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Burnout experiences and coping strategies among school counselors: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Syafrudin Bayu Nusantara¹, Ali Formen², Mungin Eddy Wibowo³, Stuart V. Guild³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

⁴Trinity Evangelical Divinity Schools, United States

Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Burnout, coping strategies, school counselors, guidance and counseling.	School counselors frequently experience high levels of stress due to excessive responsibilities, dual roles, job ambiguity, heavy caseloads, limited clinical supervision, and frequent exposure to students dealing with trauma. These occupational demands can be highly stressful and exhausting for school counselors, who are required to work under significant pressure. The aim of this research is to analyze the underlying structure of burnout experiences and to examine the coping strategies employed by school counselors. This research adopts a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and documentation as data collection techniques. The findings reveal the foundational structure of burnout experiences, including the forms of burnout and the factors contributing to it. Additionally, eight themes emerged regarding the coping strategies used by school counselors: (1) understanding occupational risks, (2) engaging in enjoyable activities, (3) adopting religious approaches, (4) utilizing positive approaches, (5) employing personal coping styles, (6) understanding services and provisions, (7) fostering work understanding, and (8) seeking social support. This article provides several recommendations for addressing burnout among school counselors and offers insights for stakeholders to manage school environments that promote the psychological well-being of educational staff.
*Correspondence address: E-mail: syafrudinbayu@students.unnes.ac.id	p-ISSN 2252-6889 e-ISSN 2502-4450

Introduction

Its school counselors, as helpers within educational institutions, are required to work optimally in providing counseling services (Firdausi & Purwaningrum, 2022; Mahanani et al., 2018). Delivering counseling services demands emotional involvement; this excessive emotional engagement can lead to burnout among school counselors (Bardhoshi et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2021; Susanti et al., 2018). Moreover, several issues such as bullying, sexual violence, and intolerance present exhausting challenges for educators, including school counselors (Muhaemin et al., 2023; Noboru et al., 2021; Surani et al., 2024). Some literature reviews that school counselors frequently experience high levels of stress due to excessive responsibilities, heavy caseloads, dual roles, job ambiguity, limited clinical supervision, and regular exposure to their students' difficulties in schools (Beasley & Norris, 2021; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Shackleton et al., 2019). These factors contribute to professional burnout within the counseling profession.

Burnout is a psychosocial phenomenon that develops over time, often resulting from chronic stress. It frequently occurs in human service professions that involve both physical and emotional components (Dung et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2022). Moreover, Maslach describes burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). If left unaddressed, burnout among school counselors can negatively impact the effectiveness of their services (Stephenson, 2019); as social-emotional factors and burnout experiences are interconnected. These elements influence the counselor-client relationship and, in turn, the overall climate of the counseling process (Camacho et al., 2021; Cancio et al., 2018; Oberle et al., 2020; Ristian et al., 2021). In addition, the occupational demands often become increasingly stressful and overwhelming for school staff, including counselors, who must navigate complex pressures from various directions (Mahfouz, 2020; Wang, 2022).

Research indicates that burnout symptoms vary across individuals and professional communities (Mota et al., 2021; Pietarinen et al., 2021). These findings suggest that school counselors need to cultivate psychological well-being practices to balance their circumstances and mitigate burnout (Bali-Mahomed et al., 2022; Şahin et al., 2022). From a philosophical perspective, burnout is possibly alleviated through coping strategies (Wirayuda et al., 2022). Coping is defined as the process used to manage stress-inducing demands (Maryam, 2017).

Numerous studies have examined burnout and coping strategies among teachers and school counselors. However, many of these studies have not thoroughly explored participants' perspectives using qualitative research methodologies. For instance, predominantly utilized quantitative methodology (Cook et al., 2021; Pyhältö et al., 2021; Stephenson, 2019; Wulolign et al., 2020). This approach relies on standardized instruments, which lack the ability to deeply explore individual experiences and may not fully represent the unique conditions of specific communities, such as those in Kota Ende.

Kota Ende is home to nine vocational high schools, including seven private schools and two public schools. This research focuses on the two public vocational high schools, such as SMKN 1 and SMKN 2. These schools were selected based on several shared field findings, including: (1) an imbalanced ratio of students to counselors at both schools, (2) the absence of a fixed schedule for counseling services, (3) comparable student age ranges between 14 and 21 years, (4) a student population primarily consisting of individuals from nearby rural areas, (5) limited infrastructure and facilities at both schools, (6) a lack of evaluation reports for guidance and counseling services, and (7) both schools' orientation toward equipping students with practical skills for entering the workforce.

