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National Association of School Psychologists approved programs applying for Nationally Certified School Psychologist

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST APPROVED
PROGRAMS APPLYING FOR NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGIST**

by

Karly A. Trovarelli

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Psychology
College of Science and Mathematics
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in School Psychology
at
Rowan University
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Roberta Dihoff

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my father, Vince Trovarelli, for always believing in me and for all of his love and support.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Roberta Dihoff for her guidance and support. The skills and knowledge I have gained will stay with me through the different endeavors life takes me on.

My dearest boyfriend, Michael DePalma, thank you for your unwavering love, constant support, and help throughout this research.

Abstract

Karly A Trovarelli

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST APPROVED
PROGRAMS APPLYING FOR NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGIST

2015-2016

Dr. Roberta Dihoff

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this paper is to examine the decision-making process of graduates of National Association of School Psychology (NASP) approved programs who are eligible for the National Certification of School Psychologists (NCSP). Having graduated from a NASP approved program, graduates have met all prerequisites for the NCSP, but some still choose not to receive the certification. This research centers on the monetary value—including the application fee—of the certification; applicants have expressed indifference to receiving the NCSP because it will not provide an advantage, monetarily or otherwise, for advancement in their careers. Current New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP) members who have also graduated from NASP approved programs but do not possess the NCSP were surveyed. The data received from the sample is then evaluated against comparable certifications in other career fields. The findings indicated that those surveyed decided against receiving their NCSP because the value of the certification has little direct effect on career opportunity, placement, or advancement. The implications of this research suggest that higher application numbers for the NCSP may be possible if NASP approved programs made application for the certification a requirement upon graduation.

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Chapter 1

Purpose

As with many professions, it takes a lot of work, dedication, and money to get started in the field of School Psychology. In order to work in some fields, one must obtain a certification or specific credential in order to be fully licensed and begin employment. As a School Psychologist, one may obtain his or her credential by becoming a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP). It may appear easy to become certified since it comes down to filling out a form, however there are many School Psychologists who never apply.

The purpose of this study is to analyze members of New Jersey Associated of School Psychologists (NJASP) who have graduated from a National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) approved program for the Master's and Educational Specialist Degree (EdS) as well as those students who graduate from such programs but do not apply for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential. To acquire the credential is voluntary, but can be necessary in certain states. Those who graduate from a NASP approved program can apply for his or her credential without any further requirements besides graduating, yet there are a low amount of graduates who do apply. This study will look at the reasons why graduates of NASP approved programs do not apply for the NCSP credential after graduating. This paper aims to look at graduates from a NASP approved program who did apply for the NCSP credential and compare the reasons why he or she applied to those who did not apply. It is hypothesized that individuals graduating from a NASP approved program do not obtain their NCSP

because the credential offers no benefit to their current or future career prospects; in addition, individuals who do have an NCSP do not receive a stipend from their employer, which suggests that there is no direct monetary advantage for receiving the certification.

Definitions

National Association of School Psychology (NASP). NASP's mission is to have all children and youth perform at their best ability in school, at home, and in life ("Who are School Psychologists," n.d.). Therefore, NASP's vision is to provide school psychologists with supporting practices to increase students' learning, behavior, and mental health. NASP association represents more than 25,000 school psychologists and graduate students throughout the United States and 25 other countries ("Who are School Psychologists," n.d.).

NASP is one of the specialized professional associations (SPAs) of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in which programs are reviewed for accreditation. Therefore, since NASP is only a part of NCATE SPA, it does not alone provide a school with accreditation; rather, its specific utility comes in the form of identifying an approved program (NASP, 2000).

School Psychologist. A school psychologist's main role is to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists' work with teachers and parents to create a supportive learning environment for students by providing direct educational and mental health services. With a background in psychology and education, school psychologists conduct decision making assessments as

well as record and analyze data. A list of skills a school psychologist develops include: Data collection and analysis; assessment; progress monitoring; school-wide practices to promote learning; resilience and risk factors; consultation and collaboration; academic/learning interventions; mental health interventions; behavioral interventions; instructional support; prevention and intervention services; special education services; crisis preparedness, response, and recovery; family-school-community collaboration; diversity in development and learning; research and program evaluation; professional ethics, school law, and systems. School psychologists seek to provide services to schools and families such as academic interventions and help create a safe learning environment (“Who are School Psychologists,” n.d.). A school psychologist must be credentialed by the state in which he or she works but also can become nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPCB).

