

An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors  
in Different Educational Sectors

Elizabeth Sheridan

Master of Arts in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan  
Development

University of Limerick 2018



# UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Title of Research Study:

An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors  
in Different Sectors

By

Elizabeth Sheridan

Student Number: 16100611

Supervisor: Dr Lucy Hearne

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Arts in  
Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development

Submitted to the University of Limerick, 9 October 2018

## **Declaration**

*I hereby that this is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for the reward of a degree at this or any other university. I agree that the University of Limerick library may lend or copy this dissertation on request.*

Signed:

---

Elizabeth Sheridan.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr Lucy Hearne, who provided me with great support, guidance and encouragement throughout this study as well as the two years of this course. It was and always will be much appreciated.

I wish to thank Tom Geary and Margaret Keating for their wonderful contribution to the course and their unique way of getting the very best from us. I learned so much from you and I will not forget the enjoyable times spent in your company.

I would like to extend a word of thanks to the six participants who partook in the study. Your time is precious, and I thoroughly appreciate you giving up some of that to help me complete my research.

I wish to express a heartfelt thanks to my classmates, your kind words, friendship, help and encouragement never went unnoticed or unappreciated. I have been blessed to meet and get to know you all, my friends for life.

I sincerely want to thank my family, my father Tommy and mother Mary, sisters Helen and Ann Marie, and brothers Michael and Brendan. I am deeply grateful for your constant support, encouragement and love.

Finally, to Molly, my daughter, my friend, my person. You are now and always will be my meaning, my inspiration and my motivation. Thank you

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Appendices .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>1.1 Context and Justification for the Researcher.....</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>1.2 The Positionality of the Researcher .....</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>1.4 Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>1.5 Outline of Thesis.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>2.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>2.1 Professional Guidance Counselling in Ireland- Policy and Practice in     Post Primary and Other Sectors.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>2.1.1 The Definition of Guidance Counselling.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>2.1.2 Post Primary Guidance Counselling.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>2.1.3 Adult Guidance Counselling.....</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>2.2. The Concept of Job Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>2.3 Job Satisfaction in the Guidance Counselling Profession.....</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>2.3.1 Identified Factors Which Effect Job Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>2.3.2 Organisational Factors.....</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>2.3.3 Policy Factors.....</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>2.3.4 Stress and Burnout.....</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>2.4 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>Page 16</b>

<b>Chapter 3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>3.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>3.1 Research Questions.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>3.1.1 Primary Question.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>3.1.2 Secondary Questions.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>3.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretive (Qualitative).....</b>	<b>Page 18</b>
<b>3.3 Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews.....</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<b>3.3.1 Access and Sampling Strategy.....</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<b>3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews.....</b>	<b>Page 21</b>
<b>3.4 Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>Page 22</b>
<b>3.5 Validity and Reliability in Interpretivist Research.....</b>	<b>Page 22</b>
<b>3.6 Reflexivity.....</b>	<b>Page 23</b>
<b>3.7 Ethical Issues in Study.....</b>	<b>Page 24</b>
<b>3.8 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>Page 25</b>
<b>Chapter 4. Primary Findings.....</b>	<b>Page 26</b>
<b>4.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>Page 26</b>
<b>4.1 Data Analysis Strategy.....</b>	<b>Page 26</b>
<b>4.2 Theme 1: The Human Relationship Element and its Contribution to Job Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>Page 27</b>
<b>4.2.1 Guidance Counsellor Relationship with Students and Clients.....</b>	<b>Page 27</b>
<b>4.2.2 Guidance Counsellor’s Relationship with Management and Co-workers.....</b>	<b>Page 28</b>
<b>4.2.3 Relationships with External Bodies.....</b>	<b>Page 29</b>
<b>4.3 Theme 2: Factors Which Contribute to Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Amongst Guidance Counsellors.....</b>	<b>Page 30</b>
<b>4.3.1 Definition of Job Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>Page 30</b>

4.3.2 Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction.....	Page 31
4.3.3 Factors Contributing to Job Dissatisfaction.....	Page 32
<b>4. 4 Theme 3: The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors.....</b>	<b>Page 33</b>
4.4.1 Stress Levels .....	Page 33
4.4.2 Personal Self- Care.....	Page 34
4.5 Conclusion.....	Page 35
<b>Chapter 5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>Page 36</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	Page 36
5.1 Research Findings in Context of Research Questions.....	Page 36
5.2 Theme 1: Job Satisfaction for Guidance Counsellors.....	Page 37
5.2.1 How Guidance Counsellors Define Job Satisfaction.....	Page 37
5.2.2: Levels of Job Satisfaction for Guidance Counsellors.....	Page 37
5.3 Factors That Contribute to Job Satisfaction .....	Page 38
5.3.1 The Client-Based Relationship in Guidance Counselling.....	Page 38
5.3.2 Collegial Relationships and External Supports.....	Page 39
5.4. Factors That Lead to Job Dissatisfaction .....	Page 40
5.5. The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction in Guidance Counselling.....	Page 41
5.5.1 Stress and Burnout in Guidance Counselling.....	Page 42
5.5.2 Resilience and Coping Mechanisms.....	Page 43
5.6 Conclusion .....	Page 44
<b>Chapter 6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>Page 45</b>
6.0 Introduction.....	Page 45
6.1 Overview in the Context of the Study’s Aims and Objectives.....	Page 45
6.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Study.....	Page 46
6.2.1 Strengths .....	Page 46

6.2.2 Limitations.....	Page 47
6.3 Recommendations for Future Policy, Practice and Research.....	Page 47
6.4 Reflexivity in Relation to Personal Learning.....	Page 48
6.5 Conclusion .....	Page 49
References .....	Page 50- 59
Appendix .....	Page 60- 71
Gatekeepers Information Sheet (IGC Branch Chairperson) .....	Page 61
Gatekeepers Consent Form (IGC Branch Chairperson) .....	Page 63
Gatekeepers Information Sheet (AEGAI Chairperson) .....	Page 64
Gatekeepers Consent Form (AEGAI Chairperson) .....	Page 66
Guidance Counsellors Information Sheet .....	Page 67
Guidance Counsellors Consent Form.....	Page 69
Interview Questions .....	Page 70



## **List of Tables**

<b>Table 3.1 Participants Profile A.....</b>	<b>Page 20</b>
--	----------------

## **Glossary of Terms**

<b>AEGAI</b>	Adult Education Guidance Association Ireland
<b>AECS</b>	Adult Education Guidance Services
<b>ASTI</b>	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland
<b>BTEI</b>	Back to Education Initiative
<b>CAO</b>	Central Applications Office
<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
<b>DEIS</b>	Delivery of Equality in Schools
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education and Skills
<b>ETB</b>	Education Training Board
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>IGC</b>	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
<b>INTO</b>	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
<b>NCGE</b>	National Centre for Guidance in Education
<b>NCLB</b>	No Child Left Behind
<b>NGF</b>	National Guidance Forum
<b>OECD</b>	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PLC</b>	Post Leaving Certificate
<b>SPHE</b>	Social, Personal and Health Education
<b>TALAS</b>	Teaching and Learning International Study
<b>TIMSS</b>	Third International Maths and Science Study
<b>WSA</b>	Whole School Approach

## Abstract

The aim of this exploratory research study is to examine the topic of job satisfaction amongst guidance counsellors working in different educational sectors within the Irish education system. A further aim is to identify the key factors that result in both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction within the profession. While there has been extensive research carried out on the concept of job satisfaction in general terms, and indeed job satisfaction among teachers, this research study has identified a dearth in empirical research on the topic of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors.

The concept of job satisfaction is a complex one. In general, job satisfaction is a concept that has been researched quite substantially throughout the previous decades (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holmes, 2005; Hoppock, 1935; Locke, 1976; Schaffer, 1953; Weiss, 2002). Similarly, in the educational discipline, there has been significant research carried out on the topic (Darmody & Smith; Day, 1999; Morgan et al, 2016; Sharft, 2010; Kyriacou et al, 2003). However, there appears to be a lack of empirical research in relation to job satisfaction specific to the profession of guidance counsellors at both a national and international level.

The interpretive paradigm was used in this study, in the form of semi-structured interviews with six guidance counsellors working in different sectors of education. A thematic approach was used to analyse the interview data (Guest et al, 2012). The researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase thematic method. In the primary findings, three central themes emerged: the human relationship element of guidance counselling and its effect on job satisfaction, factors which contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst guidance counsellors, and the pivotal role of self-care in the attainment of job satisfaction.

Regarding the issue of job satisfaction, the findings reveal that working with the students or clients is the main contributor to satisfaction amongst the participants of the study. The findings also indicate that there appear to be numerous factors which lead to dissatisfaction such as extensive workload, lack of time, inequality of resources within different settings (i.e. DEIS vs voluntary schools), lack of external supports, inadequate response times to crisis cases and lack of autonomy in the role. The study concludes with a number of recommendations for future policy, practice and research.

## ***Chapter 1. Introduction***

The aim of this chapter is to present the topic being investigated in this research study. It will discuss the context and justification for this research. The positionality of the researcher, the aims and objectives, and research methodology and are outlined. Finally, a structural outline of the thesis is provided.

### ***1.1 Context and Justification for the Research***

This research will explore the job satisfaction of guidance counsellors across different educational sectors. Considering the ever changing and challenging role of the guidance counsellor, in terms of increased workloads and demands (ASTI, 2007; Browne, 2004; Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Sodoma and Else, 2009), and in the face of greater constraints on resources (Morgan et al 2016; Hearne, 2012), it is an appropriate time to investigate job satisfaction within the profession. There is also a scarcity of comprehensive empirical research in the context of guidance counsellors' job satisfaction across different educational sectors both at an international and national level.

There appears to have been substantial changes within the profession of guidance counselling from its establishment in Irish secondary school in 1966 to present day. Among these is the change to allocation of hours over different periods within the profession. Prior to 2012, guidance counselling hours were allocated on an ex-quota basis (DES, 2005). Subsequently, the Irish Government implemented budgetary measures as a response to the economic recession which saw guidance counselling provision lose its ex-quota allocation status (DES, 2012). Since then it has been argued that guidance services in secondary schools have been eroded and the implications fall directly on the students and the professionals providing the guidance service (IGC, 2016). The IGC have described guidance counselling as being “on its knees, with guidance counsellors in 2016 struggling on a daily basis to cope” (IGC, 2016) as a direct result of the 2012 provision changes.

With regards to the adult guidance services, a similar account is presented with increasing demands for the service being reported along with diminished resources (DES, 2014; NCGE, 2017). Regardless of the economic difficulties faced in the past decade, resulting in diminished resources, there is a requirement that those providing guidance services to adults make the obligatory contributions to the public policy of the country (OECD, 2013). This is

placing increasing pressure on those providing the service (Hearne, 2012). Despite attempts to improve services such as a six-year National Development plan in 2007, delivery of these intended improvements failed to adequately materialise (Hearne, 2012).

International research indicates that as well as meeting the need of their students and clients, the guidance counsellor is also facing the issue of role definition or role conflict and ambiguity where time constrictions and unrealistic expectations are factors that negatively affect the guidance counsellor (Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Paisley, 2001). Stress, in the education profession has been well researched over the years with stress and job satisfaction found to be negatively correlated (Lambie, 2007; Chaplain, 1995; Kyriacou, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003; ASTI, 2007; Morgan & Ni Craith, 2015; Morgan & O'Donnell, 2016). Considering this, the importance of resilience is a key issue with regards to job satisfaction in educational professions (Day et al, 2007; Hearne, 2012)

This current study is concerned with exploring the levels of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in Ireland in the context of the professional pressures arising from Government policy. Its purpose is to provide insights into the issue from the perspectives of the practitioners themselves.

### ***1.2 The Positionality of the Researcher***

There is a need for acknowledgement of the positionality of the researcher within research (Thomas, 2009). This researcher is a qualified post-primary teacher, who due to the lack of opportunity in securing a permanent position in teaching pursued a career in the private sector. Within this role the researcher experienced elevated job dissatisfaction and occupational stress before she left the occupation. Thus, this research topic appealed to the researcher and provided the opportunity to examine the issue of job satisfaction within her newly chosen career of guidance counselling. Throughout the study, the issue of reflexivity has remained to the forefront of the researcher's mind. It has involved critical reflection of the researcher's position and assumptions, to ensure the validity of the study (Thomas, 2009). There has been an acknowledgement of the researcher's own experience and preconceptions of job satisfaction with the need to bracket them off during the research study. This was achieved through the means of reflective journaling and supervision (Bryman, 2012).

### ***1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study***

The principle aim of this research study is to investigate job satisfaction from the perspective of guidance counsellors across different educational sectors. Furthermore, the specific objectives are:

- 1) To review relevant national and international literature on the topic of job satisfaction in the context of guidance counselling practice.
- 2) Gather the perspectives of guidance counsellors in order to gain an insight and understanding of their experience of job satisfaction.
- 3) Identify the factors that affect job satisfaction for guidance counsellors.
- 4) Develop recommendations to inform future policy, practice and research within the guidance counselling profession.

### ***1.4 Research Methodology***

This research study adopted an interpretivist (qualitative) paradigm. This was to ensure that the study could encapsulate the participant's attitudes and perceptions in relation to the topic of job satisfaction (Cohen, 2006). This method enabled provided the opportunity to hear about their experiences and the meaning of said experiences, and the multiple realities for those involved (Boeije, 2010; Hearne, 2009; Thomas, 2013) In particular, the holistic nature of the paradigm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and the opportunity for personal interaction through individual interviews on a sensitive topic was beneficial

### ***1.5 Outline of the Thesis***

**Chapter 1.** This chapter presents the topic being investigated, its context and justification, the positionality of the researcher, aim and objectives, research methodology and an outline of the thesis chapters.

**Chapter 2.** This chapter reviews the established research in relation to the topic of job satisfaction through an engagement with primary texts, national and international policy documents, journals, articles and reports. It is presented in three thematic sections: professional guidance counselling in Ireland, the concept of job satisfaction in general terms and finally, and the specific issue of job satisfaction in the guidance counselling profession.

**Chapter 3.** The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the paradigm and methods used within this research study. It provides a rationale for method of data collection and analysis. The

issues of validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethical responsibilities of the researcher are also examined.

**Chapter 4.** This chapter outlines the data analysis strategy and the primary findings from the collected data.

**Chapter 5.** In this chapter, a synthesis of the overall findings of the study within the context of the study's research questions is provided.

**Chapter 6.** This closing chapter concludes the study. It addresses the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future policy, practice and research are put forward and the researcher's personal learning achieved from undertaking the study is discussed.

## ***Chapter 2. Literature Review***

### ***2.0 Introduction***

Hart considers the literature review as imperative as,

Without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic, of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are (Hart, 1998, p.1)

The aim of this literature review is to provide an insight into the established research in relation to the issue of job satisfaction in guidance counselling practice. Internationally there is a vast amount of research literature on job satisfaction in general terms, with substantial amounts relating to teacher's job satisfaction. Indeed, within Ireland there has been some relevant research in relation to the topic of job satisfaction in the teaching profession. For example, the TALIS (2009) as well as by independent academic researchers (Morgan & Kitching, 2007; Morgan & O'Leary, 2004; Morgan & O'Donnell, 2016). There also been research carried out in relation to adult guidance (Hearne & Bimrose, 2012; Hearne 2012; AEGAI, 2016). Irrespective, there appears to be a scarcity of broad, empirical research in the context of guidance counsellor specific job satisfaction across different educational sectors both at an international and national level.

