

Burnout and Exhaustion: A Case Study

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Abstract

Burnout is a situation that occurs from the effects of stress at work. Stress is one of the problems that most people face nowadays. Emotional stress that is not handled well not only affects mental well-being but can also affect physical health. The objective of this article is to identify the journey of a respondent who is burnout at work due to stress that cannot be managed well. This article also tells about the self-recovery done by the respondents to recover. The findings from the respondents found that the respondents began to dislike being placed in schools far away from their hometowns. The respondent lost enthusiasm for duty when the place was far away from her husband and children. The findings also found that burnout occurs when the workplace is not as desired. The workplace plays an important role for married individuals so that they can work calmly every day. The implication of this study is for the Malaysian Ministry of Education to take more drastic measures to identify married teachers so that they are placed in places close to their families.

Keywords: Burnout, Exhaustion, Stress, Teacher.

Introduction

Burnout is a situation that occurs from the effects of stress at work. Stress is one of the problems that most people face nowadays. It can almost be said that no human being has ever experienced stress in life because stress varies, some are small and some are large. Stress when viewed from a positive angle will produce good qualities such as courage to take on challenges, perseverance in the face of adversity, and patience in going through trials. On the other hand, if stress is seen from a negative aspect as something troublesome, then it is indeed a troublesome matter and if not handled well will cause problems of disappointment, sadness, despair, low spirits, depression, and the like. Stress comes from the Greek word 'stringer' which means tight or tense.

Stress is an emotional, physical, and mental response due to changes in a situation that occurs in human daily life. Stress includes burden, stress, anxiety, fatigue, conflict, panic, depression and listlessness. In general, stress is divided into short-term stress and long-term stress. Short-term stress is the body's spontaneous response to any challenging, dangerous, or frightening situation. The level of stress usually depends on several factors such as the duration of the stress experienced and how the individual deals with the stress. Long-term stress is often experienced by those who suffer from prolonged stress. This kind of stress is often caused by dangerous diseases or long-term problems. Selye (2003) in Jamilah (2019) has defined stress as "a non-specific body reaction or response to a request or desire" or a non-specific response by any part of the body to the existence of an urge. According to Jerrold (2012), stress can cause several behavioral and body changes such as physical pain, emotional and psychological disturbances, and a decline in a person's performance.

Emotional stress that is not handled well not only affects mental well-being but can also affect physical health. Brecht, an Australian Clinical Psychologist, explains that stress can cause disturbances in the body and mind (body and mind) caused by the existence of many changes and demands (demands) in a person's life. Among the physiological changes that can occur due to stress such as changes in blood pressure and acid content in the blood or sometimes can also cause other diseases such as heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, mouth sores (ulcers), and so on. Stress can also result in the occurrence of spiritual diseases such as anxiety, depression, or psychosis (Corsini, 2017). Therefore, working women should wisely organize and organize their many responsibilities so that their emotional and physical well-being can be well taken care of. The pressure experienced must be proactively found a solution so that pressure does not become an agent of failure in all aspects of life.

Stress According to Islamic Perspective

As a Muslim, the best way to deal with this kind of work pressure is to stick closely to Islamic Sharia. Islam has encouraged a person who faces pressure and hardship to be patient, calm, always rational, and confident in God's provisions. Allah SWT has given the best guidance in dealing with this kind of pressure through His word which means: "*For sure! We will test you with a little fear (of the enemy) and (by feeling) hunger, and (by the occurrence of) lack of wealth and souls and crops. And give glad tidings to those who are patient (i.e. those who, when they are afflicted by something difficult, say: Verily we belong to God and God we shall return).*" (Surah al-Baqarah verses 155-156).

Accepting the fact that human life will always be tested and placing confidence that tests such as work pressure are aimed at strengthening the values of faith, piety, gratitude, and our love for Him. When we are confident, with the permission of Allah SWT, all the problems that bind us will be unraveled and finally we manage to face the pressure calmly and successfully.

Many methods of dealing with work pressure based on Islamic teachings are effective enough to practice. First, observe the obligatory prayers five times a day and increase the number of circumcison prayers. The studies of Western psychologists themselves have confirmed the benefits of prayer in giving peace of mind and one's thoughts. According to the conclusion of several studies by Western scholars, scientifically prayer is a period of 'peace and tranquility' with the whole body and mind of a person focused on something (to Allah SWT). The movements and state of mind in prayer can prevent the outflow of hormones such as Cortisol,

Epinephrine, and Norepinephrine from the adrenal glands that respond to any stress. Prayer also helps to provide positive interventions to the respiratory system, oxygen flow in the body, heartbeat, and brain waves. From an Islamic perspective, by performing the obligatory five-time prayer and completing the practice of various circumcision prayers, a person will be given help by Allah SWT in any difficulty.

