

Pastoral Counseling Care for People with Depression Impacts Self-harm and Suicidal Ideation

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Abstract: People with depression have potential and symptoms that lead to acts of self-harm and a desire to end life. Conventional approaches in this regard, medical and psychological approaches, can overcome depression but have limitations, so there is a crucial need to expand interventions, including in spiritual contexts. People with depression must be helped holistically so that Pastoral Counseling Assistance can be the answer. This paper aims to describe pastoral counseling assistance as an indispensable effort for sufferers (victims) of depression impacting self-harm and suicide to get complete and sustainable recovery by restoring themselves, reasoning, and having hope and enthusiasm to live the reality of life. This research uses qualitative methods with a literature-review approach to obtaining relevant data. The results of this study show that holistic pastoral counseling assistance and using an integrated approach based on conditions and needs is effective in helping people with depression overcome depression and negative impulses.

Keywords: depression; pastoral counseling; self-harm; suicide



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INTRODUCTION

Life's problems impact everyone differently, including one's mental response in dealing with them. Life's problems also weaken the harmony of one's life and create an imbalance. He is very rarely encountered when encountering trouble, but his mood is good. When faced with a problem, most people must be in a lousy mood and respond negatively to thoughts, words spoken, and actions taken to express their response to the problem. Some experience stress and anxiety, and what has the most flawed and dangerous impact on a person's life is depression.

Depression is a change in a person's emotions in a prolonged state of sadness and makes the presence of depression and helplessness in dealing with everything.¹ Depression can stem from significant social and personal problems, which is also a mental disorder. A study stated the presence of depressive disorders in oneself can pose risks that are detrimental to sufferers, such as insomnia, interpersonal disorders (easiness to offend, distancing themselves from the social sphere, quickly carried away by any atmosphere, etc.), work being unfocused, health including life patterns become irregular, even the emergence of destructive behavior such as self-harm or self-injury and even worse, the

¹ Mandasari, Linda., Tobing, Duma L., *Tingkat Depresi Dengan Ide Bunuh Diri Pada Remaja* (Indonesian Journal of Health Development Vol. 2 No. 1, 2020), 2.

desire to commit suicide appears.² Negative actions that hurt physically are hazardous for someone in a slump. Self-harm is an action taken to express emotions or transfer verbal pain that is felt, but it can also be a trigger for suicide. This phenomenon is witnessed not only in a drama, TV series, or fictional story but also in the reality of today's life. Self-harm to the point of suicide becomes the culmination of an inevitable depression. But many underestimate and taboo this issue without any role that would be a relief effort. Even when faced with such an event, many people would easily give nasty comments to the perpetrators and their families because this is a crucial issue and must present appropriate and ideal efforts and handling to avoid it.

Self-harm and suicide is a phenomenon that is rife in Indonesia. According to WHO data for 2019, around 800,000 people died as a result of suicide, and Indonesia is one of the countries that has the percentage above. In addition, according to DATIN information from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of deaths due to suicide per year is the same.³ A mental health survey conducted by Into the Light (a community with a mission to prevent suicide) stated that 5,211 respondents admitted that they had loneliness and depression that have the potential to commit suicide. Meanwhile, depression that results in suicide is more common among young people or adolescents – the productive ages of 20-40 years. However, it is common for these actions to be carried out by children, adults, and the elderly.⁴ So, people of all ages can commit suicide because of the inevitable depression.

Apart from being a responsibility in the psychological world, this phenomenon involves a person's mental existence. Still, presenting pastoral counseling to assist sufferers is considered necessary and essential. Pastoral counseling is a service to help those in a state of life crisis so that the counselee or client can get or find a possible solution that can answer the crisis they are facing, in this case, when they are in a state of depression. Two pastoral areas can help: 1) Pastoral Conversations and 2) Pastoral Visits.⁵ Both are integral to the practice of pastoral counseling. The conversational service carried out by the counselor must be based on sincerity to truly understand each other, both the counselor and the counselee, as well as the counselor. So that there is an apparent openness to understanding the crisis experienced and presenting the right solution even with pastoral visits. Pastoral counseling answers everyone's need to provide warmth, full attention, support, and shepherding (accompaniment). This pastoral counseling assistance is also an act of help carried out by representative Christian individuals aimed at providing healing, support, guidance, and reconciliation, but also as a preventive measure for people with problems⁶, including for people with depression who have the impact of self-harm and suicidal ideation.

