* $p > .05$, ** $p > .01$, *** $p > .001$

confidence intervals (CI) were estimated for the indirect effects based on 2000 bootstrap samples of the data (Hayes, 2018). Indirect effects are considered as significant when the CIs do not include zero (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

The following latent variables were included in the tested model: social support (14 items of the Social Support Scale), role clarity (1 item), role autonomy (1 item), occupational self-efficacy (six items of the Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale), life satisfaction (five items of the Life Satisfaction Scale), job satisfaction (five items of the Job Satisfaction Scale), and future plans (four items of the Future Plans Scale).

Results

Table 1 shows the means, SDs, and inter-correlations of the study variables. Given the strengths of the SEM, the study's findings are presented with a focus on model fit and pathway estimates. Likewise, non-significant pathway estimates are not reported, as they are assumed to be non-different from zero.

Test of the measurement model

The model fit indices of the measurement model were satisfied—absolute fit measures: $\chi^2 = 426.07$; ($p < 0.001$); $\chi^2/df = 1.99$; GFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.045; incremental fit measures: IFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96. The range of the standardized factor loadings for the indicators onto the latent constructs was between 0.55 and 0.91 ($p < 0.002$). These results demonstrate a good fit of the proposed measurement model.

Test of the structural model

The absolute fit measures, incremental fit measures, and parsimonious fit measures were also used to analyze the fit of the proposed structural model. The model fit indices were satisfied—absolute fit measures: $\chi^2 = 520.19$; ($p < 0.001$); $\chi^2/df = 2.08$; GFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.05; incremental fit measures: IFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95. In sum, the results indicate that the overall goodness-of-fit for the

proposed research model is satisfactory, supporting the proposed theoretical model of partial mediation of occupational self-efficacy between the tested antecedents and outcome variables.

Before confirming the conceptual model of occupational self-efficacy as a mediator of the relations between the tested antecedents and outcome, an alternative model was examined. The alternative model converted the mediator variable to antecedent variables, thus comprising four predictors of the same three outcomes. These predictors were allowed to correlate. This alternative model is based on SCCT (Lent et al., 1994) where self-efficacy serves as an antecedent for academic or career choices. The analysis indicated the following results: $\chi^2=583.38$; ($p < 0.001$); $\chi^2/df=2.31$; GFI=0.91; RMSEA=0.57; incremental fit measures: IFI=0.94; TLI=0.93; CFI=0.94.

These results indicate that the alternative model also has satisfactory goodness-of-fit, but the index of the suggested structural model is better. Consequently, the general hypothesis that the proposed theoretical model of partial mediation of occupational self-efficacy between the tested antecedents and outcomes fits with the sample's data was supported by the analysis.

After supporting the hypothesis of partial mediation of occupational self-efficacy, the specific hypotheses regarding the relationship between variables was examined through the statistical significance of the path coefficients from one latent variable to another. Results revealed that role clarity was significantly related to occupational self-efficacy ($\beta=0.22$, $p < 0.01$) and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.15$, $p < .01$). Role autonomy was significantly related to occupational self-efficacy ($\beta=0.19$, $p < 0.01$) and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.15$, $p < 0.01$). Social support was significantly related to the following outcomes: future occupational plans ($\beta=0.12$, $p < 0.05$), job satisfaction ($\beta=0.36$, $p < 0.01$), and life satisfaction ($\beta=0.27$, $p < 0.01$). Lastly, occupational self-efficacy was significantly related to future occupational plans ($\beta=0.20$, $p < 0.01$), life satisfaction ($\beta=0.19$, $p < 0.01$), and job satisfaction ($\beta=0.21$, $p < 0.01$). As such, all the study hypotheses were supported, excluding four paths: between role clarity and future occupational plans (H2b), role clarity and life satisfaction (H2b2), role autonomy and future occupational plans (H3b) and role autonomy and life satisfaction (H3b2).

Discussion

The present study examined the validity of the social cognitive model (Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008) for future occupational plans among school counselors. The examination took into account social support, role clarity, and job autonomy and their correlations with occupational self-efficacy, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and future occupational plans. The structural model provided a good overall fit for the data, and most of the estimated paths to future plans, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction were supported. Occupational self-efficacy partially mediated social support and the examined outcomes, while it fully mediated role clarity and role ambiguity and the consequences of future plans and life satisfaction. At the same

time, occupational self-efficacy was found also as an antecedent for these outcomes in the alternative model, but the indexes were less optimal.

