ABSTRACT

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS’ TIME ALLOCATION: STRIVING FOR “LEAN” SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

by Markie Falotico

This study was designed to examine the time use of school psychologists across a diverse spectrum of activities to determine which activities require the most time. The study examines data collected from Ohio school psychologists through the Ohio School Psychologists Association Omnibus Survey. The data were analyzed to determine what activities school psychologists engage in and how much time is spent in each of those activities. Results indicate that school psychologists spend the majority of their time in evaluation and reevaluation. School psychologists also spend disproportionately more time in the evaluation and reevaluation processes than in counseling and consultation related activities. These results suggest that some processes may be taking a disproportionate amount of time. Implications for work efficiency are provided.
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS’ TIME ALLOCATION: STRIVING FOR “LEAN” SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY
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School Psychologists’ Time Allocation: Striving for “Lean” School Psychology

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2000), “school psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally” (Fagan and Wise, 2007, p. 2). Based on this definition it can be assumed that the ultimate goal for school psychologists is to improve the functioning of students. School psychologists enhance outcomes by working with and for individual students through assessment and evaluation, intervention and counseling. All of these roles are of equal importance but various smaller aspects of those larger roles, such as administrative or mandated tasks, may take time away from that service to students (Fagan and Wise, 2007). The proposed study was designed to examine the time use of school psychologists across the diverse spectrum of activities just described.

**Literature Review**

**The Role of a School Psychologist**

The role of a school psychologist differs greatly based on individual characteristics, socioeconomic conditions, school structure, societal influences and many other factors. In general, school psychologists engage in a number of functions as part of their role in schools. One of the most substantial tasks that school psychologists engage in is evaluations and reevaluations, which involve the assessment and referral process. Assessment is defined by Fagan and Wise (2007) as “a complex problem-solving or information-gathering process” (p. 117). Assessment involves collecting data about a student in order to determine the student’s strengths and weaknesses and determine what types of support the student may require. Assessment can be very formal in the form of standardized test batteries or more informal in the form of parent and teacher interviews and an analysis of the student’s class work.

Although the assessment process may vary from setting to setting, the first is typically the referral procedure. Referrals can come from a student’s parents or from a professional within the school. Teachers can refer students either as a first step in helping a student or as a last resort after the teacher has tried several possible solutions and interventions. After receiving the referral, the school psychologist will start to collect and analyze data in order to help make an informed decision about how to help the student. This process often involves meeting with the person who made the referral; conducting a classroom observation of the student; reviewing the student’s school records; testing the student on necessary and appropriate tests; and interviewing relevant school personnel, parents and sometimes the student. Once this information is gathered
and analyzed, the school psychologist develops a report that explains the results of the assessment. After writing the report, the school psychologist also meets with parents and teachers to communicate the results and recommendations.

In order for school psychologists to adhere to legal and ethical standards, they are required to assess, to some level, any student who has been referred. This could be formal assessment such as using a cognitive test or just reviewing the student’s records. One of the most challenging issues with carrying out the assessment process is the amount of time it takes to complete. According to Lichtenstein and Fischetti (1998), school psychologists spend a median of 12 hours per case (Fagan and Wise, 2007). Fagan and Wise (2007) suggest that this is an inefficient method to having a “major impact on the schools” (p.130).

Besides the assessment process, school psychologists also engage in intervention processes, which include selecting an intervention strategy, managing the implementation of the intervention and progress monitoring the intervention. One intervention strategy is counseling (individual or group). Performing various intervention tasks, similar to the assessment process, requires large amounts of time by the school psychologist. An additional role of a school psychologist is to engage in the consultation process. This process has a large impact by helping many students and teachers at the same time. All of these processes take time and involve mandates and requirements (Fagan and Wise, 2007).

