

---

# Korean School Counselors' Experience of Difficulties in Practice\*

Eunsun Joo\*\* and Haerim Mun  
(Duksung Women's University)

---

**Abstract:** It has been more than 40 years since the guidance and counseling have been practiced in school settings in South Korea. However, the studies concerning school counselors' experience in their practice are rare. This research attempts to the difficulties reported by school counselors in South Korea and compared them to counselors practicing in non-school settings in order to provide a unique perspective of the difficulties faced in practicing in school settings. Using the Common Core Questionnaire for Psychotherapists from the International Study of Development of Psychotherapists", a large scale multinational, collaborative research effort designed to study the professional and personal development of psychotherapists (Orlinsky & Ronnestad, 2005), 60 school counselors and 114 counselors are compared with each other. The main research questions are: 1) "What are the factors for difficulties in practice?" 2) "How different are the school counselors in their experience of difficulties in practice compared to counselors in non-school settings"?; 3) "What are the significant predictors for the factors of difficulties in practice? Based on the results, the authors hope to provide some information concerning the current school counseling practice in South Korea and suggest some implications for improving the school counseling practices.

**Key words:** school counselors, school counseling, difficulties in practice

---

\* This research was funded by Duksung Women's University Research Fund 2005.

\*\* corresponding author

---

*Korean Social Science Journal*, XXXIII No. 1(2006): 139-160.

In many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, education is regarded as a means to an end rather than end itself (Romano et al., 2005). South Korea is no exception to this general fact as most students face an environment of high pressure and stress related to their academic goals. National college entrance exams are extremely competitive and many students struggle to enter top universities. In addition, many adolescents are also challenged a growing set of social problems such as bullying, violence, drugs, and sex in school settings. (Joo & Han, 2000). Many professionals are concerned with the psychological well-being of adolescents in South Korea and this concern has naturally led to an increased emphasis on school counseling and the role of school counselors. Though school counseling has long history and many acknowledge its growing need and importance, studies concerning school counseling practice and practitioners in South Korea are rare. In order to facilitate the development of school counseling, this study attempts to closely examine the unique experiences of school counselors by comparing them to counselors in general in terms of the difficulties of practice.

The history of school counseling in South Korea can be traced back to mid 1960s, when the guidance and counseling practice was first introduced in the middle and high schools. In 1973, under the reformed education law, guidance counselor (*Kyo-do Ju-im*) were allowed to practice in school settings and in 1974, education law was again changed to include the guidance counseling licensure as part of the teaching certificate. Up to this time, in the Korean school setting, the typically a teacher served also as a counselor, rather than having professional counselor solely serving that role. Then in 1998 and 2001, elementary and high school education laws was reformed, respectively, to place professional counselor (*Chun-mun Sang-dam Kyo-sa*) in schools, in recognition of the rising need for professional counseling practice in schools (Kim, 2003). Furthermore, what was formally called “guidance

centers" has been upgraded to "career and counseling centers", in order to emphasize their importance and function. In addition, eleven educational districts in Korea established "adolescent counseling centers" recently to facilitate the school counseling practice (Seoul Educational Research Center, 1997, 1999).

Despite the long history and recognized importance of school counseling, it was only recently that an association of school counseling was established. In 2001, professionals in the field of school counseling formed Korean School Counseling Association ([www.ksca.pe.kr](http://www.ksca.pe.kr)), the first large scale, official school counseling association in Korea. At the same time, professionals started to do research on school counseling and recently, there has been some studies examining the general activities and experiences of the school counselors on issues such as their attitudes regarding the counseling practice (Whang, 1994) and the school counseling environment in Korea (Chang, 2000; Kim, 2002). In reflecting the need for further development of the profession in Korea, Joo and Kim (2004) found that the majority of school counselors practice without a certificate from any professional school counseling programs. Furthermore, in terms of practice, they report to seeing students only for 10 to 30 minutes, often times not in counseling rooms, and without a proper understanding or support from the schools in which they work. Lee and Ahn (2003) criticize that school counselors tend to emphasize control rather than growth when they counsel student. Song (1999) challenges the current school counseling situation in South Korea by questioning its effectiveness and points to the fact that currently school counseling in Korea needs to establish an identity of its own. From the students side of view, those who receiving counseling in schools, recent studies show that many of them report to having negative experiences and attitudes toward school counseling and they attribute this fact primarily on the attitude of school counselors (Chung, 2003, Song, 1999). Among these recently studies,

