

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Counselor's Compass: Navigating Self-Growth Amidst Professional Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges, skills, and self-development strategies counselors require in various fields, including education, industry organization, and clinical. The approach used is qualitative research with a phenomenological design involving seven experienced counselors with at least three years of experience. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The study's results identified four main themes: problems often handled by counselors, counseling skills needed, factors causing burnout, and self-development activities. In education, the main challenges include student behavior problems and children with special needs. At the same time, in industry and organizations, counselors often deal with disciplinary problems and employee dissatisfaction. In the clinical field, counselors focus on cases of violence and legal assistance. The discussion shows that ongoing self-development and burnout mitigation strategies through time management and peer support are essential to improving the quality of counseling practice in all fields.

Keywords: *counselor, self-growth, counselor burnout, counseling skill*

INTRODUCTION

The role of a counselor extends far beyond providing guidance and support to clients; it encompasses a profound journey of personal and professional development. As practitioners engage with diverse individuals facing a myriad of challenges, their experiences in the counseling field become instrumental in shaping their identities and competencies (Taylor, 2020). This intricate interplay between counselor experience and self-development is critical, as it influences not only the effectiveness of the counseling process but also the well-being of the counselors themselves. Through reflective practice, ongoing education, and exposure to various client narratives, counselors cultivate essential skills such as empathy, resilience, and cultural competence (Dixon & Chiang, 2019). This research explores the dynamic relationship between a counselor's experiential learning and ongoing self-development,

highlighting how these elements contribute to personal growth and enhanced therapeutic outcomes. Understanding this relationship is vital for fostering a more effective counseling practice and promoting practitioners' mental health in a demanding profession (Laitila & Oranen, 2013).

Moreover, the evolving landscape of counseling practice necessitates professionals to adapt their skills and critically engage with the changing definitions of professionalism within organizational contexts. As counselors navigate these shifts, they may encounter a growing tension between traditional notions of professional identity and the demands imposed by contemporary managerial frameworks. This discord can lead to disempowerment and uncertainty, as highlighted in studies that reveal how organizational changes can significantly affect counselors' emotional well-being and sense of belonging (Bamberger et al., 2012). Compassion fatigue compounds these

challenges, from prolonged exposure to systemic and organizational stressors and broader societal issues that impact counselors' professional and emotional capacities (Robino, 2019). Consequently, fostering a supportive environment where counselors feel heard and valued becomes essential for enhancing both their personal growth and the quality of care they provide to clients. By prioritizing such an atmosphere, organizations can mitigate the negative impacts of these tensions, ultimately promoting a healthier, more resilient workforce capable of thriving amidst challenges (Bamberger et al., 2012).

Understanding the importance of counselor experience is crucial for undergraduate students, particularly those pursuing psychology, social work, or related fields. As future practitioners, students must recognize that real-world experiences profoundly shape the journey of a counselor, rather than academic knowledge alone. Engaging with diverse client narratives and navigating various challenges enables counselors to develop essential skills such as empathy, resilience, and cultural competence. These skills are vital for fostering effective therapeutic relationships and ensuring clients feel understood and supported throughout their healing processes (Ikonomopoulos, 2016). Moreover, exposure to different therapeutic approaches and settings can enhance students' adaptability, preparing them for the complexities of real-life counseling scenarios (Edwards, 2018). This adaptability enriches their professional toolkit and empowers them to tailor their interventions to meet each client's unique needs, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes in their practice.

For undergraduate students, gaining insight into seasoned counselors' experiences can illuminate the profession's complexities, highlighting the interplay between personal growth and professional development. This knowledge prepares students for the realities of counseling practice and fosters a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological demands placed on practitioners. Furthermore, as the counseling profession evolves, students must be aware of the shifting definitions of

professionalism and the impact of organizational dynamics on counselors' well-being.