How School Psychologists’ Time is Allotted

School psychologists engage in various tasks within the assessment, intervention, and consultation processes just described. These tasks may differ depending on what role a particular school psychologist plays based on mandates and the roles of other student support staff. In combination with the other student support staff, a school psychologist’s role tends to include assessment of children and placement in special education with appropriate educational and developmental programs. School psychologists still spend a substantial amount of their time testing students and completing the clerical activities surrounding assessments, such as maneuvering report writing software and tracking down student records. In a study of time use among support staff, Agresta (2004) found that school psychologists spend about 25% of their time testing and around 15% of their time report writing. This same study found that school psychologists spend only about 11% of their time consulting with teachers and another 12% of their time in individual counseling with students (Agresta, 2004).
Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingford, & Hall (2002) conducted a similar study to determine the amount of time school psychologists spend engaging in certain activities. This study found that assessment is the most time consuming role for school psychologists, comprising about 46% of their time. Bramlett et al. describe a “problem-solving process” in their study, explaining that intervention and prevention are the two main components to this process. They suggest these roles are crucial for school psychologists to engage in; however, a study conducted in 1995 by Reschly and Wilson, found that school psychologists only spend about 20% of their time participating in direct interventions for students (Bramlett et al, 2002). Bramlett et al. suggest that daily requirements of school psychologists, including administrative tasks connected to assessment, may prevent psychologists from spending more time working with students and participating in interventions.

Shapiro and Heick (2004) support this idea in their research. Their study found that the majority school psychologists, 63.1%, used an achievement test in at least four of their last ten referred cases. An even higher number of school psychologists, 84.3%, used a cognitive assessment in at least four of their last ten referrals. An analysis of those data means that for just the last ten students who were referred, four or more were administered one or more of those tests, one of those being a cognitive assessment such as the WISC-IV. According to the WISC-IV Administration and Scoring Manual, it takes on average about 65 to 80 minutes to administer the assessment (Wechsler, 2003). According to Raiford and Holdnack (2014), testing time was a significant consideration when developing the WISC-V. They state “funding and scheduling limitations pressure practitioners to ensure testing time is as brief as possible” (p. 30). Shapiro and Heick’s study (2004) also found that there is an increasing number of school psychologists using interviewing, rating scales and direct observation of students as part of their assessment process. As an example of how much time that requires, a B.O.S.S. interval observation, 66 intervals of 30 seconds, takes over 30 minutes to complete. After all of these assessments are conducted, they must also be scored and analyzed, which requires larger amounts of time and is mandated as part of the assessment process.

Curtis, Hunley, and Grier (2002) discuss that school psychologists ideally would like to spend less time performing assessment processes and more time participating in interventions and consultation. School psychologists have expressed dissatisfaction with the types of activities they do on a daily basis and the amount of time they spend on those tasks. The authors suggest
that school psychologists have more control over this than they perceive. The research conducted by Curtis et al (2002) was done in order to examine the time allotted to various activities in school psychologists’ day to make them aware of how they can “refocus their time and effort away from issues that may be unproductive” (p. 31).

In general, studies have found that more students on a school psychologist’s caseload are indicative of more time in activities around evaluation and reevaluation such as assessment and report writing. Therefore, a lower student-to-school psychologist ratio may allow for more time engaging in interventions with students and one-on-one time in counseling students. The number of students on school psychologists’ caseloads and how their time is spent are both directly related to the types of activities a school psychologist is able to do on a daily basis. However, efficiency of service delivery, meaning spending the least amount of time while performing the greatest number of tasks, has not been shown to be related to differences in school psychologists’ roles. Curtis et al (2002) suggest that this is an area that requires further research. The current study seeks to examine issues related to that efficiency, by determining the amount of time school psychologists devote to various tasks.

**Job Dissatisfaction among School Psychologists**

In general, school psychologists spend more of their time in assessment and testing than they do in consultation with teachers, staff and parents and direct activities with students (Brown, Holcombe, Bolen, & Thomson, 2006). There is a discrepancy between the amount of time school psychologists truly spend doing those tasks and the amount of time they desire to spend in those activities (Brown et al, 2006). This difference leads to job dissatisfaction among school psychologists. In a study conducted by Brown et al. (2006), a sample of school psychologists, practicing in a single school building, were surveyed about demographic data and their job satisfaction. The survey used was the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, and it asked school psychologists about their level of satisfaction based on twenty different aspects of their job. Although most psychologists who responded to the survey (82%) fell in the satisfied range, the second highest group of respondents was those who are dissatisfied with their jobs (10.4%). Of the school psychologists polled, assessment, report writing and clerical/administrative responsibilities require more time than desired. School psychologists would like to spend more of their time delivering and implementing interventions (Brown et al, 2006). According to Fagan and Wise (2007) when listing the stressful aspects of a school psychologist’s job, the second
most stressful part of a school psychologist’s job is not having enough time to perform all the
tasks of the job adequately.

