The relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and burnout among professional school counselors

by

Emily E. Manker

B.S., Northwest Missouri State University, 2004
M.S., Emporia State University, 2018

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2022

# Abstract

The profession of school counseling is seeing an increase in job demands and expectations, such as high student caseloads, role uncertainty, and multiple job responsibilities. With the responsibility increase of the profession, school counselors are at risk for experiencing higher levels of stress, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout. The need for further study was indicated to identify and understand high predictors of school counselor burnout. This quantitative research study examined the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy, measured by the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale and burnout, measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey. A multivariate regression analysis indicated no significant relationships between the independent variable, school counselor self-efficacy and two subscales of the dependent variables of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. However, there was a significant relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and the third subscale of the dependent variable of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment. The key findings, implications, and recommendations for future research were discussed.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Judy Hughey

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# Acknowledgements

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# Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Chris. Thank you does not begin to describe how grateful I am to have you by myside through this process. I cannot imagine accomplishing this doctoral degree without your constant love and support from start to finish.

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

School counselors frequently encounter high levels of stress as part of their job, which might result from multiple job responsibilities, role ambiguity, high student caseloads, minimal support resources, and limited supervision (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Stress is a challenging relationship between an individual and the environment that is exhausted of supportive resources and can damage the individual's wellbeing (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). With the increase in job-related stress, burnout is a possibility and could cause negative consequences for the work completed by school counselors, with the possibility of fewer direct and indirect services for students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016).

Completing a master's degree in school counseling allows graduates to work in elementary and secondary schools, including students from different learning ability levels, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural backgrounds. Nelson (2018) identified six keys to strengthening the professional identity of a novice school counselor upon completion of a graduate counseling program. The six key elements for novice school counselors to effectively develop personally and professionally include: (a) experiential learning, (b) exposure, (c) administrative support, (d) professional development, (e) mentoring, and (f) advocacy. The fifth key, mentorship, indicates the counselors' understanding for seeking or being open to mentorship by an experienced school counselor (2018). Also, Nelson (2018) concluded that mentees with a mentoring relationship increased their self-confidence and provided them a person to discuss complex cases, resulting in a strengthened professional identity.

School counselors are a vital part of the school system, but many professionals leave the profession because of emotional distress triggered by internal and external forces resulting in low self-efficacy and burnout. Counselors often misjudge their potential to become at-risk for

experiencing impairment or burnout and allow external stressors to hinder the counseling process with their clients (Lawson et al., 2007). When counselors are impaired or not managing their wellness, they are likely not emotionally available during the counseling session and foster their clients' wellbeing and success (Lawson et al., 2007). There are studies on aspects that contribute to school counselor burnout, but there is limited research on the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout (Gündüz, 2012). Exploring and understanding the possible reasons for school counselor burnout and low self-efficacy can assist with the gap in the literature and address how to provide adequate access for supervision and occupational supports for school counselors. Additionally, the results may provide more reason for counselor educator programs to focus on counselor wellness and education regarding managing one's stress and emotional impairment (Lawson et al., 2007).

## Statement of the Problem

The increase of professional school counselors' stress and burnout may be due to the increasing demands and expectations of the educational system with a lack of resources to meet and support the demands, such as high student caseloads, role ambiguity, multiple job responsibilities, and limited resources for coping and clinical supervision (Gündüz, 2012; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). The national average student-to-school-counselor ratio is 465 to 1, and approximately one in five students do not have access to any school counselor in their school. (ASCA, 2019b). Over the next 10 years there is estimated to be an average of 35,000 openings for school and career counselors each year, with many of these openings resulting from replacing individuals leaving the profession or retiring (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). In addition to the increasing demands and expectations, counselors are educated to see and experience the client's feelings and emotions through empathy and compassion, leading counselors to become

at risk for compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout (Lawson et al., 2007). Holman et al. (2019) described school counselors as significant resources in helping students become successful academically, socially-emotional regulated, postsecondary ready, and thus becoming contributing members of society. When school counselors experience high levels of job-related stress and burnout, there is potential for adverse effects on student clients, such as counselors' ability to deliver ethical and practical counseling services (Holman et al., 2019; Kim & Lambie, 2018). School counselors experiencing feelings of chronic fatigue, depersonalization, or powerful feelings of burnout may relate to reduced productivity, turnover intention, and a decreased level of devotion to the profession (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Identifying and understanding the high predictors of school counselor burnout may support school counseling educators and educational organizations with establishing and providing assistance for school counselors to manage their wellbeing and self-care (Maor & Hemi, 2021).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to add to the current literature on school counselor burnout by further exploring the influence school counselor self-efficacy has on school counselor burnout. With the results of this study, school counselors can identify low self-efficacy and possible signs of burnout and practice ways to advocate for specific school counselor job duties assigned by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019a). Counselor educators can use the results to focus and further educate master's level school counseling students and supervisees on the importance of managing one's wellness and self-care routines.

## Research Question

The following research question provided the framework and direction for this study to identify the effect of school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout:

Does the school counselors' level of self-efficacy effect the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment?

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research study was Bandura's (2012) social cognitive theory (SCT), which is also linked to the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy. Bandura's (2005) social cognitive theory embraces an agentic perspective of self-development, adaptation, and change. Within this viewpoint, individuals can self-organize, be proactive, self-regulate, and self-reflect; they participate within life circumstances and are not just the results of events. Social cognitive theory is grounded in the triadic reciprocal causation of intrapersonal influences, engaging behaviors, and environmental forces (Bandura, 2012). Self-efficacy is an essential component within the three areas of reciprocal causation. Within the intrapersonal influences, individuals play a part in determining life events and the directional paths their lives take (Bandura, 2012).

## Definitions of Terms

Within this study, multiple definitions from the research literature were used and defined as follows:

### Burnout

Burnout is defined by Maslach and Leiter (2016) as a "psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (p. 103). Maslach and Leiter (2016) explains the burnout experiences within the three dimensions of "overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the profession, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment" (p. 4). The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey has 22 statements of job-related feelings and seeks to measure the three subscales of

educator burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 2019).

**Career and Academic Development**

The subscale, career and academic development, has seven questions on the SCSE scale and is related to the ASCA national standards on academic and career development and focuses on effective learning, relating school to career, and career decisions (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

**Collaboration**

The fourth subscale of the SCSE scale, collaboration, has eleven questions related to the ASCA National Model theme of collaboration and teaming. The focus is on working with stakeholders within and outside the school system to develop and implement responsive educational programs that support the goal of achievement of every student (ASCA, 2019a; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

**Compassion Fatigue**

Compassion fatigue occurs because of exposure to job-related events that cause stress (Figley, 1995). It is a state of exhaustion and dysfunction because of secondary traumatic stress through counselor-client interactions, responding to the emotional challenges of hearing, and witnessing client reports of pain and suffering (Robino, 2019).

**Cultural Acceptance**

Cultural acceptance is the fifth subscale on the SCSE scale and has four items relating to increasing cultural awareness and acceptance with all counseling processes (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

**Depersonalization**

Depersonalization is an unfeeling and impersonal response toward individuals at work (Maslach et al., 2018). School counselors may experience negative feelings toward their student clients and become indifferent when working with students (Maslach et al., 2018).

**Emotional Exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion is the "feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work" (Maslach et al., 2018, p. 31). When individuals experience persistent fatigue and tired feelings, emotional energies are depleted, resulting in diminished student counseling services (Maslach et al., 2018).

**Leadership and Assessment**

The second subscale of the SCSE scale is leadership and assessment with nine items relating to the ASCA National Model and is directed on ensuring student success by engaging in systemwide change (ASCA, 2019a; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). School counselor leadership and assessment are using student and school data to advocate for equitable outcomes for all students, creating a partnership with schoolwide stakeholders to improve student services, and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program (Young, 2013).

**Personal Accomplishment**

Personal accomplishment is the "feeling of competence and successful achievement with one's work with students" (Maslach et al., 2018, p. 31).

**Personal and Social Development**

Personal and social development is the first subscale of the SCSE scale and has twelve items associated with the ASCA national standards. These items focus on respecting self and others, goal achievement, and safety and survival skills (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

**Non-counseling Activities**

Non-counseling activities are activities school counselors engage in that are not designated by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a). Extra responsibility activities may include substitute teaching, discipline, hallway monitoring, morning and afternoon supervision, lunchroom supervision, test coordination, and course scheduling (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Participation in non-counseling activities could lead to role conflict and ambiguity and weaken the school counselor's professional identity (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

**Reduced Personal Accomplishment**

School counselors enter the profession to support student clients with academic, career, and social-emotional growth and success. School counselors can become vulnerable and disappointed when they feel they are no longer helping students succeed. They may find it difficult to find personal accomplishment with other parts of their jobs (Maslach et al., 2018).