In conducting this research, the researcher engaged with primary texts and publications, national and international policy documents, journals, articles and reports as well as numerous web-based resources (Thomas, 2009). The literature review is divided into three thematic sections. The first section looks at professional guidance counselling in Ireland, examining the policy and practice which underpins it. The second section focuses on the concept of job satisfaction in general terms. While the concluding section will explicate the specific issue of job satisfaction in the guidance counselling profession, to include where necessary areas such as teaching, counselling and caring professions.

### ***2.1 Professional Guidance Counselling in Ireland- Policy and Practice in Post Primary and Other Sectors.***

The focus of this section will be on the policy and practice within guidance counselling in Ireland across different educational sectors, particularly the post primary and adult (further/higher) education sectors.

#### ***2.1.1 The Definition of Guidance Counselling***



The Department of Education and Skills defines guidance counselling in schools as a two-pronged approach, firstly defining guidance as:

A range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assists students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance.

(DES, 2005; p. 4)

Secondly, the counselling element of the role is viewed as a “key part” of the guidance service which is offered as a “developmental learning process and at times of personal crisis” (DES, 2005.p.4). The objectives being:

the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. Counselling in schools may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of these

(DES, 2005, p 4).

In an adult guidance context guidance is defined as:

Facilitating people to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

(National Guidance Forum, 2007; p. 6).

### ***2.1.2 Post Primary Guidance Counselling.***

In 1966 the Department of Education formally established guidance counselling within Irish schools. At the time this establishment was attributed to factors like industrialization, a decline in emigration and an increase in the range of career options for students (Shield & Lewis, 1993). The appointments were made on an ex-quota basis. The role of the guidance counsellor in post primary was to provide students with guidance and information in the areas of subject choice, careers and vocational training opportunities as well as supporting them in the completion of application processes for third level institutes (Hannan et al, 1983). In addition, the role involved personal counselling to students who needed it (Hannan et al, 1983; McCarthy, 1985; O’Leary & McCay-Momssey; 1987, Ryan, 1993).

More recently, the role of guidance counsellors in schools has been identified as supporting student’s transitions to second and third level education, in making decisions on subject choices and career options (DES, 2005). The IGC (2017) recognises the role of the guidance counsellor as being to:

facilitate clients in their unique identification of strengths, skills, possibilities, resources and options at key developmental milestones through their lifespan in areas relating to personal, social, educational and vocational concerns (IGC, 2017.p. 14).

The DES (2015) has highlighted professional competences such as managing design and delivery, catering for diverse needs, working and collaborating with other professionals and developing and implementing high quality guidance services. The guidance counsellor, who undergoes specific specialised educational training to acquire these competences, has a key role to play in the delivery of the guidance counselling programme (DES, 2015). However, their work should not be carried out in isolation, they should be operating in a collaborative manner with others, namely the management as well as other staff members (DES, 2005). This approach is referred to as a Whole School Approach (WSA) to guidance counselling (DES, 2005). It is viewed by the DES as a “model of good practice” (DES, 2009, p.8). Against the backdrop of budget cuts in 2012 the DES proposed that teaching staff, such as teachers of SPHE, take on a more active role in delivering certain aspect of the guidance plan (DES, 2012, p.5). The comprehensive success of this strategy remains questionable. Findings from one research study undertaken in 2014 indicate that teachers required to be part of the whole school approach had admitted to never having received any specialised training in pastoral care and therefore felt ill-equipped to deliver aspects of the guidance counselling service (Hearne & Galvin, 2014).

Prior to 2012, guidance counselling hours were allocated on an ex-quota basis, with one 22 hours posts per student population of 500-799 (DES, 2005). Subsequently, government implemented budgetary cuts were introduced in 2012 as a response to the economic recession which saw guidance counselling provision lose its ex-quota allocation. Hours were then allocated from within standard staffing allocation, at the discretion of school management (DES, 2012). This resulted in loss of guidance posts and guidance counsellors being forced into dual positions; retaining decreased allocated guidance counselling hours while also being required to reintegrate back into the mainstream classrooms as subject teachers.

As a result, the IGC National Audit of Guidance Counselling Practice 2015/16 -Audit 4 (IGC,2016) found that there was a decrease in the delivery of guidance counselling in second level schools and colleges of further education from 24.5 hours to 17.7 hours, accumulating in a total loss of 6.78 hours, highlighting the ominous state of the service of guidance counselling. Services have been eroded and the implications fall directly on the students and the professionals providing the guidance service (IGC, 2016). The Education Act (1998) set down the requirements for the provision of guidance counselling in schools but the cuts to

allocation has seen the government renege on their promise to support young people and all those in further education in assisting them to reach their full potential (IGC,2016). Ongoing efforts have been made to gather data on the outcomes of the 2012 budgetary restrictions for both students and guidance counsellors. Surveys generated by bodies such as the ASTI (2013), IGC (2014) and NCGE (2013) have argued for the urgent need for reinstatement of pre-2012 guidance service posts. In an IGC press release in May of 2016 they described Guidance counselling as being “on its knees, with guidance counsellors in 2016 struggling on a daily basis to cope” (IGC, 2016) as a direct result of the 2012 provision changes.

### ***2.1.3 Adult Guidance Counselling***

In its more recent publication the AEGAI identified the role of the adult guidance counsellor as providing:

A professional guidance service to all referred clients on a one-to-one and group basis including workshops on a wide range of guidance and information issues to target groups within the ETBs. This includes personal development, stress and time management, QQI progression routes, information on courses, rights and entitlements, CAO, study skills, CV preparation and interview skills

(AEGAI, 2016.p.7)

As guidance services are government funded there is an emphasis on employability and sustaining the labour market (Watts et al, 1996). Regardless of the economic difficulties faced in the past decade, resulting in diminished resources, there is a requirement that those providing guidance services to adults make the obligatory contributions to the public policy of the country (OECD, 2013).The lack of emphasis in national policy regarding the personal, social, and life choices aspect of guidance counselling as mentioned in the NGF (2007) would indicate policy makers may be overlooking certain elements of the role which in turn may be placing added pressure to those providing the service.

There are numerous services available within the adult guidance services sector, they include Intreo, which provides income and employment support as well as career guidance; Solas, which replaced FAS in providing further education and training courses for the unemployed and the AEGS (Adult Education Guidance Services) which is a DES funded service which provides education guidance to adults through the national Educational Training Boards (ETB). The Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) was established in 2000 in response to recommendations outlined in the DES White Paper on Learning for life (2000). Its aim is to:

Offer a guidance service to adults which includes impartial adult education information, one-to-one guidance and group guidance, which will help people to make informed educational, career and life choices. (AEGI, 2012)

This initiative is currently provided by the sixteen nationally located Education and Training Boards (ETB) under the FET strategy.

The NCGE (2012) identifies the change and diversity which faces the guidance counselling professionals within adult guidance. The client base and their varying needs are extensive and diverse. An increase in social problems add to the burden placed upon the resources of the adult guidance counselling services. Finding suggest there is a substantial requirement for adult guidance services with the AEGS reporting having up to 4,500 potential clients in their area and one guidance coordinator / guidance counsellor to support them (DES, 2014). The NCGE (2017), in their quantitative and qualitative report of the adult educational guidance services indicated that some 52,885 clients used the service over the period of one year.

Collaboration between policy makers and stakeholder is fundamental to the success of the adult guidance services. Recent developments in the FET sector have related to guidance provision more specifically. The Further Education and Training Strategy (2014) outlines the plan to integrate all adult guidance services under the one framework in an effort to “include adults within the general population, collaboration with PLC based guidance provision and implementation of a quality assured guidance service” (SOLAS, 2014). This would result in a more integrated model of adult guidance and eliminate the inequalities across the sector such as qualified guidance counsellors being employed by the ETB on an ‘hours only’ contract or those employed on BTEI programmes not having access the support services and quality assurance mechanisms for guidance provision available to their counterparts within AEGI. Contracted guidance counselling staff are increasingly becoming part of adult education Services however, they may not have access guidance counselling supervision which is a requirement of the AEGI and provided by DES to AEGS and school-based guidance counselling staff. (DES 2014).

## ***2.2. The Concept of Job Satisfaction***

This section will examine the concept of job satisfaction in a general manner from its origins to present.

Robert Hoppock is accredited with defining the concept of job satisfaction;

The term job satisfaction was first utilised by Hoppock (1935), referring to a combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that make a person feel satisfied with their job. (Darmody & Smith, 2011, p.5)

He proposed several probable factors which lead to job satisfaction: namely social status, job autonomy, and interpersonal relationships with one's supervisors and co-workers. When he put forward his propositions in the 1930's those with higher job satisfaction were older, had higher levels of emotional adjustment and lower work monotony (Hoppock, 1935).

Interestingly, in addition to conceptualising the notion of job satisfaction, Hoppock's contribution to vocational guidance is prominent as he is accredited with being a founder of career guidance counselling in 1930's America (Bowling et al, 2015).

Job satisfaction has been connected to the 'needs' of the employee and how their employment fulfils these needs. In 1953, Schaffer stated that

Overall job satisfaction will vary directly with the extent to which those needs of an individual which can be satisfied in a job are actually satisfied; the stronger the need, the more closely will job satisfaction depend on its fulfilment (Schaffer, 1953, p.21).

This conceptualisation is similar to that of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. He identified five human needs, physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization and affirmed that "we are motivated by the desire to achieve or maintain the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions rest and by certain more intellectual desires" (Maslow, 1943, p.371).

Later contributors to the study of job satisfaction, such as Locke (1976), defined it as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1304), thus, placing the emphasis on the emotive aspect. While Locke focuses on the emotional element there are others who favour of a more cognitive approach. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) recognised that there were many aspects of work with which an individual must be satisfied such as salary, type of work, staff morale, security, environment and the requisite skills to meet the jobs needs to name but a few. They were among those responsible for the creation of the measurement instrument known as the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Davis et al, 1981) which focused on the needs of the worker. It comprises of twenty individuals 'needs' of which six 'values' are derived from. To draw meaning from the questionnaire the observer must look at the relationship between the needs and values and the relationship between the different values to gain an indication of what is facilitating job satisfaction and what is impeding it for individuals (Sharf, 2010). In their later work on Work Adjustment Theory, which emphasises the matching of individual traits with

job requirements, Dawis and Lofquist (1993) voice that counsellors need to identify their own needs and values as it can lead to a better understanding of the effect they can have on their clients (Sharft, 2010).

Weiss (2002) defines job satisfaction as “a positive or negative evaluative judgement one makes about one’s job or job situation” (p.175). He argues that job satisfaction is in fact an attitude towards our work and how we evaluate it. Weiss was not alone in his attitudinal and evaluative approach to job satisfaction. Later, Ilies et al (2009) similarly defined job satisfaction as “the employee’s attitude about their job,” but added that it is an “evaluative state that varies over time” (Ilies et al, 2009.p. 87). Thus, suggesting that there is a variation in levels of job satisfaction over the course of time. Holmes (2005) identified needs such as being appropriately rewarded for one’s work, adequately trained and qualified, development opportunities (on a personal as well as professional level) and offerings of ongoing progress reviews to be important for job satisfaction.

The area of industrial and organisational psychology has provided significant findings over the years. Spector attributes this to the fact that the main task of psychologists in this field is “assessing how employees feel about their jobs, or their job satisfaction and determine ways to improve it” (2003, p. 209). He also argues that looking at job satisfaction through different “facets” gives a purer sense of what causes it. These could include pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, co-workers, job conditions, security etc. There will be various levels of satisfaction towards different facets of the job, overall a person may be satisfied with their job but dissatisfied with certain aspects of it. There has been vast research carried out in organisational psychology which focuses on the concept of job satisfaction. Findings suggest that organisations benefit from employees being satisfied within their roles in the form of increased productivity/ performance (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2002; Petty et al., 1984; Goslin, 2005; Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes 2003; Locke, 1979; Herzberg, 1968 & 1959; Judge & Bono, 2001).

### ***2.3 Job Satisfaction in the Guidance Counselling Profession***

This section will look at job satisfaction in the guidance counselling profession. Due to the insufficiently in research specifically relating to job satisfaction of guidance counsellors it will include where necessary areas such as teaching, counselling and caring professions. It will examine how elevated levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction may have consequences for the profession of guidance counselling.

### ***2.3.1 Identified Factors Which Effect Job Satisfaction***

Cervoni & DeLucia (2001) found that the main frustrations encountered by those working within education were being overwhelmed by duties and difficulties encountered with parents, while factors such as supervision and organisational support were factors which resulted in elevated levels of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been associated with teacher performance, absenteeism and leaving the job (Kyriacou et al 2003). The level to which educators are satisfied with their jobs and working conditions is reported to have significant consequences for the retention of teachers within the profession (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Chaplain, 1995). International research indicates that if teachers are satisfied within their job it will have direct, positive outcomes in relation to retention levels within the profession (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Chaplain, 1995) which may apply to guidance counsellors also. Job satisfaction will have a direct impact on the service provided and student outcomes (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Chaplain, 1995). Morgan and O'Donnell (2016) state that many countries report an increase eroded teacher morale which in return results in teacher attrition.

From an Irish perspective, research carried out by the ASTI in their 2007 survey on stress in post primary teachers identified that 70% of participants cited working with young people as a catalyst for high levels of job satisfaction, stating they got satisfaction from “the feeling that they are making a difference to students lives and helping them reach their full potential” (Morgan et al, 2016, pp 94). Acknowledging the strong similarity between the profession of teaching and Guidance counselling, given that both are caring roles, this too may apply to the job satisfaction of guidance counsellors. TALIS (2008) National report for Ireland indicated that 89.6pc of Irish second level teachers would agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied within their job. This study found that the strongest correlation was between job satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy. According to Darmody and Smyth (2011), in a report compiled by the ESRI on behalf of The Teaching Council, which looked at the levels of job satisfaction and occupational stress encountered by primary school teacher and principals, the overall factors that have been found to impact on the job satisfaction of teachers and principals can be divided into three sections - teacher background factors, school level factors and factors associated with society and the education system.

### ***2.3.2 Organisational Factors***

School culture has been identified as one factor effecting job satisfaction. Deal and Kennedy (1984) argue that “When culture works against you, it’s nearly impossible to get anything

done” (p.4). The school culture comprises of the values and beliefs of the organisation and how they are played out in the school environment. There have been several studies carried out on this facet and the effect it can have on the personal and professional development of the teachers/ guidance counsellors (Hargreaves, 1994; Nias et al, 1989). Research on the school level factors have identified links between the type of schools and their location and levels of job satisfaction with teachers in rural or private schools presenting as most satisfied in their jobs. (Baker,1997; Sewell &Abel ,1999)

Research carried out in the UK by Griffith et al (1999) which explored coping strategies among teachers found that elevated levels of job stress was directly linked to low social support in the workplace. The negative association between lack of occupational support and burn out suggests that the relationship between the management of the school and the guidance counsellor is critical. The absence of a positive relationship will result in diminished wellness as well as contributing to occupational stress (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2001).