The Changing Role of School Psychologists

The tasks that fall under the school psychologist’s purview have changed. The traditional
view of a school psychologist is testing students and determining eligibility for special education
in a “test and place” model. In more recent years and with changes in education, including the
adoption and implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the role of school
psychologists has expanded and broadened. School psychologists have taken on various new
roles and aspects of their job. In their study, Larson and Choi (2010) surveyed school
psychologists across the nation asking about their roles. Results of this survey show that school
psychologists are spending much less time on assessment and more time implementing
interventions, RTI, and work with teams in collaboration (Larson and Choi, 2010).

Sullivan and Long (2010) state that school psychologists are uniquely trained and
experienced in a way that makes them crucial to the implementation of RTI. Implementing RTI
in a school involves being familiar with current and leading research in the field, consulting with
staff and parents, providing professional development and learning opportunities for teachers,
directly contributing to the assessment of students and evaluating intervention effectiveness. In
their study, Sullivan and Long (2010), found that 87.5% of school psychologists reported being
directly involved with the implementation of RTI in their school. Almost every participant in
this study, 98.8%, stated that they had direct involvement with interventions. The majority of
school psychologists who participated in this study, 71.2%, expressed they spend up to 25% of
their time on interventions. School psychologists have experienced an increase in the amount of
time spent implementing RTI and directly participating in the selecting, implementation, and
evaluating of interventions. Although school psychologists’ level of involvement and time
commitment to RTI has increased, they are still conducting “traditional” evaluations and
performing all of their other roles simultaneously (Sullivan and Long, 2010).

In recent years, schools have decreased their budgets and have had to lay off some
personnel like school psychologists. As a result of these layoffs, school psychologists have had
to spread themselves and their time across more students and more schools. This, in
combination with the expanded role of school psychologists, leads to psychologists having more
to do in less time (Weir, 2012). According to Weir (2012), Rachel Barron Stroud, a practicing
school psychologist, discusses this difficulty with time management by explaining, “I think, in general, school psychologists feel like they don’t have time to do all the things they’d like to do” (p. 35).

“Lean” Schools

There is only so much time in a day and there are so many things that a school psychologist must accomplish. One way to more efficiently and effectively use time in order to accomplish more tasks is to use “lean” methods (Flumerfelt, 2008). The idea of being “lean” originally came from the manufacturing and business world. The term “lean” was coined by John F. Krafcik in his article reviewing this model’s application to the auto industry (Krafcik, 1988). “Going lean” in manufacturing means performing tasks proficiently and efficiently in order to manufacture products. When considering how “lean” could be applied to education and schools, one must look at the processes that occur in schools and whether or not they could be done more efficiently. Flumerfelt (2008) suggests that there are a number of processes that could be examined through the view of “lean” management. “Lean” has been successfully implemented and used in other service and helping jobs, as well as in organizations such as hospitals and non-profits. In these organizations the “product” had to be redefined as it would in education and in schools. Utilizing “lean” in schools could improve service delivery to students through more efficient teaching, assessment and interventions (Flumerfelt, 2008).

“Lean” is a process to help improve job performance and job satisfaction by making practices more efficient. Many of the roles of school psychologists can be broken down into procedures, such as writing a report or running an IEP meeting. According to “lean” principles, every process we do has various steps that people have to complete in order to accomplish the entire task and reach the desired outcome. When implementing “lean,” an organization must look at their procedures and determine if there are unnecessary steps being taken or if processes are taking too much time or resources. Once that is determined, more efficient ways of completing those tasks are determined and implemented (Ziskovsky, 2007). Applying the “lean” model to school psychology has the potential to be tremendously beneficial because it would increase the efficiency of performing mandated tasks and various processes, therefore allowing school psychologists to spend more time on activities that directly and indirectly help students.
Rationale and Purpose

It is important for school psychologists to understand the proportion of time they are spending in different activities so they can advocate for policy changes that allow them to use their time most effectively and efficiently. This study aims to build upon previous work of Agresta (2004), Bramlett et al (2002), and Sullivan and Long (2010) to examine the time usage of school psychologists. The first goal of the study is to identify the degree of involvement of Ohio school psychologists in a variety of functions. It is predicted that school psychologists spent large amounts of time conducting evaluations and reevaluations and less time in counseling and consultation related activities. The second goal of the study is to compare the proportion of time spent in counseling and consultation related activities to that spent in evaluation and reevaluation related activities. It is predicted that school psychologists will report spending more time in evaluation and reevaluation related and less time in counseling and consultation related activities.

