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A Study of Select Factors That Influence the Perceptions of School Social Workers' Levels of Satisfaction with Their Professional Practice

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

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A STUDY OF SELECT FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS’ LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH  
THEIR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Committee Chair: Gerry L. White, Ph.D.

Dissertation dated August 2018

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and ways it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: the level of decision making, workload management, professional development, collaboration, and advocacy. Specifically, this study sought to determine if school social workers are satisfied with their roles in the school system and daily practice. The 130 participants of the study were district presidents who reached out to all Georgia school social workers and members of the state’s School Social Workers Association (SSWAG) which is the state’s charter of the larger national organization—School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA). All respondents participated in the study voluntarily.
The data analysis was conducted on two levels: descriptive findings and analytical procedures. The first section presented descriptive findings associated with demographic variables, the social work practice experience, and school social work settings results. The second level of the analysis tested the hypotheses under study. This section used Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient to test the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable—overall levels of satisfaction in professional practice—and each of the independent variables: perceived level of decision making, workload management, professional development, collaboration, and advocacy.

The researcher found that there was a moderately strong positive correlation between the overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of decision making and workload management. There was a strong positive correlation with the perceived level of professional development. The perceived level of collaboration resulted in a weak positive correlation and a moderate positive correlation was found in the perceived level of advocacy. The conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that all five independent variables showed a correlation with the dependent variable. These study findings may be useful not only for school social workers but also for support staff (school psychologist, counselors, etc.) and school administrators.
A STUDY OF SELECT FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS’ LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
CYNTHIA SIMMONS TURNER

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The global definition of the social work profession is as follows: “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014, para. 1). Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central attributes to the social work profession. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge, social workers engage people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. Social workers fulfill these responsibilities in a myriad of settings, including schools.

A school social worker is an advocate who helps students to reach their potential in the school setting (Massat, Kelly, & Constable, 2016). In order to fulfill this goal, support services are provided in order to help remove obstacles to a child's academic success. School social workers play a critical role in schools and educational settings as they work within the educational system to provide services to students to enhance their emotional well-being and improve their academic performance (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009). School districts employ or contract social workers to provide services. Barker’s (2003) research shows that school social workers help students, families, and teachers address various problems: truancy; social withdrawal; overaggressive behaviors;
the effects of special physical, emotional, or economic problems; substance abuse; and sexuality.

Social work began with the pioneer Jane Addams. In 1931 she became one of the first women to receive a Nobel Peace Prize. Best known for establishing settlement houses in Chicago for immigrants in the early 1900s, Addams was a dedicated community organizer and peace activist (Watts, 2014). Entrenched in social changes, and in its infancy social workers attempted to tackle poverty and inequality (Ehrenreich, 2014). Although, Social work is intricately linked with the idea of charity work; it must be understood in broader terms. The concept of charity can be traced back to biblical times and imbedded in all major religions. For example, charity is required of Muslims as one of the religion's five pillars and the Jewish and Christian faiths espouse tithing (giving 10% of income earned) (Brodd, 2013). However, the modern social work profession and program has origins in 19th century concept of charity (Reisch & Andrews, 2014). Even considering its theological origins, social workers serve clients from all or no faith and help them to overcome social challenges (Ehrenreich, 2014).

The specialty area of school social work practice evolved in the early 1900's to address the compulsory school attendance laws (Massat, Kelly, & Constable, 2016). The compulsory attendance laws established mandatory school attendance for children. These laws generally provide that children between certain ages must attend public, private, or home school. Failure to comply may result in criminal sanctions for parents or caretakers (La Morte, 2008). The development of child labor laws coincided with compulsory school attendance laws. Northern states such as New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, and
Connecticut were the first states to establish the practice of school social work (Allen-Meares, 1994). Today, most states enacted laws to ensure children attend school until a certain age: social workers provide services to aid at-risk youth to remain enrolled and navigate the educational system.

In the early 1900s, school social workers were termed visiting teachers. The role of a visiting teacher was to act as a liaison between the school and the community in an effort to address the unique needs of students and families. Visiting teachers were responsible for the promotion of student attendance and the protection of the educational rights of children (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). The two primary objectives of the visiting teacher were to support and educate families about the importance of their children attending school and inform educators about the circumstances and experiences of the children coming to their classrooms (Corbin, 2005; Nesbit, 1976). The social work profession grew as the needs for visiting teachers increased. By 1930, 21 states incorporated school social work services as a permanent part of the school system (Constable, McDonald, & Flynn, 2002). A 1917 study of truancy in Chicago supported the need for school attendance officers who understood the social problems of the community and responsibilities best suited for social workers (Allen-Meares, 1994). School social workers have a unique ability to address both the internal and external aspects of a student's educational process (Corbin, 2005).

In the 1930s, the focus of school social work began to shift from the roles of attendance officer and community liaison to that of social caseworker (Allen-Meares, 2006). During this shift, school social workers began to take on more specialized roles.
Behavioral and social-emotional support became the primary focus of school social workers. By the 1940s, social casework was the primary function of school social work (Corbin, 2005). From 1940 to 1960, social casework in the schools was the most common task of school social workers. The varying duties associated with casework focused on the emotional needs of individual children (Constable et al., 2002).

According to Kopels and Lindsey (2006), the roles and responsibilities of contemporary school social workers expanded significantly to keep pace with the problems commonly found in schools. For example, students battle homelessness, addiction (themselves or parents’/family members), abuse, and bullying. While some of these conditions span the decades, the way in which they surface changed recently. School social workers began to administer assessments and develop interventions for at-risk students in their schools to combat these conditions.

The development of school social work is rooted in the school’s recognition of the importance of nonacademic factors in students’ success in learning, adjustment, and growth (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). School social workers bring unique professional knowledge and skills to the education system. They enhance the school systems’ abilities to meet their academic missions by addressing home-to-school and community partnerships and relationships (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). School social workers use the approach of developing relationships between people and their environment by utilizing prevention strategies and interventions designed to contribute to the overall health of the school environment (Kopels & Lindsey, 2006). The purpose of prevention, focusing on the total wellness of individual students and the
collective student body, and intervention, targeting at-risk students, responsibilities are to promote a positive school climate to help all students to learn and to develop social competence (Allen-Meares, 2006). Through assessment, crisis intervention, and coordination of community services, school social workers help students, families, and school systems overcome barriers that interfere with learning (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). School social workers perform a critical function in academic environments by providing services to supplement instruction while simultaneously contributing to positive student outcomes.

School social workers’ duties begin where teachers’ end. They are, perhaps, the professionals most competent to address the social and psychological issues that block academic progress (Allen-Meares, 2007). Through counseling, crisis intervention and prevention programs, school social workers help young people overcome the difficulties in their lives and increase their chances of succeeding in school (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2014). Research shows that the number of school social workers in a school district positively influences the number of high school completers. School districts with social workers have more students completing high school, signifying that the knowledge and skills social workers bring to the school districts enhance educational and student outcomes (Alvarez, 2013).

Approximately 5% of this country’s half a million social workers works in schools, primarily in public school settings (Allen-Meares, 2006). Besides helping youth with traditional academic problems, social workers serve others whose specific social, psychological, emotional, or physical difficulties adversely impact their academic
pursuits. Examples of student populations served include homeless youth, gay and lesbian youth, and young people with physical or mental disabilities (Kopels & Lindsey, 2006). Because social workers are trained to think of innovative solutions to complex problems, their interventions often make a strong difference for young people at risk for academic failure (NASW, 2014).

Social workers are uniquely equipped to intervene with at-risk youth in the school settings: the discipline emphasizes training and understanding of youths who are affected by severe poverty, abuse, neglect, and disabilities (Allen-Meares, 2010). As a profession, school-based social work recognized the ethical need to offer school-based practitioners ways to offer youths the most effective and evidence-based services to meet their needs (Powers, Bowen, Weber, & Bowen, 2011). With the increasing number and intensity of social problems experienced by students, school social workers work with educators to ensure that service delivery helps the greatest number of students in the most effective and efficient ways (Staudt, 1991).

The need for social workers in the school setting is more essential than ever. School social workers provide services to the increasing number of students with social and mental health problems (Kopels & Lindsey, 2006). Despite the need and historical presence of school social workers in school systems, factors that negatively impact students’ success remain. (Allen-Meares, 2007). These factors include, but are not limited to the following: the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy. This study examined these factors.
Statement of the Problem

As the past president of the School Social Workers Association of Georgia, this practitioner witnessed many challenges to achieving school social work's goals. The role of the school social worker and the perception to which they are satisfied with their performance is often impacted by many factors. Changing demands for the profession include the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy. Researchers should investigate contemporary school social workers’ lived experiences. Each of the five factors will be discussed in further detail.

School social workers participate in professional development trainings and present current research projects. Current research in the field addresses the following topics: practice and policy to serve today’s youth (Allen-Meares & Montgomery, 2014). Through scholarship and presentations, professionals share ways children continue to suffer from poverty, poor health, absence of basic needs, and the inadequate access to a quality education. The article provided social workers with a contextual setting for progress (Allen-Meares & Montgomery, 2014).

According to Greene and Lee (2001), school social workers should be trained to provide the therapy needed to address students’ changing mental health issues. They argue that school social workers have the competence in providing effective services and interventions to benefit students and enhance their academic performance. According to Franklin (2005) school social workers should advocate for themselves in the school system and demonstrate their work with diverse populations. Examples of advocacy
include being knowledgeable about funding sources for the practice and collaborating with community service providers. This article mentions the use of technology in order to transmit data and prepare referrals. Accountability has become a crucial factor to providing outcome data in school social work. One has to be able to measure and report outcomes to show a strong association with the school challenges (Franklin, 2005).

The research closely follows a study conducted by Cooper (2016) in which she sought to study school social workers’ perceptions of barriers to practice. Cooper found barriers impeding school-based social work practice included (a) lack of understanding of the role of school social workers, (b) limited resources (e.g., funding, staff, space, and community), (c) limited resources and language barriers; and (d) expert feedback facilitated development of specific strategies to overcome the identified barriers. To this end, similar factors are associated with school social workers’ satisfaction with their professional practice.

**School Social Workers Number of Referrals**

School social workers typically receive numerous referrals, which comprise their caseloads. On average, school social workers’ caseloads range between 4 and 10 school assignments and more than 1,000 students (Allen-Meares, 2007). Social workers serve very large caseloads, particularly in highly populated school systems, without the necessary and appropriate support needed (Cawood, 2010; Garrett, 2006; Whittlesey-Jerome, 2012). This dynamic creates challenges in complying with existing mandates and pursuing new initiatives (Leyba, 2009; Teasley, Canifield, Archuleta, Crutchfield, & Chavis, 2012). The State Department of Education (GaDOE, 2014) reported 1,639,077
students in the state’s public schools used school social workers’ services during the 2011-2012 school year. Most schools in the state of Georgia employ only one social worker for every 2,475 students. These school social workers in the selected southern state provide services to multiple schools in each district (GaDOE, 2014). The student to school social worker ratio throughout the state impedes their ability to provide exemplary service to all students and their families.

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) (2013) recommends a maximum ratio of one Master of Social Work (MSW) level school social worker to 250 general education students, or one school social worker per building serving 250 students or fewer. The recommendation was informed by the roles and functions of the profession as outlined in the SSWAA School Social Work National Practice Model (2013). In spite of the rotational and recommended ratios, most schools in the state fail to meet this recommendation (School Social Work Association of America, 2013).

**Perception of Administrators Knowledge of School Social Work Roles and Expertise**

School social workers assist public school administrators in ensuring students receive practical and effective interventions to address their academic and psychosocial needs. However, school based leaders often lack knowledge about school social workers’ knowledge bases, abilities, and levels of expertise. The disconnect between school based social workers wanting to perform various interventions for students and school based leaders’ limited knowledge about their roles adversely impact student outcomes and professional relationships. The study conducted by Teasley, Gourdine, and Canfield (2010) presented descriptive findings from self-reported qualitative and quantitative data
about barriers and facilitators to culturally competent school social work practice. Their study highlights the need for the growth of evaluative methods for the purpose of examining ways factors within the social work practice affect intervention outcomes. The qualitative findings showed school-based personnel's low knowledge and awareness of school social work tasks and lack of resources. Organizers of culturally competent practice include collaborative practice, teacher assistance, parental involvement, and knowledge of the practice environment. The quantitative findings indicated collaborative practice and assistance from teachers are the highest-rated factors facilitating culturally competent practice (Teasley et al., 2010). Peckover, Vasquez, Van Housen, Saunders, and Allen (2013) explored the roles of school social workers in responses to the needs of the education system while adhering to state and national policy changes. Since the 1980s, education reform greatly influenced the roles of school social workers (Constable, 1992).

Schools now serve more diverse populations of students. With this diversity comes the need to not only be concerned with academic needs; but also recognize the social and psychological needs of students. The broader expectation placed on schools and the pressure placed on administrators for services were not prepared to offer created the need for school social workers within schools. Davis-Foster’s (1999) study revealed that principal’s perception of school social workers was displayed when they did not have a clear understanding of school social workers’ functions. In many cases, principals do not directly supervise school social workers but assign them administrative tasks out of their purview such as cafeteria duty. His study further showed that the principals’
perception of school social workers was clearer based on their years of experience (Davis-Foster, 1999).

**Level of Professional Practice**

Providing social work programs and other strength based programs for students within the context of the school setting may help them to achieve academically. Recognizing the possible issues associated with workload management, and the level of collaboration is important. Dupper, Rocha, Jackson, and Lodato (2014) conducted a study to explore the factors that influence the practice of school social work. The authors concluded that school social workers were knowledgeable in the areas of systems theory, child development, and cultural diversity. However, the focus on an individualistic approach in their practice may pose barriers to students. For example, education systems rarely hire multiple school social workers for one location and peer interaction is limited. School and district leaders often overlook school social workers’ professional needs during planning, which adversely impact their standing among other educators and ability to perform their duties and responsibilities (Dupper et al., 2014).

Another way of implementing professional practice is for school social workers to use data to guide service delivery, conduct ongoing evaluation of their practice to make decisions, and improve or expand services (NASW, 2008). School social workers must have a commitment to make the effort to offset the barriers that hinder practice within schools (Groton, Teasley, & Canfield, 2013; Owens, 2001). The professionals must communicate with educators, school personnel, students; family, community stakeholders, and school administrators to ensure that strategies are effectively used to
assist students reach the expected educational outcomes (Flath, 2014). School social workers are most likely to achieve in their professional goals when better coordination is displayed in communities and the school districts. They need to see themselves as more than resource gatherers (Flath, 2014).

The investigation into the barriers of school social work practice from the perspective of school social workers expands the knowledge base of school social work practice efficacy (Groton et al., 2013; Teasley et al., 2010). Additionally, strategies can be expressed to overcome specific barriers to practice (Groton et al., 2013; Teasley et al., 2012). Gaps in the research regarding barriers to school social work practice from the perspectives of school social workers exists (Groton et al, 2013; Peckover et al., 2012; Teasley et al., 2012). Teasley et al.’s study of 284 school social workers revealed that time constraint and caseload were the most common barriers to school social work practice. The findings indicated time and caseloads received the most responses with 206 mentioning the issues. Teasley et al. reported time constraints had the highest mean. School social workers address critical issues such as suicidal and homicidal ideations, abuse reports, mental health, special education, and teen pregnancy (Cawood, 2013; Lebya, 2010; Stanley, 2012). Domitrovich, Bradshaw, Greenberg, Embry, Poduska, and Ialongo (2010) described ways school-based prevention programs have a beneficial effect on student social, emotional, academic, and behavioral outcomes. According to Lebya (2009) school social workers envision a role of reducing their caseloads. They are proactive by eliminating barriers by communicating with Supervisors about their task and
accomplishments in a monthly report. They can also start effective programs for students and leverage community resources for students, parents and families.