By exploring the significance of counselor experience, undergraduate students can cultivate a more informed and compassionate approach to their future roles. This exploration will ultimately enhance their effectiveness as practitioners and contribute positively to the mental health field.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. We chose this approach because it aims to deeply understand the meaning and experiences of counselors in carrying out the counseling process. Thus, this study allows for a richer understanding of the counseling phenomenon from the counselor's perspective.

Participants

Seven counselors with at least 3 years of experience providing counseling services participated in this study. Other inclusion criteria were that the counselors would participate and provide honest and open information. The sample was purposive, namely selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Table 1 describes the participants.

Data Collection Strategy

The researchers collected data in this study through in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with each counselor. Before conducting the interview, the researcher prepared an interview guideline with open-ended questions related to the counselor's experience in conducting counseling. These questions include:

- a. What are the most common problems encountered in practice as a counselor?
- b. What are the most important skills during practice as a counselor?
- c. What factors have the potential to cause burnout, and how do each anticipate or overcome them?
- d. What can counselors do to improve themselves?

Table 1. Description of Research Participant

No.	Interviewee	Field	Position	Experience	Main Focus
1	IPAS	Education	Counselor in High School	Working since 2020	Handling students with problems of delay, low learning motivation, and antisocial behavior.
2	NS	Education	Educational Psychologist	10 years	Specializing in handling children with special needs (ABK), such as autism and dyslexia.
3	TH	Industry and Organization	HRD SGA Manager	More than 10 years	Handling employee discipline and communication issues
4	RFP	Industry and Organization	HR Officer	3 years	Informal counseling related to employee complaints, such as work that is not linear with majors.
5	IAW	Industry and Organization	Director at Psychology Institute	7 years as HRD Manager at National Hospital, 3 years at PT Kortex	Handling discipline, work relationships, and managing employee administration systems.
6	AS	Clinical	Clinical Counsellor	5 years	Handling cases of violence, molestation, and language barriers in the counseling process.
7	LE	Clinical	Clinical Counsellor	4 years	Accompanying clients in legal cases, including preparing post-mortem reports before the trial process.

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed the interview data verbatim to ensure accuracy. Following transcription, the data were subjected to thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. These phases include:

1. Familiarization with the Data: The researcher read the interview transcripts multiple times to immerse themselves in the data and identify preliminary patterns.
2. Generating Initial Codes: Initial codes were generated by systematically labeling important data features relevant to the research questions. The researchers completed this phase manually to maintain an in-depth understanding of the material.
3. Searching for Themes: After coding, the researcher examined the codes for similarities and differences, grouping related codes to form potential themes.

4. **Reviewing Themes:** The researchers reviewed and refined the themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. The researchers merged some themes and split others to reflect the participants' experiences more accurately.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Each theme was clearly defined and named, with an accompanying narrative explaining its significance in the study context.
6. **Writing the Report:** The final themes were presented and illustrated with direct participant quotes to substantiate the analysis. The report was structured around the key themes, providing insights into counselors' professional challenges, coping strategies, and personal development.

To ensure the findings' trustworthiness, the researcher also engaged in member checking by sharing the preliminary findings with some participants to verify the interpretation's accuracy. Additionally, the researchers verified the analysis through peer debriefing, where colleagues familiar with thematic analysis reviewed the findings to ensure consistency and validity.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participants' confidentiality. All participants provided informed consent and were assured that their responses would be anonymized and used exclusively for this research. Participants were also allowed to withdraw from the study without consequence.

RESULTS

The researchers present the results of the data analysis in four main themes: frequently handled problems, the most needed counseling skills, triggers for burnout and how to deal with them, and activities needed for self-development. The four themes are categorized based on three areas: Education, Industry and Organization, and Clinical.

