

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT IN BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY
AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION:
A MULTI-CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
by
Yolanda Kay McBride

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

The role of a pastor encompasses many duties and responsibilities within the church as well as in the home. In particular, associate pastors are akin to lead pastors in dealing with issues that arise in their personal marriages, family, and ministry. Balancing the three can be daunting and arduous tasks without proper guidance and leadership. Lead pastors have a responsibility to assist associate pastors in balancing those three areas of concern to ensure the ability to serve in ministry with a strong state of mind necessary for a full and thriving career in leading others to Christ. Without the assistance from the lead pastors, associate pastors face stress and depression that negatively affect a successful career in ministry. The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore associate pastor's perceptions of how the lead pastor encourages a balance between marriage, family, and ministry as it relates to stress and depression. Associate pastors will perform their calling in a better state of mind and with renewed confidence. The participants in the study represented eight different churches throughout the state of North Carolina. Surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews were conducted both online and in a natural setting where the participants felt free to answer the questions honestly. Servant leadership was the guiding theory of this study where leaders place the needs of others over their own self-interest through the application of listening, showing empathy, healing, awareness, conceptualization, stewardship, and a commitment to the growth of others.

Keywords: Ministry Leadership, Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, family, balance, stress, depression

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Dedication

Throughout this journey, the Holy Spirit always whispered in my ear, "God's grace is sufficient." It is with humbling grace that I give all praise to God for seeing me through this fantastic journey. Steadfast support was provided by my husband Mickey and my two daughters, Kenadi and Taylor, my three heartbeats. Without their encouragement and love, I could not have made it through. My beautiful family and friends, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank all of the leaders and staff at the United States Army Reserve Command, Headquarters, G8. Thank you for your words of encouragement and for checking on me to ensure I was tracking to completion. Special thanks go to my supervisor and committee members for constant guidance and support during this dissertation process, as well as my classmates for advice and support. Lastly, this entire project is dedicated to the late, Ms. Wanda Mae Guillory, my grandmother and guardian angel in heaven. Your love and guidance are still felt every day. I love you always Maw-Maw Peewee. Again, I am humbled for all of the overwhelming support shown by all.

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List of Abbreviations

African Methodist Episcopal (AME)

Family Systems Theory (FST)

Faith, Activity, and Nutrition program (FAN)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

King James Version (KJV)

Liberty University (LU)

Preacher's Kid (PK)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

"Why are you always at church? What about your family?" "You never come to any of my games!" "God, what am I doing wrong?" The above questions and statements are standard terms echoed in the homes of many who are "called" into ministry. Church ministry leadership is relied on heavily to lead congregations, community, and their families. To be effective in their role as a pastoral leader, pastors must be deliberate in the practice and promotion of balance in marriage and family with the ministry. Everything in life requires balance for stability.

Pastors can easily find themselves distracted and not exercising a balance with ministry and other human experiences, namely focusing on what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has to say. Without balance, some of the more profound matters are neglected. Luke 10:40, details how Martha was so busy doing multiple things preparing for Jesus that she failed to focus on what was more important, simply being there in his presence. This scriptural reference is a reminder to balance all aspects of life from work to serving God by sitting at the feet of Jesus. The grace of God is a necessity for finding balance.

Pastors understand that they have several obligations where their congregations are concerned, and many want to be attentive to those needs and concerns. For example, interview data collected from 125 pastors in Upstate New York subscribe to an ethics of care and eagerly want to help anyone experiencing a family disruption in the congregation (Edgell, 2006, p 2-3). Pastors have to balance their role as the moral authority with their charge to care for congregants (Jenkins, 2014). Pastors fail to conduct outreach efforts for those congregants who may need family crisis management, so the congregants do not feel comfortable in the church (Sullivan, 2005). Several pastors struggle not only in their pastoral-ship but also in their personal lives,

which often spills over into their role as a pastor (Whitson, 2014). Finding time to spend with family can be a real challenge given the number of demands the church congregation can place on the pastor and the family members. Pastors are expected to attend multiple meetings, visit members of the congregation, and prepare excellent sermons weekly. The demands placed on the pastor and his family are described as living in a "glass house syndrome," where they are expected to be perfect and transparent (Cook, 2014).

The mere calling into pastoral leadership can present a heavy load of stress, given the emotional ups and downs and the needs of the congregation. Most pastors will also endure a mixture of supporters, with critics and conflict, mainly trivial pursuits, not necessarily doctrinal concerns (Cook, 2014). The demands placed on ministers to perform, provide, and produce are incredible and add to the stress minister's face (Whitson, 2014). The spouse of a pastor endures challenges and struggles, such as feelings of loneliness, depression, and suicide. The wives often feel unappreciated by the congregation (Smith, 2009). Several pastor's wives indicated that the congregation acts like they have received two pastors, but the wives are firm in stating that they are not the associate pastors to their husbands (Smith, 2009). To add to the strain spouses face, the pastor's wives indicate that it is difficult to make friends because once the other ladies learn that they are the wives of pastors, the prospective friends do not act like themselves (Smith, 2009).