However, understanding the perceived barriers to school social work practice is essential for the progression of both school social work research and practice (Groton et al., 2013; Teasley et al., 2010). As previously stated, only a limited amount of peer-reviewed literature exists documenting and exploring the barriers to the practice of school social work (Groton et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2010; Berzin, O’Brien, Fery, Kelly, Alvarez, & Shaffer, 2011; Teasley et al., 2012). School social workers have a responsibility to the profession to use data to guide service delivery, conduct ongoing evaluation of their practice to make decisions, and improve or expand services (NASW, 2008). As such, school social workers must make an effort to offset the barriers that inhibit practice within schools (Groton et al., 2013; Owens, 2001).

**School Social Workers Knowledge of Their Functions**

School social workers play a critical intricate function in creating caring communities of support around issues of academic success amongst students. They are best equipped for this role when they have up to date knowledge of current best practices. School social workers perform many functions in schools; hence, when academic outcomes and test scores decline, they are responsible for providing social work interventions in consultation with teachers and other school personnel. This process outlines the factor: level of decision making (Allen-Meares, 2007). When school social workers lose sight of their primary functions their ability to impact a student’s academic environment may be compromised (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2007). Many
school administrators often delegate school social workers to tasks more directly associated with school performance. For example, they are assigned roles to assist with behavioral support, academic and classroom support. To combat this situation, social workers must define and make known their workspace, priorities, and functions (NASW, 2008). They must demand an office space within the school setting which allows for confidentiality when meeting with students and families. The ability to organize and prioritize referrals within the practice is a necessary skill as a school social worker.

School Social Workers functions as the link between the home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students’ academic and social success.

Researchers disclosed ways the numbers of school social workers were a significant predictor of the number of students who completed high school in the 100 largest school districts in the United States during the 2008–2009 school year (Alverez, Bye, Bryant, & Mumm, 2013). Their assessment detailed whether the number of school social workers remained a significant predictor while controlling for district size and poverty rate. The number of students, poverty rate, and number of school social workers were significant predictors of high school completion. More students completed high school in districts where school social workers were employed. These results support the claim school social workers’ knowledge and expertise positively impacts educational outcomes (Alvarez, Bye, Bryant, & Mumm, 2013).

Argesta (2004) conducted a study about the roles and experiences of academic professionals: school social workers, counselors, and school psychologists. The results
indicated the educators understood their roles and ways to support stakeholders, particularly students. Participants from all three groups wanted to provide more counseling. Additionally, participants reported they seldom felt competitive toward members of the other groups (Argesta, 2004).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and ways it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy. This study hopes to expand beyond the barriers listed in the findings found in Cooper’s (2016) study by analyzing ways the factors impact the levels of satisfaction. The leadership skills and training of school social workers can lead to the strategies needed for school social workers to have a positive levels of satisfaction in their daily practice in Georgia Public Schools. Specifically, this study aims to determine if school social workers are satisfied with their roles in the school system and daily practice. The participants of the study are Georgia public school social workers who are members of the state chapter of School Social Workers Association of Georgia (SSWAG) organization, which is the state charter of the larger School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA) national organization and (SSWAG) District Presidents, who will reach out to all School Social Workers in Districts 4 & 5.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses guided this study:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ5: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.
Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for the social work profession. The following factors will determine the extent to which they impact school social workers’ levels of satisfaction.

Satisfaction will be assess using the following independent variables: the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy. However, the school social workers’ levels of satisfaction may influence the capacity at which workers supports students’ needs. It is, therefore, of great significance to demonstrate with these data whether these factors and relationships exist.

**Definition of Terms**

This study focused on school social workers’ perceptions of their levels of satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to provide uniform definitions that are present throughout this study.
Administrators are defined as school personnel hired in leadership or supervisory positions.

Advocacy is defined as public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

Caseload size is the systematic measurement and monitoring of the amount and nature of a social worker’s workload (School Social Work Association of America, 2005).

Collaboration is the action of working with someone to produce or create something.

Expertise is defined as an examination of learned or taught expert practice (Ericsson & Smith 1992).

Professional coordination is the use of data and feedback to guide service delivery, conduct ongoing evaluation of their practice to make decisions, and improve or expand services (NASW, 2008)

Professional practice refers to work that demonstrates a commitment to the value of social work in society.

School social workers are trained professionals hired by school districts to enhance the ability to meet its academic mission, especially where home, school, and community collaboration is the key (School Social Work Association of America, 2005).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of presenting this review of the literature is to lay a scholarly foundation in order to establish a need for the study. The objectives of this chapter are to review literature pertaining to the impact of school social work factors to school social workers’ perceptions of their levels of satisfaction in their professional practice. The review covers an historical overview of school social work, Georgia policy, and school social workers. The discussion about school social workers includes the extent to which they impact school social workers levels of satisfaction; an overview of conditions internationally, nationally, and throughout the state; the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy; and theories about school social workers’ perceptions about job satisfaction.

Historical Overview of School Social Work

School social work is a specialty practice area within the social work profession. Social work studies people in their environment and looks to understand the effects the environment has on individuals. Social workers assist individuals in dealing with problems within their environment (Allen-Meares, 1994; Massat, Kelly, & Constable, 2016). Bruggemann (2002) revealed social workers’ struggles to discover the root of
social problems by exposing injustice and discovering where human need exists. Social workers help people recognize and address their own needs within their community, environment, and society.

This section covers the historical overview and the beginning of the school social work profession. The following will be reviewed in this overview: the evolution of visiting teacher, professionalization of school social work, emergence of caseworker, compulsory attendance law, school social workers in the 1960s, and education acts that impact school social work. Allen-Meares (2006) discussed in the Encyclopedia of Social Work that school social work began in 1906 and 1907. It began with agencies and organizations doing the work with families. In 1913 the first Board of Education created what was referred to as “visiting teachers” under the supervision of the superintendent. The Superintendent placed them in the special education department. With the passage of the compulsory school attendance law in 1918 by each state, Abbott and Breckinridge (1917) felt the enforcement of this law should be designated to the school social worker.

As the field of school social work began to grow in the 1920s, the Visiting Teacher Association saw a need to fund the growth of the profession of school social work. The need for a therapeutic school social worker began as it started becoming apparent that children had behavior problems and different needs that needed to be addressed (Costin, 1978). During the Great Depression, the role of the school social worker changed to caseworker as the demand for people’s basic needs took precedence over attendance and other needs at that time. In 1940, the social climate and neighborhood needs changed so the role of the caseworker was switched back to visiting
teacher. At this time, the role of the visiting teacher was to address the clinical and personality needs of the students.

According to Vinter and Sarri (1965), the 1960s was a time of racial segregation and protest among African-American communities. The climate of the schools changed and therefore the high-school visiting teacher had to deal with students that were dropping out of segregated schools and not achieving academically. In the 1970s the role of the school social worker increased as the emphasis began to be placed back on the needs of the family. The school social worker role also began including services like collaborating with other support staff in the schools and addressing the needs of handicap students.

School social work is a specialty practice area within the social work profession. Social work studies people in their environment and looks to understand the effects the environment has on individuals. Social workers assist individuals in dealing with problems within their environment (Allen-Meares, 1994; Massat, Kelly, & Constable, 2016). Andrews (2002) revealed social workers’ struggles to discover the root of social problems by exposing injustice and discovering where human needs exist. Social workers help people recognize and address their own needs within their community, environment, and society. The National Association of Social Workers is the national professional organization for Social Work. The Preamble of its Code of Ethics states that the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 2008).
Social workers are professionals who must defend the core principles outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. The NASW Code of Ethics indicates that this constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience (NASW, 2008). School social workers provided an array of services for both the students and their families, inside and outside of the school building (La Morte, 2008).

School social workers provided aide to the teachers and administrators in the areas of achievement and discipline interventions for students (NASW, 2008). Many schools implement school wide positive behavior reward systems to confront discipline problems. One school of thought contends if students were rewarded for doing the right thing they would make better choices; this would reduce school referrals. Therefore, reducing the amount of school referrals and discipline issues could contribute to students spending more time in classrooms and academic gains (Allen-Meares, 1994; La Morte, 2008). School social workers administer interventions to students and their families.

The family and the school are the two primary factors in a child’s development (Constable, 2009). Today, school social workers are trained to recognize individual, peer, family, and community risk factors. They are also expected to provide individual and group counseling to meet mental health needs of children and facilitate peer and social support (Newsome, Anderson-Butcher, Fink, Hall, & Huffer, 2008). The shift in social work caseloads and the switch from visiting teachers to school social work had an impact
on the academic environment of students (GaDOE, 2014). School social workers enhance educational opportunities by serving students who struggle with school attendance, adjustment to school, and achievement in school (SSWAG, 2009).

**Education Acts**

As the profession evolved, there were policies that helped to shape the field of social work. The following acts provided a key provision to further shape the profession of school social work. In 1910 Chicago hired the first school social workers. School social work profession grew out of policies around compulsory attendance. Their focus was on the home, school and community. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination of students on the basis of disability. This law applies to public elementary and secondary schools. In 1975 Congress passed the Education for all Handicap Children Act. This profoundly impacted and defined the role of the school social worker. According to Atkins-Burnett (2010), the school social worker would ensure the handicapped students benefited from special education. Education for all Handicap Act of 1975 known as Public Law 94-142 was passed by Congress with the mandate that all school aged U.S. handicapped children have the right to a “free appropriate public education” by September 1, 1978. Standards were put in place for state and local education agencies to insure the educational commitment to the vulnerable and/or minority group population.

The article further stated in the 1980s, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986 included school social workers as qualified personnel in Part H of the Early Intervention for Handicapped Infants and Toddlers, and the Elementary and
Secondary School Improvements of 1988. The article noted that there were more changes in the 1990s which lead to school social workers receiving support from national organizations. Professional school social work standards were codified and states began to recognize the value of the school social worker.

In 1990, the American Education Act was enacted to establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1991 (IDEA) was subsequently passed to prevent discrimination against children with disabilities and ensure they receive educational services from school social workers, healthcare professionals, nurses and other support staff. Additionally the article mentioned that in 1994, school workers were included in another segment of legislation the American Education Act. This again included measures that would guarantee equitable educational opportunities for all students. It references two significant pieces of legislation that included the roles of the school social worker: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and in 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left behind Act (Public Law 1997-1007-110).

The No Child Left behind (NCLB) (Public Law 1997-1007-110) which is referred to as the No Child Left behind Act of 2001, was passed as a federal law under President George W. Bush administration. This NCLB represents legislation that attempted to achieve standards-based education reform. The law reauthorized federal programs so that the primary and secondary schools were held to measurably higher standards. It also provided more opportunities to parents for school choice and placed a greater emphasis on reading in schools. NCLB is written so that it requires 100% of students (including
special education students and those from disadvantaged background) within a school to reach the same set of state standards in math and reading by the year 2014.

In 2006 this legislation was reauthorized and attempted to make school systems and students accountable for learning and it included provisions for special need students. As a result of this Act there were failing schools that suffered financially, this lead to decline in enrollment due to failing test scores and limited resources available to those schools.

The most recent piece of legislation, endorsed by the Past President Barack Obama administration in 2011, was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Because NCLB did not show the growth anticipated with the mandates, in 2012, President Obama introduced the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Act (ESDA). This Act allowed states and local systems the opportunity to avoid unintentional barriers by requesting waivers of specific provisions of No Child Left Behind Act.

The Obama administration waived the requirements of the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) that would have students to be proficient in math and reading by 2014. The Act was stalled in Congress so he eventually revealed the NCLB waiver. The ESDA provided states with the flexibility to set their own student achievement goals and for the failing schools to create their own interventions. With states having that flexibility they were required to adopt a College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). This would allow them to focus on the improving low functioning schools. In Georgia schools,
the ESEA is currently being used in the school systems. This Act reportedly dates back to 1965.

**Georgia Policy and School Social Workers**

School social workers operate under the direction of a federal education mandate: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Part 300/A/300.34 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The law is comprised of a definition of related educational services offered to students: health, nursing, and social work services (Whittlesey-Jerome, 2012). States, including Georgia, developed legislation to guide educators. Code CJB 160-5-1.22 Personnel Required is the policy that governs required school level personnel within Georgia public school systems. Under this policy, school social workers are employed based on the unweighted full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment. The unweighted full-time equivalent count is the total number of enrolled students by sections in each program specified by law, divided by six. A section equals one-sixth of a school day (Georgia Department of Education, 2014).

According to Code CJB 160-5-1.22 Personnel Required, each base-sized school system will employ one full-time visiting teacher/school social worker. If less than base-sized, school systems will provide the services of a visiting teacher/school social worker part-time or contract for services across system lines. A school system with an FTE count of 1,650-3,299 shall provide visiting teacher/social worker services no less than half-time or contract across system lines for services no less than half-time. A single individual under contract for visiting teacher/school social worker may serve no more than 4,125 FTE students (Georgia Department of Education, 2014).
A school system may meet this requirement with an attendance officer instead of a visiting teacher/school social worker provided the attendance officer was employed in the school system prior to July 1990, the employment was uninterrupted, and the attendance officer was paid from local system funds. The funding formula for Georgia public school social workers is 1 school social worker for every 2,475 students (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). The recognized standard as best practice is 1 social worker for 800 students (American School Health Association, 2014).

According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), the agency that certifies educators in the state of Georgia, school social workers are eligible for certification in the field of school social work if they meet the following requirements: (a) completion of a Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) degree from a GaPSC-accepted and accredited institution (satisfying Special Georgia Requirements and the Basic Skill Requirement), (b) completion of a state-approved certification preparation program in school social work at the master's degree level (level 5) or higher (satisfying Special Georgia Requirements), and (c) submission of a valid State of Georgia Master Social Worker's or Clinical Social Worker's license issued by the Professional Licensing Boards Division of the Office of the Secretary State, O.C.G.A. Title 43 (GaPSC, 2012).

An applicant must meet the Special Georgia Requirements applicable to the field of school social work: (a) regency of study; (b) standards and conduct; and (c) nonrenewable professional certificate. Nonrenewable professional certificates in the field of school social work are issued under the following conditions: (a) the applicant met all
requirements of a state-approved certification preparation program at the master’s degree level or higher in school social work and is missing Special Georgia Requirements; (b) the applicant has satisfied all other Clear Renewable certificate requirements except that the highest degree held is social work at the bachelor's degree level (level 4) for completion of the options outlined in 1(a), (c) the applicant currently holds a Clear Renewable certificate in any field at a level 4 or higher and presents verification of acceptance into either a state-approved certification preparation program in school work (MSW) degree program for completion of the options outlined in 1(a), or (d) the applicant holds an expired Georgia Clear Renewable school social work certificate or a professional out-of-state certificate in school social work (valid or expired) at the master's degree level or higher to meet Special Georgia Requirements outlined in 1(a) and/or Standard Renewal Requirements (GaPSC, 2012).

**International Social Work**

Even though not currently espoused, the International School Social Work expects the global community to provide equitable standards of decent wellbeing for the world’s population (SSWAG, 2014). As social workers, educators, and social development practitioners, work every day with extreme situations in people’s lives. It is realized that, for many people, the opportunities for social progression and achieving their potential are beyond their own efforts; family heritage and birthplace. Access to resources is challenging too many people who could benefit from services. Interpersonal experiences and lack of understanding about or availability to resources limit social workers' abilities to serve the needs of the global community (NASW, 1985).
SSWAA (2014) contends that the global commitment to respect for human
dignity and rights is the core of our work, but we live the reality of social injustice and
lack of resources. A disconnect between theory and reality led to the creation of The
Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. The agenda was developed and
supported by the three main global bodies representing social workers, social
development practitioners and educators: the International Association of Schools of
Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and
International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

Social work and education share commonalities in this country and abroad. Social
workers and teachers aim to help children fully develop their social, emotional, and
intellectual abilities. However, much of the curriculum in most countries is dedicated to
intellectual attainment, moral, and personal developments. For example, Japanese
children are expected not only to reach high academic standards, but also to strive to
learn personal and social skills (persevering, kindhearted, strong, healthy, and diligent in
studying) (Stevenson, 1991).