² Hasanah, Uswatun., Fitri, NL., Supardi, S., Livana, PH., *Depression Among College Students Due To the Covid-19 Pandemic*, (Jurnal Keperawatan Jiwa Vol. 8, No. 4, November 2020), 421-422

³ Pusat Data dan Informasi Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2019
<https://pusdatin.kemkes.go.id/article/view/19103000002/situasi-dan-pencegahan-bunuh-diri.html>.

⁴ https://yankes.kemkes.go.id/view_artikel/1450/depresi-dan-bunuh-diri.

⁵ Tuhumury, Hanok., *Pelayanan Pastoral Konseling Berdasarkan 1 Petrus 5:1-11*, (Missio Ecclesiae, Vol. 7, No.1, April 2018), 79.

⁶ Tadung, Frieska., dan Londo, Elsy., *Pendampingan Pastoral Bagi Anak Jalanan*, (POIMEN: Jurnal Pastoral Konseling), Vol.3, No.1, 2022, 115.

Some previous research relevant to this study: "Counseling Services for Suicidal Christian Adolescents" (2023) by Setiawan et al. in *Sola Gratia Journal of Biblical Theology and Practice*, while the results of this study lead Christian adolescents to have a correct understanding of Christ to recognize that they are valuable and worthy of life. The difference between this study and the study lies in the subject, the focus of the intervention, and the approach used. The subject has the special characteristic of focusing only on Christian adolescents who experience suicidal ideation. The focus of the intervention emphasizes aspects relevant to spirituality, religion, and the church's role only. Still, this study includes holistic aspects that seek to touch emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological aspects. The approach is only integrated with religious values or spirituality, while this study uses a pastoral approach that includes various elements of pastoral counseling assistance. Another relevant research is "Pastoral Counseling as a Solution to Overcome Depression" (2023) by Putra et al. in the *Journal of Psychology Students of Buana Perjuangan University Karawang*; this research has been outstanding, including the results. However, what distinguishes the study is that it only focuses on the functions of pastoral counseling, namely healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling, without involving other relevant and helpful elements of pastoral counseling assistance. Pastoral counseling is relative and adaptive based on the level or severity of the crisis of the counselee/client. So, pastoral counseling assistance becomes a means of acknowledging the downturn he is experiencing. Still, it also presents a path to prevention, recovery, healing, and reconciliation based on an integrative approach relevant to the counselee's crisis.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, researchers used qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach, namely describing various theories related to the content and needs of the research. Albi Anggito & Johan Setiawan (2018) state that this approach is used to collect and manage data in a natural setting by interpreting a phenomenon that occurs so that the instrument of this research is the researcher himself. In this study, the data analysis technique that the researcher used was to determine the unit of analysis according to the data needed. Second, categorize the data. Third, the data should be interpreted based on the research topic, and fourth, the existing data should be concluded.

DISCUSSION

Self-harm and Suicide

Acts of self-harm and suicide are based on various things, including severe depression. In addition, several things can cause negative actions to injure and end one's life, such as: 1) Bullying/bullying can be physical or verbal. There is a desire to self-harm, and he wants to take his own life because he feels he has no self-esteem. The act of bullying makes a person feel humiliated and lose self-confidence, thereby isolating and isolating himself from the social sphere. Inner wounds torment the soul and create negative self-esteem, considering yourself petty and low. 2) Loneliness. This causative factor is also a high trigger for the presence of suicidal ideation. There is alienation and dissatisfaction in social life. This situation is also based on various stages so that sufferers choose to isolate themselves. Emotional loneliness, namely the loss of relationships or emotional closeness between parents and children, husband and wife, loss, divorce, miscarriage, and so on. Social

loneliness includes losing a job, fighting and breaking up with a lover, being abandoned by a teammate, and so on. So, it is evident that loneliness is the basis for a person not feeling his life has meaning, and it is better to end it.⁷

