

Job Satisfaction among School and Vocational Guidance Counselors: An Empirical Study in Aflou, Algeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors in Aflou, Algeria, and to identify whether statistically significant differences existed according to gender, academic qualification/specialisation, and professional experience. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected using a 27-item Job Satisfaction Scale adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The instrument was administered to a main sample of 50 school and vocational guidance counsellors, while a pilot sample of 30 counsellors was used to verify its validity and reliability. The results revealed that counsellors reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. Significant differences were found according to gender, whereas no statistically significant differences were found according to academic qualification/specialisation or professional experience. The study recommends improving counsellors' working conditions, clarifying their professional role, and reducing non-counselling administrative duties.

Keywords: *Job Satisfaction, School Counsellors, Vocational Guidance, Educational Psychology, Algeria.*

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Introduction

School guidance counselors play an increasingly important role in modern educational systems. Their responsibilities are no longer limited to providing students with academic or vocational information; rather, they are expected to support students' academic achievement, social and emotional development, psychological adjustment, and readiness for higher education and future employment. In contemporary schools, counselors contribute to student success by helping learners understand their abilities, overcome educational difficulties, make appropriate decisions, and plan their academic and career pathways (O'Connor, 2018). This expanded role has made school counseling an essential component of the educational process.

Recent literature emphasizes that school counseling should be comprehensive, developmental, and prevention-oriented. School counselors are expected to respond to students' diverse needs through guidance programs that include academic support, career counseling, social-emotional learning, and mental health-related interventions. Hickman and Klassen (2022) argue that school counselor role advocacy is necessary because counselors are often required to defend the importance of their professional role within the school system. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) highlight the importance of theory-informed school counseling practices that focus on prevention, effectiveness, and measurable outcomes. These perspectives show that the counselor's work is closely linked to the overall quality of the school environment.

However, despite the importance of this role, school counselors often face several professional pressures that may limit their effectiveness. One of the main challenges is role ambiguity, as counselors may not always have a clearly defined job description. In many cases, they are assigned tasks that are not directly related to counseling, such as administrative duties, school paperwork, discipline-related responsibilities, or organizational tasks. Blake (2020) describes this problem as part of the ambiguous role of the high school counselor, where additional duties can reduce the time available for direct student support. Such role overlap may create tension between what counselors are professionally trained to do and what schools expect them to perform.

In addition to role ambiguity, counselors may also experience role conflict and excessive workload. Myburgh and van der Vyver (2022) explain that role conflict and role ambiguity can create serious challenges

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in school management contexts because individuals are expected to meet different and sometimes contradictory expectations. For school counselors, this may occur when they are simultaneously expected to provide psychological support, academic guidance, career orientation, administrative assistance, and responses to parents' and teachers' concerns. These pressures became even more visible during the COVID-19 period, when school counselors had to respond to increasing student needs while adapting to changing educational conditions and institutional demands (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021).

Within this context, job satisfaction becomes a central issue. Job satisfaction refers to the positive or negative feelings and attitudes that individuals hold toward their work. It is influenced by personal, professional, and organizational factors, including self-efficacy, supervisor support, training opportunities, role clarity, workload, and the general work environment. For school counselors, job satisfaction is particularly important because it affects their motivation, commitment, emotional well-being, and ability to provide effective guidance services. Bakar et al. (2009) showed that job satisfaction among Malaysian school counselors is an important professional issue, while Ooi et al. (2021) emphasized that counselor self-efficacy is strongly shaped by supervisor support, access to training, and mastery experiences.

Job satisfaction among counselors is not only important for counselors themselves, but also for students and the school as a whole. A satisfied counselor is more likely to perform guidance tasks with commitment, patience, and professional effectiveness. This can improve the quality of academic, psychological, social, and vocational support provided to students. Conversely, low job satisfaction may reduce counselors' motivation, weaken their professional performance, and limit their ability to respond effectively to students' needs. Hu (2013) suggests that counselor work performance is an important factor in the effectiveness of guidance services, which indicates that counselors' professional conditions may influence the quality of support provided to learners.

The problem addressed in the present study is that school guidance counselors often work under difficult professional conditions, including overlapping responsibilities, administrative workload, role ambiguity, and multiple expectations from school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. These conditions may negatively affect their level of job satisfaction and may reduce the quality of guidance services offered to students. Therefore, studying job satisfaction among school guidance counselors is important for understanding their professional reality and for improving the effectiveness of counseling services in schools.

