

Factors that Affect School Counselor Retention in Rural Settings: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract
 Teacher attrition is a well-known issue impacting K-12 schools in the United States. Sizeable research exists highlighting noteworthy factors that promote retention and attrition. However, scant research exists describing these factors within the context of school counselors working in rural settings. Considering this gap, we employed an inductive phenomenological approach to learn more about key attrition and retention factors, utilizing a sample of five rural school counselors employed in rural locales throughout the United States.

- Rationale**
- Rural school counselors play pivotal roles in their communities
 - Rural communities struggle to retain school counselors
 - Increase in rural student mental health issues

- Purpose**
- Explore factors that lead to both retention and attrition of school counselors in rural settings

- Methods**
- Inductive Phenomenological approach
 - Focus Groups (2 Researchers each led one focus group per researcher)
 - Five total participants
 - Inductive analysis

- School Based Factors Associated with Attrition and Retention**
1. Sense of support
 2. Multiple roles
 3. Professional advocacy
 4. Student Impact

- School Community Factors Associated with Attrition and Retention**
1. Relationships
 2. Community mental health access
 3. Connection with rurality
 4. State level school counselor associations

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Years of Experience	School Level
Shelby	54	F	White	4	Elementary
Mary	52	F	White	11	High
Betsy	38	F	White	13	High
Lauren	31	F	White	5	Elementary
Donald	41	M	White	14	Elementary

- Conclusion**
- School counselors serve critical role in supporting students in rural communities
 - Student access to school-based mental health provided by school counselors in rural schools is critical
 - Findings confirm, clarify, and extend literature on rural educator retention and attrition