however, an exploration of the school counselors' actual practice and their experiences in the therapeutic context is scarce. Specifically, an examination the practices of school counselors, such as the kind of difficulties they experience may provide some useful information for the facilitation and development of school counseling in Korea.

According to Orlinsky & Rennestead (2005), regardless of the overall high level and increasing levels of confidence in therapeutic skills, difficulties are an integral and unavoidable part of the therapeutic work experience. The challenges that clients present are often, but not always, well met by the various skills that therapists can bring to their tasks. When those skills fail, or when therapists are unsure of how to use them, minor or major difficulties in practice are experienced. Studies concerning the therapists' experience of difficulties in practice suggest that therapists' professional characteristics, such as their experience levels and degree of control, in treatment setting may influence the difficulties in practice. Several studies show that the more a therapist has practiced in their profession, their self-efficacy increases and anxiety level decreases, which in turn cause lower levels and frequencies of difficulties in practice (Hong & Choi, 2001; Egan, 1999). Also, some studies suggest that therapists' autonomy in work place, such as being able to choose their own clients, set schedule, etc., may reduce burnout among therapists (Bae, 2001; Joo & Choi, 2005). Therefore, therapists who are not able to conduct practices autonomously, as is typical in the Korean school settings, may experience related difficulties in practice. Other basic factors of the therapists' personal characteristics such as age, gender, as well as satisfaction in their personal life are found to influence their practice (Kim, 2002). Psychotherapists who live in the moment and are satisfied in their personal life tend enjoy practicing therapy, which influences the level of service they provide during therapy (Kim, 2002; Cho, 1994).

In order to examine the school counselors' experience in practice in the therapeutic context, the authors use the difficulty scales developed by the researchers of the "International Study of the Development of the Psychotherapists." Recognizing the importance of the "therapist variable" in psychotherapy research, several members of Society for Psychotherapy Research gathered and formed a collaborative Research Network of International Study of Psychotherapists (CRN: ISDP) in 1989. This group designed a study of development over the entire course of the professional career of therapists and included therapists of all professional backgrounds, theoretical orientations, and several nations.

To examine the unique experience of school counselors in Korea, they are compared with counselors practicing in non school settings along several key dimensions related to difficulties associates with the counseling practice. For this identification, the main research questions used in this study are: 1) "What are the factors for difficulties in practice?" 2) "How different are the school counselors in their experience of difficulties in practice compared to counselors in general?" 3) "What are the significant predictors for the factors of difficulties in practice?" Based on the results, the authors hope to provide practical information concerning the current school counseling practice Korea and suggest some implications for the school counseling practices.

## **I . Method**

The data examining the Korean school counselors' experience of difficulties and coping strategies were collected as a part of long-term, collaborative, international study of the development of psychotherapists, the Collaborative Research Network: International Study of Development of Psychotherapists (CRN: ISDP). The study was initiated in 1989 by a group of members of the

Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR), and has been continued for more than a decade (Bae, Joo, & Orlinsky, 2003; Joo, Bae, & Orlinsky, 2003; Orlinsky et al., 1999; Orlinsky & Ronnestad, 2005). The group known as SPR Collaborative Research Network (CRN) originally consisted of colleagues from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States and subsequently expanded to include colleagues elsewhere in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including Korea. In terms of the Korean sample, the first wave of data collection was conducted in 1993, with the sample of 123 therapists (Joo, 1993, 1996), and the second wave of data collection was done in 1996 bringing the total sample size of Korea to 538 psychotherapists (Bae, Joo, & Orlinsky, 2003).