Although job satisfaction has been widely studied among teachers, school administrators, and other educational staff, there remains a need for more research focusing specifically on school guidance counselors. Within the Scopus-based literature reviewed for this study, several works address school counseling roles, counselor self-efficacy, role ambiguity, and professional challenges in different contexts, but fewer studies focus directly on job satisfaction among school guidance counselors in the Algerian educational context. This gap is important because the professional conditions of counselors may differ from one educational system to another. Therefore, examining job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors in Algeria can contribute to a better understanding of their work environment and professional needs.

Based on the above, the present study aims to measure the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors in Algeria and to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to selected demographic and professional variables, namely gender, academic qualification, and professional experience.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to gender?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to academic qualification?

4. Are there statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to professional experience?

Research Hypotheses

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

H1: School and vocational guidance counselors have a moderate level of job satisfaction.

H2: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to gender.

H3: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to academic qualification.

H4: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counselors according to professional experience.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted the descriptive-analytical method, as it is appropriate for describing educational and psychological phenomena as they exist in reality and for analysing their characteristics statistically. This approach was used to determine the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors and to examine whether statistically significant differences exist according to gender, academic qualification, and professional experience.

Study Boundaries

The study was conducted within the following boundaries:

- **Spatial boundary:** The study was carried out in the municipality of Aflou, Laghouat Province, Algeria, among school and vocational guidance counsellors working in middle and secondary schools.
- **Temporal boundary:** The fieldwork was conducted during the second semester of the 2021–2022 academic year.
- **Human boundary:** The study targeted school and vocational guidance counsellors. A pilot sample of 30 counsellors was used to test the research instrument, while the main study sample consisted of 50 counsellors selected randomly.

Study Sample

The study relied on two samples: a pilot sample and a main sample. The pilot sample was used to verify the clarity and psychometric properties of the questionnaire, whereas the main sample was used to test the study hypotheses.

2.3.1 Pilot Sample

The pilot sample consisted of 30 school and vocational guidance counsellors working in different middle and secondary schools in Aflou, Laghouat Province. The participants were selected randomly in order to ensure that the questionnaire items were understandable and suitable for the target population.

Table 1: Distribution of the Pilot Sample According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	17	56.7%
Female	13	43.3%
Total	30	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

As shown in Table 1, the pilot sample included 17 male counsellors, representing 56.7%, and 13 female counsellors, representing 43.3%. This indicates that male counsellors represented a slightly higher proportion of the pilot sample.

Table 2: Distribution of the Pilot Sample According to Academic Qualification

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	16	53.3%
Master's degree	14	46.7%
Total	30	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

Table 2 shows that 16 counsellors held a bachelor's degree, representing 53.3% of the pilot sample, while 14 counsellors held a master's degree, representing 46.7%. This indicates that the pilot sample was relatively balanced in terms of academic qualification.

Table 3: Distribution of the Pilot Sample According to Professional Experience

Professional Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10 years	10	33.3%
From 10 to 20 years	14	46.7%
More than 20 years	6	20%
Total	30	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

As presented in Table 3, 10 counsellors had less than 10 years of professional experience, representing 33.3%; 14 counsellors had between 10 and 20 years of experience, representing 46.7%; and 6 counsellors had more than 20 years of experience, representing 20%.

Main Sample

The main sample consisted of 50 school and vocational guidance counsellors working in middle and secondary schools in Aflou, Laghouat Province. The participants were selected randomly in order to examine the level of job satisfaction and test the hypotheses of the study.

Table 4: Distribution of the Main Sample According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	31	62%
Female	19	38%
Total	50	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

Table 4 indicates that the main sample included 31 male counsellors, representing 62%, and 19 female counsellors, representing 38%. Thus, male counsellors represented the majority of the study sample.

Table 5: Distribution of the Main Sample According to Academic Qualification

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Bachelor's degree	28	57.5%
Master's degree	22	42.5%
Total valid responses	50	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

Table 5 shows that, among the valid responses related to academic qualification, 28 counsellors held a bachelor's degree, representing 57.5%, while 22 counsellors held a master's degree, representing 42.5%.

Table 6: Distribution of the Main Sample According to Professional Experience

Professional Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10 years	22	44%
From 10 to 20 years	19	38%
More than 20 years	9	18%
Total	50	100%

Note. Source: Authors' field survey data, 2021–2022.

