



Ministerial Training on Consumer Culture and Volunteer Management May Prevent Burnout for Small-Church Clergy

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate Nazarene small-church pastors' perceptions of ministerial education. The issues the study addressed included managing volunteers and the consumer culture. This study involved 12 Nazarene clergy who had (1) completed the same ministerial leadership training as part of their ordination requirements, (2) pastored in the small-church setting for five or more consecutive years, and (3) experienced burnout in their assignments. The researcher themed the data, and the following themes emerged: (1) Consumer culture training is insufficient, vital, preventive; (2) People management training is inadequate, paramount, relational; (3) Pastoral burnout is contextually consumer-driven, volunteer-void. The literature indicated that small-church pastors are at a disadvantage in a consumer culture because their churches cannot compete with larger churches. The literature also indicated the necessity for leaders in nonprofit organizations and churches to understand how to manage volunteers.

Keywords Clergy burnout · Small-church clergy · Consumer culture · Volunteer management · Qualitative analysis

Burnout is recognized as a common problem among pastors across denominational lines and in multiple church sizes (Abernathy et al. 2016; Barnard and Curry 2012; Doehring 2013; Randall 2013a; Scott and Lovell 2015; Spencer et al. 2012). One study indicated that small-church pastors may be more likely to face burnout than large-church pastors (Francis et al. 2009). Since 70% percent of U.S. Protestant churches average 100 or fewer people in attendance and nearly half (44%) of U.S. churches average 50 or fewer in attendance ("Size of Congregation" 2012), a large percentage of U.S. clergy pastor small churches. The gap in the literature regarding any topic related to small churches and their pastors points to the need for empirical research that investigates issues relating to small-church pastors, including the

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causes of burnout specific to the small-church setting and whether education in these key areas may obviate burnout (Kirkpatrick and Cooper 2010; Masenya and Booyse 2016; Noullet et al. 2018).

The scholarly literature indicates that pastors may enter the small-church world with educational deficits in leading the small church in two key areas: managing volunteers and growing a small church in a consumer culture (James 2013; Lifeway Research 2015a; Waikayi et al. 2012). The small American church exists in the context of a consumer culture that embraces the bigger-means-better mentality (Bell 2012; Cavanaugh 2008; White and Yeats 2009). Therefore, megachurches and the pastors who lead them are often viewed as the most successful while smaller churches and their pastors are viewed as less successful and, therefore, less important (Dudley 2003; Pappas 2002). Since the current U.S. culture is consumer driven (Jansen 2013; Mostegel 2016; Murphree 2015), the small-church pastor is faced with reaching the members of a culture who shop for a church as if they were shopping for the best buy at the local department store (Casidy 2013; Dobocan 2014; Zech et al. 2013). Because of the consumer culture, small-church pastors are placed in a position where they cannot compete in the church market with larger churches that offer consumers more services and commodities (Lott 2014; Wright 2017). The pressures of trying to compete in such a church market may lead to burnout when a pastor overextends in an effort to offer more church-related goods and services to consumer-oriented Christians, and burnout may lead to attrition (Lifeway Research 2015b; Randall 2013b).

Since 70% of U.S. Protestant churches average 100 or fewer people in attendance (“Size of Congregation” 2012), most small-church pastors manage volunteers rather than paid employees (Schaper 2018; Stankiewicz et al. 2016; Waikayi et al. 2012). A knowledge and skills deficit in managing volunteers may place pastors in the stressful position of possessing faulty expectations that volunteers will act like paid employees, to the detriment of the church and relationships therein (Allen and Bartle 2014; Fitzpatrick et al. 2015; Hager and Brudney 2015). The literature indicates that there has been a declining cultural interest in volunteering (Eccles 2014; Granger et al. 2014; Vermeer et al. 2016) and points to the necessity of effectively managing volunteers as well as understanding what motivates them (Borchardt and Bianco 2016; Curtis et al. 2014; Krause et al. 2014; Mollidor et al. 2015; Mora 2013). If the volunteer base is low in number, pastors may overextend themselves to fill the void; overextension leads to physical exhaustion, which can be a contributor to burnout (Muse et al. 2016).

The Church of the Nazarene reflects these American small-church attendance dynamics (Church of the Nazarene 2016). For Sunday morning worship, nearly half of Nazarene churches (49%) average 50 or fewer people in attendance, and 75% of Nazarene churches average 99 or fewer people (Church of the Nazarene 2016). This means that only 25% of Nazarene senior pastors lead churches with an attendance greater than 99 people, while most active Nazarene pastors are part of the small-church throng. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the effects of ministerial education in the areas of the consumer culture and managing volunteers as it impacts Nazarene clergy pastoring small churches that average 50 or fewer in attendance (Kirkpatrick and Cooper 2010; Masenya and Booyse 2016). The ministerial educational curricula this study addressed were the faculty guides for the three leadership modules in the Nazarene Modular Course of Study (NMCOS), a 25-module curriculum that is used as a pathway for preparing Nazarene clergy for ordination.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the results of this study:

1. What are the perceptions of small-church Nazarene pastors regarding the Church of the Nazarene Modular Course of Study (NMCOS) in terms of managing volunteers and understanding how to foster growth in a small church in a consumer culture?
2. What are the perceptions of small-church Nazarene pastors regarding the issues of leading the small church in a consumer culture and pastoral burnout?
3. What are the perceptions of small-church Nazarene pastors regarding managing volunteers and pastoral burnout?

Method

Participants

The study included pastors who self-identified as (1) having completed the three NMCOS leadership modules as part of their ordination requirements in one of the eight U.S. Nazarene educational regions, (2) consecutively pastoring in the small U.S. Nazarene church setting for five or more years, and (3) experiencing burnout while pastoring a small church. The first set of participants in the research was a self-selected sampling of small-church Nazarene pastors who responded to an e-mail invitation. Sixty-four Nazarene pastors completed the survey; 55 Nazarene pastors self-identified as meeting the study's criteria of having completed the three Nazarene leadership modules, pastoring in the small church setting for five or more consecutive years, and having experienced burnout (Maslach and Jackson 1981). Out of that pool of 55 Nazarene pastors, 29 pastors showed indicators of burnout on a continuum of the Maslach Burnout Inventory: Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach and Jackson 1981; see below). The researcher extended an interview invitation to all 29 of these pastors. Of the 29 pastors invited, numerous pastors responded. However, after verbal inquiry regarding the study criteria, only 12 pastors affirmed that they had completed all three of the leadership modules in the NMCOS. Even though all 29 candidates had checked "Yes" in the preliminary survey to affirm that they had completed the three leadership modules that were clearly listed as part of the preliminary survey's prompt, some of them verbally indicated that they had not completed the three designated modules. To preserve confidentiality, the 12 participants were each assigned pseudonyms.

