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Efforts to Overcome Burnout in Pastoral Counseling

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Abstract

Burnout is a condition that is experienced by pastoral counselors which causes the loss of motivation, ideas, and goals; followed by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Burnout can cause the loss of interest and motivation of pastoral counselors. The purpose of this article was to elaborate the efforts to overcome burnout in pastoral counseling.The author examined the concepts, dimensions, and factors that contribute to burnout. Previous researches about burnout were also reviewed. Based on this review, the author elaborates some coping strategies that can help pastoral counselors to overcome burnout in doing counseling.

Keyword**s:** Burnout, Pastoral Counseling, Efforts to Overcome

1. Introduction

Pastoral counselors are demand to integrate psychology, theology, bible, and spirituality in doing counseling. The failure to integrate those dimensions hints that the pastoral counseling has lost its identity and uniqueness (Benner, 2003).

There are many factors influencing several pastoral counselors to feel the failure in doing effective and professional pastoral counseling, one of which is the burnout factor (Chandler, 2009).

Various researches on burnout in occupational context have been conducted and concluded in diverse comprehension and understanding (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). Maslach and Jackson (in Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993) concluded that burnout is a multidimensional definition, viewing burnout as a psychological syndrome consisting of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Research studies related to burnout in pastoral counseling show that burnout rises among priests and clergies. Research conducted by Barnard and Curry (2011) found that clergies with high emotional exhaustion feel dry and unsupported. Research studied by Evers and Tomic (2003) found that Reformed Dutch Priests got higher score in emotional exhaustion and lower score in personal accomplishment aspect compared to other professional human-related workers. Individuals who experience high pressure work seem to get a high score in the three dimensions of burnout. Research conducted by Chandler (2009) on the influence of personal spiritual renewal, rest, the practice of support system on pastoral burnout showed that spiritual drought is the major predictor of emotional fatigue. While Jackson's research (in Raj & Dean, 2005) about the burnout of Catholic priests showed that out of 239 priests, 10.46% reported experiencing a high burnout level, 54.39% eperiencing a medium burnout level, and 54.39% experiencing a low burnout level.

The purpose of this article was to elaborate the efforts to overcome burnout in pastoral counseling. These coping strategies, of course, contribute positively both to the development science and to the community.

2. Methods

This article was elaborated by examining the concepts, dimensions, and factors contributing on burnout in pastoral counseling. Previous researches about burnout were also reviewed. Based on this step, the author elaborates some strategies that can help counselors to overcome when facing burnout in doing counseling.

3. Results and Discussion
The Concept, Dimensions, and Factors Contributing to Burnout

The term burnout firstly introduced by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974 and Maslach in 1976 (in Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993; in Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009; in Bianchi et al., 2014). According to Freudenberger (in Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009), burnout is defined as mental exhaustion, the loss of commitment, and

gradual decrease in motivation over time. According to Maslach (in Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993; in Bianchi et al., 2014), burnout is viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising of three dimensions, which are emotional exhaustion indicated by lack of energy and enthusiasm, and also depletion of resources; depersonalization indicated by lack of appreciation and understanding toward others; and low appreciation on oneself indicated by negative self-image, unhappy with oneself, and feeling unsatisfied with one's professional development.

Pines and Aronson (1989) also pictured three dimensions of burnout comprising of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Physical exhaustion is indicated by headaches, fever, back pain, aching, vulnerability to diseases, stiffness in neck and shoulder muscle, vulnerability to flu, difficulty in sleeping, nausea, restlessness, and changing diets. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by boredom, irritability, cynicism, unwillingness to help, complaining, uncontrollable, short temperament, restlessness, ignorance about goal accomplishment, ignorance about others, feeling as if one has nothing to give, hopelesness, sadness, feeling pressured, and helpless. Mental exhaustion is indicated by the feeling of unworthiness, hatred, helplessness, insensitive, cynical, lack of empathy toward others, negative attitudes toward others, tendency to neglect oneself, one's job and one's life; apathetic, favoritism, constant blaming, lack of tolerance with those who need help, unsatisfactory with one's career, low self-concept, feeling incompetent, unsatisfactory with one's way of life.

Maslach (in Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993; in Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009) explained three main factors that trigger the emergeence of burnout, which are individual characteristic, working environment, emotional involvement with the service recipient (client). (a) Individual characteristic. The internal source that contributes to the emergence of burnout is classified into two factors: demography and personality (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). (b) Working environment. Overwhelming workload is one of the triggering factors of burnout (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). Overwhelming workload comprising of long working hour,

the large number of clients, heavy responsibility, routine work and other administrative work exceeding individuals' capacity and capability. Overwhelming workload leads to emotional tension while dealing with clients, prompting service providers to withdraw psychologically and avoid contact with clients (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). (c) Emotional engagement with service recipients. Working in social service field requires a large amount of energy because we have to be patient and understanding toward others in the situation of crisis, frustration, fear, and pain (Freudenberger in Farber, 1991). Workers in social service field often receive negative feedbacks due to the high demand on the service quality, resulting in individuals' (counselors) difficulties to reach the standards the society wants.