As shown in Table 6, 22 counsellors had less than 10 years of experience, representing 44%; 19 counsellors had between 10 and 20 years of experience, representing 38%; and 9 counsellors had more than 20 years of experience, representing 18%. This indicates that the largest proportion of the sample consisted of counsellors with less than 10 years of professional experience.

Research Instrument

Job Satisfaction Scale

The study used a job satisfaction scale adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Weiss et al. (1967). The scale was originally designed to measure employees' attitudes towards their jobs and has been widely used in different organisational and educational contexts.

In the present study, the scale consisted of 27 items formulated as closed-ended statements. The items were adapted to suit the professional context of school and vocational guidance counsellors. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction using a five-point Likert scale.

Table 7: Scoring of the Job Satisfaction Scale

Response Alternative	Score
Very satisfied	5
Satisfied	4
Undecided	3
Dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	1

Note. Source: Adapted from Weiss et al. (1967).

Higher scores indicate a higher level of job satisfaction, while lower scores indicate a lower level of job satisfaction.

Psychometric Properties of the Research Instrument

Internal Consistency Validity

Internal consistency validity was examined by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficients between the score of each item and the total score of the Job Satisfaction Scale. This analysis was conducted using the pilot sample.

Table 8: Item–Total Correlation Coefficients of the Job Satisfaction Scale

Item	Pearson's r	Significance Level
1	.640	p < .001
2	.723	p < .001
3	.700	p < .001
4	.796	p < .001
5	.796	p < .001
6	.617	p < .001
7	.631	p < .001
8	.584	p < .001
9	.800	p < .001
10	.102	p = .522
11	.852	p < .001
12	.865	p < .001
13	.267	p = .100
14	.552	p < .001
15	.630	p < .001
16	.713	p < .001
17	.659	p < .001
18	.889	p < .001
19	.685	p < .001
20	.711	p < .001
21	.773	p < .001
22	.792	p < .001
23	.136	p = .397
24	.853	p < .001
25	.861	p < .001
26	.819	p = .001

27	.899	$p = .007$
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Note. Source: Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data using SPSS version 18.

Table 8 shows that most items had statistically significant positive correlations with the total score of the scale. This indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency. However, items 10, 13, and 23 did not show statistically significant correlations with the total score. The remaining items showed significant correlations, which supports the validity of the scale for measuring job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors.

Extreme-Groups Validity

Extreme-groups validity was also used to examine the discriminative validity of the scale. The upper and lower groups were identified based on the total scores of the pilot sample. Eight counsellors with the highest scores and eight counsellors with the lowest scores were selected. An independent-samples *t*-test was then applied to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Table 9: Independent-Samples t-Test for Extreme-Groups Validity.

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	Significance Level
Lower group	8	75.38	3.021	14	-8.137	$p < 0.001$
Upper group	8	84.13	0.354	14		

Note. Source: Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data using SPSS version 18.

The results in Table 9 indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between the upper and lower groups, $t(14) = -8.137$, $p < .001$. This confirms that the scale has acceptable discriminative validity and is able to distinguish between counsellors with high and low levels of job satisfaction.

Reliability of the Scale

The reliability of the Job Satisfaction Scale was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half reliability method.

Table 10: Reliability Coefficients of the Job Satisfaction Scale

Scale	Number of Items	Split-Half Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction	27	0.968	0.811

Note. Source: Authors' calculations based on pilot survey data using SPSS version 18.

As shown in Table 10, the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.968, indicating a high level of reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.811, which also indicates good internal consistency. These results confirm that the Job Satisfaction Scale has an acceptable level of reliability and can be used in the present study.

Statistical Methods

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 18. The following statistical techniques were used:

- Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the internal consistency validity of the scale by calculating the relationship between each item and the total score.

- Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half method were used to assess the reliability of the Job Satisfaction Scale.
- Means and standard deviations were calculated to determine the general level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors.
- Independent-samples *t*-tests were used to examine differences in job satisfaction according to gender and academic qualification.
- One-way analysis of variance was used to examine differences in job satisfaction according to professional experience, since this variable included three categories.

Results

This section presents, analyses and discusses the findings of the study. The aim was to identify the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors in Aflou, Algeria, and to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to gender, academic qualification/specialisation, and professional experience.