People with depression engage in a wide variety of inappropriate verbal and nonverbal social behaviors, which tend to lead to rejection and hostility towards others. 3) Severe/chronic illness. Based on research in the United States, a high death rate due to suicide occurs in those who have chronic pain.⁸ They experience depression because they don't go away and are in a slump phase because of the pain they are experiencing. This arises because you feel that you are no longer helpful, you can't do anything, and your soul is already in death, even though it is still alive. 4) Spiritual and spiritual causes can also trigger depression, leading to suicide. Disbelief in God or anger because of various problems in life, and it is also undeniable that there may be sins committed and cause depression.

Depression and Pastoral Counseling Care

Depression greets a person's life with various causes or backgrounds. However, it is undeniable that depression does not always have a clear cause. It is even said that depression is mysterious, including for the sufferer. Unseen and unnoticed.⁹ Being in such a state makes a person not have the passion to move on and continue life's journey. So self-harm and suicide are considered to be the last and only option that must be taken because life becomes a waste. Edward T. Welch describes depression with the following statements:

The deep sorrow of the soul is a constant torturous suffering. Unmerciful pain that gives no window of hope gives no choice but to a dreary and sickening existence and gives no rest from the cold subconscious thoughts and feelings that dominate the nights of terrible and restless despair. Depression is a disease. A disease that torments a person physically and mentally. Locked up and hard to get out to find a light path. Such a situation is not just pain, but pain that does not mean. An empty and unbearable pain that only produces darkness or emptiness, thus destroying one's soul.

There are two types of depression based on the level: 1) Depression that is not so severe, namely situational depression or based on a particular situation only, and is caused by dysthymic disorder so that you feel dissatisfaction or a depressive mood. 2) Severe depression, namely clinical depression, because it is related to mentality, and from this level, the sufferer will feel that he has no hope of life. Patients with major depression accompanied by other disorders are recommended to receive and follow various psychological therapies, whereas a psychiatrist should closely monitor people with depression who use psychopharmacology or anti-depressant drugs but also integrate with psychotherapy for ideal results. Suicide is based on various causes and also in several ways. Several data sources or informants stated that he tried to end his life using a sharp instrument, a knife, and taking large amounts of drugs. Even this suicide attempt was carried out consciously but under pressure and emotion. There is a desire to commit suicide because there is a big problem that occurs in the family: the burden of excessive shame and the feeling that God is leaving, thus destroying the spirit of life and encouraging the desire to end one's life.

⁷ Tampubolon., Ernawaty & Hermanto, Yanto P., *Keinginan Bunuh Diri di Kalangan Remaja dan Solusinya Dalam Iman Kristen*, (The Way: Jurnal Teologi dan Kependidikan, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2022), 140-141.

⁸ <https://www.klikdokter.com/psikologi/kesehatan-mental/benarkah-mengidap-penyakit-parah-picu-keinginan-bunuh-diri>.

⁹ Haig, Matt., *Alasan Untuk Tetap Hidup Reasons to Stay Alive: Melawan Depresi dan Berdamai dengan Diri Sendiri*, (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama: 2020),16-17.

Trying to end life by drinking poison. The suicide attempt was made consciously in the void so that it couldn't control itself.

Pastoral is a planned and proactive service activity to help individuals or groups of people who are struggling with problems that bring them down, like those who are depressed. This command is based on the command of the Lord Jesus to feed His flock. Pastoral counseling is a service that guides the counselee in an ideal conversational atmosphere and enables the counselee to correctly understand his whole self and life goals based on the strength obtained from God.¹⁰ The assistance that aims to help is holistic. Holistic assistance requires the counselor to touch all aspects: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. This assistance also means comprehensive service and not divided, namely by understanding, viewing, approaching, and treating humans who are intact and have dignity. Pastoral assistance services cannot be separated from the biblical basis. In this case, the Lord Jesus is a great role model in holistic assistance for a broken world. His ministry work is intact.¹¹ Conceptually, counseling and pastoral care have the same function: healing a wounded soul. Pastoral assistance is carried out on an ongoing basis that is for life. Still, pastoral counseling is carried out when someone needs help or there is a crisis, followed by various approaches.¹²