The goal of education around the world is to help children become capable,
responsible citizens. Children who are successfully educated often experience more
fulfilled lives and contribute to the economic and cultural affluences of a nation.
Conversely, poorly educated children are disadvantaged in many ways and are more
likely to be dependent on others. Nations are committed to improving educational
standards because low educational achievement reduces a country's standing and
economic sustainability in the world community (Stevenson, 1991).
SSWAA (2014) contends that educational systems around the world focus on raising achievement, reducing violence at school, and improving attendance. The methods for achieving these goals often ignore the social conditions and personal and environmental factors that contribute to the problems and effective methods for influencing them. Reports on the state of education, laws to reform education, and national rhetoric often focus heavily on changes in curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation but ignore social and personal obstacles to learning. The social work profession has responded with information about how to implement effective policy for the human factor in education. The lack of attention given to personal and social obstacles to student success in the report A Nation at Risk provoked a response from NASW (1985). Other countries identified barriers to learning and recommended policies for addressing those barriers. Lack of attention to the social obstacles to education is also seen in other countries.

Austrian school social workers conduct about 13.5% of their total work outside school (e.g., through counseling and supporting students outside school or by visiting their parents) (Sting & Heimgartner, 2013). School social workers contributed to an overall expansion of school’s range of operation into the social environment. For example, contact with clubs and businesses expanded the scope of the school and students’ experiences with adults within and outside of school. However, this shift required significant time and staff resources. For example, school social workers and other educators developed relationships with external stakeholders after the school day by
attending events and meeting with local business owners and elected officials (Sting & Heimgartner, 2013).

One common thread that is found in all areas of the world is the goal to educate students so they will be productive citizens. The article by Calis and Calis (2014) found that their country’s students have similar problems as the Western world for example psycho-social, mental and academic dysfunctions. However, the Turkey educational system expects that the educational process will make the student stable and healthy (National Education Basic Law, 1973).

Although school social work is a widespread efficient practice in schools over the European Union and the United States, there are no available services provided by social workers in schools in Turkey. The national education ministry does not employ social workers for their public schools. The author further states that in 1961 at Istanbul University when students had social economic problems which may have been related to their academics they sought support, but they did not hire a school social worker that specialized in the school setting. They treated students in a medical social service facility (Ozbesler, 2009). According to Pulla and Kay (2017), strength based approaches in social work were used in Dubai. It showed that the student engagement and school counseling can be used in school settings in other countries. They considered the framework of social work and the impact of the use of strength based principles in Arab and other non-Western settings. They feel further research is needed in the area of cultural diversity.

Isaksson and Larson (2017) shared in their study conducted in Sweden how school social workers and teachers perceive their cooperation with each other with regard
to the well-being of students. Their referral system is utilized by teachers or other members of the staff as well as students themselves (Skolkuratorsenheten, 2004). Peer pressure, bullying, attendance, and discipline are the most common reasons found for school social workers to intervene. Not only are the school social workers addressing problems within their school they are involved with problems linked to outside of school as well, which include anxiety, depression, self-esteem, suicide and substance abuse.

The growth of the school social worker sector has grown since 1940. Since that time it has been mandated in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800, Chapters 2 and 25) and now there are over 1,700 school social workers which equals one worker per 800 students. Their study utilized Abbott’s (1988) theory of the system of professions and the cooperation and jurisdiction of the two professional groups. Abbott’s main point is that professions that are closely linked actually compete with each other when it comes to areas of work. The boundaries of teachers and school social workers are relaxed when they jointly try to solve student’s everyday problems.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), employment of school social workers would increase by 20% between 2010-2020 due to the growing needs of school systems and the demand to address the social issues of students and families. As difficult cases continue to increase in the area of homelessness, behavior and mental health there will always be a need for more school social workers.

National Social Work

Peckover et al. (2013) highlighted the historic trends in school social work practice. They identified two major shifts in current education policy related to school
social work practice. One shift is an emphasis on a multilevel intervention approach, and
the other is the differentiation between academic and behavioral forms of intervention.

The authors explored the shifts in current policy aimed at school social work practice
with national studies pertaining to school social work jobs. Their analysis of current
literature, national studies, and the results of a survey on school social work tasks in Iowa
concluded that school social work policy is experiencing a shift toward multilevel
systems of intervention. The current division between policy and practice is an invitation
to clarify both agendas. Professionals in the field and scholars in higher education need to
continue working in order to establish and clarify social work best practices grounded in
social work theory.

**State Social Work**

GaDOE (2014) stipulates the school social worker was originally established as a
visiting teacher responsible for the promotion of student attendance. The purpose of the
aforementioned law was to protect the educational rights of children. A visiting teacher
would focus on attendance issues and refer the nonattendance problems to the school
social worker (SSW). The school social workers, as the trained professional, viewed
nonattendance as a symptom of underlying problems with the home, child, and/or school.

As the emphasis on education reform increases, school social workers are being seen as a
vital link to and resource for intervention and prevention strategies. To address this issue,
the Georgia Department of Education is in the process of working with school social
workers to develop new guidelines and strategies of practice. The SSWAG legislative
team is actively pursuing a change at the state level of the title that refers to school social
workers as Visiting Teacher. This information is outdated and needs to reflect current school social workers’ skills, expectations, and functions (GaDOE, 2014).

An in-depth history of Georgia school social work is shared by Nesbit (1976). She pointed out that in 1945 the Georgia Legislature passed a bill known as the Compulsory School Attendance Law. The two previous laws of 1916 and 1919 had not proved effective. Both laws required attendance between the ages of eight and fourteen and allowed for reasonable excused absences which had to be approved by the local board of education. In 1916, the school term was four months and many exemptions were allowed. Students only had to complete the fourth grade and this was based on whether the condition of poverty required them to help support his/her parents or family. When conditions were present such as parents who could not afford to provide books and clothing, students having mental or physical disabilities, or students responsible for the household’s agricultural labor, they were excused from attending school.

The law of 1919 required attendance for a term of six months and fewer exemptions were allowed. Students had to complete the seventh grade. This law required an attendance officer be employed who was paid not less than one dollar nor more than three dollars per day and whose duty was to report students of compulsory age who failed to attend school. Although the 1919 law uses the title attendance officer, by the school year 1944-45 the State Department of Education was using the term truant officer. During that year there were 57 truant officers (52 Caucasian and 5 African Americans). They were listed as non-professional employees along with janitors, clerical and maintenance workers. The new law required attendance for the regular school term of 175 days (today
it is 180) and the compulsory school age between the seventh and sixteenth birthdays. Exemptions for completion of high school were implemented when children were mentally or physically disabled and unable to perform school duties.

The new law did much more than provide for enforcement. This law provided that visiting teachers must meet professional qualifications set up by the State Board of Education and that the visiting teacher/school social worker’s (VT/SSW) would be included in the state allotment of funds to local school systems. The term visiting teacher was generally used in other states and this provision was meant to relate to the general model then being developed in other states. Further, they were to cooperate with the State Department of Public Welfare, Labor and Health, and other state agencies, as well as make monthly and annually reports on attendance. Therefore, within this law was the legal basis for a new professional service to children, their families and to schools. The role of the visiting teacher was to provide care and help outside of the classroom setting. The term visiting teacher in reality was a strategic term used for them to receive the same retirement benefits as teachers.

Although most states already had compulsory attendance laws, Georgia went beyond enforcement to become the fourth state to enact legislation creating a state wide school related service. This service has gradually come to be known generally in the country as school social work. Throughout the launching of the VT/SSW’s program there was required training that had to be completed. During this period, there was only one state-allotted VT/SSW per school system and each one was of Caucasian decent. As late as 1964, there were only 17 African American VT/SSW’s in the state and they were all
trained in the segregated white university. This inspired the Atlanta University to begin a training program of preparation in 1971 becoming the only school of social work in the state at that time. Due to segregation, they were not allowed to train the few white VT/SSW’s; therefore, the State Department requested that the University of Georgia set up a training program through their College of Education. Both schools worked closely together to coordinate their philosophy, and promote the field of school social work in the state.

After Georgia launched the term “school social worker,” the implementation of the current Georgia compulsory attendance law was used by school social workers throughout the state. It is referred to as the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, 20-2-690.1 which states the following:

(a) Mandatory attendance in a public school, private school, or home school program shall be required for children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays;
(b) Every parent, guardian or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children during the ages of mandatory attendance as required in subsection (a) of this Code section shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, private school, or a home study program; (c) Every parent, guardian or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children and who violates this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine of not less than $25.00 and not greater than $100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties at the discretion of the
court having jurisdiction. Each day’s absence from school in violation of this part after the child’s school system notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence for a child shall constitute a separate offense. (Georgia Code, Title 20-Education, §20-2-690.1, 2010)

GaDOE (2014) stipulates the school social worker was originally established as a visiting teacher responsible for the promotion of student attendance. The purpose of the aforementioned law was to protect the educational rights of children. A visiting teacher would focus on attendance issues and refer the nonattendance problems to the school social worker (SSW). The school social workers, as the trained professional, viewed nonattendance as a symptom of underlying problems with the home, child, and/or school.

As the emphasis on education reform increases, school social workers are being seen as a vital link to and resource for intervention and prevention strategies. To address this issue, the Georgia Department of Education is in the process of working with school social workers to develop new guidelines and strategies of practice. The SSWAG legislative team is actively pursuing a change at the state level of the title that refers to school social workers as Visiting Teacher. This information is outdated and needs to reflect current school social workers’ skills, expectations, and functions (GaDOE, 2014).

Management in School Social Work

Support staff, administrators and policy makers help schools to understand the unique challenges school social workers face in achieving their level of professional satisfaction. Initial review of the school social work literature revealed that school social
work professionals consistently report encountering barriers balancing the expectations in the educational setting, adhering to mandates that are continually imposed upon the social work profession, and creating change using an ecological systems perspective (Schott & Weiss, 2015). Allen-Meares (2004) noted that barriers to students’ academic achievement include the experience of (a) poverty, child abuse, and neglect; (b) familial crises and economic deprivation; (c) poor or absent parenting; and (d) poor parent-teacher relationships. School social workers address these barriers to academic achievement through an array of services (e.g., crisis intervention, case management, and counseling; Frey, Alvarez, Sabatino, Lindsey, Dupper, Raine, et al., 2012).

School social workers are knowledgeable about multilevel practice; however, not all school and governmental systems that provide funding for such services understand the broad social needs of the students and families served (Dupper, Rocha, Jackson, & Lodato, 2014). For school social work to progress and promote student achievement they must address the needs of current and future school social workers, and become more knowledgeable about their practice (Peckover et al., 2013).

Specifically, they must develop an understanding of the changes encountered in the profession and the way such changes influence the roles and responsibilities of the social worker (Peckover et al., 2013). For this reason, this study will ascertain the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and ways it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: the level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy.
Workload Management

The school social workers’ daily practices require that they decide how they will prioritize and manage the extensive workload of their assigned schools. Some are assigned to schools with over 2,500 students. When students require more focused services, including specialized population such as those with diagnosed disabilities, the ratio of school social workers to students requires adjustment. This occurs to ensure school social workers’ workloads are appropriate to address students' needs (Kelly, Frey, Thompson, Klemp, Alvarez, & Berzin, 2015). For example, the student to school social worker ratio may need to decrease in programs serving students with severe behavioral challenges. This allows the school social workers to provide the level of services necessary to address students' needs (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The role of the school social worker as outlined in the SSWAA School Social Work National Practice Model includes: provision of evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services; promotion of a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching; and maximization of access to school-based and community-based resources (Kelly, Thompson, Klemp, Alvarez, & Berzin, 2015). Staffing school social workers at higher ratios than the maximum recommendation compromises the quality of services provided to students and affects the potential for positive academic outcomes for all students. The ratio further complicates academic and behavioral outcomes for students enrolled in districts where school social workers serve multiple schools (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kelly, Thompson, Frey, Klemp, Alvarez, & Berzin, 2015).
NASW concurs with SSWAA in terms of the desired school social worker to student ratio. The professional associations recommend a ratio of 1 school social worker to each school building serving up to 250 general education students (1:250). However, the recommended ratio decreases to 1:50 in cases where the school social worker is expected to provide services to students with severe needs (NASW, 2012; SSWAA, 2015).

Despite the recommended ratio school social workers rarely work in schools under these conditions and often serve students with mental health challenges. SSWAA (2015) expressed an interest in promoting adolescent mental health in schools because 10% to 20% of children and adolescents worldwide experience mental disorders. Half of all mental illnesses start by the age of 14 and three-fourths by the mid-20s (Kadushin & Harkness et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2015). Neuropsychiatric conditions are the leading cause of disability in young people in all regions of the world. If mental health is untreated, these conditions will influence children’s development, their educational achievements and their potential to live productive lives. Children with mental disorders face major challenges with humiliation, separation, and discrimination (Kelly et al., 2015). These conditions are often coupled with lack of access to health care and education facilities, what some consider a violation of their fundamental human rights (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Similar to teachers and other educators working serving special needs students, school social workers’ responsibilities expanded over the decades to include providing services to students with mental health challenges.
School social workers participated in the implementation phase of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act (P.L. 107-110) (MVA). Their school-based responsibilities now include serving as liaisons in their daily practice with children and youths experiencing homelessness (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). They advocate for the right of educational opportunity for homeless children and youths by making certain the necessities of the MVA are followed. Due to their vital role in the assistance of MVA services, their perceptions of their practice in the context of the policy, in reference to what benefits or hinders services, provide valuable understanding into the execution of this homeless act (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

School social work practice with the homeless student population revolves around implementing the MVA to reduce unexpected school mobility among the students. However, identification of homeless children remains a challenge, which often times results in students missing the opportunity to receive social work services (Cutuli et al., 2013). The MVA rely on school personnel, including the school social worker, to identify students in need of services. The policy requires schools to actively search for, collaborate with, and communicate with homeless families to inform them of their rights and provide services as needed (Canfield, 2015). These efforts help with identification of the students so they can remain enrolled in a specific school in their attendance area, thereby increasing attendance and improving academic success (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). School social workers serving this population must communicate with both students and families to identify the families’ social and academic needs (Canfield,
2015). This allows the school social worker the chance to gain a better understanding of each family’s needs. The school social workers not only have to confront the different aspects of homelessness, but also to recognize different cultural values and beliefs (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

Some schools have an enrollment of over 1,000 students, so on any given day, one may be called to attend an impromptu meeting with a parent that may not be able to get their child to attend school or a student that was put out of their home the night before, and is now homeless. Research supports that decreasing a school social worker’s caseload can relieve some of the stresses and improve satisfaction with the professional practice. In her article, “Tools to Reduce Overload in the School Social Worker Role,” Leyba (2009) described a two-step process on decreasing the work overload. The first step is identifying priorities and activities that are ineffective or in need of expansion. The second step is weeding out activities that could be done differently or no longer serve their purpose. Both of these processes would lighten the workload and allow social workers to approach their task mindfully and systematically. Reducing overload and consistently revisiting social work roles helps to make social workers more efficient sustainable, and logically focused on priorities.