Given these conditions, it shows that school counselors' awareness of burnout is essential to maximize their professional effectiveness as helpers. In addition, understanding the coping strategies employed by school counselors is equally important as part of fostering practices that support psychological well-being within the school environment. Therefore, exploring school counselors' perspectives on their burnout experiences and coping mechanisms is critical to gaining a deeper understanding of these phenomena.

In results, a phenomenological study is necessary to reveal the personal essence experienced by school counselors, aiming to uncover the existential structure of the burnout phenomenon and allow the phenomenon to present itself as it is (Sudarsyah, 2016). Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, emphasizes the uniqueness of lived experiences and the essence of specific phenomena (Matthews & Ross, 2014). Thus, this research explicitly aims to: (1) Analyze the fundamental structure of school counselors' burnout experiences; and (2) Examine the coping strategies employed by school counselors to manage burnout.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological research design. The essence of phenomenology lies in understanding participants' experiences (Leavy, 2015). In the context of this research, understanding the burnout experiences and coping strategies of school counselors is central to the research's objectives.

Data sources were determined using a non-probability sampling technique, guided by the following inclusion criteria: (1) Participants must be school counselors with at least one year of professional experience; (2) Participants must be full-time school counselors at the research site schools; (3) Participants must have experienced burnout; (4) Participants must be willing to participate in the study.

Based on the sampling technique and the inclusion criteria, the study focused on two schools, such as SMKN 1 and SMKN 2, that demonstrated similar field gaps as identified in the preliminary study. From these two schools, eight participants were selected, with their data summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Total of the Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Work Duration	Workplace
P1	Female	1 – 5 years	SMKN 1
P2	Female	1 – 5 years	SMKN 1
P3	Male	5 – 10 years	SMKN 1
P4	Female	5 – 10 years	SMKN 1
P5	Male	5 – 10 years	SMKN 2
P6	Female	1 – 5 years	SMKN 2
P7	Female	1 – 5 years	SMKN 2
P8	Female	1 – 5 years	SMKN 2

Among the participants mentioned in Table 1, based on educational background, six participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, and P7) hold a bachelor's degree in guidance and counseling, while two participants (P4 and P8) have outside of guidance and counselling educational backgrounds. In terms of age, five participants (P1, P2, P6, P7, and P8) fall within the 25–30 years age range, two participants (P3 and P5) are between 30–35 years old, and one participant (P8) is in the 40–45 years age range.

Regarding the estimated income, three participants (P1, P5, and P7) earn between 2–2.5 million IDR, two participants (P2 and P3) earn between 1.5–2 million IDR, one participant (P8) earns 3–3.5 million IDR, and one participant (P6) earns 1–1.5 million IDR. The final attribute, personal relationship status, reveals that four participants (P1, P2, P6, and P8) are unmarried, while the other four participants (P3, P4, P5, and P7) are married.

The data collection for this study was conducted in school settings as well as outside school environments. The primary data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and document analysis. The researcher conducted a total of sixteen interviews, with each participant interviewed twice. Document analysis was carried out using data from various sources, including school counselors, the school curriculum and administration offices, the deputy principal for student affairs, official school websites, and the social media platforms used by the school counselors.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 software and followed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework. IPA provides a flexible framework for process and analysis strategies, requiring iterative, complex, and creative procedures that involve reflective engagement by the researcher in dialogue with participants' narratives and meanings.

The IPA analysis model consists of four stages, including: (1) Reading the entire transcription multiple times to thoroughly understand the data; (2) Re-engaging with the transcript to transform initial notes into emergent themes; (3) Examining and grouping emergent themes based on conceptual similarities; and (4) Presenting the identified themes and sub-themes.

Results and Discussion

Challenges of Burnout Experience

The study identified two subcategories of challenges related to burnout among school counsellors, such as: (1) Types of Burnouts Experienced by School Counselors; and Factors Contributing to Burnout Among School Counselors.