In addition, Schmidt (1999) identifies the importance of the relationship between the guidance counsellor and the teachers with whom they work with. Communication and respect between both are also paramount in terms of job satisfaction. Morrissette (2000) suggests a key factor relating to job satisfaction appears to be that feelings of isolation can commonly be felt by guidance counsellors. He argues that;

*“maintaining a social support network, it becomes the responsibility of the counsellors to inform colleagues and significant others about the inherent challenges of their work and more importantly, their vulnerability”.*  
(Morrissette, 2000)

As well as meeting the need of their students, the guidance counsellor is also facing the issue of role definition or role conflict and ambiguity (Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Paisley, 2001), where time constrictions and unrealistic expectations are factors that negatively affect the guidance counsellor. While Cervoni and Delucia’s (2001) findings could be viewed as narrow, due to the fact they focus on just two specific predictors of job satisfaction- unrealistic expectations and time constrains, it highlights valuable insights. These include the fact that they found guidance counsellors were often found to be overwhelmed by increased job responsibility and expectations. In terms of organisational factors, role conflict, ambiguity and job overload were identified as the major contributors to burn-out among guidance counsellors. It was also identified that if management do not have a clear understanding of the role this too adds to the stress which results in burnout. Research suggests numerous, strenuous demands come from many various sources. It is implied by Brown (2004) that



these said demands are from both students and other members of staff with pressures from parents also being identified as an issue to contend with.

### ***2.3.3 Policy Factors***

In relation to factors associated with society and the education system, in the UK research carried out on the effect of government policy and factors such as curriculum changes on teacher's satisfaction and stress levels indicate that "The reasons for low teacher moral in many countries can be attributed to the changes in occupational and organisational working conditions directed by government" (Day, 1999, p. 71). In the UK, where there had been numerous governments implemented changes in the education sector at this the TIMSS (26 country third international maths and science study) showed a staggering 40pc of UK secondary school teachers wanted to leave the profession (Day, 1999).

Furthermore, a 2015 Ofsted report found two in five teachers leave the profession within five years of starting as a direct result of the Performance Related Pay Policy which saw teachers work between 50 and 60 hours per week. In the USA, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), introduced by President Obama in 2001 has caused teachers to "change instructional practice in a way that prioritizes narrow test preparation over broader learning" (Dee & Jacob, 2010, p. 28), forcing teachers to change teaching styles, compromising their autonomy and thus leading to job dissatisfaction. Within the Irish context, the previously discussed 2012 budgetary cuts which lead to the guidance service losing its ex-quota allocation has led to the erosion of services and increased dissatisfaction and frustration among those providing the service (IGC, 2016; Hearne, 2012).

### ***2.3.4 Stress and Burnout***

Stress, in the education profession has been well researched over the years with stress and job satisfaction found to be negatively correlated (Lambie, 2007; Chaplain, 1995; Kyriacou, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003; ASTI, 2007; Morgan & Ni Craith, 2015; Morgan & O'Donnell, 2016). The issue of stress is frequently discussed in literature relating to job satisfaction. Lambie (2007) suggests the reason behind this is that "professional school counselors experience high levels of stress because of multiple job demands, role ambiguity, large caseloads, and lack of clinical supervision" (Lambie, 2007, p.83), which could apply to the similar role of guidance counsellors. Similarly, Sodoma and Else (2009) identified that the vast increase in accountabilities and duties have led to an immense surge in stress for those in the education sectors. This applies to those teaching, and those providing guidance services to students.

Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) carried out a study which investigated the relationship between stress and the outcome arbitrated by a range of factors, these being the environment, the person and the outcomes. In relation to the work environment their study revealed factors such as adverse working conditions, excessive workload and lack of resources and autonomy as predictors of low job satisfaction (Morgan et al, 2016).

In the USA, McCarthy et al. (2010) investigated the demands and resources experienced by school counsellors using the instrument 'Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands– School Counsellor Version'. The finding indicated that the more taxing demands placed upon the counsellors the higher the levels of stress encountered. Speaking in relation to school counselling services, Mullen and Gutierrez (2016) argue that:

school counselors often incur high levels of stress that may result from multiple job responsibilities, role ambiguity, high caseloads, limited resources for coping and limited clinical supervision. (p. 345)

The ASTI (2007) found that 60% of teachers in Ireland indicated that “having too much work to do” was a leading cause of stress with the threat of aggressive behavioural issues from students and preparation for WSE also highly reported stressors (Morgan et al, 2016). The study also revealed that 65% of those surveyed attributed elevated levels of stress to factors such as not having enough time during the working day for ‘non-class contact work’, while 62% cited form filling and administrative duties and lack of time for one on one interaction with students as a source of stress. Finally, 52% of the same participants indicated that preparation and grading of work was also a contributor. Similarly, a study carried out by Morgan & Nic Craith (2015) with INTO members reveal an increase in occupational stress with 90% suggesting the job has become more stressful (96% of those surveyed cited administration and policy documentation as the primary cause), yet interestingly they appear to retain their job satisfaction with only 1/3 implying the job had become less satisfying (Morgan et al, 2016).

Studies have also shown the correlation between stress and burnout (Kyriacou, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003; Morgan & O'Donnell, 2016). Burn-out is defined as:

a type of prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job.....a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998, p.64).

Burnout has been identified as a leading contributor to teachers leaving the profession as well as having implications for the standard of service provided to students (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Lambie, 2007; Mullen and Gutierrez, 2016).

The development of adaptive coping mechanisms and resilience to reduce stress, burnout and to maintain health and wellbeing is vital to guidance counsellor's resilience. Day et al (2007) defines resilience as how we interact with our environments and our capacity to deal with stressful situations and suggest it is vital in the educational professions as it ensures continual dedication to the profession and high quality of service. Strategies adapted can be task orientated, like planning, organisation and prompt reaction to problems encountered, or Social supports, such as seeking support (Morgan et al, 2016). In relation to guidance counselling practitioners there is additional support in the form of external supervision. Hearne (2012) stated that "professional resilience and burnout prevention are pertinent to guidance practitioners" (p. 2), identifying a solid support system as well as the ability to 'switch-off' as paramount to the resilience of the practitioner. She identifies the importance of supervision as it "alleviates isolation, its restorative and provides a forum to unburden oneself" (p.5). Furthermore, Hearne (2012) key findings show that "resilience is reliant on having 'balanced challenges; in one's professional life" (p.5). She identified the importance of a balance between the "external life" and adequate professional supports and also acknowledged that practitioners who worked alone experienced elevated stress due to isolation and finally, that due to escalating numbers, declining resources and complex issues faced there is a concern for the possibility of "diminution of guidance counselling skills over a prolonged period" (p.5). In addition, the ICG (2012) Code of Ethics states that engagement in self-care is a requirement as part of CPD to ensure avoidance of conditions such as burnout which could lead to inadequate professionalism.

#### ***2.4 Conclusion***

The literature review indicates the issue of job satisfaction is a complex one. It also highlights the deficiency in research based on job satisfaction of guidance counsellors. The aim of this research is to examine this topic further to address this discrepancy. To some extent, the limited literature on the job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in Ireland justifies the need for such research especially in light of recent government cutbacks and its subsequent effect on the work of guidance counsellors and its effect on their job satisfaction.

## ***Chapter 3. Methodology***

### ***3.0 Introduction***

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the paradigm and methods used within this research study. It will introduce the primary and secondary questions, which are the central components of this research. It will also offer a rationale for the choice of data collection and analysis methods used and outline the recruitment process in terms of research participants. The issues of validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethical responsibilities of the researcher will also be examined.

### ***3.1 Research Questions***

Thomas (2009) argues that “a piece of research is built around a question, not a method” (p.43). Consideration needs to be given to what the researcher wants to discover, these factors should then be reflected in the question choice. Blaikie (2000) suggests that all research is “built on the foundations of the research questions” (p. 58). The questions asked within any research project provide the backbone of the study.

#### ***3.1.1 Primary Question***

The aim of this research study is to explore the issue of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in different educational settings in Ireland. The primary question was: *What is the level of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors across different educational sectors?*

#### ***3.1.2 Secondary Questions***

The following secondary questions also underpinned the research study:

- 1. How do guidance counsellors define job satisfaction?*
- 2. What aspects of their job bring them most satisfaction?*
- 3. What aspects of their job cause dissatisfaction?*
- 4. Is guidance counselling a profession guidance counsellors would recommend to others?*

The five research questions required an appropriate paradigm to guide the research design which will be discussed in the next section.

### ***3.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretive (Qualitative)***

Due consideration was given in this research study as to the appropriate paradigm required. All research is carried out using either one of the philosophical approaches; positivist (quantitative), or interpretivist (qualitative) or indeed a mix of both (mixed method). In this study the deciding factor between these options was the topic being researched (Cohen et al., 2011).

The term methodology quite simply denotes the ‘study of methods’, but that is not to say it is emphatically and restrictively connected to merely the method, but rather a broader correlation to what value a certain type of method can lend to a particular enquiry and what prompted its selection over its equivalent research methods (Thomas, 2009). However, Bell (2005) suggests that one must not place too heavy an emphasis on the question ‘which methodology?’, but instead the prominence should rest in the query “what I need to know and why? Only then do you ask, what is the best way to collect information” (p.115). McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) identify the aim of both types of research methods to be diverse. While the qualitative approach aims to answer questions about the what, how or why; its counterpart, quantitative, focuses on the statistical element, the ‘how much’ or ‘how many’ aspect of research (p. 537).

In research where the data sought requires unambiguous feedback from the participants, the quantitative method is deemed reliable (Brannen, 2016). Data collection instruments are predetermined and fixed, which disallows the participant to have any imaginative input (Brannen, 2016). Basit (2010) describes the quantitative method as “observable, controllable and measurable” (p. 14). While it has long been the preferred paradigm in social research, it has also come under criticism due to the restriction it causes in terms of accomplishing a holistic insight into the participant’s perspective (Thomas, 2013). Cohen et al (2011) argue that due to its measured and controlled structure it disregards the “immense complexity of human nature” (p.11), as it takes a mechanical approach to both the data and the individual (Cohen et al., 2011; McMahon & Patton, 2006)

Having contemplated this paradigm and method the researcher decided it was unsuitable as she wanted to get more depth of data from participants. In contrast, by using an interpretivist (qualitative) approach the researcher essentially used herself as an instrument of data collection and this entailed participant observation (Brannen, 2016). It was beneficial in the instance where the research topic was a little less straightforward, to allow for flexibility in

the participant's responses (Brannen, 2016). This method enables the study of humans, their experiences and the meaning of said experiences, their point of view and multiple realities (Hearne, 2009; Thomas, 2013). A limitation however is its susceptibility to subjective bias on behalf of the researcher. If encountered it can influence the final findings rendering the data ineffectual (Thomas, 2009).

Justification for the interpretivist approach in this study is its flexibility and the holistic aspect of the method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although it was time consuming for the researcher and participants alike, Bell and Waters (2014) suggest this method is undoubtedly easy in terms of "recording, summarising and analysing" the data (p. 181). It involved an interaction between the researcher and participant which provided a platform for the co-construction of meaning of questions and answers on the topic of Job satisfaction (Crotty, 1998). It allowed for first hand observations of the feelings and perceptions of the participants and their inner experiences, i.e. guidance counsellors working in different settings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Hennink et al, 2011; Oakley, 2000). There is also a detachment in quantitative methods which is not the case with qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Lodico et al, 2010).

This method facilitated the expression of the participant's views, attitudes and values in relation to the topic of job satisfaction (Cohen, 2006). It provided a unique opportunity for them to share the unique stories about individual experiences (Boeije, 2010). Nevertheless, it was essential for the researcher to remain aware of the sensitive nature of the research topic and the benefits of an intimate method and setting for data collection. This not only allowed for the collection of verbal data, but also the gathering of data relayed through body language and physical reaction (Hennink et al, 2001). It was utilised in the form of semi-structured interviews with qualified guidance counsellors in different educational sectors.

### ***3.3 Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews***

This section discusses the data collection process which was undertaken in this research study. It initially addresses the access and sampling process, and then the method used, i.e. semi-structured interviews with volunteer participants who are qualified guidance counsellors.

#### ***3.3.1 Access and Sampling Strategy***

This research study was granted ethical approval from the EHS Ethics Committee in the University of Limerick in March 2018. The recruitment process commenced thereafter.

While methodologies are paramount to the success of the study and its findings, Giorgi (2009) states that participant selection is the initial phase of data collection. According to Flick (2011) appropriate samples need to be drawn to ensure that research is representative. In this study there were points to be considered, such as the size of the sample, accessibility, time constraints, biases, type of methodologies to be used and where, and the willingness of the sample to participate (Flick, 2011). The sample exclusively consisted of qualified guidance counsellors, of both genders, within Ireland, across different educational sectors. The researcher sought to recruit six participants in total. The initial steps of the recruitment process involved contacting relevant gatekeepers, i.e., the Chairpersons of several regional branches of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the Chairperson of the National Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland (AEGAI), in order to gain access to their members who might wish to volunteer to participate in the research. Subject information sheets and consent forms were administered to the identified gatekeepers (Appendix 1-4). Once approval was granted by them, information sheets and consent forms were distributed by them to their members. Participants were also sought through the various career guidance services in several third level colleges. These possible participants were contacted directly via email by the researcher.

Due to the time constraints of the research project the participants were recruited for the interviews on a 'first come first serve' basis (Thomas, 2013) and the face to face semi-structured interviews commenced immediately. Table 3.1 displays the background, i.e. gender, educational sector and length of time each participant has been a guidance counsellor and the duration of their interview.

<b>Pseudonym Identifier</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Sector</b>	<b>Length of time as Guidance Counsellor</b>	<b>Duration of interview</b>
Participant 1	Female	HEI: University	16 Years	40 Mins
Participant 2	Female	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level School	4 Years	54 Mins
Participant 3	Female	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level School	11 Years	51 Mins
Participant 4	Female	ETB Adult Guidance	15 Months	64 Mins
Participant 5	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level school	7 Years	46 Mins

Participant 6	Female	3 <sup>rd</sup> Level Institute of Technology	9 Years	45 Mins
---------------	--------	--	---------	---------

**Table 3.1 Participant Profile A**

### ***3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews.***

The semi-structured, face to face interviews were carried out during the period April to June 2018. A series of predetermined and ethically approved interview questions formed the framework of the interviews with the participants (see Appendix 7). The semi-structure interview method was chosen over structured or unstructured interviews as it allowed for a fixed arrangement of open-ended interview questions, which arose from literature analysis and from observed experiences of the researcher, while also allowing for flexibility in terms of participant input (Thomas, 2013). It allowed the researcher to interject to clarify or probe the participant on any points that were made. It also allowed the researcher the opportunity to adjust the questions or put different questions to the participant as the interview progressed to attain a more all-inclusive body of data without constriction (Thomas, 2013). This method allowed the researcher to be part of the story telling element of the interview (McLeod, 2011). The interview method provided a fluid structure in terms of allowing the participant to divert when required and where appropriate they remain structured and focused, in the fact that each participant was asked the same questions, in the same sequence, being regarded as a “carefully controlled conversation” (Robson, 2007,p. 74).

There is the suggestion that the human interaction element leads to more effective responses. The interviewees could and were probed where appropriate, and a clearer understanding of certain elements was obtained (Bell, 2005; Thomas, 2009). This involved the construction of a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (McLeod, 2009), which is extremely valuable as good rapport in this situation leads to in depth data (Lester, 1999). It allowed for the opportunity to “probe responses and investigate feelings which a questionnaire can never do” (Bell& Waters, 2014, p. 178).

Nelson-Jones (2005) imparts the importance of use of the core skills of counselling on the part of the researcher. Considering this, the researcher applied positive affirmation and empathy, active listening and congruence with all participants in the interviews. In line with ethical responsibility to the participants, the interviews were carried out in a location agreed suitable for both the researcher and participant. Privacy of the setting was paramount and considered in advance. The data was recorded using audio recording equipment, allowing for



transcription at a later date. The researcher used pseudonym identifiers in order to ensure the participants anonymity.

