Correlates of Perceived Emotional/Verbal Abuse of Adult Children of Pastors

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Alina Baltazar and Romulus Chelbegean were also a part of the larger study team.
Background

• These analyses are a part of a larger study, using quantitative and qualitative methods, examining stressors and concerns among NAD Pastor Families (pastor, spouse and adult child).

• Many areas of concern and stress were examined from congregational stressors to church politics and financial issues as well as personal spiritual and behavioral issues faced by the families – the quantitative data has been reported to the NAD and the qualitative aspect is well underway.

• The expectation is that the data will suggest ways of strengthening Pastor families by developing educational/training programs to prepare pastors to meet the daily stressors of professional life and to offer continuing services.
Context of Analyses

The analyses presented here focused on the adult children of pastors.

Previous studies suggest that Pastor’s families experience a high degree of stress because of congregant, community and Church organizational demands (Murphy, 1992; Blanton, 1992; Weaver et al., 2002; Miner, 2007; Lee, 2007).

It has been specifically noted Clergy children often are particularly stressed by these demands as they go through various developmental stages (Strange, 2001).
Concerns and stressors were measured by the Clergy Life Inventory (Morris and Blanton, 1998), Stress Coping Scale (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985), Stressors of Clergy Children Inventory (Ostrander, Henry, & Hendrix, 1990) and the Personal Challenges Checklist developed by the researchers.

Modification were made in close consultation with colleagues at Andrews and NAD/GC Family Ministries and Ministerial Departments.

The study was reviewed and approved by the Andrews and Southern IRB committees.

An on-line survey methodology was used utilizing Survey Monkey.

The study was promoted through communication from NAD Ministerial and at a wide variety of NAD, Union and Conference Meetings.

A total of 389 Pastors, 313 Spouses and 171 Adult Children completed the survey.
Key Findings for Pastor Adult Child Survey

At least 45% of respondents expressed at least somewhat a concern about:

1. Behavioral expectations of congregants, community and Church organization.

2. A lack of family privacy.

3. An absent parent in the evenings and weekends.

4. Mental health problems and not being able to obtain mental health services (higher than physical health).

5. Demands for Church participation.
Purpose of Presentation

• We were particularly interested in examining further the perceived, congregant demands, religious participation demands and the mental health concerns.

• This drove us to examine perceptions of verbal, emotional and spiritual abuse as possibly involved with these concerns. We felt that these perceptions were likely to occur within a long time development context and may relate to the other concerns.

• Responses were simply self-reports of perception of emotional/verbal, spiritual, sexual and/or physical abuse.

• The focus of this presentation is on the adult children of NAD Pastors and the extent and correlates of perceived emotional/verbal and spiritual abuse.
Methods and Procedures

• Questionnaire developed from standardized instruments, modifications/input from NAD/GC.

• Adult children of NAD Pastors 18 and over.

• On-line survey advertised through various means at Andrews and Southern Adventist University.

• Non-random sample.

• N=171.
Sample Description

• **Age Distribution:**
  18-20 = 54.5%
  21-23 = 25.6
  24-29 = 12.4
  30+ = 7.4

• **Siblings:**
  0 = 5.9%
  1 = 47.9
  2 = 28.6
  3+ = 17.6

• **Ethnicity:**
  White (non-Hispanic) = 44.5%
  Hispanic = 17.6
  African American = 16.0
  Asian = 10.9
  Multi-Ethnic = 10.9
Perceived Abuse

1. Physical Abuse = 1.6%
2. Sexual Abuse = 4.2
3. Spiritual Abuse = 17.4
4. Emotional/Verbal Abuse = 25.0
Correlate Variables

**Spirituality:**
1. Trouble connecting to God
2. Difficulty with personal prayer
3. Difficulty with personal devotions
4. Expectations of Church involvement

**Mental Health:**
5. Substance abuse
6. Gambling
7. Anxiety/depression
8. Severe mental illness

**Attitudes/Behavioral Experiences:**
9. Same sex attraction
10. Congregants behavioral expectations
11. Lack of privacy
12. Domestic violence
Significant Correlations Between Spiritual, Emotional/Verbal Abuse and Selected Spiritual, Mental Health, and Behavioral Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern about</th>
<th>Spiritual abuse</th>
<th>Emotional/Verbal abuse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Congregant expectations</td>
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<td>.20*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of privacy</td>
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<td>Expectation about involve.</td>
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<td>.40**</td>
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<td>.22*</td>
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<td>.20*</td>
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<td>.33**</td>
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<td>Same sex attraction</td>
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<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<.05
**=p<.01
Conclusions

1. The rate of perceived emotional/verbal abuse is relative high.

2. This perceived abuse is within a context of perceptions of:
   a. Mental health and addiction issues
   b. Same sex attraction
   c. High behavioral expectations
   d. Domestic violence/dysfunction

3. And it all relates to diminished prayer life.
Implications

The ability to retain Pastor’s children in the Church may require:

1. A focus on the high level of concerns and stressors they perceive.

2. Addressing unrealistic expectations on the part of the community and church that may result in verbal/emotional and spiritual abuse with all of its consequences on mental health and personal devotions.

3. Providing realistic and perceived access to private mental health service is a high priority.

4. There are issues of same sex attraction that continue to be a very complex issue for the Church but may be correlated with very real verbal abuse.