The Stages of the Counseling Process

In dealing with people with depression who have the impact of self-harm and suicide, pastoral assistance must be accompanied by pastoral counseling using stages and approaches that are appropriate to the counselee's needs in their crisis. This is an organized and structured effort so that its functions can be felt by the counselee properly, effectively, and efficiently. The several stages are: 1) Creating Relationships. The initial stage is to build trust from the counselee. This stage can also determine the next steps that need to be taken by the counselor, namely only carrying out pastoral assistance or professional pastoral counseling – accompanied by skills. 2) Anamnesis, this initial stage must also be accompanied by obtaining precise information about the counselee but must be based on his permission. Two types of information need to be obtained: subjective information in the form of emotional memories, thoughts, or feelings and objective information such as the counselee's identity (which can be seen or obtained based on observation and assessment). 3) Diagnosis/diagnosis is a stage that can be carried out in the second session of the meeting. The counselor synthesizes data analysis or links between one piece of information and another. Pastoral diagnosis looks at the holistic aspects of the counselee: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. 4) Treatment Planning, or making an action plan, namely determining the methods and approaches that will be used to help the counselee's crises and problems. 5) Treatment: this stage can occur during the third to fifth meeting sessions. Counselors carry out various actions that have been prepared or planned. 6) Review & Evaluation, namely reviewing and providing evaluation by reassessing the process and the final results

¹⁰ Brek, Yohan., *Budaya Masamper Lifestyle Masyarakat Nusa Utara, Strategi Konseling Pastoral dalam Misi Pendidikan Kristiani di Gereja Masehi Injili Sangihe Talaud*, Pena Persada: Jawa Tengah, 2022, 85.

¹¹ Desa, Maria Vianti., *Pendampingan Pastoral Bagi Anak Tunanetra di Yayasan Bhakti Luhur Malang*, Jurnal Pelayanan Pastoral, 2021, 78-79.

¹² Engel, *Konseling Pastoral dan Isu-isu Kontemporer*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2016), 10-11.

of the pastoral counseling actions that have been carried out. 7) Termination or disconnection. Professionally, disconnection needs to be done by the counselor during the fifth to sixth meeting sessions. However, termination is not the end because social relations with counselees can continue. The counselor must do disconnection in the fifth to sixth meeting sessions. However, termination is not the end because social relations with counselees can continue. The counselor must do disconnection in the fifth to sixth meeting sessions. However, termination is not the end because social relations with counselees can continue.¹³

Pastoral Counseling Approaches and Techniques

Everyone's experience of depression may be similar, but the causes and historical settings are different. Based on this, the handling process will undoubtedly be different. In dealing with clients or counselees who experience severe depression with the potential for self-harm and suicide, proper and ideal treatment steps are needed as a preventive measure. The pastoral counseling approach can also be called the pastoral counseling method. So simply, the pastoral counseling approach or method means the counselor's efforts to create ways and ways to approach, observe, overcome, and solve the problems counselees face. The pastoral counseling approach can be integrative, namely a combination of several approaches that are appropriate for the counselee's conflict or crisis¹⁴:

Psychoanalytic Approach

Depression is related to a person's psychology and mentality. Even self-harm to suicidal thoughts, is controlled by irrational powers. The rationale of this approach states that present anxiety or depression is thought to result from the immersion of inner conflict within the sufferer or, in this case, the counselee. The purpose of this approach is to help the counselee to be aware of the conflicts that exist in his unconscious world, his childhood (which could have been a cause of depression), in this case, mental wounds or trauma, so that the counselee is able and able to express what is pent up, also expressing psychosexual conflicts of age. Early childhood and the immersion of feelings in the present are caused by fear, anxiety, and depression.