New Jersey Association of School Psychologist (NJASP). Established in 1958, NJASP is a non-profit professional association for school psychologists who either live or work in New Jersey. NJASP has different committees such as: advocacy, graduate and undergraduate studies, research, diversity, employment, continuing professional development, and ethics and professional standards. Individuals can become members of NJASP to participate in research, receive more information on school psychology, and help enhance his or her career (“New Jersey Association of School Psychologist,” n.d.).

Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP). NCSP is a nationally recognized credential for becoming a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (“Why Become an NCSP,” n.d.). Being a holder of the NCSP credential shows that the school

psychologist is committed to being highly professional, have a strong ethical development, and be devoted to show professional development. The NCSP is given to those who have met the national standards established by NASP Psychologist (“Why Become an NCSP,” n.d.). These standards include, graduating with a Master’s degree of a 60 hour graduate semester through a program officially titled “School Psychology”, complete 1,200 hours of supervised internship experience in school psychology, and receive a passing score of 147 on the national Praxis School Psychology examination (PRAXIS II) (“NSCP Eligibility,” n.d.).

Types of Credentials

Credentials can be a validation of a worker’s qualifications and capabilities that is accepted and verified by an authority able to issue such credentials. The over-encompassing term of credential can entail certificates, degrees, certifications, and government-issued licenses (“What is a Credential,” n.d.). For the purpose of this study the credential most looked at is the NCSP certification although it is important to understand the difference between a certificate, certification, and a license.

Certificate. Certificates are usually awarded after a short completion of study. For instance, a course of study lasting one year or less from an institution. The course study would have been completed at a higher education institution, university program, or postsecondary technical education schools. A certificate does not require any process to renew or retain (“What is a Credential,” n.d.).

Certification. Indicating a mastery in a specific skill, certifications can be measured against a set of accepted standards. To earn a certification one typically takes some type of assessment to show competency and knowledge in the set of skills. Certifications require continuing requirements that need to constantly be met in order to maintain the certification (“What is a Credential,” n.d.).

License. A license can be obtained by meeting set requirements established by the licenser. A license is a legal agreement allowing the licensee to carry out certain tasks or occupations. Depending on the license, there may be continuing requirements to uphold the license (“What is a Credential,” n.d.).

Difference between NASP Approved Program vs. Non-approved

A program is recognized as NASP approved when the institution’s soon-to-be professionals prove to be prepared to meet all of the needs of national standards of quality. For instance, graduates will have met all graduate education requirements consistent with NASP’s established 11 domains of knowledge: data-based decision-making and accountability, consultation and collaboration, effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills, socialization and development of life skills, student diversity in development and learning, school and systems organization, policy development, climate, prevention, and crisis intervention, as well as mental health, home/school/community collaboration, research and program evaluation, school psychology practice and development, and information technology (portfolio review form). Having the NASP program approval ensures that graduates have met all standards

of the National Association of School Psychologists, whereas a program that is not approved has provided evidence that the program failed to meet NASP standards in policy and practice (“Applying for an NCSP,” n.d.).

Applying for NCSP

When a student is applying for an NCSP, the difficulty level may vary based on whether the applicant is from a NASP approved program or not. An advantage of attending a NASP approved program is its direct link to the NCSP. This paper provides an in-depth look at applicants who graduated from NASP approved programs but have not applied for the NCSP. Given that an applicant has met all requirements to apply for the credential, not having enough money to send with the NCSP application is keeping him or her from applying. The graduate applied for the credential because the place of employment (e.g. school district) requires their school psychologist to have the NCSP credential.

As a first time applicant coming from a NASP approved program, besides the aforementioned requirements, there is also a monetary payment that may be a leading cause for not immediately applying. The nonrefundable fee is paid to NASP and can vary based on the applicant’s status at the time of submission. If the applicant is a student or in the first year of his or her career the cost is 60.00 dollars. Being in the second year of the career the application is 85.00 dollars. If the applicant is further into his or her career, and a NASP member it is 110.00 dollars, while a non-NASP member would pay 210.00 dollars. On the other hand, after receiving the NCSP, some states and schools may issue a

stipend for having the credential. Therefore, there is now a possible financial incentive to help motivate applicants to apply and receive the NCSP. This study looks closely at motivational factors such as financial incentive and location of work as measurements of a student's likelihood of applying for the NCSP ("Applying for an NCSP," n.d.).