**Self-efficacy**

Bandura (1994) perceived self-efficacy is characterized as individuals' attitudes about their abilities to create and participate in events that impact their lives. These beliefs impact how individuals feel, think, are motivated and behave within their environments (Bandura, 1994). Gündüz (2012) described self-efficacy beliefs as people's expectations to gain knowledge and skills, overcome problems, and realize specific actions are required to accomplish their personal expectations under social pressure and distress.

**School Counselor**

School counselors are certified and licensed educators with a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling, making them qualified to address all students' academic, career, and

social and emotional development needs by designing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes student success (ASCA, 2018b).

**School Counselor Self-Efficacy**

School counselor self-efficacy is an individual's attitude about their abilities to competently apply counseling-related techniques, skills, and responsibilities when counseling a student client (Butts & Gutierrez, 2018).

# Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Burnout has been a focused topic of research since the 1970s and has continued to evolve into a significant problem in many work environments worldwide (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Research studies have found significant relationships between self-efficacy and counselor stress, burnout, self-care, professional development, supervision, emotional intelligence, school settings, counselor responsibilities, and personal characteristics (Mullen et al., 2017a).

Counselor's self-efficacy is an individual's attitude about their abilities to competently apply counseling-related techniques and responsibilities when counseling a client (Butts & Gutierrez, 2018; Larson & Daniels, 1998). It can be helpful for counselors to understand their levels of self-efficacy to be able to persevere and overcome difficulties in order to be successful when working with student clients (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021). The ASCA National Model was developed for school counselors to create and implement school counseling programs that focus on improving student accomplishments and support student development (ASCA, 2019a). Comprehensive counseling programs are assessed on a regular basis with data to demonstrate student growth and development and determine the success of the counseling program (ASCA, 2019a). Matters that can influence a school counselor's self-efficacy and overcome adversity can be stress, anxiety, emotional intelligence, professional identity, and neglecting self-care and wellness, including challenging counseling and non-counseling responsibilities, lack of professional development and supervision, and negative school climates (Anderson, 2015; Bardhoshi & Um, 2021).

Research exploring the relationship between counseling self-efficacy and counselor preparation, aptitude, and level of experience, has given slight attention to counselor self-efficacy with professional school counselors (Schiele et al., 2014). Because of the gaps in the

literature on the relationships of counseling self-efficacy and burnout on school counselors, it is hypothesized that school counselors are not prepared in the best practices to develop counseling self-efficacy or reduce levels of burnout. This literature review aims to identify the empirical studies and theories that helped guide the foundation for this study and indicate how this study will contribute to the empirical literature.

## Literature Search

The literature search for this review was performed through Kansas State University access to ProQuest databases ERIC, PsychInfo, SAGE Research Methods, and Google Scholar. Keywords and key phrases used to organize the literature review were burnout, self-efficacy, counseling self-efficacy, school counselor burnout, and school counselor self-efficacy. Search filters were used to distinguish peer-reviewed research articles and dissertations, provided access to the full text, and were published within the last 8-10 years.

## History of the School Counseling Profession

The start of the school counseling profession in the early 1900s began as vocational guidance to advise students with their vocation placement and training (Cinotti, 2014). Students needed assistance with economic, educational, and social difficulties they might face as they enter the workforce (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). The National Vocational Guidance Association was created, and concerns for specific standards and duties began to develop because most of the vocational guidance was being delivered by teachers in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Cinotti, 2014). In the 1940s and '50s, the school counseling profession was grouped with school psychologists, social workers, nurses, and attendance officers after including personal adjustment counseling with vocational guidance (Cinotti, 2014). Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the school counselor roles and responsibilities still lacked a definitive

description, and administrators continued to add to the responsibilities as they saw fit (Cinotti, 2014; Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Later in the 1970s, the profession began developing a comprehensive program with goals, objectives, and evaluative measures (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Although the profession was starting to develop and change, throughout the '80s and '90s, the school counselor's responsibilities included administrative duties such as scheduling, record keeping, and standardized test coordination (Cinotti, 2014). In 2001, the American School Counselor Association designed the first National Model to create a framework for comprehensive school counseling programs based on the four elements of foundation, delivery, management, and accountability (Cinotti, 2014). The National Model framework is intended to be a change agent for defining appropriate roles, responsibilities, and tasks for school counselors to meet all students' academic, social-emotional, and career needs (ASCA, 2019a; Cinotti, 2014).

## Role of the School Counselor

Although the profession has adopted the ASCA National Model that offers examples of creating and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of all students, many schools and counselors are working within an outdated service model (ASCA, 2019a; Cinotti, 2014; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). When school counselors, administrators, and other educator stakeholders are working with an outdated counseling model, it can cause confusion about the clear role, responsibilities, and expectations for school counselors and the services they provide for students (Cinotti, 2014; DeKruyf et al., 2013).

With the help of the ASCA National Model, the school counselor's current role and professional identity have been further defined as "a crucial educational function that is integral to academic achievement and overall student success" (DeKruyf et al., 2013, p. 271). School

counselors are educators required to have a master's degree in school counseling, meet state certification and licensure standards, continuing education requirements, and uphold ASCA ethical and professional standards (ASCA, 2016). They are tasked with implementing a comprehensive school counseling program to maximize students' academic, social-emotional wellbeing and postsecondary success (ASCA, 2019a). With a comprehensive school counseling program that follows the guidelines of the ASCA National Model, school counselors can ensure a data-driven component of their school's mission will ensure access to a rigorous education, identify the skills that students will achieve to overcome barriers to learning, and are delivered to all students systematically (ASCA, 2019a).

## School Counselor Self-efficacy

School counselor's self-efficacy, defined by Larson and Daniels (1998), is "one's beliefs or judgments about his or her capabilities to effectively counsel a client in the near future" (p. 180). Understanding levels of one's self-efficacy for school counselors can be beneficial with believing they can persevere and overcome difficulties and be successful with their counseling program when working with student clients (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021). Counselors with higher self-efficacy can set higher goals and have a greater ability to achieve set goals through strong job commitment, motivation, resilience, and perseverance (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021). Recognizing a low self-efficacy score can help counselors identify the need to seek additional resources to improve, such as regular supervision, professional development for growth, self-care routines, emotional intelligence, and possible burnout (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021; Greason & Cashwell, 2009). Benefits of school counselors having a higher counseling self-efficacy include the delivery of improved direct services to student caseloads (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021; Konstam et al., 2015). In addition, Konstam et al. (2015) found that a lack of appropriate organizational

school supports, including professional development, supervision, and workshops, may be the result of the non-relationship between perceived professional expertise and organizational support of evidence-based practices.

Matters that can affect a school counselor's self-efficacy can be stress, anxiety, emotional intelligence, professional identity, and neglecting self-care and wellness include challenging counseling and non-counseling responsibilities, lack of professional development and supervision, and negative school climates (Anderson, 2015; Bardhoshi & Um, 2021). Concerns with self-efficacy can be seen in school counselors throughout the world. Wahyuni et al. (2019) researched with 250 school counselors in Indonesia, resulting in a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and school counselor burnout and between positive school climate and school counselor burnout. The study's most dominant correlate variable to burnout was emotional intelligence, which comprises four categories: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Wahyuni et al., 2019). For school counselors, emotional intelligence is an individual's ability to identify and comprehend emotions in themselves and others and to use this knowledge to control behaviors and relationships (Mullen et al., 2017b).

School counselor disposition and personal characteristics also impact school counselors' self-efficacy, burnout, stress levels, and self-care coping strategies (Fye et al., 2018). Anderson (2015) and Fye et al. (2018) found statistically significant relationships with personal characteristics and stress levels, coping skills, burnout, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy ratings. Fye et al. (2018) found that the most stressed were maladaptive perfectionists that expressed high levels of exhaustion, harmful work environments, a decline in personal life, and lack of coping with emotions. Anderson (2015) found that school counselors who indicated higher levels of

counselor self-efficacy had more years of experience and prior professional experience in the classroom. Gündüz (2012) suggested that to increase school counselors' self-efficacy beliefs and decrease potential burnout, there needs to be an organization of in-service training with workshops on educational, professional, and personal problems. Butts and Gutierrez (2018) recommended for counselor educators to help student counselors develop counseling self-efficacy, which will strengthen self-confidence and overcoming the concerns that can be related to learning new skills.