Bell (2005) states that while there may be temptation to commence the interview process as soon as possible a piloting of the interview is of paramount importance to ensure rigour. Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, the interview framework was piloted with a qualified guidance counsellor in April 2018. The piloting proved beneficial as it allowed the researcher to estimate the duration of the interview, as well as providing an insight into the value of the questions in relation to what the researcher hoped to find out. No changes were made to the questions after this piloting process.

In relation to the limitations of this method, there are factors to consider and contend with such as reactivity, this is the behaviour the participants show towards the interviewer, and respondent bias, which is the withholding of information or the desire to provide the researcher with the answers the participant feels the want to hear (Hearne et al, 2016).

### ***3.4 Data Analysis***

Data analysis, as defined by Creswell (2013), is the organising of collected data, using coding to present in the form of discussion or figures, with the purpose being to interpret the data and move towards understanding (Thomas, 2009). A thematic approach was used to analyse the interview data which involved recognising, categorising and depicting ideas from the body of data collected in the interview process (Guest et al, 2012).

The data gathered from the interviews was personally transcribed and examined by the researcher and thematic coding was applied to identify common themes throughout the compilation of data (Flick, 2015; Thomas, 2013). This involved ‘immersion’ in the data by the researcher who listened to the recorded interviews several times and examined the detailed transcripts in detail (Morrow, 2005). Common themes were then grouped together to attain findings from the raw data. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

### ***3.5 Validity and Reliability in Interpretivist Research***

Validity was an essential element in this study. It is described as informing us “whether an item or instrument measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe” (Bell, 2005, p. 117). The aim was to conduct research which reflects honest and accurate data.

However, there is no way to guarantee absolute validity. For this method of data collection to be considered reliable participants need to be completely honest, understand the question

being asked and have a sound capacity for memory recall (Lakshman et al, 2000). It can be improved by vigilance in terms of sampling, type of instruments used and how the data is analysed (Winter, 2000).

In qualitative research the “subjectivity of the respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias” (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 179)

Acknowledgement of these potential biases and the need for critical reflection of findings leads to more reliable conclusions (Noble & Smith, 2015). To produce valid results this method requires honesty of participants, in depth data, participants chosen and objectivity of the researcher (Winter, 2000). It is paramount that there is an understanding that the opinions of others are of equal value as our own, therefore, the researcher endeavoured to remain entirely objective throughout the process in order to achieve the most valid results. Cohen et al (2011) draw attention to the resistance of selecting data to fit with preconceived or ideal conceptions, that data selection must be true of the sample and represent their views coherently.

Reliability as is the “extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (Bell, 2005.p. 117). In relation to qualitative research, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identify reliability as being concerned with the ‘fit’ between the data recorded and what is occurring in the setting that is being researched. Interpretation plays a pivotal part (Kvale,1996). Two researchers using the same instruments and sample could have dissimilar results due to the way in which each interpret their findings (Cohen et al, 2011). Cohen et al (2011) suggest, “dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (p.199). In relation to this research study there were several approaches adopted to ensure reliability, namely regular supervision between the researcher and the research supervisor, consistency of the interview framework with each participant answering the same questions and the researcher seeking clarity and checking accuracy on answers where needed (Hearne et al, 2016). To ensure rigour, respondent validity was carried out by sending each participant their transcript to ensure the researcher had correctly represented their views and opinions. Four of the six participants replied that they were satisfied that what was recorded on their transcripts was a true reflection of the answers given in their interview. The remaining two participants did not respond to this request. The researcher also used a research diary.

### ***3.6 Reflexivity***

In qualitative research, reflexivity is when the researcher engages in “explicit self-aware meta-analysis” (Finlay, 2002, p, 209). The concept of reflexivity was defined by Berger (2015) as “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220). In this study the researcher needed to participate in conscious self -reflection to identify her probable influence on the data collection process (Hennink et al., 2011). Failing this she may have unintentionally swayed the process, resulting in the actuality of biases.

The researcher used the process of supervision to share findings and interpretations of the study. All the researcher’s preconceptions on the research topic were critically acknowledged along with the possible impact these could have on the various stages of the research study (Pillow, 2003). The researcher identified her personal assumptions of the guidance counsellor’s role in terms of the issue of job satisfaction. For example, the researcher perceived that, due to the 2012 DES budgetary re-allocation in some education sectors and increased demands on the guidance service, that guidance counsellors may be experiencing some degree of job-related dissatisfaction. This was perhaps heightened by the fact that the researcher had her own personal experience of job dissatisfaction in a different career where both job dissatisfaction and stress were experienced for a prolonged period. This was reflected upon by the researcher and bracketed off prior to the interviews being conducted. Regular personal reflection facilitated the researcher to remain objective and critical of the data collected.

### ***3.7 Ethical Issues in Study***

There were several ethical issues that the researcher had to consider when carrying out this research study. There is always a risk of encountering ethical dilemmas at various stages of the process, regardless of the effort dedicated to the matter (McLeod, 2015). For this reason, it was vital for the researcher to constantly revert to the ethical principles set down by her professional body the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC, 2012) as a guideline for ethical standards and best practice in the study. As the participants were all qualified guidance counsellors and members of the IGC they too were guided by the Code of Ethics in terms of disclosures they were making, ensuring they did not include names of students or clients or locations within the interview. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE, 2008) *Research Code of Ethics* also highlights respect for the rights and dignity of the person,

competence, responsibility and integrity as the corner stones of ethical practitioner research. The researcher followed this code and it underpinned the practice throughout the research study.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) identify a two-pronged frame for ethical considerations in relation to research. Firstly, there is the obligation to ensure permission from an ethics committee to carry out the research, and in this study, this was achieved in March 2018. The second consideration relates to the ethical issues which will arise during the investigation and data collection stage of the research. First and foremost, the issue of informed consent was addressed prior to the data collection process with all participants. An agreement was made between the researcher and the research participants around the intended uses of the data gathered and how the findings will be reported and circulated (Blaxter et al, 2001).

As Cohen et al (2011) suggests, there is a need for consideration in relation to the benefits and costs of such research. The personal cost to participants should be given weight over possible social benefits. It was significant that the participants fully understood the confidentiality and anonymity contract prior to collection of data. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic and the nature of the data that was collected, there were confidentially issues that needed attention. A contract of confidentiality, in the form of a consent form, between the researcher and the participant was essential. This was achieved by a guarantee that all disclosures and information gathered was done so in a confidential manner. The duty of care to the participant was of utmost importance and pseudonyms were used throughout to ensure anonymity of participants.

Along with an explanation of the confidentiality factors, participants were made fully aware of the purpose of the research, how the data collected will be used, stored and presented and that they have a right to withdraw from the research at any stage should they wish to do so. Prior to data collection all participants were notified that the interviews would be audio recorded for later transcription and that all data, both written and audio would be stored in a secure manner.

### ***3.8 Conclusion***

This chapter discussed the methodologies and methods used in the research design. On examination of the options and having evaluated several considerations, it was concluded that the method of data collection best suited to the research was the qualitative approach. The next chapter will present the data analysis and findings from the data.

## ***Chapter 4. Primary Findings***

### ***4.0 Introduction***

This chapter will outline the data analysis strategy used and the primary findings of the data gathered from the six semi-structured interviews with participants. The purpose of the interviews was to research the level of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in Ireland, across different educational sectors.

### ***4.1 Data Analysis Strategy***

The researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis method, which allowed for the identification, analysing and recording of overlapping themes from the combined data gathered. Firstly, in step one the researcher familiarised herself with the data. This commenced with the transcription process where the researcher transcribed all of the audio-recorded interviews. This proved invaluable in terms of attaining an innate knowledge of the data and allowed the researcher to emerge herself in the data while searching for patterns within. The audio recordings, along with the written transcripts were examined and re-examined several times to ensure an in-depth outcome. The second step involved the generation of codes. Coding and thematic mapping were used to identify similarities within the data (Thomas, 2013). While immersed in the data the researcher began to organise information and identify interesting aspects from within each individual interview. These aspects or codes were then compiled to identify common codes throughout the whole body of the research data. Step three involved the development of themes from the codes. This was done by hand-written and colour co-ordination coding (see Appendix 9). Once the themes were identified, step four involved a review of the themes. The data was once again examined, to ensure that the themes represented what was presented in the data. In the penultimate step five, the researcher set about defining and naming the themes. She considered whether the themes captured a true reflection of what was being portrayed in the data. Once the themes were named, it followed the identification of any supporting sub-themes to be used. In the final step, the report of the findings is presented here. A selection of direct quotes are included to provide evidence of the themes identified and capture the essence of the findings.

The findings will be discussed through three over-arching themes:

1. The Human Relationship Element and its Contribution to Job Satisfaction.

2. Factors Which Contribute to Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Amongst Guidance Counsellors.
3. The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors.

#### ***4.2 Theme 1: The Human Relationship Element and its Contribution to Job Satisfaction***

The theme of the human relationship element of the guidance counselling profession and its effect on job satisfaction was prominent in the findings and will be discussed in this section. All six participants spoke of the different human relationships within their interviews: between the guidance counsellor and students and clients; the guidance counsellor and managers/ colleagues, and the guidance counsellor and external support networks. These are conveyed through three sub-themes.

##### ***4.2.1 Guidance Counsellor Relationship with Students and Clients***

The findings indicate that the majority of the participants entered the profession due to the opportunities for human interaction and development of interpersonal relationships. Five of the six participants suggested it was the opportunity to work with students and clients that attracted them to the role. For example, participant 2 disclosed that she could “see students who were at risk, who the education system probably didn’t suit, and I was interested in supporting those students”. Other participants also offered this as a reason for entering the profession:

I had worked in the role of class tutor for a number of years and I enjoyed that kind of support in terms of getting to know students on a personal level and It was something I wanted to do more of really so that’s what drew me in into it initially (Participant 3)

For me, I’ve just always loved working with people, and this role is great in that you get to work with different people, with very different needs and life experiences, and all that, so it’s really great and really interesting and I think that’s why I entered the profession, I knew I’d have that (Participant 6)

While another practitioner, participant four, did not directly refer to the relationship or interaction aspect of the role as her motivation, she did state that having received guidance herself, she could relate to the clients she was now meeting which encouraged her to enter the profession.

The findings also indicate that the majority of participants believed the profession has met their expectations, with five of them stating that the relationships with their students or clients was what they would have expected. However, some of them added that there were

unexpected aspects also, such as politics, though these aspects were in no way related to their client/student relationships:

Yes. Ah supporting students, like supporting students in any role, be it a teacher or in guidance is what I expected, however, the politics of it is probably what I didn't expect. (Participant 2)

Yeah, it was, yeah to a degree, I mean there's always the unexpected element to things too, I suppose, but in terms of what I wanted to do and that, yeah it gave me the opportunity to do that, yes, definitely. Actually, it was probably more than I expected in so far as getting to know students better (Participant 5)

#### ***4.2.2 Guidance Counsellor's Relationship with Management and Co-workers.***

In addition to the important relationships developed between the guidance counsellor and their students or clients, their relationships with their managers and co-workers were also recognised as being of great significance in determining levels of job satisfaction.

All of the participants felt very much supported by both management and colleagues within their settings. In particular, they acknowledged the supportive nature of their management and expressed a sense of backing from them. As well as their verbal testaments, the positive body language and tone of voice used by the participants when describing how they felt supported by their individual managers reinforced the significance they placed on this support. Managerial support appears to be a key factor in relation to how satisfied the participants are in their guidance role. For participant 5 though the lack of support was described as 'being hard', and there was a sense of relief that the support was reinstated with the appointment of a new Vice Principal within his school:

Management are very good now and I feel that has gotten better, it might not always have been that way and that's hard then when it's like that but no, thank God, that is not the case now (Participant 5)

In terms of their co-workers, the participants identified different teams with which they collaborate with to discuss different guidance related issues. They spoke of how their co-workers supported their role by being flexible with class time and being supportive around the issues they face:

No, I feel great support, I love where I am, I work with a great staff, they are hugely supportive of me in my role, I've weekly meetings with the junior year head team and the senior year head team and then a learning to learn support team which its aim is all around study skills and education guidance, so I feel hugely supported from my colleagues. (Participant 3)

The staff here are great to work with, there's never a problem there with them either so that's great for me when I'm looking for help with something or trying to hijack a class here or there so yeah (Participant 5)

The team here are great, there is so much support in fairness, from my managers and the chain of command to people working in different departments here, you'll always find a helping hand and support if you look for it, its great (Participant 6)

Despite the fact that all participants expressed a sense of support within their settings, the issue of professional isolation was alluded to by participants 1,2 and 4. Participant 1 spoke of how initially she found herself segregated from her peers due to her guidance office location stating, “the central office was really far away, people kind of forgot about me”. This led to a realisation that a personal effort needed to be made by her to ensure the construction of a support system in her workplace. Participants 2 and 4 concurred with this by highlighting the need for regular engagement with peers. Participant 4 highlighted the need for networking, while participant 2 stated:

I think it's equally important for the GC to take their lunch, their break and to engage with, you know, other staff, to be seen, you know what I mean, as part of the whole staff (Participant 2)

#### ***4.2.3 Relationships with External Bodies***

The third sub-theme relates to the relationships formed with external support systems such as accessing IGC supervision. This support system was identified as being the most valuable. It was acknowledged unanimously that the opportunity to reach out to and engage with others within the profession was a major source of assistance. For example, the IGC branch meetings offered a setting in which they could receive support, confirmation and verification when needed:

I also feel great support from my guidance supervision group, you know, again, its hugely supportive, I'd like if we had more of it, but I find those Tuesday afternoons with the supervision group in particular, very, very supportive. (Participant 3)

I suppose guidance counsellors as well need to have many supports, you know, and I find that regular supervision, talking to my colleagues, meeting my colleagues in the local branch of IGC, there's always someone at the end of the phone that you can talk to do you know. I'm very happy with that. (Participant 4)

It also emerged that even though not all IGC members work within the same type of educational setting, the issues experienced by guidance counsellors in different settings are comparable. From the findings, the fact the participants worked within different sectors did not appear to hinder the supportive relationships they formed. It was apparent that the human support was the most imperative function of the IGC supervision process. Two of the participants, 4 and 6, who are employed in the adult and third level sectors respectively, acknowledged that there were valuable opportunities in learning from a community of practitioners:



I avail of my supervision, I talk a lot to my colleagues who work in different setting to me but who would have maybe some of the same issues (Participant 4)

There are similarities in what they face and what we face too, and even listening to the kind of issues that are being experienced by them at second level is very important to me because there's learning there too for me.....it is great to meet up and have that support, I look forward to them. (Participant 6)

Three of the participants (2, 3 & 5) expressed the view that it was such an invaluable service they would benefit from more than the existing five supervision meetings. Interestingly, these participants all worked in the post-primary sector. Participant 2 stated:

In terms of my professional support I do engage in the 5 supervised supervisions that are being offered by the IGC, do I think it's enough, no I don't! I think they should be at least increased to 7 in the year, because of a lot of the issues that are coming up for guidance counsellors within the profession and it is a great service to have (Participant 2)

### ***4.3 Theme 2: Factors Which Contribute to Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Amongst Guidance Counsellors.***

A range of factors that contribute to job satisfaction were prominent in the findings. All six participants spoke of various aspects of the profession that enabled job satisfaction, as well as job dissatisfaction. In this section these factors will be discussed through the three sub-themes of; definition of job satisfaction, factors contributing to job satisfaction and factors contributing to job dissatisfaction.