Significance of this Study

There is a large amount of data showing students who do not have NCSP due to the fact that he or she did not meet one of the requirements to be issued the credential. What makes this study significant is looking at students who have met all requirements yet, still have not applied for NCSP credential. This research will help acquire more knowledge and provide information to NASP approved programs on how to promote NCSP applications. To have all students graduating from NASP approved programs apply and receive NCSP will not only benefit the school program but also future school psychologists and those who the school psychologist is interacting with. Having such a credential gives value to the school psychologist, the program he or she graduated from, and his or her school and place of employment. This research aids in giving more information to the NASP board to help with promoting more NCSP credentials and understanding why some students are not applying for the credential and what changes can be made to increase NCSP application.

Limitations

The majority of the data collected for this research derived from surveys given to students who graduated from NASP approved programs. Administering the surveys presented limitations such as accurate and timely feedback. In addition, some of the applicants are unaware of whether they fit the criteria outlined in the survey.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Birth of NCSP

The start of the NCSP began during the 1980's and was a result of three factors. One, the drive for more entry level competency exams for educators, two, in 1985 NASP revised their credentialing standards which presented a set of standards for preparation, credentialing, and practice; and third, NASP began reviewing programs with NCATE starting in 1987 (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013).

Entry level competency exams. Beginning in the early to mid-1980s in a push for school reform, many state education agencies (SEA) enforced comprehensive competency exams as a requisite for certification for those in a school-based profession. Numerous states started creating their own exams for school psychologists and several of those states joined with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to help bolster their program exams. However, these exams for school psychologists were inconsistent across states, and appeared fragmented and isolated (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013). Therefore, between 1986 and 1987, NASP met with ETS to discuss a creation of a national exam for school psychology. According to Rossen and Bole-Williams (2013), by July 1988, the first national administration of the exam was given for part of the field testing process. In the spring of 1989, there was an established passing score, and so became the first version of the Praxis II School Psychology Exam.

NASP credentialing standard. Before NASP created their own form of credentialing, other professional organizations such as the American Speech and Hearing Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Counseling Association had already established national credentialing systems. The difference with NASP is that there was a set of national standards but there was no way of acknowledging those who have met the standards. By 1984/1985, the National School Psychology Certification System (NSPCS) conveyed ways to further show standards for school psychologists and gave benchmarks to states for entry-level requirements to void the gap in credentialing standards across the nation (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013).

The Middle Years of the NSPCS and NCSP

Between the years of the 1980s and 1990s, the NSPCS saw a tremendous growth spurt. According to Batsche and Curtis (2003) within the first 18 months, 14,517 NCSP credentials were distributed by the NSPCS. Applications were coming from every state and some foreign countries. The NSPCS issued certificates to all who qualified for the NCSP credential and now keeps record with a directory of NCSPs.

One reason as to why there was a higher number of NCSP holders at the creation than there is today could be that the NSPCS allowed individuals to enter a grandparenting clause. The clause stated that the person must maintain an active credential from an SEA and take the national school psychology exam which they did not need to pass. Anyone under the grandfather clause then had three years to meet the degree requirements, the reader is referred back to NCSP definition (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013).

The Later Years of NCSP

The NCSP became more and more institutionalized throughout the 1990s. Having an increase in NASP approved programs, more students were prepared to easily apply for the NCSP however, as the national standards were revised to earn the NCSP, it became more demanding to earn the credential. The mid to late 1990s saw a decrease in total NCSPs one can speculate that the decrease was a result of initially grandfathered NCSPs not obtaining their credential requirements or not renewing (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013).

Breakthrough for the NCSP

2004 was the 15th anniversary of the NCSP and to celebrate, NASP formed the NCSP Promotion Task Force. The duties of the task force was to have the credential become more known, find ways to enhance its value, and exercise the NCSP as an important goal for school psychologists. Before the start of the Task Force, 8,300 school psychologists held the NCSP, after the NCSP Promotion Task Force's efforts were put into action, by 2007, there were 10,421 active NCSPs. A rise in numbers could be due to various states and individual school districts that offered financial incentives to NCSP credential holders. A survey conducted by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPCB) reported benefits ranged from \$450 to \$10,000 per year (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013).