Some pastors battle the burden of decreasing faith within their own children's lives (Ayers, 2014). Children of pastors are referred to as "faithless children" because of the pressures placed on them to be more engaged in the church. However, the children are succumbing to the outside influences of the world, causing them to doubt their faith, often leaving the church and leaving their parent-pastor riddled with stress and fighting to maintain a balance between the

church and the church home (Ayers, 2014). To add to the statements mentioned above, spouses and children place strains on the pastoral spouse for more attention and a household spiritual leader (Ayers, 2014).

Pastors are not always trained and equipped to manage crises within the church or at home (Calain, 2002; Malphurs, 2003). The culture today is very different than fifty years ago. The challenges of the world evolve just as time passes from decade to decade. Pastors today do not feel like a natural leader to deal with the new era and the problems the period brings (Exantus, 2011). Overtime, pastoral ministry is a conduit for stress (Eantus, 2011).

Depression is also a "secret" problem among pastors, yet, widespread in pastoral ministry (Cook, 2014). Many are not equipped to deal with the struggles mentioned in consideration of the problem's pastors face in their roles as a pastoral leader. There are other issues, such as burnout, sexual problems, financial problems, and time management (Cook, 2014). Clergy stress has been linked to depression in several studies and dissertations (Johnson, 2016; McKown, 2001). Pastors frequently place large amounts of pressure on themselves to perform, which leads to feelings of hopelessness and depression (Johnson, 2016). Depression is exemplified as a spiritual and personal crisis when experienced by pastors (Johnson, 2016).

In a survey conducted by Veenker (2000, p.5), ninety-four percent of pastors surveyed indicated stress and depression associated with being the ideal family. McKown (2001) noted that pastors feel pressure and burnout in a need to be perfect, have poorly defined role boundaries, have issues with isolation and intimacy, and need pastoring themselves. However, there is a growing need for research to connect the internal, external, and spiritual factors in clergy to stress and depression. In addition to stress potentially causing depression, which alters

neurotransmitters in the brain, it also negatively affects the quality of life for clergy physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually (Gauger, 2012).

It is no secret that stress and depression left untreated can lead to suicide. Statistics from the Department of Health and Human Services (2014) indicate that 60 % of all who committed suicide suffered from a mood disorder like depression. Suicide has a more significant impact on society, family, and individuals over any other act of violent death and claims more deaths than acts of war or homicides (Ramirez, 2007). Considering Christian leadership topics of interest, namely suicide, the issue of suicide is met with a challenge since it goes against biblical principles. Many rightfully believe that God is our healer of both mental and physical problems. At the same time, many in the church congregation and within church leaders struggle with stress, depression, and suicide. These issues affect church leaders emotionally, spiritually, physically, and relationally (Stetzer, 2018).

Historical figures and cultural experiences usually shape the minister's roles in the church. Ministers also believe that they are the leaders among leaders, which translates to leaders over other ministries and associate ministers (Dixon, 2008). Sometimes there is a conflict in role and expectation management between pastor and elders in the church. Church leadership can only thrive if the perceptions of lead pastors and associate pastors' roles are fully understood and agreed upon (Dixon, 2008). A pastor's attempt to meet the role expectation is only affected by the level of acceptance and understanding of that person (Brooks, 2006).

The problem lies in the perception of the associate pastors concerning the support from lead pastors in maintaining balance in marriage and family with a productive dedication to ministry. Ministers, both male and female, face challenges today more than ever before. It becomes a common practice to "spread oneself too thin." Just as the roles of a pastor or

multifaceted, so are the different styles of leadership within churches. Lead pastors have a responsibility to be effective communicators to the congregation and the pastoral staff (Robinson, 2010). Robinson affirms that lead pastors must also be compassionate in caring for all members of his church to include his staff, and he should be wise to the affairs of his church (Robinson, 2010). Galatians 6:9-10 states,

“and let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Assuredly, some pastors are fully aware of their accountability to God, to members of the congregation, to other church leaders, to their families, and the community (Berkley, 2007). Servant leaders are inspired by the fulfillment of God’s divine purpose in the lives of the people who are part of the ministry or organization (Pettit, 2008). Ministry is a divine calling. All aspects associated with being a minister are a part of that calling; to include any administrative task the pastor must take on (Robinson, 2010).

Background to the Problem

Being a church leader in any church, regardless of size, is a daunting task with rewards and challenges. Senior pastors not only influence the congregation but also has an impact on other group leaders as well as associate pastors in the church (Lee, 2005). Associate pastors can one day become the lead pastor, and the influence a lead pastor had on them can affect the way they effectively lead (Lee, 2005). Ministers must be mindful of the distractions that can affect effective ministry for themselves, the congregation, and associate pastors (Bredfeldt, 2006)

Marriage and family are the backbones of the pastor's life. A pastor's ministry placement and endurance rely on the needs and support of the family (Lee, 2017). If pastors perceive they do not receive support from their spouse and children, as well as from the lead pastor, stress and

depression can easily seep into the equation. The church and the lead pastor have an expectation for the family to be involved in ministry along with the pastor (Lee, 2017). Some pastors equate their positions as pastors with marital instability (Barna, 2009), however, Barnard and Curry (2012) offer that the dissatisfaction and instability in the clergy and marriage are due to the pastor's self-proclamation of being poorly trained and unqualified. Stress is more acute early in a pastor's career and affects both the minister and family (Wildhagen, Mueller, & Wang, 2005).

Mental health issues add a barrier to effective ministry if not addressed and handled correctly. Stress and depression are common mental health issues the pastor faces today. If mental health is not adequately addressed, stress and depression can lead to suicide (Gauger, 2012).