The CRN: ISDP is an ongoing study and the data used in this study is from the third wave of data collection done in June through December 2004, based on the revised version of Common Core Questionnaire (CCQKorea/04). The CCQKorea/04 was revised to accommodate the unique therapeutic situation in Korea by adding Korean specific counseling categories such as the "School Counselor (*Sang-dam Kyo-sa*)", the professional group of counselors that practice in school settings. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, in person and by mail, based on a directory list of the Korean Counseling and Psychotherapy Association (KCPA) and Korean Counseling Association (KCA) members. Of the 500 questionnaires sent out, 174 were returned, most of who are used in this study. The 174 sample of counselors can be separated into two distinct groups: (1) school counselors (*Sang-dam Kyo-sa*) who received either short-term or long term training in professional school counseling (*Chun-mun Sang-dam Kyo-sa Yang-sung*) programs, (2) counselors (*Sang-dam-ja*) who received a certificate from the KCPA and KCA. Throughout the remainder of the study, we will refer to the former group as "school counselors" and to the latter group as "counselors in general".

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument designed for use by the SPR Collaborative Research Network is the Development of Psychotherapists Common Core Questionnaire (DPCCQ) (Orlinsky et al., 1999; Orlinsky & Ronnestad, 2005). The DPCCQ is a lengthy, self-administered survey consisting of 404 items covering various aspects of the therapists' professional and personal characteristics. The data from the structured responses are described in Bae, Joo, and Orlinsky (2003), Joo, Bae, and Orlinsky (2003) and Orlinsky and Ronnestad (2005). The items analyzed in this study are from section eight, which focuses on the therapists' experiences of difficulties in practice and their coping strategies (Orlinsky & Ronnestad, 2005, p. 18).

To assess the therapists' difficulties, items were composed for the DPCCQ based on a qualitative study of Davis, Elliott et al. (1987). Their analyses of numerous descriptions by therapists of their difficulties in practice revealed 9 distinct types or clusters, for each of which two quantitative scales were constructed. The difficulties in practice were surveyed by asking the question that starts out, "Currently, how often do you feel..." followed by eighteen questions related to practice difficulties such as, "...lacking in confidence that you can have a beneficial effect on a client", "...unable to have much real empathy for a client's experience", "...frustrated with a patient for wasting your time." Each question is answered based on 6-point Likert type scales (*i. e.* 0 = *never*, 5 = *very frequently*).

### **Participants**

Due to some missing responses among the 174 returned questionnaires, only 166 subjects are included in the study. Professionally, all of the 166 subjects in the analyses are psychotherapists practicing in the field of counseling.

**Table 1.** Personal and Professional Characteristics of Samples

	School Counselors ( <i>N</i> =60)	Counselors in General ( <i>N</i> =114)
<b>Age</b>		
21- 30 yrs.	16 (9.2%)	43 (24.7%)
31- 40	22 (12.7)	35 (20.1)
41- 50	14 (8)	19 (10.9)
51- 60	7 (4)	10 (5.8)
missing	1 (0.6)	7 (4)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	7 (4%)	19 (11%)
Female	53 (30.4)	95 (54.6)
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1- 5yrs.	34 (19.5%)	76 (43.7%)
6- 10	15 (8.6)	21 (12.1)
11- 15	3 (1.7)	7 (4)
16- 20	1 (0.6)	5 (2.9)
>21	2 (1.1)	4 (2.3)
missing	5 (2.9)	1 (0.6)
<b>Years of education in Counseling</b>		
<2 yrs.	21 (12.1%)	61 (35.1%)
4 yrs.	35 (20.1)	30 (17.2)
5 yrs.	4 (2.3)	9 (5.2)
>11 yrs.	0(0)	14 (8)
<b>Theoretical Orientation</b>		
Psychoanalytic/dynamic	9 (5.2%)	28 (16.1%)
Behavior	21 (12.1)	31 (17.8)
Cognitive	22 (12.6)	38 (21.8)
Humanistic	38 (21.8)	50 (28.7)
Systems	3 (1.7)	8 (4.6)

Table 1 shows the personal and professional characteristics of the sample of therapists. Though the study was designed to collect a random sample of therapists, the returned questionnaires tended to show a biased response trend. In particular, most of the sample consists of females and those who are less than 40



years of age. In terms of experience and education, the majority of therapists in the sample tend to be less experienced and have less than 5 years of education in counseling. Concerning theoretical orientation, many report to prefer to use the humanistic approach, cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamics and systems theory.

