

Zoom fatigue and burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators

by

Heidi Fergel

B.S., North Dakota State University, 2016

M.S., Kansas State University, 2020

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2024

## **Abstract**

Utilization of online programs in higher education continues to rise. Although online counselor education programs are also rising, few studies explore the personal and professional consequences of these modalities on counselor educators. Therefore, this study examined differences in burnout and Zoom fatigue scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. The results of this study show that there were no significant differences in burnout or Zoom fatigue among these three groups. These findings suggest that counselor educators may be getting more familiar with online teaching and experiencing fewer negative personal and professional consequences.

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Approved by:

Major Professor  
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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandma, Joan Erickson. On the last card she gave me she wrote, “Take it easy, and then go girl!” Her spirit and the relationship we had kept me *going* throughout the program. Grandma, I know you are watching over me with Grandpa by your side. I love and miss you both!

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

In this chapter, I first overview the research problem. Next, I discuss the theoretical framework used for the study. Then, I provide the research questions the study examined. Finally, I list relevant key terms for the study and their definitions.

## Overview of the Research Problem

Online education has become more prevalent across colleges and universities (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). More specifically, from 2019 to 2021, there was a 61% increase in students enrolling in online programs. Accordingly, more higher education faculty are teaching online (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) also reported an increase in the number of online counseling programs (CACREP, 2016b). As a result of this increase, more counselor educators are teaching online courses and could experience the personal and professional impacts of online teaching.

In addition, more counselor educators may utilize videoconferencing to teach core counseling skills and assess professional dispositions of their counselors-in-training (Chen et al., 2020; Snow et al., 2018). *Zoom fatigue*, a new phenomenon that describes the exhaustion felt from videoconferencing (Fauville, et al., 2021), impacted physical and mental health in faculty (Blandin et al., 2021). However, *Zoom fatigue* has not yet been studied among counselor educators. Further, there is a dearth of research on online teaching and learning in counselor education (La Guardia, 2021), and few studies have examined the difference among traditional, hybrid, and distance formats (Haddock et al., 2020).

Relatedly, burnout from work-related demands is a concern for online faculty (Mosleh et al., 2022), professional counselors (Warlick et al., 2021), and counselor educators (Harrichand et

al., 2021). Counselor educators have an ethical responsibility not only to assess and maintain their own personal wellness (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014), but a professional responsibility to teach and model self-care to counselors-in-training as well (CACREP, 2016a). However, counselor educators who experience burnout may be less effective in modeling these healthy behaviors to their students (Harrichand et al., 2021). While burnout among counselor educators has been addressed in the literature, it is limited in scope (Harrichand et al., 2021), and has not paid specific attention to comparing differences in burnout among counselor educators who teach in traditional, hybrid, and distance formats.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study used the Maslach Burnout Theory as its theoretical framework. Burnout first emerged in the literature when Herbert Freudenberger (1974) coined the term to describe emotional depletion and decrease in motivation surrounding one's professional environment. Maslach and Jackson (1981) have since expanded the concept of burnout to include three subdomains: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is the most common subdomain that people experience (Maslach et al., 2001) and occurs when an individual feels overextended and exhausted by one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Similarly, Zoom fatigue also includes an aspect of emotional exhaustion, but occurs after videoconferencing (Fauville et al., 2021). Depersonalization is defined as detaching oneself from the people with whom you work and is often accompanied by cynicism and negative attitudes (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2001). Finally, loss of personal accomplishment is characterized by low self-efficacy and accomplishments related to one's work (Maslach et al., 2001).

In higher education, burnout can negatively influence faculty physical and mental health (Alves et al., 2019), career satisfaction, and intent to leave the profession (Boamah et al., 2022; Coaston, 2013). In professional counseling, burnout can influence client outcomes (Delgadillo et al., 2018), impact a counselor's personal wellness (Lawson & Myers, 2011), and hinder a counselor educators' effectiveness at modeling healthy and ethical behaviors to students (Harrichand et al., 2021). Similarly, Zoom fatigue impacts well-being among higher education faculty (Blandin et al., 2021; Kershaw et al., 2021). Given that more counseling programs are using online modalities (CACREP, 2016b), counselor educators may also be at risk for Zoom fatigue in addition to burnout. In light of these critical impacts and the increase of online counseling programs, I sought to examine differences in burnout and Zoom fatigue among counselor educators and their method of teaching delivery. More specifically, the relationship between 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) reduced personal accomplishment and the scores of Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators were studied.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions in the study are as follows:

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in burnout (as measured by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

## Definition of Terms

The following section lists key terms and phrases in alphabetical order that are important to understand and are frequently referenced throughout the dissertation:

- **Asynchronous:** Online communication that occurs between students and educators at different times (Li & Su, 2021).
- **Burnout:** A condition of exhaustion and cynicism in those who work with people. It consists of 3 subdomains: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).
- **Counselor Educator:** A person and professional that teaches and supervises counselors-in-training on how to be counselors within graduate counseling programs (ACA, 2014).
- **Depersonalization:** An impersonal response towards those who one works with and is often accompanied by cynicism (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).
- **Distance:** 76 – 100% of teaching and learning occurs over telecommunication technology in counseling programs (Haddock et al., 2020).
- **Emotional exhaustion:** Emotional overextension and feelings of exhaustion with one's work (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).
- **Hybrid:** 26 – 75% of teaching and learning occurs over telecommunication technology in counseling programs (Haddock et al., 2020).
- **Online teaching and learning:** An educational setting where teachers and students engage over telecommunication technology (Li & Su, 2021).
- **Personal accomplishment:** In working with people, feeling competent and achieving successful outcomes (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). In burnout, there is a loss of personal accomplishment.

- **Self-care:** Personal engagement in behaviors and activities that help maintain and promote overall wellness (Myers et al., 2012).
- **Synchronous:** Online communication that occurs between student and educator at the same time (Li & Su, 2021).
- **Traditional:** Up to 25% of teaching and learning occurs over telecommunication technology in counseling programs (Haddock et al., 2020). Most of the course is delivered in-person or face-to-face (F2F).
- **Video conferencing:** A synchronous method in which teachers and students meet via online video technology to cover course content and practice skills (Haddock et al., 2020).
- **Wellness:** A state of being when mind, body, and spirit are integrated and leads to feelings of personal fulfillment (CACREP, 2009).
- **Zoom fatigue:** Feelings of exhaustion and fatigue from the utilization of videoconferencing platforms (Fauville et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the research problem and literature gaps, discussed the theoretical framework, described my research questions and study design methods, and defined the terms that will be seen throughout the rest of the chapters. In Chapter 2, I review the existing literature, further solidifying the rationale for this study.



## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

In this chapter, I discuss current literature regarding online learning in higher education and the impact on higher education faculty; narrowing the discussion to those who work as counselor educators. The research covered in this section was instrumental as I constructed my research questions and selected my research design for the study. Subtopics I cover in this literature review include:

- Trends for online teaching and learning in higher education
- Faculty attitudes towards online education
- Professional and personal impacts of online teaching
- Online teaching in counselor education
- Zoom fatigue in online higher education faculty
- Burnout in online faculty
- Counselor educators and burnout
- Burnout in professional counseling

### **Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**

Online learning, remote learning, virtual learning, e-learning, and distance education are all synonymous terms that describe learning that takes place over the internet. Appana (2008) defines this phenomenon as teaching and learning activities that occur over telecommunication platforms when teachers and students are separated by geographic location. Online teaching and learning can be asynchronous or synchronous. Asynchronous learning is learning that takes place at different times (Hrastinski, 2008). E-mail, text messages, discussion boards, and pre-recorded lectures on learning management software are examples of asynchronous methods. Synchronous learning refers to learning that occurs at the same time, usually via videoconference and chat

(Hrastinski, 2008). Online asynchronous and synchronous methods of learning accommodate students who may not be able to access a traditional campus setting, thereby making it an attractive modality for students (Mukhtar et al., 2020).

Developments in technology have increased the utilization of online learning in higher education (NCES, 2022; Seaman et al., 2018; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022). Enrollment in university-level distance courses has steadily increased since 2002, with 31.6% of students taking at least one online course in 2016 (Seaman et al., 2018). This steady rise became more abrupt during the COVID-19 pandemic (NCES, 2022). During the 2020 fall semester, approximately 75% of college students took at least one online course, a 97% increase from 2019. From 2019 to 2020, students enrolling exclusively in online college programs grew by 186%. While enrollment rates in online learning declined from 2020-2021 as COVID-19 began to settle, there was still a 61% increase between 2019 and 2021. Because of the increased demand, many universities plan to continue offering and implementing online courses (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022). With online education trending upward, more faculty at higher education institutions will likely teach through this modality.

### **Faculty Attitudes Towards Online Education**

Approximately 34% of faculty taught online during the 2018-19 school year, and 49% taught online during the 2021-22 school year (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). Given that more faculty are engaging with students online, it is important to understand faculty attitudes towards this modality. Faculty typically do not prefer to teach online, with only about 10% reporting a preference for online teaching (Brooks & Pomerantz, 2017; Saha et al., 2022). Rather, many prefer to teach in a hybrid format that blends both online and face-to-face (F2F) learning.

Approximately half of faculty prefer to teach using this mixed modality (Saha et al., 2022; Seaman & Seaman, 2022).

One explanation for these preferences is that faculty often believe that traditional, in-person learning is more effective than online learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2020). Accordingly, only 15% of faculty agreed that online learning was as equally effective as traditional learning (Saha et al., 2022), and only 28% saw online education as effective and valuable (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Moreover, faculty believed that the quality of education was lower in online instruction than in-person instruction (Kane & Dahlvig, 2022). Faculty also expressed concerns with the rigor of online courses (Shreaves et al., 2020).

However, faculty attitudes towards online education may be improving. About half of faculty saw online teaching as an effective method for learning (Lederman, 2020). Similarly, more faculty reported positive opinions of online education than those who reported negative opinions (Watkins, 2021), and more than half of faculty relayed an improved opinion of online learning (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). Further, faculty who completed training for online teaching had a more positive attitude towards online education (Roberts & Rizzolo, 2023). Although many faculty still have negative attitudes towards online learning, these findings suggest that faculty attitudes are improving.

### **Professional and Personal Impacts of Online Teaching**

Online teaching impacts faculty both personally and professionally. Positive professional impacts from teaching online include potentially increasing compensation, exploring new teaching pedagogy, and enhancing efficacy and skills with instructional technology (Shreaves et al., 2020). Faculty also see online teaching as a means for portfolio improvement and professional development (Khan et al., 2022). Additionally, faculty felt that their skills in

organization and planning improved after moving a F2F course to an online format (Kearns, 2016). They also became more open to trying new things, and they recognized the importance of putting in extra effort to connect with students.

Faculty also experience positive impacts to their personal life when teaching online. Faculty described feeling emotionally supported from colleagues and being able to spend more time with their families as a positive experience during online teaching (Belikov et al., 2021). Online teaching also provides faculty with more schedule flexibility, further increasing faculty satisfaction (Marasi et al., 2022; Mosquera et al., 2022). Higher satisfaction with online teaching positively impacted overall well-being by mediating home and work demands (Mosquera et al., 2022). In all, faculty feel encouraged to teach online because of the personal flexibility it allows (Shreaves et al., 2020).

In spite of these positive impacts, online teaching can also have negative consequences. Faculty expressed that preparation for online courses took more time than in-person courses (Almahasees et al., 2021), despite online teaching being perceived as more flexible. Faculty often need more time to record lectures, make meaningful assignments, and create opportunities for student engagement (Kane & Dahlvig, 2022). Grading can also take extensive time in the online format. On average, faculty spent 21 minutes per student each week reading online discussion boards, providing feedback, and grading (McKinney, 2018). Faculty also believed their workload increased and they had less time to devote to research activities when teaching online (McMurtrie, 2020).

Online teaching can also bring about challenges to faculties' personal lives. Among faculty teaching from home, 71% felt moderate to severe stress and 36% had less energy to devote to friends and family (Mosleh et al., 2022). Further, 50% felt online teaching negatively

impacted their physical health, and 30% felt online teaching negatively affected their mental health. Faculty also expressed that a lack of training for online teaching, technical problems, and an increased workload contributed to feelings of stress and frustration (McMurtrie, 2020). Other risk factors of stress for those teaching online included difficulty in maintaining work-life balance, an inconsistent workload and schedule, a lack of autonomy, and excess sedentary and screen time (García-González et al., 2020). These findings are important because delivering content and instruction online incites positive and negative impacts on faculties' professional and personal lives.

### **Online Teaching in Counselor Education**

Research for online teaching and learning in counselor education is scarce. Scholars expressed a need to focus on literature concerning online teaching in counselor education programs following review of hundreds of research articles across several counseling journals (Barrio Minton, 2019; Barrio Minton & Hightower, 2020). From 1998 to 2020, only 48 articles across 26 counseling journals addressed components related to online teaching and learning in counselor education (Li & Su, 2021). Recently, the topic of online teaching and learning in counselor education has received slightly more attention (La Guardia, 2021). However, the topic of online teaching in counselor education continues to be recommended as an area of future research focus. Moreover, there is a gap in the empirical literature comparing distance, hybrid, and F2F counselor education programs (Haddock et al., 2020).

Although there is limited research concerning online teaching and learning in counselor education, challenges of the modality have been reported. Approximately half of counselor educators felt it was a challenge to adapt their teaching style and offer effective clinical training to students in the online format (Snow et al., 2018). Additionally, a majority of counselor

educators had a difficult time cultivating student connection with the university. Counselor educators also struggled with feelings of inauthenticity and frustration while engaging online students (Hale & Bridges, 2020). These counselor educators also felt pressure from higher education leadership to provide high-quality teaching, despite a lack of support and training for online education. Further, counselor educators found online teaching cumbersome and struggled to assess students' skills and professional dispositions.