Frequently Addressed Issues

Educational Field

In counseling practice within education, counselors often face various challenges related to student behavior. One of the main problems that often arises is the tardiness experienced by many students. Tardiness is not only related to time but can also reflect a lack of motivation to learn, which impacts student involvement in academic activities. Students who are often late to class tend to need help following the lesson material in its entirety, which ultimately affects their academic achievement. In addition, the need for more motivation to learn is a significant problem, and many students need an internal drive to achieve. Various external factors, such as lack of family support or unclear educational goals for the student, often cause this problem.

In addition, antisocial behavior is also one of the problems often faced by educational counselors. Students who exhibit antisocial behavior, such as aggression, bullying, or social isolation, can disrupt classroom dynamics and create a non-conducive learning atmosphere. This type of behavior often indicates deeper emotional or psychological problems, which require a more intensive counseling approach. Counselors must help students recognize and overcome feelings of frustration or insecurity that may be at the root of the negative behavior.

In addition to behavioral issues, educational counselors also often deal with cases of students who come from broken homes. Students who come from broken families or experience parental divorce face significant challenges in their emotional and social aspects. Losing a stable parental figure or marital tension can affect a student's mental well-being, affecting their concentration and academic performance. Children from broken homes often feel unsupported or unappreciated, which can cause them to withdraw from their social environment and hinder their progress in academics.

In addition to behavioral and family issues, educational counselors also face challenges in dealing with children with special needs (ABK), which include children with developmental

disorders such as autism, dyslexia, and various other conditions that affect their ability to learn. Children with autism, for example, often have difficulty in social interaction and communication, which can hinder their academic development. Counselors must deeply understand this condition and develop appropriate approaches to help these children feel more comfortable in school.

In addition, dyslexia is one of the learning disorders that can affect students' ability to read and write. Students with dyslexia may have difficulty recognizing words or understanding reading, which can significantly affect their success in school. Counselors must work with teachers and parents to identify the most effective learning strategies and help students with dyslexia overcome their difficulties.

However, one of the biggest challenges in dealing with students with special needs cases is the need for parental involvement. Many children with special needs need significant support from home through emotional attention and involvement in learning activities. Many parents need to be more actively involved in their child's education, whether due to time constraints, knowledge constraints, or other factors. Therefore, counselors need to find ways to encourage parents to be more involved, such as through regular meetings or workshops that can increase parents' understanding of how to support their children at home.

Industrial and Organizational Field

In industry and organizations, one of the significant issues counselors often face is employee discipline, including unpunctuality, last-minute leave, and violation of work rules. Unpunctuality or unclear absence is a common problem that can impact the productivity of the team and the organization. Employees who are often late or absent without an apparent reason can create workplace tension and affect collective morale. This unpunctuality often reflects motivational issues or job dissatisfaction. These issues must be addressed with a sensitive and appropriate approach.

In addition, last-minute leave is also an equally important challenge. Employees who request last-

minute leave without sufficient notice can cause operational disruptions, primarily in organizations with tight schedules or work that rely heavily on team coordination. Counselors working in organizations must help identify the root causes of this indiscipline, which may be related to personal problems, stress, or dissatisfaction with the job. A good counseling approach can help employees understand how their behavior affects team performance and find more effective solutions to improve their discipline.

Violation of work rules is also a common issue, ranging from violations of organizational policies to more serious issues, such as misuse of company resources or unethical behavior. Various factors, including dissatisfaction with the job, a lack of understanding of the rules, or the influence of a toxic work environment, can cause this type of behavior. Counselors need to work with management to address these issues tactfully, understand work ethics, and offer support for more constructive behavioral changes.

Another problem counselors often need help with in organizations is employee dissatisfaction, which can arise from work that does not match the employee's educational background or interests. Employees who feel unsuited to their jobs or do not feel they are growing show signs of dissatisfaction, such as decreased productivity, frustration, or feeling stuck in a boring routine. Counselors need to dig deeper into employees' feelings about their jobs and help them find ways to adjust to the job's demands or seek opportunities for further development, such as training or a change in position that better suits their interests.