Types of Burnouts Experienced by School Counselors

The finding revealed eight main themes describing the forms of burnout, including: (1) Cynical behavior; (2) Self-protection; (3) Avoidance of direct contact; (4) Negative emotions; (5) Loss of energy; (6) Failure to establish collaborative relationships; (7) Failure to understand needs assessment; (8) Failure to perform service functions.

These eight themes were analyzed within the framework of the three dimensions of burnout proposed by Maslach (Maslach et al., 2001), which serves as the foundation for this research. The dimensions and themes are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Forms of Burnout

Burnout Dimensions	Finding Themes	Descriptions
Emotional Exhaustion	Negative Emotions	Heartache, emotional exhaustion, feelings of frustration, and a sense of failure
	Loss of Energy	Self-protection, feeling overwhelmed, and expending excessive energy
Depersonalization	Cynical Behaviour	Labelling students, showing differential treatment, displaying harsh behaviour, and losing a sense of care
	Self-Protection	Assuming optimal performance, blaming circumstances, and failing to develop personal competencies
	Avoidance of Direct Contact	Ineffective communication channels
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Failure to Perform Service Functions	In accordance procedure handling, focused-on-problems services, and flexible approaches to interventions.
	Failure to Understand the	Prioritizing attendance tracking as a method to detect student issues

Burnout Dimensions	Finding Themes	Descriptions
	Meaning of Needs Assessment	
	Failure to Build Collaborative Relationships	Limited collaboration with colleagues

Emotional exhaustion represents a condition of burnout manifested in feelings resulting from excessive emotional demands (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1990). In fact, negative emotions are a form of emotional exhaustion, characterized by feelings of heartache, drained emotions, frustration, and a sense of failure. This is evident in the following interview excerpts:

*"Sometimes, they say things to us like, 'Oh, why are you calling me again, as if it's important,' and I felt really **hurt** by that" (P2: 28-30).*

*"The negative emotion makes me feel tired. It's both physical fatigue and emotional exhaustion. The **emotions felt really drained**" (P3: 509-510).*

*"Long working hours can also feel monotonous. If we reprimand them and they change, that's fine. But often, the more we reprimand, the more they push back. That **triggers emotions**; frustration is inevitable in those situations" (P6: 292-294).*

*"Some days, they're (students) angrier; more aggressive; **sometimes** even physically hitting others. We can't rule that out—it happens; **as they are still humans**" (P8: 296-298).*

Those findings indicate that negative emotions stand in stark contrast to the personal competencies counselors are expected to possess, particularly in maintaining emotional stability and a balanced personality essential for professional development (Haolah et al., 2018)

The second form of emotional exhaustion is **loss of energy**. The findings indicate that when school counselors experience burnout, they indirectly feel overburdened, overwhelmed, excessively drained of energy, and powerless (Hoglund et al., 2015). This is reflected in the following excerpts:

"Indeed, school counselors are the ones who bear the brunt in schools. For any kind of issue, we as school counselors must always be ready" (P1: 232-234).

"We do feel overwhelmed, especially when handling just one student, for instance, a student in a particular class or department. Then, suddenly, there's another report coming in simultaneously. The workload distribution is quite challenging" (P8: 188-191).

*"The challenges or difficulties stem from the fact that not everyone in this school understands the work of guidance and counseling. So, in doing our work, we often **must expend extra energy**" (P2: 312-314).*

"For me personally, there's more hardship. Just as I sit down to take a break, I'm called again, 'Counselor, please come; there's a student who hasn't been attending for days.' It's very stressful and exhausting" (P1: 224-227).

Loss of energy, as described in several studies, impacts both psychological and physiological conditions, potentially leading to anxiety, depression (Syarif et al., 2022), and, in the worst cases, leaving the profession entirely. Burnout characterized by energy depletion is also supported by (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1990), who describe it as an activity that drains an individual's energy reserves.

Depersonalization experienced by school counselors is often marked by **cynical behavior** (Saputra, 2020). Depersonalization is an interpersonal dimension characterized by the loss of positive feelings and, in some cases, failing to fulfill duties in providing services (Fye et al., 2018; Maya Ningrat et al., 2023).