The participants showed no collective trend in demographic factors, education, or career experience. The pastors were educated in six of the eight U.S. Nazarene educational regions and experienced burnout in nine different states with a near-equal distribution of urban and rural (small town and country) settings. The geographic diversity indicated that the results cannot be linked to one U.S. region, Nazarene district, or church setting. There was also no shared trend in educational and career experiences, which were as varied as the participants' locations at the time of burnout. The data indicated that the pastors received their U.S. NMCOS education from seven different Nazarene church districts and five different Nazarene colleges. Their educational level ranged from some college to the doctoral level. Since there was no majority in one level of education, no trend emerged to point to level of education as an influencer on experience or opinion. Likewise, the participants' career experiences in other

areas besides pastoral ministry were just as varied as their educational experiences and represented careers from differing disciplines such as construction worker, accountant, and chiropractor.

Table 1 represents the data collected. To preserve confidentiality in a tightly knit denomination, the participants' age, number of years in ministry, and current state of residence are not included. All participants were male and were full-time, senior pastors.

Transferability

“The issue of the transferability of qualitative research needs to be taken seriously; to neglect the issue effectively suppresses the use of insights attained through qualitative research” (Pearson et al. 2011, p. 85). The participants' experiences in this qualitative study may be transferable to other denominations. The researcher procured individualized experiences, but the expectation that individualized experiences are independent of other experiences is disputed in qualitative literature (Stanley 1993). Experiences are social in nature and, therefore, are not obtained in isolation (Mykhalovskiy 1996). The pastors did not accrue their experiences without the influence of the experiences of others in similar settings, and those similar settings exist in the context of documented issues that clergy face.

The documented issues upon which this study focused are the consumer culture, managing volunteers, and clergy burnout. The dynamics that embody these three issues are present in the context of the ministerial setting, regardless of the denomination. First, the literature indicated that the consumer culture may negatively impact the small church (Mostegel 2016; Wright 2017; Zech et al. 2013). Second, the literature indicated that there is a trend of a decreasing number of church volunteers (Eccles 2014) and that there is a need for pastors to understand how to motivate and manage volunteers (Borchardt and Bianco 2016; Curtis et al. 2014). Third, the literature indicated that clergy burnout “pose[s] an increasingly serious problem for the leaders of denominations throughout the world” (Randall 2013a). The issues of the consumer culture, managing volunteers, and burnout are manifested as part of the small-church clergy experience independent of denominational affiliation. Therefore, the participants' thoughts on these issues may represent those in other settings and in other denominations.

The final judgment of whether elements of a qualitative study are transferable rests with the reader (Korstjens and Moser 2018). “The reader. . . makes the transferability judgment because. . . [the researcher does] not know their specific settings” (Korstjens and Moser 2018, p. 122). Therefore, the potential for the transferability of qualitative research, although debated (Pearson et al. 2011), should be considered, especially when documented issues exist that encompass a greater representation of the general population. Given these premises, this researcher believes these participants' experiences, undergirded by the diversity of demographic data, may be transferable (Stanley 1993).

Materials

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach and Jackson 1981) was utilized to verify that participants who self-identified as having experienced burnout had experienced it. The MBI-HSS is acknowledged as the leading and most used inventory for burnout for those in human service (Maslach et al. 2016). The inventory met criteria for

Table 1 Participants' Demographic Information

| Pastor | Still in Ministry/ Reason for Leaving | Other Career Experience Before/During Pastorate | Education Level | Field of Study | USA Nazarene Education Zone/ NMCOS Locale | Church Locale When Burnout Occurred |
|---------------|--|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Rev. Baker | No/Board Conflict/District Abandonment | None | Bachelor's Degree | Ministry | Northwest/Nazarene Bible College | rural/small town Georgia |
| Rev. Buchanan | Yes | Certified Public Accountant | Bachelor's Degree | Accounting | East Central/Mt. Vernon Nazarene University | rural/country Georgia |
| Rev. Collins | Yes | Management | Bachelor's Degree | Foreign Languages | Eastern/Pittsburgh District | rural/small town Ohio |
| Rev. Cox | Yes | Construction | Some College | Pastoral Ministry | Central/Illinois District | rural/small town Illinois |
| Rev. Griffin | No/Burnout/Doctrinal Differences | None | Bachelor's and Master's Degrees | Business Admin./ Religious Studies/Pastoral Ministries | Central/Olivette Nazarene University and Southwest Indiana District | rural/small town Indiana |
| Rev. Hayes | Yes | Telecommunications/Banking and Finance | Some College | Business | Northwest/Nazarene Bible College | urban New Mexico |
| Rev. Jackson | Yes | Chiropractor/Hospital Industry/Musical Instrument Repair | Doctorate | Medicine | South Central/South Texas District | urban Texas |
| Rev. Lewis | Yes | No response | Some College | No Response | Eastern/Philadelphia District | urban Pennsylvania |
| Rev. Long | Yes | Cattle Farmer/Factory Worker | Bachelor's Degree | Religion | Southeast/Trevecca Nazarene University and Midsouth/Tennessee District | urban Tennessee |
| Rev. Robinson | Yes | Transportation Management | Master's Degree | Pastoral Ministry/Transportation Management | Northwest/Northwest Nazarene University | urban Utah |
| Rev. Ward | Yes | Real Estate/Farmer | Trade School or Certification | Real Estate | Central/Southwest Indiana District | rural/small town No response |
| Rev. Wingate | Yes | High School Teacher | Master's Degree | Education | Southeast/Eastern Kentucky District | rural/small town Kentucky |

internal reliability and yielded an estimated Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Cronbach 1976) for the MBI-HSS scales at .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .79 for Depersonalization, and .71 for Personal Accomplishment. The standard error of measurement for each scale is estimated as follows: 3.80 for Emotional Exhaustion, 3.16 for Depersonalization, and 3.73 for Personal Accomplishment (Maslach et al. 2016).

The survey contained questions such as "I feel emotionally drained from my work" that related to the following key elements of burnout: "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment" (Maslach et al. 2016). The participants then chose their response to each question using a scale of 0–6, as follows: 0 for "never," 1 for "a few times a year or less," 2 for "once a month or less," 3 for "a few times a month," 4 for "once a week," 5 for "a few times a week," and 6 for "every day" (Maslach et al. 2016). Burnout is linked to higher scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and lower scores on personal accomplishment. Even though scores are determined on a continuum and there is no prescriptive point where burnout is declared (Maslach et al. 2016), the score potentials are as follows: emotional exhaustion 0–54, depersonalization 0–30, and personal accomplishment 0–48. The average score for participants in this study were 30.58 (emotional exhaustion), 8.92 (depersonalization), and 27.16 (personal accomplishment).

The 12 chosen participants whose MBI-HSS (Maslach and Jackson 1981) results showed signs of burnout were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview containing nine main questions and five subquestions (see Table 2). The questions evaluated pastors' perceptions regarding their NMCOS preparation in the areas of the consumer culture and managing volunteers. The interview questions also focused upon pastoral views regarding the importance of pastoral training in the areas of growing a small church in a consumer culture and managing volunteers and whether these dynamics contributed to their burnout. The questions were posed to each participant in the same order and represent the total of the planned questions that made up the interview protocol. Any additional questions were posed for the sole purpose of clarifying communication and solidifying meaning. As indicated to participants in the interview introduction, when questions referenced the Nazarene Modular Course of Study, they referred only to the three leadership modules (see Table 2).