In addition, dissatisfaction problems are often related to less harmonious interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Conflict between employees or between employees and managers can create tensions that affect the overall work environment. Poor relationships can cause significant emotional stress, affect productivity, and hinder effective collaboration within a team. Counselors in this area must facilitate conflict resolution and help individuals or groups build

better communication, reduce tension, and create a more supportive and harmonious work climate.

Clinical Field

In the clinical field, counselors often deal with cases of violence, which can be domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other forms of violence. These cases of violence not only affect the physical well-being of the victim but can also cause deep psychological trauma. Victims of violence often experience feelings of shame, fear, or confusion, and they may feel isolated or not confident enough to report it. The counselor's job in this situation is to provide emotional support, help victims overcome their trauma and fear, and provide them with a safe space to talk about their experiences. An empathetic approach is essential for victims to feel accepted and valued during counseling.

In addition, language barriers can be a barrier in the counseling process, especially when the counselor and client come from different cultural backgrounds. Difficulty in communicating can exacerbate the feelings of isolation experienced by victims of violence. Counselors must overcome language barriers through an interpreter or a more visual or written-based counseling approach to ensure that clients can fully express their experiences and feelings. Effective resolution of cases of violence requires collaboration with other parties, such as legal institutions or women's protection organizations, to provide more comprehensive support to victims.

In addition to cases of violence, clinical counselors are also often involved in legal assistance, especially in cases that require psychological support during the legal process, such as preparing a post-mortem report or trial. Legal cases often involve highly emotional situations and can affect the mental condition of clients, both victims and perpetrators. Counselors need to provide psychological support to clients so that they can face the legal process more calmly and make more rational decisions.

Preparing a post-mortem report is also part of a clinical counselor's responsibility, especially if the client experiences physical or psychological

violence. This report is critical to providing evidence to support the client's claims in the legal process. However, it must also be done carefully and with attention to the client's sensitivity. Counselors must maintain professional integrity by ensuring that the post-mortem report they prepare is objective and accurate and supports the client without further harming them.

Skills Required

Educational Field

In education, one of the key skills counselors need is the ability to use the behavioral approach. This approach focuses on the cause-and-effect relationship between students' behavior and the environmental factors that influence them. Counselors who use this approach can help students understand how their actions affect their academic and social outcomes. For example, a student frequently late to class may need help understanding tardiness's negative impact on their learning or classmates. Using the behavioral approach, counselors can show students the direct connection between their behavior and undesirable outcomes, such as lower grades or difficulty fitting into the classroom. Through this process, students can learn to change their behavior more positively and productively consciously.

This approach can also change negative behaviors caused by personal or family issues, such as antisocial behavior or lack of motivation to learn. Counselors who use behavioral principles will work to modify the student's environment and provide constructive feedback to shape better behavior. This approach often involves using positive reinforcement, appropriate consequences, and consistent guidance to help students achieve their goals.

In addition to technical approaches such as behavioral, counselors in the educational field also need empathy and adjustment skills. In their duties, counselors must create warm, open, and nonjudgmental relationships with students. These empathy skills allow counselors to truly feel and understand students' feelings and perspectives, which is essential in creating a safe space to talk. Genuine empathy can help students feel heard and

understood, encouraging them to be more open in sharing their problems.

Good counselors must be able to adjust to the unique needs of each student. They not only function as an authority who provides advice but also as a "student friend" who is ready to support them without limiting the relationship based on age or position. With this ability, counselors can create a more inclusive climate where students feel valued and accepted without fear or shame. This climate allows students to more readily accept input or changes proposed by the counselor because they feel respected and understood as individuals, not just as students who must obey the rules.

Industrial and Organizational Field

In the industrial and organizational fields, labor knowledge is one of the important skills counselors need. A counselor in this context must deeply understand labor laws, personnel administration, and employee relations. They need to know the regulations governing the rights and obligations of employees and the obligations of employers so that they can provide appropriate advice and ensure that the policies implemented are by applicable regulations.