## Increase in Non-Counseling Responsibilities

School counselors continue to face increasing demands and expectations, including mandated testing, paperwork, high caseloads with mental health needs, and other accountability measures without a decrease in other areas (Bardwell, 2010). School counselor workplace stress is increasing because not only are school counselors required to attend to and support students' social-emotional wellbeing, academics, and career success; they are also taxed with supporting administrators, teachers, parents, and community expectations (Gündüz, 2012). Bardhoshi and Um (2021) indicated that school counselors are likely to experience rare work-related challenges that leave them vulnerable to workplace stress and burnout. The workload expansion contributes to burnout by reducing the capacity of individuals to meet the challenging demands of the job with little opportunity to rest, recover, and restore balance within their professional and personal life (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Caple (2018) found that administrations often misunderstand the school counselor's role, and the additional non-counseling job responsibilities can cause frustrations leading to stress, burnout, and lack of self-care. School counselors have an ethical obligation to advocate for a comprehensive counseling program free of non-school-counseling duties that ASCA identifies as inappropriate for the school counselor's role (ASCA, 2016). It is

recommended by ASCA (2019) that school counselors meet with the administration and outline an annual agreement of counseling responsibilities, goals, and focus of the counseling program. The annual agreement can help reduce stress levels, job dissatisfaction, and burnout by lessening non-counseling obligations (ASCA, 2019a).

A research study by Nyan (2017) found that the growing roles of school counseling and non-counseling responsibilities can cause stress, burnout, and concerns with maintaining life balance and wellness as a school counselor. School counselors have too many roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of all students effectively, adhere to the ASCA guidelines of a comprehensive school counseling program, and take care of their wellbeing and professional growth and development (Caple, 2018; Nyan, 2017).

Counselors' perceptions of status variables can impact their attraction to working with specific students. They are more likely to find students they perceived as poor as attractive clients to work with and change the quality of the counseling relationship, compared to not finding students who are less prepared academically as attractive clients and less willing to work with them (Glance, 2012; Hutchison, 2009). Glance (2012) concluded a significant difference in school counselors' self-efficacy ratings based on student socioeconomic status.

**School Counselor Burnout**

School counselors are encouraged to spend at least 80 percent of their time delivering direct and indirect services to students (ASCA, 2019a). Direct services include face-to-face student interactions such as individual or group counseling and classroom guidance lessons (ASCA, 2019a). Examples of indirect student services include services that support student development, such as referrals, consultation, leadership, and collaboration with stakeholders (ASCA, 2019a). Within the school setting, school counselors often encounter high levels of

stress resulting from multiple job responsibilities, role ambiguity, high caseloads, and limited

supporting resources such as clinical supervision (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). The work

demands of the school counseling environment are high, but the resources to meet those high

demands are low (Kim & Lambie, 2018). An individual's perception of the work demands and

their ability to cope with them becomes a significant concern with whether there is a stress

response from the demands (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). The increase in extra non-counseling

responsibilities and experience of stress put school counselors at risk for experiencing feelings of

burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016).

Maslach and Leiter (2017) describe burnout as a relationship problem with an individual

and their workplace. People start with positive expectations and goals to be successful within

their profession (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). However, changes occur, and individuals have

psychological experiences involving feelings and expectations that result in a deep sense of

exhaustion, feelings of frustration, anger, cynicism, and detachment, and a lack of

accomplishment and effectiveness (Fry et al., 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2017). The Maslach

Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach et al., 1981) was developed to measure burnout within the

three dimensions of the burnout experience: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and

reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).

With the importance of burnout prevention, the ASCA's ethical standards (2016) include

that school counselors are responsible for maintaining their physical and emotional health and

care for their wellbeing to safeguard their professional effectiveness and request support when

needed to guarantee competence within the profession. School counselors experiencing feelings

of emotional exhaustion and burnout may impact their ability to effectively provide ethical

counseling services to their student caseloads (Kim & Lambie, 2018). For school counselors to

ethically be aware of their physical and emotional wellbeing, they need to know the symptoms of burnout and prevent it from happening (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

## Theoretical Framework

### Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) embraces the perspective that individuals have the power to control their actions and life path through self-development, adaptability, and change (Bandura, 2012). To be an individual with an agentic perspective is to deliberately influence one's functioning and the course of events by one's actions (Bandura, 2012). Bandura's (2012) SCT is founded on a simple structure of triadic reciprocal causation; human performance is a result of the interaction of intrapersonal influences, the behavior individuals engage in, and the environmental influences that impact them. Therefore, a change in one triadic reciprocal affects the others; the environment is not a direct result of behavior and the individual, just as the behavior is not a result of the environment and the individual (Jacobs, 2020). Self-efficacy is an essential component within SCT's three areas of reciprocal causation of intrapersonal influences, engaging behaviors, and environmental forces (Bandura, 2012).

Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura (2005) is an individual's belief in their ability to maintain control over their functioning and events that affect their lives. Lopez-Garrido (2020) claims that an individual's sense of self-efficacy can provide the foundation for motivation, wellbeing, and personal accomplishment. Bandura (2005) established that social incentives, material incentives, and self-evaluative incentives are achieved by human motivation and performance achievements linked to personal standards. Individuals practice control over their motivation, thinking styles, and emotional life by self-regulation (Bandura, 2005). In addition, people engage in events that give them a sense of self-worth and self-satisfaction likely to lead to

success and rewards; they refrain from behaving in ways that bring self-disapproval and disrupt their moral standards (Bandura, 2005; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016).

The SCT supports this quantitative research study on the aspects of school counselor burnout and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been an essential part of successful teaching, counseling, and coping with change (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs tend to set higher goals and demonstrate more substantial commitment, motivation, perseverance, and resiliency toward achieving their goals (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). This theory assisted with explaining the development of self-efficacy with school counselors. The theory supported school counselors' thoughts and beliefs about themselves, their perceived impact, and how the occupational environment may affect their thoughts and behaviors. With the use of the SCSE survey, this study provided a further understanding of school counselors' self-efficacy within the five factors: personal and social development, leadership and assessment, career and academic development, collaboration, and cultural acceptance. The survey results provided data on current areas of strength and areas that need strengthening within the school counseling occupational environment to support the growth of school counselor self-efficacy. The findings provided possible indicators of burnout when investigating the relationships of the SCSE with the Maslach Burnout Inventory survey.

**Maslach's Theory of Burnout**

There is a greater risk for burnout for individuals working within a workplace community that categorizes relationships as lacking support and trust and by unresolved conflict (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout is defined by Maslach and Leiter (2016) as a "psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (p. 103). Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout is based on the three subscales of emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Cooper, 2002). According to this theory, Cooper (2002) defined burnout as an individual stress experience rooted in an environment of complicated social relationships, and it involves the person's understanding of both self and others. Additionally, Cooper (2002) explained that the first subscale, emotional exhaustion, implies an individual's feelings of being emotionally overextended and drained of emotional resources. The second component, depersonalization, refers to a negative, cynical, or extremely detached response to other people; and the third subscale, reduced personal accomplishment, suggests a decline in feelings of competence and productivity in the workplace (Cooper, 2002).

Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout was utilized as a framework for this research study to understand the school counseling participants' stress experience within their work and social environment. Results are analyzed for the possible relationships between burnout levels and self-efficacy. Recognizing the possible indicators for burnout concerning self-efficacy, school counselors can practice ways to advocate for less non-counseling relating duties, organizational supports and implement self-care routines.

## Summary

Based on the reviewed literature, there are still areas to explore, such as organizational supports, supervision, and school climate, to help improve the school counseling professionals with self-efficacy and prevention of burnout. Burnout includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2016). School counselors can become exhausted from the many job demands and non-counseling job roles, leading to feelings of inadequacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). This quantitative study will help

determine school counselors' self-efficacy and its relationship with burnout. Chapter three

presents the research methodology, data collection, and analysis.

# Chapter 3 - Method

School counselors are significantly at risk for experiencing feelings of burnout because of the possible job environment, increased job demands, role ambiguity, low self-efficacy, and limited supervision and occupational supports (Kim & Lambie, 2018). This quantitative study utilized a multivariate regression analysis to determine if school counselors' self-efficacy, the independent variable, had any influence on the dependent variables, the three subscales of burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) reduced personal accomplishment. Along with a demographic questionnaire, the following research instruments were used to collect data to further to investigate the predictive variables for school counselor burnout, the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES). The following research question and corresponding null hypothesis addressed in this study are:

## Research Question

Does the school counselors' level of self-efficacy affect the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment?

## Null Hypothesis

The school counselors' level of self-efficacy will have no effect on the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment.

## Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through email invitation. Email addresses were obtained via the ASCA SCENE listing of school counselor members with their selected home or school email addresses. The counselors included in ASCA SCENE are members of the American School Counselor Association. To qualify to participate in the study, participants had to be

currently employed and serving as a school counselor with a state-issued license as a counselor. To be statistically significant, the goal for this study was a sample size of 370 respondents in order to detect a medium effect size with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% (Field, 2018).