The researcher also implemented a content analysis of three faculty guides of the 25 required educational modules in the NMCOS. The three modules reviewed all focused upon leadership and had the following titles: *Leading the People of God: Servant Leadership for a Servant Community* (Church of the Nazarene 2003a), *Shepherding God's People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b), and *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004).

Procedure

The Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review Board fully reviewed and approved this study that sought participation of small-church Nazarene pastors who had experienced burnout. The study utilized purposive sampling (Marshall and Rossman 2016) that included an invitation sent through e-mail. The e-mail addresses for Nazarene pastors were solicited from Nazarene Headquarters, Kansas City, Missouri, and included a list of 2537 pastors whom Nazarene Headquarters identified as meeting the criteria for pastoring in the small-church context for five or more consecutive years. The responding pastors completed a Qualtrics demographic survey that asked them to confirm that they had completed the three leadership modules in the NMCOS and requested the following information: name, gender, church setting (rural/urban, city/state) when burnout was experienced, contact information,

Table 2 Small-Church Pastor Interview Questionnaire

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1. Tell me about your burnout experience.
 2. How did your burnout experience affect your attitude toward your ministry?
 - 3.1. How did the Nazarene Modular Course of Study instruct you regarding the impact of the consumer culture on the small church?
 - 3.2. How important do you think training regarding the consumer culture is for your success as a pastor of a small church?
 - 4.1 How did the Nazarene Modular Course of Study instruct you in fostering numerical growth in a small church in a consumer culture?
 - 4.2. How important do you think knowledge of fostering numerical growth in a small church in a consumer culture is for your success as a small-church pastor?
 5. In what ways have issues regarding managing a small church in a consumer culture contributed to or not contributed to symptoms of burnout while pastoring the small church?
 - 6.1. How did the Nazarene Modular Course of Study prepare you to manage volunteers?
 - 6.2. How important do you think information about managing volunteers is for your success as a pastor of a small church?
 - 7.1. How did the Nazarene Modular Course of Study prepare you to manage paid employees?
 - 7.2. How important do you think training regarding managing paid employees is for your success as a small-church pastor?
 - 8.1. How did the Nazarene Modular Course of Study equip you regarding the differences in managing volunteers and managing paid employees?
 - 8.2. How important do you think knowledge of the differences in managing paid employees and managing volunteers is for your success as a small-church pastor?
 9. In what ways have issues regarding managing volunteers contributed to or not contributed to symptoms of burnout while pastoring the small church?
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confirmation of meeting study criteria, level and area of education, Nazarene district or college where the modular education was completed, other career experience, and whether they were still in pastoral ministry.

The researcher asked participants to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach and Jackson 1981), also in Qualtrics, to validate that their self-identified burnout was a correct assessment (Randall 2013a). The MBI-HSS scores were manually tallied to determine which participants showed evidence of burnout on the continuum, and the MBI-HSS scores determined the final judgment on whether the pastors experienced burnout. Pastors who showed evidence of burnout on the continuum were solicited as participants for the study. Each confirmed participant who met all the study's criteria completed an informed consent that detailed risks and benefits and then participated in a semi-structured interview. Interviews typically spanned 45 min to one hour.

Qualitative analysis

The inductive nature of qualitative research and its open-ended strategy give power and credence to such studies (Maxwell 2013). Triangulation, “using different data sources, investigators, and methods of data collection” (Korstjens and Moser 2018), builds trustworthiness in a study (Carter et al. 2014; Marshall and Rossman 2016). This study utilized different data sources and methods of data collection. Data triangulation may involve collecting data from different sources at different times (Korstjens and Moser 2018). All 12 participants engaged in interviews at 12 different U.S. locations at 12 different times; collectively, they held no common location experience at the time of the interviews. Triangulation was also utilized in applying more than one data collection method of research: content analysis and semi-structured interviews (Marshall and Rossman 2016).

The content analysis provided an examination of the topical instruction found in the curricula. The researcher examined the faculty guides of the three leadership curricula to determine if they contained information that instructed pastors on managing volunteers and leading the small church in the consumer culture. Using electronic highlighting and notations, the researcher marked the sections of the curricula that in any way referred to volunteers and/or the consumer culture. The researcher then tabulated the number of references to volunteers and/or the consumer culture, including any word derivatives. The content analysis revealed the frequency of words relating to volunteers and the consumer culture (see Table 3). The content analysis also provided an analysis of the educational context from which the participants provided answers to some of the interview questions.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the twelve participants; the interviews were recorded and transcribed using the online GoToMeeting app (Marshall and Rossman 2016). The researcher read and reread the data and reviewed the recordings to correct transcription errors. Themeing the data, which is particularly applicable to interviews, involves “analyzing portions of the data with an extended thematic statement rather than a shorter code” (Saldaña 2016, pp. 198–199) to identify obvious as well as covert themes (Boyatzis 1998). The QSR NVivo 12 software program was utilized as the organizational tool through which the researcher manually themed the data in the first cycle of themeing (Saldaña 2016). Using the NVivo drag-and-drop feature, the researcher moved portions of each interview to thematically aligned categories. The researcher assigned initial category names as themes emerged from the data. The researcher then copied the entire themed file to an MS Word document. In the second cycle of themeing, the researcher read and reread the data, analyzing it for thematic coherence. As the analysis process unfolded, the researcher edited the thematic category names. Data were organized to ensure logical thematic coherence and alignment. The researcher then wrote a thorough discussion of the data in the context of the themes. The minimum criteria for themes across all protocols was textual support from seven participants. In Table 4, the number of participants’ support for the themes is represented by (n =).

Trustworthiness

One element that strengthened the trustworthiness of this study’s results was the divergent demographic data and member checking. Regardless of the demographic variances, the participants held similar or identical opinions regarding the key areas of this study and their connection to burnout. Therefore, the study results may not be linked to any other dynamic, such as location, job experience, or education location, which points to the results being a trustworthy assessment of the connections to burnout.

Along with giving participants a debriefing statement, all due diligence was extended in verifying the final outcomes of the study via member checking. Member checking is the method through which a researcher affirms with participants that the summary of the final research findings reflects the experience of the participants (Birt et al. 2016). The credibility of

Table 3 Content Analysis Codes

| Module | Volunteer(s)(ing) | Consumer | Consumerism | Consumer Culture |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Administering the Local Church</i> | 6 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Shepherding God’s People</i> | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Leading the People of God</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

research hinges on whether research results reflect the actual outcomes; member checking provides a reputable avenue through which participants can validate research results (Birt et al. 2016). A member checking e-mail was sent to all interview participants, and participants were given the opportunity to affirm or refute the overarching themes found in the full study’s data. Participants provided no additional feedback, and those who responded supported the findings.

