

Predicting burnout in early-career school counselors: The role of hope and school counselor job activities

by

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B.S., Newman University, 2000  
M.S., Fort Hays State University, 2005

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  
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## **Abstract**

Early-career school counselors face role ambiguity when the duties assigned by administration do not align with the school counselor's skills and expertise acquired in their preparatory program. This quantitative study examined the alignment between early-career school counselors' expected and actual job activities and explored whether discrepancies between the two are associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its subfactors influenced burnout within the first five years of an early-career school counselor's profession. Convenience sampling was used to recruit early-career school counselors serving in the first five years of their profession as a full-time school counselor. An email invitation to participate in the online survey was sent to school counselor program coordinators and school counseling associations in the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) region as well as posted on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Member Community Open Forum. Participants voluntarily completed the following instruments: Trait Hope Scale ( $n=85$ ), Counselor Burnout Inventory ( $n = 80$ ), SCARS Modified (ASCA Expected) Survey ( $n = 79$ ), SCARS Modified (ASCA Actual) Survey ( $n = 75$ ), and the Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey ( $n = 75$ ). The findings of this study revealed misalignment on many activities the school counselors were asked to perform. The results also showed a significant negative correlation between the alignment and burnout, indicating the higher the misalignment, the higher the level of burnout. Furthermore, the results indicated a significant negative relationship between hope and burnout, indicating hope mitigates burnout. The implications of the findings, limitations, as well as recommendations for future practice and research are further discussed.

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## Abstract

Early-career school counselors face role ambiguity when the duties assigned by administration do not align with the school counselor's skills and expertise acquired in their preparatory program. This quantitative study examined the alignment between early-career school counselors' expected and actual job activities and explored whether discrepancies between the two are associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its subfactors influenced burnout within the first five years of an early-career school counselor's profession. Convenience sampling was used to recruit early-career school counselors serving in the first five years of their profession as a full-time school counselor. An email invitation to participate in the online survey was sent to school counselor program coordinators and school counseling associations in the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) region as well as posted on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Member Community Open Forum. Participants voluntarily completed the following instruments: Trait Hope Scale ( $n = 85$ ), Counselor Burnout Inventory ( $n = 80$ ), SCARS Modified (ASCA Expected) Survey ( $n = 79$ ), SCARS Modified (ASCA Actual) Survey ( $n = 75$ ), and the Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey ( $n = 75$ ). The findings of this study revealed misalignment on many activities the school counselors were asked to perform. The results also showed a significant negative correlation between the alignment and burnout, indicating the higher the misalignment, the higher the level of burnout. Furthermore, the results indicated a significant negative relationship between hope and burnout, indicating hope mitigates burnout. The implications of the findings, limitations, as well as recommendations for future practice and research are further discussed.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my children. I pray this journey inspired you to want to learn and grow in areas that give you joy. In your own journeys, search for your hope advocates that want to see you succeed. There are always helpers and you are never alone. When you can, be a hope advocate for others.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Early-career school counselors complete graduate training with expectations of being hired in a supported position that aligns with the role of a school counselor. School counselors are competent professionals, highly trained to perform activities that align with counseling standards. As they perform the actual job duties assigned, their expected job duties based on their training may conflict with the reality of what is experienced in the field (Scarborough, 2005; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). This misalignment experienced between the expected and actual duties can potentially lead to role stress and burnout (Culbreth et al., 2005; Mullen et al., 2018).

This quantitative study examined early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its two factors of agency and pathways, inversely influenced burnout within the first five years of their profession, which in turn supports school counselor retention. Discussion in this chapter is organized into the following sections: (1) background of the study, (2) statement of the problem (3) theoretical frameworks, (4) purpose of the study and research questions, (5) significance of the study, and (6) definition of terms.

### **Background of the Study**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) charges school counselors with meeting the career, social-emotional, and academic needs of all students on their caseload through a data-driven, comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). With the increasing mental health challenges of students, school counselors require adequate support, time, and resources to address the current obstacles students face impacting academic achievement (Cicco, 2024). In today's helping field, school counselors can experience stressful physical, mental, and emotional demands as they navigate their ambiguous role and increased

student obligations while trying to balance their own well-being (Fye, Kim, et al., 2022; Randick et al., 2018). Low-level or short-term stress is a normal reaction, due to the demanding role of the modern school counselor. However, when inappropriate tasks and a lack of support and resources add to the regular demands of the job, it can exceed a school counselor's ability to cope. This can lead to higher levels of stress and risk of burnout (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Rhames et al., 2025).

Burnout is a psychological construct. Burnout causes a loss of productivity and competent care in the workplace. It can also filter into the personal lives of those impacted (Lee et al., 2007). Freudenberger (1974) and Ginsburg (1974) determined that the consequence of burnout leads to feelings of exhaustion and incompetence, impairing a person's judgment towards the job and those they serve. Experiencing stress and burnout can impact a school counselor's decision to leave their job (Mullen et al., 2018), and possibly the school counseling profession, leading to school counselor shortages (ASCA, 2023a; Rhames et al., 2025).

## **Educational Context**

Currently, the United States educational system faces an ongoing shortage of certified and licensed staff (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). With an estimated 40-50% of novice teachers leaving the teaching profession, districts are struggling to retain teachers beyond the first five years of their career. Early-career teachers may experience increased demands and a perceived lack of support and training (Cells et al., 2023; Zhang & Neller, 2016). Furthermore, there is a high demand for school counselors as the profession is also experiencing a shortage. This shortage includes 59% of U.S. school districts stating they do not have the mental health school personnel needed to meet the ratios for recommended caseloads (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). In a 2022 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) survey, 55% of

school counseling district coordinators shared there were not enough school counselors to fill open positions in their districts (ASCA, 2023a). Systemic issues, also known as organizational factors, as well as individual factors, have contributed to the national shortage of licensed school counselors (ASCA, 2023a; Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Kitching et al., 2024; Mullen et al., 2018).

### **Organizational and Individual Factors**

Organizational and individual factors contribute to additional demands that exceed a school counselor's capacity to serve students, leading to impairment and burnout (Lee et al., 2007; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020) and negatively impact job satisfaction (Jones & Pijanowski, 2023; Mullen et al., 2018). Both organizational and individual factors have left early-career school counselors susceptible to a higher risk of burnout than their more experienced colleagues (ASCA, 2023a; Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Harman & Ausloos, 2024; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023; Mullen et al., 2018). Scholars have examined the importance of identifying and mitigating the factors of counselor burnout that help protect professional and personal life vitality as well as prevent impairment, impacting a counselor's ethical capacity to serve students and clients (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Lee et al., 2007; Um & Bardhoshi, 2025). Existing research, professional standards, and counselor wellness competencies have confirmed the importance of assessing both individual and organizational factors to develop advocacy skills and an individualized wellness plan to move forward (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014; ASCA, 2022; CACREP, 2023; Fye, Cook, et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2021). The following paragraphs are dedicated to explaining how organizational and individual factors impact school counselor burnout.

## ***Organizational Factors***

One organizational factor leading to burnout is high caseloads (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen et al., 2021; Um & Bardhoshi, 2025). ASCA, the national professional organization for school counselors, recommends a ratio of one school counselor to every 250 students (ASCA, n.d.-g, 2023b; Brown & Knight, 2025). However, the 2024-2025 national data indicated an average student caseload of 1:372, with even higher average ratios in elementary and middle schools. Only four states had an average ratio below or around 250 students: Colorado, Hawaii, New Hampshire, and Vermont (ASCA, n.d.-g). ASCA (2023a) estimates it would take hiring approximately 77,000 more school counselors to meet the 1:250 ratio. Matching the recommended school counselor ratio is vital to help school counselors meet the rising demand of student mental health needs as well as take care of their own mental health well-being (Office of the Surgeon General, 2021).

Another organizational factor leading to school counselor burnout is a perceived lack of administrative support from building leaders (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, et al., 2014; Bardhoshi, Um, et al., 2022; Kim & Lambie, 2018). A perceived lack of administrative support often stems from administrators not knowing how to properly maximize their school counselor's skill set. Administrators rarely receive pre-service or continuing education training on the current role of a school counselor and comprehensive school counseling programs (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Gonzales et al., 2022; Holman et al., 2019; Lane et al., 2020). Therefore, building principals often lean on their own experiences, an antiquated system of what they once knew of the reactive "guidance counselor" of the past, versus today's proactive and data-driven school counselor (ASCA, n.d.-c; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Harmon & Ausloos, 2024). Without the necessary

knowledge of today's school counseling role, administrators cannot properly optimize the expertise of school counselors (Gonzales et al., 2022).

Furthermore, school counselors and administrators are often faced with ambiguous ethical and legal dilemmas. Having a professional relationship where consultation is ongoing can create a safer school environment for students and decrease chances of an ethical or legal lapse, especially in areas such as mandated reporting, confidentiality, and equitable educational opportunities for all students (Stone, 2022a). A principal-counselor collaboration contributes to a more positive school climate and can increase both student achievement (Stone, 2022a) and student graduation rates (Jordan, 2022). A team approach of mutual respect and shared values of school safety and student success can increase access to social networks and resources, therefore developing social capital (Cinotti et al., 2022; Gonzales, et al., 2022; Jordan, 2022; Stone, 2022a). When an administrator is unfamiliar with the role of a school counselor and does not provide opportunities for collaboration, it is easy to delegate non-school counseling duties to school counselors, adding additional responsibilities leading to stress and burnout (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020).

An additional organizational factor contributing to burnout is role ambiguity (Holman, et al., 2019; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Um & Bardhoshi, 2025). Role ambiguity is experienced when a school counselor is asked to perform non-school counseling duties directed by administration or stakeholders that conflict with the expected duties learned in graduate school (Chandler et al., 2018). The reality of the job can feel confusing when administrators or stakeholders send mixed expectations of what school counselors are being told to do versus what they should be doing according to their current professional standards (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Rhames et al., 2025). Such examples include early-career school counselors being assigned clerical and administrative

duties outside of their skill set and given roles not experienced in graduate school courses or internship (Chandler et al., 2018; Evans Zalewski et al., 2024). These additional responsibilities impact burnout by adding to the already demanding job and sometimes take the place of direct student services appropriate for the role of a school counselor (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016).

The last organizational factor mentioned in this research leading to early-career burnout is a lack of intentional supervision post-graduation or ongoing mentorship (Evans Zalewski et al., 2024). Post-graduate supervision or mentorship encourages the development of competent counselors and provides ongoing support from experienced school counselors as novice school counselors develop their professional identity (Coyne et al., 2025; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023). Post-graduate supervision or mentorship can provide a safe space to discuss duties and practice advocacy skills needed to develop their professional identity (Havlik et al., 2019). When school counselors participated in continued post-graduation school counseling-specific supervision, they experienced higher levels of wellness (Fye, Kim, et al., 2022), lower levels of burnout (Fye, Bergen, et al., 2020; Fye, Kim, et al., 2022; Gnilka et al., 2015; Moyer, 2011), were at less risk of role ambiguity (Bledsoe et al., 2021), and increased their self-efficacy in engaging in school counseling best practices (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Tang, 2020).

### ***Individual Factors***

In addition to the organizational factors previously discussed, individual factors such as demographic and psychological constructs influence burnout among school counselors (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Relevant demographic factors identified in research include personal historical factors such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as well as variations in graduate program experiences and years of professional experience (Brown et al., 2024; Goodman-Scott et al., 2021; Kim & Lambie, 2018). Psychological constructs shown to impact burnout include

coping processes (Kim & Lambie, 2018) and levels of hope (Niles, Dorias, et al., 2024). The following sections further examine these demographic and individual factors in detail.

One example of an individual demographic factor that can contribute to burnout in school counselors is historical adversity in childhood, known as ACEs (Brown et al., 2024). ACEs are stressful or even traumatic events of abuse, neglect, and dysfunction that occur in the household or community before the age of 18 (Walsh et al., 2024). Research has shown that the higher the number of ACEs, the higher the chances of life-long effects, including a negative impact on adult physical and mental health (Merrick et al., 2019). A recent study covering 25 states noted that 15.6% of the adults in their sample had four or more ACEs (Merrick et al., 2019). Additional research on ACEs specific to school counselors shared that 50% of the school counselor participants had four or more ACEs, a much higher rate than the general population study (Brown et al., 2024). Also noted was that as a school counselor's ACEs increase, so does the risk of burnout (Brown et al., 2024).

Another individual demographic factor precipitating burnout is the varied experiences in education and graduate programs. Novice school counselors come from a variety of undergraduate and graduate training backgrounds that impact their practicum, internship, and post-graduation experiences (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020, 2021). Fewer school counselors are graduating with an undergraduate degree in education and may not have the background knowledge or pedagogical experience that can enhance the educator side of the professional identity of a school counselor (Goodman-Scott et al., 2021). The transition of moving from counseling theory and best practices learned in graduate school to application as both an educator and mental health expert can be perceived as stressful when the experiences and expectations of the new job do not align (Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020, 2021; Mullen et

al., 2018). The counseling profession can be stressful for most school counselors, but even more stressful for those less prepared for the reality of the job (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016).

An additional individual demographic factor that contributes to school counselor burnout is years of experience (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Recent research has shown that those with less school counselor experience are more susceptible to burnout (ASCA, 2023a; Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Fye, Cook, et al., 2022; Harman & Ausloos, 2024; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023; Mullen et al., 2018). Understanding how to help early-career school counselors find solutions and mitigate burnout is vital to both personal and professional wellness as well as job retention (Bardhoshi et al., 2022).

The psychological construct of coping styles, which play a critical role in supporting counselor wellness, is also an individual factor that influences burnout among school counselors (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Organizational factors such as overwhelming caseloads, limited resources, and unrealistic expectations create work environments that challenge even the most resilient counselors. Wellness cannot rest solely on the shoulders of individual counselors. Even those with strong coping skills may find their implementation efforts hindered by systemic barriers beyond their control (Brown & Knight, 2025; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). Without the ability to utilize effective, problem-focused coping strategies, counselors are more likely to experience impairment, and the role becomes unsustainable (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Fye, Gnilka, et al., 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wilkerson, 2009). With increasing job demands, school counselors must engage in preventative wellness practices (Wilkerson, 2009) and develop intervention strategies to reduce stress, impairment, and burnout (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016).

The last individual factor mentioned in this study is the psychological construct of hope. School counselors will face individual and organizational challenges throughout their careers.

Vital to the school counseling profession is ongoing “self-care, self-awareness, and self-evaluation strategies for ethical and effective practice” (CACREP, 2023, Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice). Hope is a significant predictor of both well-being (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022) and of services delivered by school counselors such as counseling, consulting, and coordinating activities (Niles et al., 2025). When school counselors learn to monitor their hope during graduate school as well as have meaningful discussions with their administration and peers post-graduation, school counselors can learn to thrive with support within the first years of their career (Niles, Mullen, et al., 2024). Part of this study focused on the impact of hope, specifically its factors of pathways and agency on early career school counselor burnout and school counselor retention.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The ambiguity between the expected duties and actual duties can easily cause confusion and stress, which in turn lead novice school counselors to feelings of not mattering, exhaustion, incompetence, and even a risk of devaluing clients (Curry& Bickmore, 2012; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Moyer, 2011). School counselors can burnout within the first few years of their career if they are unable to develop the coping and advocacy skills needed to mitigate the negative effects of stress and burnout (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). Limited research has empirically examined the misalignment between the expected and actual activities performed by school counselors and the possible association with burnout.

Noted as one of the best predictors of well-being (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022), research has shown how hope can impact burnout in those that work with children (Ender et al., 2019; Pharris et al., 2022). Higher hope serves as a protective factor to stress and burnout (Miller et al., 2024). Yet, limited research in the United States has examined hope in early-career school

counselors. The crucial call in education for school counselor retention and a gap in literature indicates the need for research in the United States regarding hope as a protective factor of burnout in early-career school counselors.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

Both of the following theoretical frameworks, Burnout Theory and Hope Theory, align with this research study. Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of burnout bridges early-career school counselor burnout and the individual and organizational factors that impact duty expectations (Bardoshi et al., 2022; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). The theoretical framework of hope supports how measuring hope can contribute to training, supervision, and well-being of novice school counselors (Ender et al., 2019; Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024).

### **Burnout Theory**

Burnout in the workplace can occur when individual and organizational factors impact a person's ability to cope and serve others (Lee et al., 2007). Burnout can lead to deterioration in both a person's professional and personal life. Burnout can cause feelings of exhaustion and incompetence. It can also contribute to a lack of empathy or callousness, leading to a devaluation of client welfare and care. Broken boundaries and a lack of work-life balance can impact personal relationships (Lee et al., 2007). A psychoanalyst most acknowledged for the construct of burnout was Freudenberg (1974). He noted his own symptoms of exhaustion and overwhelm as well as similar symptoms in his colleagues. He began his life-long research on the impact of burnout in the workplace (Canter & Freudenberg, 2001; Freudenberg, 1974, 1975; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). Other researchers have continued to examine burnout from different dimensions including organizational factors that contribute to burnout (Maslach, 2013;

Maslach & Jackson, 1981) as well as addressing burnout specific to the counseling profession (Lee et al., 2007).

## **Hope Theory**

Hope Theory is a cognitive construct that involves both the desire or motivation of achieving a goal and the setting of pathways to attain desired goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder et al. (1991) defined hope as “a cognitive set that is composed of a reciprocally derived sense of success (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet the goals)” (p. 570). Measuring hope focuses on personal strengths and contributes to future-forward thinking (Snyder, 2000). Those with higher hope are more likely to achieve their goals, even in the presence of barriers (Snyder, 1995). Measuring agency and pathways, both factors of hope, can help one understand their hope levels and where to intervene (Snyder, 2002).

## **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

This quantitative study examined early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope, and its two factors of agency and pathways, inversely influenced burnout within the first five years of their profession, which in turn supports school counselor retention. Understanding the alignment between the expected and actual activities of a novice school counselor as well as the impact of hope and burnout could provide data to help educational partners support novice school counselor wellness.

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ2:** Are the actual early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ3:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the actual activities?

**RQ4:** Is the alignment of actual early-career school counselor activities and expected activities associated with burnout?

**RQ5:** Does hope and its two subscales, agency and pathways, influence burnout amongst early-career school counselors?

### **Significance of the Study**

Due to the increased demands of the profession, burnout is a problem for counselors (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). Research has indicated early-career school counselors are affected by burnout at a higher rate than their mature colleagues (ASCA, 2023a; Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Fye, Cook et al., 2020; Harman & Ausloos, 2024; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023; Mullen et al., 2018). Burnout can also impact counselor job retention (Cicco, 2024). The misalignment between the expected and actual activities of a school counselor contributes to burnout, when counselors' areas of training and expertise are underutilized. In turn, misaligned work activities impact counselor wellness and student services (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Knowing how early-career counselors perceive the assigned and expected activities of a school counselor helped inform our understanding.

This research aimed to study hope as a possible means to mitigate burnout and increase retention among early-career school counselors. The significance of this research could give counselor educators, supervisors, mentors, and administrators an opportunity to integrate a protective factor such as hope, incorporating both agency and pathways, to help novice school

counselors develop problem-solving coping skills as they learn to advocate for their role as a school counselor (Bardoshi et al., 2022; Fye, Gnilka, et al., 2018).

### **Definition of the Terms**

**Advocacy**-using data, counseling best practices, and resources to share solution-focused ideas with stakeholders and support student outcomes (Havlik et al., 2019).

**Agency**-A factor of hope that measures the willpower or motivation of someone to reach their goals (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022).