The faculty requirement to assess professional dispositions is unique to counselor education programs. Professional dispositions are “the commitments, characteristics, values, beliefs, interpersonal functioning, and behaviors that influence the counselor's professional growth and interactions with clients and colleagues” (CACREP, 2016a). However, scholars determined a lack of defined dispositional characteristics can make this assessment difficult for counselor educators (Homrich et al., 2014). Further, the lack of F2F connection makes evaluating counseling students (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011) and gatekeeping (Coker et al., 2021) difficult for counselor educators in an online format. Scholars insist counselor educators who assess professional dispositions of students through online modalities need to be strategic and intentional in their course planning (Brue & Bland, 2023). Some counselor educators believe that skills and dispositions can be effectively assessed by incorporating synchronized opportunities online for students (Chen et al., 2020; Snow et al., 2018). With a 233% increase in counselor training programs with an online component (Isom et al., 2022) and increased student satisfaction and outcomes when synchronous opportunities are present (Sheperis et al., 2020), counselor educators will use videoconferencing platforms more frequently to teach, assess, and connect with their students.

## **Zoom Fatigue in Higher Education Faculty**

Approximately 10 million people per day used Zoom to host videoconferences in December of 2019. That average rose to 350 million daily users by December of 2020 (Iqbal, 2022). With this substantial increase in the use of videoconferencing, *Zoom fatigue* became popular rhetoric to allude to the feelings of exhaustion that come from engaging in the synchronous mode of telecommunication (Fauville et al., 2021). While the name of the new phenomenon only addresses the videoconference platform, Zoom, it is inclusive to any videoconferencing platform (Nadler, 2020).

Research on Zoom fatigue is in the early stages of development, but scholars have begun to theorize causes of the phenomenon. Zoom fatigue does not occur from staring at a screen for an extended period of time, but rather from the complexity of the interaction that takes place over a videoconference meeting (Nadler, 2020). This fatigue results from an overload of nonverbal communications and the increased cognitive effort it takes to send and receive nonverbal cues when interacting online (Bailenson, 2021). Further, users can experience mirror anxiety from viewing oneself for an extended period and feelings of physical confinement while on Zoom.

Fauville and colleagues (2021) constructed the Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue Scale (ZEF Scale) to measure these aspects of fatigue experienced from videoconferencing. Faculty reported a moderate level of Zoom fatigue using this instrument (Oducado et al., 2022). Predictors of Zoom fatigue included meeting duration, length of breaks between meetings, attitudes towards Zoom, levels of mirror anxiety, and feelings of confinement. Accordingly, length of time spent in a videoconference meeting impacted faculty well-being (Kershaw et al., 2021). ZEF Scale scores are also related to scores on instruments measuring somatization symptoms, anxiety, and

depression (Blandin et al., 2021). In all, Zoom fatigue is a present issue among faculty and can have implications towards their overall wellness.

### **Burnout in Online Faculty**

Burnout is also a concern for online faculty. Faculty who teach online report high levels of depersonalization, low levels of personal accomplishment, and moderate levels of emotional exhaustion (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Over 40% of faculty working from home experienced feelings of exhaustion, and 37% indicated they were emotionally drained (Mosleh et al., 2022). Alternatively, another study found overall burnout was low among online faculty and discovered differences between online and traditional faculty, with online faculty appearing to report lower burnout than traditional faculty (McCann & Holt, 2009). In all, levels of burnout varies in online faculty.

Although the experience and pervasiveness of burnout among faculty varies, online teaching can bring unique demands that contribute to burnout. Faculty may need to seek additional training to be effective online teachers, which can lead to burnout (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Since faculty report online teaching to be accompanied by a higher workload and time commitment (Almahasees et al., 2021), the added stress from these realities can develop symptoms of burnout as well (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Effective online faculty may need to have a consistent and constant online presence, which can also contribute to burnout (Dunlap, 2005).

The literature has examined possible predictors of burnout in online faculty. Online faculty with children were more likely to experience burnout (Mosleh et al., 2022). Further, low satisfaction with online teaching predicted burnout among online faculty. In addition, negative attitudes towards shifting to online teaching during COVID-19 were positively related to burnout



(Daumiller et al., 2021). However, gender, level of education, academic training, and years of experience with online work did not predict burnout in online faculty (McCann & Holt, 2009).

Regardless of teaching modality, scholars acknowledge the serious implications of burnout for faculty. Burnout negatively impacted faculty physical and mental health (Alves et al., 2019). Further, burnout influenced faculty career satisfaction and turnover intent (Boamah et al., 2022; Coaston, 2013). Around a third of faculty felt emotionally exhausted and intended to leave their academic field within 5 years (Yedidia et al., 2014). Ultimately, high turnover of academic faculty is an important concern because of the impact it has on student learning (Shrand & Ronnie, 2021). Taken together, burnout in faculty impacts faculty and students alike, and has unique considerations in the online teaching environment.

### **Counselor Educators and Burnout**

There are consequences of burnout for counselor educators. Burnout may diminish counselor educators' capacity to teach, supervise, and model healthy behavior and skills to their counseling students (Harrichand et al., 2021). The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics states that counselor educators should teach and model ethical standards for students (ACA, 2014, F.7.e), including the ability to monitor mental or emotional impairments (ACA, 2014, C.2.g) such as burnout. They also should teach counseling graduate students self-care strategies (CACREP, 2016a, 2.F.1.1). Research on variables contributing to burnout among counseling faculty is limited despite the ethical and professional responsibilities of counselor educators and the possible ramifications on students.

Although literature concerning burnout and counselor educators is scarce, research demonstrates a significant relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among this population (Hill, 2009). Typically, counselor educators who do not have tenure status experience

higher levels of burnout than tenured counselor educators, and that burnout contributed to lower job satisfaction. Among counselor educators, the most significant predictor of burnout and job is emotional exhaustion (Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013). Likewise, counselor educators' level of job satisfaction significantly predicts emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Williams, 2020). Additionally, counselor educators who experience moderate levels of burnout may feel less satisfied and may consider leaving the profession (Coaston, 2013).

Along with job satisfaction, research has found a relationship between burnout and variables like perfectionism, leadership experience, and competence among counselor educators. Greater levels of leadership experience in counselor education correlated to lower scores on personal and student-related burnout (Harrichand et al., 2021). However, those with more leadership experience were likely to experience work-related burnout. Counselor educators who feel competent in their leadership abilities are less likely to experience personal and work-related burnout than those who perceive their leadership competence as low. For perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionists had higher levels of burnout compared to non-perfectionists and adaptive perfectionists (Moate et al., 2016).

Minimal literature also exists concerning burnout and online counselor educators. Online counselor educators who communicate synchronously with their students experience significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of personal accomplishment than their asynchronous counterparts (Nelson, 2019). In all, counselor educators who engage with students through synchronous methods are more satisfied than those who primarily communicate with students asynchronously. These findings suggest the importance of seeing student faces for counselor educators. Given this assumption and the importance of the counselor

educator role on counseling students' development, examining differences in counselor educator burnout through the lens of traditional, hybrid, and distance formats of teaching is warranted.

### **Burnout in Professional Counseling**

Burnout has serious impacts on both professional counselors and their clients.