Testing the First Hypothesis: Level of Job Satisfaction

The first hypothesis stated that:

H1: School and vocational guidance counsellors have a high level of job satisfaction.

To test this hypothesis, a one-sample *t*-test was used by comparing the observed mean score of job satisfaction with the hypothetical mean of the scale. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: One-Sample t-Test for the Level of Job Satisfaction

Scale	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	df	t-value	Sig.	Significance Level
Job satisfaction	50	83.90	5.702	68	49	0.99	.320	.05

Source: Authors' calculations based on field survey data using SPSS version 18.

As shown in Table 11, the mean score of job satisfaction was 83.90 with a standard deviation of 5.702. Although the observed mean was higher than the hypothetical mean of 68, the one-sample *t*-test was not statistically significant, $t(49) = 0.99, p = .320$. Since the significance value was greater than .05, the hypothesis predicting a high level of job satisfaction was not supported.

Accordingly, the findings indicate that school and vocational guidance counsellors in the study sample showed a moderate level of job satisfaction. This result may be explained by the nature of the counsellor's work in the school environment, where professional satisfaction can be affected by workload, role ambiguity, administrative responsibilities and the level of institutional support. Therefore, while counsellors may show some satisfaction with their work, their satisfaction does not reach a high level.

Testing the Second Hypothesis: Differences According to Gender

The second hypothesis stated that:

H2: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors according to gender.

To test this hypothesis, an independent-samples *t*-test was used to compare the job satisfaction scores of male and female counsellors. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Independent-Samples t-Test for Differences in Job Satisfaction According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	Sig.	Significance Level
Male	31	83.55	5.977	48	2.98	.005	.01
Female	19	84.68	5.303				

Source: Authors' calculations based on field survey data using SPSS version 18.

Table 12 shows that the mean score of job satisfaction was 83.55 for male counsellors and 84.68 for female counsellors. The results of the independent-samples *t*-test indicated a statistically significant difference according to gender, $t(48) = 2.98$, $p = .005$. Since the significance value was lower than .01, the second hypothesis was supported.

This means that gender appears to be associated with differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors. According to the means reported in Table 12, female counsellors recorded a slightly higher mean score than male counsellors. This finding suggests that perceptions of work conditions, professional support, and satisfaction with the counselling role may differ between male and female counsellors.

Testing the Third Hypothesis: Differences According to Academic Qualification/Specialisation

The third hypothesis stated that:

H3: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors according to academic qualification/specialisation.

To test this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance was used. The results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Job Satisfaction According to Academic Qualification/Specialisation.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.	Significance Level
Between groups	70.652	2	35.326	1.091	.344	.05
Within groups	1522.328	47	32.390			
Total	1592.980	49				

Source: Authors' calculations based on field survey data using SPSS version 18.

The results in Table 13 show that there were no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to academic qualification/specialisation, $F(2, 47) = 1.091$, $p = .344$. Since the significance value was greater than .05, the third hypothesis was not supported.

This result indicates that academic qualification or specialisation did not have a significant effect on the level of job satisfaction among the counsellors in the study sample. In other words, counsellors' satisfaction with their work may be influenced more by working conditions, institutional support, workload and role clarity than by their academic qualification alone.

Testing the Fourth Hypothesis: Differences According to Professional Experience

The fourth hypothesis stated that:

H4: There are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors according to professional experience.

To test this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance was used. The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Job Satisfaction According to Professional Experience

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.	Significance Level
Between groups	48.487	1	48.487	1.507	.226	.05
Within groups	1544.493	48	32.177			
Total	1592.980	49				

Source: Authors' calculations based on field survey data using SPSS version 18.

As shown in Table 14, there were no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to professional experience, $F(1, 48) = 1.507, p = .226$. Since the significance value was greater than .05, the fourth hypothesis was not supported.

This means that professional experience did not significantly affect the level of job satisfaction among the counsellors in the study sample. Counsellors with different levels of experience appeared to have relatively similar perceptions of job satisfaction. This may suggest that the factors affecting satisfaction are shared across experience groups, particularly those related to the work environment, administrative duties, institutional expectations and the nature of counselling work.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 15: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
H1: School and vocational guidance counsellors have a high level of job satisfaction.	One-sample <i>t</i> -test	Not significant	Not supported
H2: There are significant differences according to gender.	Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test	Significant	Supported
H3: There are significant differences according to academic qualification/specialisation.	One-way ANOVA	Not significant	Not supported
H4: There are significant differences according to professional experience.	One-way ANOVA	Not significant	Not supported

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical results.