## Research Design

This correlational quantitative study utilized a multivariate regression analysis to examine the research question. The purpose of a multivariate regression analysis was to assess the difference between groups across multiple outcome variables all together (Field, 2018; Gall et al., 1996). The best fit for collecting data for this study was a survey design. With a multivariate regression analysis, the survey instruments determine the relationships between the variables to give a realistic and unbiased research view of the questions (Field, 2018). This study utilized a predictive survey demographic questionnaire and two self-reporting instruments, SCSE and MBI-ES. Participants accessed and completed a demographic questionnaire and the two survey instruments through Qualtrics online survey software. Conducting an online survey was beneficial as it allowed for convenient access for participants to respond, was cost-effective, and data was available directly after completion.

# Instruments

## School Counselor Demographic Questionnaire

The school counselor demographic predictive survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) has 10-items that collected school counselor participants' age, gender, race or ethnicity, years of experience, teaching experience, student caseload number, assigned school level, and working in a public or private school setting. The demographic questionnaire took approximately 3-5

minutes to complete. It provided data for comprehensive counseling and educational experiences, work placement, and other general information about the participants in the study.

## Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES, Maslach & Jackson, 1996) has 22 statements of educational job-related feelings and seeks to measure the three factors of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2018a). The emotional exhaustion subscale measures one's feelings of being emotionally strained and exhausted by one's work, and when the feelings become persistent, educators indicate that they no longer provide themselves to students like they used to (Maslach et al., 2018a). The second subscale, depersonalization, measures a lack of feeling and impersonal reaction toward students and no longer display positive feelings about them (Maslach et al., 2018a). The third subscale of reduced personal accomplishment measures one's feelings of competence and successful achievement in their work with students (Maslach et al., 2018a). The MBI-ES has been used to identify burnout among teachers, education administrators, teaching assistants, and school counselors within the school setting (Maslach et al., 2018a). It is a useful instrument at a school district level to determine possible systemwide problems (Maslach et al., 2018a). In addition, the MBI-ES has been used with school counselors in various research studies to explore the understanding of school counselor burnout further.

The survey uses a seven-point Likert scale with responses ranging from (0) Never, (1) A few times a year, (2) Once a month or less, (3) A few times a month, (4) Once a week, (5) A few times a week, and (6) Every day. The 22-item statements are about personal feelings or attitudes and use the general term *students* (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach et al., 1986) was created to assess the three dimensions of the burnout

experience: exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalization, and inefficacy. The MBI-ES is a version of the original MBI created for educators, including teachers, administrators, other staff members, and volunteers working in an educational setting. The MBI-ES is a self-report instrument with 22 items. The survey takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. The responses to the MBI-ES scale scores (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) should be calculated and explained individually and not combined to create a single burnout score (Maslach et al., 2018a). The scale scores can be interpreted for individual participants, or scores for a group of participants can be regarded as aggregate data (Maslach et al., 2018a). The means and standard deviations for each scale can be calculated for a group of participants and compared to the normative data for the MBI-ES (Maslach et al., 2018a). The higher the scores for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicate higher degrees of burnout, and lower scores for reduced personal accomplishment indicate a higher degree of burnout (Maslach et al., 2018a). It is important to understand that no definitive score confirms that an individual is burned out (Maslach et al., 2018a).

This valid measurement questionnaire is considered the standard tool for research and is the first burnout measure based on a comprehensive program of psychometric research (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The decision to use the MBI-ES to measure school counselor burnout was because the instrument addressed the three subscales of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The MBI-ES instrument is similar to the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS, Maslach et al., 2018a) but has been modified to provide clarity and consistency for individuals in the education profession, such as the word "recipient" was replaced with the word "student" (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

A cross-validation study was conducted to examine the construct validity of the MBI for teachers using principal factor analysis, and the results mostly replicated the three-factor structure found in other research of human service workers (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The primary three factors are emotional exhaustion (emotionally and physically being overextended), depersonalization (maladaptive feelings about one's recipients), and reduced personal accomplishment (self-evaluation of personal performance), usually indicating good internal reliability and stability over time (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The three-factor model and internal consistency were estimated with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .76 for depersonalization, and .76 for Personal Accomplishment (Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981, Maslach et al., 2016). Other Cronbach alpha estimates reported from Gold (1984) and Chang (2013) were Emotional Exhaustion .88 and .87, Depersonalization .74 and .76, and Personal Accomplishment .72 and .84 (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Maslach and Leiter (2016) report that the test-retest reliability estimates are somewhat lower than the estimates for internal reliability because of the consistently changing work situations and environments educators often face (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In a two-testing session study with 248 teachers, the test-retest reliabilities for the three scales were: .60 for Emotional Exhaustion, .54 for Depersonalization, and .57 for Personal Accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Validity evidence was reported through studies that have assessed the relationship between burnout scales and various aspects of the work experience, such as student disruptive behaviors and specific job characteristics of the classroom setting, supervision, work overload, and social support from peers (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Examples include a study of 175 physical education teachers in Greece resulting from a strong negative relationship between the three scales of burnout and job conditions, including the work setting, supervision, and the

organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Research from Chang (2013) found a correlation of burnout for teachers is student misbehaviors. In this study of 492 teachers, "episodic unpleasant emotion resulting from student misbehavior was moderately associated with Emotional Exhaustion ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), Depersonalization ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and Personal Accomplishment ($r = .33$, $p < .01$)" (Maslach et al., 2016, p. 33). Validity evidence was also provided by a meta-analysis of 116 studies with teachers from primary and secondary public schools and examining the relationship with workplace demands, available resources, and experienced burnout (Maslach et al., 2016). Workplace requirements were positively related to emotional exhaustion, while workplace resources were associated with lower depersonalization and higher personal accomplishment, and these findings were consistent with the Conservation of Resource Theory (Maslach et al., 2016).

## School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE, Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) is a self-report instrument with 43 items developed to measure the self-efficacy of school counselors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The SCSE Scale takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The SCSE contains subscales that measure school counselors' confidence within five areas of their job roles: personal and social development (12 items), leadership and assessment (nine items), career and academic development (seven items), collaboration (11 items), and cultural acceptance (four items). The SCSE uses a five-point Likert rating scale ranging from: (1) not confident, (2) slightly confident, (3) moderately confident, (4) generally confident, and (5) highly confident. A composite mean is calculated to explain the level of self-efficacy (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

The Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES, Melchert et al., 1996) was initially modified from a teacher self-efficacy scale and was used in one study of school counselors conducted by the developers (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). From the CSES, the School Counselor Self-Efficacy (SCSE) scale was developed for the school counseling profession to evaluate the effectiveness of the education process in school counseling programs and understand the relative success of school counselors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

To determine the reliability and validity of the SCSE, Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) completed four studies: initial item development, item analysis, validity study, and factor analysis. The first study was developed by studying the ASCA National Standards and CACREP career expectations of school counselors. A panel of five experts reviewed the scale's initial items and added, refined, and removed items (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). A second study surveyed practicing school counselors with the revised scale and a demographic questionnaire, and the responses were analyzed for reliability, omission, discrimination, and group differences (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The analysis indicated that the sample was representative of the population and that the survey items were highly reliable with a .95 alpha coefficient (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). It is recommended for strong internal consistency reliability that Cronbach's alpha be at least .95 (Cohen, 1988; Streiner, 2003). The analysis also indicated that group differences existed, with female participants, those with teaching experience, who had been working for three or more years, and educationally prepared to implement the ASCA National Standards reporting higher levels of self-efficacy (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The Cronbach's alpha for the SCSE from the study was .96 (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

Concerning the item analysis study and the existence of group differences, Scoles's (2011) study found a significant difference of .05 between school counselors with prior

experience as a classroom teacher or no prior experience. School counselors with prior teaching experience reported a mean self-efficacy score of 4.18 compared to school counselors with no prior teaching experiences mean self-efficacy score of 3.93 on the SCSE scale (Scoles, 2011). Also, in relation, Clark's (2006) study results indicated that school counselors with a higher understanding of the ASCA National Model was significantly related to the overall self-efficacy score as assessed by the SCSE with the statistically significant standardized coefficient of ($p<.01$).