### **Data Analysis**

For the statistical analysis, SPSS 11.0 was used. The eighteen 6-point item-scales surveying "difficulties in practice" were factor analyzed using Varimax rotation to determine empirically and conceptually coherent dimensions. Cronbach's alpha was computed to assess the internal consistency of these scales. Then, a one-tailed T-test was used to compare school counselors to non-school counselors. Finally, multiple regression analysis was run in order to find the key variables influencing the factors in "difficulties" where the variables were chosen using the enter method. The variables which entered in regression were age, experience, selecting type of clients, selecting number of clients, ability to arrange own time table, duration of counseling, personal life satisfaction as continuous variables and gender as discrete variable.

## **II . Results**

The results of this study describe in the order of research questions: 1) "What are the factors for difficulties in practice?" 2) "How different are the school counselors in their experience of difficulties in practice compared to counselors general?" 3) "What are the significant predictors for the factors of difficulties in practice?"

### **The Factors of Difficulties in Practice**

As shown in Table 2, the factor loadings of all of the scales

were above .40. Factor analyses of the scales revealed three factors of therapists' difficulties that were identified: (1) "professional self-doubt", (2) "frustrating treatment case", (3) "negative personal reaction".

Among the three factors, "professional self-doubt" was the strongest factor with a Cronbach's alpha of .94. This factor consisted of eleven items in varying measures such as, feeling unable to generate momentum to move therapy forward; feeling demoralized by an inability to help a client; feeling unable to comprehend the essence of a client's problem; unable to have much real empathy for a client; distressed by one's powerlessness to affect a client's tragic life situation; etc.

**Table 2.** The Factors of Difficulties in Practice

Scales	Factor Loadings
FACTOR I: PROFESSIONAL SELF-DOUBT [Cronbach's $\alpha$ =.94]	
9. Unable to generate sufficient momentum to move therapy with a client in a constructive direction	.813
11. Demoralized by your inability to find ways to help a client.	.793
12. Unable to comprehend the essence of a client's problem	.767
5. Unable to have much real empathy for a client's experience.	.695
7. Distressed by your powerlessness to affect a client's tragic life situation.	.675
3. Unsure how best to heal effectively with a client.	.673
6. Uneasy that your personal values make it difficult to maintain an appropriate attitude towards a client.	.656
13. Unable to withstand a client's emotional neediness.	.593
14. Unable to find something to like or respect in a client.	.585
10. Irritated with a client who is actively blocking your efforts.	.539
8. Troubled by ethical issues that have arisen in your work with a client.	.425

FACTOR II: FRUSTRATING TREATMENT CASE [Cronbach's alpha=.85]	
16. Conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client and equivalent obligations to others.	.788
15. Angered by factors in a client's life that prevent a beneficial outcome.	.763
18. Frustrated with a client for wasting your time.	.755
17. Boggled down with a client in a relationship that seems to go nowhere.	.668
FACTOR III: NEGATIVE PERSONAL REACTION [Cronbach's alpha=.79]	
2. Afraid that you are doing more harm than good in treating a client.	.828
1. Lacking in confidence that you can have a beneficial effect on a client.	.787
4. In danger of losing control of the therapeutic situation to a client.	.667

Having a "frustrating treatment case", with a Cronbach's alpha of .85, was defined by four scales: of feeling conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client with equivalent obligations to others; feeling angered by factors in a client's life that make a beneficial outcome; feeling frustration with a client for wasting time; and feeling bogged down with a client in a relationship that seems to go nowhere.

The least strong factor in difficulty was having a "negative personal reaction" to a client, with a Cronbach's alpha of .79. The scales defining this dimension were: afraid that you are doing more harm than good in treating a client; lacking in confidence that you can have a beneficial effect on a client; and feeling in danger of losing control of the therapeutic situation to a client.