NCSP Today

Since the growth spurt between 1989 and 1990, the total number of NCSPs has grown yet, is still not at a level expected by NASP. Along with the number of credential holders, the goals and purposes are continuing to develop. Currently, thirty-one states (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington) recognize or acknowledge the NCSP as either partly or fully meeting the requirements determined by that state (Rossen & Bole-Williams, 2013). This is a big improvement from 1998 when only fourteen states recognized the NCSP (Curtis et al., 1998). According to Rossen (2015) within the year of 2014-2015, 1,251 NCSPs were granted this is a decrease from 2013-2014 where 1,394 credentials were approved (Rossen, 2014). In total there were 1,345 applicants who applied for the NCSP which is an increase from previous years yet this number is still less than 50 percent of who is eligible to apply (graduates from school psychology programs) (NASP board meeting, 2016). These numbers demonstrate how although there are a number of states accepting NCSPs as meeting requirements from the state and there are many opportunities to attain an NCSP, there are fewer people applying or obtaining the credential today.

Other Certifications/Credentials

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). ASHA is a practice within the speech-language pathology profession comprised of members who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. ASHA, comparable to NASP, has their own mission to support their professionals through advancing science, setting standards, showing excellence in professional practice, and advocating for members (“General Information,” n.d.).

Being certified through ASHA means holding the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC). Those who hold a CCC certification have met academic and professional standards and go beyond minimum requirements for state licensure established by members of ASHA’s Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CFCC). Currently, more than 158,000 professionals hold an ASHA certification (“What Does it Mean to be Certified,” n.d.). Professionals in the speech-language fields choose ASHA certification to validate their skills to other professionals, employers, and possible clients. Since the certification is voluntary it shows that the holder has gone beyond the minimum requirement of state licensure. Similar to an NCSP credential, the ASHA certification may be qualified for stipends depending on the employer (“General Information,” n.d.).

National Certified Counselors (NCC). National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is an independent certification organization to identify counselors who have voluntarily obtained a certification. Counselors can become a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and currently there are more than 60,000 professional counselors who hold an NCC certification (“Certification,” n.d.). There are many similarities between why a professional would obtain an NCC certification and to why a professional would obtain an NCSP credential and ASHA certification. For example, showing commitment and professional development, to increase career opportunities, and shows to employers and public how the professional has met national standards. However, there is one main difference the NCC offers that the above two credentials do not, code of ethics. The NCC certification provides protection to both the counselor and clients through the code of ethics (“Certification,” n.d.). In addition, NCC benefits include the use of the NCC certification mark on business cards, websites, advertisements, etc., the certification allows access to low-cost liability insurance, and promotes advocacy for counselors (“Benefits of Certification,” n.d.).

Starting in the year 1999, Mississippi, was the first and only state to start giving financial rewards to school counselors who hold their National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) certificate. To date, there continues to be a low number of states who recognize the NCC or NCSC in regards to financial incentives especially since most states or school districts will recognize counselors on the same pay scale as teachers. Therefore, counselors will not be able to get paid more than the teachers in that district.

This contributes to the low number of only 2,800 certified school counselors certified as NCSCs (“The National Certified School Counselor,” n.d.).

National Certified School Nurse (NCSN). The purpose of the credential is to utilize a rigorous certification process for school nurses in order to improve the students’ health and wellness of the school community. The certification can be obtained voluntarily which shows a nurse’s exceptional preparation, knowledge, and practice. The credential, of National Certified School Nurse (NCSN) is governed on the state level meaning that applicants must meet the state’s requirements in order to obtain. The certification is granted through the National Board for the Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN). The NBCSN requires members to pay dues and renew the credential, therefore not only does this show the school nurse’s commitment to the credential but in addition, the desire to uphold the credential with having to pay a substantial amount of money (“Employer Information,” n.d.).