Efforts to Overcome Burnout

Dealing with burnout is a challange for both individuals and organizations. The effect of burnout which emerges in the counseling session can be reflected in the loss of emphaty and respect, and negative emotions toward the client (Skorupa & Agresti in Everall and Paulson, 2004). Depersonalization (Ackerley et al. in Everall & Paulson, 2004) can also contribute to the counselors' negative behavior, including degrading the client, failing to consider the client as person, and feeling irresponsible for the client's needs. Counselors who do not cope well with the burnout, tend to have impaired empathic ability, leading to therapeutic impasse and unholistic treatments. Counselors will also have difficulty in maintaining therapeutic relationships and are prone to cross the line of ethics (Newman & Gamble in Everall & Paulson, 2004).

Literature studies showed that there are a number of efforts that can be taken to help individuals overcome burnout. Demir et al. and Espeland (in Harr, 2013) advise counselors to set up a goal and manage their time. Espeland, Maslach and Leiter (in Harr, 2013) suggest that counselors think positively and reject any negative thoughts by using relaxation techniques, humor, and participating in fun activities. Demir et al. and Puig et al. (in Harr, 2013) encourage counselors to gain diverse experience in the workplace. Leiter and Maslach (in Harr, 2013) suggest that they

establish and maintain support networks. Demir et al.; Espeland et al.; Um and Harrison (in Harr, 2013) recommend that they change their response towards and adjust to stressful experiences. Meanwhile, Espeland (in Harr, 2013) suggest that counselors perform self-monitoring of stress (Maslach and Leiter (in Harr, 2013).

According to Haskel (in Exantus, 2011) there are four (4) factors which can be necessary for burnout prevention, namely (1) self-awareness – individuals need to be aware of their own strenghts, values, and weaknesses; (2) balance – controlling one's balance includes controlling one's weaknesses and limitations around self-emotion, spirituality, psychology and even physicality; (3) social connectedness – individuals need to experience social support built through intense and authentic relationships with others; (4) continued education – this opportunity allows individuals to broaden their perspective, develop a wider social network, and stimulate and strengthen individuals when doing their work.

The strategy of overcoming burnout through spiritual measures can be one of the strategies that counselors can use. This is possible because spiritual values are seen to be an important aspect in clinical care and contribute to individual health (Yuen in Salaree et al., 2014). Draper, Wong et al., Koenig, and Ravari et al. (in Salaree et al., 2014) found that spiritual strategies help individuals find the meaning and purposes in the suffering, which can result in self-empowerment to overcome burnout. Wachholtz and Rogoff (2013) view that religion and spirituality can serve as a protective factor against burnout in medical students. Previous research which was carried out by Holland & Neimyer (in Wachholtz and Rogoff, 2013) revealed that religion and spirituality are effective in curbing the negative effects of burnout among humanitarian service workers.

Wicks (1985) developed some strategies specifically to overcome countertransference and burnout in counseling. The strategies are personal-analysis, supervision, case-by-case countertransference analysis, consultation, and re-analysis. First, personal analysis. Pastoral counselors need to carefully analyze themselves systematically and continuously for their motivation in engaging in counseling profession. Wicks (1985) asserted that pastoral counselors need to analyze their unmet needs including the desire to solve internal personal problems in helping others.

Second, supervision. Supervision is an effort to encourage and guide the development of pastoral counselors, so that they can give effective counseling (Kofler & Cosgrave, 1994). Supervision is conducted not only to support pastoral counselors' profesionalism, empower pastoral counselors to develop their knowledge and counseling skills, but also to increase the quality of counselors' services to the client.

Third, case-by-case countertransference review. Countertransference and burnout are important issues in counseling. Counselors are required to be aware of it and endeavor to examine and deal with such feelings when they arise during counseling sessions.

Fourth, consultation with a collegue. Consultation with a collegue is one of the measures to overcome countertransference and burnout (Wicks, 1985). Consultation with a collegue, particularly senior and experienced counselors, can be very useful for pastoral counselors. One of the advantages of having the consultation is that pastoral counselors can gain new insights related to counseling cases they are dealing with.

Fifth, reanalysis. What is meant by reanalysis is a measure to re-examine all of the methods and interventions that counselors use which appear to be ineffective in pastoral counseling. Wicks (1985) explains that if counselors find those methods and interventions less helpful the counseling, then personal counseling and consultation with a colleague need to be done.

4. Conclusion

Burnout is a physcological syndrome caused by continuous pressure and demands of non-conducive work environment as well as idealism, causing induviduals to suffer emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and decreased personal achievement. Burnout can affect counselors' attitude and behavior, preventing them from carrying out their job professionally. There are a number of efforts that can be taken to assist pastoral counselors to overcome burnout.

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