Occupational burnout among counselors can lead to negative treatment outcomes for clients (Delgadillo et al., 2018). In addition, all counseling professionals have an ethical obligation to maintain and monitor their personal well-being (ACA, 2014), and burnout can impact levels of wellness among counselors (Lawson & Myers, 2011). Given these findings, it is critical for counselor educators to understand the symptoms, risk factors, and prevalence of burnout across the counseling profession so they can best prepare their counselors-in-training.

Helping professionals across multiple disciplines often experience similar symptoms of burnout. Psychologists expressed that they were emotionally exhausted and wanted to distance themselves from people (Clarke et al., 2020). School counselors also experienced exhaustion and reported deterioration in their personal life (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Additionally, 42% of psychotherapists indicated they were emotionally exhausted (Laverdière et al., 2018). In all, exhaustion tends to be the most reported symptom of burnout.

There are a variety of risk factors related to burnout in the counseling profession. Counselors who worked in rural areas, worked in inpatient settings, identified as female, or had high caseloads of clients with trauma were all at increased risk for burnout (Sprang et al., 2007). Contrarily, counselors who worked in private practice settings reported the lowest levels of burnout (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Sprang et al., 2007). Counselors who worked with high-risk clients or suicidal clients were also at a higher risk for burnout (Lawson & Myers, 2011). School counselors often experience higher levels of burnout when they are assigned non-counseling

duties (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Being new to the field of counseling was a risk factor for burnout (Laverdière et al., 2018; Sprang et al., 2007). However, Warlick et al. (2021) and Clarke et al. (2020) found that years of experience had no significant impact on burnout.

Overall risk and prevalence of burnout among helping professionals varies across time. Early literature suggests only a small fraction of mental health professionals were at high risk for burnout (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Sprang et al., 2007). However, demands for mental health treatment are increasing (American Psychological Association [APA], 2022), and recent research indicates the risk of burnout for helping professionals is increasing as well. Accordingly, over a third of psychotherapists were at high risk for burnout (Laverdière et al., 2018). Among professional counselors and graduate students, about a quarter reported clinically significant levels of burnout (Warlick et al., 2021). Further, nearly half of psychologists reported feeling burned out (APA, 2022). Despite varying risk of burnout among helping professionals, scholars acknowledge the serious implications of burnout on counselors and their clients alike. (Warlick et al., 2021). Counselor educators are largely responsible for the training of future counseling professionals. It is crucial they understand how burnout presents itself in the field and model healthy wellness behaviors for their students.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature surrounding trends and impacts of teaching online, narrowing the review to online counselor education and counselor educators. I also examined the research on Zoom fatigue and its' impact in higher education. Further, I reviewed literature on burnout in higher education faculty, counselor educators, and professional counseling. Based on review of the research and identified gaps in the literature, this study is warranted. In chapter 3, I will discuss the methodology of the study.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

In this chapter, I discuss the quantitative study's research purpose, research questions, and hypotheses. Further, I include details on the participants, study design, instrumentation, and the procedures of the study. I also discuss the data analysis methods I used to answer my research purpose and questions.

### **Purpose**

The first purpose of this study was to understand the differences in burnout scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. Given the impact burnout can have on a counseling professionals' personal well-being and client outcomes as well as the counselor educator's professional responsibility to teach and model wellness to counseling graduate students, it is pertinent to examine the relationship between these variables. The second purpose of the study was to examine the differences in Zoom fatigue scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. With an increased use of telecommunication in counselor training programs, it is timely to study such variables among counselor educators.

### **Research Questions & Hypotheses**

The research questions and hypotheses for the study were:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a difference in burnout (as measured by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

Null Hypotheses 2: There is no difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were counselor educators. I used purposive sampling to acquire participants. Purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers require a sample of people with specific characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Purposive sampling was an appropriate sampling strategy for this study because the research purpose and questions focused on counselor educators, and I knew of listservs, professional organizations, and institutions to locate subjects with this characteristic. The following paragraph outlines the recruitment process I carried out for the study.

Participants were counselor educators from universities accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). I chose this inclusion criteria because CACREP-accredited programs all follow the same standards (CACREP, 2016a). Before I began recruitment for the study, I obtained approval from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the IRB approved my study, I recruited participants through the Counselor Education and Supervision NETWORK – Listserv (CESNET-L). CESNET-L is a community listserv of counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors (Jencius, 2019). This listserv hosts postings for research participation and other relevant information to the profession. Therefore, this was an appropriate forum to recruit counselor educators. I also utilized the directory on the CACREP webpage to obtain email information for counseling program coordinators. I sent one initial recruitment e-mail and 2 follow-up e-mails to counseling program contacts. Participants were notified in the informed

consent that their data would be anonymous. Participation was voluntary and no compensation was provided for completing the survey.

The power, confidence level, effect size, and type of analysis that will be run determines appropriate sample size (Cohen, 1992). I identified a power of .80, a medium effect size, a .05 confidence level, and the statistical data analysis of an ANOVA and Wilks' Lambda MANOVA for my study. Using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009), I found an appropriate sample size of 159 participants, 53 in each teaching format group, for the ANOVA. I found an appropriate sample size of 111 for the MANOVA statistical test.

### **Research Design**

This quantitative study utilized a non-experimental design for approaching the research questions. This design was appropriate because I studied constructs that occurred naturally and there was no manipulation of the independent variable. This study also used ANOVA and MANOVA statistical analysis to answer research questions. The purpose of utilizing ANOVA and MANOVA was to examine mean differences in burnout and Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. An online survey was the best fit for collecting data for this study. Surveys can assess an individual's self-report of their experiences, behaviors, perceptions, and opinions by asking standardized questions that can be analyzed in a statistical manner at a later time (Leavy, 2017). Online surveys allow access to more participants across geographic locations and for self-administration (Leavy, 2017). For this study, a Qualtrics survey and link was developed for participant access. An online survey was appropriate to use because counselor educators are dispersed all over the United States.

## **Instrumentation**

Haddock and colleagues (2020) indicated counselor educators deliver content over 3 formats: traditional, hybrid, and distance. Traditional counselor educators deliver up to 25% of content online. Hybrid counselor educators deliver 26 – 75% of content online. Distance counselor educators deliver 76 – 100% of material online. The survey asked participants the following questions: *1) How many total classes do you intend to have over the course of the semester? 2) How many of these classes are planned to be delivered in-person? 3) How many are planned to be delivered via telecommunication?* I calculated the percentage of time spent delivering courses via telecommunication, which helped to minimize measurement error (Billiet & Matsuo, 2012), and placed participants into one of the teaching format groups. I also included an informed consent document and a brief demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire asked participants to report their age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The options for gender were: *Man, Woman, Non-binary/third gender, or Prefer not to say*. The options for race/ethnicity were: *American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White or Caucasian, Multiple ethnicities, or Prefer not to say*. Two previously constructed research instruments were also included.