At any school you can be frequently be called upon to handle suicidal ideations and students with mental health issues. An administrator can make requests for home visits and attendance in parent conferences to address attendance, discipline and other family issues. Some counties have provided a mental health therapist and a juvenile court probation officer from an outside agency that have a caseload of students with emotional
and mental health issues. There are weekly student support team meetings where collaboration with school psychologist, counselors, teachers and parents concerning attendance, academic, mental health, behavioral and grief are addressed. One of the most difficult types of cases school social workers have to deal with is when the student is grieving. School social workers who are clinically trained can differentiate between normal and problematic grief. If school social workers are given enough time to work with grieving students they can work to improve their functionality and help them feel better emotionally (Quinn-Lee, 2014). The increase in crime has affected all grade levels in that students have had to grieve due to the witnessing of death on all levels at an early age. This leads to the inability to focus in class or nonattendance due to the level of grief.

Parents can at times be unaware of their student academic levels and will resist mental health resources and support team strategies to help their child perform at grade levels. This can be problematic and lead to academic, behavioral and attendance problems. Attendance is a problem that affects the students’ overall success. An attendance case with a student that has accumulated ten or more unexcused absences can be referred to the school social worker who then can refer the parent to the solicitor general’s office where a parent can be charged with educational neglect.

Research has shown that chronic absenteeism in early grades is associated with lower academic achievements in later grades (Chang & Romero, 2008). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory was used as a framework for understanding and analyzing the multiple influences on chronic absenteeism in the early grades. His original framework presents levels of environmental context, the micro-, meso-, exo-, and
macrosystems, as a structure for understanding development. The microsystem refers to the family and home environment and the school. In this study the microsystem identified the relationship the child and his or her teacher. Based on how the teacher treated the child had an influence on whether they wanted to attend school. The mecosystem level found that problems within the school and home communication contributed to poor attendance. The exosystems level in terms of chronic school absenteeism, workers stated parent’s employment schedules and responsibilities as having a significant impact on the child’s ability to get to school. The macro system level encompasses many factors from the micro and exo levels. Issues such as housing, lack of transportation and limited parental employment choices all relate to the economic and political system in which the family operates. Another macrosystem level issue for some students involves cultural conflicts. Once these levels are effectively confronted by the school social worker the student is better equipped to perform their best academically in school.

School Social Workers daily work includes working with students, teacher school parents, and community stakeholders. O’Brien, Berzin, Kelly, Frey, Alvarez, and Shaffer (2011) emphasized that school social workers frequently serve as the primary mental health providers to youths with mental health problems. The authors used respondents from the 2008 National School Social Work Survey who worked primarily with students with either emotional or behavioral problems. They sought to find out whether the practice approaches differed between school social workers for whom most of their students received outside counseling and those for whom few of their students received these services. Their results demonstrated that the groups were different with respect to
practice choices, as school social workers who worked with students receiving outside counseling reported greater engagement at all levels of the ecological system except for the school setting and the practice approach of group counseling. The engagement of families is encouraging, as the inclusion of parents is critical to the effectiveness of mental health programs in schools.

It has been noted that the influence of school engagement has a positive impact on the counts of delinquent behavior. Diaz (2015) and Snyder and Smith (2015) both pointed out those students diagnosed with Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorder and other mental health issues have a higher rate of delinquent acts. School social workers have adolescents on their caseloads that had experienced maltreatment. This leads to an increase in school suspensions due to levels of aggression, anxiety or depression, dissociation, delinquent behaviors, posttraumatic stress disorder, social problems, and social withdrawal. This demonstrates the long term effect of child maltreatment (Snyder & Smith, 2015). Many urban school social workers have mental health expertise and knowledge of strategies and interventions for ADHD. They should be utilized more in the schools. They are an invaluable resource for teachers. As we work to increase the achievement of all students, school social workers must consider the value of the involvement of the family (Munoz, Owens, & Barlett, 2015).

Crosby (2015) further stated the role of the school social worker to include working on micro and macro levels within the school to help coordinate services for students suffering from trauma. Conducting in-services and professional development trainings will assist teachers and support staff in developing strategies for dealing with
difficult behavioral problems. Teachers should be encouraged to develop collaborative relationships with school social workers and engage in regular consultation to problem solve student issues. School social workers coordination of services includes collaboration with other support staff; school psychologists, community social workers, child welfare workers, and school based juvenile court probation officers.

The need for school social workers continues to expand throughout this country. The voices of district and community stakeholders as well as political stakeholders have expressed the need to expand social work positions (Ayasse & Stone, 2015). One of the resources utilized in one of Georgia urban school districts is the Family Resource Center for Families. They provide resources for counseling, tutoring, housing, day care facilities, employment training, and placement. These services help to alleviate barriers to the student and family success. Ayasse and Stone (2015) shared the creation of a similar program in Kentucky that shows how they are working towards participating in a comprehensive set of services to students and families while they work with families to encourage more participation enabling the academic success of their students.

When students require more focused services, including specialized population such as those with diagnosed disabilities, the ratio of school social workers to students requires adjustment. This occurs to ensure school social workers’ workloads are appropriate to address students’ needs (Kelly et al., 2015). For example, the student to school social worker ratio may need to decrease in programs serving students with severe behavioral challenges. This allows the school social workers to provide the level of services necessary to address students’ needs (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The role of
the school social worker as outlined in the SSWAA School Social Work National Practice Model includes: provision of evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services; promotion of a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching; and maximization of access to school-based and community-based resources (Kelly et al., 2015). Staffing school social workers at higher ratios than the maximum recommendation compromises the quality of services provided to students and affects the potential for positive academic outcomes for all students. The ratio further complicates academic and behavioral outcomes for students enrolled in districts where school social workers serve multiple schools (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kelly et al., 2015).

**Rural**

School social workers that work in rural counties are faced with the challenges of limited resources and responding to needs that are not defined by the duties and responsibilities of school social workers that work in urban areas. Lohmann and Lohmann (2015) stated school social workers working in rural counties must learn the culture, norms and traditions of the population they are working in. Due to the visibility and size of the town it may be difficult to maintain a confidential relationship with the client so the Code of Ethics has been modified. One must be ready to work in isolation from colleagues, supervision and having access to professional development. The trends have been changing to more usage of drugs and in some areas the population is increasing and in mental health issues. Retention of mental health providers in rural areas are
challenging, and high turnover is common (Meyers, Tobin, Huber, Conway, & Shelvin, 2015).

**Collaboration**

As social workers manage their caseloads in rural and urban areas they may collaborate with administrators, and support staff on a daily basis. The perception of school administrators’ (e.g., principals and superintendents) is another component of school social workers’ effectiveness and ability to serve students. Whittley-Jerome (2013) used an illustration to display an addition to the 2010 statewide school social work survey in New Mexico. The impact of the attempts to disregard the social work profession prompted the need to promote school social work in New Mexico. As a result an unspecified amount of school social workers organized the data from the survey and contacted leaders from Advisory Council in New Mexico to advocate for the profession. Educators with limited knowledge about the practices of the school social work profession often supervise school social workers. Consequently, services are not initiated as often as needed to assist students’ success (Openshaw, 2008).

Similarly, Teasley (2004) pointed out policymakers rarely contact school social workers for consultation about new initiatives. The limited involvement of school social workers in educational leadership and school policy making became a serious concern for the future practice of school social work (Corbin, 2005; Whittlesey-Jerome, 2013). School decision-makers may overlook opportunities to engage school social workers to address relevant issues and develop plans to overcome factors that impact students’
development and academic achievement (Lagana-Riordan & Aguilar, 2009; Leyba, 2010).

The lack of representation of school social workers within educational policy and leadership teams has not allowed them to contribute their expertise when developing action plans to address the students’ needs (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2010; Hendricks & Barkley, 2011). The lack of understanding regarding the need for and benefits of social work services within the school setting could cause school social workers to be viewed as unnecessary (Fisher, 2010; Garrett, 2006). Summarily, another barrier to the provision of educational social work services is a lack of understanding of the professional knowledge and value that social workers bring to the educational system (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2010).

Further, challenges in the workplace have prompted school social workers to gather data to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of their services to preserve well-known programs (Whittlesey-Jerome, 2013). For example, Whittlesey-Jerome discussed attempts to disregard the school social work profession and the specific impact experienced by school social workers in New Mexico. She pointed out that social workers were becoming discouraged due to the lack of representation in school administration. Whittlesey-Jerome reflected on the needs of social workers after using a variety of data collection became imperative for school social workers to ascertain what they perceived as the barriers delaying their work with school-aged children (Groton et al., 2013; Teasley et al., 2012; Whittlesey-Jerome, 2013).
The research teams of Altshuler and Webb (2009) and Beauchemin and Kelly (2009) indicated that the administrative organization within schools could become a barrier to the practice of school-based social work. More specifically, school systems were regarded as organizations in which teachers and administrators provide the leadership and the majority of the services; this causes a lack of understanding regarding the social outcomes attained using school social work (Altshuler & Webb, 2009; Beauchemin & Kelly, 2009). This article builds on the leadership and collaboration needed from social work college students.

Allen (2009) encouraged the university to be involved with the community so they can provide services to other public institutions to educate social work students to take on leadership roles in various settings. There is a need for a partnership between schools and communities to provide programs for youth that will address their psychosocial development which could lead to aggressive behavior. They used four key factors in the development of the connections program. The program requires: two social work faculty members to develop a model of service delivery in schools, the superintendent’s financial support, grants from foundations, and the use of social work interns.

Once the interns determine the needs of the students they offer life skills training groups for all students. This program allows for the interns to identify students who may need more intensive intervention (Gilchrist, Schinke, & Maxwell, 1987). Further discussion was mentioned by Anderson (2016) on how community-based interagency collaboration enhances student and family well-being. The researcher learned how valuable parents and
caregivers were in receiving psychological support for the student. The working theory for the Full Purpose Program is for collaboration between families, schools, and communities that was established to support academic success for students in the communities and schools facing significant needs.

The policy that supports this interagency collaboration in schools is the No Child Left behind (NCLB) passed in 2001 (Blank, Melville, & Shah, 2003; Dryfoos, 2005; Tagle, 2005). In time, it was determined that poor academic outcomes in under resourced urban schools would make compliance with NCLB accountability especially challenging. They strongly encouraged participation from parents in order to overcome the negative effects of poverty. The second policy that supports this collaboration was the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which replaced NCLB in 2015. Adelman and Taylor stated in the NCMHS (2016) article the analysis of the new legislation and determined the strong need for parents to help support and improve schools.

Moore et al. (2014) stated this work was grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives comprising of ecological, which emphasizes healthy relationship and the whole child perspective. The school social worker embraces this perspective of the whole child. It allows for one to explore the factors that prohibit the student from being successful in school and work with the community stakeholders. An article by Lynn, McKay, and Atkins summarizes research literature linked to mental health collaboration between school social workers and teachers. This relationship would help to improve prevention, identification and treatment of students with emotional and behavioral problems. This has a powerful influence on student’s mental health. An ecological-
mediational model showed the contextual, school and teacher factors and how it influences child outcomes. The school social worker role is critical in collaboration with the teachers.

A study conducted by Frauenholtz, Mendenhall, and Moon (2017) further extended the research of Lynn, McKay, and Atkins’ (2003) study in that it is grounded in collaboration theory. It emphasized the need for school social workers to train teachers and mental health center professionals to further the understanding of how to recognize and support students with mental health issues. This collaboration would help to improve students’ mental health and academic achievement. The method used was a qualitative focus group with school staff and community mental health professionals. They were drawn from a convenience sample.

Seven focus groups were conducted: three school groups and four community mental health center groups. The groups took place in varying regions in one mid-western state, including two from urban centers and one serving a rural county. The findings were analyzed through transcription verbatim by members of the research team. They used a three-step content analysis process. The first step identified representative responses, the second step identified consistent themes that appeared among the responses and the final step reviewed the themes and assess for how frequently they occurred, consistent and the relationship among the themes.

Diaz’s (2013) article has added to the literature on collaboration with school social workers and teachers. Collaborative efforts of school personnel has been found to be one of the most effective factors in addressing socioemotional needs of students.
Lynn, McKay, & Atkins, 2003). The method used was the interdisciplinary teams which can be considered one system for collaboration with possible impact on school effectiveness, improved teaching and improved responses to the total needs of students. They addressed intersecting academic (ACT) and social emotional concerns (SET) of students. The members of the team consisted of assistant principals, school social worker, guidance counselor, school psychologist, speech therapist, and a special education social worker. The findings from the team showed discussions on student issues that teachers addressed in the classroom and school wide. The school social worker was able to support the teacher with the classroom issues using a conflict resolution program while the school wide issues called for the use of a mezzo and macro level intervention.

Broussard’s (2003) article added further discussion on collaboration among with schools, families, communities and social workers. She found that non-minority teachers in a middle class population complete their education unprepared to communicate with parents or empathize with children from families that are different from their own (Broussard, 2000). The social worker has the knowledge and skills to bridge that gap, so the article calls on them to collaborate with school personnel and members of the community, so that the children from diverse families can reap the benefits of a strong home school. The implications for school social workers are to encourage teachers to learn about diverse families’ styles and cultural backgrounds and realize all families have strength. A few of the suggestions for social workers include undertaking systematic assessment of the school to determine the diversity level of teachers and administrators, engage in collaborative in-service training with teachers and administrators to increase
awareness of diverse families, and conduct parent groups and establish parent resource centers that facilitate information sharing, empathy and a sense of community.

School social workers are encouraged to be advocates and collaborate with their parent, school and community. Social workers possess a wealth of knowledge and expertise that goes underutilized on a daily basis. The marginalization of the profession is demonstrated through the internal operations of the school system. Sherman (2016) shared in her article how the paradigm shift in the role of the social worker has changed over the years. It has gone from the ecologically driven to the psychological maladjustment of the student. The shift shows how we are seen as mental health providers rather than community oriented. Social workers have been involved with schools over 100 years and have proven integral in the lives of the students and parents. School social workers are encouraged to self-advocate, collaborate and seek leadership roles to express to the administrators who we are and what we do.

The perception of school administrators (e.g., principals and superintendents) is another component of school social workers’ effectiveness and ability to serve students. Whittley-Jerome (2013) used an illustration to display an addition to the 2010 statewide school social work survey in New Mexico. The impact of the attempts to disregard the social work profession prompted the need to promote school social work in New Mexico. As a result an unspecified amount of school social workers organized the data from the survey and contacted leaders from Advisory Council in New Mexico to advocate for the profession. Educators with limited knowledge about the practices of the school social
work profession often supervise school social workers. Consequently, services are not initiated as often as needed to assist students’ success (Openshaw, 2008).

**Response from an Administrator**

The following comments were made by a metro Atlanta administrator who was a former school social worker for more than 20 years and was challenged to use his school administration degree in support services. He stated that he loved the work and had a lot of expertise, knowledge, and talent to give with little room for advancement. Thus, he became an assistant principal to gain a district promotion. The perceived lack of upward mobility within school systems is a concern within the school social worker (SSW) field. He said that his SSW skill set, education, and training was instrumental in school administration. However, he indicated that he was better equipped to build relationships and be supportive of parents, staff members, and students. He, however, had to learn/train in the area of instructional pedagogy.

Now that he is in school administration, he realizes that social workers are very contained and boxed in by their daily professional responsibilities. Many staff in his building do not know or understand the role of the SSW and may not even know the name of their SSW. He also noted that he has seen the numerous hours that other certified school staff are expected to work in order to maintain their workloads and additional educational responsibilities. SSWs should spend more/extra time working on school improvement committees and events (e.g., staff meetings, building safety/cleanliness initiatives, parent events, student sports/performances, etc). These events/meetings occur
before and after school hours and support staff are rarely in attendance (part of the visibility problem).

The administrator continued by sharing that when SSWs earned master’s level or higher degrees, their skills, knowledge, and abilities were much needed but often underutilized. SSWs addressed individual student issues (e.g., attendance, mental health, behavior, academic success, etc.) on an individual basis with students. However, SSWs rarely participated in policy-making (e.g., school or program design/creation, parent engagement, school climate, funding/resources, community involvement, etc.) meetings.

