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EFFECT OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE ON COUNSELOR'S WORK ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: Work engagement serves as one of the dimensions contributing to the development of professional identity. This article aimed to describe the level of work engagement of school counselors, and the influence of work experience and educational background on counselors' work engagement. To this end, this comparative study involved school counselors as participants of the study, recruited using an incidental sampling technique. The participants were asked to share the invitation link to several school counselor social media groups in Indonesia. A work engagement scale adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was employed to collect the data. The data were analyzed by inferential statistics using two-way ANOVA. The result shows that the average work engagement of participants was categorized as high. It was also found that work experience and educational background did not affect counselors' work engagement. The results of this study serve as preliminary findings of a complete framework for further research on the professional identity of school counselors in Indonesia.

Keywords: work engagement, work experience, educational background, school counselor.

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INTRODUCTION

Dimensions related to career development in guidance and counseling need further attention, including the school counselors' work engagement. It refers to the school counselors' involvement in pursuing their field of expertise. Efforts in exploring work engagement are based on research on personal variables, such as work values, work engagement, and the professional quality of school counselors in education, with the aim of not only exploring the

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counselor's personal experience but also having an impact on the services provided to the counselee (Blount, Bjornsen, & Moore, 2018). A counselor's involvement in their professional domain is also one of the psychological attributes that represent the counselor's professional identity. (Puglia, 2009; Woo, Lu, Harris, & Cauley, 2017).

In the field of the teaching profession, the issue of work engagement also draws attention due to teachers' high turnover rate. In the US, for example, (Ingersoll, 2001) reported that up to fifty percent of teachers leave their teaching profession in the first ten years of their career. Among those who remain, only a quarter retire while half of them move to other jobs (Feng & Sass 2017). In western countries, approximately 25%-40% of novice teachers quit their teaching profession (Ewing & Smith, 2003).

One's work engagement has been depicted differently by some scholars. Some scholars describe it as an individual's job-related function to optimize their resources (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Others view it as a positive individual's job-related function representing one's thinking skills characterized by three aspects: vigor, absorption, and dedication (Lockwood, 2007; Gifford & Young, 2021; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011).

Individuals' vigor may be characterized by their high spirit and mental resilience in the workplace. High-spirited individuals are likely to be more focused on the task given to them and may attempt to continue making contributions despite the challenges and problems they face in the workplace. Dedication refers to a state of being intensely involved in work and having a sense of pride, inspiration, and enthusiasm for the work (Gifford & Young, 2021; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Dedicated individuals may find their work meaningful and proud. One's dedication can also be viewed from their job commitment (Suleiman, Olanrewaju, & Suleiman, 2019). Actions that represent commitment and dedication are factors that can encourage professional growth. Meanwhile, the third aspect of work engagement- Absorption-, is characterized by one's concentration and preoccupation on the job. Individuals absorbed into their job can spend their whole time on job-related tasks and find it difficult to stop working on the task (Gifford & Young, 2021; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011).

Despite its importance, studies investigating work engagement are still scarce. Among the studies, Blount, Bjornsen & Moore (2018) report that

attending counseling courses may enhance the school counselors' work engagement. In the guidance and counseling context, work engagement could be defined as the active participation of a professional counselor by the expected behavioral guidelines. A counselor, as a member of a professional organization, is expected to be more engaged with their profession than non-member counselors (Puglia, 2009). Based on the concept, it can be concluded that work engagement is a term to describe individuals' mental condition related to their profession, which is represented by enthusiasm, i.e., an individual's level of focus in enhancing effectiveness and dedication to their profession.

Existing literature highlight some variables that may affect one's work engagement, such as age, gender and race, job stress, and personality traits (Rothmann, Mostert, & Strydom, 2006). Work experience and educational background are also found to affect one's work engagement (Hoti, 2019; Jayanthi, Kowsalya, & Manju, 2020). In the Indonesian context, research on the English teacher association showed interesting results for further discussion (Basikin, 2007). The study found that work experience and skill linearity have no significant effect on work engagement. This means that work engagement of teachers with long teaching experience and linear skills tend to be similar to those with minimal teaching experience and non-linear skills.

Grounded from the description above, three hypotheses were proposed: first, educational background affects school counselors' work engagement, second, work experience affects school counselor work engagement, and third, there is an interaction pattern between educational background and work experience. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify, analyze, and draw conclusions about the effect of educational background and work experience on school counselors' work engagement.

METHOD

The recent study applied the quantitative comparative method, a method to explain the changes in one variable predicted by changes in other variables (Creswell, 2012). The use of a comparative method with an explanatory design in this study was intended to provide a description related to the effect of work experience and educational background on school counselor work engagement. The findings of this study also described the effect of the interaction between work experience and the educational background of the school counselor.