As of 2011, the NBCSN estimates that only 5% of U.S. school nurses are NCSN (Beirne, 2012). A common deterrent from obtaining the certification is a lack of institutional support or compensation in addition to the cost of the certification. Maintaining the cost of the credential has also restricted the number of NCSNs (Beirne, 2012). Although most employers do not offer incentives, some organizations will recognize the certification through salary increase or paying for the exam fees. The salaries often coincide with teacher compensation policies, therefore if a teacher in a district is not being recognized for a certificate then neither will the school nurse (“Employer Information,” n.d.).

National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). It is becoming more important for teachers to prove themselves as a qualified and constantly growing educator for today's youth. A board certification (NBCT) indicates the highest mark for teacher's professional development. With the certification, teachers demonstrate their skills in the classroom, dedication to their students, and allows them to continue to grow in their practice. There are twenty-five certificate areas from pre-K to 12th grade (art, career and technical education, English as a new language, English language arts, exceptional needs specialist, generalist, health education, library media, literacy: reading-language arts, mathematics, music, physical education, school counseling, science, social studies-history, world languages) with some disciplines having more than one developmental level making up for a total of twenty-five ("Certificates, Standards, and Instructions for First-time and Returning Candidates", n.d.).

Teachers with NBCTs often perform better than their peers in the classroom and most likely, these teachers are able to hold other leadership positions, and increase their resume skills and marketability. In addition, many schools in varying states will offer salary incentives to teachers with the certification. Being a part of the National Board Certification is a way for teachers to connect with other members across the country, another way to help with constant growth and learning ("Spreading NBCT Expertise," 2014). To date, there are more than 112,000 teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia who hold their NBCT with Wake County, North Carolina ranked first in top districts for total NBCTs ("Celebrating NBCTs and Candidates Across the Country," 2015). In the state of North Carolina, 21% of teachers are NBCTs and are placed on a

salary schedule 12% higher than base pay which could be a leading cause as to why this state is one of the highest ranked states of NBCTs. Following North Carolina in percentage of teachers with NBCT is South Carolina with 18% of teachers certified. These teachers are compensated with a \$5,000 stipend for up to ten years (2015). States that have a higher percentage of teachers who are NBCTs are not only more likely to give compensation but offer a higher stipend rate to their teachers. For the upcoming year of 2017 teachers already started in the application process to earn their certification is a growing number of 10,000 (“Celebrating NBCTs and Candidates Across the Country,” n.d.).

Benefits of Attaining Certification

There are many benefits accompanying a person who attains a certification regardless of their chosen career. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will distinguish between two types of benefits consistent across all careers: internal benefit, and external benefit. Internal benefits include any gain made by the certified professional that comes in the form of self-perception, such as salary incentive. On the other hand, external benefits are those that come to the certified professional by a new perception of oneself understood by the professional world around them, for example, commitment to the profession. In the above four professional certifications and credentials, it is obvious that there are internal as well as external motives to obtaining the profession’s certification, money and to show off skills is among the most common as to why a person will obtain the certificate.

Benefits of the NCSP

Beyond the NCSP being important for the individual who holds the credential, the NCSP is important to the profession of school psychology. The NCSP credential shows an individual's qualifications and abilities that match a set of national standards, shows their commitment to professional excellence, sets an example of the individual's knowledge and skills as a school psychologist, and gives standards for continuing professional development (NASP, n.d.).

Incentives. Holding the NCSP credential shows credibility to colleagues, employers, and families of the school district. Having the credential can be like an insurance to families allowing them to feel more comfortable and sure of capabilities of the school psychologist. The NCSP can give more career opportunities to school psychologists; support job mobility through showing the individual has met all national set standards; and can lead to monetary benefits such as stipends or bonuses (Rossen et al. n.d.)

Benefits of NCSP at a District Level

NCSP has come a long way since its creation. Through the help of NASP the NCSP has become recognized on the state and district levels and through support and advocacy of state association leadership, school psychology supervisors, graduate educators and practitioners the NCSP can continue to be recognized. Rossen and colleagues (n.d.) believe local advocacy for the NCSP can focus on three areas: NCSP parity, the recognition of NCSP as meeting a national standard, and having a

comprehensive set of skills consistent with national standards. Advocating for NCSP parity makes certain that school psychologists who have the national certification be treated the same as other school-employed professionals who possess a national certification, especially involving stipends or bonuses. By encouraging the certification as meeting a national standard can help other professionals within the school district recognize the different skills and knowledge that school psychologist uphold. The national standard of having an NCSP demonstrates the demanding requirements that have been met and therefore shows the school psychologist's high level of adequacy for the profession and for the students and families. Which then ties in to a comprehensive set of standards. Having met the standards for obtaining the NCSP, school psychologists have met the 10 domains (see Difference between NASP approved program vs. non-approved) and can promote their skills and how they can be useful in providing the services to students, families and the school (Rossen et al., n.d.).