Cynicism exhibited by school counselors can be easily identified through their interpersonal behavior (Pietarinen et al., 2021). Examples from the findings include labeling students with harsh tendencies, showing differential treatment toward student issues, behaving harshly toward students, and losing empathy for them. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

*"The students who come from rural areas (**anak kampung**), we already know their characters" (P1: 62-63).*

*"Female students here are more vulnerable because they tend to have more problems. As for male students, the issues they create are usually **minor**" (P1: 82-84).*

"Especially here in Ende, if you don't have any violence, they won't listen. If it's in Java, talking already works. The strictness we use here isn't to hurt them, but to educate them so they improve" (P3: 613-616).

*"Sometimes, as humans, we are weak and fragile. Then I think, will they ever change for the better? If we struggle to find them again tomorrow, I just think, **'If you want to study, do it; if not, it's your problem'**" (P3: 712-715).*

Those findings discovered that cynicism could manifest as indifference or apathy toward work or the people around them (Gunawan et al., 2023). Additionally, the findings suggest that school counselors fail to embody the professional competencies required, such as being friendly and courteous, and maintaining a positive and dynamic outlook.

Prolonged burnout coped with depersonalization is believed to foster excessive self-protective behavior, aimed at combating burnout and disappointment (Amelia & Arifianto, 2024; Cherniss, 1980). Various forms of self-protection exhibited by school counselors include perceiving their efforts as optimal despite suboptimal circumstances, blaming external conditions, failing to embody professional personal competencies, and attributing faults to students and stakeholders. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

*"We've already **tried our best** to the extent of our abilities, strength, and the knowledge we gained during our studies" (P2: 250-252).*

*"We want to apply psychological approaches and methods, but we can't be due to **space limitations**" (P3: 276-278).*

*"A guidance and counseling teacher, as a counselor, shouldn't be emotionally affected or show tears. But **as humans, sometimes we just can't hold it back**" (P3: 513-517).*

*"Why is this student always reprimanded? Even after counseling, **there are no changes**" (P1: 128-129).*

"So, if I personally see it, some of my friends don't understand the actual work of guidance and counseling, but they seem to criticize us, which they don't really understand" (P2: 260-262).

Depersonalization also manifests as **avoiding direct contact**, characterized by individuals withdrawing from their environment and the people around them (Hastuti, 2021; Nápoles, 2022). The findings show that school counselors exhibit avoidance behaviors, represented by ineffective communication channels and a lack of closeness with students. This aligns with the contemporary perspectives (Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Rahman, 2007).

Reduced personal accomplishment, a form of burnout experienced by school counselors, is evident in low work motivation. This lack of motivation results in diminished levels of achievement, as observed in school counselors (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1990). The findings highlight that reduced work performance among school counselors can be categorized under the theme of **failure to perform service functions**.

Sub-findings related to failure in performing service functions include: (1) Counseling and guidance workflows that are guided by school regulations rather than professional standards; (2) Counseling services that focus primarily on students' problems rather than holistic development; and (3) Handling processes are flexible but lack consistency. These findings indicate that the counseling and guidance services are not functioning ideally in terms of their preventive, curative, preservative, therapeutic, developmental, referral, and adjustment roles.

Another aspect of reduced accomplishment is **failure to conduct meaningful assessments**. Sub-findings reveal a lack of work accountability, making service processes difficult to justify or measure accurately (Hidayani et al., 2023; Saputra, 2020). Additionally, student attendance records are prioritized as the primary tool for detecting student issues, reflecting an incorrect approach to problem identification. This method highlights a decline in performance regarding the understanding and application of assessment techniques in counseling, which contradicts the standards outlined by (Dirjen Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan, 2016).

Furthermore, the use of outdated work programs repeated overtime underscores the lack of innovation in the counseling profession.

Another indicator of reduced performance is **failure to build collaborative relationships**. This reflects the school counselor's inability to optimize internal workplace collaboration. Collaboration is crucial for the professional development of school counselors, especially in workplaces where the counseling profession is still unfamiliar (Awalya et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2023). School counselors should develop productive partnerships to create the best opportunities for both students and the school community (McConnell et al., 2020).

Factors Contributing to Burnout

The factors contributing to burnout experienced by school counselors, as identified in this research findings, show similar patterns across individuals. These commonalities are categorized into eight main themes, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Factors Contributing to Burnout

Burnout Factors	Participant Code
Institutional policies and regulations	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, & P8
Limited supporting facilities and infrastructure	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, & P6
Limited parental collaboration	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Personal stressors	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Peer stressors	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Student stressors	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Lack of professional supervision	P1, P6, & P7
Financial constraints	P1, P2, P3, & P5

The findings in Table 3 indicate that **institutional policies and regulations** at the workplace are significant factors contributing to burnout, as supportive policies and procedures play a crucial role in mitigating burnout among school counselors (Brott et al., 2021).