The findings show that school and vocational guidance counsellors reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. Significant differences were found according to gender, while no significant differences were found according to academic qualification/specialisation or professional experience. These results suggest that job satisfaction among guidance counsellors is more closely related to the general professional and organisational conditions of their work than to academic or experience-related variables.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors in Aflou, Algeria, and to determine whether statistically significant differences existed according to gender, academic qualification/specialisation, and professional experience. Overall, the findings showed that counsellors reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. Significant differences were found according

to gender, whereas no statistically significant differences were observed according to academic qualification/specialisation or professional experience.

The finding that school and vocational guidance counsellors showed a moderate level of job satisfaction is consistent with previous research on school counsellors. For example, Bakar et al. (2009) found a moderate level of job satisfaction among Malaysian school counsellors. This similarity suggests that moderate job satisfaction may reflect the complex nature of school counselling work, where counsellors often experience both positive professional meaning and organisational constraints. In the Algerian context, counsellors may value their role in supporting pupils academically, psychologically and vocationally, yet their satisfaction may be limited by administrative duties, workload, insufficient resources, and unclear role boundaries. Bakar et al.'s study reported a moderate level of satisfaction among Malaysian school counsellors, which supports the interpretation of the present result.

This moderate level of satisfaction can also be interpreted in light of the role ambiguity experienced by school counsellors. Blake (2020) showed that high school counsellors may suffer from role ambiguity and role conflict because of unclear job descriptions, overlap with other school roles, supervision by non-counselling administrators, and inadequate evaluation procedures. These organisational factors may reduce counsellors' ability to focus on their core counselling tasks and may weaken their professional satisfaction. Therefore, the moderate level found in the present study may reflect the fact that counsellors are not entirely dissatisfied with their work, but they do not experience optimal professional conditions either.

The result is also compatible with studies linking counsellors' stress and burnout to job satisfaction. Mullen et al. (2017) found that perceived stress and burnout were strongly and negatively associated with school counsellors' job satisfaction, and that burnout mediated the relationship between stress and job satisfaction. Similarly, Kim and Lambie (2018), in their review of burnout among professional school counsellors, emphasised that occupational stress and burnout are central issues affecting counsellors' professional functioning. These studies suggest that job satisfaction among school counsellors cannot be understood only as an individual attitude; rather, it is closely connected to the organisational and emotional demands of the counselling role.

The finding of significant differences in job satisfaction according to gender indicates that male and female counsellors may experience their professional role differently. In the present study, female counsellors reported a slightly higher mean score than male counsellors. This result may be explained by differences in professional expectations, coping strategies, perceived social support, or the way male and female counsellors experience school-based responsibilities. However, this finding should be interpreted cautiously because the mean difference between the two groups was relatively small. Previous studies have not always produced consistent results regarding gender differences in counsellors' job satisfaction, which suggests that gender may interact with other contextual factors, such as work climate, family responsibilities, administrative support, and social expectations.

The absence of statistically significant differences according to academic qualification/specialisation suggests that job satisfaction among counsellors may not depend primarily on their academic degree. Instead, satisfaction may be more strongly influenced by work-related conditions, including supervision, training, workload, autonomy and institutional recognition. This interpretation is supported by Ooi et al. (2021), who found that mastery experience, access to training, perceived supervisor support and counselling self-efficacy contributed to job satisfaction among Malaysian secondary school counsellors. Their findings indicate that professional support and practical competence may be more important for job satisfaction than formal qualification alone.

Similarly, the absence of significant differences according to professional experience suggests that counsellors with different lengths of service may share similar working conditions and organisational challenges. In other words, both less experienced and more experienced counsellors may be exposed to comparable administrative pressures, unclear role expectations and high professional demands. Mullen et al. (2017) reported that stress, burnout and job satisfaction did not differ according to school level, while Mullen et al. (2021) found that larger student caseloads were associated with higher burnout and job stress

and lower job satisfaction. These findings support the idea that organisational factors, rather than experience alone, may play a stronger role in shaping counsellors' satisfaction.