### **Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been used to study and measure occupational burnout for over four decades (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach and colleagues (2001) posit that there are three core dimensions of burnout and the MBI acknowledges these dimensions as subscales. The subscales of burnout measured in the MBI are 1) Emotional Exhaustion, 2) Depersonalization, and 3) Personal Accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). An additional



version of the MBI, the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES) was constructed and first published in 1986, consisting of 22 survey items to examine burnout in those working in educational settings (Maslach et al., 1996). I used the MBI-ES because counselor educators work in an educational setting. Survey respondents answered *how often* they experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment on a 7-point Likert scale in relation to their work and feelings towards *students* (Mind Garden, 2022): (0) Never, (1) A few times a year, (2) Once a month or less, (3) A few times a month, (4) Once a week, (5) A few times a week, and (6) Every day. Of the 22 survey questions, 9 items assess emotional exhaustion. The average from these 9 items provides an emotional exhaustion score. An example statement to be rated on the MBI-ES that measures emotional exhaustion reads: *I feel emotionally drained from my work*. Five items on the MBI-ES measure for depersonalization. The average from these 5 items provides a depersonalization score. An example statement to be rated by the participants is: *I don't really care what happens to some students*. Finally, of the 22 items on the scale, 8 measure personal accomplishment. The average from these 8 items provides a personal accomplishment score. An example statement for this subscale reads: *I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job*. Higher scores on the subscales of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion indicate higher degrees of burnout (Maslach et al., 1996) In contrast, low scores on the subscale of personal accomplishment indicates higher degrees of burnout (Maslach et al., 1996). The reliability for the MBI-ES demonstrated the following Cronbach alphas: emotional exhaustion ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), depersonalization ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ), and personal accomplishment ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ) (Hogan and McKnight, 2007). A bivariate correlation between the subscales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization relayed a moderate correlation ( $r = .44$ ), whereas bivariate correlations displayed low correlation between

emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment ( $r = -.17$ ) and between depersonalization and personal accomplishment ( $r = -.28$ ) (Maslach et al., 1981). These correlations align with the theorized notion that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment are related, but also their own constructs (Maslach et al., 1981). Discriminant validity demonstrated burnout has been established as a separate phenomenon from constructs like depression and job satisfaction (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016.).

### **Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue Scale**

Fauville and colleagues (2021) developed the 15-item Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue Scale (ZEF Scale) with all the items using a 5-point Likert-scale for measurement: (1) Not at all, (2) Slightly, (3) Moderately, (4) Very, (5) Extremely. In the survey, 5 constructs are addressed: general fatigue, visual fatigue, social fatigue, motivational fatigue, and emotional fatigue. An example of a question that addresses general fatigue in the ZEF Scale is: *How tired do you feel after video conferencing?* An example question for visual fatigue is: *How irritated do your eyes feel after video conferencing?* An example question to measure social fatigue is: *How much do you need time by yourself after video conferencing?* An example question for motivational fatigue is: *How much do you dread having to do things after video conferencing?* An example question for emotional fatigue is: *How moody do you feel after video conferencing?* The average of all 15 items provides a ZEF score. A higher score indicates more Zoom fatigue.

Fauville and colleagues (2021) demonstrated the reliability and validity of the ZEF Scale across 5 studies with over 3,000 participants. The 15 item ZEF Scale showed high reliability as a whole with a Cronbach alpha of ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ), as well as appropriate reliability for each of the 5 constructs in which Cronbach alphas ranged between 0.83 and 0.89, which demonstrated internal consistency among the items. Bivariate correlations between the 5 constructs ranged from

moderate to high with correlation coefficients as followed: general and emotional fatigue ( $r = .80$ ), general and visual fatigue ( $r = .71$ ), general and motivational fatigue ( $r = .84$ ), general and social fatigue ( $r = .59$ ), visual and emotional fatigue ( $r = .67$ ), motivational and emotional fatigue ( $r = .76$ ), social and emotional fatigue ( $r = .71$ ), visual and motivational fatigue ( $r = .65$ ), visual and social fatigue ( $r = .50$ ), and motivational and social fatigue ( $r = .58$ ). All bivariate correlations were significant at  $p < .001$ . Convergent and discriminant validity were also assessed and determined to be acceptable.

### **Procedure**

After the IRB approved my study, I used Qualtrics to create an online survey packet. The packet consisted of an informed consent document, self-report and demographic questions, and items on the MBI-ES and ZEF Scale. I purchased and received a license to administer for the MBI-ES through Mind Garden. Though the ZEF Scale is free for public use, I received permission via e-mail from Dr. Fauville, one of the creators of the scale, to use the instrument for the study. I posted the call for participation on the listserv, CESNET-L, with general information about the study, the link to the survey, and my contact information. I posted 3 calls for participation on CESNET-L over the course of 4-6 weeks. I also emailed program directors from 438 CACREP accredited institutions across the country requesting they pass along the study information to their counselor education faculty. I sent 3 total email invitations to program directors. Copies of the IRB approval letter, informed consent, instrument permissions, and communications are located in the Appendix section of this dissertation.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was collected online via an anonymous Qualtrics survey. This data was stored on a password protected computer. The data was cleaned before exporting the data into a

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Once in SPSS, the data was analyzed in an aggregate format to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for analysis. I used SPSS to calculate each participants' percentage of time spent delivering content via telecommunication and placed them into 3 groups: 1) traditional, 2) hybrid, and 3) distance. I used SPSS descriptive analysis to relay demographic information of the sample that participated in the survey. I also conducted a regression analysis to determine the Cronbach's alpha scores for internal consistency for the MBI-ES, the MBI-ES subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, and the ZEF Scale. I also conducted a bivariate correlation analysis between the three subscales of burnout. The three subscales were moderately to highly correlated at a statistically significant level in this study. Therefore, I used a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) analysis to reduce the risk of type I error (Mudallal et al., 2017) for the first research question. For RQ1, I used a one-way MANOVA to determine if there were group differences between counselor educators' method of teaching delivery and their level of burnout. Finally, since Zoom fatigue is its own dependent variable separate from burnout, I used a one-way ANOVA to determine possible differences in ZEF Scale scores and counselor educators' method of teaching delivery

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described the research purpose, research questions and hypotheses, participants, research design, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis strategies used in the study examining the differences among counselor educators' format of teaching delivery and their levels of burnout and Zoom fatigue. In chapter 4, I discuss the results of the study.

## Chapter 4 - Results

In this chapter, I discuss the results of my study. First, I describe the participants of the research using the results of the demographics survey. Next, I relay the reliability data of the study. Then, I describe the key descriptive results and statistical analysis for each research question. The purpose of this study was to examine differences in burnout and Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. The research questions for the study were:

RQ1: Is there a difference in burnout (as measured by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

RQ2: Is there a difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?