Senior Pastor Leadership

Being a member of the clergy often means having the ability to influence the transformation process of people or groups into being Christ-like. The church leadership can also aide members in reaching their potentials for leadership (Ferrari, 2016). Leadership styles matter, as pointed out earlier. Some pastors are not cognizant of their leadership styles, nor do they feel compelled to alter old ways of thinking and embrace a new way of thinking about church leadership (Crofford, 2014). Schmatzhagen (2014, p.14) makes an astounding reference of a note made by Barnabas's ministries:

The (pastors) are viewed by many with suspicion, the minister in a materialistic and religiously pluralistic culture hostile to biblical Christianity, face an attitude of consumerism and special interest groups in the church, and looked at more as CEO than as shepherds caring for the souls of people. They and their families are repeatedly under spiritual attack by the forces of darkness. Though many pastors are experiencing joy and fulfillments in pastoral ministry, many others are lonely, discouraged, afraid to trust others, and hammered by criticism. Studies and statistics reveal a disturbing pattern of resignations, burnout, depression, and moral failure within the ranks of God's chosen servant-leaders.

The point in highlighting the statement above is that a pastor's leadership style can affect how receptive an associate pastor may be in learning and applying those things being taught. Pastors need to leverage today's issues and not operate in a realm where it is hard for the congregation to decipher if the social and political issues align with the word of God found in scripture (Schmatzhagen, 2014). Pastors who take the time and effort to realign themselves spiritually and physically will be better capable of combating disease and distractions (Schmatzhagen, 2014). Bredfeldt (2006) reminds leaders that the great commission demands the leaders take the risk of leadership through teaching that enables followers. John Chapter 15, affirms that if you believe in God, stay connected to God, and abide in him, the believer will bear much fruit.

Although men have outnumbered women in ministry for many years, men still undergo some of the same marriage and family pressures as their female counterparts. A surprising eighty-five percent of pastors surveyed stated that they experienced contention with their churches. The pastors affirmed that their most significant challenge is with people such as disgruntled elders, deacons, worship leaders, worship teams, board members, and associate pastors (Schmatzhagen, 2014, p. 14). Church ministry comes with a lot of responsibility that some pastors are not adequately prepared for while in seminary (Exantus, 2011). Although research has been conducted to develop a knowledge base and theoretical model for church leadership, there is still a need to focus on the empirical research to show the effectiveness of church leadership (Langley & Kahnweiler, 2003).

Pastors need support to deal with issues, vital leadership issues, and to remain healthy. Once a pastor realizes the inadequacy of their health, it is at that point that a realignment or

transformation must occur to align their spiritual life with scripture revealed through the ministry of Jesus (Schmatzhagen, 2014).

Marriage & Family

Frequently minister's wives are called "preacher's wife," and likewise, the children are called "preacher's kids or P.K." The alternative names are one issue, but those names also come with an insurmountable amount of stress and pressure to "play the part." Hileman (2008) associates congregations to a family system complete with dysfunctions. The family of a minister is expected to be intimately involved in the ministry in many ways. The family members may be expected to volunteer, teach Sunday school, babysit, cook, sing in the choir; the list goes on and on. Although some family members can fulfill the duties, others cannot or rebel (Hileman, 2008).

The health of a church is dependent on the clergy staff fulfilling their God-given assignments. God instructs ministry leaders also to lead their families in the same shepherding manner that they lead the congregation. Therefore, clergy must lead their wives and children at home first (Navey, 2014). According to what God ordered, many people, specifically clergy, do not understand the original design for family life. God designed marriage to be the building block for society to survive and be healthy (Navey, 2014). Although culture affects how men and women think of men and women that it adversely impacts and often contradict biblical principles, there is still a desire to understand family life from a Christian perspective (Navey, 2014).

Lawndale Baptist Church (LBC) started a grass-roots project in 1952, and it is still active today. The LBC developed the position of Associate Pastor of Married Adults to address the needs of families (2007). The project's premise was to equip the men at LBC to understand their

role in the family and to help them through training to take responsibility for their families.

Navey (2014) asserts that when a man neglects God's spiritual assignment for men in ministry, the results are devastating for him and his family. In a group of forty-seven men, most admitted to struggles in the ability to lead and expressed the desire to improve (Navey, 2014, p. xii). For a pastor to lead his family, he must be growing in his relationship with God, the good shepherd. If the pastor is a male, he is charged with loving his wife and overseeing them (Navey, 2014).

Scripture supports the role of the pastor in leading his family.¹ Timothy 3:5-12 talks about the man leading his family and being qualified in church leadership, dependent on the ability to lead at home. In Exodus (2:11-3:22), Moses was apprehensive about answering God's call and saying, "yes." God was obvious to Moses and how the response was an encouragement to all men who God calls to lead. God will certainly step in and help any man who steps in obedience by aiding in him and overcoming his struggles concerning leadership. An important point is found in the fact that Moses experiences even more strife after he accepted the call. Just because the call is answered, that does not mean that things will go smoothly and efficiently.

Not only will a congregation fail to follow a leader who does not exhibit a godliness lifestyle, but the spouse and children will also lose confidence in the leadership abilities of the father. He displays hypocrisy (Gauger, 2014).