Person-Centered/Client-Centered Approach

Experiencing severe depression, the counselee often feels emptiness and emptiness within him. This approach seeks the counselee to experience what was previously unconscious to reach full awareness, confidence, and self-direction. The counselee is expected to be aware of deviant behavior or inappropriateness of what should be done. The purpose of this research is directed and focused on the counselee so that the counselee can carry out self-exploration and know correctly the things that are a barrier to his growth. The important thing about this approach is that the counselee is willing to enter the process and strengthen spontaneous feelings and enthusiasm for life. The correct technique in this approach is how the counselor's skills are applied in the counseling process.

¹³ Totok S. Wiryasaputra, *Konseling Pastoral di Era Milenial*, (Yogyakarta: Asosiasi Konselor Pastoral Indonesia, 2019), 195-199.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, hh.205-224

Gestalt approach

This approach has three essential aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The counselor functions as the counselee's supporter, director, and challenger. Even in a downturn, the counselee must be ready to accept challenges so that renewal occurs. The counselee must bring "what has not been resolved" to the present to complete it in full. Thus, the counselee gains awareness of his experiences over time and becomes a substitute for external support. Several techniques that can be used in this approach are the analysis of dreams and empty chairs (to pour out and remove all the hidden thorns in the counselee).

Behavioral Approach

Behavioral therapy specifies the goals of each helping process as clearly as possible. The approach then details the relief action plan as clearly as possible. Avoiding abnormal behavior to produce normal behavior is obtained from strengthening stimuli. This approach aims to help the counselee eliminate the counselee's deviant behavior and learn more effective behavior. Helping counselees to see the factors that influence current behavior and change problematic behavior. People with depression must experience irrational fears and phobias. In this approach, approach techniques that can be carried out are desensitization practices in real life, relaxation training (inhaling and taking deep breaths and exhaling, relaxing body muscles, etc.), strengthening behavior, modeling or imitating, cognitive restructuring, monitoring one's behavior, stopping destructive thoughts, self-management programs, social skills, and others. Some of the techniques in this approach can be appropriate preventive measures for people with depression resulting in suicide.

The Emotive-Rational Approach

The purpose of this approach is to help people with depression impact self-harm and suicide, including helping counselees to eliminate thoughts that tend to self-destruct and make counselees more tolerant of their lives. One of the techniques in this approach is that the counselee can train new behaviors to embarrass and fight himself and learn healthy behaviors and actions by forgiving and loving himself. This is also considered a challenge for the counselee.

Reality Approach

This approach encourages the counselee to be strong and rational, both emotionally and in thought and action. The purpose of the approach, which the counselor must carefully carry out, is to challenge the counselee to reassess what is being or has been done and think about how best to take appropriate actions.

Bitterness cognitive theory. Depression is a mental illness that keeps many hidden thorns within. Sufferers of depression are sure to experience bitterness, thus bringing them into a slump and helplessness in living life. Bitterness becomes a big black hole that drags someone into it and destroys life that should have meaning. Bitterness is present because of various adverse events that scratch and leave deep wounds, such as betrayal, rejection, abuse (verbal and non-verbal), unresolved feelings of offense, and low self-esteem, which can damage mental health – depression.¹⁵ This therapy seeks to re-educate the counselee to

¹⁵ Simanjuntak, Julianto., Ndraha, Roswitha., *Mencinta Hingga Terluka Pemulihan Luka Emosi, Trauma Relasi, dan Konflik Komunikasi*, (Tangerang: Yayasan Pelikan), 2020, 26.

think and act positively. Three steps of the counseling approach taken are¹⁶: 1) Think irrationally. For people with depression who have tried to end their lives, this must be done with caution. The counselor tells the counselee how to think irrationally (illogically) and then invites him out of that way of thinking. The purpose of this initial step is for the counselee to distinguish what is rational and positive and vice versa. 2) The counselor invites counsees with depression to leave irrational ways of thinking and makes them aware that it makes them disturbed and suffer but can also damage and take lives. 3) For the counselee to abandon irrational ways of thinking, the counselor uses a direct approach so that the counselee leaves the "band of irrational thinking" and replaces it with rational/logical thoughts.