These results increase our understanding of counselors' occupational plans. We have demonstrated here that the mechanisms that describe and explain how individuals in earlier stages of career development shape and construct their occupational plans, is also operative for subsequent stages of career development among school counselors. This conceptual understanding may serve researchers and practitioners seeking to guide and support clients during their course of life-long career planning, decision-making, and management.

Life-long development of an adult's professional identity includes planning for the future, throughout adult stages of life. To date, studies have applied the expanded model to samples of working adults, focused primarily on teachers (e.g., Badri et al., 2013; Lee & Shin, 2017; Lent et al., 2011). The current study extends these findings and supports the theoretical value of the Lent–Brown model () of job satisfaction and life satisfaction among school counselors and professions with similar characteristics.

The value of social support

Whereas previous studies focused primarily on environmental support at work (supervisors' and co-workers' support), the present study also incorporated family support to achieve a more complete model. Moreover, although the original model indicated an indirect link between environmental support and life satisfaction, we hypothesized that the cumulative support from supervisors, colleagues, and family members would directly relate to outcome variables. Indeed, support was linked not only to counselors' job satisfaction—directly and indirectly through occupational self-efficacy—but also directly to life satisfaction and planning for the future. Like other mental health professionals, counselors may be subject to compassion fatigue, where they may disengage from their clients and be unable to provide appropriate care (Levkovich & Ricon, 2020). Supporting counselors can help them continue to help others. The current findings are consistent with studies that have demonstrated the positive effects of support, particularly family support, as enhancing job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction (e.g., Lee & Shin, 2017), and they supplement these studies by highlighting the impact of support on school counselors' career planning for the future. These findings thus emphasize the importance of social support, from family members, supervisors and colleagues, throughout the stages of professional development and are not limited to decisions made during adolescence.

Social support has been found to be especially significant for women. For instance, women have been shown to particularly value support from supervisors, report support from family and colleagues, and are generally more affected by support (e.g., Raghuram et al., 2012). As women grow past their child-bearing years, they are often more able to focus on their role as a professional. The present study demonstrates the continuing impact that social support of various types can have on school counselors. In Israel, school counselors are overwhelmingly female, and often feel a sense of loneliness as they are the single counselor in a school, and do

not feel part of the teaching staff nor the administrative staff. The importance of social support highlights these counselors' need for acceptance within the school and additional supervision and support. This can help impact how they plan for their future.

Retention on the job and remaining in one's profession

Within the theoretical framework that emphasizes the need for working adults to continue the process of making professional choices throughout their lives (Savickas, 2012), this study introduces a novel way to examine factors that may explain retention within the field of school counseling. Our results showed that the intention to remain in an occupation is related directly to social support at work, such as support from superiors and colleagues. Our findings suggest that social support has long-term effects among female school counselors' planning for their professional future. Receiving meaningful support from one's superiors makes it more likely for workers to remain in their profession and even to look ahead for continued professional advancement. Those who provide professional development to counselors should be made aware of their need for support in their likelihood to remain in their position and include this aspect more carefully via supervision or group interactions.

Role clarity and autonomy were found to indirectly affect plans to remain and advance in the counseling profession through the mediating role of occupational self-efficacy. Clarity and autonomy are key concepts in Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory and are described as basic needs for an employee's emotional well-being. In this study, role clarity and autonomy were found to have an indirect effect on the outcome variables through occupational self-efficacy and a direct impact on job satisfaction. These findings support previous studies that found a correlation between planning for the future and role clarity (Caillier, 2016; Hassan, 2013; Kim et al., 2013) and autonomy (Skaalvik & Skaalviks, 2014; Wheatley, 2017) and expand findings to the understudied field of counseling. This underlines the importance of job clarity and autonomy for counselors, who often encounter a lack of clarity and autonomy. This affects their self-efficacy and satisfaction and plays a significant role in their intention to remain in the profession. Given the importance of clarity and autonomy for counselors, and the desire that they maintain stability within their school, it is essential that the education system provide counselors with more clarity and autonomy than they currently have (Fye et al., 2020).