The third goal of the study is to examine whether there are differences in time usage based on several demographic characteristics (i.e., highest level of degree achieved, years of experience and location). Based on research conducted by Curtis et al. (2002), it is predicted that school psychologists who have been in the field longer, and therefore had their training less recently, participate in more consultations and evaluations/reevaluations than school psychologists with less experience. It is also predicted that more initial evaluations will be conducted in rural school settings than in suburban, and that more consultations will be conducted in urban and suburban settings than in rural settings (Curtis et al, 2002). It is anticipated that the findings will help identify what processes are taking the most time for school psychologists to accomplish. If processes such as these are identified, it could be anticipated that applying “lean” methods would streamline those smaller tasks within the larger processes in order for their time to be spent more effectively and efficiently.

Methodology

Participants

This study examines data collected through the Ohio School Psychologists Association (OSPA) Omnibus Survey. The survey was distributed to school psychologists across Ohio and 507 psychologists participated in the survey. Participants ranged in years of experience from first year school psychologists to very experienced school psychologists who have worked more...
than forty years. The specific demographic data obtained from OSPA includes highest degree attained in school psychology and total number of years of experience as a school psychologist. According to survey results, 10 participants’ highest degree earned was a bachelor’s, for 200 participants a master’s was the highest degree earned, 230 participants reported that a specialist degree is their highest degree, and 61 participants have received a doctorate. Those participants whose highest degree earned is a bachelor’s reported having one year experience and anticipated their graduation to be in 2015; thus, it was presumed they were completing their school psychology internship at the time data were collected. Total number of years of experience was divided into four ranges. There were 282 participants who have worked 0 to 11 years, 116 who have worked 12 to 23 years in the field, 84 psychologists who have been in the field between 24 and 35 years and 19 who reported that they have worked as psychologists for between 36 and 47 years. Another piece of demographic data includes where the primary employment is located, specifically urban, inner ring suburban, suburban, or rural. The number of participants who work in urban settings was 110, 37 reported working in inner ring suburban settings, 151 work in suburban settings, and 115 participants work in rural locations.

Instrumentation

The data for this study were collected through a survey distributed by OSPA. The survey was developed by a team of various OSPA executive board members and OSPA members. The survey consisted of 116 items varying in format, including multiple-choice, fill in the blank questions and questions with a Likert scale. Survey items include demographic data, compensation, benefits, work conditions, roles and functions, and responsibilities of school psychologists. It was developed to help answer questions about school psychology, help guide legislative practices and mandates, and provide information to OSPA members (McNamara, York, McMahon, & Sroka, 2013).

Procedures

The current study involved accessing existing data that were already collected by OSPA. The OSPA Omnibus survey was published in January of 2013. A list of potential participants was developed from a database containing email addresses for current and former OSPA members, as well as current and former subscribers to the OSPA listserv. The invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to potential participants twice. The survey remained open
for ten days. Participation in the survey included an opportunity to be entered into a drawing to win one of 25 gift cards.

In order to gain access to these data, the proposal for this study was presented to the Miami University Institutional Review Board. Simultaneously, a proposal to gain access to the survey and a request for specific survey data was sent to OSPA. Approval from IRB was obtained and confirmation of this was presented to OSPA. Subsequently, access to the survey and the data was granted by OSPA for use in this study.