**The ASCA National Model®**-the components of a school's comprehensive school counseling program that supports access, academic success, and life-readiness skills for each student. It is data-driven to close achievement gaps and encourages leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to promote systemic change (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b).

**Burnout**-when individual and organizational factors impact a person's ability to cope and serve others, causing feelings of exhaustion and impacting both their personal and professional life (Lee et al., 2007).

**Counselor Educator**- someone who teaches, supervises, and advises counseling students in graduate programs (ASCA, 2020, 2024a; CACREP, 2023).

**Direct Services**-the face-to-face contact time a school counselor spends with a student in instruction, appraisal and advisement, as well as individual and group counseling. ASCA recommends that 80% of a school counselor's time be spent in direct and indirect services (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b).

**Early-Career or Novice**-defined as serving in a professional role five years or less (Cells et al., 2023).

**Educational Partners and Stakeholders**-these terms refer to groups of people that collaborate with school counselors to promote student success. They may include the voice of students, school staff, parents, and community members (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b).

**Guidance Counselor**-an antiquated term referring to a school counselor whose services were reactive versus proactive, and did not support all students' academic, social-emotional and college and career-readiness success through a data-driven comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, n.d.-c).

**Hope**-a scientific and cognitive construct that measures a person's agency (willpower) to impact their future through creating pathways to get to their desired goals (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022).

**Indirect Services**-services a school counselor provides for a student through consultation, collaboration, and referrals (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b).

**Mentor**-an experienced person in the same career who intentionally meets with a younger professional on a regular basis to help them navigate individual and organizational factors while following best practices in their profession (Kitching et al., 2024).

**Pathways**-A factor of hope that measures ways to get to your desired goal, even in the presence of obstacles (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022).

**Role Ambiguity**- Role ambiguity is experienced when a person is asked to engage in job duties that conflict with skills learned in training. These duties can cause confusion when they do not connect to training or professional standards (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Rhames et al., 2025).

**Role Stress**- measuring the levels of role conflict, role incongruity, and role ambiguity experienced by school counselors when individual and organizational factors do not align with the actual role of a school counselor (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020).

**School Counselor**-is a data driven, licensed professional, whose specific graduate training is in developmentally appropriate career, academic, and social emotional skills. School counselors team with other educational partners to remove opportunity and achievement gaps for all students and develop comprehensive school counseling programs that contribute to student success. (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b, 2025e).

**Social Capital**- social network and resource assets gained through the collaboration of two or more people, such as the administrator and school counselor collaboration (Jordan, 2022).

**Stress**- when the demands of the job exceed a school counselor's ability to cope (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020).

**Supervision**-intentional time, usually individual or triadic, dedicated to support counseling practicum or intern graduate students provided by doctoral students, site supervisors, or professors in the Counselor Educator and Supervision department (CACREP, 2023).

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

This quantitative study examined early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its two factors of agency and pathways inversely influenced burnout within the first five years of their profession, which in turn supports school counselor retention. Chapter two provides a review of the current literature regarding the role of school counselors and how both burnout and hope impact school counselor wellness. This chapter also addresses the current literature gaps and the need for future research to mitigate early-career school counselor burnout.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

#### **Burnout Theory**

Burnout is a term used to describe the overwhelm of stress caused by individual and organizational factors in the workplace. The high demands of the job and lack of resources or time to perform expectations impact a person's job performance including client care and can also extend into one's personal life (Maor & Hemi, 2021). Some of the earliest uses of the burnout construct were noted in separate research articles by both Herbert Freudenberger (1974) and Sigmund Ginsburg (1974). Freudenberger, a psychoanalyst most acknowledged for introducing the burnout term, helped develop free treatment clinics for people suffering from substance abuse. Noting his own physical and emotional symptoms and those experienced by his colleagues, he began to research the impact of burnout in the workplace (Canter & Freudenberger, 2001; Freudenberger, 1974, 1975; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). Freudenberger (1974) described burnout in the work environment as "becoming exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strengths, or resources" (p. 159).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) were one of the first researchers to measure burnout. When developing The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), they considered three subsets that contribute to burnout specifically in adults working in human services: exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. They described burnout as the “syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (p. 99). Working with people with high needs and emotional issues on a regular basis could lead to feelings of depletion, or emotional exhaustion. Over time, someone feeling chronic exhaustion could develop a negative attitude causing cynicism and detachment that imposes depersonalization towards the client. When one feels chronically exhausted and cynical towards their clients, it can impact a person’s capacity to effectively serve clients and impact job performance and goals, affecting their personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Maslach also looked beyond the individual factors causing burnout and took into consideration workplace issues and organizational factors causing stress and overload (Lee et al., 2007; Maslach, 2013). The MBI has been expanded to measure burnout in occupations such as the medical field, education, students in colleges or universities, and a general burnout assessment for those not working directly with people (Maslach, 2013).

Researchers assessed burnout specifically in the counseling profession focused on both personal and organizational factors (Lee et al., 2007). The Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI) is comprised of five factors: exhaustion, negative work environment, devaluing client, incompetence, and deterioration of personal life (Lee et al., 2007). Lee et al. (2007) described burnout as “the failure to perform clinical tasks appropriately because of personal discouragement, apathy towards system stress, and emotional/physical drain” (p.143). They noted the nature of the counseling profession requires the effectiveness to not only serve client

emotional needs, but also the resourcefulness to navigate organizational factors such as high caseloads and non-counseling duties that often stretch a person beyond their capacity to effectively serve clients in their work environment and impact personal life (Bardoshi et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2010). These workplace issues can lead to employee absenteeism and a decline in quality of client care (Lee et al., 2007).

Due to the high demands of the profession, current empirical studies have shown the impact of burnout in the school counseling field (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Burnout and stress can negatively impact direct services provided to students by school counselors, impacting services and client care (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Burnout also negatively impacts school counselor job satisfaction (Mullen et al., 2018). Organizational and individual factors can negatively impact school counselor perceived stress and burnout (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020), as well as impact school counselor wellness (Fye, Cook, et al., 2022). School counselors can experience higher levels of burnout when faced with organizational factors such as high caseloads, non-counseling duties on top of regular job demands, role ambiguity, and a perceived lack of administrative support (Holman et al., 2019; Um & Bardoshi, 2025). Studies have also shown that school counselors can experience burnout when faced with individual factors such as psychological constructs and demographic factors (Kim & Lambie, 2018). Additional individual factors impacting burnout in school counselors include less years of experience, school counselor self-efficacy, and school counselor ACEs (Bardoshi et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2024).

## **Hope Theory**

Hope is often thought of in affective terms, even comparing it to an optimistic feeling of a future desire (Snyder, 1994, 1995; Stotland, 1969). However, hope differs from optimism. While optimism can help one think in motivational or positive terms, it differs from hope in that

it does not necessarily have a purposeful plan to achieve goals or flexible thinking when presented with barriers and obstacles (Snyder, 1994). Hope theory explains how hope exists as a cognitive, intentional, goal-oriented action. (Snyder, 1995; Stotland, 1969). Stotland (1969), one of the earlier hope researchers, corroborated human and animal studies that inferred hopeful behavior with his seven propositions regarding hope theory. His propositions included his hypotheses on the perceived probability of goal attainment and the importance of goals, anxiety connected to motivation and goal attainment, and schemas developed from one's perception of events experienced and from communication via others (Stotland, 1969). Though his propositions shared the importance of motivation and action towards goal attainment, his theory of hope was not psychometrically measurable (Snyder, 1995; Stotland, 1969).

Hope was further defined by researchers as not only a goal-oriented cognitive construct, but also measurable (Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder (2000) stated that "Hope is the sum of the perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes" (p.8). To measure hope, you add the mental will power (agency) to achieve the goal plus the waypower (pathway) to get to the meaningful, well-defined goal (Snyder, 1994, 2000). Waypower is the mental flexibility of imagining and then defining different pathways to the goal, despite possible barriers. Willpower is the mental energy or motivation that sustains one to keep moving forward to try the pathways towards meeting the goal (Snyder, 1994). It is important to measure the two individual factors to help one raise their total hope score as well as pinpoint where to focus their energy towards meeting their goals (Snyder, 1995, 2002). For example, one might have the mental energy or willpower to meet their goal but feel blocked by perceived obstacles that prevent them from goal attainment. They will need help with interventions to build waypower or knowledge of resources to help build additional pathways

around these obstacles to meet their goal (Snyder, 1995). Conversely, one might have the knowledge of resources and the ability to imagine different pathways to get to a goal, but once it is time to get started, they do not have the mental energy, or willpower to use the pathways to get started. They might need help with recognizing their own strengths as well as help with creating small, attainable goals to build mental energy and feel the success of small steps towards goal attainment (Snyder, 1995).

People with higher hope are more determined to meet the goal, even in the presence of adversity, and people with higher hope may even use adversity to make meaning of the situation (Snyder, 1995, 2002). Furthermore, people with higher hope cope with negative emotions experienced when goals are not met. They use negative emotions as feedback to re-goal versus feeling stuck when encountering a setback. Both self-talk and flexible thinking encourage alternative routes towards goal attainment (Snyder, 2002). Lower hope people who experience negative emotions from goal setbacks tend to not see it as an opportunity to re-goal. Instead, they tend to ruminate and engage in self-doubt, which contributes to mental blocks towards flexible thinking (Snyder, 2002).

There are two types of goals, approach/achievement and avoidance (Gwin & Hellman, 2022; Snyder, 2002). Approach or achievement goals require working towards a positive outcome, either for the first time or continuing a current goal. Avoidant goals are negative in nature and require working towards deterring a goal so that it does not ever happen, it discontinues, or is delayed (Gwin & Hellman, 2022; Snyder, 2002).

Gwinn & Hellman (2022) reported that hope is “the belief that your future can be brighter and better than your past and that you actually have a role to play in making it better” (p. 9). Hope empowers a person to intentionally improve their circumstances, not only individually, but

also collectively. Hope serves as a protective factor that can be taught or modeled. For example, someone in a person's community such as a teacher, school counselor, family member, clergy, mentor, or neighbor, can step in and encourage goal achievement or help with resources to navigate barriers and re-goal when necessary (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022). The greater the hope, the better chances of a positive outcome, such as goal-attainment or ability to sustain when goal redirection is needed (Snyder 1995). However, sometimes hope fluctuates, possibly due to social or environmental deterrents as explained below.

The Hope Continuum explains what happens as people experience a decline in hope (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017). Someone starting to experience a decline in hope might experience frustration, anger, or rage when a goal is blocked or a lack of mental energy sustainability. Next, they might experience despair when they have come to a barrier they cannot surmount. At the very end of the continuum is apathy, when everything seems hopeless. At this end of the continuum, people feel that there are no resources available, and there is no path to their goals. There is a loss of imagination towards a better future (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022; Snyder, 1994). ACEs, trauma, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are examples that may impact a person's ability to move from the past to future thinking, causing lower hope on the continuum. The intrusive thoughts of the past may cause anxiety that freezes or blocks the ability to think in terms of a pathway towards future goals and depletes mental energy (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022; Munoz et al., 2018; Snyder, 1994). They experience a "normal reaction to an abnormal experience" (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022, p. 54). However, caring people with high hope can assist those with less hope by collaborating to set small, future-forward approach goals. Hope advocates can provide mentorship support to re-goal as needed (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022).

The next section shares an example of a study where caring adults intentionally provided opportunities to help raise hope in children experiencing adversity.

Hellman and Gwinn (2017) researched an experience at Camp Hope, a summer program aimed to help raise hope in children with high ACEs scores, specifically those exposed to domestic violence. Many of these children were experiencing long-term chronic stress and displayed behavioral and mental health issues. Through activities that built social connection, belonging, and other positive characteristics, their hope significantly increased. Hope can be taught and is considered malleable. Even in situations where a person has been let down consistently by caregivers, relationships, and systemic barriers, hope levels can be raised (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017). The next section discusses the role of a school counselor, an example of a caring hope advocate who focuses on helping students find their strengths and promotes opportunities for future-forward thinking (ASCA, 2025e; Pedrotti et al., 2008).

### **The Role of a School Counselor**

School counselors are graduate-level, licensed/certified professionals who specialize in developmentally appropriate strategies to encourage academic success, college and career readiness, and the social-emotional growth of each student (ASCA, 2025b, 2025e; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023). In coordination with educational partners, school counselors team to monitor the physical, emotional, and mental health needs of the whole child (ASCA, 2025b, 2025f; Zyromski et al., 2022). While school counselors do not diagnose mental health disorders, they play a vital role in prevention and intervention, including recognizing how a student's mental health can impact student success and encourage community resources as needed (ASCA, 2025f). The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2023) reported that the

percentage of children experiencing mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral issues have increased, impacting approximately 1 in 4 children between the ages of 3-17 years. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and adverse childhood experiences have increased the need for access to school-based student mental health support (ASCA 2021; Coyne, et al., 2025; Niles, et al., 2025; Walsh et al., 2024). The National Center for Education Statistics (2025) reported that public schools agreed or strongly agreed that the lingering effects of COVID-19 continue to negatively impact both the social emotional development of children ages 3-17 (79%) and behavioral development (76%). School counselors continue to play a crucial role in support of student mental health after the pandemic (Niles, Dorias, et al., 2024). Additionally, school counselors need to be aware of the impact of ACEs on student mental health and physical wellbeing (Walsh et al., 2024; Zyromski et al., 2022). Increased ACEs scores are linked to mental and physical health risks, even more so in minority and low socio-economic populations (Brown et al., 2024). Gwinn and Hellman (2022) report “The risk of suicide attempts for those with high ACE scores is 51 times higher in children and adolescents and 30 times higher in adults compared to those with a zero ACE score... 80% of suicide attempts by adolescents have been connected to ACEs” (p. 96). With the increase in student mental health needs and prevalence of ACEs, school counselors are needed more than ever to use their specialized training to provide trauma-informed prevention and intervention services to buffer negative effects and increase protective factors (ASCA, 2025f; Carney et al., 2018; Zyromski et al., 2022).

School counselors are tasked with serving each student on their assigned caseload. This makes it ethically imperative for school counselors to advocate for appropriate ratios, increased time for direct student contact, and developmentally appropriate tiered services (ASCA, 2025b). School counselors can impact student success by advocating and role modeling trauma-informed

care within schools that provide positive childhood experiences. School counselors can contribute to the school climate by building safe and nurturing relationships with students. They can also provide opportunities to encourage a sense of belonging and connectedness for students in school (Anderson et al., 2024; ASCA, 2025b, Carney et al., 2018; Zyromski et al., 2022). The following sections provide detailed background information on the role of a school counselor, including the history of school counseling, qualifications and licensure requirements, ethical standards, the impact of caseloads and ratios, and additional role implications.

### **Vocational Guidance Counselor of the Past vs Today's School Counselor**

Once titled vocational or guidance counselor, the position of a school counselor has emerged from an isolated and reactive staff member to one that is a highly trained, licensed/certified, proactive leader in the school building (ASCA, n.d.-c; Cinotti, 2014). The modern school counselor is involved in the school improvement process, working with other educational partners to impact the success of all students through data-driven, tiered services (ASCA, n.d.-c, 2025a, 2025b). This section recognizes the historical importance of the evolving school counselor role and title adjustment.

The school counseling profession began in the early 1900's, as of the industrial revolution (Chandler et al., 2018). As a notion to change economic and child labor working conditions as well as introduce educational and occupational opportunities, the concept of vocation was introduced in secondary schools (Gysbers, n.d., 2010; Wingfield et al., 2010). Teachers and administrators often taught vocational concepts in addition to their regular duties (Cinotti, 2014). Experts began to understand the importance of child development and mental wellness in the 1920s (Gysbers, n.d., 2010). They also understood the importance of prevention and made the connection that schools would be an ideal place to impact the highest number of

children. The U.S. military needed a way to test soldiers for role placement purposes (Wingfield et al., 2010). There was an increase in psychometric testing for the individual, versus the whole group. (Gysbers, n.d., 2010).

Federal legislation in the 1940's as well as the late 1950's supported the necessity for school counseling (Gysbers, n.d., 2010). The Vocational Education Act in 1946 reinforced the importance of training and financed the hiring of additional guidance positions (Gysbers, n.d., 2010). Support from the state levels encouraged appropriate counseling duties. Experts continued to debate training courses needed, course hour requirements, but agreed on the need for internships and supervision in a school setting (Gysbers, n.d., 2010). The National Defense Act of 1958 championed funding for additional counselors to help identify students with specific talents and encourage broadening their knowledge in science, math, technology, and world languages (Chandler et al., 2018; Gysbers, n.d., 2010; Wingfield, et al., 2010).

In the 1960's, research focused on roles and responsibilities (Brown & Knight, 2025). Guidance counselor positions moved beyond high school and took a developmentally specialized focus in elementary schools and middle schools (Gysbers, n.d., 2010; Wingfield et al., 2010). Elementary school counselors are experts in all areas of childhood development but utilize specific knowledge and skills in early-childhood development and middle-childhood development. Using their specialized training, elementary counselors recognize early identification of barriers that might impede a child's academic and social skills (ASCA, 2019a; Rhames et al., 2025). Middle school counselors understand the unique physical and mental health needs of the students they serve (Carney et al., 2018). They are experts in both child and adolescent development, providing critical support and education during this transitional time

when students begin to pull away from supportive adults and lean more towards peer support and interaction (ASCA, 2019b).

In the 1970's and 1980's, school counselors continued to provide reactive services that typically impacted a portion of the students within the assigned school(s). They were often delegated administrative or clerical duties inconsistent with their counseling training (Cinotti, 2014). Job duty ambiguity and high caseloads impacted the time school counselors spent in direct contact with students (Brown & Knight, 2025; Gysbers, n.d., 2010). In the late 1980's and into the early 1990's, several states recognized the role ambiguity and supported the development of comprehensive school counseling program models that provided direction to school counselors on how to implement developmental best practices at each level (Brown & Knight, 2025; Gysbers, n.d., 2010; Hatch, 2008). In 2003, ASCA revealed its first ASCA National Model. Since then, ASCA has revised several national models that support the evolving role of the school counselor. Each model outlines the current role of a school counselor and provides detailed information on how school counselors can contribute to the school climate and impact student success. Many state comprehensive school counseling programs are now modeled after the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2025b; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, n.d., 2010).

Recognizing the expectations of the enhanced and diverse role and expertise of a school counselor, a formal change in terminology from guidance counselor to school counselor was requested by ASCA in the 1990's and officially incorporated into federal legislation in the early 2000's (Baker et al., 2021; Gysbers, n.d., 2010; Jordan, 2022; Robinson et al., 2019). Since then, research has recognized the significance of the title shift from guidance counselor to school counselor and noted that the titles are not synonymous (ASCA, n.d.-b; Baker et al., 2021; Zyromski et al., 2019). A former study showed that when school counselor participants were

given a survey labeled “guidance counselor” versus those given a survey labeled “school counselor”, the guidance counselor title statistically influenced their perception of competence. The title guidance counselor was seen as less competent in the ability to perform professional tasks (Zyromski et al., 2019). When the study was replicated with the general population, results were statistically significant once again, noting that using the term guidance counselor impacts competence perception (Baker et al., 2021).

School counselors are charged with advocating for their roles as both an educator and a mental health professional, to dispel misconceptions regarding competency, and clarify their professional identity in schools as an integral part of the school leadership team (Baker et al., 2021). School counselors work with educational partners to reduce academic barriers and utilize school and community resources that encourage academic and personal growth (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). They are qualified and licensed/certified to address standards and competencies and deliver developmentally appropriate prevention and intervention services that impact a student's academic, social-emotional, and career growth at all levels (ASCA, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2025c, 2025d, 2025e). The next section describes the unique qualifications and licensure requirements of school counselors.