Benefits of NCSP in the Field

When the NASP was first implemented in 1989, it brought thought and awareness to the national standards of being a school psychologist. The first revised set of standards around the mid-1980s is what is understood as: integrated preparation, credentialing, practice and professional ethics (Rossen et al., n.d.). Around this time there was still not a way to recognize individuals who met these standards. Having the NCSP is a way to acknowledge these individuals and also bring awareness in regards to NASP standards (Rossen et al., n.d.). As mentioned before, holding the NCSP credential brings about different incentives. In the field level these incentives represent a professional accolade,

credibility, improve career opportunities, job mobility, and possible monetary stipends or bonuses. Many other school related professions (previously mentioned) that have a national certification receive stipends, having a similar national certification for school psychologists advocates for comparable monetary incentives and also brings light and recognition to NASP standards to the school boards and districts and makes certain that the school psychologists are keeping up with their highest level of development (Rossen et al., n.d.).

School Psychologist Salary

In recent years, numerous salary surveys have been conducted to communicate with legislators, local Boards of Education, the New Jersey Education Association, and professionals to help spread information about the role and function of school psychologists in New Jersey. A survey conducted by Suzanne Taft-Sheppard, Eds, (2013) looks at the salary guides for school psychologists in South Jersey regions such as, Pennsville, Penns Grove Carney's Point, Salem City, Woodstown, Bridgeton, Vineland, and Millville.

The survey and information was communicated and found through e-mail correspondence and from employee contracts. Taft-Sheppard (2013) found that the mean salary for 2012 was \$82,650.00. Analysis of the mean salary, however, show evidence of a gender gap: males earned an average of \$94,755.00, and women earned an average of \$78,332.00. Within each contract for the aforementioned regions, 80 percent of school psychologists are included in the Local Teachers' negotiation while 12 percent are

included in the Administration Organizations negotiation. In Pennsville, Salem City, and Woodstown, the school psychologists are considered professional staff alongside, teachers, nurses, and librarians. Therefore, the school psychologist will be paid on the same salary scale as these professionals, ignoring the possibility that the school psychologist has a higher education level or may possess more certifications. On the other hand, in Penns Grove Carney's Point, Bridgeton, Vineland, and Millville, the school psychologist is excluded from the provisions in the contract and are included as an administrative staff for instance, principals and superintendents. In this case, the school psychologist can be paid on a salary scale based off of degree level and certifications, such as the NCSP.

Choosing whether or not to obtain NCSP could be related to where an individual is hired and if that district will compensate for the certification. For instance, if one were to obtain the NCSP, he or she has the additional option of selecting a district that compensates for the certification, or, on the other hand, decide the incentive is not that important to him or her and work elsewhere. Implied in this distinction is the availability of choice, and thus flexibility. Furthermore, even if it is not for the financial incentive, individuals may go after the certification for a sense of pride and a feeling of accomplishment. To own any certification or specialty within one's career field is to add additional and unique skills to one's professional repertoire. In addition to compiling credibility and gaining local job mobility, the NCSP allows a school psychologist the opportunity to work in different states other than the one he or she is state certified in.

Chapter 3

Methods

Participants

Members of New Jersey Association of School Psychology (NJASP) were asked to fill out an electronic survey that was delivered through e-mail. E-mail was sent through membership e-mail contact list by NJASP administration email. All participants were asked to fill out the survey after being informed all answers are recorded anonymously. 600 hundred e-mails were sent out and a total of 43 responses were sent back completed. All participants confirmed that he or she understood the study and the survey was confidential.

Materials

A survey with a total of 8 questions (See Appendix) was sent to individuals who are a member of NJASP and have their e-mail on record. The survey was created through Rowan's Qualtrics service and completed online.