### Participants

After six weeks of data recruitment, 130 people began the study after clicking on the Qualtrics link and reading the informed consent document. Of those participants, 7 stopped after answering the screening question asking about CACREP affiliation. An additional 20 participants were screened out as they were not part of a CACREP-accredited program. In all, 102 participants completed the background questions on time spent teaching in-person or over telecommunication and the ZEF Scale. Three of those people stopped after the ZEF Scale and did not finish the MBI-ES or the demographic questionnaire. Therefore, 102 participant ( $N = 102$ ) responses were analyzed for RQ2 and 99 participant ( $N = 99$ ) responses were analyzed for RQ1. The number of participants who completed the background questions, the ZEF Scale, the entire MBI-ES, and the demographic questionnaire was 99. Participants were placed into one of

the independent variable categories of 1) traditional, 2) hybrid, and 3). Traditional participants spend up to 25% of their time teaching content online. Hybrid participants spend between 26 – 75% of their time teaching content online. Distance participants spend 76% or more of their time teaching online. After calculating the percentage of time spent teaching online, there were 40 participants in the traditional group, 19 in the hybrid group, and 40 in the distance group for the MANOVA analysis for burnout. For the ANOVA analysis for Zoom fatigue, there were 41 participants in the traditional group, 21 in the hybrid group, and 40 in the distance group.

### **Demographics**

The demographics of the participants in this study is shown in Table 1. The majority of participants identify as White ( $n = 75$ ) and as a Woman ( $n = 75$ ). The sample ranged from 28 years old to 79 years old with an average age of 45.24 years old.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Participants*

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White or Caucasian	75	72.8
Black or African American	13	12.6
American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native	2	1.9
Asian	3	2.9
Latino or Hispanic	2	1.9
Multiple ethnicities	1	1
Another choice that isn't listed here	2	1.9
Prefer not to say	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	

  

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Man	20	19.4
Woman	75	72.8
Non-binary or 3 <sup>rd</sup> gender	4	3.9
Prefer not to say	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	

## Reliability

I measured the reliability of each instrument using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for the ZEF Scale was  $a = .954$ . The Cronbach's alpha for the MBI-ES was  $a = .804$ . The Cronbach's alphas for the 3 subscales of burnout were: Emotional Exhaustion  $a = .900$ , Depersonalization  $a = .690$ , and Personal Accomplishment  $a = .774$ . Table 2 shows the bivariate correlations for the study.

**Table 2**

*Bivariate Correlations between the Burnout Subdomains*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Emotional exhaustion	—		
2. Depersonalization	.689**	—	
3. Personal accomplishment	-.310**	-.340**	—

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Descriptive and Analytic Results

The descriptive and statistical analysis results are addressed in regard to each research question. IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.0.0.0 software was used to conduct all descriptive and statistical analysis.

**RQ1: Is there a difference in burnout (as measured by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?**

I used SPSS to calculate the descriptive findings for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. The mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges on each burnout dimension were calculated for each teaching format and are shown in Table 3. The hybrid

counselor educators reported the highest emotional exhaustion ( $M = 2.959$ ) and depersonalization ( $M = 1.411$ ). The traditional group of counselor educators experienced the highest level of personal accomplishment in their work with students ( $M = 4.922$ ) and distance counselor educators experienced the lowest ( $M = 4.678$ ).

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the MBI-ES*

Variable	M	SD	Range
<b>Emotional exhaustion</b>			
Traditional	2.503	.193	2.118 – 2.887
Hybrid	2.959	.281	2.402 – 3.516
Distance	2.458	.193	2.075 – 2.842
<b>Depersonalization</b>			
Traditional	1.130	.157	.818 – 1.441
Hybrid	1.411	.227	.959 – 1.862
Distance	1.200	.157	.889 – 1.511
<b>Personal accomplishment</b>			
Traditional	4.922	.111	4.702 – 5.142
Hybrid	4.757	.161	4.483 – 5.075
Distance	4.678	.111	4.458 – 4.898

Note. Lower scores on personal accomplishment indicates higher burnout

I used a MANOVA statistical test to determine if traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators differed significantly in their mean burnout scores. The burnout subscales were significantly correlated in this study, and a MANOVA reduced the risk of Type I error. The hypothesis was there would be no significant difference in burnout scores among traditional,



hybrid, and distance counselor educators. After testing for homogeneity of variance-covariance ( $p = .540$ ) and meeting the assumption of equal variances among groups, the results indicated there was no significant difference among the teaching format categories on the dependent variable of burnout, Wilks'  $\lambda = .946$ ,  $F(6, 188) = .883$ ,  $p = .508$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .027$ . No post hoc analysis was conducted.

### **RQ 2: Is there a difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators?**

I calculated mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges from the ZEF Scale for traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators using SPSS. The mean score for counselor educators on the ZEF Scale who teach in the traditional format was 2.294 (SD = .138, Range = 2.020 – 2.568), the hybrid format was 2.571 (SD = .193, Range = 2.189 – 2.954), and distance format was 2.370 (SD = .140, Range = 2.093 – 2.647).

To determine if there was a significant difference in the means of Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators, I used a one-way ANOVA. The hypothesis was there would be no significant difference in the Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue scale scores among tradition, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. After meeting the assumption of homogeneity ( $p = .787$ ), the results indicate there is no significant difference in the teaching format of traditional, hybrid and distance counselor educators and Zoom fatigue scores,  $F(2, 102) = .687$ ,  $p = .505$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .014$ . No follow-up tests were conducted.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I went over the demographic information of the participants in the study and the study's reliability. I also covered the descriptive and statistical analysis for each research question. In chapter 5, I further discuss the results and implications of this study's findings.

## **Chapter 5 - Discussion**

In this chapter, I discuss the results of this study. I organized this chapter in the following order: key findings, implications for counselor educators and university leaders, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

### **Summary and Discussion of Key Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in burnout and Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators using the survey data from the MBI-ES and the ZEF Scale. I analyzed the results for the burnout scale using a MANOVA statistical test to determine if there were significant differences between traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. For Zoom fatigue scores, I analyzed the results using an ANOVA statistical test to examine differences between the groups.

#### **Research Question 1**

The first research question sought to examine differences in burnout scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. The null hypothesis was there would be no difference between traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators and their levels of burnout. I failed to reject the null hypothesis as there was no significant difference between traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators and their scores on the MBI-ES. In other words, counselor educators teaching in traditional, hybrid, and distance settings have similar levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. From this finding, I conclude that teaching modality may have little to no impact on levels of burnout among counselor educators.

The reportedly added workload that comes with online teaching (Almahasees et al., 2021; Kane & Dahlvig, 2022; McKinney, 2018, McMurtrie, 2020) and the added time it takes to

receive training for effective online teaching can contribute to burnout in online faculty (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). One explanation for this current study's finding of no significant differences in burnout levels across teaching modalities is that counselor educators may feel more knowledgeable and confident with online teaching and learning. This idea is supported by scholars suggesting faculty are more competent and prepared to teach online in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lederman, 2020; Roberts & Rizzolo, 2023).

Based on the scores from the MBI-ES, the most frequently experienced burnout symptom among counselor educators was emotional exhaustion, over depersonalization and loss of personal accomplishment. This finding is consistent with Maslach Burnout Theory (Maslach et al., 2001) and literature indicating that emotional exhaustion is the most commonly experienced subdomain of burnout (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Clarke et al., 2020; Laverdière et al., 2018; Sangganjanavanich & Balkin, 2013). Considering that counselor educators are teachers, researchers, supervisors, leaders, and advocates (CACREP, 2016a), it is possible that their responsibilities lead to feelings of overextension towards their work. However, it is important to acknowledge that emotional exhaustion scores were relatively low in this study, indicating a small to moderate degree of burnout among counselor educators. Further, low depersonalization scores and high personal accomplishment scores derived from counselor educators in this study indicate a low degree of burnout. In other words, counselor educators rarely feel cynical or impersonal towards their work and students, and often feel a sense of accomplishment and competency in their role.