**Professional Development**

School social workers in some geographical locations are encouraged to attend professional trainings and conferences to enhance their professional practice. They eagerly demonstrate their contribution to education throughout the United States (Altshuler & Webb, 2009; Newsome, Anderson-Butcher, Fink, Hall, & Huffer, 2008). They partner with statewide professional associations and workgroups to develop collaborative networks of support to gain knowledge in funding sources to sustain or improve their services (D’Agostino, 2013). It is expected they will quickly adjust the services provided to address the ever-changing needs of current students. Wells (2006) noted due to school social workers’ direct contact with students, they have the ability to quickly identify problems, issues, and concerns that could potentially, negatively influence the students and the provision of necessary services.

Their competences equipped them to facilitate interventions that engage multiple individuals and systems, which allow them to handle various complex issues (Agresta,
2004; Goldkind, 2011). More importantly, school social workers possess the skills, knowledge, and ability to intervene or advocate for students, as individuals or in groups; while, simultaneously, formulating interventions to address the students’ needs and behaviors (Alvarez, Bye, Bryant, & Mumm, 2013; Goldkind, 2011; Hopson & Lawson, 2011). The training provided prepares them to develop preventative and interventional plans that make the most of the unique contributions of highly diverse professionals, who are united by the goals of meeting the needs and reinforcing the success of students in 21st century schools (Franklin, 2005; Frey & George-Nichols, 2003).

Without school social workers, schools will have challenges in addressing nonacademic issues that impact student learning (Bye, Shephard, Partridge, & Alvarez, 2009). School social workers serve diverse student populations who may be at risk of maltreatment (Chanmugam, 2009). Training is continuously offered regarding concerns such as child abuse reporting and how to appropriately follow the procedures when documenting abuse incidents. Additionally, school social workers have knowledge and access to follow up with child protective services (Chanmugam, 2009). The Georgia Department of Human Services the Division of Family and Children Services (2014) indicated that 40% of the state’s child abuse reports were made by school social workers in 2013.

With the vast amount of knowledge and skills regarding problem solving, advocacy, and relationship building, the school social worker is qualified to assist young people who are being released from the juvenile justice system and reconnecting with the school, their families, and communities (Goldkind, 2011). Further, the House of
Representatives (H.R.) 1138 School Social Workers Improving Student Success Act gives a detailed account of how schools and students benefit from school social work services:

The H.R. 1138 points out how school social workers could provide the following services to address students’ needs. Counseling and crisis interventions; case management activities to coordinate the delivery of and access to the appropriate social work services to highest-need students; addressing of social, emotional, and mental health needs to ensure better school participation and better outcomes; providing assistance to teachers to design behavioral interventions; working with students, families, schools, and communities to promote attendance and address the causes of poor attendance, such as homelessness, lack of transportation, illness, phobia, or parents who have negative impressions of school; home visits to meet the family of students in need of social welfare, child welfare, and community resource systems. (Library of Congress, 2012, cited in Huffman, 2013, p. 164)

School social workers eagerly demonstrated their contribution to education throughout the United States (Altshuler & Webb 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). They partnered with statewide professional associations and workgroups to develop collaborative networks of support to gain knowledge in funding sources to sustain or improve their services (D’Agostino, 2013). They are also expected to quickly adjust the services provided to address the ever-changing needs of current students. Wells (2006) noted due to school social workers’ direct contact with students, they have the ability to
quickly identify problems, issues, and concerns that could potentially, negatively influence the students and the provision of necessary services.

**Decision Making**

The school social worker’s knowledge of their daily functions allows them to empower students, families and school personnel. They access available opportunities and resources that help develop each student's potential. The major functions are integrated into home, school, the community; diversity and cultural competence; dropout prevention; and adherence to federal and state statutes; professional development and practices; School Social Work Standards; and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (SSWAA, 2015). These educators develop interventions for individual students and their families with a goal to positively impact academic achievement and personal development.

Newsome et al.’s (2008) study with 115 participants, ascertained the impact of school social workers services on reducing factors associated with absenteeism. Participants, enrolled at five different secondary schools, were divided into two groups: one group received school social work interventions and the other did not. Risk factors associated with absenteeism decreased significantly after the application of school social work services. School social work interventions positively influenced student behaviors and reduced risk factors associated with absenteeism. Additionally, the rise of accountability and budgetary restriction encouraged the need to measure outcomes for funding purposes. Bye, Shepard, Partridge, and Alvarez (2009) studied social workers and school administrators in four districts in Minnesota. Their findings revealed data
addressing discipline problems and attendance were most commonly used by school social workers to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services (Bye et al., 2009). In addition to providing services, school social workers collect data to quantify their impact on students, similar to classroom teachers measuring student achievement based on grades and test scores.

The misconceptions of school social work can cause social workers to be vigilant in proving their services are effective and needed. In some cases, school social workers evaluate their services to show efficacy to avoid termination or promote the need to hire additional social workers. At the same time it may be possible that school administrators’ lack the understanding concerning school social work services due to their inability to see the products of school social worker and their positive impact on student outcomes (Beauchemin & Kelly, 2009). School social workers should present their product such as programs and interventions to school administrators so that it is regarded as sensible and benefits are clear (Garrett, 2006).

Balanced between education and social work notably, school social workers are ethically bound to increase ability to ensure quality services. In some instances, school social workers struggle between social work and education requirements. Garrett (2012) reported from a survey of 73 school social workers regarding their record-keeping practices. The findings revealed that time pressures were a major challenge to documentation and showed that 33 school social workers responded to the question regarding time constraints. In addition, social workers mentioned how they struggled
with what to include and issues with privacy. It was reported from the survey that more than 75% of school social workers did not document infractions.

Agresta (2006) conducted a study in which she sought to explore the perceptions of the school social worker’s relationships by measuring the perception of the workers relationship with school counselors and school psychologists. She also measured the professional role discrepancy by using a job satisfaction scale. The results showed that the social workers did not feel competitive with the other two professions and they felt valued by the other profession. The findings also showed that the job satisfaction of a school social worker is determined by the role discrepancy and interprofessional relationships. Recommendations are suggested for the policy makers would minimize professional role discrepancy and encourage positive interprofessional relationships. This can be achieved by reducing professional role discrepancy, which would allow school social workers considerable opportunity in allocating their professional time. School social workers function at a higher levels of satisfaction when they are allowed to operate with autonomy.

Following the historical and problematic efforts for the professionalization of school social workers, the profession is still met with many challenges in order to achieve its’ fundamental role. One challenge focus centers on decision making in school social work. In the 2008 study conducted by Pooler, Woofer, and Freeman (2014), a snowball sampling process was used to recruit social workers for the study. They used positive psychology to create interview questions to promote reflections about joy in social work practice. One of the sample questions sought to ask the participant to tell them about a
recent time when they found great joy in their work. After the interviews were transcribed they analyzed the data using constructive grounded theory methods. The following findings reported in three levels in clusters in related codes which included making connections, making a difference, making meaning and making a life.

This student-focused study is similar to Epstein’s (1995), and discusses the connections made between the school, family and community; however, their methods include building a caring community around students. Their model concludes that if children feel cared for and motivated, they will work hard and are more likely to read, write, compute math, study more and remain in school. Finally, they felt that a partnership between teachers, administrators and school social workers (creating a family-like school) will allow for engagement of the student and parent. They believed that this approach would promote parent and student engagement shown by their willingness to participate in educational activities and take pride in their school and school assignments.

Some parents do not feel a connection to their student’s school despite the efforts of the administrators and school staff. Lloyd (2014) mentioned in his study how school social workers level of decision making is used in selecting practice approaches to resolving student issues. The goal of working with the student is to help him/her improve their academics, encourage parental engagement and to help them achieve their goals to be productive citizens. Although this can be difficult with some students, it may lead to one feeling a lack of accomplishment and feel burnout, which could lead to job abandonment.
Maslach and Jackson (1986) defined burnout as one who is emotionally exhausted, detached from some of the duties and responsibilities of the job, feels incompetent, and not receiving any recognition from their superiors. Many SSW’s have experienced in their daily practice the emotional exhaustion in working with high risk cases such as child abuse, mental health issues and discipline issues. The lack of resources available to the low income families many times presents a challenge in trying to meet the needs of these students and families. The research team of Hansung and Stoner (2008) pointed out in their research in the areas of role stress, job autonomy, and social support in predicting burnout and turnover intention among social workers. They mention that social support and job autonomy had an impact on job turnover but did not affect the burnout rate. However the strains of social work, to solve many of the concerns that others shy away from, can prove to be stressful and lead to professional burnout. This is shown by other studies that cite that the lack of resources, emotionally strenuous job duties and constant responsibilities can lead to burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Dollard et al., 2000 cited in Hansung & Stoner, 2008; Nissly, Mor Barak, & Levin, 2004; Posig & Kickul, 2003).

There are two theories that support the role of supervisory communication in the process of burnout. The first theory is the social information processing theory. This theory considers perceptions of the workplace to be a function of the communication environment in which workers are embedded, rather than a function of the objective characteristic of jobs and needs of workers (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Another theoretical framework that supports the moderating effects of supervisory communication
on the relationship between role, stress and burnout is the empowerment theory (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

The school social worker’s roles are determined by coordinators, principals and the school superintendent. The concept of having job autonomy can be limited in a school setting which can be precursors to turnover and burnout (Liu, Spector, & Jex, 2005). The higher the level of autonomy reduces the chances one would leave their profession. Another challenge in the school setting that effects burnout is whether the schools have an equitable and supportive school climate, described as school organizational health. This factor is fluid and the school climate may be subject to change. Bottiani, Bradshaw, and Mendelson’s (2014) research shows that the differences in student’s experiences are different by race. African-American students were found to have less positive experiences than Caucasian students. Having a supportive relationship with the adults at school is crucial for minority youth (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007). Hoye et al. (1991), Hoy and Woolfork (1993), and Mehta et al. (2013), cited in Decker’s (2007) article, indicated that they had to deal with prejudice and stereotyping which led to more school discipline problems among that population. This type of reaction from the school contributes to poor academic and discipline problems. School organizational health is also recognized among staff perceptions of their colleagues and their level of leadership, trusting and supportiveness of each other (Decker, 2007).

According to Kim and Lee (2007), to prevent burnout and a high turnover rate of social workers it is imperative that there is effective supervision. This entails provision of essential guidelines, professional skills, and knowledge related to services. This includes
communicating with social workers about opinions, feelings, and decision making. This form of communication helps to prevent burnout and reduces workers’ role stress, for example role ambiguity and role conflict. The literature on social work supervision has shown that the correlation between the supervisor and social worker should be more one of mutual influence. Thus when supervisors intermingle with social workers in a less formal and more supportive manner positive relationships occur (Newsome & Pillari, 1991).

A study by Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, and Segal (2015) complemented the previous studies with the role of empathy in burnout, compassion satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress among social workers. The method used in her study involved field instructors they were sent a Qualtrics-based survey via email. They were asked to support a snowball sampling technique by forwarding the email to other service providers in their agencies. The instructors also completed measures of empathy, burnout, compassion satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress. The multiple regression was used to analyze three models one with the dependent variable burnout, a second with the dependent variable compassion satisfaction, and the third with the dependent variable secondary traumatic stress.

The results showed significant variations in burnout and compassion in addition to the time one was in a social service profession. Those having been in the profession longer showed lower level of burnout and higher levels of compassion satisfaction. The findings indicated a significant relationship between empathy and both compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among social work. The research suggested the use
of empathy in training of social work practitioners to cope with the factors that contribute to personal wellbeing and longevity the field of social work.

**Advocacy**

A similar study explored the concept of advocacy through the use of a survey from the National School Social Work Survey (Kelly et al., 2010). The instrument identified the demographics, common student issues, types of barriers to effective social work practice, and the extent to which SSWAA’s school social work practice model is implemented by school social workers. A nonprobability purposive sampling strategy was used to collect responses from practicing school social workers in the United States. The survey was sent electronically by all national social work organizations.

The findings showed these findings were consistent with the prior survey efforts over the past 25 years (Allen-Meares, 1994; Kelly et al., 2010). The results were shown through three domains: provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services, promote a school culture conducive to student learning and teaching excellence, and maximize availability to school and community based resources. The results also showed how we are distinguished from any other specialized instructional professional within the school system. Lastly the research suggested that the social workers with 10 or fewer years of experience reported using evidence based practices and data tools more frequently and with 11 or more years are engaging in school wide strategies and engage families with greater frequency than those without an MSW.

Nesbit (1976) shared a study on the formation of the professional organization Georgia Visiting Teacher Association. Their advocacy began with School social workers
engagement in community based resources which was formed from the visiting
teachers/school social workers role in the schools in 1945. The first steps toward a state
organization occurred when nonminority visiting teachers were invited to a meeting at the
State Department. There was not enough African American VT/SSW’s to form a state
organization. SSWs of all races began to know each other professionally in the summer
of 1964 when the University of Georgia admissions policies permitted all races to join
forces for training and certification. The Georgia Association of Visiting Teachers invited
African American VT/SSW’s to join that organization. In 1971 the two organizations
merged Georgia Education Association and Georgia Teacher & Education Association
According to Felderhoff, Hoefer, and Watson (2015), the National Association of
Georgia (NASW) code of ethics urges social worker to engage in political action. The
study consisted of data gathering which includes three questions. First they asked what
sources of knowledge social workers used. Second they asked what they believed are
political behaviors for social workers and NASW. Third they would ask for self-reports
regarding social workers own political behaviors. Results indicate social workers use the
internet and traditional media services to stay informed. Overall social workers are more
active than the general public in the political arena.

In previous articles, it has been shared how school social workers advocate for the
profession through their professional organization. In providing therapeutic and
counseling services to the families some systems require school social workers have
licensure through their licensing board. The article by Donaldson, Hill, Ferguson, Fogel
and Erickson (2014) discussed the primary reason for licensure is to protect the vulnerable population from misconduct that may occur in the provision of social services.

The first licensing law permitted by NASW in 1980 was used by other chapters in their efforts to advocate for the profession. The three levels of licensure are at the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Masters of Social Work (MSW) levels. License exams are taken after graduation from an accredited program. The advanced MSW licensure exam is taken two years after two years of supervised experience (Randall & DeAngelis, 2008). As of 2014 the record shows there are 1,953 licensed clinical social workers in the state of Georgia and 2,862 with the advanced clinical licensure. Donaldson et al. (2014) further recommended macro social workers need to stay abreast of state licensing regulations and development at ASWB to promote the macro perspective even when there is no representation.

Georgia Licensing Board advocates for school social workers through the national licensure process that allow them to provide counseling and therapeutic services for the citizens of Georgia under the protection of the code of ethics. The Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists was created by an act of the General Assembly in 1984. The Board consists of 10 members appointed by the Governor: three professional counselors, three social workers, three marriage and family therapists, and one consumer member.

The Board is governed by law with regulating the practice of professional counseling, social work, and marriage and family therapy in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of Georgia. The Board does so by enforcing the
education and training requirements created by law for licensure in each profession, by implementing and enforcing a code of ethics governing licensees, by establishing and enforcing continuing education requirements, and by addressing unlicensed practice in these professions.

The School Social Workers Association of Georgia (2014) has advocated for the School Social Workers of Georgia since they were founded in 1947. The School Social Workers on a daily basis advocate through helping students achieve academic success by linking the home, school, and community. In order to reach this goal, they provide support services to remove obstacles to student success. These support services include intervention, crisis support and mental health counseling, addressing issues of non-attendance and truancy, and behavioral assessments to name a few.

Their advocacy extends to community outreach with the use of resources, the development of programs that connect families with support groups, provide parenting workshops, advocate for children and their families, locate mentoring and recreational resources, and consult with interagency partners to determine ways to help meet students’ needs. This organization is the state charter of the larger School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA) national organization. It also advocates for school social workers on a national level. They provide a section for advocacy efforts on the website that includes school social workers role in addressing student’s mental health needs and increase their academic achievement. The efforts to promote school social work are shared through an online advocacy section that has tools to assist in advocacy
efforts such as a toolkit for State School Social Work Leaders and State School Social Work Associations.