Mental Health

Murphy (2002) states that pastors, since 2002, are faced with insurmountable work, more problems, and more stress than ever before. According to Bhugra, Till, & Sartorius (2013), mental health is described as being able to formulate and maintain relationships with others, as well as social roles, to manage change, and to communicate positively through emotions, both happy and sad. The dark side of mental health is just the opposite. Adverse mental health is

vulnerable when there is stress akin to a level of having no emotional resilience, poor self-esteem, social status, poor integration, challenges, cultural and family conflicts, and issues with spirituality (Bhugra, Till, & Sartorius, 2013).

Depression is more than simply being sad. There is a perceived negative connotation associated with mental health issues and those who seek mental health services. The persons that seek help are described as being weak (Haynes, 2010). According to the DHHS in 2001, a report by the Surgeon General indicated that formal mental health services were severely underutilized. However, demographically, white Americans were more likely to seek help for mental health issues than blacks and Hispanics (Williams, 2007). As a whole, ministers do not seek help for mental health because they are busy caring for the congregation's spiritual, physical, and mental needs (Burnette, 2016).

Depression is the most common mental disorder, and if left untreated can lead to suicide (Morrison, 2007, p. 272). Some sticking statistics on the incidents of depression in ministry are detailed below. Krejcir from the Francis Schaeffer Institute revealed that 1050 pastors surveyed between 2005 and 2006, seventy-five percent indicated that they fought depression constantly (Gauger, 2012, p 3). Catholic priests also revealed that they experience depression seven times the rate found in the general population (Knox, Virginia, & Lombardo, 2002). In an undisclosed number of total members, the Southern Baptist Convention report that 2100 pastors and other members of church staff suffer from depression (Osgood, 1999). When pastors experience stress and depression, they are unable to feel active, renewed, and have pleasant thoughts about life (Gauger, 2012). For lead ministers, depression can lead to burnout and ultimately cause animosity towards others in the church like congregants and other ministry leaders to include associate pastors (Crosskey, Curry, Leary, 2015, p. 785-786).

Statement of the Problem

Ministers are struggling with balancing marriage, family, and ministry. Associate ministers need support from lead ministers and family to help them balance marriage and family with the ministry (Palmore, 2019) and set the tone for the entire church as well as his or her leadership staff. Effective pastors play a vital part in the development of familial, spiritual growth, while poor pastoral leadership adversely affects the family's spiritual growth (Schwenk, 2020). Although the numbers are low at this point, ministers are leaving their clergy positions. Studies conducted since 1999 indicate high rates of attrition among clergy representing all denominations (Kanipe, 2016). More specifically, the 1994 ordination class at the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church reported that 80% of their colleagues have since left the ministry (Kanipe, 2016). More than 59% of pastors affirmed that their involvement in ministry has negatively impacted their ability to effectively spread the gospel and exacerbated the instance of burnout, conflict, and moral failure (Johns, 2015, p. 2).

Some of the reason's ministers leave the ministry are described as having: (1) a lack of vision, (2) low income, (3) lack of motivation, (4) lack of appreciation, (5) diminished "self" due to being most spiritual, (6) feeling lonely, (7) lack of denomination support, (8) ministry vision but no church vision, (9) stress on the family and health, as well as (10) stress and burnout in general (Fuller, 2019, p. 1). Over 75% of pastors work between 55 and 75 hours per week, and 84% feel that they are on call 24/7. 80% of ministers report that their ministry has negatively affected their family life. 23% of ministers report feeling distant from their families (Fuller, 2019, p. 1). Leadership training and development (despite the expansive reference materials available) has gained the attention of lead pastors in recent years, however, how to lead associate

pastors effectively and other members of the clergy have not fully come to fruition (Pennington, 2019).

Today, leadership styles in balancing marriage among married clergy couples is a large research topic covered but not discussed is how the lead pastors effectively help associate pastors in that balance (Ablack, 2000). In previous research, pastors acknowledge the prohibition's feelings regarding sadness, hurt, anger, and depression (Johnson, 2019). Gary Thomas (2011) explored the possibility of harmony between the believer and the soul to strengthen the foundation for healthy and balanced leaders in ministry.

Although some research supports the issues ministers have with maintaining a balance between marriage, family, and ministry, more research is needed to explore how the lead pastor is proactive in helping associate ministers find and sustain a balance between marriage, family, and ministry. With awareness of the perceived needs of the associate pastor, lead pastors can more effectively address the issues those associate pastors are facing when balancing marriage, family, and ministry are the imminent concern. Some of the issues are directly linked to the instance of stress and depression. The awareness of the issues can aid in the decreased instance of stress and depression. In the absence of a consorted effort to address the needs of the associate pastors, the instances of mental health issues will continue to prevail. They may lead to more serious issues and more ministers believing and acting on leaving the ministry altogether.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore the associate pastor's perceptions of lead pastor's support in the balance of marriage and family with ministry as it relates to the instance of stress and depression. Prior research focused on support pastors provide to the congregation as a whole and the community (Conder, 2017; Frost & Rice, 2017).