#### ***4.3.1 Definition of Job Satisfaction***

In the interviews, each participant was asked to provide their personal definition of job satisfaction. Two participants, 3 and 5, defined it as self-satisfaction in terms of the service they provide to their students. Participant 3 stated "Just feeling self- satisfied really, in terms of the service you're providing" while participant 5 said it was being "satisfied that you're good at the job I suppose first off. Satisfied that you do your best".

Participant 1 viewed job satisfaction as working in a role that is "interesting, challenging, varied and meaningful". Similarly, participant 2 mentioned a "sense of achievement" gained from her work as a way of defining her job satisfaction. Participants 2, 4 and 6 all used emotive terms such as, 'enjoy', 'like' or 'love', whilst participant 4 stated that she tells people she has her "dream job". Participant 4 and 2 both alluded to the fact that job satisfaction can be defined as feeling positive about attending work, with participant 4 mentioning that she "looks forward" to it as well as feeling "very positive" about the work she does. Participant 2

stated “I think job satisfaction is being able to get up every day and go to work and enjoy what you do”

Ultimately, the findings indicate that the participants define job satisfaction in terms of the feelings they derive from the work they do. Even though this is a common theme throughout the combined body of data, participant 6 illustrates this perfectly with her statement “I define job satisfaction as being employed in a job or profession where you really like or indeed love all or most aspects of what you do”. All of the participants perceived job satisfaction as relating to the value they attain from the role and the emotions they experience as a result of their work.

#### ***4.3.2 Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction***

The participants were required to rate their level of job satisfaction on a scale of one to five, with one being extremely dissatisfied and five being extremely satisfied. The findings reveal that participants rated their levels at three or four. Concerning which part of the job brings them most satisfaction, the participants unanimously identified their students or clients as their main source of job satisfaction. This is derived from meeting, helping, supporting, guiding, and working with students or clients; helping to ensure their happiness, being the one good adult in their lives and interacting with them. This is exemplified as by participant 1 “It’s definitely just meeting the students”. A view echoed by both participant 3 and 6 where they respectively declared “meeting the students, seeing the students happy” (Participant 3) and “for me, I get the most satisfaction out of meeting the different students everyday” (Participant 6).

With regards to feeling valued within their role five of the six participants articulated that they receive their value from their students or clients and the work they do with them. The majority of them also cited that they felt valued by their support systems. However, two participants (4 and 5), mentioned having experienced feeling undervalued and this was due to some individuals’ misperceptions about the role of the guidance counsellor and what the work entails:

.... well sometimes I find that some colleagues and members of the general public, they don’t quite understand what guidance is about and they might say “go down there to \*Mary, she’ll sort you out” “oh you can’t get a job, go in there to \*Emma and they’ll sort you out” (Participant 4)

In terms of undervalued, that can happen too, you know you can get some people placing expectations, parents now I mean, you know, they can expect the most unrealistic things from you, or the school or the service (Participant 5)

Finally, when the participants were asked if they would recommend the profession of guidance counselling to someone considering entering the profession all of them agreed that

they would. However, five of the six participants stipulated that it would be on the grounds that the person in question was suited to this type of profession and possessed certain qualities such as; an interest in people (Participant 1 & 6), the ability to be open-minded and non-judgemental (Participant 2), and an interest in working with people on a personal level (Participant 3). It was also felt that it was important that any potential candidate should feel that they possess the ability to be good in the role and enjoy it (Participant 5)

#### ***4.3.3 Factors Contributing to Job Dissatisfaction***

Conversely, regarding the causes of job dissatisfaction, for four of the six participants the most common factor was the significant workload and the limited timeframe in which to complete it. Other factors mentioned were inequality of resources within different settings, i.e. DEIS vs. voluntary schools, lack of external supports and inadequate response times to crisis cases, as well as a lack of autonomy. Participant 2 made a poignant comment in relation to external supports:

in relation to the system that we work in sometimes you feel that you are treading deep water with your hands tied behind your back and that can be in relation to external resources , further resources in terms of referring students and the lack of supports within those systems , while I feel very supported within my school , ahm, ya, the system and top down can be very frustrating (Participant 2)

This was a view shared by participant 5 who stated he had a “huge problem with the external supports”. He discussed how referral responses are dangerously slow and how he has faced the problem of students being left waiting to see required specialists and the harmful effect of this for them. He questioned what type of message that portrays to the young person:

It’s more harmful to that child because what’s it saying to them? nobody is there to help you, you sit and wait, and it’s very sad for everyone involved..... oh God it’s very frustrating, it maddens me, and it scares me too, where will it end. (Participant 5)

The findings also indicate the time issue and extensive workload is a direct cause of job dissatisfaction for all participants. For four participants there was a consensus that the workload associated with the role of guidance counselling is generally unrealistic within the time constraints of the working day. Two participants, both of whom work in third level education stated that certain times of the year can be less demanding, therefore the workload can be more realistic and manageable (1 and 6). The participants working in second level education did not mention this.

In addition, these time constraints cause frustration as they do not have more time to engage with students or clients; “what frustrates me most of all is that I would love to have more time

to do more things with students” (Participant 3). Participant 2 expressed a desired situation where schools could facilitate the guidance counsellor by “not having them in the classroom setting as much and allowing them to be there on a personal level for young people”. By not facilitating this she attested it “diminishes the profession of guidance counselling to a certain degree, and that’s the frustrating part in terms of politics of my job”.

The participants were also questioned on whether they feel that their levels of job satisfaction have implications for the service they provide, of which five of them reported it has direct consequences. There was a consensus that the more satisfied the guidance counsellor is, the better the service he/she can provide, with participant 5 stating, “if I’m not at my best I won’t be doing my best, I couldn’t possibly”. Participant 2 was the only interviewee who did not feel her levels of job satisfaction had implications for the service she provides.

Finally, in terms of the factors that can ensure elevated levels of job satisfaction for practitioners the minority of participants considered that extra support in the form of a second guidance counsellor would alleviate some of the burdens of the role. For example, participant 2 stated, that attaining a second guidance counsellor in her department had the direct effect of increasing her level of job satisfaction significantly:

There was a number of classes which were taken off me (and taken on by the second guidance counsellor) which allowed me to focus more on the personal and vocational of a lot of my students, and that definitely, you know that definitely supported me in coming and being much happier in the role that I was doing. (Participant 2)

#### ***4. 4 Theme 3: The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors***

The final key theme of self-care and its significant role in job satisfaction will be addressed in this section. The sub themes will support this theme are stress levels and personal self-care.

##### ***4.4.1 Stress Levels***

In the interviews, each participant was asked to rate their work-related stress on a scale of one to five, one being not at all stressful and five being extremely stressful. They rated their levels as being between three and five. There was unanimous consensus that this varies at various times in the year with the scale increasing from an average of three up to five, during the busier periods. This busy period occurs between September and February approximately, with participant 1 stating that semester one (September to December) is “so busy that it’s really stressful”. Similarly, participant 2 exclaimed that “November, December, January and

February are probably the crucial months within the guidance department” and are the most stressful for her.

Concerning the manifestation and impact of stress on the participants, three of them spoke of the physical effects experienced as a result. Participant 5 described how during times of increased stress in work his health suffers, and he has a propensity towards falling victim to illnesses such as colds, flu and mouth ulcers. Participant 3 explained how “every now or then I’ll get that knot in my stomach or I’ll get that sudden sense of urgency”. While participant 6 spoke of the tiredness or fatigue she experiences at times of high stress in work. The remaining participants cited effects such as increased alcohol consumption (Participant 1) and reduction in spare time pursuits (Participant 2)

#### ***4.4.2 Personal Self- Care***

The term ‘self-care’ was cited by participants throughout various stages of the interviews, predominantly with regard to support systems, but also in relation to expectations of the role, if they felt supported or isolated, how valued they felt in their roles and their stress levels. The findings strongly indicate recognition of the need and benefits of an individualised self-care strategy by participants:

Well I mean if somebody comes in to you stressed and if you’re stressed yourself you can’t help them (Participant 4)

I go to the gym and I train under age GAA at home and it’s the best thing I ever did, getting back into the gym because it’s my stress buster, without a doubt. I’d be less likely to get run down and everything I’ve noticed. Without that I’d be the anti-Christ I think (Participant 5)

I think just having a balance, do you know, stress can eat in to you bigtime and work can be a major contributor towards stress and if the job is stressful enough sometimes I just really think you need to manage it and I do, do you know, I really do make sure that I don’t get severely stressed because I’ve been there before, and it wasn’t nice (Participant 1)

A key self-care strategy to combat stress referred to by all of the participants is physical activity, with the most common forms mentioned being walking, gym, sports and yoga classes. Meditation was also referred to by three participants (1, 4 & 6). Attending the IGC Supervision was also a prevalent strategy, with this being cited by three participants. There were also individual strategies which included planning and linking in with parents (Participant 3), socialising and self-help books (Participant 4), “bouncing ideas off” the

second guidance counsellor (Participant 2), setting boundaries (Participant 1) and taking allocated breaks to mix with others or exercise.

Four of the six participants mentioned that self-care is something that they have developed over a period of time and improved upon having experienced the job-related stress which accompanies the role and the need for maintaining a healthy approach to dealing with it. Interestingly, the participant with the least professional experience within the role (Participant 2) appeared to have fewer strategies in place to deal with stress and instead of utilising stress-release mechanisms, she avoids them:

for me in relation to work, results in me reducing the activities that I would engage in to keep myself healthy, and things that I enjoy, an example would be I would generally walk most days, I would do an exercise class three evenings a week, and I would go horse riding one evening a week. If I'm stressed in relation to my role I will refrain or result in me not attending those classes and that extra hour in my head is like "I'll get an hour of this done now and it will take the pressure off", when really and truly that hour kinda never stops (Participant 2)

This may indicate that length of time and experience within the guidance counsellor role may determine the likelihood of developing an effective self-care strategy as it appears those more seasoned professionals may be better equipped to manage stress and experience greater job satisfaction in the role.

#### ***4.5 Conclusion***

In conclusion, it is evident that job satisfaction is not straightforward, and guidance counsellors experience it differently. The findings suggest that the nature and quality of human relationships within the role plays a significant part in ensuring job satisfaction. Similarly, the importance of individual self-care and stress management strategies on ensuring job satisfaction emerged as a strong theme in the findings.

## ***Chapter 5. Discussion***

### ***5.0 Introduction***

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the primary findings in the context of the literature in chapter two. It will do this within the context of the research questions. Despite this being a small-scale study and acknowledging that the views expressed by participants may not be representative of all guidance counsellors, the findings offer worthy insights into the issue of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in contemporary practice.

### ***5.1 Research Findings in Context of Research Questions***

The primary research question in this study set out to explore the issue of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors in different educational settings in Ireland by asking, ‘what is the level of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors across different educational sectors?’. In addition, a set of secondary questions supported this question by asking:

1. *How do guidance counsellors define job satisfaction?*
2. *What aspects of their job bring them most satisfaction?*
3. *What aspects of their job cause dissatisfaction?*
4. *Is guidance counselling a profession guidance counsellors would recommend to others?*

Through the use of an interpretivist approach the findings from this study reveal that a combination of factors give rise to job satisfaction by guidance counsellors. Primarily, the relationship between guidance counsellors and their students or clients, and the opportunity to work with people was identified as the main catalyst for elevated levels of job satisfaction, a theme also common in literature (ASTI,2007; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2001; Morrissette, 2000). Other factors such as external supervision and organisational support were identified. In contrast, the key issue identified as a contributor to job dissatisfaction was the unrealistic workload associated with the role, as well as the time constriction in which guidance counsellors are expected to carry out all aspects of their job (Lambie, 2007; Mullen and Gutierrez, 2016; Sodoma and Else, 2009) While the participants in this study indicated they are experiencing elevated levels of stress within the role due to these factors, they acknowledged moderate to high levels of job satisfaction. They attributed this to the benefits of self- care and acknowledge that they engage with different strategies to ensure their needs are being met.

Findings from this research study identified the emergence of four overarching themes:

1. Job Satisfaction for Guidance Counsellors

2. Factors That Contribute to Job Satisfaction
3. Factors That Contribute to Job Dissatisfaction
4. The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction in Guidance Counselling

## **5.2 Theme 1: Job Satisfaction for Guidance Counsellors**

This section will examine how those in the profession of guidance counselling define job satisfaction as well as exploring the levels of job satisfaction for practicing guidance counsellors.

### ***5.2.1 How Guidance Counsellors Define Job Satisfaction***

The participants in this current study placed a strong emphasis on the emotive aspect of their role when defining job satisfaction, using terms such as ‘self-satisfaction’ and ‘contentment’ and describing their sense of ‘love for’ and ‘happiness’ about going to work. This draws a parallel with Locke (1976) who defines job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state” (p. 1304). Another aspect regarding defining job satisfaction was the needs of the participants in this study such as support from others and engagement in their own self-care (Dawis and Lofquist, 1993; Holmes, 2005).

### ***5.2.2: Levels of Job Satisfaction for Guidance Counsellors***

Research indicates that levels of job satisfaction can vary at times due to a number of various factors (ASTI, 2007; Chaplin, 1995; Hearne, 2012; Morgan et al, 2016). This correlates with the findings from this study, where participants rated their levels of job satisfaction as between three and four on a scale of one to five. Participants expressed an acknowledgment of the implications their levels of job satisfaction have on the service they provide to their students or clients, with the majority stating that they felt the higher their levels of satisfaction the better the service they provide. It has been identified teacher stress and job satisfaction are negatively correlated (Chaplin, 1995). Increased workload was the key factor identified in this study as a generator of increased work-related stress and a decrease in job satisfaction. Participants indicated their levels of stress were moderate to extreme with variation in the levels of stress at various times of the year (Hearne, 2012). This research study identified a key issue, the need for more time to complete all that is required from guidance counsellors. The findings indicate that to ensure this, the minority considered that extra support in the form of a second guidance counsellor would be the primary resolve.



Interestingly, one of the participants having had the opportunity of gaining a second guidance counsellor in her department confirmed it led to dramatic elevation in her personal level of job satisfaction.

### ***5.3 Factors That Contribute to Job Satisfaction***

This section will examine the specific factors that contribute to job satisfaction amongst guidance counsellors.

#### ***5.3.1 The Client-Based Relationship in Guidance Counselling***

Guidance counselling by its very nature is an interpersonal profession. Research from the last three decades depicts the role of the guidance counsellor as that of a facilitator (DES, 2005; Hannan et al, 1983; IGC, 2017; McCarthy, 1985; NGF, 2007; O’Leary & McCay-Momssey, 1987; Ryan, 1993) with an emphasis on one-to-one or group interactions (AEGAI, 2016; IGC, 2017). A facilitator, by its very definition is an “individual who helps another person to do or achieve a particular thing” (Collins English Dictionary, 2018). This definition emphasises the human interaction element of the profession and the caring or helping aspect of the role. Findings from the participants in this study indicate that the relationship between the professional guidance counsellor and his/her clients, be they young people or adults, contributed to their decision to enter the profession. Working with young people was cited as being the main catalyst for elevated levels of job satisfaction by all participants. This reflects the findings of a larger research study carried out by the ASTI in their 2007 survey on stress in post primary teachers, which is a similar role to that of guidance counsellor. These findings identified that 70% of participants cited working with young people as a catalyst for elevated levels of job satisfaction. While participants in this 2007 ASTI study stated satisfaction was attained from “the feeling that they are making a difference to students lives and helping them reach their full potential” (Morgan et al, 2016, pp 94), similarly, the current research study’s findings revealed participants gained job satisfaction from aspects such as meeting, helping, supporting, guiding, and working with students or clients, helping to ensure their happiness, being the one good adult in their lives and interacting with them. Over half of those involved in the ASTI survey revealed that they also acquired job satisfaction from the contribution they make in society through their work. Similarly, participants in this study identified the contribution they are making to society, through helping those who avail of their service, as a predictor of job satisfaction. It was suggested that by helping their clients to engage in society they were indirectly contributing. The TALIS (2008) National report for

Ireland indicated that most Irish second level teachers would agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied within their job. It found that the strongest correlation was between job satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy. This may also apply to guidance counsellors.