The third study, validation, was conducted and examined construct validity by using data from 116 surveys of final year master's students in a counseling program (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Construct validity was shown through a correlation of the SCSE and other scales that measure constructs helpful in evaluating self-efficacy. Such as the Counseling Self-Estimate inventory, a measure of counseling skills (COSE; correlation = .41); the Social Desirability Scale (SDS; correlation = .30); the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; significant negative correlations); and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, second edition (TSCS: 2; no significant correlations) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) conducted the fourth study to establish the factor structure for the survey item responses by combining data. Using SPSS, the authors conducted a principal component analysis with an oblique rotation to separate the initial factors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The authors found natural breaks after one, two, five, and eight components, and each solution was reviewed for its interpretability (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Each solution was tested using an oblique rotation to find the simplest structure that aligns and is most consistent with research and theory (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). A five-factor solution resulted from their analysis, and the five subscales together accounted for 55% of the variance (Bodenhorn &

Skaggs, 2005). Internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for the five subscales, and the coefficient alphas for each subscale were: Personal and Social Development (.91), Leadership and Assessment (.90), Career and Academic Development (.85), Collaboration and Consultation (.87), and Cultural Acceptance (.72) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

## Procedures

Before beginning data collection, approval was obtained from the Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB, see Appendix C). Informed consent (see Appendix D) was utilized to ensure participants have accurate research study information, the purpose of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, contact information, and details on how to participate in the study. Together with the appropriate informed consent and the purpose and nature of the study thoroughly explained, demographics questionnaire, the two research instruments, MBI-ES and SCSE, were compiled into the online survey server, Qualtrics, for a higher participant response rate. An initial email was sent to school counselors with background information on the researcher, purpose and nature of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, information on the confidentiality of responses, and a link to the Qualtrics survey. After two weeks, a follow-up email was sent similar to the initial email. Once the survey was administered, the results were downloaded from Qualtrics into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). Once in SPSS, the results were categorized by demographic information, self-efficacy, and burnout sub-scale scores. Following a review of the submitted surveys and deletion of incomplete or corrupt surveys, results were imported for a statistical multivariate regression analysis using SPSS.

**Data Analysis**

Research survey data collection were completed through the online server, Qualtrics, and downloaded into SPSS for statistical analysis and was saved using an encrypted file system. Before downloading into SPSS, data were stored in the Qualtrics online system with password protection. The data were aggregated to remain confidential and anonymous for analysis.

The demographic questionnaire data were coded for descriptive statistics if they were not already recorded as a ratio scale. How do you describe your gender was coded as: 1, male; 2, female; 3, non-binary/third gender; 4, prefer not to say; 5, prefer to self-describe. How do you describe your race or ethnicity were coded as: 1, White; 2, Black or African American; 3, American Indian or Alaska Native; 4, Asian; 5, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; 6, prefer not to say; 7, prefer to self-describe. What is your highest degree earned was coded as:1, bachelor's degree; 2, master's degree; 3, educational specialist degree; 4, doctoral degree. What grade levels do you serve was coded as: 1, elementary (K-5th grade); 2, middle (6th-8th grade); 3, high (9th-12th grade); 4, other specific levels. What is the type of school you are employed with: 1, public; 2, private; 3, charter; 4, other. Do you have prior experience as a classroom teacher: 1, yes; 2, no. The following questions were recorded as a ratio scale and did not need to be coded differently: age, years of school counselor experience, the total number of students enrolled, and student caseload.

Descriptive analyses were first conducted to describe the sample, including frequencies, means, medians, and ranges. A multivariate regression analysis was-utilized to analyze the research data and answer the research question:

1) Does the school counselors' level of self-efficacy affect the three subscales of burnout:

1. emotional exhaustion,

2. depersonalization, and

3. reduced personal accomplishment?

The predictor variable, self-efficacy, will be measured by the mean from the SCSE scale results. Using the mean score provides an interval value for self-efficacy. The dependent variables, the three-subscales of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment was measured by the sum for each subscale. To measure the correlation of the resulting coefficients from the SCSE and the three-subscales of the MBI-ES, the significance of .05 level was used to determine the relationships between school counselor self-efficacy and burnout.

## Summary

After recruiting participants, sending research invitation links, and gathering the data through Qualtrics online survey platform, a multivariant regression analysis determined the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and burnout. The fourth chapter will include the report of the findings of this study, with the fifth chapter including a discussion of the findings, study implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 4 - Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and the three subscales of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. As part of their job, school counselors are too often faced with high levels of stress which might result from multiple job responsibilities, role ambiguity, high student caseloads, minimal support resources, and limited supervision (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Burnout is a possibility with the increase in job-related stress and could potentially have negative consequences for the work completed by school counselors, with the possibility of fewer direct and indirect services for students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). This chapter will discuss the descriptive findings, the data analysis procedures, and the analysis results.

The final survey data results from the MBI-ES and SCSE instruments were used to explore the following research question by using a multivariate regression analysis:

RQ: Does the school counselors' level of self-efficacy affect the three subscales of burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) reduced personal accomplishment?

$N_0$: The school counselors' level of self-efficacy will have no effect on the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment.

## Participants

A total of 492 individuals started to participate in this study by opening the Qualtrics survey link. Out of the 492 individuals, 31 participants only answered the researcher-created demographic questionnaire, and 47 additional individuals answered the demographic questionnaire and the MBI-ES but did not continue to complete the SCSE survey. Additionally,

recorded responses with missing data were excluded from the data analyses. Within 11 days this survey study reached a total of 388 participants ($n = 388$) that answered each question completely for the demographic questionnaire, the MBI-ES survey, and the SCSE survey. To detect a medium effect size with a confidence level of 95%, the target sample size for this study was a total of 370 respondents.

## Demographics Data

The descriptive statistics for the demographics of participants is listed in Table 1 (see Table 1). A majority of the respondents described themselves as female (87.9%), described their race or ethnicity as White (88.1%) and were between the ages of 35–44 years old (30.2%) or 45–54 years old (31.4%). Professionally, most participants earned the highest degree of a master's degree (87.4%), have worked 6–10 years as a school counselor (27.3%), are employed within a public-school setting (98.2%), serving elementary (K-5th grade) levels (43%), and over half have prior classroom experience (56.7%). Most of the respondents have a caseload of 251–500 students (73.2%), which is over the ASCA's recommended ratio of one school counselor to 250 students (ASCA, 2019b). The participants mainly had 750+ students (42.5%) enrolled in their school.

| Table 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Demographics of Participants* | | | |
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| Gender | Male | 47 | 12.1 |
| | Female | 341 | 87.9 |
| | Non-binary/third gender | 0 | 0 |
| | Prefer not to say | 0 | 0 |
| | Prefer to self-describe | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |

| Age | < 24 years | 1 | .3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 24–34 years | 91 | 23.5 |
| | 35–44 years | 117 | 30.2 |
| | 45–54 years | 122 | 31.4 |
| | 55 – 64 years | 49 | 12.6 |
| | 65 + years | 8 | 2.1 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |
| Race or Ethnicity | White | 342 | 88.1 |
| | Black or African American | 25 | 6.4 |
| | American Indian or Alaskan Native | 2 | .5 |
| | Asian | 2 | .5 |
| | Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 1 | .3 |
| | Prefer not to say | 3 | .8 |
| | Prefer to self-describe | 12 | 3.1 |
| | Total | 387 | 99.7 |
| | Missing Value | 1 | .3 |
| Highest Degree Earned | Bachelor's degree | 4 | 1.0 |
| | Master's degree | 339 | 87.4 |
| | Educational specialist degree | 31 | 8.0 |
| | Doctoral degree | 12 | 3.1 |
| | Total | 386 | 99.5 |
| | Missing Value | 2 | .5 |
| Years of School Counseling Experience | < 1 year | 25 | 6.4 |
| | 1-5 years | 94 | 24.2 |
| | 6-10 years | 106 | 27.3 |
| | 11-15 years | 48 | 12.4 |
| | 16-20 years | 61 | 15.7 |
| | 21-25 years | 39 | 10.1 |
| | 26-30 years | 13 | 3.4 |
| | 31+ years | 2 | .5 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prior Classroom Experience | Yes | 220 | 56.7 |
| | No | 165 | 42.5 |
| | Total | 385 | 99.2 |
| | Missing Value | 3 | .8 |
| Type of School | Public | 381 | 98.2 |
| | Private | 5 | 1.3 |
| | Charter | 2 | .5 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |
| Grade Level Served | Elementary (K-5th grade) | 167 | 43 |
| | Middle (6th-8th grade) | 73 | 18.8 |
| | High (9th-12th grade) | 117 | 30.2 |
| | Other specific levels | 31 | 8 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |
| Student Enrollment | 0-100 students | 3 | .8 |
| | 101-250 students | 18 | 4.6 |
| | 251-500 students | 123 | 31.7 |
| | 501-750 students | 78 | 20.1 |
| | 750+ students | 165 | 42.5 |
| | Total | 387 | 99.7 |
| | Missing Value | 1 | .3 |
| Student Caseload | 0-250 students | 59 | 15.2 |
| | 251-500 students | 284 | 73.2 |
| | 501-750 students | 34 | 8.8 |
| | 751+ students | 11 | 2.8 |
| | Total | 388 | 100 |

## Reliability

To determine the reliability of each instrument and subscales, internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha. An alpha score closer to 1.000 indicates a stronger correlation between the items in each instrument for each participant (see Table 2). An alpha score above

.800 suggests high internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for the MBI-ES was (α = .818).