SSWAA supports and share this resource to the members, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law which is named in honor of Judge David L. Bazelon. The Center for Mental Health Law is a nonprofit organization devoted to improving the lives of people with mental disabilities through changes in policy and law. The Bazelon Center follows an advanced mental health policy agenda, mainly at the federal level, to change systems and programs to protect the rights of children and adults with mental disabilities so they can lead lives with dignity in the community. The organization advocacy efforts extend to the state organization members to contact their representatives, senators and congressmen on several issues that affect school social workers and the children and families we provide services. They provide assistance with creating a petition to the white house and offer media tips on how to get publicity for school social work.

SSWAG affiliation with SSWAA allows them to present their annual advocacy efforts through their state report which is presented at the Delegate Assembly (DA). This includes information regarding their organization, membership, strengths, weaknesses and issues their association is facing. One of the most valuable parts of the DA is being able to share ideas and strategies to address state association issues and concerns.

SSWAA leadership and the NASW School Social Work Section signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations acknowledging the role each play in promoting the profession of School Social Workers and outlining limitations of collaboration between the associations. Since 1996, SSWAA continues to hold
Summer Leadership/Legislative meetings to assist with leadership development as well as provide advocacy training and opportunities to “Go to the Hill” and lobby members of Congress and their staff. The first president of SSWAA Randy Fisher was one of one hundred twenty invited guests to the White House for the White House Conference on School Safety: Causes and Prevention of Youth Violence. SSWAA hired its first Governmental Relations Director in 2000, Myrna Mandlawitz. She advocates for School Social Workers in Washington, DC and continues to work tirelessly on behalf of school social workers.

**Theoretical Framework**

This section provides an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study: the application of the Contingency Theory and the Afrocentric perspective to the school social worker profession. The theoretical framework for this study relied on the tenets of contingency theory (Van de Ven, Ganco, & Hinings, 2013). Contingency theory is known as the “it all depends theory,” due to theorist having to identify and measure the conditions which things might occur. This theory allows the researcher to analyze the situation and determine what variables influence the decision making strategy. It has a relationship with two phenomena wherein if one exist them a decision can be made from another. It is also used to examine the relationship between the characteristics of an organization and its environment and explore how that relationship influences performance (Donaldson, 2001).

Contingency theory, as applied by school social workers, involved embracing opportunities to identify the variables perceived as barriers to the current and future
practice of school-based social workers (Owens, 2001). As proposed by Owens, within this theoretical view social workers were required to thoroughly examine the variables in each situation that constituted barriers to school social work practice. Further, Owens explained that inherent within contingency theory was also the requirement to identify ways to offset the noted obstacles with strategies that would enhance future service delivery.

Applying contingency theory, Clegs, Kornberger, and Pitsis (2011) posited that to foster organizational success, the members of the organization frequently examined their environment and their systemic and individual responses to the specific variables or contingencies encountered. Subsequently, applying the contingency perspective, school social workers were obligated to thoroughly examine the crucial variables that constituted the barriers to practice at all levels (e.g., individual, site, school system, agency, and state) (Owens, 2001). Therefore, the findings from this qualitative study were considered for their professional implications, to align the identified barriers with strategies intended overcome or offset the obstacles and enhance service delivery (Owens, 2001).

School social workers were trained to align the barriers with strategies and develop an action plan to ensure their practice will thrive in changing circumstances (Visscher, 2013). These potentials were explored for the implication and discussion segments of the dissertation research as well as the preparation of the proposed post study presentation and subsequent professional discourse (Owens, 2001). Ultimately, this study will document contemporary school social workers’ study of factors that influence the perception of school social workers levels of satisfaction with their professional practice.
The final phase of this study involved developing a questionnaire to administer to other school social workers to address the identified factors.

A secondary theoretical approach incorporated in this study was that of the Afrocentric Paradigm. Afrocentric theory shows how developing knowledge of another culture from the perspective of that culture can change social work practice. Knowledge developed in this way enables the professions to work more profoundly for the empowerment of clients (Swigonski. 1996).

According to Hill (1993), the Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work (CAUSSW) has integrated an Afrocentric perspective in its curriculum in order for students to understand and appreciate the unique experiences of oppressed peoples in a social context, particularly those people who are of African descent. The Whitney M. Young Jr. School of Social Work formally Atlanta University School of Social Work was founded with the commitment to train students to address and serve the needs of the oppressed and marginalized (i.e. African-American communities). Although the mission of social work apparently has been to improve the quality of life for targeted client systems, the needs of African Americans have been ignored by traditional social work theories and interventions which have been based on the prevalent culture’s values and ideals. Consequently, assessments and interventions have developed from value judgement to the disadvantage of the African-American client system. Traditionally social work approaches have also ignored the role of racism and oppression in the African-American client’s inability to function at an ideal level. As a result the client
individual conditions would be diagnosed rather than addressing the ills of the injustice and inequities which infect this society (Wright, 2013).

The Afrocentric perspective as presented by Schiele (1997) proposed in order to appreciate the Afrocentric perspective, one must view it as a worldview. Afrocentric worldview is a set of philosophical assumptions that are assumed to have been initiated from common cultural themes of traditional Africa and which are believed to be helpful in not only redeeming people of African descent but also for facilitation of human and societal revolution for all.

Schiele (2017) further suggested in social work is an important professional development towards the interpretation of social work practice more culturally competent. Afrocentric theory shows how developing knowledge of another culture from the perspective of that culture can transform social work practice. Knowledge developed in this way enables the professions to work more profoundly in advocacy for the empowerment of clients (Swigonski, 1996).

Social reformers developed community practice after Black people created communities after enslavement (Fairfax, 2017). Given America’s apartheid system of segregation, black social leaders, also referred to as social reformers, were creating institutions and systems that not only attended to human needs but also affirmed culture, family, and traditions. As the Afrocentric perspective reinterpreted African philosophy, socioeconomic/political realities, and culture in the latter 20th century, social workers should use this point of view within a community practice context to attend to systemic
and environmental issues impacting the African-American community (Fairfax, 2017; Swigonski, 1996).

Manning, Cornelius, and Nosa (2004) found the important implications for using an integrated social work practice approach that includes concept from an Afrocentric perspective, ego psychology, spirituality, and when working with African Americans. Because of African Americans’ unique history and value system, social workers may require specialized training in practice approaches that are sensitive to African-America culture. By integrating core concepts from an Afrocentric perspective, the authors provide a culturally competent, practical social work approach that facilitates and furthers the well-being of African Americans. This article explored the intersection of community practice and the Afrocentric perspective that social workers can apply in the 21st century (Manning et al., 2004).

According to Graham (1999), research has suggested that the lack of understanding of the cultural of black families often results in social work operating against the interests of black children (MacDonald, 1992; Barn, 1993). She further stated that several authors have advocated for an alternative social science paradigm that will focus on cultural background and reality of black experience. Asante (1993) argued that centering on each ethnic group’s cultural background separates us but embracing all cultures shows them dignity and respect.

According to Bowles (1999), the key themes of the Afrocentric perspective are people who are subjects who act to transform the world. The world is not stagnant and closed so problems can be solved and problem solving with clients must take into account
the cultural values, behaviors, and the clients strengths and capabilities. The Afrocentric perspective emphasizes strengths, resilience, and distinctiveness of different population groups and offers service response that respects and appreciates the cultural reliability of these groups. Bowles (1999) further stated social workers are encouraged to use the Afrocentric perspective approach with people from all ethnic groups. The perspective offers strategies and a framework for resolving problem and suffering for all people. It offers seven specific constructs to implement the Afrocentric perspective.

Within the context of the overall levels of satisfaction within the professional practice of school social workers they are able to apply the basic tenets of the Afrocentric perspective, thereby addressing the factors that influence their perception. In this regard, school social workers serve a critical role in helping to make paradigm shifts regarding social work practice and school social work settings. The Afrocentric perspective grounded as it is in humanistic values, also prepares and allows school social workers to maintain their own humanity in the face of the systemic factors in the school system. It will allow them the ability to collaborate and advocate on behalf of students and families and share humanism with them all.

There is an over representation of black children in the social services systems and not enough social workers to serve their needs. Several models have mentioned the inclusion of black perspective into social work. When this is included it provides the opportunity for social workers to help and develop black children and families. The National Association of Black Social Workers’ encourages black children to live with the
values of social justice, strengthen asset building, and a continuation of self-development and growth.

School Social Workers have an added burden when we work with African American students. They are in our communities and we have a commitment to see them through the trials they encounter with family, behavior, academics and societal issues. Title One schools generally carries a majority of African-American students. The school social workers implement mentoring and support groups for the students to have a confidential outlet to discuss the problems they encounter. Resources and services are provided to the families. Parenting workshops, health concerns and character building programs are also offered for the families to attend in their communities.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The major objective of this chapter is to present methods and procedures used in conducting this study. Descriptions of the following components of the study are explained: research design, the sites, sampling and population, instrumentation, treatment of the data, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

A quantitative explanatory research design was used in this study to examine factors which impacted the levels of satisfaction in professional practice among school social workers. According to Babbie (2010), the purpose of explanatory research designs attempt to explain things; descriptive studies answer the what, where, when, and how, explanatory questions address the why. This research was able to determine which factors correlate highest with overall satisfaction and the research design was selected because it is likely to yield a study sample that is representative of the larger population of school social workers for which the study seeks to generalize.

Description of the Site

The sites for this study consisted of research in public schools within the State of Georgia who are affiliated with the School Social Workers Association of Georgia (SSWAG). Based on the District Map, there are 10 districts within the state which are
located in both urban and rural districts. Districts 4 and 5 are the primary locations for this study as they are the school systems with the largest student body and likely to have the largest number of school social workers and student referrals. District 4 encompasses Fulton, Atlanta, DeKalb, Clayton, Rockdale, Henry, Decatur City, and Newton County School Systems. District 5 includes Cobb, Douglas, Paulding, Marietta City, and Cherokee School Systems. According to SSWAG (2014) and GaDOE (2014), there are 172 school social workers serving in District 4 and approximately 39 serving in District 5. The State President for the School Social Workers Association of Georgia emailed the electronic survey to the members of SSWAG and the District Presidents. She was very cooperative, accessible and demonstrated a genuine interest in the purpose and outcome of the proposed research.

**Sampling and Population**

In this study, the units of analysis were individuals. The sampling frame consists of school social workers who are employed full time in a Georgia public school within Districts 4 and 5. Again, these districts employ the largest number of school social workers resulting in likely having the largest student population to manage. A purposive or judgmental sampling procedure was used in this study. According to Babbie (2011), this non-probability sampling technique is most appropriate to select based on knowledge of the population. As the past president of the School Social Workers Association of Georgia, the researcher possesses unique knowledge concerning the school social work population under study; this includes understanding some of the unique challenges facing social workers in urban as compared to rural settings, as well as some of the unique
barriers school social workers face. A total of 150 school social workers were targeted for this study; 50% was surveyed from the urban area of the state and 50% from the rural area of the state.

**Data Collection**

The survey was reproduced by using Qualtrics which allowed for usage of social media. According to Babbie (2010), online surveys are a popular social research method which is sent to a sample of respondents selected from a specific population. It is appropriate for this survey data to be used for explanatory purposes. Babbie further stated that monitoring of the questionnaire will provide a guide to determine when a follow-up message is to be sent to the participants. The advantages of an electronic survey are economy, speed, the lack of interviewer bias, and the possibility of anonymity and privacy to encourage more honest responses.

The respondents were emailed a link to a survey which is a designed electronic instrument. This survey was also physically administered to school social workers. When the survey is administered face to face, there is the potential for fewer incomplete questionnaires, fewer misunderstood questions, and generally higher return rates (Babbie, 2010).

**Instrumentation**

A survey entitled “A Study of Factors that Influence the Perception of School Social Workers’ Levels of Satisfaction in Their Professional Practice” was self-administered. This survey was constructed in consultation with the research advisors at Clark Atlanta University and pilot tested on October 25, 2017, with seven school social
workers before it was finalized. These social workers were not subjects in this study. The final form of the survey instrument consisted of three sections, totaling 29 questions. Section I solicits the respondent’s demographic information; sample questions include gender, ethnicity, age, level of education, and license. Section II pertains to the Social Work Practice Experience and solicits information on the years practicing social work, years worked in the Social Work Profession, on average the number of hours worked, school setting, number of schools, and annual income. Section III solicits responses in the area of School Social Work Settings. The satisfaction with professional practice serves as scale items which include decision making, workload management, professional development, collaboration and advocacy.

The subscale response range from Decision Making which consists of three questions with a response range of 3-12; the Workload Management consists of three questions and the response range is 3-12; Professional Development consists of four questions and the response range is 4-16; Collaboration consists of five questions and the response range is 4-20; and Advocacy consists of three questions with the response range being 3-12. The overall score range from 17-72. The greater the score the greater the levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

The purpose of these questions is specifically to exam their stability in determining the levels of satisfaction that is felt by school social workers. Each of these items constitutes a four-point satisfaction scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree.
As the Past President of SSWAG, training on the content of the electronic survey was conducted at the SSWAG Executive Board meeting with School Social Workers from the State of Georgia. The instrument was sent through the Qualtrics survey link to the members of the organization and the Presidents in Districts 4 & 5. The Presidents were informed of the purpose and intent of this study. A request was made for their voluntary participation in the study. It was shared that the study is being used to examine factors which impact the levels of satisfaction in professional practice among school social workers.

**Pilot Testing**

As mentioned earlier, the survey instrument was pilot tested on October 25, 2017, in a group of seven representative respondents. The goals of the study and the respondent’s level of understanding were instrumental in the results of the interview. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the purpose of the study. They felt the perception of school social workers’ satisfaction with their performances would generate measurable results than their effectiveness.

Participants were also concerned with including the level of parental engagement in Section II. They asked for it to be eliminated and replaced with current school social work trends because the categories appeared not to relate the job duties of school social workers or have an impact on the performance and would be difficult to measure. The participants also asked that they be allowed to use the term referrals instead of caseloads due to familiarity with the term being used in a school setting. They further expressed
that the level of professional coordination be replaced with our level of professional practice.

**Reliability Analysis**

Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time. It has to do with the amount of random error in a measurement. The more reliable the measure, the less random you will have errors in it (Babbie & Rubin, 2010). Looking otherwise, reliability is the amount of error variance to the total variance either by a measuring instrument subtracted from 1.00, the index 1.00 indicating perfect reliability. Thus, the reliability coefficient differs between 0 and 1 indicating 0 as no reliability and 1 as perfect reliability. The Chronbach’s Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability and can be described as a function of the number of test items and the average inter-correlation among the items.