Results

Content analysis

This qualitative study was the first empirical study to administer content analysis of the faculty guides of the three leadership modules in the Nazarene Modular Course of Study (2017): *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004), *Shepherding God’s People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b), and *Leading the People of God: Servant Leadership for a Servant Community* (Church of the Nazarene 2003a) (see Table 3). The faculty guides represent topical content also found in the student guides, but instructors are given more in-depth information for teaching material. Each faculty guide also suggests supplemental textbooks, but the decision to use textbooks is left to the discretion of the instructor. Since there was no way to know what textbooks the various instructors may have used, the content analysis focused only on the faculty guides.

Administering the Local Church The first module this study focused upon was *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004). A close examination of the instructional material in this module indicates that the word “volunteer(s)(ing)” is mentioned six times. The first mention of “volunteer” is found in the “Intended Outcomes for the Module” (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. xv). The outcomes section states, “The specific outcomes that relate to this module are: .. Ability to develop team-building skills, identify and cultivate spiritual gifts, recruit volunteers, diagnose and intervene in problems” (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. xv).

Lesson 6, “Building a Lay Ministry Team,” focuses upon recruiting volunteers for church ministry (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p-. 6–1–6–10). The lesson starts with:

Three issues have a stranglehold on contemporary churches:

- Pastors are too busy.
- Lay people say they do not have permission to do ministry.
- The church has too many mere spectators. (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 6–3).

Lesson 6 then goes into the necessity of ministry teams and points to Jesus as a model for team building. From there, the chapter relates challenges to team building, including one issue that emerged from the data in this survey—“the pastor does everything” because no one else will

Table 4 Participants’ Support for Themes

| Consumer culture training is. . . | People management training is. . . | Pastoral burnout is contextually. . . |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| insufficient (n = 11) | inadequate (n = 10) | consumer driven (n = 11) |
| vital (n = 11) | paramount (n = 11) | Volunteer-void (n = 11) |
| preventive (n = 10) | relational (n = 8) | |

(Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 6–6). Furthermore, “laity” is defined as “a nonprofessional volunteer” (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 6–6). The next section in Lesson 6, “Ten Principles for Effective Team Building,” states, “Do your part to discourage spectatorism in your church. Try to get everyone onto the playing field” (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 6–8). Lesson 1 (p. 1–3) and Lesson 4 (p. 4–3) also mention recruiting volunteers as part of a pastor’s administrative responsibilities (Church of the Nazarene 2004). The remaining uses of the word “volunteer” are not used in the context of teaching about volunteers.

Along with touching on issues relating to volunteers, *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004) also mentions “consumer” seven times and “consumerism” twice, and it does not mention “consumer culture.” For instance, Lesson 18, “Approaches to Whole-Life Stewardship,” states:

A third approach would be to live the lifestyle of consumer Christianity. These folks pick and choose their local church by the services it provides them. They are “takers” who aren’t interested in giving back either money or time. They are consumers of the products the local church offers. This is not a good picture, but it describes many modern-day Christians. (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 18–5)

In Lesson 20, “Personal Finance and Lifestyle Issues,” pastors are instructed on how consumerism might affect their personal finances. In a subsection titled “Consumer Debt,” the module advises pastors to pay off consumer debt and further states:

To obtain financial freedom through simplicity, we must beware of the consumptive lifestyle. Consumerism thrives on pride, envy, and greed. Many books are written on the subject. Christian simplicity begins with a commitment to avoid excessive consumerism and embrace Christian simplicity. (Church of the Nazarene 2004, p. 20–6)

Shepherding God’s People The second module this study focused upon is *Shepherding God’s People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b). The instructional segments of this module feature the word “volunteer(s)(ing)” 37 times. However, there is no mention of “consumer,” “consumerism,” or “consumer culture.” As with *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004), the first mention of “volunteer” in *Shepherding God’s People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b) is found in the “Intended Outcomes for the Module” (p. xii). The outcomes section states, “The specific outcomes that relate to this module are: . . . Ability to develop team-building skills, identify and cultivate spiritual gifts, recruit volunteers, diagnose and intervene in problems” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. xii).

The remaining 36 instances of the word “volunteer(s)(ing)” in *Shepherding God’s People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b) include instructional usages (29) as well as illustrative usages (7). The seven illustrative usages include the following: discussion prompts, table of contents, a lesson title, an illustration, and a case study. The remaining 29 usages of “volunteer(s)(ing)” occur in Lesson 6, “Equipping and Empowering the Laity” (p. 6–1–6–13).

Lesson 6 provides an overview of foundational concepts for recruiting and managing volunteers. The lesson opens with two key scriptures from Acts 6:3–4; 7 that are used to underscore the importance of volunteers. The module highlights another scripture from Ephesians 4:11–12 to stress the various gifts the Lord extends to believers. Lesson 6 also features the following “Learner Objectives”:

At the end of this lesson, participants should.

- understand the biblical role of the laity in ministry.
- discover ways to draw the laity into the vital task of ministry.
- list ways the laity can be motivated to become involved in ministry.
- identify New Testament list of spiritual gifts and understand their importance.
- appreciate the importance of retaining those who do ministry within the church. (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–2–6–3).

Furthermore, Lesson 6 uses a football illustration with spectators watching to demonstrate the trend many church members fall into. In other words, the module acknowledges the consumer mindset that involves people attending church to watch from the sidelines rather than become a full ministry participant through becoming a volunteer. Lesson 6 further states, “And yet many churches believe it is the pastors’ job to do all the ministry. ‘After all,’ they say, ‘that’s what we pay them for’” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–4). Further, the lesson stresses that the goal is to move the spectators off the bleachers and onto the ministry playing field. “To do this the pastor must take on the role of player/coach, equipping and empowering the laity to do the work of ministry” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–5). Lesson 6 further deals with the “Reasons Pastors Resist Lay Ministry” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–5). “Pastoral resistance may be the single greatest hindrance to lay ministry in a local church. A change in attitude must begin with an understanding the New Testament teaches lay ministry is the norm for the church” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–5).

Under the section titled “Employing Volunteers for Ministry,” the module focuses on “Beginning the Process,” which includes: “Compile a Ministry Inventory,” “Develop a Ministry Dream List,” and “Matching Ministers to Ministries” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p. 6–7). An illustration from a large church precedes this section. Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, features a yearly volunteer emphasis where people can volunteer for one of 200 ministries. Church attendees are told, “‘As a follower of Jesus, you are expected to volunteer to serve someplace in the life of the church.’ Then they are given the opportunity to freely decide where they will serve” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, p.p. 6–6). This section concludes with an illustration from a church large enough to hold a job fair where each church department decorates a table with educational material to attract and educate volunteers for their ministry.

Lesson 6 moves toward closure with two additional sections that focus on volunteers. First, “Motivating People for Lay Ministry” includes “Respect Them,” “Train Them,” “Resource Them,” “Communicate with Them,” “Develop a Team Spirit,” “Build Them Up,” “Reward Them,” and “Release Them to Minister” (Church of the Nazarene 2003b, pp. 6–7–6–8). The lesson closes with “Retaining the Workforce,” which focuses on sufficient volunteer training as well as utilizing a “Coordinator of Volunteers.”