The first policy-related factor is the imbalanced student-to-counselor ratio. An imbalanced ratio prevents school counselors from providing optimal services to all students and effectively fulfilling their responsibilities (Mullen et al., 2021). This finding stated that an unequal student-to-teacher ratio significantly impacts burnout (Camacho et al., 2021; Shackleton et al., 2019).

In addition, another policy-related factor leading to burnout is the **assignment of dual roles**. Literature suggests that the dual roles undertaken by school counselors indirectly indicate job ambiguity, which contributes to burnout (Chandler et al., 2018). Role ambiguity, characterized by unclear responsibilities, is often a result of excessive workload, leading to both physical and psychological exhaustion, and ultimately, workplace conflict (Akram & Ch., 2020; Blake, 2020). The role ambiguity experienced by school counselors as a cause of burnout is further supported (Maor & Hemi, 2021; Susanti et al., 2018).

The third policy-related factor contributing to burnout is the **lack of involvement in decision-making processes**. Findings revealed that some participants believe their exclusion from policy-making at school significantly impacts their working conditions. This aligns with findings by (Intifadhah & Wirza, 2020). The importance of teacher involvement in school decision-making is also supported by research which highlights that teacher participation in decision-making processes indirectly improves teacher performance and helps shape the school's future direction (Ikhsandi & Ramadan, 2021; Saragih et al., 2024).

The **limitations of facilities and infrastructure** at the workplace are perceived by school counselors as a significant factor contributing to burnout (Rahmadani et al., 2024). Supporting facilities includes: (1) Counseling and guidance rooms; (2) Supporting facilities; and (3) Budgetary resources. The success of counseling and guidance services in schools requires the effective and efficient utilization of facilities and infrastructure (Grimes, 2020). These resources fall into the category of external factors, significantly contributing to burnout among individuals experiencing it (Kamaruzzaman, 2016)

Limited parental collaboration is another factor contributing to school counselors' burnout. Research indicates that active parental involvement in counseling activities has a positive impact on the success of the services offered (Purwaningrum et al., 2023; Rahayu, 2021). The lack of collaboration between parents and teachers, leading to professional burnout, is also supported by studies (Amzat et al., 2021; Farida et al., 2022).

Another factor that contributes to the school counselors' burnout is **personal stressor**. A lack of personal control over their work makes individuals more vulnerable to burnout (Jose & Mohd Matore, 2021). Sub-findings related to personal stressors include: (1) Difficulty applying needs assessments; (2) Failure to understand the functions and goals of services; (3) Inability to evaluate services effectively; (4) Misinterpretation of job descriptions and responsibilities; (5) Discrepancy between academic knowledge and field conditions; and (6) Limited participation in competency development activities. Those sub-findings reflect school counselors'

inability to fulfill the required pedagogical and professional competencies, as outlined in (Permendiknas No 27 Year 2008). Personal stressors contributing to burnout among school counselors are also highlighted by researches (Maor & Hemi, 2021; Nápoles, 2022)

Lack of support from colleagues is another stressor contributing to burnout. **Peer stressors** are consistently identified as key triggers of burnout. This aligns with research findings (Gaol, 2021; Shackleton et al., 2019), which emphasize that insufficient support from schools and colleagues is a major factor in professional fatigue. Similarly, (Nápoles, 2022) notes that unclear or unsupportive communication within an organization can lead to burnout. The importance of workplace social support is reinforced by (Bali-Mahomed et al., 2022), who state that positive social support in the workplace significantly impacts the psychological well-being of employees.

Another factor contributing to burnout among school counselors is the condition of students, who are the primary recipients of counseling and guidance services in schools. The findings reveal that all school counselors reported similar concerns. The **student stressors** contributing to burnout include: (1) Lack of enthusiasm; (2) Lack of openness; (3) Confusion about the role of school counsellors; and (4) The problems experienced by students.

Lack of enthusiasm among students is a significant cause of burnout, supported by research (Gaol, 2021; Shackleton et al., 2019), which identifies student attitudes as a consistent factor linked to teacher exhaustion. This highlighted that inadequate recognition from students contributes to workplace fatigue (Camacho et al., 2021; Nápoles, 2022).