**Data Analysis**

The data, obtained from OSPA in a spreadsheet, was exported into SPSS. To address the first goal of the study, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Means, standard deviations, frequencies (percentages and counts), and ranges will be used to quantify the time use of school psychologists across various activities. To address the second and third goals of the study, (a) t-tests were used to determine if there were significant differences in the proportion of time spent in counseling and consultation related activities to that spent in evaluation and reevaluation related activities (second research goal), and (b) a one-way ANOVA was used to determine if there were significant differences in time usage among school psychologists' degree obtained, years experience and school location (third research goal). An ANOVA was used to analyze the data for research goal #3 because the nine assumptions required for a MANOVA were violated.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The study was approved for exemption by the IRB. The research qualified for exemption under the category of using existing data. The data obtained from OSPA is without identifying characteristics or information and involved participants who were not in a protected group.

**Results**

**Research Goal #1**

**Standard initial evaluation.** The first goal of this study was to determine the degree of involvement of Ohio school psychologists in a variety of functions. The results indicate that school psychologists spend a substantial amount of time on some form of evaluation. School psychologists, on average, conduct about 26.6 ($SD = 22.5$) standard initial evaluations in a school year and spend about 13 ($SD = 5.7$) hours on each of those initial evaluations. Of the 26.6 evaluations, about 80% ($SD = 21.9$) of those students qualify for special education services in a
school year. When a student qualifies and an IEP meeting occurs, school psychologists report attending about 55.6% ($SD = 40.7$) of IEP meetings and report being a significant contributor to 37.7% ($SD = 41.1$) of IEP meetings for qualifying students.

**Reevaluations.** Although school psychologists spend a more substantial amount of time performing the initial evaluation function of their job, the reevaluation role also requires a significant amount of time but not as much as completing evaluations. On average, school psychologists conduct about 48 ($SD = 27$) reevaluations in a school year. The most time consuming reevaluation is a comprehensive evaluation. These reevaluations take, on average, about 12 ($SD = 5.3$) hours apiece. Less time intensive reevaluations are (a) “record review” reevaluations, taking about 5 ($SD = 3.6$) hours apiece, and (b) standard reevaluations requiring about 10 ($SD = 4.8$) hours apiece. Of the 48 average reevaluations conducted in a school year, about 89% ($SD = 13.8$) of students being reevaluated qualify for special education.

**Formal consultation and individual counseling.** School psychologists spend very little time, relative to evaluation and reevaluation, on a single formal consultation case. On average, school psychologists spend about 4 ($SD = 3$) hours on a single formal consultation case and conduct about 17 ($SD = 30.4$) formal consultations in a school year. Although the data did not provide information about the amount of time school psychologist spend doing individual counseling, the results indicate that on average, school psychologists have about 4 ($SD = 7.8$) individual counseling cases in a school year.

**Research Goal #2**

**Time comparison.** The second goal of this study was to compare the proportion of time spent in counseling and consultation related activities to that spent in assessment related activities. Overall, the results indicate that school psychologists spend significantly more time in assessment related activities, such as evaluations and reevaluations, than they do in consultation and counseling related activities. For example, the participating school psychologists spend on average 356.44 hours conducting initial evaluations in a school year whereas spend only 68 hours in formal consultation in a school year. The t-test results indicate that the mean number of hours spent conducting a standard initial evaluation ($M = 13.4$, $SD = 5.7$) was significantly different than the mean number of hours spent in formal consultation ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 2.8$), $t(243)=27.156, p<0.0005$. Similar results were found with reevaluations. The results indicate that the mean number of hours school psychologists spent conducting “record review”
reevaluations, \((M = 5.2, SD = 3.6)\), standard reevaluations, \((M = 9.7, SD = 4.8)\), and comprehensive reevaluations, \((M = 12.3, SD = 5.3)\) was significantly different than the mean number of hours spent in formal consultation \((M = 4.4, SD = 2.9)\), \(t(243) = 3.848, p < 0.0005\), \((M = 4.3, SD = 2.8)\), \(t(243) = 18.906, p < 0.0005\), \((M = 4.3, SD = 2.8)\), \(t(243) = 25.774, p < 0.0005\), respectively.

**Individual counseling.** The results indicate similarities between the number of initial evaluations and reevaluations and the number of individual counseling cases. The results show that the mean number of initial evaluations \((M = 26.7, SD = 22.3)\) was significantly different than the mean number of individual counseling cases \((M = 3.8, SD = 7.8)\), \(t(281) = 15.956, p < 0.0005\). Similarly, the mean number of reevaluations \((M = 47.9, SD = 26.9)\) was also significantly different than the mean number of individual counseling cases \((M = 3.8, SD = 7.8)\), \(t(282) = 25.785, p < 0.0005\).