In this research, reliability analysis with the Cronbach’s Alpha model was conducted for 17 scale items—Decision Making, Workload Management, Professional Development, Collaboration and Advocacy (see item descriptions in Appendix A, Section III). As Table 1 shows, the overall reliability of these items as measured by Cronbach’s alpha is 0.860. In order to ascertain the internal uniformity among these scale items, additional Chronbach’s Alpha if item deleted statistics were obtained. Therefore, it is determined that the scale items were uniformly consistent with an average level of reliability.
Table 1

*Reliability Analysis Items – Total Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree with the following statements?</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Squared Correlated Item - Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Multiple Correlation Deleted</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: I am provided enough information to develop a school-wide assessment.</td>
<td>51.48</td>
<td>44.016</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13: I am provided enough information to develop an intervention plan.</td>
<td>51.25</td>
<td>44.508</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: I have control over the daily prioritization of my work.</td>
<td>51.13</td>
<td>44.184</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: I am satisfied with the number of referrals assigned to me from my school.</td>
<td>51.64</td>
<td>43.442</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16: I am able to effectively manage the number of referrals assigned to me.</td>
<td>51.63</td>
<td>44.772</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17: I receive adequate support from my supervisor when managing caseload referrals.</td>
<td>51.39</td>
<td>42.307</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td>.851</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale Mean</th>
<th>Scale Variance</th>
<th>Correlated Item Multiple</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q18: I receive adequate training on current trends in School Social Work.</td>
<td>51.49</td>
<td>42.329</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19: I am able to apply my training to my daily practice.</td>
<td>51.18</td>
<td>43.697</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20: I am encouraged by my supervisor to attend professional development trainings.</td>
<td>51.14</td>
<td>41.602</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21: I am encouraged by my supervisor to take leadership roles in my schools.</td>
<td>51.26</td>
<td>41.386</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale Mean</th>
<th>Scale Variance</th>
<th>Correlated Item Multiple</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q22: I collaborate frequently with professional support staff (counselors, psychologists, etc.) in my schools.</td>
<td>50.68</td>
<td>45.630</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23: I collaborate frequently with the student support team (teachers, special ed. staff, etc.) around student issues.</td>
<td>50.91</td>
<td>44.454</td>
<td>.434</td>
<td>.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24: I collaborate frequently with school administrators around student issues.</td>
<td>50.93</td>
<td>45.011</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Squared Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you agree with the following statements?</td>
<td>Mean if Item Deleted</td>
<td>Variance if Item Deleted</td>
<td>Correlated Item - Total Correlation</td>
<td>Multiple Deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25: Professional support staff, student support teams, and school administrators frequently initiate collaboration with me regarding student issues.</td>
<td>51.01</td>
<td>43.924</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26: I collaborate frequently with school social work co-workers regarding student issues.</td>
<td>50.93</td>
<td>44.432</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27: I feel like social work professional organizations advocate for students.</td>
<td>51.02</td>
<td>44.672</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28: I feel like the Georgia Licensing Board advocates for the school social work profession.</td>
<td>51.66</td>
<td>45.302</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29: I feel our supervisors listen to our suggestions for improving service delivery.</td>
<td>51.38</td>
<td>41.951</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td>.609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treatment of the Data

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data at two levels. Frequency distributions of independent variables were used to develop a demographic profile of school social work participants. This described participant responses across dependent and independent variables. Several nonparametric
correlations were used to test the research hypothesis so it could identify which variable are most correlated with school social worker overall satisfaction. The test statistics for the study was Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient. Correlations and bivariates were used to analyze each of the variables of the study in order to summarize the results.

A partial correlation was utilized to measure the strength of association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This correlation was conducted between the level of overall satisfaction with social work professional practice and their perceived level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration and level of advocacy.

Two test statistics was employed to test the hypothesis. The first was partial correlation which could be controlled for highly correlated variables. The second test used was Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient which tested the dependent variable which is the overall satisfaction score and the independent variable group (Knoke & Bohrnstedt, 1995).

**Limitations of the Study**

There are two basic limitations to this study. The number of surveys administered (130) and it was limited to the southeast region. It did not allow the researcher to generalize to the overall population of school social workers. Based on non-probability sampling, the ability to generalize to the greater social work population will be limited. The addition of the School Social Workers Association of America to distribute the electronic survey to their partner states would have allowed for further exploration of satisfaction among school social workers on a broader collection scale.
Differential population of the schools may impact satisfaction of school demographics, size of school, and number of schools assigned to the social workers.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study in order to examine factors which impacted the levels of satisfaction in professional practice among school social workers. The data analysis was conducted at two levels. The first level was the descriptive. The first section presents descriptive findings associated with demographic variables, the social work practice experience and school social work settings results.

The second level of analysis was analytical procedures which tested the hypothesis under study. This section used Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient which tests the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable, overall levels of satisfaction in professional practice, and each of the independent variables including perceived level of decision making, workload management, professional development, collaboration and advocacy.

Descriptive Analysis

Demographic Information

A total of 130 respondents participated in this study. The following table shows that the majority (89.1%) of respondents was female and the remaining (10.9 %) were male. Ethnicity of respondents shows that 69 or (53.1%) were African American, 46 or
(35.4%) were Caucasian, 10 or (7.7%) were Hispanic (7.7%), 2 or (1.5%) were Asian and remaining 3 or 2.3% identified themselves as an ethnicity other than shown (see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Student Respondents (N = 130)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your gender?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your ethnicity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-47</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-59</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-71</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your level of education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/DSW</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your highest level of license or certification in Georgia?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMSW</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSW</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW “Only”</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age distribution indicates that 21 or (16.4%) between the ages of 24-35, while the majority 59 or (46.1%) were between the ages of 36-47. Thirty-seven or (28.9 %) were between the ages of 48-59 and the remaining 11 or (8.6%) reported an age range between 60-71.

With regards to level of education, 106 or (82%) reported a level of MSW and 23 or (17.5%) indicated having a Ph.D. or DSW. Their level of license/certification shows that 25 or (19.5%) reported having an LMSW, 36 or (28.1%) reported having an LCSW and the majority 58 or (45.3%) reported having an MSW only.

**Social Work Practice Experience**

Participants’ experience nearly mirrors their age ranges: 29 or (22.3%) reported working in school social work for less than 8 years while 54 or (41.5%) reported 9-17 years. Thirty-four or (26.2%) reported 18-26 years and 13 or (10%) reported 27-35 years in school social work. Their years in the profession slightly differed as 18 or (13.8%) reported 0-9 years, and 41 or (31.5%) reported 10-19 years. Fifty-four or (41.5%) reported the highest number with 20-29 years and 17 or (13.1%) reported 30-39 years. In regards to the number of hours worked a week, 7 or (5.4%) reported working less than 20
hours. Fifty-eight or (44.6%) worked 21-41 hours, 62 or (47%) reported working 42-62 hours and the remaining 3 or (2.3%) reported working the highest amount of hours: 63-83 (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Social Work Practice Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many years have you worked in school social work?</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years have you worked in the social work profession?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average, how many hours do you work a week?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-41</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On average, how many hours do you work a week?  (continued)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-83</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what school social work setting do you primarily work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many schools do you serve on average?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which category best describes your annual income?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $30,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $69,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000 - $79,888</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000 or more</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In regards to the primary areas in which respondents worked 30 or (23.1%) reported rural, 42 or (32.3%) indicated urban. The majority 50 or (38.5%) reported suburban areas while the remaining 8 or (6.2%) small town. School assignments reported 5 or (3.9%) served one school. Seventeen or (13.3%) reported serving two schools, 34 or (26.6%) reported serving three schools and the majority 71 or (55.5%) served four or more schools. Annual income shows 1 or (.8%) earns less than $30,000 a year. Fourteen or (10.9%) earns $40,000-49,999. Twenty-seven or (21.1%) earns $50,000-59,999, 33 or (25.8%) earns $60,000-69,999, 30 or (23.4%) earns $70,000-79,999 and the remaining 23 or (18.0%) earns $80,000 or more.

Social Work Settings

The variables were set up in classes to determine the range levels of satisfaction among school social workers in their professional practice. The respondent’s lowest level of satisfaction with decision making among school social workers was 23 or (18.1%) and the highest level of satisfaction was 104 or 81.9%. The workload management lowest level of satisfaction was 45 or (35.2%) and the highest was 83 or (64.8%) among school social workers. The lowest level of professional development satisfaction score 4-7 reported 5 or (3.9%). Fifty-four or (41.9%) score was 8-11 moderate score and 70 or (54.3%) with the highest level of satisfaction 12-16. The collaboration satisfaction lowest score fell within the 5-9 satisfaction range with 3 or (2.3%), the medium score was 10-14 with 81 or (62.8%) and the highest score was 15-20 with 45 or (34.9%). The level of advocacy lowest level of 3-7 reported 30 or (23.8%) and the highest level of 8-12 reported 96 or (76.2%) (see Table 4).
Table 4

*Overall Satisfaction within Social Work Settings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7 Low</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 High</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Workload Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7 Low</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 High</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 Medium</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-16 High</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 Medium</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20 High</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Total Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7 Low</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 High</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross tabulations were conducted to examine descriptive findings for each independent variable by the dependent variable—overall levels of satisfaction. Raw scores were transformed to create classes for each of the variables. Among those who reported low levels of overall satisfaction, a total of 37 respondents for each variable indicated a low level of overall satisfaction in their professional practice.
Decision Making

Twenty respondents reported having a high level of decision making while 17 reported a low level of decision making. Forty-seven respondents reported having a moderate level of overall satisfaction and 42 reported having a high level of decision making. This shows that the more satisfied they were overall, the higher the level of decision making (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Perceived Levels of Decision Making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Score GROUPED</th>
<th>3-7 Low</th>
<th>8-12 High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Grouped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Decision Score</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Decision Score</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Decision Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely High</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Decision Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Decision Score</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty-six respondents reported having somewhat high levels of satisfaction and all were satisfied with their level of decision making. Similarly, those who reported an extremely high level of satisfaction also reported having an extremely high level of group decision making. This suggests that the more satisfied they became with their decision making, the more they became satisfied with their overall levels of satisfaction.

**Work Load Management**

Eleven respondents reported having a high level of workload management while 26 reported a low level of workload management. Forty-seven respondents reported having a moderate level of overall satisfaction and 35 reported a moderate level of workload management. This shows that the more satisfied they were overall, the higher the level of workload management.

Twenty-six respondents reported having somewhat high levels of satisfaction and 80.8% were satisfied with their level of workload management. Similarly, of those who reported an extremely high level of satisfaction, they also reported having an extremely high level of group workload management. This suggests that the more satisfied they became with their workload management, the more they became satisfied with their overall levels of satisfaction (see Table 6).
Table 6

Perceived Levels of Workload Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload Management Score</th>
<th>3-7 Low</th>
<th>8-12 High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Work Load Score</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Work Load Score</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Work Load Score</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Work Load Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Work Load Score</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Development

Four of the respondents reported having a high level of professional development while 30 reported a moderate level and 3 reported a low level of professional development. With regards to a moderate level of satisfaction, 47 respondents reported a moderate level of overall satisfaction and 29 reported having a high level of professional
development. This shows that the more satisfied they were overall, the higher the level of professional development.

Twenty-six respondents reported having somewhat high levels of satisfaction and all were satisfied with their level of professional development. Similarly, those who reported an extremely high level of satisfaction also reported having an extremely high level of group professional development. This suggests that the more satisfied they became with their professional development, the more they became satisfied with their overall levels of satisfaction (see Table 7).

Table 7

Perceived Levels of Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development Score</th>
<th>Grouped</th>
<th>4-7</th>
<th>8-11</th>
<th>12-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>42-49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Professional</td>
<td>Development Score</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Professional Development Score</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat High</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Professional Development Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Collaboration

Five respondents reported having a high level of collaboration while 29 reported a moderate level and 3 reported a low level of collaboration. With regard to moderate levels of satisfaction, 47 respondents reported having a moderate level of overall satisfaction and 13 reported having a moderate level of collaboration. Twenty-six respondents reported having somewhat high levels of satisfaction and all were satisfied with their level of collaboration. Similarly, those who reported an extremely high level of satisfaction also reported having an extremely high level of group collaboration. This suggests that the more satisfied they became with collaboration, the more they became satisfied with their overall levels of satisfaction (see Table 8).
Table 8

Perceived Levels of Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Collaboration Score GROUPED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Score Grouped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Collaboration Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-57 Moderate</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Collaboration Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-65 Somewhat High</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Collaboration Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-73 Extremely High</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Collaboration Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Collaboration Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advocacy

Eighteen respondents reported having a high level of advocacy while 19 reported a low level of advocacy. With regard to moderate levels of satisfaction, 47 respondents reported having a moderate level of overall satisfaction; of that number, 38 reported having a moderate level of advocacy. Twenty-six respondents reported having somewhat high levels of satisfaction and all were satisfied with their level of advocacy. Similarly, those who reported an extremely high level of satisfaction also reported having an extremely high level of group advocacy. This suggests that the more satisfied they became with advocacy, the more they become satisfied with their overall levels of satisfaction (see Table 9).

Table 9

Perceived Levels of Advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy Score GROUPED</th>
<th>3-7 Low</th>
<th>8-12 High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Advocacy Score</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-57</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Advocacy Score</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-65</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>% within Advocacy Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### Advocacy Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPED</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>3-7 Low</th>
<th>8-12 High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>% within Advocacy Score</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>120</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% within Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Advocacy Score</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Analytical Procedures

In an effort to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1, several Spearman’s Rho Correlations were used to determine the impact of the overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice by the following independent variables: (a) decision making, (b) workload management, (c) professional development, (d) collaboration, and (5) advocacy. Research questions and hypotheses were reintroduced prior to the test to further clarify the test results.

**RQ1:** Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice?

**Ho1:** There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

A Spearman’s Rho Correlation of Coefficient was calculated for the relationship between overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of
decision making. A moderately strong positive correlation was found $\rho(119) = .667, p < .001$ indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Participants with higher perceived levels of decision making (satisfaction with enough information being provided to develop a school wide assessment and develop an intervention plan, and having control over your daily prioritization of work) tended to have greater overall satisfaction with professional practice (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Results of Correlation between Overall Levels of Satisfaction with Professional Practice and Perceived Levels of Decision Making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Decision Making Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s Rho</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making Score</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.
A Spearman’s Rho Correlation of Coefficient was calculated for the relationship between overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of workload management. A moderately strong positive correlation was found Rho (119) =.641, \( p < .001 \) indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Participants with higher perceived levels of workload management (satisfaction with referrals received and ability to manage them, and support received from supervisor) tended to have greater overall satisfaction with professional practice (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Results of Correlation between Overall Levels of Satisfaction with Professional Practice and Perceived Levels of Workload Management*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload Management</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Workload Management Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s Rho</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Practice</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload Management</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.641**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development and overall satisfaction with professional practice?
Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

A Spearman’s Rho Correlation of Coefficient was calculated for the relationship between overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of professional development. A strong positive correlation was found Rho (119) = .852, \( p<.001 \) indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Participants with higher perceived levels of professional development (satisfaction with training on current trends, ability to apply knowledge, encouraged by supervisor to attend trainings and to take leadership roles) tended to have greater overall satisfaction with professional practice (see Table 12).

Table 12

*Results of Correlation between Overall Levels of Satisfaction with Professional Practice and Perceived Levels of Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Professional Development Score</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Professional Development Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s Rho</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.852**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Score</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.852**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
RQ4: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

A Spearman’s Rho Correlation of Coefficient was calculated for the relationship between overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of collaboration. A weak positive correlation was found Rho (119) = .595, *p < .001* indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Participants with higher perceived levels of collaboration (collaborating with support staff, student support team, school administrators and others and the degree they collaborate with school social workers) tended to have greater overall satisfaction with professional practice (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Results of Correlation between Overall Levels of Satisfaction with Professional Practice and Perceived Levels of Collaboration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's Rho</td>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Score</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.595**</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.595**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
RQ5: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

A Spearman’s Rho Correlation of Coefficient was calculated for the relationship between overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived level of advocacy. A moderate positive correlation was found Rho (119) = .702, $p<.001$ indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Participants with higher perceived levels of advocacy (belief that Social Work Professional Organization advocate for student, Licensing Board advocate for SSW profession, and supervisors listen to suggestions for improving service delivery) tended to have greater overall satisfaction with professional practice (see Table 14).
Table 14

Results of Correlation between Overall Levels of Satisfaction with Professional Practice and Perceived Levels of Advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Advocacy Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's Rho</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.702**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Score</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.702**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and ways it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: the perceived level of decision making, level of workload management, level of professional development, level of collaboration, and the level of advocacy. The study provides a deeper understanding of those factors that contribute to social workers’ levels of satisfaction.