### **Qualifications and Licensure/Certification**

In the United States, most states require the completion of at least a master’s degree in counseling from an accredited institution (ASCA, 2024c; Mitchell et al., 2021). Each state has specific requirements for comprehensive testing to apply for licensure and/or certification credentialing (ASCA, n.d.-a, n.d.-f; Mitchell et al., 2021). School counselors are required to fulfill ongoing education requirements to continue licensure/certification and are encouraged to engage in relevant professional development in current best practices to foster student success.

To protect students and to promote professional practice in an ethical manner, counseling associations also encourage school counselors to uphold professional ethical standards to retain their professional license/certification (ACA, 2014; ASCA, n.d.-a, 2022, 2024c).

To counter the growing need to fill vacant school counselor positions, state departments of education are also granting local districts the option of emergency credentialing, which allows underqualified people to serve in the role of school counselors (KSDE, 2021; Harmon & Ausloos, 2024). Some state agencies such as the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE), allow for a provisional licensure for school counselors. This is a temporary license for those that meet certain qualifications including: completed at least half of their school counseling graduate program course requirements, have a licensed/certified school counselor supervisor, and have verification of employment by a school district (KSDE, n.d.).

However, even with the allowance of a provisional licensure, school counselor positions continue to remain unfilled, and districts may choose to hire adults that do not meet state licensing requirements and have little to no school counseling preparation coursework (Mitchell et al., 2021). “Grow Your Own” counseling models allow adults just starting or still in the first half of the counselor graduate program to serve in the role of a school counselor, until a provisional license can be earned (KSDE, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These models may encourage a different job title until licensure is obtained, to not misrepresent themselves as a credentialed school counselor (KSDE, 2021; Harmon & Ausloos, 2024). Though these well-meaning personnel are filling a gap in services, they do not yet have the knowledge and skill set needed to implement a comprehensive counseling program (ASCA, 2024c). They may not have the leadership and advocacy skills needed to advocate for their role, therefore taking on non-school counseling duties that take time away from the proper implementation of a

comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2024c). They could unintentionally provide interventions that are not developmentally or ethically appropriate and could cause harm (ASCA, 2024c). The following section provides research on the importance of abiding by the ASCA National Model's Ethical Standards for School Counselors.

### **The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors**

Counselors are trained in the continued use and consultation of professional ethical standards (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2022). The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2022) are a self-assessment guide to those serving in any capacity of a school counselor role and inform educational partners of expected behaviors and practices (ASCA, 2025b). The ethical standards provide guidance in the following areas: responsibility to students, responsibility to parents/guardians, school, and self, school counselor directors/administrators/supervisors, school counselor practicum/internship site supervisors, maintenance of standards, and ethical decision-making (ASCA, 2022).

The intent of ethical standards is to protect students from harm as well as provide best practices in the counseling profession. School counselors are charged with reviewing ethical standards on a regular basis as well as staying current in their knowledge of state and federal laws as well as legal cases impacting the profession. In a school system, school counselors work “in loco parentis,” meaning school counselors are trusted to act in the best interest of minors and should keep caregivers informed (Stone, 2022b). Even with years of experience, ethical dilemmas can occur. School counselors are highly encouraged to consult with experienced counselors as well as other colleagues (Stone, 2022b). Furthermore, as part of the ethical standards, school counselors are encouraged to advocate for their role. This includes educating administrators and other educational partners on the components of a comprehensive school

counseling program, including non-school counseling duties and the recommended school counselor to student ratio (ASCA, 2022). The following section describes how caseloads and ratios impact the role of a school counselor.

### **Caseloads and Ratios**

School counselors are tasked with serving the academic, social-emotional, and career needs of each student on their caseload. To provide services in a sustainable manner, the ASCA national model addresses the recommended ratio of one school counselor for every 250 students (ASCA, n.d.-g). While this ratio is aspirational, it is not a reality in most American schools (ASCA, 2026; Donohue et al., 2022). In 2024-2025, the United States averaged 372 students per school counselor. Only four states, Colorado (247), Hawaii (243), New Hampshire (186), and Vermont (172), were below the 250 recommended ratio (ASCA, n.d.-g). Five states were close to or beyond double the recommended ratio, including Arizona with the highest ratio average of 570 students for every school counselor (ASCA, n.d.-g). Not all states have legislative requirements regarding the employment of school counselors. However, states with legal school counselor employment requirements have better student-to-school counselor ratios (Donohue, et al., 2022). While the national average of school counselor ratios has decreased in recent years since COVID-19, it was in part due to emergency federal funding partially earmarked for mental health supports from the American Rescue Plan (Solis, 2024, U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Those temporary dollars ended in September of 2024, and without continued additional funding, there is once again a concern of an increase of students per counselor national ratio as most local districts cannot absorb the costs (Solis, 2024).

Scholars have assessed the benefits of student outcomes when school districts allocate money towards meeting the recommended counselor to student ratio including higher graduation

rates, fewer disciplinary issues, better attendance rates, enrollment in advanced placement (AP) classes (Donahue et al., 2022; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Lapan et al., 2012), higher ACT scores (Lapan et al., 2012), and higher achievement leading to lower achievement gaps (Brown & Knight, 2023). In a six-year study in North Carolina, elementary and middle schools with better ratios experienced increased math scores and decreased absenteeism (Domina et al., 2022). Studies have indicated the positive academic impact and college access of increasing school counselors in schools with economically disadvantaged students and supporting students of color, including black and Hispanic students (Brown & Knight, 2023, 2025; Bryan et al., 2023; Domina et al., 2022). The studies mentioned support the need to continue to increase the ratio of counselors per student and increase direct service time to support student success.

### **Counseling Program Services and Management**

ASCA recommends that school counselors should spend at least 80 percent of their time on direct and indirect services (ASCA 2025a, 2025b; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). This ambitious percentage allows school counselors the adequate time needed to successfully implement a school counseling program. Unfortunately, this percentage is not attainable for many schools due to additional inappropriate roles assigned by administration (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Rhames et al., 2025).

#### ***Direct Services***

Direct services allow school counselors to interact with students by providing life-readiness skills, post-secondary readiness, and academic interventions (ASCA 2025a, 2025b). School counselors can deliver these skills and interventions while counseling the students short-term, either individually or in small groups. Direct services also include providing instruction through large groups, classroom lessons, in small groups, or with individual students (Mullen &

Gutierrez, 2016). Appraisal and advisement are another form of direct services to students. School counselors assist students in the interpretation of the results of tests and inventories. They advise students on the next steps and how to apply the information to their future endeavors (ASCA 2025a, 2025b).

### ***Indirect Services***

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students, as school counselors collaborate or consult with school staff, caregivers, other school services, and community agencies to contribute to the academic success and well-being of each student (ASCA 2025a, 2025b).

Indirect services also include referrals to outside resources, when the needs of students intensify beyond tier one or tier two services (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). The next section discusses how counseling program management can monitor time usage and provide data on duties that take time away from direct and indirect services for students.

### ***Counseling Program Management***

School counselors evaluate their school counseling programs to provide data on the effectiveness of their services and time usage (Donohue et al., 2022). School counselors use participation data, ASCA student standards data, and achievement data to inform educational partners and contribute to student success (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b, 2025d). Participation data measures how many, how often, and what length of time students access the components of their counseling program. Through pre-tests and post-tests, the ASCA student standards data measure the knowledge, skills, and attitudes taught through implementation of the ASCA student standards (ASCA, 2025d). Factors such as attendance, discipline, systemic barriers, student perspectives, and educational partner perspectives can provide valuable information on what is impacting achievement data and interventions needed. The school counseling program can

monitor student progress in these areas to help impact student improvement in areas such as grades, test scores, and graduation rates (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). School counselors also use tools to monitor their time usage and activities (ASCA, n.d.-h). This data provides important information for administration and other stakeholders on how much of the school counselor's work time is allocated in direct services, indirect services, program planning, and fair-share or inappropriate job tasks (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). The next section describes the appropriate and inappropriate roles of a school counselor and how assigned tasks impact direct services with students.

### **Appropriate and Inappropriate School Counseling Duties**

The ASCA National Model is clear about the appropriate and inappropriate roles and responsibilities of a school counselor (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b; Scarborough, 2005). Following these guidelines and experiencing system support and collaboration allows the school counselor to contribute to the academic, social-emotional, and college and career readiness success of all students in the school building through implementing a comprehensive school counseling program (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). When school counselors are faced with high caseloads and inappropriate duties outside of their scope and training, vital time is taken away from direct services for students (Shi & Brown, 2020). Assigning administrative tasks to a school counselor invites opportunities for role conflicts and ethical dilemmas (Chandler et al., 2018).

Authoritarian decision making hinders relationships with students, teachers, and caregivers (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020). One example of an inappropriate activity for school counselors is the coordination and management of Section 504 student accommodation plans (ASCA 2025a, 2025b). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 legislation requires public schools receiving federal funding to provide free and appropriate education for Pk-12 students in

their jurisdiction, regardless of ability. If a student has a mental or physical impairment that limits major life activities, a school team can determine eligibility and appropriate accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). School counselors are a valuable team member in the 504-plan decision making process. School counselors listen to caregiver concerns, advocate for student needs, and help provide ideas for accommodations when appropriate (ASCA, 2024b). However, when a school counselor is put in an administrative role to determine eligibility, assign accommodations to staff members, and ensure teacher follow-through of appropriate accommodations, these tasks create dual relationships compromising the working alliance with students, teachers, and caregivers. These administrative tasks assigned to school counselors can lead to ethical and legal ramifications (ASCA, 2022, 2024b; Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020). Following the ASCA National Model for appropriate and inappropriate activities provides clarity regarding school counselor roles and responsibilities and lessens the risk for legal and ethical issues (ASCA 2025a, 2025b).

Building administrators are charged with delegating tasks and evaluating staff, including school counselors (Chandler et al., 2018; Gonzales et al., 2022). Training on how to best utilize school counselors and the purpose of the comprehensive school counseling program is rarely included in educational administration graduate programs (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Gonzales et al., 2022; Holman et al., 2019; Lane et al., 2020). Though administrators are very familiar with state standards for teaching staff, they may not be aware of counseling specific state and national standards. For example, in a study aimed to gauge the perceptions of Kansas administrators regarding school counseling, almost 90% of Kansas administrators were unfamiliar with the ASCA National Model, let alone 76% were not familiar with the Kansas Comprehensive School Counseling Program (Lane et al., 2020). Administration's lack of knowledge of how school

counselors can contribute to the school's mission and improvement process may contribute to assigning inappropriate tasks (Chandler et al., 2018; Rhames et al., 2025).

School counselors should work directly with leaders in the school building to connect standards to the building school improvement process goals and gather data to identify and address achievement gaps (Gonzales et al., 2022). Such activities include sharing calendars of lessons and events, newsletters, monitoring time spent on appropriate and inappropriate duties, leading advisory council meetings, and attending board of education meetings to present program information (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). Educators, including school counselors, may be assigned or volunteer for additional responsibilities, sometimes known as “fair-share” duties, to support the needs of the school beyond the curriculum (Fye, Bergen et al., 2020). Working intentionally with administration provides an opportunity to develop “social capital”. Building this trust not only illustrates the value of school counselors, but also demonstrates how school counselors are willing to be a contributing member of the school community (Cinotti et al., 2022; Hatch, 2008; Jordan, 2022). School counselors must advocate to make sure these “fair share” duties do not interfere with vital time needed to serve students (Cinotti et al., 2022; Hatch, 2008; Jordan, 2022). The next section includes information on the importance of implementing the ASCA National Model to protect the role of a school counselor.

### **The ASCA National Model**

The American School Counselor Association provides a national model framework for school counselors as a guide to provide continuity as school counselors work to implement a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b; Hatch, 2008). Implementation of the ASCA National Model has shown decreased feelings of burnout as it provides a consistent framework with professional standards and competencies, reducing role ambiguity (Fye, Bergen

et al., 2020; Randick et al., 2018). Rather than operating in isolation to develop the counseling program, the ASCA National Model encourages leadership and collaboration. School counselors work in tandem with educational partners to explore how the counseling program can support the school's mission and improvement plan and contribute to student outcomes (Fye, Bergen et al., 2020). In addition to collaboration, the ASCA National Model promotes developing their school counselor professional identity through advocacy work with educational partners to create systemic change and support the academic success of each student (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023). ASCA recommends school counselor preparation programs provide graduate students with the leadership and data-driven advocacy skills necessary to counter the inappropriate demands of stakeholders and prioritize the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2020; Gonzales et al., 2022).

The ASCA National Model framework involves four components to help support the development, implementation, and assessment of the school counseling program: define, deliver, manage, and assess (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). Under define falls our three sets of standards that guide the school counseling program in the ASCA Model: The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, and the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2022, 2025a, 2025b, 2025d). These standards should be embedded throughout the planning, implementation, and appraisal process (ASCA, 2025b). School counselors deliver tiered services based on data indicating student needs. School counselors are part of the school's multi-disciplinary team impacting student success through the delivery of tiered, evidence-based services through a framework called multi-tiered systems of support, also known as MTSS (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023). Data is gathered from universal screeners, through the progress

monitoring of grades, and the monitoring of other types of information to assess interventions needed (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023). Managing the school counseling program also involves advocacy work including data collection and dissemination to educate and inform educational partners on the student impact of the counseling program (Havlik et al., 2019). ASCA recommends that no more than 20% of a school counselor's time be dedicated to managing and planning the school counseling program and supporting non-school counseling school activities (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b).

### **Counselor Program Accreditation**

Graduating from an accredited program prepares school counselors with the knowledge and experience needed to be effective and ethical in their profession. Accredited colleges and programs are peer-reviewed and demonstrate the ability to meet the high standards set by the profession (Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], n.d.). School counselors graduating from non-accredited programs may not obtain the skill set or internship experience needed and are less prepared for the demands of the profession (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020; Harman & Ausloos, 2024). The next section discusses the accreditation for educator and counselor preparation programs.

#### **Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation**

The Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation is a professional accreditor that reviews college and university education preparation institutions and specific P-12 programs. The set of standards is designed to prepare educators for state licensure, as most states require preparation from an accredited program (CAEP, n.d.). The college of education at universities and colleges can be CAEP accredited. School counseling preparation programs may fall under

the category of the college of education or counseling specific departments at universities and colleges.

### **Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs**

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is considered the gold standard in accreditation, promoting best practices for counseling preparation programs that meet or exceed standards that encourage diversity, ethics, and the changing instructional needs of today's master's and doctoral level students (CACREP, 2023). These standards allow consistency in knowledge, skills, and supervision practices that prepare counselors for the licensure and certification process. CACREP provides accreditation to 969 graduate programs at the master's and doctoral levels in 483 higher learning institutions (CACREP, n.d.). School counselors that graduate from CACREP-accredited programs versus those that graduate from non-accredited programs are more likely to pass the National Counselor Exam (Harman & Ausloos, 2024; Lawson et al., 2017) and are less likely to succumb to ethical violations (Even & Robinson, 2013; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020; Harman & Ausloos, 2024).

Those that attend master's or Education Specialist counseling graduate programs that are CACREP accredited, must fulfill the requirement of 60 course credit hours (Merlin et al., 2017). These include the eight foundational counseling curriculum standards, showing cultural sustaining practices imbedded in each class: professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural identities and experiences, lifespan development, career development, counseling practice and relationships, group counseling and group work, assessment and diagnostic processes, research and program evaluation (CACREP, 2023).

In addition to course expectations, CACREP requires counselor education faculty to systematically monitor a graduate student's professional disposition throughout the program

(CACREP, 2023). In addition to knowledge and counseling skills, graduate students should also possess the professional core values, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to become competent counselors (Christensen et al., 2018). Counselor educator faculty act as gatekeepers to the profession, ensuring graduate students have the ability to serve clients and students. Data is gathered from several evaluations throughout the program, and if deemed necessary, data may show the need for retention, remediation, or even dismissal (CACREP, 2023).

Furthermore, counseling graduate students must also engage in supervised practicum and internship hours. CACREP standards require 100 supervised practicum hours, including 40 hours of direct service to clients, 1.5 hours a week of group supervision, and one hour a week of individual/triadic supervision completed in one semester. Students must also complete 600 hours of internship, including 240 hours of direct service to clients, 1.5 hours a week of group supervision, and one hour a week of individual/triadic supervision completed in one semester (CACREP, 2023). The next section dives into the importance of supervision in school counseling.

### **Supervision in School Counseling**

School counselors attending accredited programs benefit from supervision towards the end of the graduate program. Supervision allows a supervised opportunity to develop counselor competence and utilize wellness skills needed to thrive in their professional identity (Blount & Mullen, 2015). School counselors receive in-person or virtual supervision during practicum and internship from both the counseling graduate program institution and from site supervisors located in proximity to their school (CACREP, 2023). The school counseling program course work and internship experiences should be designed to provide an opportunity to practice applying counseling theory and advocacy skills in a realistic environment so that novice school

counselors feel prepared for the reality of the job (Brown et al., 2018; Gonzales et al., 2022). High standards of accreditation require school counselors to complete a 100-hour supervised practicum and a 600-hour supervised internship during their graduate training (CACREP, 2023).

Supervision from both the counseling graduate program supervisor and a site supervisor allows for a safe space for emerging school counselors to engage in confidential conversations regarding best practices, culture responsiveness, resources, and ethical dilemmas. During individual or triadic sessions, counseling graduate program supervisors and school counseling students view and discuss recorded video or audio of counseling sessions. Institution supervisors are usually trained doctoral students or counselor educators (CACREP, 2023) that play a role in encouraging self-care practices and other healthy coping skill practices to help school counselors maintain ethical and professional effectiveness (Evans Zalewski et al., 2024). Site supervisors, usually an experienced school counselor, model counseling practices, answer questions, provide resources, and evaluate the counselor in training progress throughout the semester (Blount & Mullen, 2015).

Early-career school counselors can also benefit from post-graduation supervision (Brott et al., 2021; Evans Zalewski et al., 2024). When school counselors participated in continued post-graduation school counseling-specific supervision, they experienced higher levels of wellness (Fye, Kim, et al., 2022), lower levels of burnout (Fye, Bergen, et al., 2020; Fye, Kim, et al., 2022; Gnilka et al., 2015; Moyer, 2011), were at less risk of role ambiguity (Bledsoe et al., 2021), increased their self-efficacy in engaging in school counseling best practices (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Tang, 2020) and improved their school counseling professional identity (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023).

Despite the benefits of post-graduate supervision, most novice school counselors receive little to no post-graduate clinical supervision (Bardhoshi et al., 2022; Bledsoe et al., 2021; Culbreth et al., 2005; Fye, Bergen, et al., 2020; Moyer, 2011). Researchers stated that school counselors are willing to engage in post-graduate supervision (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Evans Zalewski et al., 2024), but several reasons contribute to a lack in pursuing it. The cost of supervision, lack of time during the school day to engage in supervision, and accessibility issues due to a shortage of trained school counselors able to clinically supervise, especially in rural areas, all pose as barriers to post-graduate supervision (Bledsoe et al., 2021). Post-graduate supervision and mentoring can then fall on site supervisors, who may have experience, but may have little to no training in supervision (Merlin-Knoblich et al., 2018). Early-career school counselors may be supervised by administration or other non-school counseling educators, who are not always trained in the role of a school counselor and in professional best practices (Bledsoe et al., 2021; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023; Tang, 2020). Research supports the significance of clinical post-graduate supervision, including mitigation of stress and burnout as school counselors navigate organizational factors (Evans Zalewski et al., 2024; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Tang, 2020). The next section describes the impact of burnout on the counselor profession.