Leading the People of God The third module this study focused upon is *Leading the People of God: Servant Leadership for a Servant Community* (Church of the Nazarene 2003a). As the title indicates, *Leading the People of God* (Church of the Nazarene 2003a) focuses upon instruction for servant leadership. A close reading of this module indicated that it does not provide instruction on the topics of volunteers or the consumer culture. However, Lesson 15, “Core Values and Attitudes of the Servant Leader,” does include a section on the pastor’s role in supervising paid employees (Church of the Nazarene 2003a, pp. 15–1–15–13). “Since the

pastor of a church is responsible for supervising employees, you will need to establish goals and perform annual reviews of each employee. What questions will you use to conduct the reviews so the proof of servant leadership will be reflected in the qualitative growth of the led?" (Church of the Nazarene 2003a, p. 15–12).

Interview analysis

The researcher themed the interview data (Saldaña 2016) and classified the three major themes with their subthemes, as follows: (1) Consumer culture training is insufficient, vital, preventive; (2) People management training is inadequate, paramount, relational; (3) Pastoral burnout is contextually consumer-driven, volunteer-void. The following participant quotations represent the voices of small-church pastors who are dealing with the consumer culture and volunteer issues as they impact their churches and ministries.

Consumer culture training is insufficient, vital, preventive Instruction regarding the consumer culture is vital to small-church pastors, and the NMCOS does not provide sufficient instruction on the consumer culture. More in-depth instruction on the small church in the consumer culture is needed to prevent key pitfalls and to empower small-church pastors in leading their churches in the cultural context.

Consumer culture training is insufficient

Rev. Ward: "I think [the need for consumer culture training is] very high, and I think . . . we're training very low."

Rev. Robinson: "I don't really remember . . . the modular program really being that significant in helping me understand the consumer culture in the church. I think it did a little bit, but not to the level of understanding that I believe it should. . . . From the struggles that many churches are having with dealing with consumerism, dealing with globalism, dealing with millennial generations, and the generation X-ers . . . we still have many churches and leaders who were being caught off guard."

Consumer culture training is vital

Rev. Baker: "What I came to discover was even if [church members are] taking care of things, in the back of their minds, at the very least, they still have the consumer mindset, and they want this, this, this . . . they want things a certain way. They want it done just the way they want it done. And if they ever don't get what they want, they'll threaten to leave. But . . . it's so important for a pastor going into a small church to realize that , , , it is a consumer culture; people shop around for churches like they shop around for goods. You know, you're always going to have to contend with that."

Rev. Cox: "How do I reach the folks in this small town when just a few miles away . . . are . . . bigger churches? One of 'em six miles away, one's 12 miles away. . . . I'm talking about they run 450 people. . . . I'm not knocking the [larger] church and what they're doing; that's not the case. But they have the pastors. They have the praise bands. They have the modern facilities. And so every day, every Sunday plus throughout the days, when you walk into the church, here your question is . . . that . . . Satan puts . . . in you: I wonder who I lost to the big church today? . . . And so the training regarding the consumer culture for your success as a pastor of a small church is very important."

Consumer culture training is preventive for. . . evangelism challenges.

Rev. Lewis: “I think. . . [consumer culture training] is one of the pieces that are missing for a small church to be able to effectively reach. . . a consumer culture of today.”

an unhealthy focus on numbers, rather than spiritual growth.

Rev. Ward: “Honestly, I think sometimes we put so much emphasis on nickels and noses [in pastoral education] and not in people and you know, it seems like that’s a push—numerical growth—and that’s good. Nothing wrong with seeing people saved, but we also need to develop the people that we’ve got and develop them into being soul winners. . . If we’re just worried about noses. . . and that’s all we’re worried about—how many people we get to sit in the pews—I can just hire the Gaithers [famous Christian music artists] to come in every week and fill the place, but that’s not accomplishing the real purpose of the church.”

negative emotions.

Rev. Cox: “Being aware of. . . [the consumer culture] is very important so that you are not beat up on a weekly basis by looking over the fence, so to speak, at the masses who may be with you one week and not with you the next week and then back and forth and all those different things because. . . if you look at that. . . you can become very discouraged in a hurry.”

People management training is inadequate, paramount, relational People management is an issue in small churches. Therefore, effective volunteer management is of utmost importance for small-church pastors. The NMCOS does not fully prepare small-church pastors to manage volunteers or paid employees.

People management training is inadequate for. . . volunteers.

Rev. Griffin: “I did not feel well-prepared to manage volunteers. I can’t think of particular examples in my education where I felt prepared [in this area], and. . . I’d say that was one of the weaknesses. . . Like I said, I felt very prepared for everything on the theological side—my first funeral, my first wedding, preaching week after week—I felt solidly prepared for all that. But this is one of those things, kind of on the. . . ‘businessy’ side of employees, volunteers, things like that, that I felt very unprepared for. I didn’t realize just how much of my job would be managing people. . . I felt very unprepared.”

paid employees.

Rev. Jackson: “As a small-church pastor, you know, you actually have to get stuff from the church post-modular course of study to teach you how to do that [manage employees]. . . If you were ordained and had like a 300-person church. . . that would have to be mandatory. . . But the Nazarene Modular Course of Study prepar[ing] me to manage paid employees—no, didn’t happen.”

People management training is paramount for. . . volunteers.

Rev. Robinson: “I think it’s critical to understand how to manage volunteers, especially when you have by definition a small church, [and that] means that you’re going to have

a small amount of volunteers with a lot of work to do.”

The differences in volunteers and paid employees.

Rev. Baker: “I think it’s pretty important to know the difference [in managing paid employees and volunteers] as a pastor of a small church. . . . You’re dealing with two different. . . areas when it comes to a paid employee versus a volunteer. Your. . . paid employee is. . . receiving payment for services rendered. . . . There’s [the] job aspect to this. Your volunteers, on the other hand, they are freely giving their time and their efforts out of, you know, whatever it is. . . love. . . devotion. . . recognition. But. . . in any event. . . there’s a totally different set of. . . concerns and rules for handling a volunteer versus a paid employee.”

People management training is relational regarding. . . volunteers.

Rev. Hayes: “If you go at. . . [managing volunteers] saying, ‘I have to do it,’ your [volunteer] relationship’s going to fail, but if you have the tools to know how to build a relationship that builds the confidence more so than just a ‘hi-bye’ relationship, then you’ll succeed. And I don’t believe pastors today know how. . . to do that.”

volunteers versus paid employees.