Participants of this study identified self-efficacy as a key factor for ensuring job satisfaction and spoke of the need for a sense of achievement from their work.

### ***5.3.2 Collegial Relationships and External Supports***

Another key finding of this study is the importance of strong collegial relationships between the guidance counsellor and their work colleagues, including management. This has been identified in previous studies also (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2001; Darmody & Smith, 2011; Griffith et al, 1999). Hoppock (1935), acknowledged the interpersonal relationships with one's supervisors and co-workers as a contributor to job satisfaction (Bowling et al, 2015). In this study the findings reveal that all of the participants felt supported both by management and colleagues within their settings, and that this in turn led to their job satisfaction. According to Schmidt (1999) communication and respect between both are vital. Morrissette (2000) refers to isolation and its association to inadequate job satisfaction and argues that it is the responsibility of the guidance counsellor to maintain a social support network, informing others of the challenges they face in the role and their vulnerability. This correlates with the primary finding in which the participants spoke of effective channels of communication between them and their colleagues. The IGC Code of Ethics (2012) states, in its preamble, that guidance counsellors have an ethical responsibility to seek support from colleagues at time of elevated stress or vulnerability due to their professional role. The findings show that isolation within the role is a real threat to guidance counsellors and that there is a need for the establishment of a support system, achieved through interaction with colleagues and forming relationships. It was acknowledged that the role could potentially be an isolating one if efforts are not made on the part of the guidance counsellor to construct supports for themselves.

Furthermore, it has been found that elevated levels of job-related stress are directly linked with low social supports in the workplace (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Griffith et al. 1999; Morrissette, 2000). The findings indicate that all the participants were availing of the support systems available to them. There was a consensus that management and colleagues were approachable, and support was available when needed. When participants were asked to identify the aspects of the role which caused them most dissatisfaction none identified low

social supports. Finding from the existing literature indicates that external supports feature in the attainment of job satisfaction (Cervoni et al, 2001; Hearne, 2012). According to the IGC Code of Ethics (2012), it is a requirement that all guidance counsellors seek and receive supervision. Cervoni et al (2001) observed that guidance counsellors identified supervision as a primary factor leading to job satisfaction, in consort with organisational support. Likewise, it was acknowledged by all of the participants in the current study that the opportunity to reach out and engage with others within the profession, such as at IGC branch meetings and supervision sessions, was a major source of support. These opportunities offer a forum to “debrief, share practice and cope with stressful situations” (Hearne, 2012, p.5). All participants portrayed this external support in an extremely positive manner with 50% of them stating they felt an increase in the number of meetings would be beneficial.

#### ***5.4. Factors That Lead to Job Dissatisfaction***

Research carried out in the UK by Griffith et al (1999) which explored coping strategies among teachers found that elevated levels of job stress was directly linked to low social supports in the workplace. All participants of this research study cited they received high social supports within their respective work places therefore this was not quoted as a contributor to job dissatisfaction. Day (1999) found that low morale was as a direct result of government implemented changes, interestingly none of the participants directly alluded to the budgetary cuts of 2012, which saw dramatic reform in the deliverance of guidance counselling in Ireland. However, there was mention of government involvement from one of the participants regarding the review in guidance counselling issued by the DES as she felt there was a serious need for more formalised structures in place regarding elements of the profession, such as referrals to outside agencies. She was also the only second level guidance counsellor to indicate that she had a dual role, as both a guidance counsellor and a subject teacher, splitting her time between both roles- common direct consequence of the 2012 reallocation of guidance counsellors.

As well as meeting the need of their students, the guidance counsellor is also facing the issue of role definition or role conflict and ambiguity (Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Paisley, 2001) where time constrictions and unrealistic expectations are factors that negatively affect the guidance counsellor. In the Irish context, post 2012, guidance counsellors are expected to teach curriculum subjects in concurrence to their guidance role (Hearne & Galvin, 2014). There is also the key issue of the pressure placed upon guidance counsellors to maintain a

balance between classroom guidance as well as the demands of one to one guidance (Hearne et al, 2017). The current research finding indicate the emergence of a key issue relating to the participants workload and time constraints. For the majority of the participants the workload associated with the role of guidance counsellor is unrealistic within the time constraints of the working day. Literature suggests that a significant percentage of teachers find it stressful not having adequate time to spend with individual students and non-class contact work (ASTI, 2007). Similarly, it was found that participants of this research study are unsatisfied with the fact they don't have more time to engage with students or clients with participants describing this drawback as being frustrating.

Literature reveals that guidance counsellors are often found to be overwhelmed by increased job responsibility and expectations (Cervoni & Delucia ,2001; Hearne, 2012). In terms of organisational factors, role conflict, ambiguity and job overload were identified as the major contributors to burn-out among guidance counsellors (Cervoni & Delucia ,2001). Also, in relation to their research, it was found that the main frustrations encountered were being overwhelmed by duties and difficulties encountered with parents. The issue of parental pressure has also been identified as a source of job dissatisfaction (Browne, 2004). While the findings from this current research study did indicate the majority of participants felt overwhelmed by their workload, only one mentioned encountering difficulties with parents.

Finally, Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) found the work environment, such as adverse working conditions, excessive workload and lack of resources and autonomy as predictors of low job satisfaction for those working within education. From an Irish prospective, Hearne (2012) highlighted similar findings with guidance counsellors citing comparable issues. Excessive workload was a key issue discussed by all of the participants in this research study, with lack of resources identified as a particular stressor. Autonomy was discussed by some of the participants. It is common among them to experience lack of autonomy and the frustration which accompanies this issue.

### ***5.5. The Pivotal Role of Self-Care in the Attainment of Job Satisfaction in Guidance Counselling***

The theme of self-care and its centrality in ensuring job satisfaction emerged as a key finding. This section will examine this theme under the subheadings; stress and burnout in guidance counselling and resilience and coping mechanisms.

### ***5.5.1 Stress and Burnout in Guidance Counselling***

It has been identified teacher stress and job satisfaction are negatively correlated indicating that elevated occupational stress can result in low levels of job satisfaction (Chaplin, 1995). With regards to the education sector there have been reported increasing levels of stress (ASTI, 2007; Morgan et al, 2015; Morgan et al 2016). In the context of the adult guidance counselling services, practitioners indicated that the increased demand for their services has resulted in limited time for “professional revitalisation” to deal with work related stress (Hearne, 2012. p.5) which would in turn lead to increased stress. The findings from the current research study are that the participants rated their levels of stress on a scale of 1 to 5 between a moderate 3 to an extreme 5. Furthermore, there was variation in the levels of stress at various times of the year, with the scale increasing from an average of three up to five during the busier times of the year, such as the period between September and February which involves the CAO deadline and were identified as the most stressful times. This compares with Hearne (2012), who reported the existence of “peak and trough times” for guidance counsellor (p.5).

An additional issue related to stress is the increased workload and emphasis on accountability in the workplace for guidance counsellors. Findings suggest that guidance counsellors were often found to be overwhelmed by increased job responsibility and expectations with job over-load identified as a major contributor to burn-out among guidance counsellors (Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Paisley, 2001; Sodoma and Else, 2009). Similarly, excessive workload was cited by the participants in this research study as a leading contributor to their stress.

The literature identifies the negative association between lack of occupational support and burn out suggesting that the relationship between the management of the school and the guidance counsellor is critical (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2001). None of the participants in this study specifically referred to, or implied they were suffering from burnout; however, they did discuss stress related illnesses. In contrast, they all cited positive managerial relationships indicating a correlation between occupational support and guidance counsellor wellbeing.

Interestingly, Morgan & Nic Craith (2015) revealed an increase in occupational stress among primary school teachers, with 90% suggesting the job has become more stressful, yet they appear to retain their job satisfaction with only 1/3 implying the job had become less satisfying (Morgan et al, 2016). Similar finding suggests this also applies to post primary teachers (ASTI, 2007; Day et al, 2007). Hearne (2012) identifies that finding themselves

operating in a situation where increased demands and diminished resources is proving challenging for guidance counsellors, with the threat of dissatisfaction becoming a possibility. Findings from the current study show that participants indicated their levels of stress and levels of satisfaction were on par suggesting that even though they experience high level of stress, they also remain satisfied. This would indicate that guidance counsellors are, in general, resilient practitioners.

### ***5.5.2 Resilience and Coping Mechanisms***

The ICG (2012) states that engagement in self-care is a professional requirement to ensure avoidance of conditions such as burnout which can lead to inadequate professionalism. The development of adaptive coping mechanisms and resilience to reduce stress, burnout and to maintain health and wellbeing is well argued (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Day et al, 2007; Hearne, 2013; Lambie, 2007; Morgan et al, 2016). Resilience refers to how we interact with our environments and our capacity to deal with stressful situations (Day et al, 2007). It is vital within the educational professions as it ensures continual dedication to the profession and high quality of service (Day et al, 2007). The findings from the current study reveal that there is a strong awareness amongst the participants of the importance of resilience and developing coping mechanisms to support their satisfaction.

With regards to particular strategies it is suggested they can be task orientated, such as planning, organisation and prompt reaction to problems encountered, or social supports, such as seeking support (Morgan et al, 2016). The majority of participants in this study referred to the need for forward planning and taking advantage of quiet times within the year to get organised. In relation to social support systems, Hearne (2012) identifies the importance of supervision as it leads to alleviated isolation and provides a forum for guidance counsellors to share the burdens of the role. Availing of IGC supervision is a necessary strategy utilised by the study's participants. Hearne (2012) also identifies the ability to 'switch-off' outside of work as paramount to the resilience of the practitioner. This is reflective of the findings in the current study where the utilisation of physical activity or engagement in personal interests were a means of combating stress. The most common forms were walking, gym, sports, yoga classes, meditation, and socialising. It is worth noting that the participant with the least experience, who has been employed within the profession for four years appeared to have less strategies in place to deal with stress and disclosed that at times of elevated stress, instead of utilising coping mechanisms she refrains in favour of allocating spare time to work

related activities such as planning and administrative work. She believed that not switching off from work mode results in a reduction of engagement with the activities she enjoyed. Her justification for this was she felt the time could be better spent on work related activities in order to alleviate the pressure.

Research indicates that satisfaction with one's life outside of teaching is also an important indicator of teacher's resilience (Morgan et al, 2016). Indicating poor resilience and dissatisfaction can be a holistic enigma effecting all aspects of life. Finding in this research study indicated that those in the role for a longer period acknowledged there were times in the earlier stages of their career when they were not as resilient as they are at present.

## ***5.6 Conclusion***

This chapter has examined the findings of this research study while integrating findings from the existing literature as well as the semi-structured interviews. Certain correlations were identified between the data gathered as part of this dissertation and those from various sources of existing literature. It was found that close comparisons exist in relation to the job satisfaction of teachers and guidance counsellors, as discovered through examination of the existing literature. Furthermore, it was found that though guidance counsellors experience elevated levels of occupational stress, they remain relatively satisfied within their role. It was not however identified if this was sustainable long-term.

## ***Chapter 6. Conclusion***

### ***6.0 Introduction***

This chapter concludes the research study with a presentation of the overview of the findings within the context of the aim and objectives of the study. It will identify the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future practice, policy and research will be offered, as well as the researcher's personal learning from the undertaking of the study.

### ***6.1 Overview in the Context of the Study's Aims and Objectives***

The key aim of this research study was to investigate job satisfaction of guidance counsellors across different educational settings in Ireland. In addition, the establishment of several objectives supported the overall aim of the study. These included a review and analysis of relevant literature on the topic of job satisfaction, interviews with qualified guidance counsellors, and the development of recommendations to inform future policy, practice and research within the guidance counselling.

A number of key findings have emerged in this study. Firstly, the levels of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors appears to be directly related to the relationship they have with their students and clients. In particular working with young people and adults was the main catalyst for elevated levels of job satisfaction for the majority of participants in this research study. Secondly, another key factor regarding levels of job satisfaction is having supportive management and colleagues in the workplace (Bowling et al, 2015; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2001; Darmody & Smith, 2011; Morrissette, 2000). In general, the participants of this study felt supported by both management and their colleagues within their different employment settings, which in turn led to their job satisfaction. In relation to external supports, opportunities to reach out to and engage with others within the profession, such as through professional supervision and IGC branch meetings, was a major source of support to guidance counsellors.

In relation to factors that cause job dissatisfaction, the literature indicates a variety of issues such as low social supports (Griffith et al, 1999), government driven changes (Day, 1999), role definition or role conflict and ambiguity (Cervoni & Delucia, 2001; Paisley, 2001), and excessive workloads and time constraints (ASTI, 2007; Hearne, 2012; Morgan et al 2016; Sodoma and Else, 2009). Similarly, the current research findings highlight that practitioners' workload can be unrealistic within the time constraints of their working day, contributing to



increased stress and dissatisfaction. While this was a key issue, the lack of resources was also identified as a stressor for guidance counsellors. The findings reveal that the main factor, which could ensure elevated levels of job satisfaction amongst guidance counsellors across the different sectors, was further time to spend with students, and support in the form of an additional guidance counsellor within the setting.

Finally, a key matter that emerged in this study is the pivotal role of self-care in the attainment of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors in contemporary practice (ASTI, 2007; Chaplin, 1995; Hearne, 2012; Morgan et al, 2015). Findings from the study show that participants indicated that both their stress levels and their levels of job satisfaction were high, suggesting that even though they experience elevated level of stress, they also remain satisfied in their job. Strategies such as forward planning, utilising quieter periods in their working day, availing of internal and external supports, and taking part in physical activities and having personal interests were helpful.

## ***6.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Study***

The current study identifies both strengths and weaknesses, as follows;

### ***6.2.1 Strengths***

There are several identified strengths of the study. While the literature reveals that substantial research has been carried out on the job satisfaction of teachers this research study has explored the issue with regards to guidance counselling practice across different educational sectors. Despite this being a small-scale study, the findings offer worthy insight into the issue of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors. It thus addresses the gap of empirical evidence on the topic.

Furthermore, the use of the interpretivist paradigm provided a unique opportunity for interaction between the researcher and participants, offering a platform for the co-construction of meaning of the research topic (Crotty, 1998). It allowed for first hand, in-depth observations of the feelings, experiences and perceptions of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Hennink et al, 2011; Oakley, 2000).

Throughout the study the issue of validity was addressed. Reflexivity was applied through critical reflection on the researcher's position (Thomas, 2009). Likewise, rigor was achieved through member checking of transcript data with participants for accuracy and understanding. Furthermore,

### **6.2.2 Limitations**

Due to the time limitations of the study participants were recruited on a ‘first come, first serve’ basis, which resulted in the recruitment of only one male participant, leading to a gender imbalance in the study. Furthermore, most participants were based within rural or small urban settings. Despite the interpretivist paradigm lending to the strength of the study it is not without its limitations, namely its susceptibility to subjective bias on behalf of the researcher. There was an acknowledgement of the researcher’s own potential bias due to personal experience and preconceptions of job satisfaction, and the need to detach from these during the research study. The method employed also has its limits. When semi structured interviews are utilised, there are factors to consider and contend with such as reactivity, this is the behaviour the participants show towards the interviewer, and respondent bias, which is the withholding of information or the desire to provide the researcher with the answers the participant feels the want to hear (Hearne et al, 2016).