Occupational self-efficacy as a mediating factor

In line with our hypothesis, occupational self-efficacy comprised a mediating variable in the relationship between support and all of the model's examined outcomes. This finding corroborates other studies showing that work-related self-efficacy, indirectly predicted job satisfaction through working conditions (Badri et al., 2013), and through additional variables such as work stress (Lee & Shin, 2017). Occupational self-efficacy was also found to have a significant influence on life satisfaction, as a mediator between support and life satisfaction, among students (Jung & Cho, 2011)

and teachers (Lent et al., 2011). Importantly, this study extends these findings to school counselors and those in analogous helping professions—and highlights the significance of occupational self-efficacy on outcome variables. That is, work characteristics can impact on one's occupational self-efficacy, which in turn, impacts outcomes such as life satisfaction and job satisfaction.

Practical applications

The study's findings suggest important practical applications, primarily, for school principals and the system responsible for counselors, as well as for career counselors and organizational counselors in Israel, and throughout the world. Given the findings that social support has a direct and indirect effect on school counselors' life satisfaction and career choice, as well as on the decision to remain in the same profession, principals and those responsible for counselors should focus on developing social support for counselors. It is also advisable to design organizational policy that emphasizes and encourages support in the school.

In addition, career counselors should address this issue when advising young people in choosing a profession and when making career decisions throughout life. Along with the need to choose a profession, work toward specialization, and develop unique skills, it is also important to talk to young clients about the importance of establishing and fostering social support networks at work and in family life. Such support networks can contribute substantially to both their professional development and their well-being, particularly for women (e.g., Michael et al., 2015). Similarly, designing an organizational policy that emphasizes and encourages support is recommended.

The findings of this study also point to the negative potential evident in professional roles that are not clearly defined and that accord only minimal professional autonomy. Schools or organizations that do not provide counselors with autonomy and role clarity may harm their workers' occupational self-efficacy and, in turn, negatively impact their plans to remain in the workplace. As such, principals and systems responsible for counselors should work to clearly define counselors' roles, and allow them autonomy in fulfilling these roles.

Further, the framework for training and guiding counselors in the field should encourage counselors to initiate and seek more explicit job descriptions and even seek more autonomy at work. This recommendation corresponds with the term "job crafting," which defines the responsibility of employees to design their roles according to their preferences and tendencies, even if initially defined differently (Tims et al., 2012). Additionally, principals should be encouraged to define counselors' roles more clearly in order to maintain the school's all-important human capital and not lose talented and experienced counselors.

Limitations

Several limitations concerning the study's findings should be addressed. The sample focused on school counselors working in Israel, who are overwhelmingly female.

Although previous studies maintained that women are more affected by support than are men (Raghuram et al., 2012), it is unclear whether male counselors would demonstrate different results. Future studies should thus include males in their samples. Additionally, school counseling is one of many helping professions. Conducting this study with other helping professions may reveal commonalities between them. Another potential limitation is that the results were based solely on self-report data, which increases the risk of bias associated with self-reporting. Future studies should expand data collection on employees, incorporating more than a single source, such as managers or colleagues.

In addition, there are a number of limitations regarding certain research variables and how they were measured in the present study. The variable of future occupational plans was evaluated using a questionnaire constructed by the authors. This questionnaire must undergo further validation in future work. Role autonomy and role clarity were assessed using one item. This measure was meant to reflect the total sense of autonomy as well as the employees' overall sense of clarity regarding his or her role. At the same time, it is advisable for follow-up studies to examine different aspects of these variables with a more comprehensive questionnaire.

Furthermore, the model fit indices of the suggested model were satisfied and as accepted in the literature. These results support our suggested model. At the same time, the path coefficients are not high.

Conclusions

The study's findings have both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, they support the use of the Lent–Brown (2006, 2008) model for examining the future career plans of school counselors, an understudied population. Practically, the study's results highlight the positive impact of social support for school counselors, along with the benefits of a workplace that fosters role clarity and facilitates professional autonomy. Work environments that encompass these elements will likely imbue employees in general, and particularly school counselors, with a sense of self-efficacy, enhance their job satisfaction within the organization, and facilitate high levels of life satisfaction. Similarly, having social support, role clarity, and autonomy increase the likelihood of retention in the counseling field.

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