The target population was school counselors who expressed a willingness to participate online as research participants. The sampling technique used to reach the target population is incidental sampling. By using incidental sampling technique, the researcher looked for the target population through numerous school counselor WhatsApp groups and asked them to fill out the work engagement scale. As a result, 211 responses from 211 school counselors were obtained. The respondents came from 14 provinces in Indonesia, the distribution of the respondents is presented in the following table 1.

	Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents						
NO	VARIA	ABLE	Frequency	Percentage (%)			
1	Gender	•					
	a.	Male	49	23.2			
	b.	Female	162	76.8			
		Total	211	100			
2	Provinc	cial Origin					
	a.	Banten	11	5.2			
	b.	Bengkulu	1	.5			
	c.	DI Yogyakarta	27	12.8			
	d.	DKI Jakarta	5	2.4			
	e.	Gorontalo	1	.5			
	f.	Jawa Barat	81	38.4			
	g.	Jawa Tengah	47	22.3			
	h.	Jawa Timur	16	7.6			
	i.	Kalimantan Selatan	1	.5			
	j.	Lampung	7	3.3			
	k.	Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam	2	.9			
	1.	Nusa Tenggara Barat	2	.9			
	m.	Riau	1	.5			
	n.	Sumatera Selatan	9	4.3			
		Total	211	100			

The school counselors' work engagement in this study was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker dan Salanova (Schaufeli, 2014). It is a three-factor scale consisting of 17 items aiming to measure three dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor consists of 6 items, dedication consists of 5 items, while absorption consists of 6 items. Six response options were provided, starting from 0 (never), 1 (several times a year), 2 (once a month), 3 (several times a month), 4 (once a week), 5 (several times a week) to 6 (every day). The alpha coefficient of the instrument was .88, indicating that the scale was reliable to measure the school counselors' work engagement.

The data obtained were statistically processed and analyzed using a twoway ANOVA. This analysis technique is used to determine the comparative effect and interaction of work experience and educational background on work engagement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Work Experience and Educational Background

Work experience in this study is defined as the school counselors' professional experience, determined from their certification status. School counselors who have worked for more than seven years, based on the Indonesian government regulation, receive a professional certificate. Whereas those with a length of service of fewer than seven years are categorized as non-certified school counselors. Regarding educational background, in the present study, it is defined as the linearity of a school counselor's undergraduate education and their present profession, i.e., as a school counselor.

Table 2. Profile of Work Experience and Educational Background

No	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Work Experience		
	a. Certified	130	61.6
	b. Non-certified	81	38.4
	Total	211	100
2	Educational Background		
	a. Bachelor's degree in Guidance and	186	88.2
	Counseling		
	b. Bachelor's degrees in other majors	25	11.8
	Total	211	100

Respondents in the present study were categorized based on their educational background as some respondents did not have a bachelors' degree in guidance and counseling major. As shown in Table 2, 186 respondents (88.2%) held a bachelor's degree in guidance and counseling, while 25 respondents (11.8%) held a bachelor's degree in other majors. In addition to the educational background, respondents were also grouped based on their certification status, revealing that 130 respondents (61.6%) had been certified through the national certification program while 81 respondents (38.4%) had not been certified.

School Counselor's Work engagement

Work engagement consists of three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The instrument used to measure the level of work engagement is

the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) which was adapted from the instrument developed by Schaufeli and Bakker. This instrument consists of 17 items with a response scale of 0 - 6. A scale of 0 means Never; 1 means several times a year or less; 2 means once a month or less; 3 means several times a month; 4 means once a week; 5 means several times a week; and 6 means every day. Ideally, the respondent's minimum possible score is 0×16 points = 0 and the maximum possible score is 6×16 points = 96. The score is likely to move between the 0-96 score range.

Empirical results through descriptive statistics on work engagement variables are shown in the following Table 3.

Tuble 3. Descriptive Statistics of Work engagement					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work engagement	211	17	96	80.4	4.8
a. Vigor	211	7	36	30.4	4.2
b. Dedication	211	5	30	26.8057	4.67873
c. Absorption	211	5	30	23.374	12.15694

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Work engagement

As displayed in Table 3, the average score of work engagement of 211 respondents was 80.4. This empirical average was greater than the theoretical average of 48. By using the formula $M_e > M_t \ (80.4 > 48)$, it can be roughly described that the respondents' work engagement is in the high category. Table 3 and Figure 1 also present the mean differences between three dimensions in school counselor work engagement. The vigor dimension, indicating the school counselor's enthusiasm and energy in pursuing his work, tends to be higher than the dedication and absorption dimensions. Based on the formula for the average and the theoretical standard deviation, the researchers set a normative category with the following formula in Table 4.