The Cronbach's alpha for each of the three subscales was emotional exhaustion (α = .920),

depersonalization (α = .735) and reduced personal accomplishment (α = .751). The Cronbach's

alpha for the SCSE survey was (α = .962).

| Table 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Bivariate Correlations* | | | | |
| | | Emotional Exhaustion | Depersonalization | Reduced Personal Accomplishment |
| Emotional Exhaustion | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .623** | -.367** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | <.001 | <.001 |
| | N | 388 | 388 | 388 |
| Depersonalization | Pearson Correlation | .623** | 1 | -.387** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | <.001 | . | <.001 |
| | N | 388 | 388 | 388 |
| Reduced Personal Accomplishment | Pearson Correlation | -.367** | -.387** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | <.001 | <.001 | . |
| | N | 388 | 388 | 388 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

## Results

The responses to the SCSE scale were combined and averaged to form a single self-

efficacy score. The responses to the MBI-ES items were not combined to form a single burnout

score. Individually, the items for each of the three subscales emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment were scored by using the SUM as the

scale score. The mean scores for the MBI-ES and SCSE were calculated (see Table 3). The mean

score on the SCSE scale ($M = 4.102$, $SD = .526$), indicates that, research participants were

generally confident in their abilities to participate and accomplish their expectations within their

environments. The potential score range on the SCSE scale is ($M$ = 3.91, $SD$ = .77) with a range

of mean scores from 3.4 to 4.7 (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The mean scores and standard

deviations for each subscale are emotional exhaustion ($M$ = 37.557, $SD$ = 11.871),

depersonalization ($M$ = 10.812, $SD$ = 5.191), and reduced personal accomplishment ($M$ = 48.989,

$SD$ = 4.943). The potential score range for each subscale are emotional exhaustion ($M$ = 21.25,

$SD$ = 11.01), depersonalization ($M$ = 11.00, $SD$ = 6.19), and reduced personal accomplishment

($M$ = 33.54, $SD$ = 6.89) (Maslach, et al., 2018a). Higher outcome scores for emotional

exhaustion and depersonalization on the MBI-ES indicate higher degrees of burnout. Lower

outcome scores for the third subscale of the MBI-ES, reduced personal accomplishment, indicate

higher degrees of burnout.

| Table 3 | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Descriptive Statistics - MBI and SCSE* | | | | |
| | Emotional Exhaustion | Depersonalization | Reduced Personal Accomplishment[*] | School Counselor Self-Efficacy |
| *M* | 37.557 | 10.812 | 48.989 | 4.102 |
| *SD* | 11.871 | 5.191 | 4.943 | .526 |
| Minimum | 10.00 | 5.00 | 25.00 | 1.64 |
| Maximum | 63.00 | 33.00 | 56.00 | 5.00 |
| [*]Lower scores on the MBI-ES Reduced Personal Accomplishment subscale indicate a higher degree of burnout | | | | |

It was hypothesized that school counselors' level of self-efficacy will have no effect on

the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced

personal accomplishment. To address this hypothesis, a multivariate regression analysis was

performed (see Table 2). A high degree of covariance was seen in the dependent variables,

emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. When

examining the three subscales of burnout with school counselor self-efficacy, the first subscale, emotional exhaustion, did not show a statistically significant relationship ($p > .05$) and had a weak effect ($R^2 = .041$). The second burnout subscale, depersonalization, was also not statistically significant ($p > .05$) and had a weak effect ($R^2 = .019$). However, the third subscale, reduced personal accomplishment, was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) with a strong effect ($R^2 = .182$).

| Table 4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Multivariate Regression Analysis - Predicting Burnout Based on School Counselor Self-Efficacy* | | | |
| | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | $p$ |
| a. Emotional Exhaustion | 0.264 | 0.041 | 0.153 |
| b. Depersonalization | 0.247 | 0.019 | 0.305 |
| c. Reduced Personal Accomplishment | 0.372 | 0.182 | <.001 |

Based on the lack of significant findings on two of the three subscales, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis: The school counselors' level of self-efficacy will have no effect on the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization and (c) reduced personal accomplishment.

The following scatter plots show the association of the results of the SCSE survey with each of the three subscales of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The first scatter plot reveals no statistically significant relationship and that participants with moderate to high levels of self-efficacy had a wide range of levels of the burnout component, emotional exhaustion.

Self-Efficacy and Emotional Exhaustion
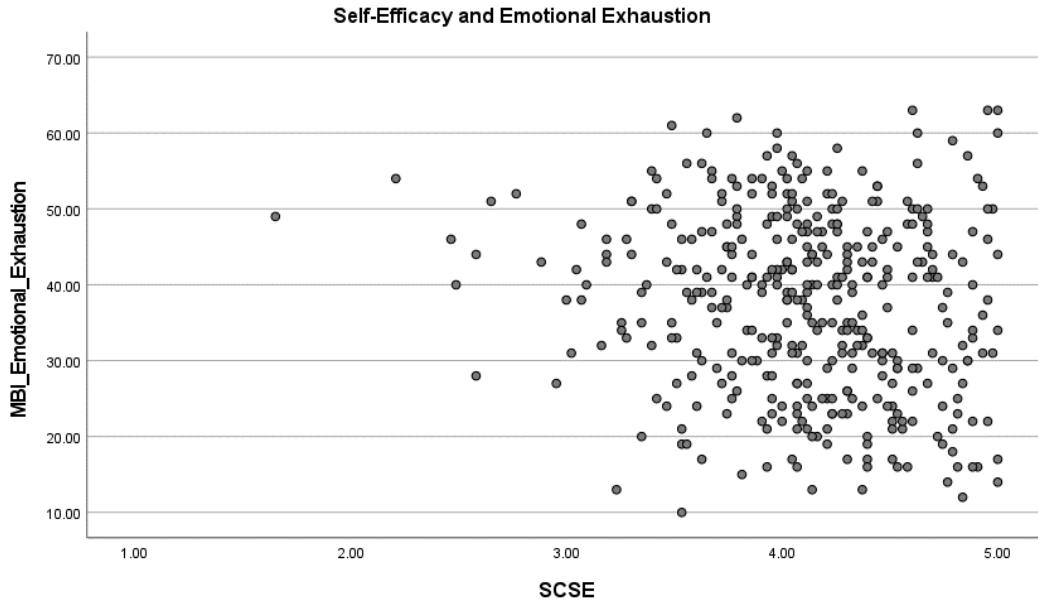
The second scatter plot also reveals no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and burnout subscale, depersonalization. On this subscale there were moderate to high levels of self-efficacy and low levels of depersonalization.



Self-Efficacy and Depersonalization
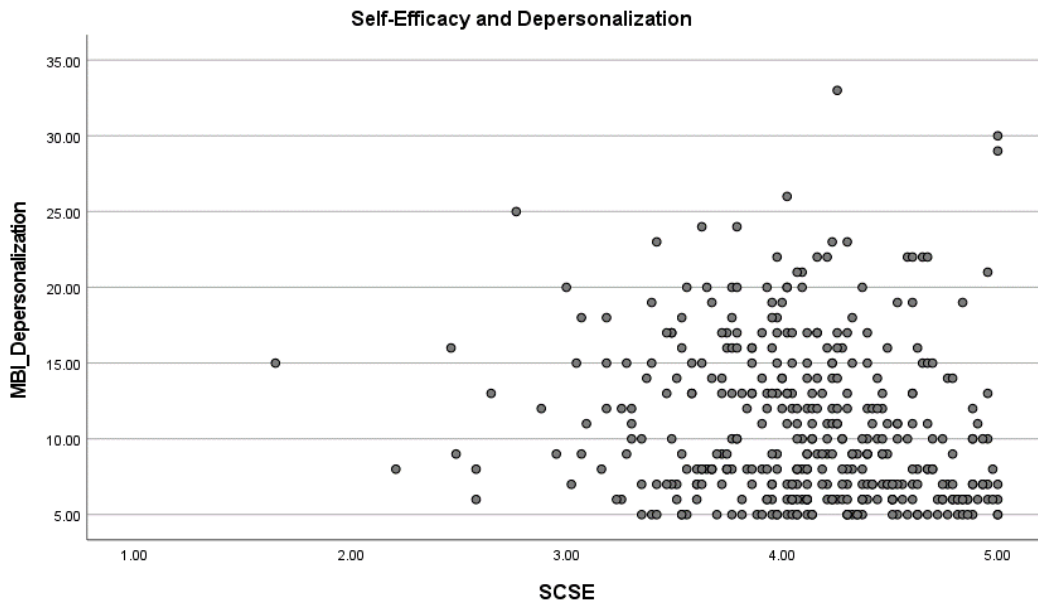
The third scatter plot reveals the statistically significant relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and the third subscale of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment.