### Difficulties in Practice Experienced by School Counselors Compared to Counselors in General

**Table 3.** Difficulties in Practice by Factors Experienced by School Counselors Compared to Counselors in General

Factor	School Counselors ( <i>N</i> =60)		Counselors in General ( <i>N</i> =114)		<i>T</i>
	Average	Standard Deviation	Average	Standard Deviation	
Professional Self-Doubt	2.09	1.04	1.79	.89	1.66*
Frustrating Treatment Case	1.90	.93	1.52	1.06	1.98*
Negative Personal Reaction	1.81	.96	1.74	1.00	.65

\*  $p < .05$

When compared to counselors in their experience of difficulties in practice, school counselors report to experience significantly higher levels and frequencies of “professional self-doubt” and “frustrating treatment case”. Compared to counselors in general, school counselors have a higher tendency to feel unable to generate momentum to move therapy forward, feel demoralized by an inability to help a client, feeling unable to comprehend the essence of a client’s problem, are unable to have much real empathy for a client and are distressed by one’s powerlessness to affect a client’s tragic life situation. Also, they report to experience more often feeling conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client with equivalent obligations to others, feeling angered by factors in a client’s life that make a beneficial outcome, feeling frustration with a client for wasting time and feeling bogged down with a client in a relationship that seems to go nowhere. In other words, compared to counselors in general, school counselors report to doubt their capability of treating clients and experience a high sense of limitations in practice. At the same time, they report to experience conflicted feelings in dealing with clients and experience more negative feelings as well in their relationship with clients (see Table 3).

### Variables Predicting the Factors of Difficulties in Practice

Table 4 shows results of the multiple regression analysis conducted for school counselors and counselors in general. The regression analysis was conducted in a way such that factors of difficulties in practice were treated as the dependent variables and therapists' characteristics as the independent variables. The independent variables were chosen as enter method and they include: age, gender, years of experience, control in treatment case (selecting the client with whom you work, selecting the number of clients, arranging your time table over the duration of counseling you offer) and personal life satisfaction.

**Table 4.** Variables Influencing the Difficulty Factors (Multiple Regression Analysis- Enter Method)

Dependent Independent	Professional Self- Doubt				Frustrating Treatment Case				Negative Personal Reaction			
	School Counselor		Counselors in General		School Counselor		Counselors in General		School Counselor		Counselors in General	
	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	-.03	.01	-.017	.17	-.30	.04	-.00	.65	-.54	.00	-.19	.18
Gender	-.30	.12	-.056	.83	-.36	.92	-.32	.30	.26	.45	.15	.60
Experience	-.29	.43	-.031	.17	-.10	.66	.01	.58	.05	.83	-.01	.70
Select type of Client	.18	.24	.93	.33	.22	.20	.12	.31	-.40	.81	.03	.77
Select No. of Client	.20	.43	-.41	.72	-.16	.94	.04	.80	.23	.27	.17	.90
Arranging time table	.59	.42	.65	.58	-.15	.38	.02	.91	.13	.44	.14	.30
Duration of Counseling	.10	.74	-.99	.38	-.60	.69	-.01	.50	-.26	.04	-.17	.19
Personal life Satisfaction	-.16	.85	-.69	.30	.13	.30	-.09	.29	.17	.15	-.47	.54
R <sup>2</sup>	.18		.14		.23		.06		.28		.09	

The only significant predictor for “professional self-doubt”

among school counselor was age ( $\beta = -.27$ ,  $p = .008$ ), implying that younger school counselors tend to experience more "professional self-doubt". No other variable significantly predicted "professional self-doubt". The eight independent variables predicted 18.2% of therapists' difficulties of "professional self-doubt".

In the case of other counselors, not single variable significantly predicted the dependent variable and the eight independent variables predicted 14.2% of "professional self-doubt". Thus, comparing the two counseling groups, while for other counselors "professional self-doubt" was not significantly differentiated by the general characteristics of the therapists, in the case of school counselors, age was a significant predictor for difficulties of "professional self-doubt" and that younger school counselors tend to experience more difficulty in this factor.