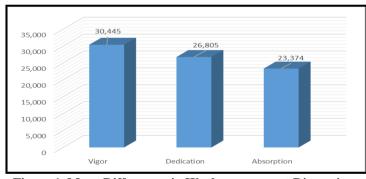


Figure 1. Mean Differences in Work engagement Dimensions

Table 4. Normative Category of Work engagement

Table 4. Normative Category of Work engagement						
Norm	Formula	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage		
Very High	$x > \mu + 1.5\sigma$	x > 76.5	115	54.5		
High	$\mu + .5\sigma < x \le \mu + .5\sigma$	$59.5 < x \le 76.5$	76	36		
Moderate	$\mu5\sigma < x \le \mu + .5\sigma$	$42.5 < x \le 59.5$	15	7.1		
Low	$\mu - 1.5\sigma < x \le \mu5\sigma$	$25.5 < x \le 42.5$	3	1.4		
Very Low	$x \le \mu - 1.5\sigma$	x ≤ 25.5	2	.9		
	·		n=211	100%		

As presented in Figure 2, most of the school counselors report high (36%) and very high (54.5%) work engagement, while only a few of them report low work engagement.

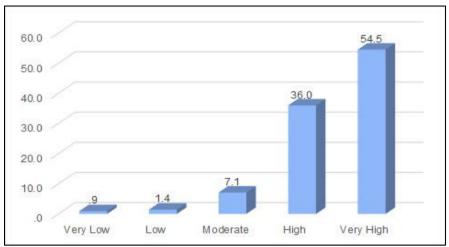


Figure 2. Percentage of Work engagement Level

Table 5 shows the average work engagement of school counselors in terms of work experience and educational background. From the data of these two variables, school counselors with a non-guidance and counseling educational background tend to have a higher average work engagement (79.4) compared to school counselors with guidance and counseling educational background (74.5). It was also found that noncertified school counselors tended to have a higher average work engagement (77.09) than certified school counselors (73.83).

The difference in the mean score of work experience and educational background was further examined to see the significance. In the present study, three hypotheses were tested, including 1) whether or not school counselors' educational background affect their work engagement (main effect), 2) whether or not school counselors' work experience affect their work engagement (main effect 2), and 3) how work experience and educational

background interact with each other (*interaction effect*). The analysis result is presented in Table 5.

Before hypotheses tests, a homogeneity test was conducted using Levene's test. Based on Levene's test results, it is known that the value of F=1.516 with df1=3, df2=207, and sig.= .211. According to the criteria, if the significance value (α) \geq .05, t can be interpreted that the sample group being tested comes from a population that has a homogeneous variance. Because the value of sig.=.211 \geq .05, it can be concluded that the compared groups have homogeneous variances. The homogeneity of variance is used as the basis for overcoming the number of respondents in each group which tends to be different. That is, the number of samples in each group of work experience and educational background is considered to be representative of their respective populations.

Table 6. Factorial ANOVA Test Results (3 x 2)

Table 6: Factorial 1110 vil Test Results (5 x 2)							
Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
Intercept	519945.179	1	519945.179	4.010E3	.000		
Inter-educational background (F _a)	438.584	1	438.584	3.382	.067		
inter-work experience (F _b)	102.634	1	102.634	.791	.375		
Interaction (F _{a*b})	30.133	1	30.133	.232	.630		
Galat (Error)	26843.061	207	129.677				
Total	1217439.000	211					

Table 6 presents the output data of factorial ANOVA of two independent variables (educational background and work experience) and one dependent variable (work engagement). Some important results were noticed related to the main effect based on the analysis results of each grouping variable and the interaction effect based on a combination of group variables. The main effect can be observed from the F score of the educational background factor (F_a -test) and work experience factor (F_b -test), while the interaction effect can be seen from the score of F-test result between educational background and work experience (F_a * $_b$).

The first important finding was that the Fcount for the inter-educational background factor (F_a-test) was 3.382 with a value of sig.=.067. As sig. value was higher than .05, hypothesis 1 stating that educational background affects

school counselors' occupational management was not supported. In other words, school counselors' educational background does not affect their work engagement.

Second, the Fcount for the inter-work experience factor (F_b-test) was .791 with a value of sig.=.375. This result indicates that the second hypothesis stating that work experience affects school counselors' work engagement was also not supported. That is, there is no significant difference in work engagement between certified and noncertified school counselors.

Third, the Fcount for the interactional factor between educational background and work experience (F_{a*b}) was .232 with a value of sig.= .630. Since the sig. value was .630 (> .05), the hypothesis stating there is a relationship between educational background and work experience was also rejected.