## **Burnout**

### **Counselor Burnout**

Counselors face job-related challenges as part of the scope of their practice (Cook et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2007). Additional burdens can take a stressful toll such as limited funding, policy requirements or changes, and heavy caseloads (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). Counselors bear ethical pressure to balance their own mental and physical capacity to effectively service

clients/students (Cook et al., 2021; Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). Research has noted burnout in counselors as early as those still in counselor preparation graduate programs (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). The next section dives into the specific impact of burnout on school counselors.

### **School Counselor Burnout**

Studies have compared burnout amongst different classifications of counselors. Research reported school counselors score higher on exhaustion and negative work environment on the CBI compared to other classifications of counselors (Fye, Bergen et al., 2020; Gnilka et al., 2015). Furthermore, early-career school counselors are vulnerable to a higher risk of burnout than more experienced school counselors (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Mullen et al., 2018). School counselors are burning out due to organizational factors that impact their practice and ability to serve students (Gnilka et al., 2015). Bardhoshi et al. (2014) conveyed an example of organizational factors influencing school counselor burnout in their qualitative research. Even though the school counselors in their study experienced “adverse and personal effects, including feeling exhausted and burned out,” some school counselors became complicit to the additional non-school counseling tasks as a “reality of their job” asking the common question, “who will do the duty if we were not to” (p. 432). Given the detrimental consequences of burnout, ASCA’s ethical codes encourage school counselors to monitor burnout as well as engage in wellness practices and consultation to mitigate the negative effects (ASCA, 2022; Kim & Lambie, 2018). Reducing burnout in school counselors can impact the number of school counselors leaving the field. There is a financial incentive for districts when retainment contributes to less hiring and training of new school counselors (Limberg et al., 2021). It may be necessary for colleagues and supervisors to intervene and to help impaired counselors refrain from behavior that could cause

harm to those they serve (ACA, 2014; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023). The next section shares current literature on school counselor wellness practices to help mitigate the effects of burnout.

### **School Counselor Wellness**

A school counselor's well-being not only impacts their own professional and personal life, but it also contributes to the quality of care they provide for students (Um & Bardhoshi, 2025). Current research suggests that both organizational and individual factors contribute to the well-being of school counselors (Fye, Cook, et al., 2022; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023).

Organizational factors causing stress and burnout that impact school counselor wellness are not always within the control of school counselors (Brown & Knight, 2025; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). Examples of organizational factors leading to school counselor unwellness are role ambiguity, inflated student to school counselor ratios, inadequate time allocated to spend on direct services to students, and engagement in non-school counselor assigned tasks (Fye, Cook et al., 2020; Fye, Miller, et al., 2018; Randick et al., 2018). Subsequently, administrative support is needed to decrease organizational factors and systemic barriers impacting school counselor stress and burnout (Mullen et al., 2021). Literature encourages the expansion of administration knowledge on the role of a school counselor and understanding of how their school counselor's leadership can contribute to the school climate and student success. In addition, literature also states the importance of administrative endorsement for the ASCA Model (Cinotti et al., 2022; Gonzales et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2020; Um & Bardoshi, 2025). Implementation of the ASCA National Model has predicted school counselor job satisfaction and has lessened role stress in areas such as role ambiguity (Fye, Schumacker, et al., 2022).

School counselors are charged with balancing the well-being of students while also monitoring individual factors that impact their own personal well-being (Randick et al., 2018;

Winburn et al., 2018). A counselor must also take into consideration the roles they serve inside and outside of school and the impact their job has on relationships, boundaries, and self-care (Gibson et al., 2021). The Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) Counselor Wellness Competencies address the importance of self-care, self-monitoring for stress, burnout, and impairment, as well as professional support practices where “counselors appropriately seek, utilize, and provide consultation, supervision, education, mentorship, and/or personal counseling to maintain healthy personal/professional environments” (CSI, 2020; Gibson et al., 2021). The following sections discuss current literature contributions regarding staying professionally connected and how self-monitoring is vital to the well-being of school counselors.

### **Staying Professionally Connected**

Ethical standards in the counseling profession encourage consultation, collaboration, and continued education throughout a school counselor's career (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2022). Starting in graduate preparation training, emerging school counselors are encouraged to obtain professional memberships through state and national associations (Bardhoshi et al., 2022). Professional organizations contribute to school counselor's wellness by providing connection and universality, knowing they are not alone in the barriers impacting their profession. Professional organizations provide continued education on best practices, including self-care, advocacy, and solution-focused interventions (ACA, n.d.-b; ASCA, n.d.-d; Um & Bardoshi, 2025). Attending relevant professional development is important for intentionally connecting early-career school counselors to more experienced colleagues and opportunities for collaboration and continued skill expansion (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Um & Bardoshi, 2025). In rural districts, the connection and collaboration with other school counselors is vital. A school counselor might be the solo school counselor for the district or even one of few located in the geographical area

(Harmon & Ausloos, 2024). Staying professionally connected is important to stay current in best practices and encourages school counselor wellness (CSI, 2020). The next section addresses hope as a predictor of wellness for school counselors.

### **Addressing Hope in School Counselors**

Numerous scholars continue to report that hope is a significant predictor of mental well-being, and the science of hope can be taught (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022; Hellman et al., 2012; Munoz et al., 2018). Research has also suggested that hope is a protective factor to mitigate workplace burnout (Miller et al., 2024; Niles, Dorias, et al., 2024). A recent study in child welfare workers indicated that while both hope and resilience are protective factors to lower burnout, hope was a larger predictor (Pharris et al., 2022). Hope has been acknowledged not only as a protective factor, but research has also shown that the impact of hope on self-efficacy might have more of an impact than reduced burnout (Ender et al., 2019; Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024).

When counselors know their own hope level, it can determine their effectiveness as their hope levels can impact those they serve (Snyder, 1995). Counselors that do not self-monitor may not recognize impairment, impacting their job performance and attendance (Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). The CSI Counselor Wellness Competencies encourage self-monitoring and personal wellness-based goal setting and plans (CSI, 2020). Learning how to assess school counselor hope, set goals through hope in action, and navigate obstacles early on, contributes to job satisfaction and stress/burnout mitigation (Niles, Mullen, et al., 2024). Hope has also been shown to be a predictor of job satisfaction in school counselors, even in the presence of stress, supporting that school counselors with high hope can plan different pathways to overcome obstacles experienced in their job (Niles, Mullen, et al., 2024). A research study in Turkey examined the mediational role that both hope and school counselor burnout had between

mindfulness and school counselor self-efficacy. The correlation in this study between hope and counselor burnout could indicate that as a school counselors' hope increases, burnout decreases (Ender et al., 2019; Niles, Mullen, et al., 2024). Research suggests the need for counselor educators to encourage the self-monitoring of hope starting in counselor graduate preparation programs. It also suggests continued support monitoring hope throughout a school counselor's career (Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024; Niles et al., 2025; Niles, Mullen, et al., 2024).

### **Literature Gap**

Research has indicated that implementation of the ASCA National Model predicts job satisfaction and less role ambiguity in school counselors (Fye, Schumacker, et al., 2022). There is a gap in literature focusing specifically on measuring the novice school counselors expected and actual activities, using the ASCA National Model for appropriate and inappropriate tasks and activities delegated to school counselors. Understanding the alignment between the novice school counselors' actual duties and expected duties will provide data to help supervisors prepare emerging school counselors, by assisting them in developing advocacy skills in a safe space with supervision. It can also help early-career school counselors and post-graduate supervisors, mentors, and educational partners advocate for the ASCA National Model, impacting student achievement, school counselor wellness, and retention (Harman & Ausloos, 2024).

Recent literature has studied several factors impacting school counselor burnout, including altruism, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, role stress, less years of experience, work engagement, organizational resources, counselor service delivery, school counselor ACEs, and professional identity (Brown et al., 2024; Ender et al., 2019; Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Limberg et al, 2021; Maor & Hemi, 2021; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Niles,

Dorias, et al., 2024; Um & Bardoshi, 2025). However, limited research has focused on early career school counselors who tend to be more susceptible to burnout.

Researchers have also studied the impact of measuring hope to mitigate burnout in occupations that work with children, including child abuse pediatric clinicians, child welfare workers, and recently school counselors (Ender et al., 2019; Niles, Dorias, et al., 2024; Passmore et al., 2020; Pharris et al., 2022). However, little research has focused on the impact of hope and its subfactors, agency and pathways, specifically on early-career school counselors.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

All aspects of the research methodology the researcher used in this study are reported in this chapter. The information is organized into the following sections: (1) Research Questions, (2) Participants, (3) Measures (4) Research Design, (5) Procedure-Data Collection, and (5) Data Analysis.

### **Research Questions**

This quantitative study examined early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its two factors of agency and pathways, inversely influenced burnout within the first five years of their profession, which in turn supports school counselor retention.

**RQ1:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ2:** Are the actual early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ3:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the actual activities?

**RQ4:** Is the misalignment of actual early-career school counselor activities and expected activities associated with burnout?

**RQ5:** Does hope and its two subscales, agency and pathways, influence burnout amongst early-career school counselors?

## **Participants**

Participants included in this study were school counselors who were hired full-time in a public or private grades P-12 school setting and served in the school counseling role for five years or less. Due to specifically studying early-career school counselors, excluded from the study were those that served in the role of a school counselor for more than five years and were not currently hired full-time in a public or private school. Participants were recruited by posting the call for participants on the American School Counselor Association's ASCA Member Community Open Forum, an online community for ASCA members, designed for networking (ASCA, n.d.-d). The researcher emailed a call for participants to school counselor program coordinators in the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) region. Due to the high volume of school counselor programs in the United States, the researcher chose to email program coordinators of school counseling programs located specifically in the states of the NCACES region to share this research opportunity with potential recruits. States in this region include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin (NCACES, n.d.). Furthermore, due to the high number of State School Counseling Associations (SCAs) granted through ASCA (ASCA, n.d.-e), the researcher kept it consistent by emailing the designated contacts only in SCAs located in the same states as NCACES. SCAs were asked to share the research study recruitment information with their school counselor members.

## **Measures**

Participants were asked to anonymously complete three main instruments—Hope Scale (Appendix A), Counselor Burnout Inventory (Appendix B), SCARS Modified (Appendix C), and

an online 20-item Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey (see Appendix D) designed by the researcher.

### **The Trait Hope Scale**

Qualifying participants took the Trait Hope Scale, also known as the Adult Hope Scale and The Future Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The Future Scale is used for the title when administering the instrument, per recommendation of the authors (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 1991). This self-reported instrument is used to measure a person's hopeful disposition level towards goal attainment. Hope is a cognitive process that is considered consistent across both situations and time (Hellman et al., 2012; Snyder et al., 1991). The Hope Scale consists of two components: (1) agency-the motivation and determination to achieve one's goals (4 items); and (2) pathway-the ability to plan strategies to reach these goals, even when facing obstacles (4 items). The agency and pathway factors are related yet independent factors. These two factors can be scored separately. They can also be combined into a total hope score. There are also four filler or distracter items that are not included in the total hope score. These fillers were not included in this research study. Each item is measured on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = definitely false, 2 = mostly false, 3 = somewhat false, 4 = slightly false, 5 = slightly true, 6 = somewhat true, 7 = mostly true, and 8 = definitely true. Exemplary Pathway items on the instrument include, "I can think of ways to get out of a jam" and "Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem." Exemplary Agency items included are, "I met the goals I set for myself" and "My past experiences have prepared me well for my future." Adding the 4 agency items and the 4 pathway items equals the total Hope Score. A higher score indicates a higher level of hope. No level differences in sex have been noted (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1995).

While researching the internal structure of the Hope Scale, Snyder (1995) reported “acceptable internal reliability” (p. 357). Each item had remainder coefficients that ranged from .23 to .63 and a coefficient alpha range of .74 to .84. Results showed an intercorrelation between the four pathway items and the four agency items, showing both the appropriateness for using a total score and the use of each subscale separately. The two subscales have correlated in the range of + 0.40, supporting the idea that the two factors of hope “are related but not synonymous” (p. 357). Readministering the Hope Scale in intervals between 3-10 weeks showed a test-retest reliability of .80. In their study linking goal-directed thinking and life meaning, Feldman and Snyder (2005) reported Cronbach’s alpha of .85 in a sample of 139 University of Kansas college student participants that took the total Hope Scale.

Over 2,000 studies have been published on the power of hope since Snyder’s original studies (Gwinn & Hellman, 2022) including the areas of child welfare workers, mental health, and education. Studies continue to show good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and a high test-retest score of 0.80 (Hellman et al., 2012). Scholars have measured each subscale separately, such as the Niles, Mullen, et al. (2024) study on a sample size of 450 school counselors, with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  value of .84 for Agency and  $\alpha$  of .82 for Pathways. This research also studied each of the subscales separately.

### **Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI)**

Participants took The Counselor Burnout Inventory (Lee et al., 2007). The Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI) is a 20-item instrument that measures the level of burnout in counselors as well as assesses their work environment. Burnout is displayed when clinicians are unable to perform normally expected tasks due to feelings of exhaustion and discouragement, possibly due to excessive duties and systemic stress. Burnout can cause counselors to display apathy towards

clients and perform less client care (Lee et al., 2007). The CBI measures five dimensions: Exhaustion (e.g. “I feel exhausted due to my work as a counselor.”), Negative Work Environment (e.g., “I feel bogged down by the system in my workplace”), Devaluing Client (e.g., “I am no longer concerned about the welfare of my clients”), Incompetence (e.g., “I do not feel like I am making a change in my clients”) and Deterioration in Personal Life (e.g. “My relationships with family members have been negatively impacted by my work as a counselor”). Each subscale has 4 questions that use a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = never true to 5 = always true. Each subscale can range from a low score of 4 to a high score of 20 or a total score maximum of 100. The higher the score, the higher the level of burnout is indicated. The internal consistency reliability of the CBI was demonstrated by Cronbach’s alpha of .88 with each of the CBI subscales ranging from .73 to .85. With the test-retest of 18 counselors, there was an overall correlation coefficient of .81 and a range of .72 - .85 for the 5 subscales (Lee et al., 2007).

Several studies have confirmed the CBI’s five factor structure as a good model, specifically for school counselors (Bardoshi et al., 2019; Gniska et al., 2015). Fye, Cook, et al. (2020) reported internal consistency reliability coefficients for the CBI subscales ranging from .78 - .89 on a sample of 227 school counselors. Bardhoshi et al. (2022) reported CBI subscale alpha coefficients ranging from .68 - .87, and .90 for the total scale on a sample size of 231 novice school counselors.

### **The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS) and SCARS Modified**

The original School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (Scarborough, 2005; Scarborough & Culbreath, 2008), or SCARS, is an instrument used to help school counselors gather perceptual data of their actual job duties, or what they are required to do on the job, versus their

preferred roles, or what they prefer to do, based on how they have been trained in graduate school/labeled as appropriate professional activities by the American School Counselor Association. The original SCARS used a five-point verbal frequency scale. The actual frequency for each item ranges from 1 = I never do this, 2 = I rarely do this, 3 = I occasionally do this, 4 = I frequently do this, and 5 = I routinely do this. The preferred frequency for each item ranges from 1 = I would prefer to never do this, 2 = I would prefer to rarely do this, 3 = I would prefer to occasionally do this, 4 = I would prefer to frequently do this, and 5 = I would prefer to routinely do this. With permission, Lane et al. (2020) adapted the SCARS to capture the perception of Kansas administrators on the role of a school counselor. They developed a five-part instrument, SCARS Modified, allowing administrative participants an opportunity to share what they perceived to know regarding the parts of a comprehensive school counseling program, including their knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate school counseling roles and duties. This second section of the SCARS Modified used a descriptive scale to match a response of 66% or above as highly agreeing/highly disagreeing with the statement, 33-65% as moderately agreeing/moderately disagreeing, and below 33% indicated low agreement/low disagreement.

The researcher was granted permission by the original author (Appendix E) to take SCARS and adapt it to the school counselor's actual and expected (versus the word preferred) job responsibilities with current recommendations from the Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). This modified instrument, SCARS Modified, measured descriptive data, with 28 statements that include activities that ASCA deems appropriate, such as "appraisal and advisement for academic planning" and "providing short-term individual and small-group counseling services to students" and activities ASCA deems inappropriate, such as "building the master schedule" and "coordinating school/district cognitive,

aptitude and achievement testing programs". Early-career school counselor participants responded if the item was an expected activity based on their training and what they knew of the current ASCA National Model (appropriate, inappropriate, or unsure). They also responded if they were required to perform the activity in their current job (yes or no).

### **Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey**

Lastly, the 20-item Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey included basic demographic questions such as ethnicity, gender, and geographical location of their school. It asked additional questions specifically related to the identity and role of an early-career school counselor such as current school counselor caseload size, CACREP accreditation of attended graduate program, professional counselor membership, etc.

### **Research Design**

This quantitative study used a non-experimental approach given the nature of the non-manipulatable predictors (Yang, 2025). Caution should be used when making causal inference. The researcher gathered descriptive information regarding early-career school counselor expected and actual duties and to what degree there is misalignment between the two. A bivariate correlation analysis was used to examine the potential association between duty misalignment and burnout. A linear multiple regression analysis was used to examine if hope and its two subfactors of the hope scale, agency and pathways (independent variables) influence burnout (dependent variable) statistically. Though the researcher used the word "influence" in research question five, it was strictly a statistical use of the word in this non-experimental approach. No variables were controlled or influenced. For the fifth research question, the researcher conducted an a priori power analysis using G\*Power Software (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009). A

sample size of 68 was determined to be sufficient to achieve statistical significance with a medium effect at an alpha level of .05 and power of 0.80, with two predictors.

### **Procedure (Data Collection)**

The researcher obtained approval from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix F). Once permission was received to proceed, an initial invitation was posted on the online ASCA Member Community Open Forum and was sent by email to the school counselor program coordinators and SCAs located in the NCACES region (Appendix G). A final participation email reminder and two follow-up ASCA Member Community Open Forum posts were sent to encourage participation.

The data collection was voluntarily based, anonymous, and conducted virtually via Qualtrics, an online survey. Interested school counselor participants were directed to an informational link describing the purpose, data protection strategies, and the procedure of the research study. No compensation was given for participating in any part of this research study.

School counselor participants gave consent electronically by agreeing to complete the survey (Appendix H). Participants verified if they were currently employed full-time in a public or private P-12 school and served in the role of a school counselor for five years or less. Those that met the inclusion criteria continued to the rest of the online survey. The Qualtrics survey included the Hope Scale, Counselor Burnout Inventory, SCARS Modified, and demographics survey. Survey data was securely stored on a password-protected online server to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Participant data from the Qualtrics survey was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The aggregated, anonymous data was cleaned to exclude any incomplete

surveys. The survey answers were coded and categorized in SPSS. The researcher used a descriptive analysis for the first three research questions. The researcher also used a descriptive analysis for the demographics. For research question four, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted between the alignment score and the CBI. Finally, for research question five, a multiple linear regression was conducted between the total hope score and the CBI, as well as with the individual factors of hope, agency and pathway, with the CBI.