Rev. Buchanan: “Probably two years into my ministry where we were in revival and had a young couple to show up with their—I’d say the child was one or two—I don’t think anyone in our church, knowing our people, I don’t think they were at all disturbed by the child’s activity during the service. But I know. . . that couple was, and I knew that they were self-conscious of that. So, after the. . . church service, I asked the church board to come back into. . . the board room, and I basically said, ‘Okay one of you are going to volunteer to keep the nursery.’ And, yeah, I probably could have done that a little bit different. If it were paid staff, I know that I could have done it one way. Volunteers—that probably wasn’t exactly the best way to do it. So, yeah, there’s a difference. . . and formal training, it would probably help in that situation, as opposed to just doing it by trial and error because unfortunately, I lost a board member due to that meeting.”

community outreach.

Rev. Baker: “So. . . even with that, you have to learn [about] people’s. . . mindset, their strengths, their weaknesses, how to best direct them. . . I would say that [people management training is] vitally important to success that the more you can reach out to your community, the better your chances of succeeding as [a] church.”

Pastoral burnout is contextually consumer-driven, volunteer-void Participants indicated that leading the small church in a consumer culture contributed to their burnout experience. Participants also linked their burnout experience to issues related to managing volunteers. Furthermore, the issues of volunteers and the consumer culture thematically overlapped since consumer-minded congregates are less likely to serve.

Rev. Griffin: “[Consumer culture] contributed [to burnout] very much in the sense that I felt, from day one, the pressure to maintain the religious goods and services that we offered regardless of whether or not they were actually discipling and forming people

into Christlikeness. And so, that was consumer culture in action in our church.”

Rev. Buchanan: “If you’re [a church member] wanting to consume, there’s not much motivation to serve.”

Rev. Cox: “And so, how . . . [consumer volunteers] contribute to burnout is the lack of dedication, the lack of following through, a desire from them to have very little or no responsibility. And so, obviously, it . . . can become an ongoing cycle . . . where you’re always chasing a volunteer . . . to become more committed, or . . . seems like you’re always trying to fill a position for a volunteer. . . . And it becomes very frustrating . . . and you become discouraged. And that can help lead to burnout when you become discouraged. . . . So as I look at that and look back on it, if I had been prepared to deal with what a consumer culture looked like in a small church, then it would have helped me not to be burned out [as quickly].”

Rev. Wingate: “I think that [a lack of volunteers] has been . . . possibly a contributing factor [to burnout] because trying to motivate and trying to get individuals to . . . take responsibility also in the church and . . . to . . . have a concern for lost souls and to do their job and to . . . get involved . . . I think . . . by having issues in these concerns, you know, it does lead to the symptoms of burnout because it helps you . . . think, well, I may not be being successful in this handling the volunteers. . . . And sometimes, I guess, Satan jumps on your back . . . in this way, too, and say[s] you are the only one that’s concerned, and that helps lead to the symptoms of burnout.”

Rev. Baker: “I was pastoring a small church in which they wanted a lot of different things to be done. They wanted a lot of different things to be offered, but they did not want to step in to help do it. They expected the pastor to do it all. . . . It contributes to the weariness and the burnout when you have to do everything, and . . . there are some pastors I’ve known that want to do everything. In my case, I asked on multiple occasions for someone to step in and take on roles of oversight of the various programs, and no one was ever willing to do it. You either do it, or it doesn’t get done.”

Rev. Collins: “If you don’t have—if you’re not managing . . . [volunteers], the result is going to be that you’re going to be doing everything. And you’re going to get fried . . . just because you can’t. And here comes expectations . . . I don’t think I’ve said that word yet. You can’t possibly even . . . no matter how hard you try, you can’t possibly meet everyone’s expectations. So you set yourself up for failure.”

Conclusion

The research results reflected the experiences of 12 clergy in small Nazarene churches. Regardless of the demographic variances, the participants held similar or identical opinions regarding the key areas of this study and their link to burnout. Regarding consumer culture training, the participants called for more education due to the importance of being culturally relevant and understanding the driving forces within the consumer culture. They viewed such training as preventive against ministry pitfalls. Regarding managing volunteers, the participants likewise called for more education as a vital resource to empower small-church pastors in building healthy relationships that would sustain a volunteer-driven organization. Furthermore, the participants linked burnout to issues related to both the consumer culture and managing volunteers.

Discussion

Consumer culture training is insufficient, vital, preventive.

Edward L. Bernays (1891–1995) singlehandedly influenced the twentieth century in the ways of consumerism (Jansen 2013; Mostegel 2016; Murphree 2015). Mass producers of consumer goods employed Bernays to manipulate consumers into buying their products based on desires, not needs. Modern consumers in industrialized countries were born into a global climate where vendors seek them out from childhood and serve them because of their purchasing power (Brunk 2018; Casidy 2013; Dobocan 2014). James (2013) identified the consumer culture as a threat to the church and saw it as the context in which all churches in the Western world must operate.

Consumer culture training is insufficient A thorough examination of the scholarly literature along with the NMCOS and perceptions of small-church pastors revealed the insufficiency of consumer culture training for small-church pastors. First, none of the NMCOS three leadership modules' faculty guides dealt with the consumer culture's impact on the small church; only one of the modules even acknowledged the consumer culture. Second, the participants in this study affirmed that the NMCOS training they received was insufficient regarding growing a small church in a consumer culture. Third, there has been no empirical study conducted that is specific to the small church in the consumer culture or that examines the education of small-church pastors regarding the consumer culture.

The near absence of consumer culture training in the NMCOS validated the trustworthiness of participants' perceptions that the consumer culture training they received from the NMCOS was insufficient. Rev. Baker observed that the NMCOS provided "wonderful theological training, [but] it does nothing to prepare you for actual ministry," including ministry in a consumer culture. A close examination of the NMCOS leadership modules' faculty guides yielded results that verified Rev. Baker's observation. Likewise, most participants did not believe that the NMCOS offered instruction on the consumer culture, but several pastors believed they had received marginal instruction on the topic. Overall, participants issued a near-unanimous call for more in-depth instruction on the small church in the consumer culture.

Consumer culture training is vital The societal focus on the consumption of goods and services influences people to choose a church in a consumer mindset (Casidy 2013; Dobocan 2014; James 2013; Zech et al. 2013). In such a mindset, church attendees often seek out churches that can offer them the best deals and widest variety of religious goods and services (James 2013; Lott 2014; Wright 2017). Therefore, small-church pastors are at a disadvantage when their churches cannot compete with larger churches in these ways (James 2013; Lott 2014; Wright 2017).

The silence of empirical research and clergy training regarding the small church in the consumer culture speaks to the vital need for more attention to be paid to this subject for the health of small churches and their pastors. All but one participant indicated that instruction regarding the consumer culture was important to small-church pastors. Several pastors expressed the challenge of a small-church pastor in a large-church world. Rev. Cox shared his view of the importance of consumer culture training for small-church pastors by pointing to

large churches near his small church. He discussed his efforts to reach people when his church could not offer all the ministry perks that the larger churches offered, such as, “children’s pastor. .. youth pastor. .. married family pastor, and all those different things, and they got the praise bands and they got. .. everything that would feed into the consumer culture.” Small-church pastors particularly feel the pressure of this consumer mindset because, unlike larger churches, small churches do not typically have the varied programs and services that meet the consumer demand.