Second, the practice of *dhikr* such as *takbir*, *tahmid*, *tasbih*, and so on is a practice that can calm the soul as guaranteed by Allah SWT in surah ar-Ra'd verse 28 which means: *"(That is) those who believe and calm their hearts with zikrullah. Know that with the zikrullah, the human heart will be calm.*

Third, practice listening, reading, and appreciating the interpretation of the Qur'an. It is narrated that the Prophet SAW once said that *"the Qur'an is a cure for the pain of the mind"* (narrated by Bukhari). Reading the Quran itself gives peace to the reader and even to anyone who listens to the reading, not to mention if the verses of God are understood, appreciated, and used as a guide in life. This is because the Qur'an is the greatest source of unraveling all human problems.

Fourth, believe that the life of this world is temporary and the afterlife is a place that lasts forever. In this way, the soul will be forced to realize that whatever happens in this world, whether it is positive or negative, is just 'the color of the life of this world that does not last long' and will get its due reward in the afterlife. The pressure faced at work will be something that is too dwarfed when compared to what will be faced at Padang Mahsyar later. We will always fear the punishment of hellfire and try to find His pleasure and be included in heaven.

The fifth, with the practice of praying, asking for forgiveness, and surrendering everything that has been done to overcome self-pressure for His provisions. The word of Allah SWT means: *"And your Lord said: Pray to Me and I will grant your supplication. Verily, those who are proud and arrogant instead of worshiping and praying to Me, will enter Hell in a state of humiliation"* (Surah al-Ghaafir, verse 60). If we have earnestly tried to overcome work pressure, following the right channels and methods, then we also need to be self-reliant and sincerely accept all His provisions.

Methodology

The design of the study is qualitative and a form of case study where the respondent is interviewed. The data and information needed to meet the objectives of the study are collected through the interview method. The interview was conducted to better understand the experience of the respondent. However, these questions are not too binding and need to be flexible based on the responses given by the respondents and their willingness to continue the conversation. Among the interview guides that the researchers have prepared prior to the interview with the respondents are:

1. What makes you stressed?
2. Does the workplace support you?
3. Do you get support from other?
4. How do you deal with your stress?
5. What reasons help you to treat yourself?

However, this question guide is not too binding and needs to be flexible based on the responses given by the respondents and their willingness to continue the conversation (Md Ali, Mohd Yusof & Shaffie, 2018). According to Lebar (2015) interviews are conducted in conducting a study not to answer the question of a study, or make an assessment but to understand deeply the experience in life or an event that has been passed. Written consent from the respondent is required to record the interview. If the respondent does not allow the interview to be recorded or feels uncomfortable using the recorder, a note will be done during the interview session. In fact, the benefits of making a note compared to using a recorder, the researchers will focus more on what the respondents tell us than relying on the recorder alone. Apart from understanding through verbal communication, the respondent's feelings should also be understood through the non-verbal communication shown.

Data Analysis

Respondent Background

The respondent is a teacher in a primary school in the state of Sabah. The respondent's name is Arifah Ahmad (not his real name). She has 8 years of experience as a teacher at the school. It's been 2 years since she moved to her hometown in the state of Penang with her children after divorced 3 years ago. She faced very high pressure when she was away from her husband for seven years. The respondent's husband married again with another women when she was seventh year in Sabah. The respondent had to manage all the children alone. She has 3 children was aged 14 years, 12 years and 10 years.

Work Experience

The respondent was placed in the state of Sabah after he finished studying at an IPG in Penang. At first, the respondents were quite surprised because they had to be away from their husbands and children at that time. However, the respondent's husband assured the respondent that he would help the respondent take care of their children with their mother-in-law. The experience of working makes respondents very stressed. The respondent's situation was even more surprising when he arrived at the school where she was placed. The condition of the school is very bad and it is located in a rural area quite far from the town. She continued to cry when she saw the situation around him. The respondent grew up in a wealthy family and never had a hard life. However, the situation in Sabah is different from his life before that. The respondent could not accept this situation and had to get up every day to work at the school. On the respondent's first day at school, he was confronted by a very strict head teacher. The principal did not celebrate the presence of the respondent in the school. The headmaster is also a migrant child who has settled in Sabah because she is married to a teacher at a school in Sabah.

Burnout At Work

Respondents often take sick leave because they miss their young children too much. She has been married to her husband since her first year at IPG Penang. They both want to be teachers. However, the respondents did not think that the beginning of the respondent's career was not good and unproductive. Months pass until years turn into years. It has been 3 years since the respondent worked as a teacher in Sabah. The respondent started to fill out the exchange application but was unsuccessful. Respondents only come home every school holiday and holiday. However, the respondent's husband has shown a slight difference in attitude. The respondent's husband often goes out at night and is rarely with the respondent.

The respondent was quite depressed and did not know why her husband changed his attitude. The respondent already had 3 children at that time. The mother-in-law manages all the respondent's children. The respondent is also unable to bring his children to Sabah due to factors in the conditions in Sabah that are not suitable for his children. The respondent's husband seemed to start ignoring his children. Due to this factor, the respondent began to feel restless and stressed throughout working at school. When she is away from her husband and children, she thinks a lot negatively about her husband. Respondents began to keep quiet and began to have signs of burnout when respondents were not able to perform tasks in school well. Respondents take more leave and this causes other staff to prejudice the respondent. The respondent tried to ignore the prejudices of other staff but was unable to when her husband expressed his desire to marry someone else. The respondent's attitude began to be aggressive at work. The respondent is always alone and does not talk to other staff at school. The respondent began to feel useless at school when the respondent's marriage was already in an unstable state. The fourth year her husband was married at the border with another woman. The respondent lost control and was unable to accept the news and this situation while the respondent had rejected her husband's request to marry again. The respondent is no longer able to do his job well and often gets angry and hits the students at school. The respondent was called by the headmaster but the respondent fought the headmaster with his aggressive attitude.

Relationship with Staff

The relationship with the staff is not good when the respondent is always angry with other staff. No one approached the respondent and the effect of the respondent's attitude towards them. Respondents feel stressed by the situation. However, the respondent did not meet with a counselor to resolve this problem and continued to leave the respondent in a state of extremely high stress. When there are matters involving other teachers, the respondent will not be involved. Many activities carried out by the school were not attended by respondents due to sick leave. Respondents are more alone and do not have friends in Sabah.

Divorced

Every time I go home page, the respondent is unable to stop herself from fighting with her husband. The respondent hated seeing her husband's irresponsible face with the children. The respondent also spends a lot of time with his second wife. The condition of the fifth-year respondent is getting more and more stressful with a husband who does not help and even hurts. The mother-in-law sided with the respondent's husband and started not wanting to be responsible with the respondent's children as well. The mother-in-law requested that the respondent take her children to Sabah and take care of all her children herself. The hot conditions in the house made the respondent no longer willing to live with her husband. What is the purpose of the marriage for the respondent when all the respondents have to bear it themselves? Since his husband's second wife gave birth to twins. The mother-in-law takes care of and favors her daughter-in-law. Not to mention the respondent's husband does not treat the respondent's children well and is even busy with his twin children only. The respondent decided to divorce and filed for divorce in the Penang Court. The respondent's decision was supported by the respondent's father and other siblings. The respondent has not had a mother since high school. The divorce case lasted for almost 2 years. In the seventh year, the court approved the fasakh application. So, the respondent was divorced and became a single mother.

Single Mother

The respondent has brought all his children to Sabah. Although the situation in Sabah is quite bad, the children become a strength for the respondents when they are close to the respondents. However, for the first time, the respondent felt quite busy and unable to take care of all his children with busy work. Sending and picking up children at school is also sometimes unmanageable. The respondent's children felt sorry for the respondent and asked to go to school on their own. Heavy respondents let go of their children to go to school by themselves but were persuaded by their children. The respondent often cried and his children saw the situation. So maybe this is a factor of the respondent's children not wanting to burden the respondent. The respondent felt guilty and was not strong enough to take care of her three daughters.

Feeling Suicidal

Appears in the respondent's feelings to commit suicide because he feels useless. He once wanted to drink Clorox, but was pushed away by her daughter who pushed him. Her daughter cried when she saw the respondent's actions. Her daughter begged not to do such an act again. The respondent's children need the respondent. The condition of respondents who often cry and are in a state of depression is often seen by children and staff at work. The respondent said that sometimes she feels as if she is so stupid that she does not know what to do. The respondent applied for a change in the eighth year and finally, this application was approved and the respondent returned to hometown and her workplace was also close to her father's house. She happy to returns to her life when she is close to his family. Her father was a strength to the respondent. The respondent's father gave many words of encouragement to the respondent.

Recovery Process

When working in the home village, the respondents feel they can breathe again because they always have the support of friends and family members. Respondents started meeting with counselors at an IPTS because they saw an advertisement related to counseling sessions. Respondents attend counseling sessions for 6 meetings over 8 months. Respondents are recovering from the effects of divorce and being away from family. Burnout at work was no longer there when the respondents started reporting to a new school in Penang. Many of the respondent's friends also work as teachers around schools in Penang and Kedah. Respondents stated that individuals need support. If that support is not obtained then the individual will begin to be in a state of depression and not well. The pressure is always there in life, but we need to be smart to find a solution and not just stay silent.

Conclusion

Individuals will not miss a lot of work every day. But, we can manage and divide the time as best as possible so that the work is completed within the specified period. There may be individuals who feel too tired from the existing work and it is increasing day by day. However, it can be overcome by taking a break or doing other activities to reduce the feeling of burnout. If you find that there are signs of burnout happening to you, then do the recommended ways to overcome work burnout.

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