In terms of "frustrated treatment case", for school counselors, again age was a significant predictor for this dependent variable ( $\beta = -.30$ ,  $p = .04$ ). Younger school counselors tend to experience more often a "frustrated treatment case". No other variable was statistically significant for the school counselors group. The eight independent variables predicted 23.2% of therapists' difficulties of "frustrated treatment case". For the other counselors group, no variable significantly predicted the dependent variable and the eight independent variables predicted only 6.4% of the difficulty "frustrated treatment case". Again, compared to the other counselors group, for the school counselors' group age was a significant predictor for the latter group, while insignificant for the former group related to difficulties of "frustrated treatment case" and younger school counselors tend to experience more difficulty of this factor.

For "negative personal reaction", among school counselors, age was a significant predictor for this dependent variable ( $\beta = -.57$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Younger school counselors tend to experience more difficulty of "negative personal reaction". Also, duration of counseling

significantly predicted the “negative personal reaction” experience ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p = .04$ ). This indicated that those therapists in schools who are not able to control their duration of counseling tend to experience more instances and degrees of “negative personal reaction”. The eight independent variables predicted 27.6% of the dependent variable in the regression. In the case of the other counselors group, no variable significantly predicted the dependent variable and the eight independent variables explained only 8.8% of the variance in “negative personal reaction”. Compared to the general counselors group, in the case of the school counselors’ group, age and control in duration of counseling variables were significant predictors for difficulties of “negative personal reaction” showing that school counselors that are young and/or who are not able to control their duration of counseling sessions tend to experience more difficulties along this dimension. In sum, age was a significant predictor for all the factors of difficulties in practice for the school counselors group while no variable significantly explained the variations in the three dimensions of difficulty among the general counselors group. Younger school counselors report to experience more self-doubt in their professionalism, tend to be more frustrated by their treatment case and show higher degrees of negative personal reaction when treating clients.

### **III. Discussion**

The findings suggest that therapist’s difficulties in practice concern three different areas which are, “professional self-doubt”, “frustrating treatment case”, and “negative personal reaction”. “Professional self-doubt” involves a therapists’ professional aspect where they are unsure of their capability in treating clients and is the dimension that reflects the therapists’ professional qualities more than the patient characteristics. Conversely, the “frustrating treatment case” involves the therapists’ frustration toward clients

and it is more about the client characteristics than therapists'. "Negative personal reaction" concerns the therapists' personal aspect in terms of psychologically in cases where they have low confidence in dealing with clients. When school counselors were compared to counselors in general along these three factors of difficulties, the results show that overall, school counselors report to experience more in terms of difficulties compared to counselors in general. They tend to experience more doubt in terms of their professional capability, are more frustrated about the clients' external issues and express difficulty in the relationship. Finally, age seems to be a critical determining variable in the case of school counselors, but not for counselors in general, that tends to influence the school counselors' difficulties in practice along all three dimensions. Thus, younger school counselors seem to experience the most instances of difficulties in terms of higher professional self-doubt and more frustrating treatment cases and less control over the duration of their sessions.

The three dimensions of difficulties in practice portray a picture of therapy that is a collaborative work between the therapist and client that they involve both the therapist's and the client's characteristics. According to Orlinsky & Rønnestad (2005), the challenges in therapeutic work that clients present are often, but not always, well met by the various skills that therapists can bring to their tasks. When those skills fail, or when therapists are unsure how to use them, minor or major difficulties in practice are experienced. In other words, difficulties can be lessened when therapists are aware of their clients' needs, have various skills at their disposal as well as know how to use them.

The findings that school counselors in Korea experience high levels of difficulty in "professional self-doubt" and "frustrating treatment case" coincides and is explained by the fact that the majority of school counselors practice without much qualification and not able to provide professional service (Joo & Kim, 2004).