Student confusion regarding the presence of school counselors also emerged as a notable barrier for counselors, particularly in schools where counselors had not previously been employed. This aligns with findings which noted that differing societal levels of familiarity with school counselors can lead to stress and burnout (Hamelin et al., 2023; Zincirli, 2021).

Another contributing factor is the **lack of professional supervision**. School counselors reported that having supervisors who lack expertise in the same field poses significant challenges in practice. This argued that inadequate professional supervision negatively impacts counselors' practices (Chandler et al., 2018; Hadi et al., 2023; Hestingtyan et al., 2022). Moreover, limited access to clinical supervision increases the likelihood of work-related stress (Beasley & Norris, 2021; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Shackleton et al., 2019)

The final factor contributing to burnout is **financial constraints**. School counselors expressed that their salaries were perceived as low and insufficient. Research by (Bingöl & Batık, 2018; Gaol, 2021; Margaret et al., 2018) support this claim, stating that inadequate salaries contribute to stress levels, which in turn lead to burnout. The issue of low salaries for school counselors, as part of the teaching profession reported that teachers in Indonesia receive comparatively lower salaries than their counterparts in other countries. This inadequacy often fails to meet the daily living needs of teachers. Consequently, salary levels significantly influence teacher productivity (Prihutami & Rahmiati, 2024).

Coping Strategy to Overcome Burnout

Based on the analysis process using NVivo 12 software, eight main themes were identified to describe the strategies employed by school counselors to reduce workplace burnout. These themes are presented in Table 4 as follows:

Table 1. Coping Strategy Employed by School Counselors

Coping Strategy Theme	Participant Code
Understanding occupational risks	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, & P8
Engaging in enjoyable activities	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Religious approaches	P2, P3, P5, & P6
Positive approaches	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Personal coping styles	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, & P7
Understanding services and provisions	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, & P8
Building work comprehension	P1, P3, & P7
Social support	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, & P8

The findings indicate that having an **understanding of occupational risks**, such as fluctuating work conditions, encourages school counselors to accept the challenges they face. This understanding allows them

to prioritize tasks that need immediate attention and manage their expectations regarding their work (Fye et al., 2018). This is reflected in the following excerpts:

*"Sometimes, it's best to **take a break, calm our mind**, and only return to activities once you're more composed. For me, working in an emotionally unstable state is challenging; **forcing myself would only result in suboptimal outcomes**. So, taking a moment to rest and recharge is better if we're feeling tired" (P1: 512-516).*

*"Well, feeling tired and burnt out is normal, but I personally don't reach the point where I no longer want to work. Of course, **we always try to make improvements to avoid reaching that stage**" (P3: 123-126).*

*"There are definitely stigmas like that, but **our work in transforming students is not as simple as flipping a switch**" (P8: 512-514).*

Understanding occupational risks is described as a means to improve the situation or reconcile oneself with the challenges and problems faced. This approach aims to eliminate thoughts or desires to leave the profession. School counselors also interpret awareness of occupational risks as part of the job's inherent demands, which must be completed regardless of the challenges.

Furthermore, the school counselors tend to reduce workplace burnout by **engaging in enjoyable activities**, such as watching YouTube at home, participating in preferred social activities, watching Korean dramas (K-dramas), and consciously avoiding thoughts of work during rest periods or when at home. This is evident in the following excerpts:

*"I prefer **doing activities like playing on my phone or watching YouTube** at home. The next day at school, I'll focus on work matters again" (P1: 570-572).*

*"I usually **scroll through my phone**, whether it's watching YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, or other things like that" (P2: 375-377).*

*"If I'm told to rest or sleep at home, I feel more drained because there's no movement or activity. For me, it's actually more tiring. I prefer **going out to engage in community activities or interacting with people**" (P8: 552-556).*

Engaging in enjoyable activities is also described by school counselors as a way to refresh their minds. These activities include listening to favorite music, going for walks, and having open conversations with friends. Such approaches reflect emotion-focused coping strategies.