Counselors in this field must understand various aspects of labor administration, such as recruitment, career planning, performance evaluation, and labor-related issues. This knowledge helps counselors better support employees facing career problems or are dissatisfied with their position or career level.

Communication and management skills are also essential for counselors in the industrial and organizational fields. Good communication skills enable counselors to resolve conflicts between employees or between employees and management. Listening carefully and providing constructive feedback becomes very important in a work environment involving many parties with various interests.

Additionally, conflict management is a skill that must be considered. Conflict between individuals or groups in the workplace can decrease productivity and create tension that can harm the

work environment. Counselors must be able to mediate differences, help parties find mutually beneficial solutions, and create an environment that supports collaboration. Counselors in this field must also be able to provide emotional support to employees dealing with personal issues affecting their work. Using communication skills to provide security and respect can improve employees' emotional well-being and enhance their performance. Utilizing efficient administrative systems is also important to increase productivity and reduce administrative burdens that are often a source of stress in the workplace.

Clinical Field

Empathy and personal approach skills are two essential qualities for a counselor in the clinical setting. In order to work effectively, counselors must be able to build trust with their clients. A supportive and sympathetic approach helps clients feel safer and more willing to open up about their issues. Clients who feel heard and understood are more likely to talk about their experiences, which is an important first step in the healing process.

Empathy is not just about feeling what the client is feeling but also about understanding the emotional and psychological context of the client's situation. In cases of trauma or crisis, an empathetic approach helps clients feel that they are not alone in their struggles and that the counselor is there to provide support without judgment. This personal approach allows counselors to tailor their intervention strategies to the client's needs, making the counseling process more effective.

Clinical counselors also need skills to provide psychological support to clients involved in the legal process, such as victims of violence or individuals facing trial. In these cases, counselors play a vital role in helping clients cope with the emotional stress of a complex and often stressful legal process.

Counselors provide emotional support and may prepare post-mortem reports or expert testimony if necessary. They must ensure clients receive the support they need throughout the legal process, both psychologically and practically. This skill involves understanding the legal system and

working with others, such as lawyers, to protect clients' rights.

Causes and Ways to Deal With Burnout

Educational Field

In education, burnout is a serious issue faced by counselors and teachers. One of the primary causes of burnout is the complexity of student issues. Students often bring various personal challenges into the school environment, such as family problems, academic difficulties, or behavioral issues that need to be addressed by counselors. Managing these diverse challenges can be emotionally exhausting, especially when insufficient support or resources are insufficient to deal with them effectively.

Additionally, a lack of parental involvement can exacerbate the situation. When parents are disengaged or indifferent to their children's progress, counselors and teachers find it difficult to achieve positive student outcomes, leading to increased stress levels. The overwhelming workload, including tight schedules, lesson preparation, and involvement in various school activities, further contributes to the emotional toll on educators. In some cases, counselors are forced to work late into the night to finish administrative tasks or prepare counseling sessions, which exacerbates mental and physical stress.

Counselors in the education field can implement several strategies to address burnout. One of the most effective solutions is setting boundaries for working hours. Establishing precise work hours and turning off phones after 9 p.m. can help reduce external distractions and ensure time for rest. This strategy also allows counselors to separate their personal and professional lives, which is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Time management is another key strategy. Techniques such as Pomodoro, which involves working in set time blocks with short breaks in between, can increase productivity while providing regular recovery periods. In addition, taking time for relaxation with family or colleagues is crucial for emotional well-being. Spending quality time with loved ones can help reduce stress and provide

the energy to return to work with renewed enthusiasm.

Industrial and Organizational Field

Burnout is often triggered by an increased workload in the industry and organization, especially during critical periods like the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many employees were required to adapt to rapid changes in the work environment, leading to more significant stress and anxiety. The shift to remote work, pressure to meet performance targets, and increased workload contributed significantly to burnout.