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Policy, Practice and Research**

The findings have led to the establishment of several recommendations for future policy, practice and research:

1. The current research findings indicated the emergence of a key issue relating to guidance counsellor’s workload and time constraints. There is a need for change in policy regarding the allocation of guidance counselling hours in post primary schools, reducing the time spent on subject teaching to facilitate the delivery of an adequate guidance counselling service.
2. It is evident that guidance counsellors identify supervision as a primary factor leading to job satisfaction. The findings indicate a demand for additional supervision provision, to ensure continual job satisfaction. An increase from the existing number of IGC sessions is needed to meet this demand.
3. The development of adaptive coping mechanisms and resilience to reduce stress, burnout and to maintain health and wellbeing is well argued in the findings. There is a need for further promotion of this and for guidance counsellors to develop and maintain such skills through continuous and relevant CPD
4. It is recommended that more formalised structures regarding referrals from guidance services to outside agencies as currently there appears to be an inadequate level of response to external referrals to agencies such as CAMS

5. In practice, management of educational settings need to be aware of the significant demands upon guidance counsellors, thus revising their approach to timetabling and allocations. Guidance counsellors should be allowed delegated time for the execution of the three facets of guidance counselling- personal and social, educational and career. In addition, the requirement for delivery of additional subject curriculum as well as guidance counselling which emerged after the Budget in 2012 should be preferably abolished to alleviate the demands and allow the focus to remain solely on the deliverance of an adequate guidance service.
6. A further, large scale study would be beneficial to investigate the job satisfaction of guidance counsellors as the findings only represent a small cohort of professionals. Also noteworthy is the fact that most participants in this study were based within rural or small urban settings. A larger scale study would also allow for a more diverse geographical coverage and thus yield greater variation in the findings.

#### ***6.4 Reflexivity in Relation to Personal Learning***

A reflexive approach was taken by the researcher throughout this research study. This involved the researcher reflecting on how she interpreted and analysed the data gathered throughout the research process (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Prior to, and at the initial stages of the study the researcher held personal preconceptions on the topic of job satisfaction, especially within the guidance profession. She believed the findings would indicate experiences of job dissatisfaction overriding those of satisfaction. She felt this may be due to factors such as the effect of the 2012 Budgetary cuts in guidance provision, increased demands from students and clients for personal counselling and diminished supports. Through reflection, both conceptual and written, in the form of her research diary, as well as the process of professional supervision the researcher was able to acknowledge and bracket off these preconceptions.

The researcher was struck by how the participants so honestly and candidly described their authentic experiences and any initial concerns relating to personal experience of job dissatisfaction and the effect this could have on the data collection process was dismissed. Initially, having to conduct interviews was a daunting concept for the researcher who did not have much experience in this practice. However, engaging with the process resulted in personal learning and a clearer insight into the benefits offered by utilising the qualitative paradigm. It allowed for further development of listening and interpreting skills. The researcher recognised the importance of allowing the participant's story to be told both

verbally and non-verbally. In terms of job satisfaction, the researcher learned that the caring nature of the guidance profession and the interaction with students or clients is vital to the attainment of job satisfaction, as well as the importance of self-care when engaging in this type work. The fundamental learning has been positive and will influence the future practice of the researcher within her professional role as a guidance counsellor.

### ***6.5 Conclusion***

This concludes the research study, an investigation of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors. This chapter has presented an overview of the findings and identified the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future practice, policy and research have been offered, as well a reflection on the researcher's personal learning from the undertaking of the study.

## **References:**

- AEGAI, (2016). *The Role of the Adult Educational Guidance Association of Ireland Working in The Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS)*. Retrieved from <http://www.aegai.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/17Oct-The-Role-of-the-AEGS.pdf>. [Accessed on 12 Mar 2018]
- Allen, N.J. and Grisaffe, D.B. (2001) *Employee Commitment to the Organization and Customer Reactions: Mapping the Linkages*. Human Resource Management Review, 11, 209-236. Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822\(00\)00049-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00049-8). [Accessed on 26 Jan 2018]
- Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland. (2013). *Survey of schools; impact of cutbacks on secondary schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.asti.ie/publications/other/>. [Accessed on 7 Apr 2018]
- ASTI (2007) *Survey of stress of post-primary teachers*. Dublin: ASTI
- Bimrose, J. and Hearne, L., (2012). *Resilience and career adaptability: Qualitative studies of adult career counselling*. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 81(3), pp.338-344
- Bishay, A. (1996). *Teacher motivation and job satisfaction: A study employing the experience sampling Method*. Journal of Undergraduate Sciences, 3, 147-154.
- Bowling, N. & Cucina, J. (2015). *Robert Hoppock: Early Job Satisfaction and Vocational Guidance Pioneer*. The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist. Vol. 53, No. 2. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282295269\\_Robert\\_Hoppock\\_Early\\_Job\\_Satisfaction\\_and\\_Vocational\\_Guidance\\_Pioneer](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282295269_Robert_Hoppock_Early_Job_Satisfaction_and_Vocational_Guidance_Pioneer). [Accessed on 12 Jan 2018]
- Brown, N. (2004) *The study of the Job Satisfaction of Beginning School Counsellors & Their Transition into The Field*. University of Wisconsin. Retrieved from [www.uwstout.edu/lib/thesis/2004/2004brown.pdf](http://www.uwstout.edu/lib/thesis/2004/2004brown.pdf). [Accessed on 25 Aug 2017]
- Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Butler, S. K., & Constantine, M. G. (2005). *Collective self-esteem and burnout in professional school counsellors*. Professional School Counselling, 9, 55–62.

Cervoni, A & DeLucia- Waack, J. (2011) “*Role Conflict & Ambiguity as Predictors of Job Satisfaction in High School Counsellors*” *The Journal of School Counselling*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ914271.pdf> .8 [Accessed on 2 May 2018]

Chaplain, R. (1995). *Stress and job satisfaction: a study of English primary school teachers*, *Educational Psychology*. 15, 4, 473 – 489.

Collins English Dictionary (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com>. [Accessed on 5 Aug 2018]

Council of the European Union. (2008). *Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies*. Retrieved from [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf8](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf8). [Accessed on 14 May 2018]

Crampton, S.M., & Wagner, J.A. (1994). *Precept-percept inflation in micro organizational research: An investigation of prevalence and effect*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 79, 67-76.

Crossman, A. & Harris, P. (2006), *Job satisfaction of secondary school teacher*. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 34, 1, 29-46.

Darmody, M.& Smyth. E. (2011) *Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress among Primary School Teachers and School Principals in Ireland*. A Report Compiled by the ESRI on Behalf of The Teaching Council. Dublin: ERSI. Retrieved from <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/57426>. [Accessed on 27 Jan 2018]

Davis, R.V., Rounds, J.B., Henly, G.A., Lofquist, C.H., Weiss, D.J. (1981) *Manual for the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire. A Measure of Vocational Needs and Values*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Dawis, R.V., & Lofquist, L.H. (1984) *A Psychological Theory of Work Adjustment*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Dawis, R.V., & Lofquist, L.H. (1993). *From TWA to PEC*. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*. 43, 113-121.

Day, C. (1999) *Developing Teachers, The Challenges of Lifelong Learning*. London: Falmer Press.

- Day, C., Sammons, P., Stobart, G., Kington, A., & Gu, Q. (2007). *Teachers Matters: Connecting work, lives and effectiveness*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Deal, T. & Kennedy, A. (1984) *Corporate Cultures: The rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Reading, MA: Addison- Wesley.
- Dee, T. S., & Jacob, B. (2010). *The impact of 'no child left behind' on students, teachers, and schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/ES/BPEA/2010\\_fall\\_bpea\\_papers/2010fall\\_deejacob.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/ES/BPEA/2010_fall_bpea_papers/2010fall_deejacob.pdf) Gardner. [Accessed on 1 Feb 2018]
- Department of Education and Science. (2009). *Looking at guidance; Teaching and learning in post-primary schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/InspectionReports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp\\_looking\\_at\\_guidance\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/InspectionReports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_looking_at_guidance_pdf.pdf) [Accessed on 16 June 2018]
- Department of Education and Skills (2000). *Learning for Life. White Paper on Adult Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Education and Skills (2005). *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*. Dublin: Stationery Office
- Department of Education and Skills (2014). *Guidelines for the Integration of Contracted Guidance Staff Within the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI)*. Retrieved from [https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/Guidelines\\_re\\_integrating\\_contracted\\_guidance\\_staff\\_201114.pdf](https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/Guidelines_re_integrating_contracted_guidance_staff_201114.pdf). [Accessed on 23 June 2018]
- Department of Education and Skills (2015). *Recognition of Initial Education Programmes in Guidance Counselling by the Department of Education and Skills: Proposed Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Recognition-of-Initial-Education-Programmes-in-Guidance-Counselling.pdf.8>
- Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate (2005). *Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students' Access to Appropriate Guidance*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science.
- Department of Education and Skills. (2012). *Adult Education Guidance Initiative Operational Guidelines*. Retrieved from

[https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/AEGI\\_Operational\\_Guidelines\\_2012\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/ncge/uploads/AEGI_Operational_Guidelines_2012_FINAL.pdf)

Department of Education and Skills. (2012). *Circular 0009/2012 staffing arrangements in post-primary schools for the 2012/2013 school year*. Retrieved from [http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/cl0009\\_2012.pdf](http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/cl0009_2012.pdf) [ Accessed on 21 June 2018]

Evans, L. (1998) *Teacher Morale, Job Satisfaction and Motivation*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Goslin, P. A. (2005). *Managing employee satisfaction of volunteers in South African sport*. African Journal for Physical Health Education, 12, 30–40.

Government of Ireland (1998). *The Education Act*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Griffith, J., Steptoe, A. & Cropley, M. (1999), *An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers*. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 69, 4, 517-531.

Guglielmi, S.R., & Tatrow, K. (1998). Occupational stress, burnout, and health in teachers: A methodological and theoretical analysis. *Review of educational research*. 58, (1), 61-91.

Hannan, D F, Breen, S, Murray, B, Watson, D, Hardiman, N, & O Higgins, K (1983) *Schooling and sex roles Sex differences in subject provision and student choice in Irish post primary schools*. Dublin: Dublin Economic and Social Research Institute

Hargreaves. A. (1994) *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review. Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. London: Sage

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2003). *Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes, A Review of the Gallup Studies, Flourishing, The Positive Person and the Good Life*, Chapter 9. In Keyes, C. L. M., & Haidt, J. (Ed). (pp. 205–224). American Psychological Association.



Hearne, L. (2012) *The Resilient Adult Guidance Practitioner, A Study of the Impact of High Touch Work in Challenging Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ul.ie/pdf/232957089.pdf>. 8. [Accessed on 24 June 2018]

Hearne, L. (2012). *The resilient adult guidance practitioner: A study of the impact of high-touch work in challenging times*. Limerick: University of Limerick. Retrieved from <http://www2.ul.ie/pdf/232957089.pdf>. [Accessed on 1 Feb 2018]

Hearne, L.& Galvin, J. (2014) *The role of the regular teacher in a whole school approach to guidance counselling in Ireland*. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*. Retrieved from [https://ulir.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10344/4907/Hearne\\_2014\\_counselling.pdf?sequence=4](https://ulir.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10344/4907/Hearne_2014_counselling.pdf?sequence=4) [Accessed on 7 June 2018]

Hearne, L. King, P., Geary, T. & Kenny, N. (2017). Case study research on a whole school approach to guidance counselling in the voluntary school sector. *NCGE News*;47, pp. 23. Retrieved from <https://www.ncge.ie/ncge/news>. [Accessed on 5 Aug 2018]

Herzberg, F. (1968). *One More Time: How do you motivate employees?* *Harvard Business Review*, 46, 53-62

Herzberg, F. Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B (1959). *The Motivation to Work*. New York: Wiley.

Holmes, E. (2005). *Teacher Wellbeing, Looking After Yourself and Your Career in the Classroom*. Oxon: Routledge Falmer

Hoppock, R. (1935) *Job Satisfaction*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

IGC (2012) *The Future Role of Guidance and Counselling in Second Level Schools and Colleges of Further Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/archivedcommittees/jobssocialprotectionandeducation/02.-The-Future-Role-of-Guidance-and-Counselling-in-Second-Level.pdf>. [Accessed on 12 Mar 2018]

IGC (2016) *National Audit of Guidance Counselling Practice 2015/16 -Audit 4*. Retrieved from <http://www.igc.ie/download/1/IGC%20FINAL%20Audit%204%20REPORT%20-%20May%205-2.pdf>. [Accessed on 12 Mar 2018]

IGC (2016). *DEIS takes the Brunt of Austerity Cuts to Guidance Counselling in Schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.igc.ie/Events\\_Publications/IGC-Press-Releases/DEIS-takes-the-](http://www.igc.ie/Events_Publications/IGC-Press-Releases/DEIS-takes-the-)

[Brunt-of-Austerity-Cuts-to-Guidance-Counselling-in-Schools;-where-One~to~One-Counselling-has-been-Cut-by.](#) [Accessed on 12 Mar 2018]

IGC (2017) *Guidance Counselling Core Competencies and Professional Practice*. Retrieved from

<http://www.igc.ie/download/1/2017/Guidance%20Counselling%20Core%20Competencies%20&%20Professional%20Practice.pdf>. [Accessed on 20 Jul 2018]

Ilies, R., Wilson, K. S., & Wagner, D. T. (2009). *The spill over of daily job satisfaction on to employee's family lives: The facilitating role of work-family integration*. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(1), 87–102.

Ingersoll, R.M. (2003.) *Is there really a teaching shortage?* Centre of the Study of Teaching and Policy. Seattle: University of Washington

Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2012). Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.igc.ie/about-us/our-constitution/code-of-ethics>. [Accessed on 6 Aug 2018]

Institute of Guidance Counsellors. (2014). *National audit of guidance counselling practice in second level schools & colleges of further education in Ireland 2011-2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.igc.ie>. [Accessed on 7 Apr 2018]

Judge, T.A., & Bono, J.E. (2001). *Relationship of core self-evaluations traits- self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability- with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), 80-92.

Kyriacou, C (2000). *Stress Busting for Teachers*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes

Kyriacou, S., Kunc, R., Stephens, P., & Hultgren, A. (2003). *Student teachers' expectations of teaching as a career in England and Norway*. *Educational Review*, 55, 255-263.

Kyriacou, S., Kunc, R., Stephens, P., & Hultgren, A. (2003). *Student teachers' expectations of teaching as a career in England and Norway*. *Educational Review*, 55, 255-263.

Lambie, G. W. (2007). *The contribution of ego development level to burnout in school counsellors: Implications for professional school counselling*. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 85, 82–88.

Locke, E. A. (1976). *The nature and causes of job satisfaction*. *Handbook of Industrial and Organisational Psychology*, 1, 1297-1343.