Another coping strategy used by school counselors to manage workplace burnout is adopting a **religious approach**. By relying on spiritual beliefs, counselors are able to influence their perspective and exercise self-control to address the burnout they experience (Fadlilah et al., 2023; Muslikah et al., 2021). The findings reveal that religious approaches among school counselors include expressing gratitude for difficult experiences through religious affirmations, surrendering to God regarding life's challenges, and using religious understanding as a foundation for self-control in responding to adverse events at work.

The findings related to the previous paragraph are illustrated in the following excerpts:

*"I deal with many different children, each with unique traits, attitudes, and behaviors. But through this process, **praise be to God**, some have shown changes in their attitudes" (P5: 158-160).*

*"We must remember that these (students) are other people's children. There's a saying, '**you reap what you sow**.' If we're indifferent to others' children, it's possible, whether true or not, that when it's our children's turn, they might be treated the same way by others" (P3: 694-697).*

Participant P7 expressed a similar sentiment in a document posted on September 23, 2024:

"Monday, September 23, 2024. God's hand is with you today. Keep believing that everything you do and work on throughout this day, God will make it successful. Amen."

The next coping strategy school counselors use to manage burnout is adopting a **positive approach**, which includes: (1) Positive thinking; (2) Self-awareness; (3) Self-appreciation; and (4) Emotional regulation. Positive thinking about work emerged as a sub-theme, with counselors viewing it as a helpful way to reduce workplace burnout (Bali-Mahomed et al., 2022; Kurt & Demirbolat, 2018). This is reflected in the following excerpts:

"Sometimes, we struggle with our own thoughts, feeling conflicted. But in the end, becoming a teacher is a calling in life" (P3: 715-717).

*"Encouraging oneself can be done by **staying positive** and believing that things will improve in the future" (P1: 621-623).*

Self-awareness is interpreted by counselors as an effort to care for themselves by evaluating personal limitations that need improvement. Self-appreciation is also emphasized, with counselors believing that acknowledging their achievements boosts motivation for their work (Voon et al., 2022). Lastly, emotional regulation is seen as an effort to exercise patience and suppress negative emotions to prevent them from affecting the work environment.

Other than that, personal factors play a crucial role in helping school counselors manage burnout. These **personal coping styles** are influenced by individual traits, character, thoughts, personality, and personal anxiety. School counselors' personal strategies for handling stressors including **avoiding problems**. This reflects a form of resignation to the situations they face (Ümmet, 2020). Another strategy is a **confrontation**. This involves direct efforts to change the situation. Furthermore, individuals employing confrontational strategies tend to display hostility and express anger toward those directly involved in the problem.

Another strategy discovered is understanding services and provisions. School counselors' understanding of the services and provisions in guidance and counseling is seen as a strategy for managing workplace burnout. Several sub-themes emerged under the main theme of understanding services and provisions:

The first is understanding work responsibilities. The findings show that by comprehending their work responsibilities, school counselors are more likely to embrace the process and consequences of their profession, viewing them as part of professional demands (Maor & Hemi, 2021). Developing a sense of responsibility is achieved by adhering to the knowledge and theories they have studied and understood. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

"Since it's part of our job responsibilities, we have to be able to address the challenges we face" (P1: 523-524).

"It's fine; no problem at all. When it comes to guidance and counseling, I feel confident that everything I learned during my studies has been fully implemented in school" (P2: 342-344).

"It motivates me to work harder because parents go to great lengths to earn money and entrust their children to us. That gives me a sense of responsibility and care for them" (P3: 725-728).

"Of course, there's fatigue and tiredness, but what can we do? It's our duty, and we have to carry it out" (P6: 241-242).

"There are moments when we feel a bad mood when a student comes to us, but we remind ourselves of our professionalism as teachers. When we counsel, we do our best not to show what we're experiencing" (P8: 287-290).

The second is understanding time management. A good understanding of time management enables school counselors to overcome stressors that lead to burnout and ensures optimal performance (Kholisa, 2012). The example of time management strategies used by school counselors include utilizing free periods to conduct classical guidance sessions in classrooms.

"Yes, for services, it's a bit challenging. So, I take advantage of moments when teachers are absent. If a teacher is unavailable, I say, 'Okay, I'll use their time slot'" (P5: 418-420).

"I divide my time into two parts. In the morning until the break at 9:55, I'm here. Then at 10:25, when the bell rings, I head upstairs" (P7: 179-181).