Moreover, the pressure to meet targets can be overwhelming, particularly in sales, project management, or customer service roles where performance is constantly monitored. Employees may experience stress from meeting high expectations without sufficient resources or support. In addition, the imbalance between work and personal life becomes a significant issue when employees work longer hours to compensate for challenges at work, leading to neglect of their personal needs and relationships.

Organizations can implement several solutions to combat burnout. One effective strategy is offering leave for recovery, allowing employees to take time off to rest and recharge. This strategy is critical during high-stress periods. Providing mental health support is also crucial; offering counseling services, stress management workshops, and access to support networks can help employees cope with the emotional and psychological challenges they face at work.

Furthermore, improving work efficiency through better administrative systems can help reduce stress. Simplifying processes, automating tasks, and enhancing communication within the team can improve productivity without overburdening employees. Encouraging open communication about workload and work-life balance also fosters a supportive work environment where employees feel valued and understood.

Clinical Field

In the clinical field, burnout is often caused by the emotional toll of listening to clients' traumatic stories, handling numerous cases, and administrative demands such as case reporting. For clinicians working with trauma survivors or clients dealing with serious mental health issues, the emotional burden can be overwhelming. The constant exposure to clients' pain, suffering, and distress can take a toll on a counselor's mental health, especially when they have limited opportunities to process their emotions.

The sheer volume of cases can also contribute to burnout. Clinicians often juggle multiple clients with diverse needs, which can lead to exhaustion. Furthermore, administrative tasks, such as completing detailed case reports, managing client records, and meeting regulatory requirements, add another layer of stress. Balancing the clinical and administrative aspects of the job can be difficult, especially in settings with high caseloads and insufficient resources.

Several strategies can be applied to address burnout in the clinical field. One important solution is taking breaks between sessions. Clinicians need time to emotionally recharge between clients, especially when dealing with intense cases. Short breaks allow them to clear their minds and be more present and effective in subsequent sessions.

Another solution is sharing stories with colleagues. Clinicians can benefit from discussing challenging cases or venting their frustrations with trusted colleagues who understand the emotional weight of the work. Peer support plays a significant role in reducing isolation and building a supportive work environment.

Finally, reducing exposure to social media is an important strategy for protecting mental health. Many clinicians report feeling overwhelmed by the constant stream of information and emotional intensity on social platforms. By reducing exposure to social media and focusing on self-care activities, clinicians can maintain better emotional health and reduce the risk of burnout.

Required Self-Development Activities

Educational Field

In the education field, personal development activities are crucial for counselors to stay updated with the latest trends and techniques in counseling. One key activity is regularly attending *Musyawah Guru Bimbingan dan Konseling (MGBK)*, a monthly meeting for school counselors. These meetings allow counselors to share knowledge, discuss common challenges, and stay informed about new developments in counseling and education. Through MGBK, counselors can learn about updated methodologies, tools, and best practices, enabling them to support students effectively.

In addition to attending MGBK meetings, education counselors should consider joining professional communities. Being part of a community of peers allows counselors to network, share insights, and seek advice on various counseling techniques and approaches. This sense of belonging to a professional group also provides emotional support, which can be particularly important in a field where counselors often face emotional and psychological challenges while working with students.

Lastly, professional training is essential for counselors in the education field. Training programs can focus on various aspects of counseling, from improving communication skills and empathy to learning specific techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy or mindfulness practices. Counselors can enhance their skill set by attending workshops or seminars, adapting to students' evolving needs, and offering more targeted interventions. Continuous professional development boosts counselors' confidence and ensures their practice remains relevant and effective in a fast-changing educational environment.

Industrial and Organizational Field

Personal development is equally important for counselors to remain competitive and effective in their roles in the industry and organization field. One of the primary activities for professional growth is participating in training programs and obtaining certifications relevant to their work in organizational psychology or human resources.

