



Recruitment and Retention in School Psychology: An Analysis of School Psychology Peer-Reviewed Journals 2011-2021

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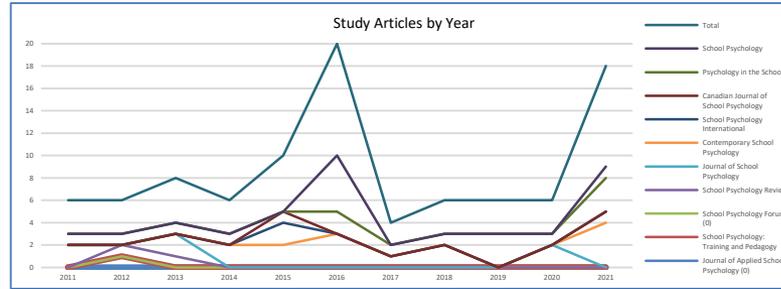
BACKGROUND

The field of school psychology is experiencing shortages in the number of practitioners and trainers. Current national estimates indicate that there is one school psychologist for every 1,211 K-12 students (NASP, 2021a). To meet the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommended ratio of 1:500, there needs to be approximately 63,000 additional school psychologists added to the current workforce (NASP, 2021b). This shortage is a critical problem for the field as it limits current and future opportunities to provide high quality services to students, their families, and school districts. Some of the most severe consequences include unmanageable caseloads, a decreased ability to provide prevention and intervention services, limited time to consult with families and staff, and reduced access to mental and behavioral services for students (NASP, 2021b).

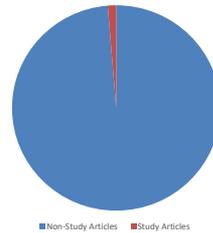
In addition to an overall personnel shortage, NASP has identified an underrepresentation of school psychologists from diverse backgrounds within the field (NASP, 2021a). There is also notable discrepancy between the number of school psychologists from diverse backgrounds and the number of students from diverse backgrounds in the schools. In NASP's most recent membership survey, only 14% of respondents identified as a race/ethnicity other than White/Caucasian (Goforth, Farmer, Kim, Nasar, Lockwood, & Affrunti, 2021). However, 39.9% of U.S census respondents in 2020 identified as a race other than Caucasian (United States Census Bureau, 2020) and 50% of students in K-12 schools come from racial and ethnic minoritized groups (Schilling, Malone, Bocanegra, & Barrett, 2021). To better meet the current and future needs of the profession and the individuals with whom we work, we need to address these shortages, with a specific focus on addressing the underrepresentation of diverse practitioners, graduate students, and graduate faculty.

NASP has provided recommendations on how to address this shortage, including improving recruitment overall and recruitment of a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Recruitment is defined as "strategies that help attract professionals into positions that are otherwise hard to fill or at a level where demand exceeds supply" (NASP, 2016, p. 1) In terms of recruiting school psychologists, this can refer to recruitment of prospective graduate students, potential graduate educators, or practitioners in the K-12 schools. Another strategy to address the shortage is improving retention. Retention can be defined as "ensuring that qualified individuals stay in their positions to avoid gaps, empty positions, transience, and burnout" (NASP, 2016, p. 10). Retention of practicing school psychologists, graduate faculty, and graduate students are all of concern. However, the absence of targeted retention strategies has resulted in graduate students from diverse backgrounds being at greater risk of leaving their programs prior to completion. Only about 50% of surveyed graduate programs had specific retention strategies in place, and the majority of those were not specific to graduate students from diverse backgrounds (Schilling et al., 2021).

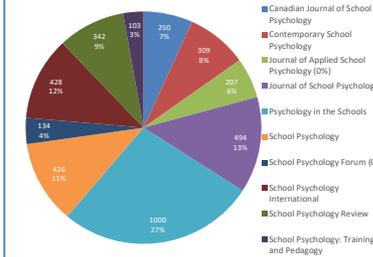
To be successful in addressing shortages and underrepresentation, the field needs to develop and publish guidance on how to recruit and retain individuals, particularly individuals from diverse backgrounds. These recruitment and retention efforts need to be directed at K-12 practitioners, graduate students, and graduate faculty. To identify progress on this front, articles from 10 peer-reviewed school psychology journals between 2011 and 2021 were reviewed for coverage of this topic.



Total Articles in Journals



Study Articles by Journal



METHODS

Articles assigned to issues from school psychology journals (2011-2021) were reviewed from ten journals (*Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, *Contemporary School Psychology*, *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *Journal of School Psychology*, *Psychology in the Schools*, *School Psychology [School Psychology Quarterly]*, *School Psychology Forum: Research in Practice*, *School Psychology International*, *School Psychology Review*, *School Psychology Training and Pedagogy [Trainers Forum]*). Articles, book reviews, commentaries, test reviews, and special issue introductions were reviewed. Many articles were associated with recruitment, retention, diversity within the field, and working with diverse students, but only articles that specifically focused on recruitment and retention of graduate students, graduate faculty, and K-12 practitioners were included in the study. Articles that briefly mentioned these topics or did not provide guidance on addressing the shortages were not included. Analyses included frequency counts of the number of articles published in each journal, as well as counts of articles included in the study that covered recruitment and/or retention of individuals from diverse backgrounds, K-12 practitioners, graduate students, and/or graduate faculty.

RESULTS

From 2011-2021, 3,693 articles were published in the peer-reviewed school psychology journals identified for this study. After review, 48 articles (1.3%) met the study criteria. Of those, 36 (0.98% of the total published) covered recruitment and 31 (0.84%) covered retention. Of the articles covering recruitment and/or retention, 37 (77.1%) pertained to graduate students, 28 (58.3%) pertained to individuals from diverse backgrounds, 11 (22.9%) pertained to K-12 school psychologists, and 6 (12.5%) pertained to graduate faculty.

Data analysis revealed that 2016 was the peak year for journal coverage of recruitment and retention in school psychology, with 10 articles (2.99% of all articles published) that met study criteria. However, it should be noted that 9 articles that met study criteria have already been published in 2021 and this presents the possibility for additional coverage of these topics in 2021 to exceed the coverage in 2016 by the end of the year. Over the 10 year period, *Psychology in the Schools* published the most articles (15) related to recruitment and retention of school psychology graduate students, faculty, and K-12 practitioners, followed by *Contemporary School Psychology*.

DISCUSSION

APA and NASP have emphasized a need to address the issues surrounding the lack of recruitment and retention of school psychologists, including graduate students, graduate faculty, K-12 practitioners, and individuals from diverse backgrounds. Although NASP has documented concerns on this issue, a minimal number of articles on this topic have been published in the peer-reviewed literature. We found that less than 2% of all articles published in the past ten years in ten of the most prominent school psychology journals focused on recruitment and retention. This is particularly concerning given the current shortages that exist and the potential impacts of those shortages. Within the literature that has been published, there appears to be a greater need for coverage pertaining to graduate faculty.

To further the goal of increasing the number of school psychology graduate students, graduate faculty, and practitioners, more research needs to be published on which strategies are the most effective at addressing the shortages. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that school psychology organizations increase grant funding for research on recruitment and retention. School psychology journals can collaborate to develop distinct special issues that focus on different areas of recruitment and retention as they pertain to each journal's focus. The individual journals could then put out a call for research to identify the most effective strategies for recruitment and retention, with an emphasis on recruiting and retaining individuals from diverse backgrounds.

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