"We deliver one topic in class so that everyone benefits, not just one student during a one-on-one session. That's how we utilize free periods when teachers are absent, making use of the time effectively" (P8: 431-436).

The third is understanding personal competence. By understanding and applying personal competence, school counselors can indirectly cultivate traits such as friendliness, humility, and perseverance. This is crucial

because the success of the counseling process is largely determined by the counselor's personality. This is evident in the following excerpts:

"Patience and perseverance are essential because our goal is to ensure students feel comfortable and have their issues resolved while they're at school" (P1: 611-614).

"I try to be approachable—I greet everyone, interact casually, joke, and engage with students. These small gestures make them comfortable with me as their teacher" (P5: 771-774).

"I approach them in a welcoming way. If they come to the counseling room with questions or need a listening ear, I'm there to help, whether they need advice or just someone to talk to. My goal is to avoid projecting a harsh or intimidating image of a counselor" (P8: 247-252).

The fourth is understanding work innovation. Engaging in work innovation allows school counselors to develop new methods to reduce workplace burnout. This process involves replacing outdated approaches with new ones to avoid monotony and maintain enthusiasm in their work (Bastomi (Bastomi et al., 2023). This is reflected in the following excerpts:

"Besides taking breaks, we tried changing our methods. For instance, if one approach doesn't work, we look for another, and if that doesn't work, we keep searching for new methods until we find what works" (P1: 520-523).

"There needs to be continuous learning because I think there are differences that we need to adapt to in the field" (P1: 581-584).

Another strategy used by school counselors is **building work comprehension** within their workplace. This aims to help counselors effectively communicate the nature of their work to students, colleagues, stakeholders, parents, and others. The following excerpts illustrate this strategy:

"We usually explain or provide information related to guidance and counseling" (P3: 91-92).

"We have informed them about the role and function of guidance and counseling teachers in schools" (P1: 104-105).

Efforts to build work comprehension in environments that lack awareness of counseling functions are essential for improving psychological well-being and fostering positive interactions with the surroundings (Gündüz, 2022; Pavlidou et al., 2022).

The final coping strategy identified is social support, which is closely tied to an individual's psychological well-being (Akram & Ch., 2020; Rohmah, 2019; Sezer, 2022). Social support can be moral or material (Zakaria et al., 2021). The findings show that the social support received by school counselors from various sources provides significant encouragement, feedback, and constructive criticism. Sources of support include colleagues, parents of students, and close personal relationships. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

"Some of my colleagues here usually encourage us, especially when we are dealing with students" (P1: 544-548).

"There was a time when I shared my struggles with my fellow teachers. They told me, 'It's okay, Ma'am. Sometimes kids act like that when they see a younger teacher. Just be patient and don't let your emotions get the better of you'" (P2: 34-38).

"Sometimes parents apologize. 'I'm sorry, Ma'am. My child has been a handful and has caused you trouble.' When parents say this, it motivates us even more to collaborate with them" (P7: 596-599).

"Even my wife advises me. She says, 'Don't worry. Just talk to them. If they listen, great. If not, keep trying. Raising children isn't a one-time conversation; it requires repetition'" (P3: 651-653).

"Sometimes my old college friends and I keep in touch. We exchange news, share information about guidance and counseling activities, and occasionally vent to one another" (P2: 434-436).

Conclusion

The findings reveal that the fundamental structure of burnout experiences among school counsellors consists of two main components: the forms of burnout and the factors contributing to burnout. The eight themes emerged as forms of burnout, including: (1) Cynical behaviour; (2) Self-protection; (3) Avoidance of direct contact; (4) Negative emotions; (5) Loss of energy; (6) Failure to build collaborative relationships; (7) Failure to interpret assessments; and (8) Failure to perform service functions.

The study also identified eight themes as factors contributing to burnout, including: (1) Institutional policies and regulations; (2) Limited facilities and infrastructure to support activities; (3) Limited parental collaboration; (4) Personal stressors of school counsellors; (5) Peer stressors; (6) Student stressors; (7) Lack of professional supervision; and (8) Financial constraints.

Lastly, eight main themes were identified as coping strategies employed by school counsellors to manage workplace burnout, including: (1) Understanding occupational risks; (2) Engaging in enjoyable activities; (3) Religious approaches; (4) Positive approaches; (5) Personal coping styles; (6) Understanding services and provisions; (7) Building work understanding; and (8) Social support.

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