However, few studies exist on the support provided to associate pastors. This study was essential because prior research is limited in highlighting associate pastors, specifically in their perception of lead pastor support in balancing marriage, family, and ministry, as it relates to instances of mental health issues such as stress and depression. Balance here is defined as being satisfied with the amount of time spent between work and home, not necessarily the equal amount of time spent in each area (Lindgren, 2014). The central theory guiding the study was servant leadership coined by Greenleaf based in his writings from 1970, 1972, and 1977. The servant leadership theory is an approach that focuses on the attentiveness from a leader to his followers, where the followers are empowered, and the leader helps them reach their full potential (Northouse, 2016). The servant leadership theory is akin to the study of balancing marriage, family, and ministry from the perceptions of an associate pastor on lead pastors. The key constructs of the servant leadership theory align with the duties and expectations of a lead pastor.

Research Questions

Consistent with the multi-case study design, the following questions are used to guide the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

RQ1. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their marriage health and wellbeing?

RQ2. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their family health and wellbeing?

RQ3. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their mental health and wellbeing?

RQ4. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their spiritual health and wellbeing?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do associate pastors perceive support or nonsupport from their lead pastors in addressing life balance concerns?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

1. All pastors in the study have experienced stress due to challenges in ministry.
2. The lead pastors understand that they have a responsibility to support associate pastors.
3. The associate pastors desire to maintain balance in marriage, family, and ministry.
4. The lead pastor accepts the role of the shepherd of the flock and his pastoral staff.
5. The associate pastors will feel comfortable enough to be interviewed on a topic that directly speaks to the leadership of the lead pastor.
6. The servant leadership theory is familiar to, understood, and accepted by the pastors in the study as well as being validated and applicable to the study.
7. The results of the research can be generally applied to a broader field of study.

Delimitations of the Research Design

1. The study was delimited to associate pastors who serve in Christian churches throughout the state of North Carolina.
2. The research was delimited to only ten total participants. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181), qualitative research works best with a smaller sample size.
3. The research was delimited to only associate ministers who are married and have served for at least one year as an associate pastor.

Definition of Terms

As stated earlier, this study was designed to explore the ways lead pastors can support the balance of marriage, family, and ministry for associate pastors at eight large denominations in the state of North Carolina, as it relates to the instance of stress and depression. For this study, the following terms are defined.

1. *Associate pastor*: defined as an ordained pastor serving under the leadership of a lead pastor either part-time or full-time. For the sake of the research, the associate and assistant pastor will be used interchangeably.
2. *Balance*: is defined as relating to work-life balance, where the individual perception of work and non-work activities is compatible and promotes growth in line with an individual's current life priorities (Kalliath & Brough, 2008).
3. *Denomination*: in a religious context, a recognized autonomous branch of the Christian church where Christians can live out varying understandings of faith in Jesus Christ and of what faith requires in terms of right belief and right practice (Collins, 2013).
4. *Depression* is a common and serious medical illness that shows a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleep, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide (McCoy, 2017).
5. *Life-balance* is defined as bringing a balance to work and home leisure time to live life to the fullest. It means balancing the two to achieve harmony in physical, emotional, and spiritual health (Simmons, 2012).
6. *Ordained Minister*: A believer who has been appointed by a group of believers to act as a servant to humanity on behalf of God (Hill, 2017).
7. *Stress*: is defined as any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one's wellbeing and hinders one's ability to cope (Krawford, 2008).

Significance of the Study

According to the Christian Reformed Church in North America (2005), church leadership must foster a relationship of trust and responsibility through the grace bestowed by God, and operate as a great shepherd of the sheep while taking his pastoral responsibilities as a part of his flock (p.14). Current research in this field supports how ministers help others with their marriage and family (Irby, 2016); however, there is a need for research in how church leadership encourages and supports ordained associate ministers' balance in their marriage, family, and ministry.

Westberg (1985), in his book *Premarital Counseling: A Manual for Ministers*, affirmed that ministers should recognize and understand that the family is a legitimate concern under their

tutelage and improving the lives of the family should be a priority for improvement. In light of the shift of pastors joining other churches to develop marriage preparation programs, a pointed focus shifts to pastors develop successful and tailored counseling approaches. (Irby, 2016, p 39). Pastoral leaders balance two sides of their work duties by focusing on their calling, leveling the challenges of church duties with rewards, and allowing ease in reconciling the integration of public and private life (Johnson, 2010). The balancing act employed by pastors can increase the stress level and negatively affect the pastor's quality of life (Currier et al. 2018).

The research shows that a church leadership emphasis on the work-life balance for ministers will improve the entire ministry and decrease the instance of stress and depression in associate pastors. Through the use of the flexibility of a multi-case study design and a variety of data sources, the research assisted in exploring perceptions of associate pastors in lead pastor's support in balancing marriage and family with the ministry. Later in this research, the family systems theory (Brown, 2020) was discussed and shed light on, and support needed for ministers to be cognizant of the concerns and issues within his family.