- Locke, J. (1979). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Maslach, C., & Goldberg, J. (1998). *Prevention of burnout: New perspectives*. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, 7(1), 63-74.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A theory of human motivation*. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396
- Mathieu, J.E., & Zajac, D.M. (1990) *A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment*. *Psychological Bulletin*. 108, 171-194.
- McCarthy, C., Kerne, V. V. H., Calfa, N. A., Lambert, R. G., & Guzmán, M. (2010). *An exploration of school counsellors' demands and resources: relationship to stress, biographic, and caseload characteristics*. *Professional School Counselling*, 13, 146–158.
- McCarthy, J. (1985). *A survey of guidance, counselling and assessment in the Cork COMTEC area*. Cork: Community Training and Employment Consortium
- Morgan, M. & Kitching, K. (2007). *Teaching in disadvantaged schools: Job satisfaction of beginning teachers*. In Gilligan, A.L., & Downes, P. (Eds), *Educational Disadvantage in Ireland*. (pp. 367-378), Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- Morgan, M. & Nic Craith, D. (2015). *Workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers: Report of a survey of INTO members*. *Irish Teachers Journal*. 3, 9-20.
- Morgan, M. & O'Donnell, M. (2016) *Stress, Resilience and Quality of Teacher's Lives*. *Education Matters Yearbook 2016-2017. Shaping Irelands Education Landscape*. pp.92-100  
Dublin: Phyllis Mitchell
- Morgan, M. & O'Leary, M. (2004). *The job satisfaction of beginning primary teachers*. *Irish Journal of Education*, 35, 73-86.
- Morrisette, P. J. (2000). *The experiences of the rural school counsellor*. *Professional School Counselling*, 3(3), 197-207.
- Mullen P.R., & Gutierrez, D. 2016. *Burnout, Stress and Direct Student Services Among School Counsellors*. *The Professional Counsellor* Volume 6, Issue 4, Pages 344–359.  
Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1124058.pdf>. [Accessed on 1 Feb 2018]

National Centre for Guidance Education (2012). *Adult Education Guidance Initiative Operational Guidelines*. Retrieved from [http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/AEGI\\_Operational\\_Guidelines\\_2012\\_FINAL.pdf.8](http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/AEGI_Operational_Guidelines_2012_FINAL.pdf.8).

National Centre for Guidance in Education (2013). *Review of guidance counselling provision in second level schools 2012-2013; Report of the findings*. Retrieved from [http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/Review\\_of\\_Guidance\\_Counselling\\_provision\\_in\\_second\\_level\\_schools\\_2012-2013.FINAL.pdf](http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/Review_of_Guidance_Counselling_provision_in_second_level_schools_2012-2013.FINAL.pdf)

National Centre for Guidance in Education (2017). *Quantitative and Qualitative Report of the Adult Educational Guidance Services*. Retrieved from [https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/NCGE\\_AGMS%20FINAL%202017%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/NCGE_AGMS%20FINAL%202017%20Report_0.pdf) [Accessed on 24 Jun 2018]

National Centre for Guidance in Education. (2004). *Planning the school guidance programme*. Dublin: NCGE

National Commission on Education (1993). *Learning to Succeed: Report of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation*. London: Heinemann.

Nias, J. (1989). *Primary Teachers Talking: A Study of Teaching as Work*. London: Routledge

Nias, J., Southworth, G.W. & Yeomans, R. (1989). *Staff Relationships in the Primary School: A Study of School Culture*. London: Cassell.

O' Donoghue, A. (2015). *The Influence of Perceived Constructive and Destructive Leadership on Employee Well-Being and Ill-Being: The Mediating Role of Self-Conscious Emotions*. A Thesis Submitted to Dublin City University Business School. Retrieved from [http://doras.dcu.ie/21383/1/PhD\\_Thesis\\_Ashley\\_O'Donoghue.pdf](http://doras.dcu.ie/21383/1/PhD_Thesis_Ashley_O'Donoghue.pdf) [Accessed on 3 Mar 2018]

O'Driscoll, M.P. & Beehr, T.A. (1994). *Supervisor behaviours, role stressors and uncertainty as predictors of personal outcomes for subordinates*. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*. 15, 141-155.

O'Leary, E, & McCay-Mornssey, T (1987). *Time spent by the guidance counsellor on various duties*. *Institute of Guidance Counsellors Journal*, 13, 25-30

Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, (2013). *Getting Youth on the Job Track, OECD Economic Surveys, Ireland 2013*, OECD publishing. Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco\\_surveys\\_irl\\_2013\\_en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys_irl_2013_en). [Accessed on 20 Jul 2018]

- Paisley, P. (2001) *School Counselling For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges & Opportunities*. Professional School Counselling, 5,2-12. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/anonymous?id=GALE%7CA84152030&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=fulltext&issn=10962409&p=AONE&sw=w&authCount=1&isAnonymousEntry=true>, [Accessed on 2 Aug 2017]
- Perie, M. & Baker, D. P. (1997). *Job satisfaction among America's teachers: effects of workplace conditions, background characteristics, and teacher compensation*. National Centre of Educational Statistics, Statistical Analysis Report, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97471.pdf> [Accessed on 2 Mar 2018]
- Petty, M. M., McGee, G. W. & Cavender, J. W. (1984). *A meta-analysis of the relationships between individual job satisfaction and individual performance*. Academy of Management Review, 9 (4), 712-721.
- Price Waterhouse Coopers (2002). *Management Barometer*. Retrieved from [www.pwcglobal.com](http://www.pwcglobal.com) [Accessed on 25 Jan 2018]
- Ryan, L (1993). *Counselling the adolescent in a changing Ireland*. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Guidance Counsellors.
- Schaffer, R.H. (1953). *Job Satisfaction as related to need satisfaction in work*. Psychological Monographs: General and Applied, Vol. 67, no.14, pp. 1-29
- Schmidt, J. (1999). *Counselling in Schools: Essential Services and Comprehensive Programs*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Massachusetts: Viacom Company.
- Sewell, J. & Abel, M. H. (1999) *Stress and Burnout in Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers*. The Journal of Educational Research 92(5):287-293
- Sharf, R.S. (2010) *Applying Career Development Theory to Counselling*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.
- Shiel, G & Lewis, M. (1993) *Guidance and Counselling in Irish Second-Level Schools*. The Irish Journal of Education, 1993, xxvii, pp. 5-24. Dublin: Educational Research Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.erc.ie/documents/vol27chp1.pdf.8>.
- Shiel, G., Perkins, R., & Gilleece, L. (2009). *TALIS summary report for Ireland*. Retrieved from [http://www.ubuntu.ie/documents/talis\\_summary\\_report2009.pdf](http://www.ubuntu.ie/documents/talis_summary_report2009.pdf). [Accessed on 9 Apr 2018]

Sodoma, B. & Else, D. (2009). *Job satisfaction of Iowa public school principals*. *The Rural Educator*, 31, 1, 10-18.

SOLAS (2014). *Further Education and Training Strategy. 2014-2019*. Dublin: SOLAS

Spector, P.E. (2003). *Industrial & Organisational Psychology: Research & Practice*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

TALIS, Teaching and Learning International Survey (2008). *National report for Ireland*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

TALIS, Teaching and Learning International Survey. (2013). Retrieved from [www.org/talis](http://www.org/talis)

Thomas, G. (2009). *How to Do Your Research Project: A Guide for Students in Education and Applied Social Sciences*, London: Sage

Thomas, L.T. & Ganster, D.C (1995). *Impact of Family- supportive work variables on work-family conflict and Strain: A control perspective*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 6-15

Watts, A.G., Law, B., Killeen, J., Kidd, J.M. and Hawthorn, R. (1996) *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance; Theory, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Weiss, H.M. 2002. *Deconstructing job satisfaction: Separating evaluations, beliefs and affective experiences*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(2), pp.173-194.

Wynne, R., Clarkin, N., Dolphin, C. (1991), *Stress and teachers*, Council of Teachers' Unions Survey on Teacher Stress. Dublin: Work Research Centre Ltd



UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK  
OLLSCOILLUIMNIGH

**Student Name:** Elizabeth Sheridan  
**Student ID Number:** 16100611  
**Primary Investigator:** Dr Lucy Hearne

**Research Title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Gatekeepers Information Sheet (IGC Branch Chairperson)**
- Appendix 2: Gatekeepers Consent Form (IGC Branch Chairperson)**
- Appendix 3: Gatekeepers Information Sheet (AEGAI Chairperson)**
- Appendix 4: Gatekeepers Consent Form (AEGAI Chairperson)**
- Appendix 5: Guidance Counsellors Information Sheet**
- Appendix 6: Guidance Counsellors Consent Form**
- Appendix 7: Interview Questions**

## Appendix 1



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK  
OLLSCOILLUIMNIGH

### **Subject Information Letter (IGC Branch Chairperson)**

**Date: 05/04/2018**

**EHS REC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

Dear IGC Branch Chairperson,

I am a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr Lucy Hearne. I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling as part of my studies.

In my research I aim is to explore the issue of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors working in different educational sectors through research interviews. In order to recruit participants, I would greatly appreciate your support to access prospective volunteers by disseminating a Subject Information Letter and Consent Form to your branch members on my behalf. If they wish to take part in an interview with me, they can then contact me directly to make further arrangements.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure the anonymity of participants and their work settings. The interviews will be audio tape-recorded and the taped data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick.

If you have any queries or require further any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:



Researcher: Elizabeth Sheridan

Principal Investigator: Dr Lucy Hearne

UL Email address: [16100611@studentmail.ul.ie](mailto:16100611@studentmail.ul.ie)

Telephone number: 061 202931

Email address: [lucy.hearne@ul.ie](mailto:lucy.hearne@ul.ie)

Thank you for your support with this research study.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Sheridan,  
Researcher.

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (*EHS Rec No. 03\_18*). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
[ehsresearchethics@ul.ie](mailto:ehsresearchethics@ul.ie)

Appendix 2



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK  
OLLSCOILLUIMNIGH

**Consent Form (IGC Branch Chairperson)**

**EHS REC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research Title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

I have read the project Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project.

I understand that the identity of the participants will not be revealed in the reporting of this research study.

The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contribution are:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary.
2. Participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage and any contribution made will be subsequently destroyed.
3. The interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and the Principal Investigator. Excerpts from the interviews may be part of the final research dissertation but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

I hereby give my consent for ..... to carry out this research with IGC Branch Members who may volunteer independently.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK  
OLLSCOILLUIMNIGH

### Subject Information Letter (AEGAI Chairperson)

**Date: 15/04/2018**

**EHS REC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

Dear AEGAI Chairperson,

I am a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr Lucy Hearne. I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling as part of my studies.

In my research I aim is to explore the issue of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors working in different educational sectors through research interviews. In order to recruit participants, I would greatly appreciate your support to access prospective volunteers by disseminating a Subject Information Letter and Consent Form on my behalf to your members. If they wish to take part in the study, they can then contact me directly to make further arrangements.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure the anonymity of participants and their work settings. The interviews will be audio tape-recorded and the taped data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick.

If you have any queries or require further any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Elizabeth Sheridan

Principal Investigator: Dr Lucy Hearne

UL Email address: [16100611@studentmail.ul.ie](mailto:16100611@studentmail.ul.ie)

Telephone number: 061 202931

Email address: [lucy.hearne@ul.ie](mailto:lucy.hearne@ul.ie)

Thank you for your support with this research study.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Sheridan,  
Researcher.

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee ( *EHSREC no 03\_18\_2018*). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
[ehsresearchethics@ul.ie](mailto:ehsresearchethics@ul.ie)

**Appendix 4**



**UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**  
**OLLSCOILL UIMNIGH**

**Consent Form (AEGAI Chairperson)**

**EHS REC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research Title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

I have read the project Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project.

I understand that the identity of the participants will not be revealed in the reporting of this research study.

The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contribution are:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary.
2. Participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage and any contribution made will be subsequently destroyed.
3. The interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and the Principal Investigator. Excerpts from the interviews may be part of the final research dissertation but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

I hereby give my consent for ..... to carry out this research with AEGAI members who may volunteer independently.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

### Subject Information Letter (Research Participant)

**Date : 15/4/2018**

**EHSREC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

Dear Guidance Counsellor,

I am a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr Lucy Hearne. I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling as part of my studies.

I aim to explore the topic of job satisfaction for guidance counsellors who are providing guidance counselling to young people and adults in different educational settings. In order to gather information on the topic I would appreciate if you would agree to participate in a face-to-face audio-taped interview with me. The interview, which will be audio-recorded, will take approximately 45-60 minutes and be held in a confidential location agreeable to you. A Skype interview is also a possibility if it is more convenient for you.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity for participants and their work setting. Interviews will be audio tape recorded and the data will be destroyed after the analysis stage. The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. It is important to note that your name or your organisation will not be used in the reporting of the research.

If you have any queries or require further any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Elizabeth Sheridan

Supervisor: Dr Lucy Hearne

Telephone number: 061202931

Email address: 16100611@studentmail.ul.ie

Email address: [lucy.hearne@ul.ie](mailto:lucy.hearne@ul.ie)

Should you wish to participate in this research please contact me by the following date:  
20/4/2018.

Thank you for your consideration of this invitation to take part in this research study.

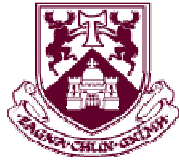
Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Sheridan,  
Researcher

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee ( *EHSREC no. 03\_18\_2018*). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
**[ehsresearchethics@ul.ie](mailto:ehsresearchethics@ul.ie)**

**Appendix 6**



**UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**  
**OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH**

**Consent Form (Research Participant)**

**EHS REC no. 03\_18\_2018**

**Research Title: An Exploration of Job Satisfaction of Guidance Counsellors in Different Educational Sectors**

- I understand what this research project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of the procedures and of the risks and the benefits of the study.
- I am fully aware that the recording of the interview and the data generated from it will be kept confidential.
- I am aware that my identity will remain anonymous.
- I know that my participation in the research study is voluntary and I can withdraw my involvement at any time prior to the data analysis stage.

I hereby agree to take part in this study:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 7

EHSREC No. 03\_18\_2018



UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

### Interview Framework: Themes and Questions

#### Section 1- Background Information

- Question 1. Describe the type of educational setting you work in?
- Question 2. How long have you been in this role?
- Question 3. Approximately, how many students / clients are availing of the service?

#### Section 2- The Guidance Counselling Profession

- Question 4. Why did you enter the profession of guidance counselling?
- Question 5. Is it what you expected? Why? Why not?
- Question 6. Has your role changed in your current position over time? If so, in what way?
- Question 7. Would you recommend this profession to anyone thinking about pursuing a career in this field? Why? Why not?

#### Section 3- Job Satisfaction

- Question 8. How do you define Job Satisfaction?
- Question 9. How do you rate your level of job satisfaction within your current role on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied)
- Question 10. What part of your job brings you most satisfaction?
- Question 11. What part of your job causes most dissatisfaction?
- Question 12. Do you think your level of job satisfaction has implications for the service you provide to your students/clients? Please explain.
- Question 13. Have your levels of job satisfaction changed over time? If so, can you clarify?

Question 14. What, in your opinion, could ensure high levels of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors in general? And for you?

#### **Section 4 - Professional Issues and Support Systems**

Question 15. Do you feel the expectations placed on you in terms of your role and workload, are realistic within the time constraints of the working day? If not, why?

Question 16. Do you feel supported/ isolated within your role? Explain further?

Question 17. How valued do you feel within your professional role? What are the factors which make you feel valued/ undervalued?

Question 18. In terms of your workload, how do you feel you manage to complete of the all the tasks required of you as part of your role?

Question 19. In general, how stressful do you find your job on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 being extremely stressful and 5 being not at all stressful)

Question 20. Describe how stress manifests and impacts on you.

Question 21. Have you developed any strategies to deal with work related stress? If so, what are they?

Question 22. Can you tell me about the kind of support system you have within the school/college?

Question 23. Do you have anything to add that has not been asked about the topic?

**Thank You**