These certifications may include conflict management, leadership development, or organizational behavior. Training helps counselors stay informed about the latest practices in human resources, employee engagement, and psychological assessment, which can be applied directly to improving the workplace environment and employee well-being.

Another important personal development activity is sharing experiences in professional communities. By attending conferences, webinars, or local networking events, counselors can learn from the experiences of others in the field. These forums allow them to discuss issues, exchange ideas, and gain insights into new methodologies or technologies that could be applied in their work. Additionally, engaging in discussions within these communities helps counselors stay informed about current organizational psychology and workforce management trends.

A vital aspect of professional growth in this field is understanding current issues in organizational psychology. Counselors can learn about organizations' challenges by participating in relevant seminars or professional groups, such as adapting to remote work, managing workplace diversity, or maintaining employee morale. This knowledge allows them to offer tailored solutions to companies and ensure their practice is aligned with the changing needs of modern workplaces.

Clinical Field

In the clinical field, personal development is essential to maintain the highest standards of care and ensure counselors continue to offer practical support to their clients. One of the most important activities for clinical counselors is attending professional training. These training sessions may cover topics from specific therapeutic approaches, such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) or trauma-informed care, to skills like crisis management and ethical decision-making. By attending professional development courses, clinical counselors enhance their therapeutic techniques and stay updated on the latest evidence-based practices.

Another important aspect of personal development is sharing experiences with senior colleagues. Senior counselors can offer valuable insights based on their years of experience, provide mentorship, and guide newer counselors through challenging cases. This knowledge exchange helps build a supportive work environment and fosters continuous learning. Moreover, senior counselors often share strategies for managing difficult emotions, building therapeutic rapport with clients, and handling burnout, which are all vital aspects of being an effective clinician.

Finally, participating in clinical communities is an excellent way for counselors to stay current. These communities—whether they are local professional groups, online forums, or associations—provide opportunities to learn from other professionals, attend workshops, and stay updated on emerging trends in mental health care. By actively engaging in clinical communities, counselors can expand their knowledge base, explore new therapeutic modalities, and keep their skills sharp. Furthermore, being part of a community offers emotional support, which is crucial in a field where counselors are often exposed to high levels of emotional distress.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of personal development activities, skills development, and burnout management in the professional growth of counselors across education, industry, and clinical fields. As counselors navigate the complexities of their roles, the interplay between personal development and professional practice becomes central to maintaining well-being and effectiveness. The results suggest that engaging in continuous professional development, managing burnout, and acquiring the necessary skills tailored to specific contexts are integral to fostering a competent, resilient, and adaptable counseling workforce.

Skills Development and Its Impact on Counseling Effectiveness

One of the key findings of this study is the emphasis on developing specific counseling skills within each sector. In the education sector, counselors need to possess not only traditional therapeutic skills but also a deep understanding of behavioral approaches and the ability to adapt their methods based on the unique needs of students. As evidenced by the literature, behavioral interventions have significantly improved student outcomes, particularly in addressing issues like procrastination, disruptive behavior, and poor academic performance (Sue et al., 2009). Applying behavioral principles allows counselors to foster cause-and-effect awareness in students, encouraging positive behavioral change (Ziomek-Daigle, 2015).

Moreover, the role of empathy and the ability to build strong, supportive relationships with students cannot be overstated. According to Rogers (1995), empathy is foundational in creating a nonjudgmental environment where students feel heard and understood. Counselors who engage empathetically with their students are better able to provide tailored support, addressing not just academic issues but emotional and psychological challenges as well.

In the industry and organization, counselors need a solid foundation in employment law and organizational behavior to effectively manage employee concerns, such as conflicts, work-related stress, and career dissatisfaction (Beru et al., 2015). This knowledge enables counselors to provide solutions aligning with legal standards and organizational goals. Similarly, navigating workplace dynamics and managing interpersonal conflicts is critical in promoting a harmonious work environment. Recent studies highlight the importance of conflict resolution skills in reducing workplace stress and improving overall job satisfaction (Mayer, 2010).