The last interesting result is related to the intercept pattern. In general, in the regression equation, the intercept is defined as the average value of Y when the X value is zero. In other words, if X does not contribute, then on average the Y variable will be able to change without being influenced by the existence of the independent variable. If the value of $< \alpha$ =.05, then the intercept is significant. Through the factorial ANOVA test, it is known that the value of sig. = .000 < .05. In conclusion, the average work engagement can change without being influenced by educational background and work experience factors.

Discussions

The present study was designed to determine the level of school counselors' work engagement and examine the effect of educational background and work experience on their work engagement. The present study found that school counselors' work engagement was categorized as high. However, the unanticipated findings were in line with that conducted by Basikin that educational background and work experience had no significant effect on teachers' work engagement in the English teaching context (Basikin, 2007). This finding in terms of work experience is supported by research conducted by Skovholt and Jennings (Konstam et al., 2015) that years of work experience do not guarantee an increase in one's expertise and professional development in counseling practice. This study found that school counselors with guidance and counseling backgrounds and those with non-guidance and counseling backgrounds reported a similar level of work engagement. The same goes for

work experience. Certified and noncertified school counselors also tend to report having relatively similar levels of work engagement.

The finding of this study contradicts Jayanthi, Kowsalya, and Manju (2020) and Hoti (2019) who argue that work experience variables (Blount et al., 2018; Ufaira, et. al., 2020) and educational background may affect one's work engagement. Its finding indicates that more relevant educational background and work experience results in an individuals' higher job-related engagement (Hoti, 2019; Trisnowati, 2018; Dwikurnaningsih, 2011). However, Basikin highlights that the effect of these two factors is irrelevant in his study on Indonesian English teachers' work engagement (Basikin, 2007). His study revealed that teachers with professional cerficiation tend to exhibit stagnant career progress as they perceives that they have already had safe position in their career. Such feeling of safety arises since, with their long work experience and professional certification, they are financially sufficient and guaranteed by the Indonesian government.

What is interesting for further discussion is that the average of the two factors shows a difference in the mean score. The group of school counselors with no guidance and counseling background and who have not been certified tends to have a higher mean score of work engagement than those with guidance and counseling background and more professional work experience. This condition raises a concern related to the syndrome of self-completism, a condition where an individual views him/herself as a certified, educated, oncefor-all school counselor (Kartadinata, 2011).

Related to the fact that school counselors are highly engaged in guidance and counseling services, one of the comparisons that can be used as a reference is research conducted on teachers (Basikin, 2007). High engagement is driven by various motives, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic. Extrinsic motives are related to material adequacy and job security guarantees, intrinsic motives are related to the nature of the teaching profession which is considered a dignified profession and teaching is a noble profession. Making work meaningful is an important aspect of improving performance and employee engagement (James & Emily, 2015).

Altruistic motives include a willingness to interact with children and help students achieve success (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Unfortunately, this study only reveals the evidence of work engagement among pre-service teachers and there is no factual condition that looks at the extent of the motives that encourage work engagement among teachers with longer work

experience. Related to the previous statement, many factors that influence the level of work engagement, such as psychological meaningfulness, job insecurity, employee empowerment, organizational commitment, happiness, learning goal, organizational circumstances, and institutional support (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008; Chugtai & Finian, 2011; Soelton et al., 2020; Warr, 2011; Warr & Inceoglu, 2012)

The limitation of this study lies in the possibility of a fairly high social desirability in the instrument or psychological scale used (Azwar, 2013). UWES as the instrument that the most used to examine the level of work engagement in many countries tends to use a generic work-related substance for any field of work. Explorations conducted in several online databases have not found a specific psychological scale to measure work engagement in the context of guidance and counseling. Because the indicators of questions about work tend to be general, there is a tendency for respondents to give the best response following social expectations that apply normatively. Besides that, a wider exploration and meaning is needed regarding the dimensions of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008). It would be more effective and representative if there were broad agreements on the meaning of work engagement and its dimensions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and analysis of the research results, it could be concluded that most of the school counselors' work engagement in this study was categorized as high. However, their educational background and work experience were found not to significantly affect their work engagement. It can be interpreted that educational background and work experiences have a small effect on the level of school counselors' work engagement.

Further scrutiny on the antecedents of school counselors' work engagement is pivotal. Future studies need to address the role of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motives in driving a school counselors' work engagement. As school counselors with long work experience and linear educational background exhibit a similar level of occupational engagement to those with minimum work experience and non-guidance and counseling education background, it seems critical to address a potential issue concerning self-completism. This is important to prevent school counselors from being preoccupied with their certification status and financial security. In addressing

such issues, skills and competency development may serve as one of the important strategies.

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