**Research Goal #3**

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether there were differences in time usage based on several demographic characteristics. Findings revealed that no statistically significant differences in the number of individual counseling cases based on degree earned, \(F(18, 263) = 0.792, p = 0.71\). There were also no statistically significant differences in the number of individual counseling cases based on mean number of years of experience, \(F(18, 262) = 0.836, p = 0.656\) or based on geographical location, \(F(18, 264) = 1.033, p = 0.422\). There were no statistically significant differences in the number of formal consultations based on degree earned, \(F(30, 247) = 1.140, p = 0.288\), number of years’ experience, \(F(30, 246) = 1.475, p = 0.059\), or geographical location, \(F = (30, 248) = 0.666, p = 0.909\).

**Discussion**

The results of this study suggest that school psychologists spend more time conducting activities related to evaluation and reevaluation and engage in those activities much more frequently than others such as counseling and consulting. In the case of initial evaluations, school psychologists spend an average of 13.4 hours on a single case. On average, school psychologists have about 27 of these cases a year adding up to about 356.44 hours. In contrast, in the case of formal consultation, school psychologists spend about 68 hours per school year in this activity. There were no significant differences in time usage based on geographical location of the school, degree earned, or number of years’ experience.
There were three distinct hypotheses involved in this study. The first hypothesis, based on Agresta (2004) and Bramlett et al (2002), predicted that school psychologists spend large amounts of time conducting evaluations and reevaluations and less time in counseling and consultation. Based on the results of the study, this hypothesis was supported. As predicted and as reported in prior research, Bramlett et al (2002), school psychologists spend large amounts of time on activities around evaluations and reevaluations and less of their time on activities involved in counseling and consulting. The second hypothesis, based on the research of Shapiro and Heick (2004), predicted that school psychologists spend more time in assessment related activities such as evaluations and reevaluations and less time in consultation related activities. This hypothesis was supported by the results of the current study. Specifically, this study found that school psychologists spend more time in those assessment related activities over the amount of time spent conducting consultation. This study also found that school psychologists have a higher number of evaluations and reevaluations in a school year than they have individual counseling cases. The final hypothesis of the current study, based on research and results by Curtis et al (2002), predicted that (a) school psychologists, who have been in the field longer, participate in more consultations and evaluations and reevaluations than school psychologists with less experience, (b) more initial evaluations would be conducted in rural school settings than in suburban, and (c) more consultations would be conducted in urban and suburban settings than in rural settings. This hypothesis was not supported through the results of this study. This study found no significant results in the area of demographic and experience level differences in relation to time spent in various activities.

Based on Curtis et al (2002), it was predicted that school psychologists who are more experienced would participate in more activities and by extension spend more time in each of those activities than less experienced psychologists. This study found that there was not a significant difference in the amount of cases, and by extension the amount of time spent. This could mean that even the more experienced psychologists still have as much work and need as much time as those newer professionals who are still learning how to get things accomplished. This result indicates that it is not just inexperienced school psychologists who may need to examine their time allocation to increase efficiency and student outcomes, but all school psychologists may benefit from a shift in where time is spent in order to be more efficient and better serve students.
School psychologists participate in a number of activities throughout their days, weeks and school years. Each of these activities involves doing small tasks that lend themselves to a large action to ultimately help students. Arguably, each of these large actions is equally important and crucial in the success and aid of students. Despite that equality in importance, the amount of time school psychologists are required to spend on each of the parts that lead to the large actions is incredibly disproportionate. School psychologists spend much more time on the small tasks that comprise assessment, evaluations and reevaluations than they do on the small activities that encompass counseling and consultation with teachers. Some activities involved in evaluation and reevaluation may be taking more time than necessary and ultimately taking precious time away from other crucial activities.