Consumer culture training is preventive The reason consumer culture training is important to small-church pastors is because they view it as preventive. However, there is no empirical research on the preventive impact of consumer culture training on small-church pastors. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the proven preventive effects of education by considering another topic which is central to this study—burnout.

The scope of this study indicated that education can be pivotal in helping pastors prevent and overcome burnout (Abernathy et al. 2016; Doehring 2013; Scott and Lovell 2015). The power of education is exposed when pastors are equipped to negate and deal with the issues that contribute to burnout (Abernathy et al. 2016; Scott and Lovell 2015). One of the elements that contribute to burnout, negative emotions (McGarity 2016), closely aligns with the issues this study’s participants indicated that consumer culture training would help prevent.

Not only is consumer culture training a possible preventive force against negative emotions, it also may empower pastors to negate threats to evangelism as well as an unhealthy focus on numbers rather than spiritual growth. One of the threats to evangelism is the concern that the consumer culture might shadow the church’s motives, thus compromising biblical teaching, which would also compromise evangelism. Likewise, participants pointed to the power of consumer culture training to obviate an unhealthy focus on numbers. An unhealthy focus on numbers could lead to spiritual compromise and building church numbers without building the kingdom of God.

People management training is inadequate, paramount, and relational.

Since small churches usually do not have the funds to pay staff, a significant percentage of small-church pastors deal with issues related to both the recruitment and management of volunteers (Schaper 2018; Stankiewicz et al. 2016; Waikayi et al. 2012). Considering that almost half of U.S. churches average 50 or fewer people in Sunday morning attendance, it is important to explore the effects of volunteer issues upon the small church (Size of Congregation 2012). The current cultural trends point to a declining interest in volunteering, and small churches can feel the brunt of this decline (Eccles 2014; Granger et al. 2014; James 2013; Vermeer et al. 2016; White and Yeats 2009). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider pastors’ perceptions regarding their people management training experience. The study’s participants indicated that people management training is inadequate, paramount, and relational.

People management training is inadequate Before delving into participants’ thoughts and the scholarly literature regarding volunteer training, it is of merit to examine the NMCOS contents regarding the topic of managing volunteers. An examination of the findings regarding the NMCOS volunteer management training indicated that two of the module faculty guides

dealt with issues regarding managing volunteers: *Administering the Local Church* (Church of the Nazarene 2004) and *Shepherding God's People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b). Both modules recognized the need for volunteers along with the tendency of church attendees to be spectators rather than volunteers. Even though all the suggestions and instruction addressed pertinent issues, there was no instruction on how to move beyond recognizing volunteer problems to dealing with them in an effective way that would yield consistent results. Neither module addressed how the small-church context and/or the consumer culture might impact volunteer recruitment. Furthermore, examples of recruiting volunteers were from the large-church context, and there was an expectation that willing volunteers would be available to recruit.

Even though two of the NMCOS leadership modules' faculty guides presented some aspects of managing volunteers, most participants still stated that the NMCOS did not provide education in managing volunteers, thus rating it "inadequate." Rev. Cox indicated that he was "adequately unprepared" to manage volunteers. The participants' call for more information and training on managing volunteers is reflective of the literature's emphasis on the necessity of effective volunteer management (Borchardt and Bianco 2016; Waikayi et al. 2012; Zech et al. 2013). However, the current cultural climate leads to people's declining interest to become involved in religious organizations, which has driven a reduction in the number of volunteers (Eccles 2014; Granger et al. 2014; Vermeer et al. 2016). Therefore, participants' testimonies regarding their perception of a lack of training regarding volunteers becomes a topic of greater concern. Furthermore, Rev. Baker's impression that "[t]here really was no addressing of the human aspect of ministry within the course of study" takes on a haunting nuance.

The perceptions of participants regarding employee management training was in alignment with their perception regarding volunteer management training—that they received very little to no instruction. However, the module *Leading the People of God: Servant Leadership for a Servant Community* did at least touch on the pastor's managing paid employees in Lesson 15, "Core Values and Attitudes of the Servant Leader" (Church of the Nazarene 2003a, pp. 15–1–15-13). Nevertheless, half of the pastors interviewed did not perceive that instruction on managing paid employees was of value for small-church pastors because most small churches do not have paid employees. This commentary points to the importance of volunteer management training for small-church pastors and underscores the validity of Schaper's (2018) statement: "While volunteer recruitment is an increasingly important skill in many fields, it has always been key to religious institutional experience" (p. 13).

People management training is paramount The results of this study revealed that people management training is paramount in two areas: managing volunteers and understanding the differences between volunteers and employees. As already mentioned, the literature indicates that religious organizations have seen a decline in volunteers (Eccles 2014; Granger et al. 2014; Vermeer et al. 2016), and participants supported the literature by pointing out that small churches lack volunteers. Therefore, the pastor's ability to motivate volunteers to continue to serve is of utmost importance.

The pastors' pointing to the importance of volunteers is affirmed in the literature, which also provided more insight into the motivating factors that drive volunteers to commit to and continue in their positions. According to Rev. Cox, "And so, it is vital to be successful in a small church that you will learn how to manage people, especially volunteers, who can quit at a whim if they're not feeling like they're being fulfilled." Given the propensity of volunteers to

quit due to a lack of fulfillment, it is important for pastors to understand what motivates volunteers. The literature indicated that volunteers look to such things as church veracity and reputation and whether they agree with the church's ethics and/or theology (Borchardt and Bianco 2016; Curtis et al. 2014; Mora 2013). Other motivating factors for volunteers may include benefits such as a greater gratitude to God, reduced depression, a more positive frame of mind regarding physical health, and life satisfaction (Krause et al. 2014; Mollidor et al. 2015).

This study's participants also agreed that understanding the differences between managing paid employees and volunteers is paramount. Pastors expressed thoughts that were parallel with the literature regarding the different motivations between volunteers and paid employees. For instance, interviewees echoed the research of Allen and Bartle (2014) and Hager and Brudney (2015) regarding volunteers' motivation to serve from a heart of love and devotion while employees are motivated to serve for payment. Therefore, the pastor must manifest different management styles with volunteers versus paid employees. Participants extended their views on the validity of training on the differences between paid employees and volunteers by discussing the relational element of people management.

People management training is relational This study revealed that participants viewed relationship elements as necessary in people management training. The relationship issues that surround people management include interpersonal skills as well as a church's desire to reach the community for Christ. Healthy relationships between pastors and volunteers breed a healthy church organization that is better equipped to fulfill Christ's great commission. When pastors do not know how to build healthy relationships, the connection between pastor and volunteers can be strained and eruptive and may cease to exist when the people leave the church. Rev. Long candidly admitted, "I've made some [relational] mistakes along the way with volunteers. I'd say. .. it's a 10 on the [1–10] pain scale, to be honest, from those mistakes."