Procedure

Members of NJASP received an email with a description of the research presented and was asked for his or her participation. The link to the survey was included in the body of the email. The survey may take the participant approximately 5 minutes to complete. All participation is voluntary. If a participant does not wish to participate in this survey, he or she was asked to not respond to the online survey. Completing the

survey indicates that the participant is voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The survey first asked if the individual graduated from a NASP approved program, if yes, the individual was prompted to continue with the survey. After the participant answered a question he or she would be shown the next question until all 8 were completed. Once the participant was finished filling out the questions he or she was thanked for the time and asked to hit submit final answers. The final answers were saved unanimously for data and results.

Chapter 4

Results

Results were recorded anonymously through Qualtrics system as descriptive measures. Results found the participants to be 80% female and 20% male. Members reported if they are currently employed as a school psychologist, 93% said they are employed as a school psychologist and 8% are not currently employed as a school psychologist. Out of all of the participants, 85% reported that they graduated from a NASP approved program, 8% reported they did not graduate from a NASP approved program and the other 8% were unsure if the program they graduated from was NASP approved. 55% of participants who graduated from a NASP approved program reported receiving NCSP post-graduation and 45% did not apply for the NCSP.

When asked why the participant did not apply for the NCSP the most common responses indicated that the NCSP left him or her with no monetary value, the participant was not ever planning on moving from New Jersey, or he or she did not take/pass praxis exam (See figure 2). Those reporting having the NCSP explained having the credential to add credibility and recognition to their professional development, to have the ability to be nationally certified in order to move and work in other states, or it was strongly encouraged by their program director. From this survey, 1 participant reported receiving a stipend from his or her employer for having the NCSP.

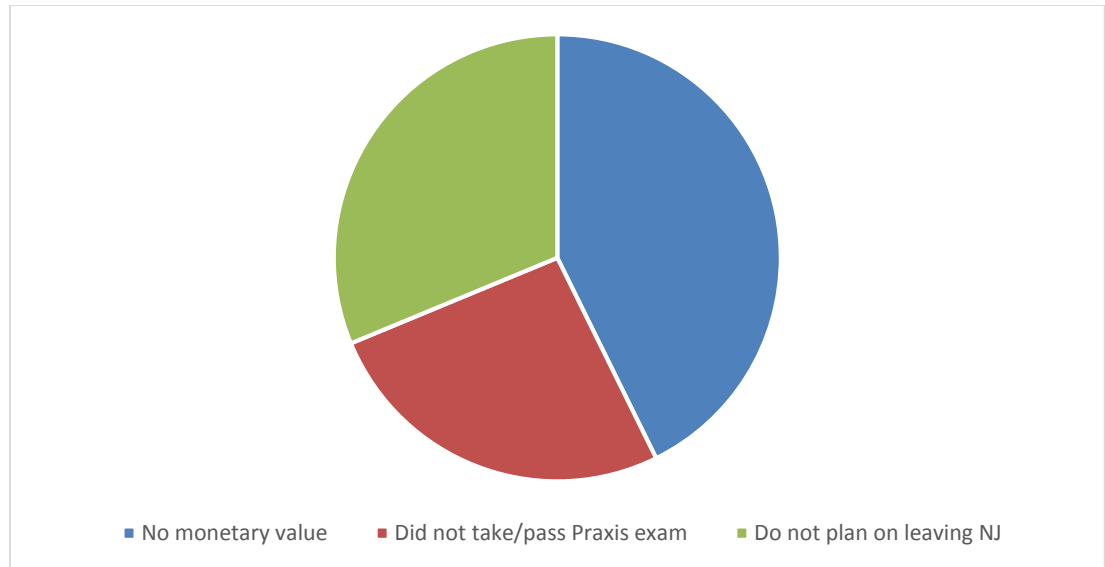


Figure 1. Reason for not having NCSP.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis one. Individuals graduating from a NASP approved program do not have their NCSP because the credential has no benefit to their current career. Hypothesis one is supported through the descriptive results of responders noting that obtaining the NCSP had either no effect, or an adverse effect on their career.

Hypothesis two. Individuals who do have an NCSP do not receive a stipend from their employer, which suggests no monetary advantage for receiving the certification. Results support the second hypothesis by showing 1% of school psychologists with NCSP report receiving a stipend from his or her employer.