One explanation of the overall low degree of burnout among counselor educators across all modalities in this study could be because counselor educators feel satisfied with their job and with online learning. A few studies have linked job satisfaction and burnout in counselor

education, with higher burnout scores predicting lower job satisfaction (Coaston, 2013; Hill, 2009; Williams, 2020). An additional study found faculty satisfaction with online learning is related to levels of burnout (Mosleh et al., 2022). Another explanation for the low degree of burnout is that counselor educators are engaging effectively in wellness practices. Lower burnout scores are linked to higher wellness scores (Lawson & Myers, 2011).

Finally, regarding distance counselor educators, this study's findings of a low level of burnout are consistent with results that found low levels of burnout among online faculty (McCann & Holt, 2009). However, while McCann and Holt (2009) found differences in levels of burnout between traditional and online faculty, this study did not find any differences between teaching formats. Further, this study's findings of low depersonalization and high personal accomplishment contradicted findings that online faculty reported high depersonalization and low personal accomplishment (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). One explanation for this study's finding among distance faculty is the increased use of video conference platforms, like Zoom, to connect with students in the online environment. Data reporting that 87% of online faculty use synchronous methods like video conferencing with their students (Snow et al., 2018) supports this idea. Using videoconference technology can allow faculty to see and interact with their students in real time, which could help foster more personable and meaningful connections. This study's findings support Snow and colleagues' (2018) notion that "videoconference tools help decrease the *distance* in distance education" (p. 138).

## **Research Question 2**

The second research question sought to examine differences in Zoom fatigue scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. The null hypothesis was there would be no difference between traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators and their

levels of Zoom fatigue. I failed to reject the null hypothesis as there was no significant difference between traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators and their scores on the ZEF Scale in this study. In all, the results indicated counselor educators across all modalities experience slight to moderate fatigue and exhaustion from video conferencing. Lower levels of Zoom fatigue are associated with more favorable attitudes of video conferencing (Fauville et al., 2021), a key component of distance teaching in counselor education (Snow et al., 2018). Therefore, one explanation for these findings is an increase in positive attitudes from counselor educators towards online learning and video conferencing. This idea is supported by recent research indicating improved faculty attitudes for online teaching and learning (Lederman, 2020; Roberts & Rizzolo, 2023; Seaman & Seaman, 2022). As mentioned before, an additional explanation for the results of this study may be that counselor educators are becoming more familiar and confident in their use of online technology, which includes video conference platforms.

### **Implications**

The results of this study have several implications for counselor educators and university leaders. First, roughly 60% of the counselor educators that responded to this study teach in hybrid or distance formats. This result aligns with recent data that show counseling programs with online components are becoming more common (Isom et al., 2022). University leaders should ensure faculty have the time and access to adequate training for effective online teaching practices. Further, counselor educators should continue to seek training and professional development opportunities focusing on effective practices for online counselor education, as well as consider engaging in research pertaining to online counseling programs.

Second, counselor educators should be aware that there are no significant differences in burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance modalities. Although additional training and

increased workload is commonly associated with the burnout that can arise from online teaching, this study's findings suggest that online teaching may be becoming more streamlined. Current and prospective counselor educators can consider these results as they make choices regarding their location of work and course planning. Another implication of this study is that burnout is relatively low among counselor educators. Counselor educators should continue to advocate, implement, and engage in the ethical practice of wellness and self-care in order to prevent future burnout. Further, teaching and modeling these healthy strategies for self-care to graduate students would be beneficial. Although this study depicted low burnout among counseling faculty, university leaders should recognize the impact burnout can have on job satisfaction, turnover intent, and student outcomes. It is crucial for university leaders to monitor the capacity and burnout levels of their faculty and provide time and opportunity for self-care.

Finally, counselor educators should be aware that there is no significant difference in Zoom fatigue among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. There is also a relatively low level of Zoom fatigue among all counselor educators in this study. Therefore, video conferencing should continue to be considered as an effective means to teach and connect with students in counselor education. As online counseling programs increase, the number of counselor educators interacting with students over video conference platforms will increase as well. Although this study found relatively low levels of Zoom fatigue, indicating a level of comfortability with the video conference platforms, university leaders need to be sure effective training on using video conferencing to teach is accessible to faculty. Counselor educators should also seek further training or engage in research on best practices for working with students over a synchronous telecommunication platform. It is important counselor educators be knowledgeable of, and consider the causes and impacts of, Zoom fatigue not only on themselves, but their

students as well. In addition, it is likely many graduate students will provide counseling through the means of video conference platforms at some point in their career. Counselor educators should be sure to discuss with their students the implications of online counseling, Zoom fatigue, and the potential impact these can have on their work with clients.

### **Limitations**

This study had a few limitations. First, the sample size was short of the ideal sample size determined for the study. Further, the traditional, hybrid, and distance groups were unequal. It is important to note that a small sample size and unequal groups can minimize the power of detecting a true effect in the population. In addition, this study utilized a non-random sample which limits generalizability of the findings. The sample also lacked diversity with 72.8% of participants identifying as White and as a Woman. Therefore, the results should be considered through this lens.

Another limitation is the self-report nature of the study. While it is assumed participants answered all questions honestly in this study, participants can be biased when reporting their experiences or may provide responses they feel are socially acceptable (Leavy, 2017). Further, it is also important to note that since this study utilized a non-experimental design and there was no control group, internal validity of this study is limited. Therefore, causal inferences between the independent and dependent variable should be made with caution (Johnson & Christenson, 2020).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

To address the limitations of the study, future research should aim to get a greater and more diverse sample size by reaching out to more professional counseling organizations and more directly to counseling faculty. Further, future studies can utilize random sampling strategies

to improve generalizability. Future research should also focus on utilizing an experimental design with a control group to increase internal reliability.

In contrast to the current study's findings of low burnout among counselor educators, some studies indicate higher levels of burnout among helping professionals (APA, 2022; Laverdière et al., 2018; Warlick et al., 2021). Therefore, a closer examination of the participants, counselor educators, is warranted for future research. Future research should further explore variables such as course load, institution type, advisee caseload, level of students they teach, experience teaching online, and age. Further, since the hybrid group in this study had the smallest sample size of the three teaching formats, future research can narrow in on counselor educators who spend 26 - 75% of their time teaching online. Future research can utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods to further examine and explore the concepts among counselor educators.

### **Conclusion**

Online teaching and learning continue to be understudied in counseling programs, and comparative literature on traditional, hybrid, and distance counseling programs needs further investigation. While research demonstrates the negative consequences of burnout and Zoom fatigue, these constructs have received little to no attention among counselor educators. In this study, there were no significant differences found in burnout and Zoom fatigue scores among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. Across all modalities, counselor educators experienced low to moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, low depersonalization, and a high level of personal accomplishment towards their work, indicating a relatively low degree of burnout. Counselor educators across all modalities also experience slight to moderate levels of Zoom fatigue, or exhaustion from video conferencing. It is important that counselor educators



continue to understand and monitor for burnout and Zoom fatigue, and continue to engage in personal self-care strategies when engaging students both in-person and online.