These results can be understood as being consistent with the fact that many tend to question the effectiveness of classroom teacher/counseling model. A model that uses a classroom teacher/counselor model, as is found in some countries, lends itself more naturally to implementing guidance lessons into curriculum, compared to the US model which usually employ exclusive counselors who do not have teaching responsibilities (Romano et al., 2005). For teacher-counselors, the role may induce boundary problems for them as school counselors. Since they know in detail of the external conditions which the clients may experience and are not able to do anything about it, this may cause their immediate feeling of frustration and helplessness. Also, there is an issue of a dual relationship, being a teacher and sometimes a counselor at the same time. Usually, in most contexts, the dual relationship is prohibited in counseling (Hill and O'Brien, 1999). That this is not so in the case of Korean school counselors is one area that needs to be addressed seriously.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that no other variables of the therapists' professional characteristics influence the difficulty in practice, with age being the only significant variable influencing the difficulty in practice only for the school counselors group. This result does not coincide with previous research that other variables such as experience level, control in treatment settings, gender, personal life satisfaction influence the difficulty in practice (Cho, 1994; Joo & Choi, 2005; Kim, 2002). The fact that age was an important variable among school counselors may suggest that school counselors' practices are different from other practices. It may be that school settings convey the characteristics of traditional hierarchical relationship of Korean culture (Han & Shin, 1999). Therefore, younger school counselors may experience much more difficulties compared to older school counselors. Also, this result may be related to work autonomy that according to Bae (2001), next to having salient theoretical

orientation, is the most significant positive predictors of work autonomy included having greater seniority among Korean therapists. It maybe that for senior school counselors in Korea they tend to experience less difficulty due to higher autonomy in their work setting.

The results of this study have some implications for improving the situation of school counselors in Korea. First, school counselors in Korea need to work on establishing their own identity as counselors in the context of having to play a dual role of teacher and counselor along with many other conflicting responsibilities. Second, school counselors, especially younger school counselors need to have a firm support base in the school and understanding from school administrators, including more such as the principals, vice-principals, etc. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, school counselors need more formal and continuous training and education in counseling along with a follow-up monitoring program to help them along in their professional development path.

## References

- Bae, S. H. (2001). *The experience of support in the work setting among psychotherapists in Korea*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Bae, S. H., Joo, E. & Orlinsky, D. E. (2003). Psychotherapists in South Korea: Professional and practice characteristics. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Training*, 40 (4), 302-316.
- Chang, D. (2000). *Elementary school counselors' counseling activities and perceptions*. Unpublished master's thesis, Soonchunhyung University. (in Korean).
- Cho, D. (1994). The characteristics of counselors in continuing

- counseling. *Korean Social Science Research*, 14, 29-36.
- Chung, B. (2003). *A survey on middle school counseling practices in Korea*. Unpublished master's thesis, Yeasoo University (in Korean).
- Egan, G. (1999). *Skilled Helper* (5th ed.) Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Davis, J. D., Elliott, R., Davis, M. L., Binns, M., Francis, V. M., Kelman, J. E., & Schroder, T. A. (1987). Development of a taxonomy of therapist difficulties: Initial report. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 60, 109-119.
- Han, K. & Shin, S. (1999). The changes in preference of values among Koreans- Hierarchical group to egalitarian individualism. *The Korean Journal of Social & Personality Psychology*, 13 (2), 293-310. (in Korean).
- Hill, O'Brien (1999). *Helping Skills*. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association.
- Hong, S. & Choi, H. (2001). The influence of counselor's self efficacy and state of anxiety on initial stage of counseling. *The Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 13 (1), 31-48. (in Korean).
- Joo, E. (1993). *Psychotherapists in Korea: A cross-cultural study of the 'Development of psychotherapists' common core questionnaire' and Korean psychotherapists' current practice*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Joo, E. (1996). *The psychotherapeutic relationship in Korea: Cross-national and internal cultural comparison*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Joo, E. (2004). The motivational themes of psychotherapists: A Preliminary qualitative study. *The Korean Journal of Counseling*, 5 (1), 29-42.
- Joo, E. (2005). Various aspects of strength in practice reported by psychotherapists. *The Korean Journal of Counseling*, 6 (1), 43-60.
- Joo, E. Bae, S. H. & Orlinsky, D.E. (2003). The professional and