The findings of the present study also have implications for the quality of guidance services provided to pupils. Previous research has shown that school counsellors can positively influence pupils' academic and behavioural outcomes. Carrell and Hoekstra (2014) found that the presence of an additional school counsellor was associated with reduced student misbehaviour and improved academic achievement among boys. This means that improving counsellors' working conditions and job satisfaction is not only important for counsellors themselves, but also for pupils and the overall effectiveness of the school environment.

Furthermore, the results should be understood within the broader international discussion on the changing role of school counsellors. Savitz-Romer et al. (2021) highlighted that school counsellors became even more important during the COVID-19 period because pupils' academic, social-emotional and postsecondary needs increased, while counsellors continued to face organisational constraints such as administrative duties and unclear role expectations. Although the present study was conducted in a local Algerian context, its findings are consistent with this wider literature showing that counsellors' job satisfaction is closely connected to role clarity, institutional support and the ability to dedicate sufficient time to direct counselling services.

In general, the present findings suggest that the moderate level of job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors may be the result of a balance between the meaningful nature of counselling work and the constraints imposed by the school environment. Counsellors may derive satisfaction from helping pupils, supporting educational choices and contributing to pupils' psychological and social adjustment. However, this satisfaction may be weakened when counsellors are required to perform non-counselling tasks, when their role is poorly understood, or when they lack sufficient support from school leadership.

Therefore, the findings point to the importance of improving the organisational conditions of school counselling in Algeria. School authorities should clarify the professional role of counsellors, reduce unnecessary administrative duties, provide continuous professional development, and strengthen supervision and institutional support. Such measures may improve counsellors' job satisfaction and enable them to provide more effective academic, psychological and vocational guidance to pupils.

Conclusion

This study examined job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors in Aflou, Algeria. It aimed to identify the general level of job satisfaction and to determine whether statistically significant differences existed according to gender, academic qualification/specialisation, and professional experience. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach and relied on a job satisfaction scale administered to a sample of 50 school and vocational guidance counsellors.

The findings revealed that school and vocational guidance counsellors showed a moderate level of job satisfaction. Although the observed mean score was higher than the hypothetical mean of the scale, the statistical results did not support the assumption of a high level of job satisfaction. This indicates that counsellors experience a certain degree of satisfaction with their work, but this satisfaction remains limited by professional and organisational conditions.

The results also showed that there were statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to gender, with female counsellors reporting a slightly higher mean score than male counsellors. However, no statistically significant differences were found according to academic qualification/specialisation or professional experience. These findings suggest that job satisfaction among school and vocational guidance counsellors may be influenced more by the general conditions of the school environment than by qualification level or length of professional experience.

The study highlights the importance of paying closer attention to the working conditions of school and vocational guidance counsellors. Their job satisfaction is not only important for their own professional well-being, but also for the quality of guidance and counselling services provided to pupils. When counsellors are satisfied, supported and professionally recognised, they are more likely to perform their roles effectively and contribute positively to pupils' academic, psychological, social and vocational development.

Main Findings

The study reached the following main findings:

1. School and vocational guidance counsellors in Aflou reported a moderate level of job satisfaction.
2. There were statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to gender.
3. Female counsellors recorded a slightly higher level of job satisfaction than male counsellors.
4. There were no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to academic qualification/specialisation.
5. There were no statistically significant differences in job satisfaction according to professional experience.
6. The results suggest that organisational and professional conditions may play a greater role in shaping counsellors' job satisfaction than personal or demographic variables.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. The role of school and vocational guidance counsellors should be clearly defined in order to reduce role ambiguity and role conflict.
2. School administrations should reduce the administrative and non-counselling duties assigned to counsellors, allowing them to focus on their core guidance and counselling responsibilities.
3. Educational authorities should provide continuous professional development programmes for counsellors, particularly in the areas of psychological support, career guidance, stress management and student counselling.
4. School leaders should offer stronger institutional and emotional support to counsellors, as supportive leadership can improve job satisfaction and professional commitment.
5. The student-to-counsellor ratio should be reviewed in order to reduce workload and improve the quality of individual guidance services.
6. Counsellors should be involved in educational decision-making processes related to guidance, orientation and student support.
7. Regular evaluation of counsellors' working conditions should be conducted in order to identify professional difficulties and improve the school counselling environment.
8. Greater recognition should be given to the role of school and vocational guidance counsellors within the Algerian educational system.

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