Cybercounseling. In a research paper, this approach or method is also a form of recovery for the counselee. This approach is done virtually. According to previous research, cyber counseling effectively addresses the problems experienced by counsees and provides high satisfaction. This is an advantage for sufferers of depression; when they refuse to meet in person or because of the social isolation experienced (from various factors), this virtual counseling encounter is beneficial. Essential in this approach is thorough preparation, such as internet connection, the platform used, etc. This approach can also use several stages: delivery/initial, assessment (information with several open questions), and interpretation (giving meaning and meaning to the counselee's problem).¹⁷

Various approaches must be carried out effectively and maximally so the counselee can present self-esteem and apply healthy and sustainable behavior. Several forms of pastoral care can also be goals for counsees with depression: caring for them in a severe crisis, including the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental dimensions; supporting those who are going through significant challenges; guiding sufferers to be able to answer questions about their problems and most importantly addressing needs through soul healing and reconciliation from broken relationships.¹⁸ Depression sufferers who experience self-harm and suicide must experience reconciliation. Reconciliation supported by the counselor for the counselee will restore and reconcile injured relationships; through reconciliation, it makes the counselee a counselor for others who are also suffering, and through reconciliation gives the ability to accept the realities of life that are happening and willing to learn, grow and develop from the suffering that has occurred experienced.¹⁹

Pastoral Assistance to People with Depression

From the data described above, some pastoral assistance actions that can be intended for people with depression have an impact on self-harm and suicidal ideation; researchers want to convey some ideas in the final part of this study:

¹⁶ Opit, Hesky C., *Hati Yang Terluka: Pastoral Konseling Bagi Orang Yang Mengalami Kepahitan Atau Luka Batin*, (POIMEN: Jurnal Pastoral Konseling, Vol.1.1, No.2, 2020), 64.

¹⁷ Alexander, Christopher., Christianto, Josef., Venturini, Hana., *Penerapan Cyber Counseling dalam Menangani Depresi Remaja Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19*, (KHARISMATA: Jurnal Teologi Pantekosta, Volume 4, No.2, Januari 2022), 251.

¹⁸ Hutagalung, Stimson., Nainggolan, Bartholomeus D., Hendriks, Alwyn Cesarinto., Walukouw, Yane Restuwati., Hutabarat, Reymand., ..., Sagala, Rudolf Weindra., (*Konseling Pastoral*, Yayasan Kita Menulis: 2021), 33.

¹⁹ Julie, Frengki., Purwati, Ester., Kanto, Zakaria., Jumari, Amor., Alfius, Yohanes., (*Peranan Konseling Pastoral dalam Pelayanan Luka Batin*, Widya Sari, Vol.3, No. 5, 2019)

Positive relationships for people with depression. People with depression who have the potential and symptoms of various deviant behaviors must get emotional support from the surrounding environment. The intended environment is family, friends or close relatives, and people around who can assist, so an essential role in this relationship is needed.

Development of a safety plan through education for people with depression. Inevitable depression can occur at any time. So, the assistance carried out in it must include education aimed at the safety of people with depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.

Integrated pastoral counseling approach. Every counselor's crisis is different. Each pastoral counseling approach and technique also has its own weaknesses, so an integrated approach will produce a counseling process that is relevant, ideal, and accurate.

CONCLUSION

Purposeful and supportive accompaniment is a meaningful pastoral counseling approach with a helping impact. Actions that have been damaged can be repaired and continue to grow gradually when able to address them constructively and appropriately for those who are troubled. Depression, as a crucial illness, can be cured. Recovery and healing for people with depression that has an impact on self-harm and suicide must go through various stages of the pastoral counseling approach to obtain maximum impact and results for the counselee. Targeted pastoral counseling assistance with an integrated approach according to the crisis and needs of people with depression impacted by self-harm and suicidal ideation can empower individuals to manage good thoughts and actions in achieving sustainable recovery. An approach to holistic aspects in pastoral care practice is the answer to overcoming depression and the encouragement of hostile actions.

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