- practice characteristics of Korean psychotherapists: Based on the "International Study of Development of Psychotherapists (ISDP)". *The Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 15 (3), 423-439. (in Korean).
- Joo, E. Bae, S. H. & Orlinsky, D. E. (2005). Korean psychotherapists' self-report on strengths and limitations in practice: An exploratory qualitative study. *Korean Social Science Journal*, 32 (2), 71-89.
- Joo, E. & Choi, M. (2005). A study on the counselors' role-confidence and work-satisfaction. *Duksung Women's University Journal*, 34, 113-137. (in Korean).
- Joo, E., & Han, B. (2000). An Investigation of the Characteristics of "Classroom Alienated" Middle School Students in Korea, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 1 (1), 123-128.
- Joo, E. & Kim, E. (2004). A study on the investigation of counseling practices in junior and senior high schools in Seoul area. *Duksung Women's University Journal*, 33, 183-210. (in Korean).
- Kim, H. (2002). *A research on the involvement in organization among clinical social workers*. Unpublished master's thesis, Catholic University Korea. (in Korean).
- Kim, M. (2003). *Teachers' Counseling Performance in Junior High Schools*. Unpublished master's thesis, Kaymyung University (in Korean).
- Orlinsky, D. E., Ambul, H., Ronnestad, M.H., Davis, J. D., Gerin, P., Davis, M., Willutki, U., Botermans J-F., Dazord, A., Cierpka, M., and Aapro, N., Buchheim, P., Bae, S., Davidson, C., Friis-Jourgenson, E., Joo, E., Kalmykova, E., Meyerberg, J., Northcut, T. Parks, B., Scherb, E., Schroder, T., Shefler, G., Stiwe, D., Stugart, S., Tarragona, M., Vasco, A. B., Wiseman H. & the SPR Collaborative Research Network. (1999). Development of psychotherapists: Concepts, questions and methods of a collaborative international study. *Psychotherapy Research*, 9 (2), 127-153.

- Orlinsky, D. E. & Rønnestad, M. H. (2005). *How psychotherapists develop: A study of therapeutic work and professional growth*. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association.
- Romano, J. L., Goh, M., Wahl, K. H. (2005). School Counseling in the United States: Implications for the Asia-Pacific Region. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 6 (2), 113-123.
- Seoul Educational Research Center (1997). *Teachers' Manual for Student Guidance and Counseling I*. Seoul: Sungwoong Press. (in Korean).
- Seoul Educational Research Center (1997). *Teachers' Manual for Student Guidance and Counseling II*. Seoul: Sungwoong Press. (in Korean).
- Song, H. (1999). *The Characteristics of School Counseling and Future Tasks*, Unpublished master's thesis, Yeosu University (in Korean).

## Appendix

Difficulties in practice: currently, how often do you feel ... ?

(0 = never, 5 = very frequently).

1. Lacking in confidence that you can have a beneficial effect on a client.
2. Afraid that you are doing more harm than good in treating a client.
3. Unsure how best to deal effectively with a client.
4. In danger of losing control of the therapeutic situation to a client.
5. Unable to have much real empathy for a client's experience.
6. Uneasy that your personal values make it difficult to maintain an appropriate attitude towards a client.
7. Distressed by your powerlessness to affect a client's tragic

life situation.

8. Troubled by ethical issues that have arisen in your work with a client.
9. Unable to generate sufficient momentum to move therapy with a client in a constructive direction.
10. Irritated with a client who is actively blocking your efforts.
11. Demoralized by your inability to find ways to help a client.
12. Unable to comprehend the essence of a client's problem.
13. Unable to withstand a client's emotional neediness.
14. Unable to find something to like or respect in a client.
15. Angered by factors in a client's life that prevent a beneficial outcome.
16. Conflicted about how to reconcile obligations to a client and equivalent obligations to others.
17. Bugged down with a client in a relationship that seems to go nowhere.
18. Frustrated with a client for wasting your time.