As one example, spending time maneuvering around a report writing software program, which is considered part of the evaluation process, could be taking time away from counseling with students. According to Hanchon and Fernald (2013), counseling in the schools has become an increasingly important and critical topic because mental health has become an overwhelmingly crucial issue. In reference to school psychologists’ role in identification of students with special needs, Hanchon and Fernald (2013) state, “Practitioners’ attention toward fulfilling these responsibilities comes at a time when students’ mental health needs have never been greater” (p. 651). Although every aspect of the school psychologist’s job has importance, the amount of time spent on those crucial activities throughout the day, week should be considered so that school psychologists are able to provide efficient and effective services.

In recent years, there is the constraint of less funding to hire school psychologists coupled with an increase in the number of activities in which school psychologists must engage. In other words, there are fewer people, more required tasks and less time to accomplish these important job responsibilities. It is increasingly more necessary for school psychologists to be efficient and effective in their work. They need to have the time to complete all of their important work while not overlooking other, equally important work. One way to address this need is to have more appropriate and qualified staff to complete these various roles effectively. Employing more school psychologists and intervention specialists would allow each of those professionals to dedicate more time and effort to the growth and success of students. Protecting the roles and functions of the school psychologist by employing other professionals to take on some auxiliary
roles would also allow school psychologists to be more efficient with their time and have a larger impact on students.

Another method to help school psychologists be able to spend more time on equally important tasks is to analyze their roles through a “lean” lens. “Lean” is a process to improve efficiency and ultimately, in schools, increase aid to students and student outcomes. “Lean” works by analyzing processes, such as the evaluation process, and identifying parts that may be taking more time or effort than necessary to be effective (Flumerfelt, 2008 and Ziskovsky, 2007). If it can be determined what parts of various processes are taking more time than necessary, then strategies to reduce that time can be developed and implemented in order to reallocate that time to other important processes and activities. Some of the tasks that school psychologists spend time engaging in are required by district, state or federal statutes. If school psychologists can show specifically how they can be more efficient and effective, they can advocate for policy changes on those various levels. These efforts should also center on advocating for a system that allows school psychologists to be more efficient and effective in their roles.

Regardless of the results and the proportions of time spent in each of the discussed activities, efficiency could still be improved. School psychologists are bound by mandates and laws that at, while they do serve a function, at times may inhibit their ability to provide comprehensive and efficient services. In order to be more efficient and ultimately have a larger impact on students, there must be an infrastructure established that supports that change. Schools could choose to implement a “lean” model to improve efficiency of various processes. In order to implement "lean" in a school, the first step is to determine which processes may or may not be taking more time than necessary to complete or those processes that are not being completely the most efficiently. Once that has been determined, that process must be value stream mapped. This involves determining every step, movement and activity that is done as part of the entire process. This involves who and what are involved in each step and how it is completed. Once this is completed, a future map of a more efficient process is created and then implemented. Once a value stream map is completed, it may be determined that there are parts to a process that do not have much value but still consume time. Simultaneously, a value stream map may point to tasks that require large amounts of time but are valuable. For example, even though there are administrative and mandated tasks associated with evaluations and assessment
that are not preferred and consume time, there may be value that is not quantifiable such as increasing parents’ understanding.

**Limitations**

There are some limitations to this current study. One limitation is that the data collected only represents school psychologists in Ohio. Although these data may be generalizable, that cannot be confirmed until a similar data are collected from school psychologists in other states. Another limitation of this study is the data collected. Despite the large sample size and variety of respondents, the survey items were very general. The data collected represents how much time is spent on entire large processes or activities and does not further breakdown how much time is spent on specific smaller parts that compose the entire process. Furthermore, the roles evaluated in this study are not comprehensive and do not represent all of the tasks that a school psychologist conducts (i.e., the amount of time spent in the various activities do not add to one hundred percent of a school psychologist’s time). Future studies could seek to determine the amount of time spent on the smaller parts of processes across all functions of school psychologists to identify aspects that are requiring the most time by utilizing “lean” methods and the “lean” system. For example, with those data, school psychologists can reallocate their time to be more efficient and effective. Future studies could examine which tasks get the “biggest bang for their buck” in terms of time spent on specific tasks versus the cost effectiveness of those activities. This could help school psychologists reallocate their time to have a more equivalent balance between student outcomes and their time investment. School psychologists have many roles that are crucial to the success of students. If school psychologists can use their time and talents more efficiently and effectively, there can be a large positive impact on a larger number of students.
References