Summary of the Design

The qualitative research method was used to explore the ways associate pastors perceive church leadership encourages and supports the balance between marriage, family, and ministry for its ministers. The multi-case study design was selected because the participants were all ordained ministers, currently holding associate pastor positions in the church who are married and have children. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research methods involve exploring and understanding the "meaning" individuals, in this case, attribute to a human or social problem while in the participant's setting. Using qualitative research methods allows questions that begin with what and how to explain why certain things occur (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). An exploratory multi-case study was also appropriate for use when the subject being evaluated had no clear single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). Constructivists claim that the instance of 'truth' is highly dependent on an individual's perspective (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). An important advantage of utilizing a multi-case study design was the close collaboration between the participants and the researcher in gathering evidence through face-to-face interviews (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

The participants represented eight different Christian denominations throughout the state of North Carolina. The goal was to have at least one ordained associate pastor on staff that meet the criteria to participate. The criteria for participation were briefly addressed earlier. According to Crouch & McKenzie (2006), a qualitative multi-case study involves personal perceptions of individuals, which allows a researcher to conduct interviews yielding a comprehensive understanding of a particular experience.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides both a theological framework that gives credence to the lead pastor's support role, communication in church leadership, clergy staff management, support from family, and health issues of clergy. The theoretical framework for the qualitative research multi-case study touches on the literature that guides the study. This chapter also addresses related literature, the rationale for the study as well as any gaps in the literature. The sources used in the study are from the leading experts in the field of ministry leadership, marriage, and family, and supported by biblical text.

Theological Framework for the Study

Marriage and ministry respectively may seem dichotomous, but in the context of scripture, it is meant to coexist. God said it is not suitable for man to be alone; therefore, he created women to be Adam's helpmate. When God instituted marriage at the beginning of the Bible through the union of Adam and Eve, his word says that marriage is honorable among all, and the bed is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4). In Genesis 2:23 (KJV), Adam said, "this is bone of my bone flesh of my flesh: she shall be called women because she was taken out of man."

Throughout scripture, God provides specific guidance for women such as wives should be sober, love their husbands, love their children, be discreet, chaste, keeper of the home, good, obedient to their husbands, and to respect their husbands. Proverbs, 21:9 says, "it is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a nagging, quarrelsome, and fault-finding woman."

God does not stop there with guidance for women, and he also provides instructions for the husband. God tells husbands throughout scripture to love their wives, do not be bitter against wives, dwell with wives according to knowledge, and honor wives.

God intended for husbands and wives to be equal together in making decisions with God as the head. However, God did assign the spiritual leadership in the home to the husband (Colossians 3:18-19). Paul's letter to Timothy emphasized the family theme by calling Timothy "son" in 1 Timothy 1:2, 18. One of the most impactful scriptures to emphasize the balance of family and pastoral leadership rests in 1 Timothy 3:2-5, "Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? Scripture foretells of the consequences of failing to lead one's family properly in 1 Samuel 2:1-34. Eli was punished because of the sins of his sons. When Eli's sons refused to revere God because of their selfish greed in taking some of God's offerings for themselves and committing other vial acts, they were punished, but not by their father Eli. Eli failed to take corrective actions with his sons and therefore the entire household was punished with the death of his sons.

To further the theological frame, Ephesians 5:25 says, "husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." This study is informed through the literature from leading experts in the field of marriage, family, and ministry. It focuses on support from lead pastors, support from a spouse, support from children, and health factors for ministers. The following critical literature review provides a theological frame for the study. Starting with support from the associate pastor's family, health concerns for ministers, support

from the lead pastor through communication, clergy staff management, and the conclusion for the theological framework.

Support from family

Family support is essential to its members in times of difficulty and stress as well as in good times and celebration. The comfort and reassurance provided by family makes the process manageable especially if the situation is a trial or tribulation. Psalms 128:3 states, “that your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.” There are times when the support is absent in a relationship and very costly when not rendered. In Genesis, Eve is the first reference of a spouse who did not fully support her husband. Although she was created as a helpmate for Adam, Eve allowed her flesh to be deceived by Satan and the consequences were irreversible. The act of Eve, as well as Adam, changed the course of humankind forever. Sara, the wife of Abraham exercised impatience and self-centeredness by insisting that Abraham father a child with an Egyptian slave. The actions forced by Sarah have lasting effects even today.

Proverbs 31 provides the best example for all women to become a woman of God. The pastor’s wife and all women, for that fact can use this scriptural passage to enhance their relationships and trust for their spouses. Proverbs 31 talks about the virtuous woman who walks in the favor of God by making a good life for her husband, supporting her husband in all of his efforts, and caring for her children. The spouse of a minister is an awesome responsibility. The spouse assumed many duties inside the home as well as inside the ministry. When the minister's spouse is a wife, the expectation includes domestication and childcare duties (Nesbitt, 1995). The role of a minister's wife affects the overall ministry of the husband. In the Adventist Home, Ellen White (1952) wrote that a wife of a minister of the Gospel could be the best kind of successful

helper and blessing to him or a complete hindrance to this calling. In Genesis 2:18, the Lord God said, "it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.

Another example of a virtuous wife is Ruth, daughter in law of Naomi. Ruth for all accounts was a good and faithful wife to her spouse before his death and even more faithful to her mother-in-law upon his death. Ruth is the epitome of a supportive spouse who is also supportive to the entire family.

Andor (2013) describes three types of pastor's wives: the detached, the supportive, and the incorporated.

1. *The Detached Wife*- The wife does not see herself as being relevant to his spouse's ministry. She cares for her husband's work but not to the point of her being intimately involved. The detached wife sees her roles as domestic and occupational. She does not see herself as unique or in any way necessary to her husband's ministry. Because of the feelings a detached wife experiences, she does not see that the lack of involvement can translate into a lack of support to her minister's spouse.
2. *The Supportive Wife*- This type of wife works in the background but does feel like she is a part of the ministry and does support the husband in his ministry. The supportive wife will work with her husband at home by giving advice and making decisions but not in the public eye. Although a minister needs the support of his wife, the stress she receives from working in the background puts pressure on her and, ultimately, the family. Some of the ways the supportive wife assists her husband rest in being a watchful eye throughout the congregation as well as helping him in preaching, teaching, and counseling all in the form of suggestions only.