Self-Efficacy and Reduced Personal Accomplishment
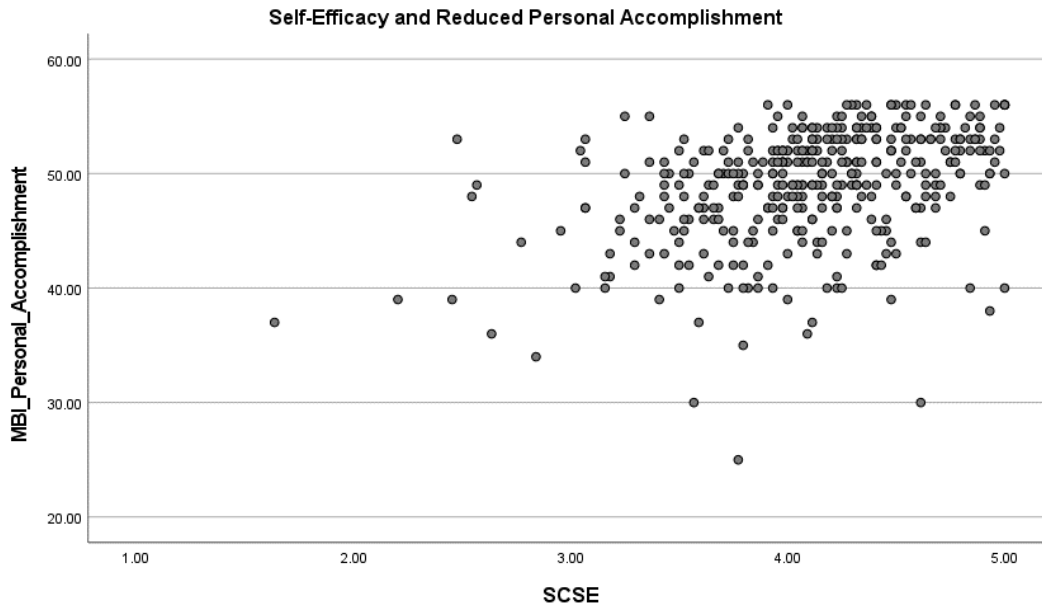
## Validity of the study

This study aimed to measure the level of self-efficacy and burnout by using the frequency of response to each item on the MBI-ES and the SCSE used in this survey. The outcome data from both instruments were analyzed using a Likert scale to answer the study's research question. The chosen instruments for this study, the MBI-ES and the SCSE were selected due to their alignment with effectively measuring school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout. Both survey instruments have documented research validity and were not altered in any way for this study. There was no pre or post-test administered for this study; thus, no past issue impacted internal validity.

## Summary

Three hundred and eight-eight participants completed the School Counselor Self-Efficacy survey and the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey, and the researcher created demographic questionnaire. Based on the multivariate regression analysis, results did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and the first two subscales of

burnout, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, results indicated a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and the third subscale, reduced personal accomplishment. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis because there was not a statistically significant relationship between all three subscales of burnout. This chapter included the descriptive findings and data collection and analysis results. Chapter five will provide the key findings, implications of the data, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 5 - Discussions and Future Research

This study intended to investigate the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout using the survey data from the SCSE scale and the MBI-ES. The problem was that school counselors are possibly enduring higher levels of stress because of multiple job responsibilities, role ambiguity, high student caseloads, minimal support resources, and limited supervision (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Because of the increase in job-related stress, school counselors could be at risk for burnout, causing negative work outcomes and risks for fewer direct and indirect services for students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). To test the hypothesis, a multivariate regression analysis was completed to investigate the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and burnout.

Provided in chapter five are the key findings, study implications, and limitations. In addition, based on the results of the study, further discussion and recommendations for future research are provided.

## Key Findings

The key findings of this multivariate regression analysis did not show a statistically significant relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout with the first two subscales emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, the analysis did show a statistically significant relationship with school counselors' self-efficacy and the third subscale of reduced personal accomplishment. With the overall analysis results, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. That school counselors' level of self-efficacy did not affect the three subscales of burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (C) reduced personal accomplishment. It is important to note that the null hypothesis failed to reject because self-efficacy only showed a statistically significant relationship with the third subscale of

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burnout, reduced personal accomplishment. This indicated that participants with high levels of burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization still felt a sense of personal accomplishment and competency in their ability to perform and make a difference as school counselors. The mean score on the SCSE scale indicated that, research participants had moderately high levels of self-efficacy and were generally confident in their abilities to participate and accomplish their personal expectations within their counseling environment.

## Implications

There are several main implications of this research study. The first implication was the quick response rate of reaching 492 participants that opened and started the Qualtrics survey in 11 days. A total of 435 participants answered the survey questions for the MBI-ES. This suggests that the topic of school counselor burnout is a highly important topic and on the minds of participants. Finding ways in predicting and preventing burnout needs to be a priority within the education setting for school counselors.

Second, the results of this study indicated that school counselors are generally confident in their current ability to perform counseling responsibilities. With school counselors being generally confident, it is logical that participants would score high in reduced personal accomplishment on the MBI-ES, suggesting a low level of burnout in this area of their lives and resulting in a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and reduced personal accomplishment. This significant relationship confirms that helping student counselors develop counseling self-efficacy will strengthen self-confidence and overcome concerns related to novice school counselors (Butts & Gutierrez, 2018). Based on Bandura's (2012) social cognitive theory, individuals have the power to control their actions and life path through self-development, adaptability, and change. Self-efficacy is grounded in SCT, and with the sample of school

counselors having general confidence in their abilities, it is essential for school counseling master's programs, counselor educators and supervisors to continue to teach the importance of self-efficacy and how our interaction of intrapersonal influences, engaging behaviors, and environmental influences have an impact on levels of self-efficacy.

Third, because the study results did not provide evidence that self-efficacy is a predictor for the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, school counselors need to be aware of other possible factors leading to burnout. The question remains, "What are the internal and external predictors of burnout within the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization?" Maslach's Theory of Burnout indicated a greater risk for burnout for individuals working within a workplace environment that classifies relationships as lacking support and trust and by unresolved conflict (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Possible internal forces that impact school counselors' self-efficacy, burnout, stress levels, and self-care coping strategies are the school counselor's disposition and personal characteristics (Fye et al., 2018). School counselor educators and supervisors can help school counselor students and supervisees self-reflect and be aware of personal qualities and temperament when working and counseling in certain situations. This can help identify when self-care, supervision, and professional development are needed. As a result of this study, school districts need more in-service training with workshops on educational, professional, and personal problems to increase school counselors' self-efficacy beliefs and decrease this potential burnout component.

A fourth implication for this study is the results indicate that school counselors are feeling emotionally exhausted. The ever-expanding workload of school counselors needs to be a focus among school counselors and administrators to work together and reduce the non-counseling responsibilities. This will help with creating a positive relationship and work

environment. School counselors need the opportunity to rest, recover, and restore balance within their professional and personal lives (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The results also indicated that 85% of school counselors have a student caseload of 251 or higher, which is above ASCA's recommended student caseload ratio of 1:250. This study highlighted a need for more school counselors in schools to help with reducing school counselors' student caseloads.

## Limitations of the Study

One limitation was the self-report nature of the study, which can cause method bias which is the response tendencies that participants apply across the survey (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Individuals are often biased when reporting on their own experiences. Participants provided answers to all study instruments in this study, and it was assumed that all questions were answered honestly. However, respondents may have answered in a way they feel is more socially acceptable; they may not have accurately assessed themselves or interpreted the questions.

Another limitation of this study is using the Likert rating scales for the instruments, which might restrict the participant from providing an accurate response and giving a middle or extreme response to all questions. The time of year this study was completed is also a limitation of this study. This survey was emailed in February. School counselors might have recharged over winter break and felt less burned out than if the survey had been administered in October or November of the same school year.

A third limitation of this study was completing a convenience sampling of participants. While this type of sampling saved time finding participants and provided immediate research outcomes, it did not control a more significant sample representation or represent all school

counselors. An additional limitation was the lack of diversity among the participants, with most participants identifying as middle-aged, White, and female.

## Recommendations for Future Research

A suggestion for future research would be to analyze the demographic subgroups' responses to determine which subgroups are experiencing higher degrees of burnout than others. This would help identify and target early interventions for specific groups that are prone to burnout. Such interventions might include additional professional development, workplace relationships, or additional educational efforts within school counselor master's programs. A recommendation would be to focus first on the subgroup of school counselor that had over the recommended student caseload ratio of 1:250. The utilization of a regression analysis is recommended to see if there is a significant relationship with school counselors with caseloads over 250 students as the independent variable and the burnout component, emotional exhaustion as the dependent variable. These two variables resulted in high scores within this current research study. Another subgroup to target is the school counselors with 10 or less years of experience. This subgroup represented 58% of the research participants. Investigating the different subgroups and their level of self-efficacy and burnout would provide insight into the needs of interventions, professional development, supervision, and areas for counselor educators to focus on in master's level courses.

Another recommendation would be to add an additional survey, the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS, Scarborough, 2002) to identify how counselors spend their time with acceptable or non-acceptable school counseling responsibilities. Another possible survey instrument to include would be the Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS, Leiter & Maslach, 2003) which assesses the workplace environment to help identify contributing factors to burnout by

measuring: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. Both surveys would help with examining any statistical relationships between workload and burnout.

Finally, future research is recommended to include information on the possible impact of Covid-19 and burnout with school counselors. Because of the pandemic, much has changed in the school setting from virtual school counseling, school environment, job expectations, and student concerns on attendance, academics, and growing mental health matters such as stress, anxiety, and depression. It would be helpful to study the impact of any additional responsibilities that have been placed on school counselors because of the pandemic.

## Summary

This study provided several significant key findings, implications, and recommendations for future research, regardless of rejecting the null hypothesis. School counselor self-efficacy did not have a significant relationship with burnout on the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, there was a significant relationship between self-efficacy and burnout subscale of reduced personal accomplishment, indicating that school counselors who are generally confident in their abilities are less likely to experience burnout due to reduced personal accomplishment. Continued research into contributing factors to burnout is essential for the profession of school counseling. Understanding what drives burnout will provide valuable information for school counselor educators, supervisors, administrators, and school counselors to provide focused education, offer valuable occupational supports, and practice self-awareness and self-care to reduce or prevent burnout.

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# Appendix A - School Counselor Demographic Questionnaire

1. How do you describe your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-binary/third gender
   d. Prefer not to say
   e. Prefer to self-describe

2. How old are you?
   a. Under 24 years old
   b. 24-34 years old
   c. 35-44 years old
   d. 45-54 years old
   e. 55-64 years old
   f. 65+ years old

3. How do you describe your race or ethnicity?
   a. White
   b. Black or African American
   c. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   d. Asian
   e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   f. Prefer not to say
   g. Prefer to self-describe

4. What is your highest degree earned?
   a. Bachelor's degree
   b. Masters's degree
   c. Educational specialist degree
   d. Doctoral degree

5. How many years have you worked as a school counselor?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1-5 years
   c. 6-10 years
   d. 11-15 years
   e. 16-20 years
   f. 21-25 years
   g. 26-30 years
   h. 31+ years

6. Do you have prior experience as a classroom teacher?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. What is the type of school you are employed with?
    a. Public
    b. Private
    c. Charter
    d. Other

8. What grade levels do you serve?
    a. Elementary (K-5th grade)
    b. Middle (6th-8th grade)
    c. High (9th-12th grade)
    d. Other specific levels

9. How many total students are enrolled in your school?
    a. 0-100 students
    b. 101-250 students
    c. 251-500 students
    d. 501-750 students
    e. 750+ students

10. How many total students are on your caseload?
    a. 0-250 students
    b. 251-500 students
    c. 501-750 students
    d. 751+ students

# Appendix B - Approval to Use the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale

This email originated from outside of K-State.

Hi Emily, your study sounds important and relevant to these days! If the SCSE meets the needs that you are looking at, you are welcome to use it.
I have attached two versions – one has the initial factors in parentheses included for your reference.
Good fortune!
Nancy

Good afternoon Dr. Bodenhorn,

I am a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas in the Counselor Education and Supervision program. I am currently working on my first three chapters for my dissertation proposal. With your permission, I would like to use your development of the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale as part of my research. I am interested in exploring the relationships between school counselor's self-efficacy and burnout. As a current school counselor, myself, I feel that this topic is important to explore and to add to the current literature to be able to help educate school counselor students on burnout prevention.

Thank you for your consideration to use the SCSE, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Emily Manker

**Emily Manker**
**KSU Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision**
**Middle School Counselor**
816-500-5253
emanker@ksu.edu

# Appendix C - Approval for Remote Online Use of the MBI-ES

**mind garden**

www.mindgarden.com

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

**Maslach Burnout Inventory forms: Human Services Survey, Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel, Educators Survey, General Survey, or General Survey for Students.**

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument form may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

**Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below. Sample Items:**

**MBI - Human Services Survey - MBI-HSS:**
I feel emotionally drained from my work.
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
I don't really care what happens to some recipients.

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**MBI - Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel - MBI-HSS (MP):**
I feel emotionally drained from my work.
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
I don't really care what happens to some patients.

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**MBI - Educators Survey - MBI-ES:**
I feel emotionally drained from my work.
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
I don't really care what happens to some students.

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**MBI - General Survey - MBI-GS**:
I feel emotionally drained from my work.
In my opinion, I am good at my job.
I doubt the significance of my work.

**MBI - General Survey for Students - MBI-GS (S)**:
I feel emotionally drained by my studies.
In my opinion, I am a good student.
I doubt the significance of my studies.

Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

# Appendix D - IRB Approval Letter

**KANSAS STATE** | University Research
**U N I V E R S I T Y** | Compliance Office

TO:     Judith Hughey                                   Proposal Number:  IRB-11005
        Spec Ed, Counsel & Student Aff
        Manhattan, KS 66506

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE:   01/28/2022

RE:     Proposal Entitled, "Aspects of school counselor self-efficacy and burnout.."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review.  This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations.  A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Rick Scheidt on 01/28/2022 5:45 PM ET

# Appendix E - Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "Aspects of school counselor self-efficacy and burnout." The survey is confidential and data will be analyzed in aggregate format. Email addresses, names and/or institutions will not be correlated to survey responses via a coding procedure on Qualtrics. All data will be stored on an encrypted server. This study is being conducted by Emily Manker, a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University as part of her doctoral dissertation with the IRB#11005.

**Purpose**

With the growing interest in understanding school counselor burnout, this quantitative study can add to past research and help find interventions and solutions to addressing burnout and low levels of self-efficacy. The data from the research question will be analyzed to identify the impact school counselor self-efficacy has on burnout.

**Procedure**

The study will be conducted through this online survey. To participate, individuals must be currently licensed/certified and employed as a school counselor and working in the school setting. Participants are asked to answer each question as accurately and honestly as possible. It is estimated to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

**Benefits and Risks**

The benefits of this research will identify the effect of school counselors' self-efficacy and burnout. There are no risks or discomforts anticipated for participants.

**Contact Information for Any Problems/Questions**

Dr. Judy Hughey, NCC, Associate Professor; 785-532-5527, jhughey@ksu.edu

Emily Manker, emanker@ksu.edu

**Terms of Participation**

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I verify by proceeding with this survey by clicking the Qualtrics link below that I have read and understand this consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described.

# Appendix F - Email Communications

Initial Contact Email for ASCA Scene

Subject: Research Participation Request: Self-Efficacy and Burnout

Dear School Counselor Participant:

I am a practicing school counselor in Kansas and a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision at Kansas State University. I am requesting your assistance with an anonymous online survey study on the relationships between self-efficacy and burnout of school counselors.

To participate, individuals must be currently licensed/certified and employed as a school counselor and working in the school setting. Participation is voluntary for the online survey and will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation in this study of school counselor self-efficacy and burnout. The goal of the study is to address the increase of professional school counselors' stress and burnout by exploring the influence school counselor self-efficacy has on school counselor burnout. All the information collected in the study is anonymous and confidential. Data will be analyzed in the aggregate. The study has IRB approval at Kansas State University, #11005.

For more information on the study and to participate, please click on the following link or copy and paste it into your internet browser to begin

[Qualtrics Survey Link]

Please contact Dr. Judy Hughey, NCC, jhughey@ksu.edu, 785-532-5541 or Emily Manker, emanker@ksu.edu if you have questions regarding the survey.

Reminder Email

Subject: Research Participation Request: Self-Efficacy and Burnout

Dear School Counselor Participant:

We recently asked for your participation in an anonymous and online survey study on the relationships between self-efficacy and burnout of school counselors. Thank you so much to those that have already participated. I appreciate your support.

This is just a quick reminder that you still have time to participate if you would like to. I am looking to get approximately 100 more school counselor participants. I appreciate your support and thank you in advance for participating.

To participate, individuals must be currently licensed/certified and employed as a school counselor and working in the school setting. Participation is voluntary for the online survey and will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. All the information collected in the study is anonymous and confidential. Data will be analyzed in the aggregate. The study has IRB approval at Kansas State University, #11005.

For more information on the study and to participate, please click on the following link or copy and paste it into your internet browser to begin

[Qualtrics Survey Link]

Please contact Dr. Judy Hughey, NCC, jhughey@ksu.edu, 785-532-5541 or Emily Manker, emanker@ksu.edu if you have questions regarding the survey.