A total of 130 school social workers were randomly selected as to determine which factors correlate highest with overall levels of satisfaction and the research design was selected because it was likely to yield a study sample that is representative of the larger population of school social workers for which the study sought to generalize. The respondents were emailed a link to a survey through Qualtrics which is a designed electronic instrument. This survey was also physically administered to school social workers. The data analysis was conducted at two levels. The first level was the descriptive. The first section presents descriptive findings associated with demographic variables, the social work practice experience and school social work settings.

The second level of analysis was analytical procedure which was to test the hypothesis under study, and social work settings. This study sought to examine the
degree to which these variables interacted with the strength and association of these variables with the overall levels of satisfaction.

The second test used was Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient which tests the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable and the overall levels of satisfaction score in professional practice and each of the independent variables including perceived level of decision making, workload management, professional development, collaboration and advocacy.

Summary and conclusions of the research finding are presented in this chapter. Additional recommendations for future research directions, implications of the study and implications for the school social work practice, school social work policy, and school administration are presented.

The research study was designed to answer five questions concerning the overall levels of satisfaction in professional practice among school social workers.

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and overall satisfaction with professional practice?
RQ5: Is there a relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and overall satisfaction with professional practice?

The following were the null hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of decision making and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of workload management and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of professional development their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of collaboration and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between the school social workers’ perceived levels of advocacy and their levels of satisfaction with professional practice.

Some of the major findings from the study revealed that school social workers level of decision making impacted their levels of satisfaction which is consistent with their level of advocacy. The research suggests that school social workers understanding the value of making decisions leads to advocacy which is a critical part of what is needed for the clients and it produces a healthy process, and so it make sense that advocacy
impacts work satisfaction. Research questions and focus groups are consistent with decision making and the study shows that the school social workers should advocate for their profession, policies and their daily practice.

Based on the school social work satisfaction profile experience, 41.5% of school social workers have worked in the school setting 9-17 years. School social workers in the profession have worked 41.5% for 20-29 years. Results suggest that school social workers between the ages of 36-47 (46.1%) may bring prior experience with them to the job. Based on the results of the study it further shows the percentage of females to males is consistent with the ratio of females to males in the social work field. Eighty-nine percent were females and the remaining ten percent were males. This shows the need for more males to enter the field of social work. There is also a need for more diversity in the field. Results show that 53.1% were African American. However, these results could be based on the number of respondents located in counties within metro Atlanta with a strong African-American population. It also showed that the majority 38.5 % worked in suburban areas with 55.5% having school assignments of four or more schools.

A substantial number of school social workers have MSW certification only (45.3%) which aligns with their level of education with an MSW. However, 28% have LCSW licensure which may imply in the future the privatization of social services and child welfare systems around the country will most certainly change the structure and function of practice for school-based professionals. Therefore, the LCSW licensure may be required in order to secure employment in the school system.

The variables findings imply the overall levels of satisfaction among school social
workers’ were high in the areas of decision making. Eighty-one percent of the participants overwhelmingly responded to the survey questions on being provided enough information to develop an intervention plan and having control over the daily prioritization of their work. These suggest the productivity of services to students and families are being met, which makes a better student academically and socially.

Sixty-two percent of the participants responded to the survey question regarding collaboration with student support teams, which include professional staff such as counselors, psychologist around student issues. This suggests the team approach to student issues is beneficial in creating an intervention plan that will produce positive results.

Seventy-six percent of the participants responded to the survey question concerning advocacy felt like the professional organization advocated for students. This supports the need for school social workers to become involved in the organization and the advocacy that is being conducted through the legislative committee.

The researcher found that there was a moderately strong positive correlation between the overall levels of satisfaction with professional practice and perceived levels of decision making and workload management. There was a strong positive correlation with the perceived level of professional development. The perceived level of collaboration resulted in a weak positive correlation and a moderate positive correlation was found in the perceived level of advocacy. The conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that all five independent variables showed a correlation with the dependent variable.
Implications for Future Research

In an effort to address the factors that impact the level of school social workers' satisfaction with professional practice, it was decided to have school social workers examine the factors in hopes that it creates a level of advocacy from the school social worker and more collaboration with administrators and other school personnel. This will help to generate changes in policy and an appreciation of the valuable skills possessed by the school social worker. This finding may be useful not only for school social workers, but also support staff (school psychologist, counselors, etc.), school administrators and policy makers.

The findings of this study suggest the following recommendations:

1. While detailed data were obtained regarding the overall satisfaction level of school social workers, additional research should explore whether the factors impacted their level of performance in the workplace.

2. For other support staff (psychologist, counselors, etc.), this study highlighted challenges with collaboration across disciplines. Further research should investigate the role and focus of the school social workers as it relate to the student’s social and emotional needs.

3. This study informed school administrators on how best to utilize social workers’ unique skill sets and the challenges they face in achieving their professional goals. Future research needs to be conducted on the implementation of interventions and the effect it may have on the perception school administrators have of school social workers.
4. This study will inform school policy makers on decision making and development policy allowing social workers to effectively implement interventions most beneficial to student outcomes. This would allow for further exploration of satisfaction regarding involvement and communication with school policy makers.

5. Future research can also be conducted on the school social workers impact on academic achievement of students that suffer from mental health issues.

6. A universal system be developed between agencies such as the School system, Department of Juvenile Justice, mentoring organizations and after-school programs, churches and faith-based communities, companies, and mental health professionals to address academics, discipline and attendance cases on students.

7. The National Association of School Social Workers monitors the local organization and provides support in the areas of lobbying for issues, and support on issues that impact the daily practice.

8. Grants and Medicaid services should be distributed from governmental agencies or the school districts for parental support group and other programs to assist in operation, training, and fiscal support of students.

9. Future research studies should include how effective school social workers perceive themselves.

10. School social workers should be properly trained on a regular basis to ensure longevity of the relationship between the youth.
11. Identify core elements from other helping professions such as social emotional learning, mental health counseling, and criminal justice.

12. School-based mentoring programs should automatically be implemented in schools that do not meet standard performance.

13. Legislature and policy makers should support the Juvenile Justice Delinquency & Prevention Act and automatically give funding to states that have high crime rates.

Further research should be explored on the students and administrators thoughts and levels of satisfaction with the school social workers.

**Implications for the Social Work Profession**

This study has shown that multiple factors including decision making, professional development, workload management, collaboration, and advocacy significantly affect a perception of school social worker’s levels of satisfaction with their professional practice. Implications of these findings for the social work profession are relevant across geographic areas of Georgia.

**School Social Work Practice**

Implications of this study for practitioners suggest an opportunity, from a system perspective, because social workers utilize a range of theories, paradigms, and skills. They can be effective change agents within the educational reform environment. To help students, the educational institution must effectively use theoretical perspectives such as the ecological perspective, systems theory, and empowerment theory to respond to the various systems that interact with the school system.
School Social Work Policy

Implications for school social workers include understanding the future role of the school social worker in the educational environment. The future of privatization of public education will change the school placement of school social workers, and therefore will cause competition for reduced local, state, and federal funding. School-based practitioners will face greater competition due to increased accountability obligations, specialization of services, and a demand for outcome-based assessment which will lead to better practices. Private organizations that are contracted to provide services will be concerned with economic efficiency and the value of how their dollars are spent. This may directly challenge and call to action the social work profession to advocate for the educational needs of schools in limited resource communities. The privatization of social services and child welfare systems around the country will most certainly change the structure and function of practice for school-based professionals. In regard to policy development, social workers must implement change on the macro level by lobbying, talking with legislatures, and even running for political office. At this level, the practitioner’s purpose will be aimed at providing funding for additional school social workers in order to meet the need of the students and families they serve. School social workers must continue to explore research and stay abreast of current trends and practices in order to serve the population.

School Administration

For social workers, this research has shown that due to the increased emphasis on specialization, social workers responsibility to advocate for their positions is crucial
because it is possible in the future that social workers may be in the same school but employed by different funding sources, serving in different capacities (e.g., as therapists, consultants, evaluators, health care professionals, etc.). As advocates, social workers, clinicians, educators, policy makers, funders, parents, political figures, community stakeholders, and youth, it is critical to see the need for school social work services. If society would like to see a shift in the behaviors of the future generation, more emphasis has to be placed on students and families. In dealing with people from diverse backgrounds, social workers have to implement best practices and utilize the Afrocentric perspective in regard to seeking the good and importance of all human beings.
APPENDIX A

School Social Work Satisfaction Survey

Factors That Impact School Social Worker Satisfaction with Professional Practice

Ins #HR20181769-1

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a student in the Ph.D. Program at the Whitney M. Young, Jr. School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University. I invite you to participate in a School Social Work Professional Practice study. The questionnaire will take only five minutes to complete. The purpose of the study is to learn more about factors that influence worker satisfaction. Please relate your responses directly to your experience as a school social worker. Because we want your responses to remain confidential, please do not put your name on the questionnaire sheet. Choose only one answer for each question. Please respond to all questions. Again, thank you for your time and cooperation

Cynthia Simmons-Turner

Section I. Demographic Information
Place an (x) next to the appropriate item. Choose only one answer for each question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender:</td>
<td>1) Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ethnicity:</td>
<td>1) African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is your age?</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level of Education:</td>
<td>1) BSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. License/Certifications</td>
<td>1) LMSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section II: Social Work Practice Experience

6. How many years have you worked in School Social Work? ______

7. How many years have you worked in the Social Work Profession? ______
8. On average, how many hours do you work a week? _____

9. In what school social work setting do you primarily work?
   1)_____Rural  2)_____Urban  3)_____Suburban  4)_____Small Town

10. How many schools do you serve on average?
    1)____ One     2)____Two     3)___Three     4) ____ Four or more

11. Which category best describes your annual income?
    1)_____ Under $30,000  
    2)_____ $30,000-$39,999  3)_____ $40,000-$49,999  4)_____ $50,000-$59,999 
    5)_____ $60,000-$69,999  6)_____ $70,000-$79,999  7)_____ $80,000 and up

Section III. School Social Work Settings:

Considering your primary social work practice setting, how much do you agree with the statements? Please write the appropriate number in the blank beside each statement

   12. I am provided enough information to develop a school wide assessment.
   13. I am provided enough information to develop an intervention plan.
   14. I have control over the daily prioritization of my work

DEcision Making

   15. I am satisfied with the number of referrals assigned to me from my school
   16. I am able to effectively manage the number of referrals assigned to me
   17. I receive adequate support from my supervisor when managing caseload referrals

workload management

   18. I receive adequate training on current trends in school social work
   19. I am able to apply my training to my daily practice
   20. I am encouraged by my supervisor to attend professional development training
   21. I am encouraged by my supervisor to take leadership roles in my schools

professional development

   22. I collaborate frequently with professional support staff (Counselors, Psychologist, etc.) in my school
   23. I collaborate frequently with the student support team (teachers, special education staff and parents) around student issues
   24. I collaborate frequently with school administrators around student issues
25. Professional Support Staff, the Student Support Teams, and School Administrators frequently initiate collaboration with me regarding student issues
26. I collaborate frequently with social work co-workers regarding student issues

**ADVOCACY**

27. I feel like social work professional organizations advocate for students
28. I feel the Georgia Licensing Board advocate for the School Social Work Profession
29. I feel our supervisors listen to our suggestions for improving service delivery
APPENDIX B

Letter to Participants

A STUDY OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS’ LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks to explore the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and how it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: school social workers’ number of referrals, perception of administrators’ knowledge of school social work roles and expertise, the level of professional practice, and school social workers’ knowledge of their functions. This study consists of a questionnaire with 30 questions. The findings will be used in an analysis for my dissertation. There are no known risks to participants who agree to take part in this research.

There are no known personal benefits to participant who choose to take part in this research. However, it is anticipated that those who participate in this study will help research in the field of social work education, social work group practice, and the professional development of school social work as a specialty area in the United States.

I would appreciate your cooperation. Since all of the responses are confidential please do not put your name on the questionnaire. Choose only one answer for each question. Please respond to all questions. The questionnaire will take less than five minutes to complete. Participation in this study is voluntary. If participants have questions about the study, they can contact the principal investigator—Cynthia Turner by email at cynthia.turner@students.cau.edu.

Participants may also contact Dr. Gerry White Research Advisor in the School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University at 404 880 6905. Please note: by participating in this questionnaire, you are giving consent to the principal investigator to analyze your responses for the investigator’s dissertation research.

Thank you

Cynthia Turner

Cynthia Turner, Ed.S
APPENDIX C

Letter of Request to Organization

January 30, 2018
Dr. Terriynn Rivers-Cannon
President of School Social Workers Association of Georgia

Dear Dr. Rivers-Cannon:

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss the research project for my doctoral dissertation, A STUDY OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE. As I shared, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the perception of school social workers’ levels of satisfaction and ways it is impacted by one or more of the following factors: Decision Making, Workload Management, Professional Development, Collaboration, and Advocacy. The leadership skills and training of school social workers can lead to the strategies needed for school social workers to have a positive level of satisfaction in their daily practice in Georgia Public Schools. Specifically, this study aims to determine if school social workers are satisfied with their roles in the school system and daily practice.

As you know I am a doctoral candidate at Clark Atlanta University Whitney M. Young, Jr. School of Social work. I have completed all of my course requirements and now in the process of completing my dissertation for a Ph.D. in Social Work. District 4 and 5 are the primary locations for this study as they are the school systems with the largest student body and thus likely to have the largest number of school social workers and student referrals. The surveys are online so they will be secured in the Qualtrics software system.

As you know, research and outcomes drive funding and shape policy. By conducting this study with school social workers who work in the school system, there will be a unique opportunity to articulate factors related to school social work satisfaction with administrators, support staff, and school policy makers.

Finally, it is my intent to collect data over the next two weeks and be prepared to share preliminary results in February or March. I am enclosing a copy of the instrument in which the initial form has already been submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Respectfully,

Cynthia Turner, Ed.S

Cynthia Turner
APPENDIX D

SSWAG Research Permission Form

SSWAG RESEARCH PERMISSION FORM

January 26, 2008

Cynthia Turner, Ed. S
DeKalb County School District
School Social Worker

To Whom It May Concern:

Cynthia Turner has my permission to conduct research with the members of the School Social Workers Association of Georgia (SSWAG). Her research will be used to ascertain the perception of school social workers level of satisfaction with their professional practice.

This permission is given with the understanding that the proposed study will be conducted in accordance with the Clark Atlanta University guidelines. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at triversmann99@gmail.com or call me at (678) 523-5417.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Terrilyn Alexander
President
School Social Workers Association of Georgia

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APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter

CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Office of Sponsored Programs

February 4, 2018

Ms. Cynthia Simmons Turner <Cynthia.turner@students.cau.edu>
School of Social Work
Clark Atlanta University
Atlanta, GA 30314

RE: A STUDY OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS LEVEL OF SATISFACTION IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.

Principal Investigator(s): Cynthia Simmons Turner
Human Subjects Code Number: HR20181769-1

Dear Ms. Turner:

The Human Subjects Committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your protocol and approved it as exempt in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Your Protocol Approval Code is HR20181769-1/A
Type of Review: Expedited

This permit will expire on February 4, 2019. Thereafter, continued approval is contingent upon the annual submission of a renewal form to this office.

The CAU IRB acknowledges your timely completion of the CITI IRB Training in Protection of Human Subjects – “Social and Behavioral Sciences Track”.
Your CITI certification expires on September 17, 2019.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office or Dr. Paul I. Musey, (404) 880-6337.

Sincerely:

Paul I. Musey, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Human Subjects Committee

223 James P. Brawley Drive, S.W.  *  ATLANTA, GA 30314-4391  *  (404) 880-8000
Formed in 1865 by consolidation of Atlanta University, 1863 and Clark College, 1869

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REFERENCES


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