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## Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter



TO: Alexander Becnel  
Spec Ed, Counsel & Student Aff

Proposal Number: IRB-11894

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

DATE: 10/18/2023

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Zoom fatigue and burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators."

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 10/18/2023 10:36 PM ET

## **Appendix B - Informed Consent**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Zoom fatigue and burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators

**IRB #11894**

**PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:** 10/18/2023

**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:** Exempt

**LENGTH OF STUDY:** 10 - 15 minutes

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** This study is being conducted by Heidi Fergel, a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University, as part of her doctoral dissertation. Dr. Alexander Becnel is the dissertation major professor.

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS:** If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact me at heidie@ksu.edu or my dissertation major professor, Dr. Alexander Becnel, at atbecnel@ksu.edu.

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:** Questions regarding this research project should be sent to Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:** The purpose of this quantitative study is to gain an understanding of how traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators experience burnout and Zoom fatigue. The data collected will be analyzed to explore how burnout and Zoom fatigue differ among teaching formats for counselor educators.

**PROCEDURES USED:** You will be taking an online survey. To participate, individuals must be employed as a counselor educator in a CACREP-accredited program. Participants are asked to answer each question as accurately and honestly as possible. There is no compensation provided for participating in this survey.

**RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:** The survey examines personal information.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:** An anticipated benefit of this study is the



identification of possible risk factors for Zoom fatigue and burnout among counselor educators. Another anticipated benefit is increased self-awareness.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** This survey is anonymous. No information about names, email addresses, and/or institutions will be collected. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer and analyzed in an aggregate format. Identifiers are not collected in this study. Therefore, the data obtained in this study may be used for future research or given to another investigator for further research without additional informed consent.

**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.**

**I verify in proceeding with this survey by clicking the link below that I have read and understand this consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described.**

## **Appendix C – License to Administer MBI-ES**

**Permission for Heidi Fergel to administer 160 copies within three years of  
September 28, 2023**

### **Maslach Burnout Inventory™**

**MBI Forms and Scoring Keys:**

**Human Services - MBI-HSS**

**Medical Personnel - MBI-HSS (MP)**

**Educators - MBI-ES**

**General - MBI-GS**

**Students - MBI-GS (S)**

### **License to Administer**

By Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, Michael P. Leiter,  
Wilmar B. Schaufeli & Richard L. Schwab

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**MBI - Human Services Survey - MBI-HSS:**

I feel emotionally drained from my work.  
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job. I don't really care what happens to some recipients.

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**MBI - Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel - MBI-HSS (MP):**

I feel emotionally drained from my work.  
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job. I don't really care what happens to some patients.

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**MBI - Educators Survey - MBI-ES:**

I feel emotionally drained from my work.  
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job. I don't really care what happens to some students.

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Cont'd on next page

**MBI - General Survey - MBI-GS:**

I feel emotionally drained from my work.  
In my opinion, I am good at my job.

I doubt the significance of my work.

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**MBI - General Survey for Students - MBI-GS (S):**

I feel emotionally drained by my studies.  
In my opinion, I am a good student.  
I doubt the significance of my studies.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Most', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Most  
Mind Garden, Inc.  
[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

## Appendix D – Permission to use ZEF Scale

This email originated from outside of K-State.

Dear Heidi,

Thank you for reaching out and for telling me about your fascinating research!

You are welcome to use the ZEF scale!

Best of luck with your research,

Géraldine

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**From:** Heidi Fergel <heidie@ksu.edu>

**Date:** Tuesday, 3 October 2023 at 21:43

**To:** Geraldine Fauville <geraldine.fauville@gu.se>

**Subject:** ZEF Scale Permission

Hi Dr. Fauville,

My name is Heidi Fergel and I am a doctoral candidate with Kansas State University. I will be doing a study on Zoom fatigue and burnout among counselor educators. I know that in your article: Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale, it indicates the scale is freely available for use. However, I wanted to be sure this was still the case. I am reaching out for your approval to use the ZEF Scale in my dissertation study.

Please let me know if you have further questions about my study!

Take care,

**Heidi Fergel, MS, LPC**

Doctoral Student in Counselor Education and Supervision

Dept. of Special Education, Counseling, & Student Affairs  
College of Education  
Kansas State University

## **Appendix E – Email Communications**

### **To Program Directors**

Subject Line: Call for Participants: Counselor Educators

Dear [name of counseling Program Director]

My name is Heidi Fergel, and I would like to invite the counselor educator faculty in your counseling programs to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my dissertation research at Kansas State University (KSU). This study is designed to better understand the differences in Zoom fatigue and burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. You are receiving this email because of your role as the Program Director of a CACREP-accredited counselor education program. The research study will consist of a 3-question background about teaching delivery, 2 instruments (The Zoom Fatigue and Exhaustion Scale (ZEF Scale) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI – ES), and a short demographic questionnaire. The online survey is expected to take 10 – 15 minutes to complete. There are no financial incentives and minimal risks for participating in this research study.

[Qualtrics Survey Link]

The study is supervised by Dr. Alexander Becnel (atbecnel@ksu.edu) in the Department of Special Education, Counseling and Special Affairs at KSU and has been approved by the KSU Institutional Review Board (#11894). Please feel free to contact me, Heidi Fergel, at [heidie@ksu.edu](mailto:heidie@ksu.edu) or Dr. Becnel with any questions or concerns regarding this study. Thank you for considering participating in this research opportunity.

Please forward this e-mail to your counseling faculty so they may participate in this meaningful research in our field.

Sincerely,

Heidi Fergel

### **CESNET**

Subject Line: Participant Request: Counselor educator Zoom fatigue and burnout

Dear CACREP-accredited counselor education faculty member,

My name is Heidi Fergel, I am a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Kansas State University. The purpose of this study is to examine differences in Zoom fatigue and burnout among traditional, hybrid, and distance counselor educators. I am doing this dissertation research to fulfill the degree requirements for my doctoral program and the results will be used to add to the literature in our field of counselor education. Your experience as a counselor educator has much to contribute to this research, and I hope you will consider participating and pass the study information along to other counselor educators at CACREP-



accredited universities. Participation involves responding to 3 questions related to teaching delivery, 2 instruments (The Zoom Exhaustion and Fatigue Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey), and a brief demographic questionnaire. The instruments can be completed online, and it is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous, and you can withdraw at any time. If you are interested in participating in this study, please use the link below to access the survey.

[Qualtrics Survey Link]

If you have any questions about the study or its procedures, please contact me at [heidie@ksu.edu](mailto:heidie@ksu.edu) or at 701-412-8529. This study is supervised by my advisor, Dr. Alexander Becnel ([atbecnel@ksu.edu](mailto:atbecnel@ksu.edu)) at Kansas State University, and approved by KSU IRB (#11894).