## **Chapter 4 - Results**

### **Purpose**

This quantitative study examined early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its two factors agency and pathways, can inversely influence burnout within the first five years of their profession, which in turn supports school counselor retention.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ2:** Are the actual early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

**RQ3:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the actual activities?

**RQ4:** Is the misalignment of actual early-career school counselor activities and expected activities associated with burnout?

**RQ5:** Does hope and its two subscales, agency and pathways, influence burnout amongst early-career school counselors?

### **Participants**

Participants in this quantitative study were recruited through convenience sampling. After obtaining permission from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board, the researcher posted an initial invitation to the online American School Counselor Association's ASCA Member Community Open Forum. An initial email invitation was also sent to the school

counselor program coordinators and School Counselor Associations (SCAs) located in the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) regions, with a request to send out the invitation to possible participants. One follow-up email was sent to the school counselor program coordinators and SCAs. Two follow-up invites were posted to the online ASCA Member Community Open Forum.

The anonymous data collection via Qualtrics began January 26, 2026, and closed on March 9, 2026. During this period, interested participants were directed to a link describing the purpose, data protection strategies, and the procedure of this quantitative research study. No compensation was given to the participants. There were 123 responses recorded in Qualtrics. Data were imported directly from Qualtrics into The IBM SPSS Statistics (Mac Version 31.0.0.0), were cleaned, and then the researcher conducted all statical analyses. Of the 123 responses, 18 respondents were excluded within the first two exclusionary questions. Specifically, six respondents did not meet the qualifications of working full-time in the role of a school counselor for any grade level P-12. Another 12 of the 18 excluded respondents did not meet the qualification of working in the role of an early-career school counselor in years one to five. Twenty participants chose not to move forward after meeting both qualifying questions.

This research survey was voluntary, and participants could choose to not answer questions and could choose to not continue to the next scale. Therefore, participant numbers varied by scale. The following surveys are shown in order presented. The Hope Scale was completed by 85 participants. The Counselor Burnout Inventory was completed by 80 participants. The SCARS Modified Survey (ASCA Expected section) was completed by 79 participants. Both the SCARS Modified Survey (ASCA Actual section) and the Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey were completed by 75 participants. First year school

counselors responded to the survey at the highest rate (29.4%), and fourth year counselors responded at the lowest rate (15.3%).

**Table 4.1**

*Early-Career School Counselor Data (n = 85)*

|                                                | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Year Serving in the Role of a School Counselor |           |            |
| First                                          | 25        | 29.4       |
| Second                                         | 17        | 20.0       |
| Third                                          | 16        | 18.8       |
| Fourth                                         | 13        | 15.3       |
| Fifth                                          | 14        | 16.5       |

## Demographic Data

Descriptive statistical data regarding participant demographics was recorded in Table 4.2. Most respondents reported as female (90.7%) and White or European (88%). The majority of respondents reported having an undergraduate degree other than education (65.3%). When respondents disclosed their Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) score, 28% reported having an ACEs score of three or higher and 16% reported having an ACES score of 4 or higher. Of those that chose to share their ACEs score, 48% of participants reported they did not know their ACEs score.

**Table 4.2**

*Participant Demographic Data (n = 75)*

|                                | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                         |           |            |
| Male                           | 7         | 9.3        |
| Female                         | 68        | 90.7       |
| Non-binary                     | -         | -          |
| Other                          | -         | -          |
| Prefer Not to Say              | -         | -          |
| Ethnicity (all that apply)     |           |            |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 1         | 1.3        |
| Asian/Asian American           | 3         | 4.0        |
| Black or African American      | 4         | 5.3        |

|                                            |    |      |
|--------------------------------------------|----|------|
| Hispanic or Latino                         | 6  | 8.0  |
| White or European                          | 66 | 88.0 |
| Other                                      | -  | -    |
| Prefer Not to Say                          | -  | -    |
| Undergraduate Degree in Education          |    |      |
| Yes                                        | 26 | 34.7 |
| No                                         | 49 | 65.3 |
| Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Score |    |      |
| 0                                          | 7  | 9.3  |
| 1                                          | 4  | 5.3  |
| 2                                          | 6  | 8.0  |
| 3                                          | 9  | 12.0 |
| 4                                          | 5  | 6.7  |
| 5 or More                                  | 7  | 9.3  |
| Unsure of ACEs Score                       | 36 | 48.0 |
| Prefer Not to Say                          | 1  | 1.3  |

Descriptive statistical data regarding school counselor licensure and training were recorded in Table 4.3. Participants were asked to share their licensure and school-counselor training background. The majority reported full licensure as a school counselor (69.3%). Over a quarter of the respondents (26.7%) reported working full-time in the role of a school counselor and were on a provisional license. However, 4% also responded that they were working full-time in the role of a school counselor and were not fully licensed as a school counselor, nor were they on a provisional license. A majority of participants were former graduates of a counseling program (80%), while 20% were still graduate students in a current counselor program. Among the respondents who were still graduate students in a current counselor program, the most common supervision was provided by a site supervisor (73.3%).

Over half of early-career school counselor graduates did not have a mentor of any kind (56.7%). Of the graduates that had a mentor, only 16.7% of graduates had a school counselor mentor in their building, and 11.7% had a mentor that was not a school counselor. Most

respondents noted they were currently attending or previously attended a CACREP accredited counselor program (73.3%).

**Table 4.3**

*School Counselor Licensure and Training Demographic Data (n = 75)*

|                                                                           | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Licensed as a School Counselor (n = 75)                                   |           |            |
| Yes, Fully Licensed                                                       | 52        | 69.3       |
| Yes, but on a Provisional                                                 | 20        | 26.7       |
| No                                                                        | 3         | 4.0        |
| Current Graduate Status (n = 75)                                          |           |            |
| Still in Graduate Program                                                 | 15        | 20.0       |
| Graduate of a Counseling Program                                          | 60        | 80.0       |
| Those Still in a Counseling Program (all that apply; n = 15)              |           |            |
| Supervised by a Counselor Educator                                        | 5         | 33.3       |
| Supervised by a Doctoral Student/ Graduate Teaching Assistant             | 3         | 20.0       |
| Supervised by a Site Supervisor                                           | 11        | 73.3       |
| Supervised by Other                                                       | 2         | 13.3       |
| Not Currently Receiving Supervision                                       | 4         | 26.7       |
| Graduated from a Counseling Program (all that apply; n = 60)              |           |            |
| School Counselor Mentor in the Same Building                              | 10        | 16.7       |
| School Counselor Mentor in District                                       | 11        | 18.3       |
| School Counselor Mentor in State                                          | 2         | 3.3        |
| Mentor is not a School Counselor                                          | 7         | 11.7       |
| Do Not Have a Mentor                                                      | 34        | 56.7       |
| Attended or Still Attending a CACREP Accredited Graduate Program (n = 75) |           |            |
| Yes                                                                       | 55        | 73.3       |
| No                                                                        | 12        | 16.0       |
| Unsure                                                                    | 8         | 10.7       |

Descriptive statistical data regarding professional association membership was recorded in Table 4.4. Most respondents belonged to one or more professional counselor organizations. For those that belonged to a national professional counselor organization, 78.7% reported being a member of ASCA only. Those holding both ASCA and ACA memberships accounted for 17.3% of the respondents. Seventy-six percent reported belonging to a state professional organization.

**Table 4.4***Professional Association Demographic Data (n = 75)*

|                                                                  | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Current Member of a National Professional Counselor Organization |           |            |
| Yes, both ASCA and ACA                                           | 13        | 17.3       |
| Yes, ASCA Only                                                   | 59        | 78.7       |
| No, Not a Member                                                 | 2         | 2.7        |
| Unsure                                                           | 1         | 1.3        |
| Current Member of a State Professional Counselor Organization    |           |            |
| Yes                                                              | 57        | 76.0       |
| No                                                               | 14        | 18.7       |
| Unsure                                                           | 4         | 5.3        |

Descriptive statistics regarding participant school and student population demographics were recorded in Table 4.5. Most respondents (86.7%) currently serve in a public school setting. The respondent's community location of school was reported as follows: rural (34.7%), urban (28.0%), suburban (36.0%), and online (1.3%). The respondents served in a variety of grade levels, with the highest numbers in elementary, serving grades P-5 (34.7%), and high school, serving grades 9-12 (21.3%). The largest percentage of school population served by early-career school counselor participants was a population size of 251-500 students (44%) and the smallest population size was 1751-2000 (1.3%). Most respondents (58.7%) did not have a registrar.

**Table 4.5***School Specific Demographic Data (n = 75)*

|                               | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| School Setting                |           |            |
| Public                        | 65        | 86.7       |
| Private                       | 10        | 13.3       |
| Community Location of School  |           |            |
| Rural                         | 26        | 34.7       |
| Urban                         | 21        | 28.0       |
| Suburban                      | 27        | 36.0       |
| Online                        | 1         | 1.3        |
| Current Grade Level(s) Served |           |            |

|                                        |    |      |
|----------------------------------------|----|------|
| Elementary (P-5)                       | 26 | 34.7 |
| Middle School (6-8)                    | 14 | 18.7 |
| High School (9-12)                     | 16 | 21.3 |
| Secondary (6-12)                       | 4  | 5.3  |
| Mult-level (other)                     | 8  | 10.7 |
| All Grade Levels Combined              | 7  | 9.3  |
| Total Size of School Enrollment        |    |      |
| <250                                   | 11 | 14.7 |
| 251-500                                | 33 | 44.0 |
| 501-750                                | 13 | 17.3 |
| 751-1000                               | 5  | 6.7  |
| 1001-1250                              | 3  | 4.0  |
| 1251-1500                              | 2  | 2.7  |
| 1501-1750                              | 2  | 2.7  |
| 1751-2000                              | 1  | 1.3  |
| >2000                                  | 5  | 6.7  |
| Counseling Department Registrar        |    |      |
| Yes, Not Shared with Other Departments | 17 | 22.7 |
| Yes, Shared with Other Departments     | 14 | 18.7 |
| No                                     | 44 | 58.7 |

As shown in Table 4.6, almost 63% of respondents had a student caseload above the ASCA recommended ratio of 250 students to each school counselor. Forty-five percent of respondents worked in a school where 51% or more of their students were on free and reduced lunches.

**Table 4.6**  
*Students Served Demographic Data (n = 75)*

|                                                | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Number of Students on Caseload                 |           |            |
| <200                                           | 20        | 26.7       |
| 201-250                                        | 8         | 10.7       |
| 251-300                                        | 8         | 10.7       |
| 301-350                                        | 12        | 16.0       |
| 351-400                                        | 7         | 9.3        |
| 401-500                                        | 10        | 13.3       |
| 501+                                           | 10        | 13.3       |
| Percentage of Students on Free/Reduced Lunches |           |            |
| 0-10                                           | 7         | 9.3        |
| 11-20                                          | 10        | 13.3       |
| 21-30                                          | 2         | 2.7        |
| 31-40                                          | 7         | 9.3        |
| 41-50                                          | 7         | 9.3        |
| 51-60                                          | 3         | 4.0        |

|        |    |      |
|--------|----|------|
| 61-70  | 3  | 4.0  |
| 71-80  | 4  | 5.3  |
| 81-90  | 5  | 6.7  |
| 91-100 | 19 | 25.3 |
| Unsure | 8  | 10.7 |

### **Reliability of Hope Scale**

Cronbach's alpha is used to measure the internal reliability, or consistency in measuring the construct. Both the total scale and its subfactors should be evaluated (Field, 2013). The researcher calculated Cronbach's alpha for both the total Hope Scale and its two subfactors, agency and pathways ( $n = 85$ ). The internal reliability of the 8-item Hope Scale was found to be high, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .851$ . The four items of the subfactor Agency had a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .780$ . The four items of the subfactor Pathways had a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .682$ . At least two studies have reported pathways  $\alpha = <.70$ , including the original study of the Hope Scale,  $\alpha$  range of .63-.80 (Snyder et al., 1991) and  $\alpha = .68$  (Ferrari et al., 2012). Cronbach alpha levels of less than .70 can be attributed to a low number of test questions and can happen in psychological constructs in social sciences (Field, 2013). Item-total correlations for agency range from .575-.679 and pathways range from .377-.559, all above the .3 acceptable level (Field, 2013).

### **Reliability of the Counselor Burnout Inventory**

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal reliability of the Counselor Burnout Inventory and its five subscales. There were five excluded cases as five respondents chose not to continue with the rest of the survey ( $n = 80$ ). The internal reliability of the total 20-item Counselor Burnout Inventory was found to be high,  $\alpha = .906$ . Similarly, the internal reliability was satisfactory for all five subscales - Negative Work Experience,  $\alpha = .815$ ; Devalue Client,  $\alpha = .781$ ; Deterioration in Personal Life,  $\alpha = .796$ ; Exhaustion,  $\alpha = .894$ ; and Incompetence,  $\alpha = .792$ .

## **Analytic Results**

This section addresses the descriptive and analytic results regarding each research question (RQ).

**RQ1:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

### **ASCA Expected, SCARS Modified Survey**

Descriptive statistics for the ASCA Expected portion of the SCARS Modified Survey are presented in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. These tables show the frequency and percentage of alignment and misalignment for each item. Respondents viewed the list of possible activities that may be performed by school counselors and answered each item based on what they expected to be appropriate or inappropriate based on their graduate training or current knowledge of the ASCA model. The researcher then coded each respondent's answer for each activity item for mis/alignment based on the appropriate and inappropriate ASCA designation (ASCA, 2025a). If a respondent's answer was in alignment with the ASCA appropriate and inappropriate designation, the researcher coded it as a 1. If a respondent's answer was in misalignment with the ASCA appropriate and inappropriate designation, it was coded a 0. If the respondent was unsure, the researcher coded -1.

### ***Expected, Alignment of Activities Designated Appropriate by ASCA***

Table 4.7 reports the descriptive data showing mis/alignment for the expected activities that may be performed by a school counselor and designated appropriate by ASCA. Respondent answers indicated an alignment score of 80% or higher on 12 out of 14 activity items deemed appropriate by ASCA. Examples of aligned appropriate activities that school counselor respondents expected to perform were: “presenting school counseling lessons based on the

ASCA student standards to address students’ developmental needs and needs identified through data” (100%), “consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems” (100%), and “providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students” (100%). Respondents showed notable misalignment for activities such as “Interpreting school records” (32.9% misaligned, 24.1% unsure), and “Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests” (39.2% misaligned, 10.1% unsure).

**Table 4.7**

*Expected Survey: Activities Deemed Appropriate by ASCA (n = 79)*

| Activity That May Be Performed by a School Counselor                                                                                                         | Aligned  |      | Misaligned |      | Unsure   |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|------------|------|----------|------|
|                                                                                                                                                              | <i>n</i> | %    | <i>n</i>   | %    | <i>n</i> | %    |
| Academic advising for new students                                                                                                                           | 76       | 96.2 | 2          | 2.5  | 1        | 1.3  |
| Presenting school counseling lessons based on the ASCA Student Standards to address students’ developmental needs and needs identified through data          | 79       | 100  | -          | -    | -        | -    |
| Consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management, and the role of the ASCA Student Standards in student success | 78       | 98.7 | -          | -    | 1        | 1.3  |
| Analyzing schoolwide and school counseling program data                                                                                                      | 77       | 97.5 | -          | -    | 2        | 2.5  |
| Analyzing GPAs in relationship to achievement                                                                                                                | 65       | 82.3 | 4          | 5.1  | 10       | 12.7 |
| Interpreting school records                                                                                                                                  | 34       | 43.0 | 26         | 32.9 | 19       | 24.1 |
| Providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent.                                                                                         | 77       | 97.5 | 1          | 1.3  | 1        | 1.3  |
| Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems                                                                                              | 77       | 97.5 | 1          | 1.3  | 1        | 1.3  |
| Advocating for students at individual education plan and 504 meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, as necessary                | 78       | 98.7 | 1          | 1.3  | -        | -    |
| Providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students                                                                              | 79       | 100  | -          | -    | -        | -    |
| Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                                                                                      | 40       | 50.6 | 31         | 39.2 | 8        | 10.1 |
| Protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations                                                                                 | 66       | 83.5 | 6          | 7.6  | 7        | 8.9  |
| Consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems                                                                 | 79       | 100  | -          | -    | -        | -    |
| Appraisal and advisement for academic planning                                                                                                               | 69       | 87.3 | 5          | 6.3  | 5        | 6.3  |

### ***Expected, Alignment of Duties Designated Inappropriate by ASCA***

Table 4.8 reports on alignment for the expected activities that may be performed by a school counselor but designated inappropriate by ASCA. Respondent answers indicated an

alignment score of 80% or higher on 9 out of 14 activity items deemed inappropriate by ASCA. Examples of aligned inappropriate activity items that school counselor respondents expected to not perform were “disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences” (98.7%), “serving as data entry clerk” (98.7%), “providing long-term counseling” (92.4%), and “assisting with duties in the principal’s office” (91.1%). There was noticeable misalignment for several inappropriate activity items such as “maintaining student records” (38% misaligned, 16.5% unsure), “computing GPAs” (29.1% misaligned, 17.7% unsure), and “coordinating any of the following: IEPS, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards” (19% misaligned, 21.5% unsure).

**Table 4.8**

*Expected Survey: Duties Deemed Inappropriate by ASCA (n = 79)*

| Activity That May Be Performed by a School Counselor                                                                                                                                 | <i>Aligned</i> |          | <i>Misaligned</i> |          | <i>Unsure</i> |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>n</i>       | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>          | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i>      | <i>%</i> |
| Disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences                                                                                                                           | 78             | 98.7     | -                 | -        | 1             | 1.3      |
| Providing long-term counseling in schools                                                                                                                                            | 73             | 92.4     | 2                 | 2.5      | 4             | 5.1      |
| Covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time                                                                                                         | 71             | 89.9     | 3                 | 3.8      | 5             | 6.3      |
| Supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms                                                                                                        | 68             | 86.1     | 4                 | 5.1      | 7             | 8.9      |
| Coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards. | 47             | 59.5     | 15                | 19.0     | 17            | 21.5     |
| Computing GPAs                                                                                                                                                                       | 42             | 53.2     | 23                | 29.1     | 14            | 17.7     |
| Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent                                                                                                                                 | 67             | 84.8     | 4                 | 5.1      | 8             | 10.1     |
| Keeping/filing clerical records                                                                                                                                                      | 59             | 74.7     | 10                | 12.7     | 10            | 12.7     |
| Building the new master schedule                                                                                                                                                     | 70             | 88.6     | 6                 | 7.6      | 3             | 3.8      |
| Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students                                                                                                                            | 70             | 88.6     | 4                 | 5.1      | 5             | 6.3      |
| Coordinating school/district cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs                                                                                                   | 58             | 73.4     | 14                | 17.7     | 7             | 8.9      |
| Serving as a data entry clerk                                                                                                                                                        | 78             | 98.7     | -                 | -        | 1             | 1.3      |
| Maintaining student records                                                                                                                                                          | 36             | 45.6     | 30                | 38.0     | 13            | 16.5     |
| Assisting with duties in the principal’s office                                                                                                                                      | 72             | 91.1     | 3                 | 3.8      | 4             | 5.1      |

**RQ2:** Are the actual early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors?

## **ASCA Actual Results**

Descriptive statistics for the ASCA Actual portion of the SCARS Modified Survey are listed in Table 4.9 and 4.10. These tables indicate the frequency and percentage of the alignment and misalignment of each item. Respondents viewed the list of possible activity items that may be performed by school counselors and answered yes or no on each item, based on whether they perform each listed activity based on their current job requirements and/or agreement with their current principal. The researcher coded each respondent's answer for each item for mis/alignment based on the appropriate and inappropriate ASCA designation (ASCA, 2025a). If a respondent's answer was in alignment with the ASCA designation, the researcher coded a 1. If a respondent's answer was not in alignment with the ASCA designation, the researcher coded a 0.

### ***Actual, Alignment of Activities Designated Appropriate by ASCA***

Table 4.9 reports descriptive data computed regarding the respondent alignment for the actual activities that may be performed by a school counselor and designated appropriate by ASCA. Respondent answers indicated an alignment score of 80% or higher on 9 out of 14 activities deemed appropriate by ASCA. Examples of alignment with the appropriate activities that school counselors said they actually performed were: “providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems” (96.0%), “providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students” (96.0%), and “providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent” (90.7%). High misalignment was noted in several activities such as “interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests” (70.7%), “interpreting school records” (54.7%), and “analyzing GPAs in relationship to achievement” (53.3%). Over one-third of

respondents also indicated misalignment with “academic advising for new students” (36%) and “appraisal and advisement for academic planning” (34.7%).

**Table 4.9**

*ASCA Actual Survey: Duties Deemed Appropriate by ASCA (n = 75)*

| Activity That May Be Performed by a School Counselor                                                                                                         | Aligned  |      | Misaligned |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|------------|------|
|                                                                                                                                                              | <i>n</i> | %    | <i>n</i>   | %    |
| Academic advising for new students                                                                                                                           | 48       | 64.0 | 27         | 36.0 |
| Presenting school counseling lessons based on the ASCA Student Standards to address students’ developmental needs and needs identified through data          | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management, and the role of the ASCA Student Standards in student success | 62       | 82.7 | 13         | 17.3 |
| Analyzing schoolwide and school counseling program data                                                                                                      | 61       | 81.3 | 14         | 18.7 |
| Analyzing GPAs in relationship to achievement                                                                                                                | 35       | 46.7 | 40         | 53.3 |
| Interpreting school records                                                                                                                                  | 34       | 45.3 | 41         | 54.7 |
| Providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent.                                                                                         | 68       | 90.7 | 7          | 9.3  |
| Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems                                                                                              | 72       | 96.0 | 3          | 4.0  |
| Advocating for students at individual education plan and 504 meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, as necessary                | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students                                                                              | 72       | 96.0 | 3          | 4.0  |
| Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                                                                                      | 22       | 29.3 | 53         | 70.7 |
| Protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations                                                                                 | 63       | 84.0 | 12         | 16.0 |
| Consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems                                                                 | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Appraisal and advisement for academic planning                                                                                                               | 49       | 65.3 | 26         | 34.7 |

### ***Actual, Alignment of Duties Designated Inappropriate by ASCA***

Table 4.10 reports on the respondent alignment for the actual activities that may be performed by a school counselor and designated inappropriate by ASCA. Respondents indicated an alignment score of 80% or higher on 6 out of 14 activities deemed inappropriate by ASCA. Examples of alignment with the inappropriate activities that school counselors said they did not perform were: “serving as a data entry clerk” (90.7%), “coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students” (85.3%), and “computing GPAs” (84.0%). High misalignment was noted in several activities such as “supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-

out rooms” (65.3%), “coordinating any of the following: IEPs, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards” (61.3%), “covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time” (40%) and “maintaining student records” (40%). Over one-third of participants also reported misalignment by “assisting with duties in the principal’s office” (34.7%).

**Table 4.10**

*ASCA Actual Survey: Duties Deemed Inappropriate by ASCA (n = 75)*

| Activity That May Be Performed by a School Counselor                                                                                                                                 | Aligned  |      | Misaligned |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|------------|------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>n</i> | %    | <i>n</i>   | %    |
| Disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences                                                                                                                           | 59       | 78.7 | 16         | 21.3 |
| Providing long-term counseling in schools                                                                                                                                            | 59       | 78.7 | 16         | 21.3 |
| Covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time                                                                                                         | 45       | 60.0 | 30         | 40.0 |
| Supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms                                                                                                        | 26       | 34.7 | 49         | 65.3 |
| Coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards. | 29       | 38.7 | 46         | 61.3 |
| Computing GPAs                                                                                                                                                                       | 63       | 84.0 | 12         | 16.0 |
| Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent                                                                                                                                 | 58       | 77.3 | 17         | 22.7 |
| Keeping/filing clerical records                                                                                                                                                      | 62       | 82.7 | 13         | 17.3 |
| Building the new master schedule                                                                                                                                                     | 60       | 80.0 | 15         | 20.0 |
| Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students                                                                                                                            | 64       | 85.3 | 11         | 14.7 |
| Coordinating school/district cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs                                                                                                   | 60       | 80.0 | 15         | 20.0 |
| Serving as a data entry clerk                                                                                                                                                        | 68       | 90.7 | 7          | 9.3  |
| Maintaining student records                                                                                                                                                          | 45       | 60.0 | 30         | 40.0 |
| Assisting with duties in the principal’s office                                                                                                                                      | 49       | 65.3 | 26         | 34.7 |

**RQ3:** Are the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the actual activities?

The method for coding the Expected and Actual Alignment of the SCARS Modified Survey is listed in Table 4.11. The researcher coded each item for each respondent to show alignment or misalignment between what they expect school counselors should do (“expected activities”) and what they actually did on the job (“actual activities”). For example, alignment

meant the respondent expected an activity was appropriate for school counselors to perform, and they actually performed that activity on the job, indicating an aligned yes/yes. Alignment could also mean the respondent thought the activity item was inappropriate for school counselors, and they do not perform the activity on the job (no/no). Misalignment meant the respondent expected an activity to be appropriate for school counselors to perform but does not actually perform the activity (yes/no). Another example of misalignment was that the respondent thought the activity was inappropriate for school counselors but actually performed the activity on the job (no/yes). Alignment answers (yes/yes, no/no) for each item were assigned a 1. Misalignment answers (yes/no, no/yes) for each item as well as those answered “unsure” were assigned a 0.

**Table 4.11**

*Alignment and Misalignment Coding Assignment*

| Alignment                                                                                                                     | Assigned 1 | Misalignment                                                                                                              | Assigned 0 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| The respondent thought the activity was appropriate for school counselors to perform and they perform the activity on the job | Yes/Yes    | The respondent expected an activity to be appropriate for school counselors to perform, but does not perform the activity | Yes/No     |
| The respondent thought the activity was inappropriate, and they do not perform the activity on the job.                       | No/No      | The respondent thought the activity was inappropriate for school counselors, but performed the activity on the job        | No/Yes     |

Descriptive statistics of the Expected and Actual Alignment of the SCARS Modified Survey are listed in Table 4.12. Descriptive data responses that showed high alignment were: “providing short-term individual and small-group counseling services to students” (96.0%), “providing counseling to students that have disciplinary problems” (93.3%), and “providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent” (90.7%). Examples of responses that showed high misalignment were: “supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension or time-out rooms” (61.3%), “analyzing GPAs in relation to achievement” (56%), “coordinating schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention

plans, MTSS and school attendance review boards” (56%), “interpreting school records” (50.7%), and “interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests” (46.7%).

**Table 4.12**

*Expected and Actual Alignment (n = 75)*

| Activity That May Be Performed by a School Counselor                                                                                                                                 | Aligned  |      | Misaligned |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|------------|------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>n</i> | %    | <i>n</i>   | %    |
| Disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences                                                                                                                           | 59       | 78.7 | 16         | 21.3 |
| Academic advising for new students                                                                                                                                                   | 49       | 65.3 | 26         | 34.7 |
| Providing long-term counseling in schools                                                                                                                                            | 58       | 77.3 | 17         | 22.7 |
| Covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time                                                                                                         | 47       | 62.7 | 28         | 37.3 |
| Presenting school counseling lessons based on the ASCA Student Standards to address students’ developmental needs and needs identified through data                                  | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management, and the role of the ASCA Student Standards in student success                         | 61       | 81.3 | 14         | 18.7 |
| Supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms                                                                                                        | 29       | 38.7 | 46         | 61.3 |
| Analyzing schoolwide and school counseling program data                                                                                                                              | 60       | 80.0 | 15         | 20.0 |
| Analyzing GPAs in relation to achievement                                                                                                                                            | 33       | 44.0 | 42         | 56.0 |
| Coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards. | 33       | 44.0 | 42         | 56.0 |
| Interpreting school records                                                                                                                                                          | 37       | 49.3 | 38         | 50.7 |
| Computing GPAs                                                                                                                                                                       | 48       | 64.0 | 27         | 36.0 |
| Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent                                                                                                                                 | 57       | 76.0 | 18         | 24.0 |
| Providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent.                                                                                                                 | 68       | 90.7 | 7          | 9.3  |
| Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems                                                                                                                      | 70       | 93.3 | 5          | 6.7  |
| Keeping/filing clerical records                                                                                                                                                      | 54       | 72.0 | 21         | 28.0 |
| Advocating for students at individual education plan and 504 meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, as necessary                                        | 66       | 88.0 | 9          | 12.0 |
| Building the new master schedule                                                                                                                                                     | 62       | 82.7 | 13         | 17.3 |
| Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students                                                                                                                            | 63       | 84.0 | 12         | 16.0 |
| Providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students                                                                                                      | 72       | 96.0 | 3          | 4.0  |
| Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                                                                                                              | 40       | 53.3 | 35         | 46.7 |
| Coordinating school/district cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs                                                                                                   | 55       | 73.3 | 20         | 26.7 |
| Serving as a data entry clerk                                                                                                                                                        | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations                                                                                                         | 64       | 85.3 | 11         | 14.7 |
| Maintaining student records                                                                                                                                                          | 44       | 58.7 | 31         | 41.3 |
| Consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems                                                                                         | 67       | 89.3 | 8          | 10.7 |
| Appraisal and advisement for academic planning                                                                                                                                       | 51       | 68.0 | 24         | 32.0 |

**RQ4:** Is the alignment of actual early-career school counselor activities and expected activities associated with burnout?

A bivariate correlation analysis was used to examine the potential association between activity alignment and burnout. For the total scores of the alignment of the SCARS Modified Survey, the researcher used the alignment score between the expected and actual answers for each activity item from RQ3 and further calculated the total score of the alignment of the SCARS Modified Survey on all 28 items for each participant. The total score range possible for the alignment of the SCARS Modified Survey was 0-28, with a score of zero indicating misalignment on all items and a score of 28 meaning the respondent was aligned on all 28 activity items. Table 4.13 showed that the participants on average had an alignment score of 20.43 ( $SD = 3.65$ ). The minimum score was 11.0 and the maximum score was 26.0. For burnout score, the researcher calculated the total score on all 20 items of CBI for each participant. The total score range of the CBI is 20-100, with a higher score indicating a higher level of burnout. Table 4.13 showed the participants on average had a CBI score of 49.55 ( $SD = 10.94$ ). The minimum score was 25.0 and the maximum score was 83.0.

**Table 4.13**

*Descriptive Statistics of Activity Misalignment and CBI*

|                    | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Range</i> | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> |
|--------------------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Activity Alignment | 75       | 20.43    | 3.65      | 15.0         | 11.0       | 26.0       |
| CBI                | 80       | 49.55    | 10.94     | 58.0         | 25.00      | 83.00      |

Table 4.14 further shows the descriptive statistics for selected demographics and CBI-Total Scores including the population, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation. Of those

that reported their ACEs score, early-career school counselors with an ACEs score of 4 had the highest burnout ( $M = 58.40$ ) and those with a score of 3 had the lowest burnout ( $M = 43.56$ ). Participants with the highest student caseload numbers of 501+ had the highest burnout scores ( $M = 54.10$ ) and those in the 351-400 range had the lowest burnout score ( $M = 47.14$ ). Males ( $M = 54.43$ ) had a higher burnout score than females ( $M = 48.99$ ). Participants that reported serving grade levels considered “Multi-level, other” ( $M = 56.50$ ) indicated highest burnout and those serving “Secondary, 6-12” ( $M = 39.75$ ) had the lowest burnout. Surprisingly, participants that reported not having a school counselor's licensure had lower burnout ( $M = 45.33$ ) compared to those with either a full license or provisional. Participants that reported having a provisional license had the highest burnout ( $M = 50.50$ ). Participants that reported having a registrar that is not shared with others had lower burnout ( $M = 43.59$ ) compared to those that reported having no registrar ( $M = 52.25$ ). Respondents working in a public school had higher burnout rates ( $M = 50.65$ ) than those working in a private school ( $M = 42.00$ ). Participants that reported having an undergraduate degree in education reported slightly lower burnout ( $M = 49.08$ ) than those that did not have an undergraduate degree in education ( $M = 49.71$ ). Furthermore, those serving in their first year in the role of a school counselor reported the highest burnout ( $M = 51.86$ ) while those serving in year two reported the lowest burnout ( $M = 44.50$ ).

**Table 4.14**

*Descriptive Statistics for CBI-Total Scores and Selected Demographics*

|                         | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| ACEs Score ( $n = 75$ ) |          |          |          |           |
| 0                       | 7        | 9.3      | 50.14    | 9.63      |
| 1                       | 4        | 5.3      | 53.75    | 9.29      |
| 2                       | 6        | 8.0      | 52.67    | 15.60     |
| 3                       | 9        | 12.0     | 43.56    | 9.28      |
| 4                       | 5        | 6.7      | 58.40    | 6.31      |
| 5 or more               | 7        | 9.3      | 53.57    | 9.66      |
| Unsure                  | 36       | 48.0     | 48.03    | 11.55     |

|                                                    |    |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Prefer not to say                                  | 1  | 1.3   | 42.00 | 11.16 |
| Caseload ( <i>n</i> = 75)                          |    |       |       |       |
| <200                                               | 20 | 26.7  | 48.45 | 10.25 |
| 201-250                                            | 8  | 10.7  | 50.38 | 15.35 |
| 251-300                                            | 8  | 10.7  | 49.63 | 11.80 |
| 301-350                                            | 12 | 16.0  | 49.33 | 6.93  |
| 351-400                                            | 7  | 9.3   | 47.14 | 9.51  |
| 401-500                                            | 10 | 13.3  | 48.00 | 15.52 |
| 501+                                               | 10 | 13.3  | 54.10 | 10.79 |
| Gender ( <i>n</i> = 75)                            |    |       |       |       |
| Male                                               | 7  | 9.3   | 54.43 | 13.51 |
| Female                                             | 68 | 90.67 | 48.99 | 10.88 |
| Grade Levels ( <i>n</i> = 75)                      |    |       |       |       |
| Elementary (P-5)                                   | 26 | 34.7  | 53.36 | 11.74 |
| Middle School (6-8)                                | 14 | 18.7  | 45.93 | 8.29  |
| High School (9-12)                                 | 16 | 21.3  | 44.38 | 11.80 |
| Secondary (6-12)                                   | 4  | 5.3   | 39.75 | 8.18  |
| Multi-level (Other)                                | 8  | 10.7  | 56.50 | 9.55  |
| All Grade Levels (P-12)                            | 7  | 9.3   | 51.57 | 5.09  |
| Licensure ( <i>n</i> = 75)                         |    |       |       |       |
| Yes                                                | 52 | 69.3  | 49.35 | 11.08 |
| Yes, but Provisional                               | 20 | 26.7  | 50.50 | 11.59 |
| No                                                 | 3  | 4.0   | 45.33 | 12.66 |
| Registrar ( <i>n</i> = 75)                         |    |       |       |       |
| Yes-not shared                                     | 17 | 22.7  | 43.59 | 11.25 |
| Yes-shared                                         | 14 | 18.7  | 48.00 | 10.63 |
| No                                                 | 44 | 58.7  | 52.25 | 10.52 |
| School Setting ( <i>n</i> = 75)                    |    |       |       |       |
| Public                                             | 65 | 86.7  | 50.65 | 11.05 |
| Private                                            | 10 | 13.3  | 42.00 | 9.10  |
| Undergrad Degree in Education ( <i>n</i> = 75)     |    |       |       |       |
| Yes                                                | 26 | 34.67 | 49.08 | 9.08  |
| No                                                 | 49 | 65.33 | 49.71 | 12.20 |
| Year Served as a School Counselor ( <i>n</i> = 80) |    |       |       |       |

|   |    |       |       |       |
|---|----|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 22 | 27.5  | 51.86 | 12.49 |
| 2 | 16 | 20.0  | 44.50 | 7.67  |
| 3 | 16 | 20.0  | 48.75 | 11.38 |
| 4 | 13 | 16.25 | 51.77 | 10.66 |
| 5 | 13 | 16.25 | 50.62 | 10.69 |

A Pearson's correlation coefficient (Table 4.15) was calculated to assess the linear relationship between activity alignment and burnout. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables,  $r(73) = -.266, p = .021$ , indicating higher misalignment between the expected and actual activities is positively associated with higher burnout among counselor participants.

**Table 4.15**

*Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Alignment and CBI ( $n = 75$ )*

|           | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1      | 2 |
|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|---|
| Alignment | 20.4267  | 3.65089   | -      |   |
| CBI       | 49.5500  | 10.93699  | -.266* | - |

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

**RQ5:** Does hope and its two subscales, agency and pathways, influence burnout amongst early-career school counselors?

A multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine if the total hope score and the two subfactors of the hope scale, agency and pathways (independent variables) in school counselors influence burnout (dependent variable) statistically. The researcher used the word "influence" in research question five strictly as a statistical use of the word in this non-experimental approach. No variables were controlled or influenced. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data for the total of the CBI were normally distributed,  $W(80) = 0.989, p = .751$ .

The results of the linear regression showed that the total Hope score statistically significantly influenced burnout,  $F(1,78) = 4.687, p = .033, R^2 = .057$ , indicating hope mitigates burnout. However, linear regression results show that neither predictor, the subscale agency ( $\beta = -.039, p = .816$ ), nor the subscale pathway ( $\beta = -.217, p = .204$ ) significantly influenced burnout  $F(2,77) = 2.517, p = .087, R^2 = .061$ . The regression coefficient of pathway subscale suggested a more meaningful effect.

## Summary

In this chapter, the researcher reported the descriptive demographic information for the early-career school counselor participants, the internal reliability of both the Hope Scale and CBI instruments and addressed the descriptive and analytic results regarding each research question. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between the alignment results and the CBI for participants, indicating that the higher misalignment between what an early-career school counselor expects to perform on the job and what they actually do on the job is associated with higher burnout. While the total Hope score statistically significantly influenced the total CBI score, results indicated neither the subfactor pathways nor agency significantly influenced burnout in early-career school counselors. Next, chapter five discusses a summary of the findings, implications, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for research.

## **Chapter 5 - Discussion**

This quantitative study examined the alignment between school counselors' expected and actual job activities and explored whether discrepancies between the two are associated with burnout. It further studied whether hope and its two factors agency and pathways inversely influenced burnout within the first five years of a school counselor's profession. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings, implications and limitations of the study, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for research.

### **Discussions of the Findings**

The following section provides a summary of the findings for each of the five research questions as well as key findings within the descriptive demographic data.

#### **Research Question One-Activities Expected to Be Performed**

Research question one analyzed whether the expected early-career school counselor activities aligned with the current ASCA list of appropriate and inappropriate activities for school counselors (ASCA, 2025a). The expected activities refer to the activities that an early-career school counselor expects to spend their time at work based on their graduate training and current knowledge of the ASCA Model. The following paragraph discusses the expected activity results of alignment with ASCA appropriate activities.

#### ***Expected Appropriate Activities***

Descriptive results from this research study showed high alignment and misalignment of expected duties on several items. Several exemplary activities that were highly aligned with ASCA (2025a) recommendations were "providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students", "presenting classroom lessons based on the ASCA student standards to address students' developmental needs and needs identified through data", and

"consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems". Survey results also showed high misalignment of activities that an early-career school counselor did not expect to perform yet was designated by ASCA as appropriate time usage for school counselors such as "interpretating school records" and "interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests". The following paragraph explores the expected activities results of alignment with ASCA inappropriate activities.

### ***Expected Inappropriate Activities***

Descriptive results from this study also showed high alignment and misalignment of ASCA activities listed as inappropriate. Early-career school counselors were in high alignment with several activities deemed inappropriate by ASCA such as "disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences", "serving as a data entry clerk", "providing long-term counseling in schools", and "assisting with duties in the principal's office". However, results also indicated high misalignment between what early-career school counselors expected to perform, and duties that ASCA deems inappropriate for school counselor time usage such as "coordinating any of the following: IEPs, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards", "computing GPAs", and "maintaining student records".

Together, the findings for the first research question of expected school counselor activities support previous research on reducing role ambiguity through intentional training on the implementation of the ASCA Model (ASCA, 2020; Fye, Bergen et al., 2020). Furthermore, the data reinforces the need for supporting the early-career school counselor in areas such as advocacy and impacting activities by enhancing the counselor-principal partnership (Cinotti et al., 2022; Gonzales, et al., 2022; Jordan, 2022; Mullen et al., 2021; Stone, 2022).

## **Research Question Two-Actual Activities Performed on the Job**

Research question two examined whether the actual activities an early-career school counselor performs on the job align with the current list of appropriate and inappropriate activities for school counselors designated by ASCA (2025a). The following section discusses the results of alignment with ASCA for appropriate activities.

### ***Appropriate School Counselor Activities***

Respondents were in high alignment with performing several activities designated appropriate by ASCA (2025a) such as “providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems”, providing short-term individual and small group counseling to students”, and providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent”. The results of this study also indicated misalignment between several activities that ASCA deems appropriate and early-career school counselor participants reported they didn’t perform: “analyzing GPAs in relation to achievement”, “interpreting school records”, “interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests”, “academic advising for new students”, and “appraisal and advisement for academic planning”. School counselors are trained in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program and have expertise in performing each of the listed misaligned activities (ASCA, 2025a). However, the early-school counselor participants reported they did not complete these activities.

### ***Inappropriate Activities***

Descriptive results from this study showed alignment and misalignment of the actual duties designated as inappropriate by ASCA (2025a). ASCA states that school counselors should not be performing these activities (ASCA, 2025a). However, early-career school counselor

participants in this study indicated they were performing these duties, leading to misalignment with the role of a school counselor.

Several activities that were highly aligned and designated inappropriate by ASCA were “serving as a data entry clerk”, “coordinating the paperwork and data entry for new students”, as well as “computing GPAs” for students. High misalignment with activities that early-career school counselors reported they performed but designated as inappropriate by ASCA included “supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms”, “coordinating any of the following: school wide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards”, “covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time”, “maintaining student records” as well as “assisting with duties in the principal’s office”.

Like research question one, the findings for the second research question also expand on existing evidence for the need of continued advocacy for the role of a school counselor, as well as the importance of developing school counselor and administration partnerships (Cinotti et al., 2022; Gonzales, et al., 2022; Jordan, 2022; Mullen et al., 2021; Stone, 2022).

### **Research Question Three-Expected vs. Actual**

Research question three investigated whether the expected activities of an early-career school counselor aligned with the actual activities they perform on the job. Alignment was evident when participants performed duties they expected to perform and refrained from performing duties they viewed as inappropriate. Examples of duties showing high alignment were: “providing short-term individual and small-group counseling services to students”, “providing counseling to students that have disciplinary problems”, and “providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent”.

High misalignment occurred when participants performed duties they viewed as inappropriate or failed to perform duties they viewed as appropriate. Results showed high misalignment with “supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension or time-out rooms”, “analyzing GPAs in relation to student achievement”, “coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards”, “interpreting school records”, and “interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests”.

These findings support recent research showing that school counselors continue to experience role confusion, perform duties outside their training, and may have a limited knowledge of the ASCA Model (ASCA, 2026). Findings were also consistent with recent research regarding organizational factors impacting school counselors including a lack of administrative understanding of best practices, such as best usage of school counselor time and inappropriate role assignment by administrators (ASCA, 2026; Gonzales et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2020).

#### **Research Question Four-Misalignment and Burnout**

Research question four examined whether the alignment of the actual and expected activities of an early-career school counselor is associated with burnout. Results indicated there was a statistically significant negative correlation between alignment and burnout, insinuating the higher the misalignment between the expected and actual activities, the higher the chance of burnout in early-career school counselors. These findings support previous research indicating early-career school counselors experience role stress and role ambiguity that can lead to burnout when the realities of the job, including the assignment of inappropriate duties, do not align with how they expect to use their time (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020; Rhames et al., 2025).

## **Research Question Five-Hope and Burnout**

Research question five examined if the hope total score and the two subscales of hope influence or predict burnout in early-career school counselors. Data produced nonsignificant findings for the individual subfactors of hope. Neither pathways nor agency was a significant predictor for burnout. However, results indicated that the total hope score mitigates burnout. The total hope score findings replicate a myriad of research on hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) confirming hope as a protective factor and specifically builds on previous research regarding hope and burnout in school counselors (Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024). This study is consistent with previous research of the mitigating factors of hope in other professions that work with children (Passmore et al., 2020; Pharris et al., 2022). The findings affirm previous research recommending the monitoring of hope and burnout in early-career school counselors (Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024).

## **Demographic Findings-ACEs and Student Caseloads**

There were several key findings in the demographics that were not directly related to the research questions. These demographics connect to the organizational and individual factors that impact burnout in school counselors. Early-career school counselor participants were asked if they knew their personal ACEs score. ACEs can negatively impact a person's mental and physical health in childhood. If not mitigated, ACEs can also have possible health and economic repercussions into adulthood (Zyromski et al., 2022). One key demographic finding that emerged from this research was the participant's lack of knowledge of personal ACEs. Almost half (48%) of the early-career school counselors in this research study reported they did not know their ACEs score. Participants that did report knowledge of their ACEs score revealed that over a quarter (28%) of the early-school counselor participants had an ACEs score of 3 or more. These

reported results included an ACEs score of 3 (12%), 4 (6.7%), and 5 or more (9.3%). Data indicated that 16% of early-career school counselor participants had an ACEs score of 4 or more. This finding supports previous research stating 15.6% of the adult population report having an ACEs score of 4 or more (Merrick et al., 2019). Adults with four or more ACEs have an increased susceptibility to negative health, social, and economic issues (Merrick et al., 2019). Notably, the results of an ACEs score of 4 or more from this research study are much lower than recent school counselor research indicating that half of a school counselor sample (50.42%) reported an ACEs score of 4 or more (Brown et al., 2024). However, the key finding that almost half of the early-career school participants did not know their personal ACEs score may have impacted the results of this research. School counselors should have a personal awareness of their own ACEs score. School counselors must learn skills to buffer possible impairment due to their personal ACEs and seek personal resources as needed to prevent secondary traumatic stress and burnout (Brown et al., 2024). Furthermore, school counselors should understand the connection of how these adverse experiences that happen during childhood impact student learning (Zyromski et al., 2022). School counselors should have an awareness of the protective factor skills and resources needed to help prevent and moderate the impact of student ACEs (Walsh et al., 2024; Zyromski et al., 2022).

Early-career school counselor participants were also asked to report their student caseload numbers. ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 students to each school counselor. Data from 2024-2025 indicated a national average of 372:1 (ASCA, n.d.-g). Having a lower ratio better allocates the time and support needed to successfully implement a comprehensive school counseling program aimed to serve all students who come with a variety of academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary needs (ASCA 2025a, 2026). A key finding from this study

indicated that while 37.4% of the early-career school counselor respondents had a caseload right at 250 students or under, 62.6% had a student caseload above 250 students. Lower student ratios can positively impact student outcomes such as graduation, attendance, disciplinary incidents, achievement, and college entrance rates (Brown & Knight, 2025; Domina et al., 2022; Lapan et al., 2012). Furthermore, higher student caseloads can lead to counselor burnout and lower job satisfaction (Mullen et al., 2021). This key finding reaffirms the need to support counselors as they learn to build the agency needed to educate stakeholders on the ethical considerations of student caseload numbers (Brown & Knight, 2025; Mullen et al., 2021). Advocacy is important to create a school environment able to meet the myriad of student needs and to protect school counselor wellness (Brown & Knight, 2025; Mullen et al., 2021).

## **Implications**

The findings from this research study include several implications to encourage the support needed to strengthen the professional identity, wellness, and retention of early-career school counselors. Key findings from this study validate an expansion of graduate school curriculum, and continuing education to promote the evolution of the school counselor professional identity. Results also bring into consideration the need to bridge partnerships with building principals, while increasing administrative understanding of how to best utilize school counselors. Key findings further add to existing research to foster school counselor wellness, including discourse on ACEs, monitoring hope, and decreasing burnout. The following sections describe each implication.

### **Build Professional Identity**

Data from this study presented numerous examples of high misalignment with both the expectations and actual job performance of the early-career school counselor participants,

highlighting role ambiguity (Fye, Cook, et al., 2020). Participants mentioned engaging in inappropriate activities that were administrative in nature and inhibit essential direct student contact time including coordinating student IEPs and 504s. Respondents also mentioned involvement in additional inappropriate activities (ASCA, 2025a) that were clerical or administrative in nature, such as maintaining records, covering classrooms, and the supervision of students.

The results from this study also indicated a significant correlation between misalignment of expected and actual activities and burnout. These findings build on previous research noting how a school counselor's professional identity can be a protective factor to counteract role stress and burnout (Maor & Hemi, 2021). Through building leadership and advocacy skills in safe spaces such as preparatory programs, school counselors can build their professional identity, while learning how to educate stakeholders to reverse any pre-conceived and inappropriate notions of the role of a school counselor. By providing clarity on the role of a school counselor, school counselors can learn to create data-driven reports that highlight the positive impact made on student outcomes when school counselors are placed in appropriate activities within their professional training (Cinotti et al., 2022; Hatch, 2008; Havlik et al., 2019; Jordan, 2022). School counselors must also learn how to build social capital by working alongside school administration and other educational partners to showcase how school counselors can contribute to a school climate that willingly engages in systemic change and contributes to student success (ASCA, 2025a; Cinotti et al., 2022; Gonzales, et al., 2022; Jordan, 2022). There is a continued need for opportunities to strengthen the school counselor's identity. Clarity and communication of appropriate duties can be enhanced and expanded in preparatory programs, post-graduate

supervision/mentorship, as well as during professional development designed specifically for school counselors in the early years of their career.

### **Training on ACEs**

Almost half of the early-career school counselor participants in this research study reported a lack of awareness of their personal ACEs score. Recent studies have explained the negative impact of ACEs, including an increase in health, social, and economic issues (Brown et al., 2024; Merrick et al., 2019; Walsh et al., 2024; Zyromski et al., 2022). Previous research has also indicated that both secondary traumatic stress and burnout can increase as the ACEs score of a school counselor increase (Brown et al., 2024). If the impact of a school counselor's personal ACEs score is not mitigated, possible impairment can influence both the wellness of the school counselor as well as their ability to provide appropriate services for students (Brown et al., 2024). It is imperative for school counselors to engage in wellness and ethical practices to mitigate the impact a counselor's own ACEs may have on the students they serve (ASCA, 2022; Walsh et al., 2024) and to prevent burnout (Brown et al., 2024). When school counselors are trained on ACEs and protective factors, they are also better equipped with trauma-informed interventions to support students and families in developing positive childhood experiences (Walsh et al., 2024; Zyromski et al., 2022). When school counselors learn to self-monitor and intervene with healthy coping skills, they are more likely to prevent secondary traumatic stress, sometimes caused by working with students and communities with high trauma (Brown et al., 2024). The results of this study indicate a need for further training on ACEs in school counseling preparatory programs so that school counselors can engage in protective factors that increase their personal wellness, as well as promote skills in their practice that contribute to student success.

## **Monitoring Hope and Burnout**

Two additional key findings support the monitoring of both hope and burnout in early-career school counselors. Results from this study indicated that the total hope score was a significant predictor of burnout for early-career participants. The total hope data from this research supports using hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) as a possible protective factor to help mitigate school counselor burnout (Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024). Furthermore, the burnout results from this study are an extension of current literature on counselor burnout theory (Lee et al., 2007) regarding the dire need to monitor and mitigate burnout in school counselors for both personal wellness and to prevent impairment impacting student services (Fye, Kim, et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2007; Niles, Dorais, et al., 2024). Data from this study supports the monitoring of both hope and burnout in early-career school counselors in both preparatory programs and post-graduation.

## **Limitations**

This study has several limitations to consider. First, the study was non-experimental; therefore, caution should be exercised when considering causation (Yang, 2025). Second, convenience sampling was used, and participants were recruited from the NCACES area and from the ASCA Member Community open forum. The majority of participants belonged to either a state and/or national professional organization. Most respondents identified as female and of White or European descent. The sample size started with 123 respondents, but numbers declined throughout the survey as some respondents were either eliminated due to qualifications or chose not to continue with the next section of the survey. The smaller sample size and demographics including location, gender, ethnicity, and professional membership may not be an accurate reflection or generalization of the geographical location or diversity of the entire early-

career school counselor population (Field, 2013). Third, this study was conducted during a limited section of time during the school year and data collected throughout the year might produce different results. Therefore, additional studies may need to be conducted throughout the school year to grasp a better understanding of school counselor activities, hope, and burnout. Fourth, almost half of the respondents did not know their ACEs score, which may have impacted demographic findings. Finally, respondents were asked to self-report their answers. While the expectation is that each participant will answer honestly and to the best of their ability, social desirability bias may take place, resulting in answers that are considered more socially acceptable rather than reflect accurate representation (Patterson, 2024) of school counselor activities, feelings of burnout, or levels of hope.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The results of this research study provide several recommendations to promote the professional identity, wellness, and retention of early-career school counselors. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are offered to facilitate support for early-career school counselors in these areas.

The first recommendation is to facilitate early learning and ongoing opportunities to continuously build the professional identity for both pre-service and post-graduate school counselors. This research study noted misalignment on many activities, indicating role ambiguity as participants engaged in inappropriate activities outside of the expertise of school counselors. Both counselor professional organizations, ACA and ASCA, promote the ethical use of a school counselor's time, while staying within the scope and boundaries of a counselor's skill set (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2022). Support in building a professional identity within the scope of the role of school counselor should begin during graduate school and continue into the profession.

Opportunities for post-graduation supervision/mentorship could support early-career school counselors as they navigate the expectations of administration and stakeholders (Brott et al., 2021). Having support to build professional identity while under the mentorship of credentialed experts provides a safe space to further practice advocacy skills and role play boundary setting (Bledsoe et al., 2021).

The second recommendation is to allocate time within administrative pre-service preparation and ongoing in-service professional development to train building principals on best practices on how to utilize and maximize the skill set of school counselors and promote collaboration. Results from this study indicated that early-career school counselors were performing inappropriate activities and not engaging in tasks aligned within their area of expertise. Administrative training should include components on both the role of a school counselor and how both the roles of the building principal and counselor can complement each other towards the goal of student success (Gonzales et al., 2022). Administration can learn how to delegate and better utilize support staff to tend to the clerical and administrative tasks. Taking away these inappropriate duties from school counselors allows more direct time with students (Gonzales et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2020). Combining training opportunities for both pre-service administrators and school counselors could provide a safe space for collaborative learning where advocacy can lead to both professions learning about the roles of each profession and how to work together with positive intent (Gonzales et al., 2022).

The third recommendation is to provide intentional wellness training for pre-service school counselors. Counselor preparatory programs should expand to provide intentional opportunities to encourage ongoing wellness, including the monitoring of burnout, hope, and ACEs.

Graduate program content and supervision should equip developing school counselors with skills to monitor burnout. Graduate students should be given several opportunities throughout the program to take burnout inventories, such as the CBI. Skills and resources should be encouraged to address any of the five factors that need to be mitigated.

Preparatory programs should monitor hope and help emerging school counselors build a skill set of hope interventions that include creating goals, building agency, navigating pathways, and identifying hope advocates. Developing school counselors can learn how to set meaningful goals that apply to their personal hope needs and re-goal when necessary. Engaging in purposeful agency activities can build willpower when mental energy is depleted. Brainstorming with peers and supervisors can model waypower, or how to build an abundance of resources and community connections, as they learn how to navigate pathways when encountering systemic barriers. Opportunities should be provided to identify their hope advocates and the community of support and resources available to them.

Program content should also facilitate awareness of the impact of ACEs both personally and professionally. Developing school counselors should be aware of their own ACEs score. They should engage in protective factors to help reduce the impact of their personal ACEs and secondary trauma. They should also develop skills to identify resources and assist in the mitigation of student ACEs.

Professional counselor organizations can also intentionally include sessions at conferences and provide virtual opportunities directed at the wellness and support of early-career school counselors. Most participants were members of a national professional organization such as both a member of ASCA and ACA (17.3%) and ASCA only (78.7%) and/or a state professional organization (76%). Both ACA and ASCA uphold the importance of interventions

designed to prevent counselor impairment and nourish activities that cultivate wellness (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2022).

The final recommendation is to provide opportunities for supervision/mentorship post-graduation. Spending intentional time with knowledgeable and credentialed school counselor peer experts in the ever-changing field allows early-career school counselors time to discuss the stressors and navigate challenges that may occur early in one's career. Supervisors that are experts in the school counseling field can provide insight on building hope as well as multicultural, legal, and ethical issues. Mentors can also help early-career school counselors build their professional identities by increasing the self-efficacy of their skill set and agency towards boundary setting and advocacy for roles.

### **Recommendations for Research**

This research studied the activities of early-career school counselors as well as burnout and hope. The quantitative results from this study indicate a need for further research to continue the discourse of supporting early-career school counselors in areas of professional identity, wellness, and retention.

One possible area to explore is a longitudinal study to examine the use of hope and professional identity as protective factors against burnout, measured both in graduate school and in post-graduate supervision/mentorship. This research can assist graduate programs and post-graduate supervisors/mentors in continuing to provide effective wellness opportunities and interventions for both developing school counselors and early-career school counselors.

Another possible area of research is examining early-career school counselor personal ACEs and burnout. Little research has focused on personal ACEs in the school counseling profession in general, let alone early-career school counselors. This research study studied the

total CBI score. Future research could explore the individual five factors of the CBI to determine specific areas of burnout in early-career school counselors.

Finally, though administration perspective on school counselor activities has been studied, updated research could help further explore current administrator perceptions. This research study noted that early-career school counselors were still experiencing role ambiguity and were tasked with inappropriate activities. Examining current administration perceptions could provide scholars with research to encourage collaboration and support administration in learning how to utilize the skill set of school counselors to support students.

## **Conclusion**

While previous research has focused on the activities, hope, and burnout in the general school counselor population, this quantitative, non-experimental study focused specifically on the responses of early-career school counselors. The data from this study provides a clearer understanding of the professional development and ongoing support needed to promote early-school counselor professional identity, wellness, and retention. Misalignment results on many activities demonstrated continued role ambiguity and confirmed that school counselors continue to perform duties deemed inappropriate by ASCA. Key findings also indicated a significant correlation between activity misalignment and counselor burnout. These statistically significant results revealed that higher misalignment between the expected and actual activities is associated with early-career school counselor burnout. Furthermore, data from this study revealed a significant relationship between the total hope score and burnout, indicating hope mitigates burnout. Finally, demographic findings revealed that almost half of the early-school counselor participants were not familiar with their own ACEs score, and also, the majority of participants had a student caseload above the ASCA recommendation of 250:1. Understanding the results of

this research study can provide guidance for additional training and support in counselor and administrative preparatory programs, supervision and mentoring, and post-graduate support. The results may also enhance the working relationship between administration and other educational partners, contributing as a team towards improving student success.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2021.2021052>

## Appendix A - Hope Scale

**Directions:** Read each sentence carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided.

1.=Definitely False

2.Mostly False

3. Somewhat False

4. Slightly False

5. Slightly True

6. Somewhat True

7. Mostly True

8.Definitely True

\_\_\_ 1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.

\_\_\_ 2. I energetically pursue my goals.

\_\_\_ 3. There are lots of ways around any problem.

\_\_\_ 4. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.

\_\_\_ 5. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.

\_\_\_ 6. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.

\_\_\_ 7. I've been pretty successful in life.

\_\_\_ 8. I meet the goals I set for myself.

Note: When administering the scale, it is recommended to call it The Future Scale. The researcher will not include the fillers. The agency subscale score is derived by summing items 2, 6, 7, 8. The pathway subscale is derived by adding items 1, 3, 4, 5. The total Hope Scale score is derived by summing the four agency and the four pathway items.

## **Appendix B - The Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI)**

Directions: Read each sentence carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided. Feel free to think of students in the place of clients.

1.=Never True

2. =Rarely True

3.=Sometimes True

4.=Often True

5.=Always True

\_\_\_ 1. I feel frustrated with the system in my workplace.

\_\_\_ 2. I am treated unfairly in my workplace.

\_\_\_ 3. I feel bogged down by the system in my workplace.

\_\_\_ 4. I feel negative energy from my supervisor.

\_\_\_ 5. I have little empathy for my clients.

\_\_\_ 6. I have become callous towards clients.

\_\_\_ 7. I am not interested in my clients and their problems.

\_\_\_ 8. I am no longer concerned about the welfare of my clients.

\_\_\_ 9. I feel I do not have enough time to spend with my friends.

\_\_\_ 10. I feel like I do not have enough time to engage in personal interests.

\_\_\_ 11. I feel I have poor boundaries between work and my personal life.

\_\_\_ 12. My relationships with family members have been negatively impacted by my work as a counselor.

\_\_\_ 13. Due to my job as a counselor, I feel tired most of the time.

- \_\_\_ 14. I feel exhausted due to my work as a counselor.
- \_\_\_ 15. Due to my job as a counselor, I feel overstressed.
- \_\_\_ 16. Due to my job as a counselor, I feel tightness in my back and shoulders.
- \_\_\_ 17. I feel I am an incompetent counselor.
- \_\_\_ 18. I am not confident in my counseling skills.
- \_\_\_ 19. I feel frustrated by my effectiveness as a counselor.
- \_\_\_ 20. I do not feel like I am making a change in my clients.

Administering Note: There are four questions for each of the five factors (in order with questions above): Negative Work Environment, Devaluing Client, Deterioration in Personal Life, Exhaustion, and Incompetence.

## Appendix C - The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS Modified)

**Directions:** Below are activities that may be performed by a school counselor. Based on your graduate training and/or current knowledge of the ASCA National Model of activities a school counselor should perform, answer best what you would EXPECT the following listed activities to be: **appropriate, inappropriate, or unsure.**

|                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity that may be performed by a school counselor                                                                                                         |
| Disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences                                                                                                   |
| Academic advising for new students                                                                                                                           |
| Providing long-term counseling in schools                                                                                                                    |
| Covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time                                                                                 |
| Presenting school counseling lessons based on the ASCA Student Standards to address students' developmental needs and needs identified through data          |
| Consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management, and the role of the ASCA Student Standards in student success |
| Supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms                                                                                |
| Analyzing schoolwide and school counseling program data                                                                                                      |
| Analyzing GPAs in relationship to achievement                                                                                                                |

|                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards. |
| Interpreting school records                                                                                                                                                          |
| Computing GPAs                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent                                                                                                                                 |
| Providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent.                                                                                                                 |
| Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems                                                                                                                      |
| Keeping/filing clerical records                                                                                                                                                      |
| Advocating for students at individual education plan and 504 meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, as necessary                                        |
| Building the new master schedule                                                                                                                                                     |
| Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students                                                                                                                            |
| Providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students                                                                                                      |
| Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                                                                                                              |
| Coordinating school/district cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs                                                                                                   |
| Serving as a data entry clerk                                                                                                                                                        |
| Protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations                                                                                                         |
| Maintaining student records                                                                                                                                                          |
| Consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems                                                                                         |

|                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|
| Appraisal and advisement for academic planning  |
| Assisting with duties in the principal's office |

**Directions:** Below are activities that may be performed by a school counselor.

Please indicate if you ACTUALLY perform each listed activity based on your current job requirements and/or agreement with your current principal. **Answer Yes or No**

|                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity that may be performed by a school counselor                                                                                                         |
| Disciplining students or assigning discipline consequences                                                                                                   |
| Academic advising for new students                                                                                                                           |
| Providing long-term counseling in schools                                                                                                                    |
| Covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time                                                                                 |
| Presenting school counseling lessons based on the ASCA Student Standards to address students' developmental needs and needs identified through data          |
| Consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management, and the role of the ASCA Student Standards in student success |
| Supervising classrooms, common areas, in-school suspension, or time-out rooms                                                                                |
| Analyzing schoolwide and school counseling program data                                                                                                      |
| Analyzing GPAs in relationship to achievement                                                                                                                |

|                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coordinating any of the following: schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS, and school attendance review boards. |
| Interpreting school records                                                                                                                                                          |
| Computing GPAs                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent                                                                                                                                 |
| Providing counseling to students who are frequently tardy or absent.                                                                                                                 |
| Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems                                                                                                                      |
| Keeping/filing clerical records                                                                                                                                                      |
| Advocating for students at individual education plan and 504 meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, as necessary                                        |
| Building the new master schedule                                                                                                                                                     |
| Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students                                                                                                                            |
| Providing short-term individual and small group counseling services to students                                                                                                      |
| Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                                                                                                              |
| Coordinating school/district cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs                                                                                                   |
| Serving as a data entry clerk                                                                                                                                                        |
| Protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations                                                                                                         |
| Maintaining student records                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Consulting with school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems |
| Appraisal and advisement for academic planning                                               |
| Assisting with duties in the principal's office                                              |

## **Appendix D - Early-Career School Counselor Demographic Survey**

**Participant Instructions:** Please complete the following questions to help us better know our participants. Each question is voluntary.

(Inclusion Questions 1-2)

1. Are you currently employed full-time in the role of a school counselor in a P-12 school?
  - Yes
  - No (ineligible-exit the survey)
2. In what year are you currently serving in the role of a school counselor?
  - First year
  - Second year
  - Third year
  - Fourth year
  - Fifth year
  - More than five years (ineligible-exit the survey)
3. Are you currently serving in a public or private school setting?
  - Public
  - Private
4. Do you have an undergraduate degree in education?
  - Yes
  - No
5. Gender
  - Male

- Female
- Nonbinary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

6. Ethnicity-please select all that apply:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or European
- Other
- Prefer not to say

7. Community location of school

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban

8. Grade level currently serving

- Elementary (Grades P-5)
- Middle school (Grades 6-8)
- High school (Grades 9-12)
- Secondary (Grades 7-12)

- Multi-level (other)
- All grade levels combined (P-12)

9. Number of students on your current caseload

- < 200
- 201-250
- 251-300
- 301-350
- 351-400
- 401-500
- 501+

10. Total Size of School Enrollment (total number of students in the grade levels you serve)

- < 250
- 251-500
- 501-750
- 751-1000
- 1001-1250
- 1251-1500
- 1501-1750
- 1751-2000
- < 2000

11. Does your counseling department have a registrar?

- Yes, and the person is not shared with other departments in the school

- Yes, but the person is shared with other departments in the school
- No

12. Percentage of student in your building on free/reduced lunches

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%

13. Are you currently licensed as a school counselor?

- Yes, fully licensed as a school counselor
- Yes, but on a provisional license
- No

14. Choose one of the following:

- I am currently in a school counselor program (moves to 15)
- I am a graduate of a counseling program (moves to 16)

15. I am currently in a school counselor program, and I am currently supervised by

(select all that apply):

- counselor educator

- doctoral student/graduate teaching assistant
- site supervisor
- other

16. I am a graduate of a counseling program, and I currently have a school counselor mentor (select all that apply):

- In the same school building
- Not in the same school building, but in my district
- Not in my same building or district, but in my state
- I have a mentor, but they are not a school counselor
- I am a graduate of a school counseling program, and I do not have a mentor

17. Did you attend or are you currently attending a CACREP accredited graduate program?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

18. Are you a current member of at least one national professional counselor organization? (ASCA, ACA)?

- Yes, I am a member of both ASCA and ACA
- Yes, I am a member of ASCA only
- Yes, I am a member of ACA only
- No, I am not currently a member of a national professional counselor organization.

- Not sure

19. Are you a current member of a state-level counseling organization?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20. If you know your Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) score, please choose one of the following:

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more
- I am unsure of my ACEs score
- I prefer not to say

## Appendix E - Permission to Modify SCARS



Melanie Scott

To: scarboro@etsu.edu; Jessica Lane



Thu 9/19/2024 9:48 PM

Good evening Dr. Scarborough,

My name is Melanie Scott. I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University in the Counselor Education and Supervision program. I have CC'd my Major Professor, Dr. Jessica Lane.

I am interested in using The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale to show the actual vs preferred activities/functions of early-school counselors (what is the ideal role of a school counselor versus the reality of the job). We have too many early-career school counselors leaving the profession due to burnout and role confusion. The data from this dissertation study could have implications for graduate training and early career support interventions.

1. May I please use the SCARS in my study?
2. If approved for me to use the SCARS in my study, is it possible to update the language from personal/social to social emotional (under Coordination Activities)?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melanie D. Scott  
Kansas State University Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Doctoral Student in Counselor Education and Supervision

**From:** Scarborough, Janna L. <[SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 25, 2024 11:22 AM  
**To:** Melanie Scott <[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)>; Jessica Lane <[jj3636@ksu.edu](mailto:jj3636@ksu.edu)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Permission to use SCARS

This email originated from outside of K-State.

Hello Melanie,  
Thank you for your interest in the SCARS. You have permission to use the instrument as you describe and to make the changes. I do ask people to cite the following articles:  
Scarborough, J. L., & Culbreth, J. R. (2008). Examining discrepancies between actual and preferred practice of school counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 86, 446-459.  
Scarborough, J. L. (2005). The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale: An instrument for gathering process data. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 274-283.  
Good luck to you!  
-Janna

*P.S. My work schedule may differ from yours. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your work schedule.*

Janna L. Scarborough, Ph. D.  
Dean of Clemmer College  
Professor of Counseling  
She/Her



Box 70685  
Johnson City, Tn 37614  
[scarboro@etsu.edu](mailto:scarboro@etsu.edu)  
<http://www.etsu.edu/coe/>



**From:** Melanie Scott <[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:06 AM  
**To:** Scarborough, Janna L. <[SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu)>; Jessica Lane <[jjj3636@ksu.edu](mailto:jjj3636@ksu.edu)>; Yang Yang <[yyang001@ksu.edu](mailto:yyang001@ksu.edu)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Permission to use SCARS

Hello Dr. Scarborough,

My name is Melanie Scott, and I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University. I have included my co-major professors on this email, Dr. Lane and Dr. Yang. I previously contacted you and was granted permission for a modification and to use SCARS in my research study for my dissertation. I am requesting a few additional modifications beyond what I asked for the first time around, so I want to make sure I have your permission. This would be considered SCARS Modified. I will cite the two resources you have given me as requested.

1. May I modify SCARS to use the current [ASCA Appropriate/Inappropriate Duties](#)?
2. One of my goals is to examine the alignment or misalignment between the Preferred and Actual school counselor activities. What are your thoughts on using dichotomous answer choices (yes/no) versus the 5-point rating scale? Yes/no they perform the actual duties and also yes/no they prefer the activities based on their graduate training and our national standards?
3. May I use the word "expected" vs preferred? These are the activities they expect to perform based on their graduate training and our national standards.

Thank you for your consideration,

Melanie Scott

**Melanie D. Scott, MS, LPC**  
**Doctoral Student in Counselor Education and Supervision**  
**Chi Sigma Iota, Kappa Alpha Tau - Doctoral Student Representative**  
[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)  
2024 Recipient of the Kansas School Counselor Association Hall of Fame Award  
Kansas School Counselor Association Mentorship Program Co-Chair  
Kansas School Mental Health Advisory Council Member  
Apply Kansas Steering Committee Member

---

**From:** Scarborough, Janna L. <[SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu)>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 5, 2025 12:47 PM  
**To:** Melanie Scott <[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)>; Jessica Lane <[jjj3636@ksu.edu](mailto:jjj3636@ksu.edu)>; Yang Yang <[yyang001@ksu.edu](mailto:yyang001@ksu.edu)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Permission to use SCARS

**This email originated from outside of K-State.**

Hello Melanie,

Thank you for reaching out to me. You are welcome to modify as you request. You might be limited on the stats you can perform if you utilize a yes/no categorical scale but that maybe most appropriate depending on your research questions. You certainly may use a yes/no scale.

Best of luck to you!

-Janna

*P.S. My work schedule may differ from yours. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your work schedule.*

Janna L. Scarborough, Ph. D.  
Dean of Clemmer College  
Professor of Counseling  
She/Her



Box 70685  
Johnson City, Tn 37614  
[scarboro@etsu.edu](mailto:scarboro@etsu.edu)  
<http://www.etsu.edu/coe/>



---

**From:** Melanie Scott <[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 11, 2025 9:42 AM  
**To:** Scarborough, Janna L. <[SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu)>; Jessica Lane <[jjj3636@ksu.edu](mailto:jjj3636@ksu.edu)>; Yang Yang <[yyang001@ksu.edu](mailto:yyang001@ksu.edu)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Permission to use SCARS

Good morning Dr. Scarborough,

Yesterday, I met with my committee during my proposal. It was suggested that we consider adding Appropriate, Inappropriate, and Neutral to the Expected (Preferred column) instead of yes/no.

I still plan to use yes/no on the Actual column-do they perform the activity or not.

Do you approve the modification using appropriate/inappropriate/neutral?

Thank you again for your time!

**Melanie D. Scott, MS, LPC**  
**Doctoral Student in Counselor Education and Supervision**  
**Chi Sigma Iota, Kappa Alpha Tau - Doctoral Student Representative**  
[melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu)  
2024 Recipient of the Kansas School Counselor Association Hall of Fame Award  
Kansas School Counselor Association Mentorship Program Co-Chair  
Kansas School Mental Health Advisory Council Member  
Apply Kansas Steering Committee Member

**Well-Being Notice:** If you are receiving this email outside of normal working hours, I have sent this message at a convenient time for me. I respect your wellness and work boundaries, and I know you will respond at a time when it suits you best. Take care!

**From:** Scarborough, Janna L. <SCARBORO@mail.etsu.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 11, 2025 3:28:07 PM  
**To:** Melanie Scott <melanieds@ksu.edu>; Jessica Lane <jjj3636@ksu.edu>; Yang Yang <yyang001@ksu.edu>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Permission to use SCARS

This email originated from outside of K-State.

Hello Melanie,  
Yes, I agree to this change. It will be interesting to see what you find out!  
Best,  
Janna

Janna L. Scarborough, Ph. D.  
Dean of Clemmer College of Education and Human Development

*P.S. My work schedule may differ from yours. Please do not feel obligated to reply outside of your work schedule.  
Look for and remember the good.*

*When humans are ranked instead of linked, everyone loses. –Gloria Steinem  
No one deserves to disappear. – Dear Evan Hansen*



Box 70685  
Warf-Pickel 319  
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She/Her



## Appendix F - IRB Approval



Office of Research Integrity,  
Compliance and Security

TO: Jessica Lane  
Spec Ed, Counsel & Student Aff  
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number: IRB-13457

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 01/05/2026

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Predicting burnout in early career school counselors: The role of hope and school counselor activities."

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 Lisa Rubin on 01/05/2026 12:59 PM ET

## **Appendix G - Invitation to Participate in Research Study**

Dear Counselor Program Coordinators,

My name is Melanie Scott, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Kansas State University. I have been given permission by our Institutional Review Board to conduct research on the following topic: Predicting burnout in early-career school counselors: The role of hope and school counselor job activities (IRB-13457).

Please consider participating or sharing this research study aimed to help support early-career school counselor wellness and job retention.

Qualifications to participate in this research study:

- be an early-career school counselor working in the role of a school counselor for up to and including the fifth year
- be an early-career school counselor that currently works full-time in a private or public school

The data collection for this research study is voluntarily and conducted virtually via Qualtrics, an online survey. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or loss. Your identity is anonymous, and your personal information will not be collected.

Here is the link to the survey for those that qualify and are interested in participating in this research study [https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ehudIFfAbW9ButM](https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ehudIFfAbW9ButM)

If you have additional questions, please contact me at [melanieds@ksu.edu](mailto:melanieds@ksu.edu) or you may contact my dissertation co-major professors, Dr. Jessica Lane, [jjj3636@ksu.edu](mailto:jjj3636@ksu.edu), or Dr. Lydia Yang, [yyang001@ksu.edu](mailto:yyang001@ksu.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melanie Scott

## **Appendix H - Informed Consent**

PROJECT TITLE: Predicting burnout in early-career school counselors: The role of hope and school counselor job activities (IRB-13457)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Jessica J. Lane, jjj3636@ksu.edu

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Lydia Yang, yyang001@ksu.edu

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):Melanie Scott, melanieds@ksu.edu

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: If you have questions at any time during the study or afterwards, you are welcome to contact the doctoral candidate researcher, Melanie Scott, at melanieds@ksu.edu.

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have questions and want to discuss any aspect of this research with an official of the university, you are welcome to contact:

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 1-785-532-3224, email: rubin@ksu.edu

Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224, email: brwoods@ksu.edu

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this quantitative research study is to examine early-career school counselor actual activities and expected activities and whether the mis/alignment between the two is associated with burnout. It further studies whether hope, specifically its two factors of agency and pathways, can influence burnout within the first five

years of their profession. This study aims to help support early-career school counselor wellness and job retention.

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:** The data collection for this research study is voluntary, through an online survey called Qualtrics. Your identity is anonymous, and your personal information will not be collected. You can withdraw at any time. Data collected will be used for this research study only, and it will not be used for future research studies. No compensation will be given for participating in any part of this research study. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

**RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:** No risks or discomfort are anticipated by participating in this study.

**ANTICIPATED BENEFITS:** This research study hopes to support school counselor wellness and retention.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** This is an anonymous survey. Survey data will be securely stored on a password-protected online server and/or password protected computer to ensure confidentiality. All personal identifiers will be removed.

**TERMS OF PARTICIPATION:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is 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.

CONSENT: By continuing with this survey, I verify that I have read and understand this consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described above.