The business of the church is the same as Christ's business—to share the good news of the gospel and to make disciples. Committed volunteers are necessary for a small church to achieve this goal. If a church does not have committed volunteers, then a pastor may overextend and try to complete too many church jobs (Lifeway Research, 215a, 215b). Therefore, a pastor's ability to develop long-lasting, positive relationships with church people is imperative for the health of the church, the engagement of volunteers, and the health of the pastor.

Pastoral burnout is contextually consumer-driven and volunteer-void.

Francis et al. (2009) conducted a study that revealed that small-church pastors are at greater risk for burnout than large-church pastors because small churches place pastors in closer relationships with congregates. Since burnout can be a causative factor to pastoral attrition, it is important to understand the different causes of burnout and to investigate ways pastors may avoid it (Lifeway Research 2015b; Randall 2013b; Spencer et al. 2012). In light of the numerous tasks that small-church pastors are required to master (Scott and Lovell 2015), the link between clergy burnout and key areas of education is a viable connection to consider. This study investigated the link between two of these key areas—the consumer culture and volunteer management—and determined that small-church pastoral burnout is contextually consumer-driven and volunteer-void.

The previously mentioned study by Scott and Lovell (2015) investigated the causes of burnout among small-church rural pastors. Even though the study focused on rural pastors, the results were indicative of this study's small-church pastors in various settings. The study revealed that pastors were often required to perform duties for which they were not trained or educated. Aside from that, pastors often performed almost every job in the church, usually with no paid staff and with little to no support from church volunteers (Scott and Lovell 2015). The rural participants of the Scott and Lovell (2015) study related a similar experience to the pastors in this study, even though not all this study's participants were in a rural setting. For instance, Rev. Lewis was pastoring in an urban setting when he experienced burnout, and he stated, "When things aren't. . . done or if things need to be done and you don't have people to do that, it becomes the burden and. . . the heavy load that. . . a pastor carries." Rev. Lewis went on to state that when a pastor is bivocational, he or she will have the weight of all the church tasks, plus ". . . you have the weight of doing a job and providing for your family while also trying. . . to get everything needed. . . in the church to reach out to. . . that [consumer] culture, and it. . . does provide burnout because it keeps reverting back and falling. . . on the leader." Rev. Long stated that one of the factors that leads to pastors being bivocational is church attendees who do not tithe because they would rather use their money to give themselves purchasing power. The consumer church member mentality places small-church pastors in a place of overextension to make up for the lack of volunteers, and that scenario leads to weariness and ultimately burnout.

Some studies have examined the effects of educational intervention with clergy experiencing burnout (Abernathy et al. 2016; Noullet et al. 2018). The participants in this study were nearly unanimous that issues related to the consumer culture and managing volunteers had contributed to their burnout. Regarding the link between volunteers and burnout, only one pastor did not link his burnout experience to managing volunteers, and that was because he had secular training on the subject. Even though that pastor still experienced burnout from other causes, his experience speaks to the potential power of education to minimize contributors to burnout.

Limitations

An honest look at a study's limitations is necessary to point to the researcher's commitment to avoid making unjust or overreaching claims about the results (Marshall and Rossman 2016). The limitations of this study included time issues, the solicitation of pastors from all eight Nazarene educational zones, and memory issues. The first limitation, time, involved the narrow range of time that was given to soliciting pastors to participate in the study's first phase—the MBI-HSS survey. The second limitation was that the 12 participants who met the full criteria for the interview phase represented only six of the eight U.S. Nazarene educational zones. The third limitation, memory, involved the pastors' ability to remember the burnout symptoms they experienced while pastoring a small church and to remember their modular educational experience.

Implications for professional practice

According to Dr. Dan Copp, education commissioner and global clergy development director for the Church of the Nazarene, "The Modular Course of Study has been a resource for lay and

clergy development for over fifteen years. While it served its initial purpose well, review in recent years by various interested parties, including the USA/Canada Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee, has helped to identify deficiencies that include the obsolescence and the delivery of the curriculum. It is now in process of being phased out as a validated course of study for ordination” (personal communication, July 19, 2019). Given the phasing out of the Nazarene Modular Course of Study, the following suggestions for the future education of pastors may inform decisions on upcoming Nazarene curriculum content. The suggestions may also inform educational leaders from other denominations and colleges regarding ways they can improve their educational efforts for future ministerial leaders.

Pastoral burnout curriculum

The first implication for pastoral educators points to required clergy educational curriculum that instructs on the causes of pastoral burnout and the solutions for it. For instance, the Nazarene module *Shepherding God's People* (Church of the Nazarene 2003b) recognizes that clergy burnout is a complex issue that needs to be addressed. However, this module only provides approximately one page of instruction related to burnout. Scholarly literature indicates that educational burnout interventions may be an effective tool in dealing with burnout (Abernathy, et al. 2016; Noullet et al. 2018). Therefore, required clergy training on the causes of burnout and ways to avoid it would increase the likelihood of pastors circumventing burnout. Thus, the implication for any pastoral educational initiative, including those of the Church of the Nazarene, is that a required clergy burnout curriculum should be a priority topic.

Small-church curriculum

The second implication for pastoral educators consists of the development of at least one required course with aligning curriculum that focuses on pastoring the small church. The curriculum would train students in areas specific to pastoring the small church, including issues related to volunteers and the consumer culture. Since nearly 50% of all U.S. Protestant churches average 50 or fewer in worship and 70% average 100 or fewer, consideration should be given to detailing the unique aspects and cultures associated with pastoring churches in different size categories (“Size of Congregation” 2012). A small-church curriculum would serve as a designated resource that pastors could go back to for support when they are in the heat of ministry.

Numerous participants in this study reported feeling a disconnect between their small-church experience and denominational leaders who did not seem to understand the dynamics and pressures of pastoring a small church. Therefore, the small-church curriculum should be written in consultation with veteran small-church pastors. Professionals might write the curriculum, but the curriculum should be driven by ample qualitative input from veterans who might not have advanced degrees but who do have wisdom and insight from years in the small-church world. These insights can only be gleaned through qualitative research targeting pastors who have successfully pastored small churches and steered them to healthy sustainability.

College and district initiatives

The third implication for pastoral educators is that Christian universities and denominational districts should provide a broader spectrum of continuing education and seminars specific to

small-church pastors. The lack of scholarly research on the topic of pastoring the small church speaks to the strong need for a reevaluation of the scholarly neglect of almost two-thirds of the churches in the United States. Small-church dynamics vary greatly from large church dynamics. Churches that average up to 50 attendees even vary in dynamics from those that average 50 to 100 attendees. The voices of this study's participants cry out for universities to rethink not only their degree plans but also, along with denominational districts, to rethink their ongoing pastoral training initiatives. A good plan is to purposefully and strategically target the majority pastors with realistic education that applies to the small-church world. Perhaps one reason small churches struggle is because too many times the training comes from the large-church world and the concepts simply do not apply to the small-church experience. Therefore, pastors are undertrained and underprepared for what they face in the small-church world.

Compliance with ethical standards

Human rights All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review Board, #0304sis, and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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