Chapter 5

Discussion

It is worth noting how “adverse effect” is defined in support of hypothesis one. Adverse effect does not mean that obtaining the NCSP dissuaded employers from hiring applicants who had received the credential. In contrast, adverse effect includes the following stipulations: that obtaining the NCSP would have no effect on job prospects within the state, that obtaining the certification would cost unnecessary money, and that obtaining the certification forced an applicant to retake the praxis exam. In this study, adverse effect is defined as both unvalued use of time and money, as well as a lack of effect on current or future job prospects.

In regards to hypothesis two, only one person in the current study reported receiving a monetary stipend from their school district for having the stipend. This suggests that current or aspiring school psychologists are not in pursuit of applying for NCSP because it will not give any monetary benefit. Having to previously deposit money in order to receive the credential and not be receiving that money back in other forms may be another deterrent for why school psychologist are not going after the NCSP.

Taken together, both hypothesis one and two reflect a lack of motivation on the part of the applicant due to insignificant monetary or career incentives (see *Figure 1*).

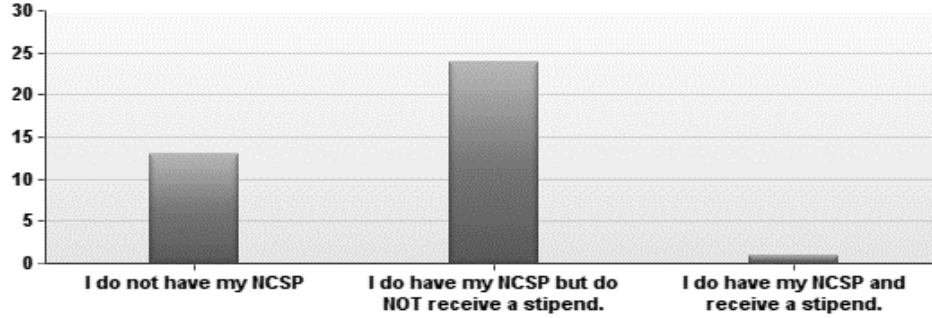


Figure 2. School psychologists who receive a stipend with NCSP.

Limitations of this Study

Although the sample size consists of 600 individuals, only a small amount (45) responded to the survey; of the responders, 8% reported being unsure whether or not they graduated from a NASP approved program; and the method of data collection, surveys, causes questions with data reliability and timeliness.

There are many members of NJASP who constantly receive emails concerning research survey requests. The multiple requests can cause participants to quickly take the survey and overlook some questions or take the survey quickly in order to finish or not take the survey all together. Members who answered the survey but were unsure if the program he or she graduated from was NASP approved can alter the validity of the results.

Future Direction

Given the support shown by the data for both hypotheses, this study may provide possible solutions for the low application numbers of the NCSP. The data provides insight into the undervalued nature of the credential. Therefore, a clearer representation of the benefits of receiving the credential may increase the number of School Psychologists with the NCSP. If more school programs, especially NASP approved programs, promoted and advocated for the credential upon completion of the program more students would be exposed to the possible benefits and importance of the credential. This way, the students will be fresh to the career and wanting to open up as many opportunities and advancements that the NCSP will give aid to.

In addition to providing clearer information of the benefits of the certification, the data suggests that if NASP worked with local school districts to work out a stipend plan, the number of members with the NCSP would grow. Many professionals decide not to go after the NCSP knowing the credential will not provide any further benefit while only setting them back financially. If more school districts, particularly in New Jersey, were able to provide a stipend for having the credential, similar to a teacher having a NBCT, this would not only increase the amount of NCSPs but would raise the level of necessity for attaining the certification.

In the future, studies related to this topic should be considered to further and support the results found in this analysis as well as to continue the knowledge already gained.

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Appendix

NJASP Survey

1. I identify as:
Male. Female.
2. Did you graduate from a National Association of School Psychology (NASP) approved program?
3. If yes, did you apply for your Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential upon graduating from your program?
4. If yes, why did you apply for NCSP credential?
5. If you answered “no” to applying for NCSP why did you not apply for the credential?
6. Are you currently employed as a School Psychologist? If so, where are you employed?
7. If you have your NCSP, do you receive a stipend from your employer for having your credential?
8. If you have any other information/comments about holding the NCSP, please provide it here: