



The Effects of Role Differentiation Among Clergy: Impact on Pastoral Burnout and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of differentiation of self as an emotion regulation strategy on work and family conflict, ministerial job satisfaction, and burnout for pastors. Specifically, does differentiation of self provide a psychological resource for pastors coping with the experience of burnout as emotional exhaustion, given the unique social context of the pastor's family and the role emotional labor has in causing burnout in social service professions? A unique aspect of the pastorate is the pastor's family's social context of living with the congregation. Due to this unique social context, work and family conflict were investigated as predictors of pastoral burnout. A sample of pastors ($N=164$) was surveyed to investigate the impact of differentiation and job satisfaction on personal and work-related burnout. Findings suggest that differentiation of self provides a resource against the personal experience of burnout, while ministerial job satisfaction buffers pastors against work-related burnout.

Keywords Differentiation of self · Burnout · Work and family conflict · Intent to turn over · Pastor · Emotional labor

Burnout is considered to be the experiences of significant fatigue and exhaustion, a loss of efficacy in the workplace, and a higher level of indifference towards one's work (Maslach et al., 1996, 2001). Examples of negative consequences of burnout include employee turnover, diminished work performance, lower production levels, a negative work environment, lack of boundaries, and a lack of loyalty to the organization. Individuals experiencing burnout may suffer effects such as headaches, migraines, elevated blood pressure, stress, depression, poor communication, strained relationships, apathy, and irritability (Campbell et al., 2013; Enkhtuya et al., 2017; Harolds, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020; Yuguero et al., 2017). Such consequences indicate that burnout affects the individual, the organization, and the individual's life outside of work life (i.e., home life).

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For pastors, burnout also reflects exhaustion and depletion due to the demands of the congregation and other ministry-related tasks (Dunbar et al., 2020). For a sample of Assemblies of God clergy, the experience of burnout focused on feeling empty, sad, guilty, physical complaints, and withdrawing from the congregation (Visker et al., 2017). Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, empirical evidence suggests that pastors experience similar levels of exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization compared to other social service professionals (Adams et al., 2016). Pastors with higher levels of burnout experience a sense of depression, lowered satisfaction with their spirituality, and having had a trauma-filled church in the past (Doolittle, 2008).

Research on burnout has emphasized the measurement of burnout focused on the experience of exhaustion as a primary psychological construct. The main measurement device for burnout has been the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach et al., 1996), despite some concerns regarding its validity for pastors. There are two broad ways in which measurement using the MBI for pastors is a concern. First, evidence suggests that pastors persist in their ministry despite high levels of burnout. Francis and colleagues (2017) have developed a balanced affect theory to explain this aspect of pastoral burnout. Pastoral burnout, in this perspective, is viewed as the ratio of meaningfulness of ministry to exhaustion in ministry. Francis's theory will be discussed below.

Second, research on burnout has also focused on the ways in which burnout occurs due to interrole conflict, mainly between work and family spheres (Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). The focus on work and family context as contributing to burnout emphasizes the role of differentiation of self (DoS). Differentiation of self is a family-based psychological resource that provides a core identity base from which to engage in one's work and personal life in a values-based manner. This concept will be discussed in more detail below.

Third, the concept of emotional labor has been increasingly useful in understanding emotion regulation strategies used by employees who serve customers by responding in an appropriate manner despite the employees' personal experience (anger) with the customer (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 2009). Emotional labor has been implicated in the increasing burnout among social service workers. Emotional labor will be discussed below. These three dimensions of burnout research are the framework for our discussion in this paper.

Measurement challenges of the maslach burnout inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach et al., 1996) is the most widely used tool in assessing and documenting the relationships between burnout and a host of negative outcomes associated with it. However, there have been some critiques of the MBI, and there is a need to develop other measures for burnout. Of the three dimensions in the MBI, researchers have determined the Exhaustion or Emotional Exhaustion dimension seems to be the predominant aspect of burnout assessed by the MBI (Bianchi et al., 2015; Schaufeli & Taris, 2005; Wheeler et al., 2011). The MBI has been criticized for having a primary dimension, which may lessen the impact of the entire instrument as a whole or lessen the impact of the other two dimensions. In other words, defining burnout along three dimensions and then having a measure that consists predominantly of a single measure is a validity concern.

Kristensen et al. (2005) identify some of the concerns regarding the MBI: (1) the questions in the MBI were developed for those who work with people or who work in the

human service sector; (2) respondents have reacted negatively to some of the questions on the MBI; (3) questions on the MBI have been reported as being too American and thus may not translate well into other cultures; and (4) the questions in the MBI are not in the public domain—rather, researchers must pay a commercial company to access and use the MBI. In other words, the MBI is not generally relevant to professions outside the human service sector, especially pastors (Francis et al., 2017).

Examples of other instruments used to measure burnout include the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen et al., 2005), the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005), and the Francis Burnout Inventory for pastors (Francis et al., 2017). Common among all such instruments are questions designed to measure exhaustion. Words such as fatigue, worn-out, energy, tired, weary, and drained are found in these burnout measurement instruments (Francis et al., 2017; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005; Kristensen et al., 2005). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory improves conceptualization of the exhaustion component by incorporating physical and emotional exhaustion into the measure (Todorovic et al., 2021).

Measuring burnout for pastors

One of the critiques raised regarding the MBI is its applicability to measuring burnout in the pastorate. A central issue is the persistence of pastors in ministry who tend to experience high levels of burnout. Francis and colleagues have proposed the balanced affect model of pastoral burnout to understand the unique experience of pastoral burnout (Francis et al., 2017, 2019; Village et al., 2018). Given the measurement challenges of the MBI, Francis sought to understand why pastors with high levels of burnout remained in their congregations. In other words, pastors tend to persist in ministries despite having high levels of burnout if they perceive those ministries as *meaningful*. Approaching burnout as balanced affect means that pastors may experience high levels of both negative and positive emotions related to the pastorate. These experiences have complex interactions that may result in burnout or other negative ministry outcomes like leaving the pastorate altogether. In some ways, the positive impact of satisfaction in ministry seemingly provides a buffer against the emotional exhaustion of ministry.

Given the contextual dimensions of burnout in terms of conflict between work and family spheres, DoS provides insight into understanding pastoral burnout. Differentiation of self is the ability to maintain relationships with others that are based on one's core identity commitments. It describes how one lives out one's core values and identity commitments while engaging in meaningful relationships. This ability is sometimes referred to as the *core self* in Bowen theory (Bowen, 2004). Frederick and Dunbar (2019) describe the core self as the ability to "(1) recognize [one's] core beliefs and experiences while (2) maintaining emotionally meaningful relationships without compromising those beliefs and values" (pp. 25–26). Both aspects are important to the core self—knowing one's beliefs and expressing them in relationships with others.

Differentiation contributes to one's ability for emotion regulation and coping (Jankowski & Sandage, 2012; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; Yavuz Güler & Karaca, 2020). Differentiation provides psychological resources needed to manage one's emotional experiences due to relationship pressures and other stressors. Expressing one's beliefs and values in relationships creates tension and stress, especially when those values diverge from one's relationship partners. This tension and stress could facilitate someone to modify their core

beliefs in order to reduce this pressure and stress. Continually denying or modifying one's beliefs in order to maintain relationships ultimately erodes the identity.

Differentiation of self and burnout have been studied among Christian clergy, focusing on the role of DoS and leadership (Beebe, 2007; Wasberg, 2013). Based on Friedman (1985), this research emphasizes the importance of DoS on the pastor's leadership ability, which entails identifying clear goals based upon the pastor's value system and using those goals and values to guide the congregation while maintaining relationships with the congregation. Wasberg (2013) adopts a mixed-methods approach that identifies how role differentiation, or the ability to separate one's self-worth and identity from one's work role as a clergy, affects both burnout and retention. Pastors with higher levels of DoS experience more transformational leadership styles and are able to engage in self-regulation, which results in their managing their emotional responses to conflict and maintaining good relationships with congregants.

Beebe (2007) describes how pastors and other clergy are often overwhelmed by role demands (time, energy, and expectations), how these demands increase conflict, and how they result in a diminished sense of personal efficacy. Beebe documents how clergy with higher levels of DoS tend to have lower levels of burnout and turnover. Those clergy that are able to respond (not react) in a nonaggressive manner and not take conflict personally are able to prevent burnout and remain in the ministry longer than those with lower levels of DoS.

Differentiation of self is crucial to understanding and addressing pastoral burnout. Beebe (2007) and Wasberg (2013) explicitly tie DoS to areas of pastoral ministry and health. This empirical work alongside Friedman's (1985) theoretical use of Bowen theory for congregational life emphasizes the importance of DoS for pastoral health and ministry effectiveness. Due to the focus of Friedman, Beebe, and Washburn on DoS, we view it as crucial to understanding pastoral burnout. Differentiation of self is included as a significant contribution to understanding pastoral burnout.

Work and family context for burnout and the pastorate

Burnout viewed from a social context perspective entails conflict between the worker and their work environment. Burnout results from a "major mismatch between the nature of the job and the nature of the person who does the job" (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 9). This social context view of burnout emphasizes the two main social spheres in which everyone lives: work and family life (Frederick & Dunbar, 2019). This has led researchers to describe the relationship between work and family spheres in terms of conflict or interrole issues (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

One way to conceptualize the relationship between work and family is as one of conflict (Allen & Martin, 2017; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work and family conflict (WFC) is conceptualized as interrole conflict due to the incompatible demands and role pressures and associated expectations arising from both domains. Interrole conflict may arise from work to family demands as well as family to work demands. In other words, conflict can be viewed as emanating from either work or family life. A recent study by Pattusamy and Jacob (2016) that looked at the relative contributions of work to family conflict and family to work conflict found evidence that work to family conflict plays a more significant, negative role compared with family to work conflict in both job and family satisfaction.

A review of the literature regarding the relationship between burnout and WFC reveals two major findings. First, most of the research shows a positive relationship between WFC and the dimensions of burnout (Barriga Medina et al., 2021). This association describes how WFC exacerbates the experience of burnout as individuals try to balance work and family life. Evidence suggests, as an example, that higher levels of WFC are associated with higher levels of burnout for firefighters (Smith et al., 2019). For working mothers, the evidence suggests that perception of one's ability influences the relationship between WFC and burnout (Balogun, 2019). Mothers perceiving that they are able to manage WFC have lower levels of burnout even when experiencing higher levels of WFC. Mothers perceiving less control over WFC experience higher levels of WFC and burnout.

Second, some of this research on burnout and WFC suggests that family roles can lower levels of burnout due to a positive spillover effect on work-related emotions (Kida et al., 2022). While positive spillover may lower levels of burnout in some instances, this is not the norm. A study conducted by Terry and Woo summarize their findings on burnout related to WFC as follows: "work-family conflict and work during personal time were negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with perceived stress and burnout" (2021, p. 196). Additionally, Tang et al. (2017) identified the positive effect on creativity from the positive spillover of marital satisfaction. Individuals that view their marriages as satisfying have higher levels of on-the-job creativity.

Boundary ambiguity provides an important framework for understanding WFC for pastors and their families in contrast with WFC concepts. Boundary ambiguity refers to the family's difficulty in determining membership or roles in the family (Lee, 1995). Ultimately, it describes the experience of "*cognitive uncertainty regarding the allocation and enactment of roles, triggered by questions of family membership*" (Lee, 1995, p. 78, italics in original). In other words, families are not certain about the accessibility or availability of the pastor to meet the families' parenting and spousal needs due to work obligations. There is an ambiguity because the pastor is present (not physically absent) in the life of the family but is not always emotionally available (is psychologically absent). The presence of the pastor in the family creates this ambiguity for the family.

Boundary ambiguity reflects the intrusiveness of the demands of ministry (Lee, 1995). Because the family and congregational life share an ambiguous social boundary, the congregation and other ministry-related demands may be intrusive. That is, the congregation may hold unspoken expectations and behavioral demands for the minister's family that members of the congregation do not have for their own families. The minister's family perceives these demands as intrusive as the family experiences the life of the congregation as well as the participation of the pastor ambiguously. These intrusive demands also hold obligations regarding the minister's availability for congregants' needs. Of particular importance, the family's *interpretation* of these events, the meanings associated with the psychological absence and demands, are associated with well-being and burnout (Kim et al., 2016; Lee, 2007). Additionally, Han and Lee (2004) demonstrate that boundary ambiguity is associated with higher stress and lower psychological well-being among Korean American pastors (Han & Lee, 2004).

Due to the ambiguous and intrusive nature of pastoral ministry, WFC operationalizes our understanding of the social context of ministry and family life. We assume that, given the high level of stress due to COVID-19, pastors are currently experiencing more conflict rather than ambiguous relationships with their congregations (Gill, personal communication, February 21, 2021). Based on the WFC literature, WFC informed our understanding of the relationship between congregational life (work sphere) and family life for pastors. Stress and burnout result from the mismatch or conflict between an individual's roles in

the separate spheres of work and family. In some instances, the congregation and other ministerial job requirements place demands on the minister's family. On the other hand, the minister's family may make demands on the pastor that cause conflict regarding meeting ministerial expectations.

Emotional labor and burnout

When the U.S. economy transitioned from the production of goods to the delivery of services, sociologist Arlie Hochschild developed the concept of "emotion management" or "emotion work" to refer to the way people actively shape and direct their feelings based on social norms and expectations of the situation. She posited that there are "feeling rules" or societal norms about the appropriate type and amount of feeling that should be experienced and expressed in a particular situation (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 2009). Hochschild noted that service work was unique in that employees are required to exert a certain level of emotional competence while on the job. Huppertz et al. (2020) write, "The emotion with which service is delivered is a major contributor to service quality" (p. 214). When emotions become regulated by other people or organizations in public as required by work, that is known as emotional labor. Hochschild (1983) defined emotional labor as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" to create a particular emotional state in another person (p. 7). Emotional labor then is essentially the act of expressing socially desired emotions during service transactions. Emotions that are displayed while on the job then have economic value, which is translated into salaries, wages, or tips (Choi & Kim, 2015).

Service workers who do not feel the required emotions may need to engage in one of the two emotional labor strategies: surface acting or deep acting. Whereas surface acting only changes the expression of emotion, deep acting transforms one's emotional state (Larson & Yao, 2005). Surface acting involves simulating emotions that are not actually felt by changing outward appearances (i.e., facial expression, gestures, or voice tone) when exhibiting the required emotions. In this way, the service worker feigns emotions that are not being experienced. Deep acting on the other hand, is when one attempts to experience or feel the emotions that one wishes to display. Here, the service worker convinces themselves into experiencing the desired emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Unlike surface acting, deep acting involves changing one's feelings by altering more than the outward appearance. In surface acting, feelings are changed from the "outside in," whereas in deep acting feelings are changed from the "inside out" (Hochschild, 1983). These strategies allow employees to perform the emotional labor that is required of them on the job (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003).

Research has found negative outcomes related to engaging in emotional labor. Surface acting can create strain that Hochschild (1983) called emotive dissonance, which could lead to personal and work-related maladjustment such as poor self-esteem, depression, and cynicism. Deep acting may lead to self-alienation as one loses touch with one's authentic self, which could impair one's ability to recognize or experience real emotion (Ashforth, 1989). According to Wharton (2009), numerous studies show that workers who report having to display emotions that conflict with their own feelings on a regular basis are more likely than others to experience emotional exhaustion. Zapf (2002) reported that there is a positive correlation between emotional labor and burnout. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) reported a correlation between emotional exhaustion and the need to prevent the negative feelings. Workers employed in the categories of "high emotional labor" jobs (Hochschild,

1983) and “high burnout jobs” (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) report significantly higher levels of employee stress than do other workers. Specifically, people in health care, social service, teaching, and other “caring” professions are more likely to experience burnout (Cherniss, 1993; Jackson et al., 1986; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Schaufeli et al., 1993).

Framework for the current study

We hypothesized that DoS would provide important psychological resources for pastors to engage in deep acting as an emotion regulation strategy. Further, DoS and emotional labor strategies should mitigate WFC. That is, we operationalized boundary ambiguity in terms of WFC in this study, and we posited that DoS and emotional labor would lower or minimize the amount and intensity of WFC. We hypothesized that DoS and deep acting would lower the experience of WFC, which would result in increased satisfaction as ministers and lower levels of burnout. This framework forms the basis for the research question that follows.

This study attempts to answer the following research question: Does differentiation of self provide a psychological resource for pastors coping with the experience of burnout as emotional exhaustion, given the unique social context of the pastor’s family and the role emotional labor has in causing burnout in social service professions?

Method

We collaborated with Standing Stone Ministry in distributing a paper-and-pencil survey containing demographic questions along with the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), Work and Family Conflict Scales (Work–Family Conflict and Family–Work Conflict), Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version, Revised (DSRC), Emotional Labor scales (Surface and Deep Acting), Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, and intent to turn over scale. A total of 355 surveys were distributed, and 164 were returned for a response rate of 46%. Standing Stone is a ministry devoted to assisting pastors that have experienced ministry challenges and failures. The organization offers spiritual support to pastors that have experienced burnout and other negative experiences while in the ministry. This support is offered as a free service to pastors, and the services provided are from Standing Stone pastoral staff.

Instruments

The present study used the personal and work burnout subscales of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI; Kristensen et al., 2005) to assess pastors’ level of burnout. The personal burnout scale was intended to assess respondents’ general experience of exhaustion and fatigue at work, regardless of occupation. Sample items from the personal burnout scale are (1) How often do you feel tired? and (2) How often are you physically exhausted? The work burnout scales were intended to measure respondents’ perceptions that work caused their burnout. Sample work burnout items are (1) Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day? and (2) Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work? That is, the work burnout scale measured the respondents’ perceptions that work was causing the experience of burnout. Kristensen et al. (2005) reported internal

consistencies for personal burnout as .85 and .86 for work-related burnout. For the current study, reported internal consistencies were .88 for personal and .81 for work burnout.

The two scales related to WFC were developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) and measure two dimensions. One dimension of WFC focuses on conflict emanating from work and spilling over into family life (work–family conflict; sample item: The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life). The other dimension entails conflict originating in family life and spilling over to work (family–work conflict; sample item: The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities). Netemeyer et al. (1996) reported internal consistencies for the work–family conflict and family–work conflict scales as .88 and .89, respectively. The internal consistencies for the two scales in the current study were .89 and .92, respectively.

The Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version (DSRC) was developed by Beebe (2007). This scale measures the levels of DoS among clergy respondents. Beebe (2007) developed a revised DSRC, which was used for the present study to reduce the number of items and increase reliability and validity. The DSRC assessed the respondents' ability to separate their identities from their roles as pastors. Sample items are (1) When I disagree with someone, I tend to encourage talking about the problem/issue, and (2) I often feel the congregation does not allow for my self-expression outside of the pastoral role. Beebe reported an internal consistency for the DSRC as .90. The internal consistency reported for the current study was .89.

The emotional labor scales assessed respondents' use of surface and deep acting strategies. The present study measured these emotional labor strategies using the surface and deep acting scales developed by Diefendorff et al. (2005). The surface acting scale measured respondents' use of emotional strategies to hide or minimize personal reactions to situations to respond to others. The deep acting scale measured respondents' use of more authentic expressions of emotions with customers or clients. Both the surface and deep acting scales were slightly modified to reflect the pastors' congregations instead of clients and customers. That is, the original scales focus on client and customer service, which could be confusing language as pastors would not necessarily view members of their congregations as clients or customers.¹ Sample surface acting items are (1) I put on an act in order to deal with parishioners in an appropriate way, and (2) I put on a "show" or "performance" when interacting with parishioners. Sample deep acting items are (1) I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward others and (2) I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show parishioners. Diefendorff et al. (2005) reported internal consistencies for the surface acting and deep acting scales as .92 and .85, respectively. Internal consistencies reported for the current study were .94 and .89 for the surface acting and deep acting scales, respectively.

Job satisfaction for pastors was measured using the Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale (MJSS) developed by Glass (1976). The MJSS measures two main domains of ministerial satisfaction: intrinsic ministerial satisfaction and support and relationships. Intrinsic ministerial satisfaction is about personal satisfaction in ministry—I am a good minister. Support and relationships ministry satisfaction refers to the experience of support received from the congregation and denomination and the experience of relationships between the pastor and

¹ After we changed the original items from customers/clients to parishioners, we sent the original survey and the modified survey to two colleagues in Christian ministry. The ministers confirmed the equivalence of the items and the readability for pastors. The authors would like to thank Drs. John Gill and Shawn Wilhite for their assistance with this.

congregation. In other words, the MJSS focuses on how ministers generally feel regarding their jobs (intrinsic ministry satisfaction) as well as the level of interpersonal support they receive (support and relationships). Sample items for the MJSS are (1) The Congregation understands the problems I have in the job and (2) I find meaning and purpose in my work. Internal consistency reported for the present study was .81. Glass did not report internal reliabilities in his 1976 study.

Intent to turn over was measured by the three items developed by Seashore et al. (1983): (1) It is likely that I will actively look for a new job in the next year, (2) I often think about quitting, and (3) I will probably look for a new job in the next year. The internal consistency of the intent to turn over scale reported for the current study was .84.

Results

Data were analyzed three ways using SPSS version 28. First, means and standard deviations were calculated for all study variables. Second, a correlation coefficient matrix was created to determine the nature of the relationships among study variables (see Table 1). Third and finally, hierarchical regression was used to answer the research question. Age was entered into the regression models due to the range of age among the sample of pastors.

Participants

Table 2 represents a summary of the demographic categories of the sample. The pastors responding from Standing Stone Ministry were predominantly White (83.5%), male (97.6%), and married (92.7%) and had a lengthy tenure in ministry (16–20 years of fulltime ministry, 59.1%).

Pastors, burnout, and intent to turn over

Evidence from the sample of pastors indicates that DoS is associated with lower levels of personal and work burnout, intent to turn over, surface acting, and WFC (see Table 1 for correlations). In the current study, differentiation was found to account for 19% of the variance associated with work burnout and 26% of the variance associated with personal burnout. Further, respondents with higher levels of differentiation tended to rely on surface acting less ($r_{\text{DSRC-SA}} = -.56, p < .001$) and to report lower levels of WFC ($r_{\text{DSRC-WFC}} = -.44, p < .001$; $r_{\text{DSRC-FWC}} = -.38, p < .001$). Finally, those respondents with higher levels of DoS reported lower levels of intent to leave their ministries ($r_{\text{DSRC-Turnover}} = -.27, p = .002$). Evidence based on these correlations indicates that differentiation related with the other study variables along theoretical lines so that higher levels of differentiation are associated with lower levels of burnout, intent to turn over, surface acting, and WFC.

Table 3 contains the results of the hierarchical regression using differentiation and the other study variables to predict work-related burnout. Differentiation contributes a small, yet statistically significant, amount of unique variance (2%) when compared with the other predictors. Comparing differentiation ($\beta = -.207$) and ministerial satisfaction ($\beta = -.372$) as predictors indicates that ministerial satisfaction is the single best predictor of work-related burnout. The interaction term for ministry satisfaction and differentiation is also a significant predictor of work burnout ($\beta = .135, p = .042$).

Table 1 Means and standard deviations and correlation coefficient matrix

Variables	Age in years	DSRC	SA	DA	WFC	FWC	Minister	Turnover	Work	Personal
Age in years	-									
DSRC	.22*** (152)	-								
SA	-.16* (163)	-.56*** (152)	-							
DA	-.20* (162)	-.09 (151)	.19* (161)	-						
WFC	-.24*** (163)	-.44*** (152)	.29*** (163)	.15 (161)	-					
FWC	-.22*** (161)	-.38*** (149)	.34*** (160)	.16* (159)	.61*** (159)	-				
MJSS	.21* (145)	.24** (138)	-.40*** (145)	-.19* (143)	-.32*** (145)	-.37*** (142)	-			
Turnover	-.15 (151)	-.27** (140)	.32*** (150)	.15 (149)	.25** (150)	.24** (149)	-.39*** (134)	-		
Work	-.14 (138)	-.44** (128)	.40*** (138)	.22** (136)	.44*** (138)	.41*** (136)	-.55*** (124)	.50*** (128)	-	
Personal	-.09 (163)	-.51** (151)	.42*** (162)	.09 (161)	.39*** (162)	.36*** (161)	-.32*** (144)	.41*** (151)	.78*** (137)	-
Mean (Standard Deviation)	Median: 49.5 (11.96)	4.09 (0.73)	2.24 (89)	3.30 (.97)	17.07 (6.98)	13.68 (7.13)	64.59 (8.32)	1.98 (1.00)	38.13 (14.91)	46.09 (16.81)
Skew (Kurtosis)	.24 (-.48)	-.69 (.35)	.64 (.06)	-.84 (.16)	.06 (-.70)	.50 (-.42)	-.06 (-.12)	0.97 (-.17)	.52 (.14)	.38 (-.20)

The number of participants is given in the parentheses

DSRC Differentiation of Self and Role-Clergy Version Revised, SA Surface Acting Scale, DA Deep Acting Scale, WFC Work-Family Conflict Scale, FWC Family-Work scale, MJSS Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, Turnover intent to turn over scale (Turnover), Work Work Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, Personal Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory

* = $p \leq .05$; ** = $p \leq .01$; *** = $p \leq .001$

Table 2 Demographic characteristics (N = 164)

Variable	Total %
<i>Age (Years) (Median/SD)</i>	49.5 (11.96)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	97.6
Female	2.4
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
African American	6.7
Asian American	1.8
White	83.5
Hispanic/Latino	3.7
Mixed Race	3.0
Other	1.2
<i>Length of Full-Time Ministry</i>	
1–5 Years	6.7
6–10 Years	16.5
11–15 Years	16.5
16–20 Years	59.1
<i>Relationship Status</i>	
Married	92.7
Single	1.8
Widowed	3.0
Divorced	0.6

Our findings indicate that respondents experienced lower levels of work-related burnout when they experienced higher levels of ministerial job satisfaction, and they experienced a lowered effect of burnout when considering the interaction between ministry satisfaction and DoS. That is, the overlap between DoS and ministry satisfaction also has a significant role in predicting work burnout.

Differentiation of self is the best single predictor of personal burnout for the study respondents (see Table 4). Differentiation of self contributes 15% unique variance compared with WFC and emotional labor strategies and job satisfaction. Of note, ministerial satisfaction is not a predictor of personal burnout. Comparing DoS ($\beta = -.287$) and ministerial satisfaction ($\beta = -.117$) as predictors indicates that DoS accounts for more variability associated with personal burnout, all things being equal. This finding is highlighted in the nonsignificant effect of the interaction term using DoS and ministry satisfaction (see Table 4).

Of note, DoS is not a significant predictor of intent to turn over (see Table 5). However, work-related burnout is the best predictor of intent to turn over ($\beta = .250$, $p = .029$) contributing 7% of the unique variance associated with turnover. This finding is supported by the nonsignificant interaction terms demonstrated in model six, ($F(2, 152) = 2.388$, $p = .095$).

Table 3 Predicting work burnout

Models and Predictors	β	p	F_{ch}	Significance of F_{ch}
Model one			9.765	<.001
Age	-.050	.503		
SA	.332	<.001		
DA	.132	.081		
Model two			9.801	<.001
Age	.017	.812		
SA	.231	.002		
DA	.110	.127		
WFC	.224	.012		
FWC	.148	.100		
Model three			24.509	<.001
Age	.047	.487		
SA	.137	.061		
DA	.084	.211		
WFC	.192	.022		
FWC	.084	.317		
MJJS	-.360	<.001		
Model four			6.604	.011
Age	.066	.324		
SA	.040	.621		
DA	.095	.151		
WFC	.138	.102		
FWC	.073	.379		
MJJS	-.372	<.001		
DSRC	-.207	.011		
Model five			4.210	.042
Age	.072	.279		
SA	.032	.692		
DA	.063	.346		
WFC	.154	.066		
FWC	.064	.434		
MJJS	-.383	<.001		
DSRC	-.186	.022		
MJJSxDSRC	.135	.042		

SA Surface Acting Scale, DA Deep Acting Scale, WFC Work–Family Conflict Scale, FWC Family–Work scale, MJJS Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, DSRC Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version Revised

Pastors, ministry satisfaction, and emotional labor

Evidence from the current study suggests that DoS is associated with higher levels of ministerial satisfaction but not deep acting. In reviewing Table 1, higher levels of differentiation are associated with higher levels of ministerial job satisfaction. However, differentiation does not have a statistically significant relationship with deep acting.

Table 4 Predicting personal burnout

Models and Predictors	β	p	F_{ch}	Significance of F_{ch}
Model one			11.136	<.001
Age	-.021	.775		
SA	.410	<.001		
DA	.011	.885		
Model two			8.802	<.001
Age	.042	.559		
SA	.316	<.001		
DA	-.010	.887		
WFC	.233	.009		
FWC	.113	.204		
Model three			1.669	.198
Age	.051	.484		
SA	.290	<.001		
DA	-.017	.810		
WFC	.224	.012		
FWC	.096	.287		
MJJS	-.100	.198		
Model four			11.537	<.001
Age	.077	.274		
SA	.156	.066		
DA	-.002	.979		
WFC	.149	.091		
FWC	.080	.358		
MJJS	-.117	.122		
DSRC	-.287	<.001		
Model five			3.026	.084
Age	.082	.241		
SA	.149	.078		
DA	-.030	.670		
WFC	.164	.063		
FWC	.072	.405		
MJJS	-.126	.093		
DSRC	-.268	.002		
MJJSxDSRC	.121	.084		

SA Surface Acting Scale, DA Deep Acting Scale, WFC Work–Family Conflict Scale, FWC Family–Work scale, MJJS Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, DSRC Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version Revised

Differentiation of self accounts for 6% of the variance associated with ministerial job satisfaction.

Differentiation of self is not a significant predictor of ministerial job satisfaction, and it does not contribute any unique variance associated with it (see Table 6). However, work-related burnout ($\beta = -.505$) and personal burnout ($\beta = .199$) are the best two predictors of ministerial job satisfaction, with work-related burnout being the best single predictor. It is

Table 5 Predicting intent to turn over

Models and Predictors	β	p	F_{ch}	Significance of F_{ch}
Model one			6.148	< .001
Age	-.089	.246		
SA	.269	< .001		
DA	.073	.345		
Model two			2.035	.134
Age	-.056	.471		
SA	.221	.007		
DA	.062	.420		
WFC	.122	.203		
FWC	.059	.543		
Model three			7.689	.006
Age	-.037	.628		
SA	.161	.051		
DA	.046	.543		
WFC	.101	.281		
FWC	.019	.845		
MJJS	-.228	.006		
Model four			.543	.462
Age	-.031	.690		
SA	.129	.166		
DA	.050	.513		
WFC	.083	.390		
FWC	.015	.876		
MJJS	-.232	.006		
DSCR	-.069	.462		
Model five			7.895	< .001
Age	-.058	.440		
SA	.099	.275		
DA	.026	.722		
WFC	.029	.754		
FWC	-.014	.881		
MJJS	-.124	.155		
DSCR	.021	.823		
Work	.250	.029		
Personal	.131	.230		
Model six			2.388	.095
Age	-.055	.458		
SA	.075	.406		
DA	.056	.455		
WFC	.049	.606		
FWC	.019	.839		
MJJS	-.122	.158		
DSCR	-.001	.995		
Work	.221	.055		

Table 5 (continued)

Models and Predictors	β	p	F_{ch}	Significance of F_{ch}
Personal	.122	.258		
MJJSxperson	.236	.031		
MJJSxwork	-.180	.095		

SA Surface Acting Scale, *DA* Deep Acting Scale, *WFC* Work–Family Conflict Scale, *FWC* Family–Work scale, *MJSS* Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, *DSCR* Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version Revised, *Work Work* Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, *Personal* Personal Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory

interesting that the evidence suggests a positive association with personal burnout and job satisfaction in the regression. This is despite the inverse correlations between the two variables as documented in Table 1. Burnout accounts for 13% of the unique variance associated with ministerial job satisfaction. Interaction terms are nonsignificant.

Pastors, family life, and turnover

Work and family conflict is not a significant predictor of work-related burnout, personal burnout, or intent to turn over (see Tables 3, 4, and 5, respectively). Surface acting and WFC are significant predictors of personal and work burnout. However, including ministerial job satisfaction and DoS removes any unique contributions to burnout that WFC makes. In other words, ministerial job satisfaction and DoS moderate the relationship between WFC and intent to turn over. Work and family conflict is not a significant predictor of intent to turn over.

Minister job satisfaction and turnover

Evidence suggests that ministerial job satisfaction is associated with lower levels of intent to turn over ($r_{\text{Minister-Turnover}} = -.39, p < .001$) and work-related burnout ($r_{\text{Minister-Work-related Burnout}} = -.55, p < .001$). Minister job satisfaction accounts for 15% of the variance associated with turnover and 30% associated with work-related burnout. In reviewing the regression tables on predictors of work-related burnout and intent to turn over (see Tables 3 and 5, respectively) minister job satisfaction is a significant predictor of work-related burnout. Comparing DoS ($\beta = -.207$) and ministerial satisfaction ($\beta = -.372$) as predictors indicates that ministerial satisfaction is the single best predictor of work-related burnout. Ministerial job satisfaction is the best single predictor of intent to turn over. Differentiation of self is not a significant contributor to intent to turn over (Table 5, model 4). There is a significant interaction between personal and work burnout and job satisfaction, indicating these constructs synergistically relate to turnover.

To summarize, DoS and ministerial job satisfaction are significant predictors of burnout (work and personal) but not the intent to turn over. Differentiation of self and job satisfaction provide resources against the experiences of burnout and planning on leaving one's church. These resources seem to extend to the work and family spheres, and they moderate the effects of emotional labor.

Table 6 Predicting ministerial job satisfaction

Models and Predictors	β	p	F_{ch}	Significance of F_{ch}
Model one			10.752	<.001
Age	.130	.082		
SA	-.338	<.001		
DA	-.087	.243		
Model two			4.849	.009
Age	.084	.260		
SA	-.262	<.001		
DA	-.071	.332		
WFC	-.091	.316		
FWC	-.175	.056		
Model three			15.226	<.001
Age	.083	.225		
SA	-.213	.005		
DA	-.012	.857		
WFC	-.027	.752		
FWC	-.124	.144		
Work	-.516	<.001		
Personal	.223	.023		
Model four			1.722	.191
Age	.094	.173		
SA	-.256	.002		
DA	-.006	.929		
WFC	-.049	.570		
FWC	-.126	.137		
Work	-.516	<.001		
Personal	.198	.047		
DSCR	-.112	.191		
Model five			.224	.800
Age	.101	.150		
SA	-.259	.002		
DA	.001	.990		
WFC	-.052	.550		
FWC	-.127	.138		
Work	-.505	<.001		
Personal	.199	.048		
DSCR	-.126	.159		
WorkxDSCR	.048	.662		
PersonalxDSCR	.000	.998		

SA Surface Acting Scale, DA Deep Acting Scale, WFC Work–Family Conflict Scale, FWC Family–Work scale, MJSS Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale, Work Work Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, Personal Personal Burnout Scale from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, DSCR Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version Revised

Discussion

The findings from the present study support Francis and colleagues' (Francis et al., 2017, 2019) work in several ways. First, ministry satisfaction, or what Francis measures using the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS), provides some level of support against work-related burnout and intent to turn over. The findings of the regression may indicate that Francis's (Francis et al., 2017, 2019) understanding of pastoral burnout as based on the ratio of exhaustion to sense or meaningfulness of ministry is reflected in our sample of pastors. If pastoral burnout is experiencing both high levels of emotional exhaustion and low levels of ministry satisfaction, pastors in the present sample evidenced a similar phenomenon. Respondents indicated that their sense of satisfaction as ministers was inversely related to their view that burnout is caused by work. Additionally, pastors distinguished between burnout attributed to work (work-related burnout) and personal exhaustion (personal burnout), as indicated by ministry satisfaction's significant contribution to predicting work-related burnout.

The inclusion of DoS and the interaction of DoS and ministry satisfaction provide increased buffers for pastors dealing with the experience of burnout. Further, the personal experiences of burnout and work burnout are predicted by DoS and ministry satisfaction, respectively. This implies that pastors in our study distinguish between burnout at work and their personal experience of it. Recall that the CBI work-related burnout scale measures the attribution of the experience of burnout to work. For the pastors in the present study, the higher the ministry satisfaction, the lower the burnout related to work and the lower the desire to leave the church or ministry altogether.

Based on our findings, we would argue that DoS provides critical *psychological abilities* to cope with burnout and ministry stress. Differentiation of self facilitates emotion regulation and goal-oriented behavior (Bowen, 2004; Jankowski & Sandage, 2012; Murdock & Gore, 2004; Titelman, 2014). Murdock and Gore (2004), for example, identified that individuals with lower levels of DoS experience more stress and have fewer resources for coping with stress. Differentiation of self as a resource provides a buffering effect for pastors experiencing burnout. This ability is tied in with the pastor's identity as a Christian and as a pastor, which buffers the effects of burnout.

In viewing the pastorate as a calling, the findings may indicate that role differentiation is important for coping with the personal experience of burnout. Individuals are called to be pastors, to shepherd the flock, and this calling is based on their identity as Christians (Stevens, 1999; Wilson, 2021). This sense of identity and calling provides a level of transcendent meaningfulness that provides an additional buffer against burnout and WFC and mitigates the desire to leave the ministry. The connection with ministry satisfaction is highlighted in the correlations and regressions for the sample of pastors. Those with higher levels of satisfaction can withstand the stress and burnout associated with WFC and the ministry. Further, those with higher levels of DoS, in our study as measured by the ability to distinguish between one's identity as a pastor and one's self, experience lower levels of personal exhaustion associated with burnout.

Second, DoS is the best predictor of the personal experience of burnout or exhaustion. Differentiation of self provides important psychological and family-level resources for coping with the experience of burnout. The positive benefits of DoS are associated with lowered use of surface acting, and DoS levels are positively associated with ministerial job satisfaction. In terms of surface acting, DoS is a useful emotion regulation strategy while it is also associated with the pastor's sense of calling and ministerial effectiveness.

Additionally, DoS moderates the impact of WFC on the experience of emotional exhaustion, making it an important resource that can aid pastors in their unique social context.

Differentiation of self is crucial for understanding and living out one's sense of call. In the first sense, DoS reflects the establishment and grounding of identity in one's relationship to God via Christ. In family terms, believers are called to become members of God's family via Christ. This adoption provides the sense of significance, i.e., being loved by God, and the salience or importance of this core identity for embodied life (see Dunbar et al., 2020; Frederick & Dunbar, 2019). In the pastorate, identity as a follower of Christ is expressed to the congregation via being the pastor. This identity provides the resources to manage stressors and pressure from the congregation and the pastor's family while maintaining one's primary identity commitments—as a member of God's family via Christ's saving work on the cross.

Frederick and Dunbar (2019) have conceptualized DoS as providing role-related and intrapersonal skills in embodying one's calling. In terms of role-related skills, DoS provides (1) the core beliefs and values needed to approach both work and family spheres intentionally and (2) the needed psychological resources to regulate one's emotions in order to respond to situations in an identity-congruent manner. In terms of pastors experiencing burnout, DoS allows pastors to understand and experience satisfaction based on their identity as a child of God called to be a pastor (role satisfaction). Further, DoS allows pastors to determine which sphere takes precedence at a given time. That is, DoS provides identity-based resources for discerning the importance of the demands made from work or family spheres and responding in an appropriate manner.

Third, work and personal burnout seem to be very different concepts with different causes and effects. That is, personal burnout, but not work burnout, is impacted by DoS. Work burnout, but not personal burnout, is impacted by ministry job satisfaction. This indicates that respondents clearly differentiated the causal interpretations of burnout, i.e., due to work, compared with their personal experiences of burnout. Differentiation of self provides emotion regulation strategies for coping with the personal experience of burnout while job satisfaction helps pastors remain in high-burnout ministries.

A very interesting finding, albeit based on a nonsignificant finding from this study, is related to the nature of emotional labor. Surface and deep acting have been implicated in other career categories for their role in burnout. Pastors in our study engaged minimally in deep acting, and surface acting was only related to work-related burnout. However, even with work-related burnout, the relationship between surface acting and work burnout is partially due to controlling for ministerial job satisfaction. Including pastoral job satisfaction removes the significance of surface acting on work-related burnout.

Limitations and further study

The first limitation for the study focuses on sampling. First, the sample size was relatively small, making generalization more difficult. In other words, the small sample size limits the generalizability towards the intended population of pastors experiencing burnout. Second, the sample is limited in terms of its demographic characteristics as the present sample of pastors was White, older, and married. Future research would benefit from a larger sample size and the inclusion of pastors from various demographic groups and with various levels of pastoral experience.

Second, future research should focus more on the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the congregation and the pastor's family. Work and family conflict has been used

in other burnout research, and it is implicated as an important causal factor in the present study. For pastors, boundary ambiguity may be a more nuanced way to operationalize the unique career and social context of ministry. That is, the relationship between the congregation and pastor and family is not solely comprised of conflict. The nature of this relationship is ambiguous at best, and it may be important to capture that ambiguity instead of focusing only on the conflict aspects of this relationship.

The third limitation for the present study is the lack of incorporating a measure of calling to the ministry. Whether using the Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale (MJSS) developed by Glass (1976) or the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS) developed by Francis and colleagues (Francis et al., 2017, 2019), the emphasis is on ministry effectiveness and not on the concept of calling. In other words, the measure employed in this study focused on the respondent's interpretation and derived sense of satisfaction with ministry and not their sense of calling. This important difference ties into the pastor's sense of ministry as identity. Christian ministry or pastoring has been conceptualized as a calling, and this sense of calling profoundly shapes the understanding of ministry (Wilson, 2021). It may be the sense of calling that allows pastors to derive a sense of satisfaction from ministry despite their experience of burnout in ministry. Further, ministry as calling may connect DoS more clearly with emotion regulation and ministry (see Frederick et al., 2018). Therefore, we recommend including a measure of calling in future research on pastoral burnout.

Conclusion

Burnout may become a ruinous experience for the pastor, the pastor's family, and the congregation. Burnout may negatively impact the pastor's emotional and physical health and ministry effectiveness and cause damage in the home and congregation. Understanding the role of DoS for pastors provides important psychological and family resources for coping with the experience of burnout. Additionally, focus should be given to the minister's satisfaction in ministry as it provides a buffer against burnout due to work and the intent to leave the church or ministry altogether. The present study demonstrates the importance of DoS and ministerial job satisfaction when investigating burnout in the pastorate.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest for this research.

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