In the clinical setting, empathy again emerges as a critical skill. However, in this context, it must be paired with a personal approach, tailoring counseling to each client's needs. The clinical counseling process often involves dealing with sensitive issues, such as trauma and mental health

disorders, where clients require counselors to exhibit not only empathy but also expertise in various therapeutic modalities (Gabbard, 2017). As Harrington et al. (2021) suggest, a counselor's ability to engage with clients on a deeply personal level can significantly enhance the therapeutic alliance, which predicts treatment success.

Burnout and Strategies for Managing Stress in Counseling

Burnout is pervasive across all sectors, with counselors in education, industry, and clinical settings reporting high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion. Burnout is often triggered by excessive workload, emotional strain from client interactions, and insufficient support systems. These findings are consistent with prior research linking burnout to high caseloads and emotional tolls (Maslach & Leiter, 2000).

In education, counselors often experience burnout due to the emotional challenges of managing many students with diverse issues, compounded by limited resources and parental disengagement. This finding aligns with the findings of Agustin et al. (2020), who argue that counselors in educational settings are at a higher risk of burnout due to the emotional demands of the job and the lack of external support systems. The study recommends implementing strategies such as work-hour boundaries, including turning off devices after working hours, in line with research on work-life balance (Kossek et al., 2023). Strategies like Pomodoro time management can also reduce stress by encouraging breaks and focused working intervals.

In the industry and organization, burnout is exacerbated by the pressure to meet high targets, often under stressful conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has intensified the challenge of balancing work and personal life. As Smith et al. (2020) noted, the pandemic created an environment where employees faced increased workload and psychosocial stress, leading to higher rates of burnout. The study's recommendation to offer mental health support and leave for recovery resonates with broader findings in occupational health psychology, emphasizing the importance of

organizational support in mitigating stress (Cohen & Williamson, 1998).

In the clinical setting, counselors face emotional burnout due to the intense nature of dealing with clients' traumatic experiences. The findings in this study suggest that counselors can benefit from taking breaks between sessions and sharing experiences with colleagues to reduce the emotional toll. Research by Figley (2013) on compassion fatigue highlights the importance of these strategies, as clinicians working with trauma survivors are at risk of developing emotional exhaustion due to prolonged exposure to clients' suffering. Additionally, reducing social media exposure is a well-supported strategy for improving mental well-being and preventing burnout in clinical practitioners (Rosen et al., 2016).

Personal Development Activities and Professional Growth

The study also reveals the importance of personal development activities in maintaining counselor effectiveness across all fields. For counselors in education, attending MGBK meetings and participating in training programs are key activities that help counselors stay informed and equipped to handle the evolving educational challenges (Ferguson, 2019). Similarly, in industry and organization, engaging in professional certifications and networking within industry groups can keep counselors up-to-date on the latest organizational psychology trends and management practices (Gravina et al., 2023).

Professional development is significant in the clinical field, given the rapidly changing landscape of mental health care. Continuous training in new therapeutic approaches and sharing insights with senior colleagues is critical for adapting to clients' complex needs. As noted by Cohen and Williamson (1998), clinical counselors must continually update their skills to maintain a high level of competence and effectively address emerging mental health issues.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study emphasize that counselors in education, industry, and clinical settings require a comprehensive approach to professional development, burnout management, and skill acquisition. By engaging in continuous learning through professional training, joining peer communities, and implementing effective burnout prevention strategies, counselors can improve their well-being and enhance their ability to provide adequate support to those they serve. Organizations and educational institutions should prioritize counselor development, improving outcomes for counselors and the individuals they assist.

DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Dewi Ilma Antawati and Bambang Raditya Purnomo do not work for, consult, own shares in, or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this manuscript and have disclosed no affiliations other than those noted above.

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