3. *The Incorporated Participant Wife*- This wife is actively involved in her husband's ministry. She is comfortable in her role as it relates to her husband's ministry and does everything he does, especially in his absence. Although the incorporated wife is 100% supportive, that support can backfire if the congregation starts keeping comparison scores on her and her husband. This role for a wife can also add stress to her and her family. The following further divides the roles of pastor's wives into the following roles. These roles are tough, demanding, tiring, self-sacrificing, and emotionally draining. These roles also vary from spouse to spouse (Andor, 2013, p. 28).
4. *The domestic role (roles at home)*
 - a. The spiritual role (roles at church)
 - b. The social role (roles in the community)
 - c. The occupational role (roles at work)

In a review of literature by Nwele (2009), notably, children need love, support, and care from both parents to develop a relationship with God. Children are first taught about religious education from their parents. A father's absence emotionally diminishes the well-being of the child and the family as a whole (Nwele, 2009). Children of pastors are often referred to as Preacher's Kids or PKs. Donaldson (2004) assert that raising PKs are often the most neglected aspect of a pastor's ministry. The other spouse usually has to carry the load with raising the child in the father/minister's absence from him due to the call into ministry.

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that children grow up in the church and follow the principles, laws, and guidance from God. It is not uncommon for the family to include children of a minister to attend church at least two nights a week: weekly Bible study and Sunday service. Sometimes churches are inadvertently charged with aiding in raising children of

pastors. When this happens, there is conflicting guidance between the home and the church. The confusion causes the children to rebel and not want to attend church at all (Brunner & Stroope, 2010). The goal here is to prevent the straying and encourage the full commitment to God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 provides excellent parental guidance, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words, which I command, you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk to them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates.

According to Ayers (2014) the scripture reference above tells God's children (parents) not only to impress the words of the Lord on their hearts but also to teach them to their children.

Health Factors for Ministers

Family life can be fragmented when there is an increased number is suffering from economic distress and emotional distress (Durka, 1988). Burnout manifests itself in varying forms such as fatigue, frequent illnesses, never energized, disillusionment at work, not satisfied with pastoral vocation, feeling powerless, and depression and isolation (Barna.com, 2017).

Although there are positive and negative forms of stress, the perils of ministry life add to harmful types of stress. Depression, stress, substance abuse, and infidelity will be discussed below concerning ministry leaders.

Depression

Depression is defined as a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how one feels, thinks, handles daily activities such as sleeping, eating, and working (www.nimh.nih.gov, 2018). Proverbs 12:25 states, "heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad." The scripture reference means that anxiety will lose its power in the face of positive and encouraging words.

Stress

Being called into ministry can be stressful for any pastor regardless if they are the lead or associate pastor. Some of the contributing factors for stress from a spiritual perspective are any form of temptation, pornography, sexual fantasies, or sexual inappropriateness, despair for issues surrounding church growth; jealousy of other people's success, and many different ways Satan can use you. It is easy to attribute stress and burnout to individuals who are lack-luster or just plain lazy. However, exhaustion and stress can even hit believers who are committed to serving God. In ministry, clergy who try to please everyone on the ministry staff, within the congregation, and at home is more than likely under extreme stress (Kanipe, 2016). Stress can be positive as well as negative but ironically some of the symptoms are the same such as elevated heart rate, shallow breathing, or burst of adrenaline (Frisbie & Frisbie, 2014).

Substance abuse

1 Peter 5:8 states that we must be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Pastors are no stranger to falling victim to the gales of substance abuse. In a short article written by Hal Gates, he provided details of how he suffered from alcohol addiction. Gates asserts that “many members of the church congregation may suffer but are afraid to say anything for fear of being judged and rejected” (Gates, 1988, p 3-4). A survey of priests, ministers, and rabbis indicates that 94 percent of front-line clergy and 98 percent of theology school presidents consider substance abuse and addiction in their congregation. The alarming fact is that only 12.5 percent obtained proper training to deal with substance abuse. Pastors may fall victim to substance abuse, just like any other person under undue stress (Califano & Sheehan, 2002, p. 10).

In light of the lack of training in substance abuse, pastors may have to seek help from practitioners who may not believe in God as a source of healing. To solidify the statement, only between 40-50 percent of mental health practitioners believe in God and his importance, religious importance, and the need for spirituality in treating patients suffering from substance abuse (Califano & Sheehan, 2002, p. 10). According to Yerby (2020) there are about 600 million people in the world who identify as an Evangelical Christian. There are several denominations under the Evangelical umbrella with varying thoughts on addictions such as alcohol and drugs (Yerby, 2020, p.1). With a growing concern worldwide on substance abuse, this researcher may establish a trending issue among the participants in the study struggling with substance abuse. Ministers need the same knowledge and treatment options as the laypersons in the congregation when suffering from substance abuse. The body of Christ in the congregation can aid in the healing process for the minister and his family, as they would be affected immensely.

Support from Lead Pastor

When it comes to lead pastor support to associate pastors, clearly, Joshua's selection as an assistant to Moses comes to mind. Joshua's faithfulness, obedience, and obedience to God eventually warranted his promotion as the leader once Moses was no longer there (Numbers 27:12-23). Another noteworthy relationship is the apostle Paul's relationship with Timothy. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul found favor with and chose Timothy to be his understudy. Paul groomed Timothy and placed him in positions of increased responsibility as Paul saw fit. Timothy accompanied Paul for many years acting as his assistant and liaison for several churches (Acts 16:1-3; 17:15; 20:4). Paul was adamant in his imperative to Timothy concerning building a good foundation for the coming age (Sheldon, 2012). This relationship is carded as the ideal mentoring relationship the book of 1 Timothy. Some of the ways Paul lived out the supporting

role to an associate pastor such as Timothy was through having regular open communication, providing unconditional love and expressing an authentic interest in well-being, pray for them and thank God for them, value them, and show solidarity through their differing life experiences, and care enough to give guidance and correction (2 Timothy 1:7). Paul reiterated to Timothy the importance of reminding the body of believers about the effects of the destructive nature of quarreling and godless chatter. Paul also charged Timothy to remember his pastoral responsibilities (concerns for Christian faith and practice) and to continue to pursue what he learned about the gospel of Jesus Christ and that all scripture is inspired by God (Shelton, 2012).

Paul provided instructions to Timothy on proper church conduct and to avoid letting his youthful age be a stumbling block but to set the example in love, speech, conduct, faith, and purity (Porter, 2016). Paul affirmed that older men should not be rebuked but encouraged like fathers, younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, and younger women like sisters (Porter, 2016).

The challenges that face lead pastors are the same challenges that associate pastors face. Since the lead pastor has the responsibility of mentoring the associate pastor, the lead pastor must be engaged with them to recognize when there may be more serious issues like mental health issues such as stress and depression.

According to (Strunk, Milacci, & Zabloski, 2017), most new preachers only last for five years due to not being prepared for the challenges associated with the call to ministry. One of the more alarming trends is that only one out of seven pastors is under the age of 40, which makes it a challenge for the church today (Shellnutt, 2017). The statistics mentioned above may negatively contribute to the amount of support lead pastors can afford to provide to his/her

marriage and family ministers. Couple the lack of support with a bi-vocational lead pastor, and that equals even less support the lead pastor can provide.

The duties, responsibilities, and expectations of ministers continue to grow year after year to a level that stretches thin to the point of cessation and discouragement. As a minister, placing God first, family second, self-third, and the ministry last is still a theme (Zimmerman, 1998). Lead ministers must recognize the needs of his followers but not at the expense of failing to support those who help carry the heavy load of ministry in the church. Some of the ways a lead pastor can support his ministry as well as his associate ministers are: through managing a calendar of daily events, have set office hours, make time for meals and family time together, schedule days off that do not involve ministry work for the church, maintain spiritual and physical health (Gunter, 2011). According to Breen & Matusitz (2012, p. 353), 35% of associate pastors reported communication, dictatorship, and relational issues are the leading cause of intragroup conflict and adversely affect their ministry.

Hyun & Shin (2010) undergird the work of Harvey and Williams (2002) on the challenge's ministry couples undergo that often jeopardize their marriage. Hill et al. (2003) indicate that ministers experience difficulties in marriage due to the ministry's undermining of family time and cohesiveness. Communication and staff management on the part of lead ministers are two essential aspects of support needed from associate pastors discussed below.

Communication

God communicates with man through his Holy word and the Holy Spirit. For believers to communicate effectively with God we must read, study, and meditate his word (Romans 10:17). Communication is an essential part of effective leadership, and it more than just the transfer of communication from one to another or from the leader to the follower (Grusendorf, 2016).

Pastoral roles are manifested in the congregation through effective communication (Bates, 2018). Manala (2010, p. 1) writes about pastoral leadership and congregational health by stating, "effective communication is vital in maintaining a productive working community and environment, in building positive interpersonal relationships and for solving problems effectively."

How a lead pastor communicates with subordinate pastors is critical to understanding and support. Since the beginning of time, effective communication has been a challenge. Eve's victimization by Satan caused communication between her, the serpent, and Adam to precipitate the fall of humanity in Genesis 2. God expects his leaders to communicate in three ways: honestly (Proverbs 12:19), to bless in encourage, (Proverbs 24:6), and avoid speaking foolishly but wisely and avoid babbling (Proverbs 10:19).

Clergy Staff Management

Scripture offers some of the most effective leaders for pastors today to emulate as they possessed strong styles of leadership. Paul was a servant leader in scripture, just as Jesus was. He led graciously because he acknowledged that there was something greater than he was, Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:2 states that "he believed in himself, but he believed in something bigger than himself, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Barnabas was known as the son of encouragement as he was able to calm opposing views among the Greeks and Jews (Acts 4:36). Moses was a patient leader of the people who had little faith and complained about petty affairs (Exodus 16:8). Peter was considered a rock and a stumbling block. Peter showed resilience in his leadership (Matthew 16).

Lead pastors have to develop a spirit of implementing help from others and delegating work evenly to the associate ministers. For associate ministers, finding confidants and mentors

within the same ministry staff can be beneficial for dealing with and managing the perils and conflicts that arise from trying to balance marriage, family, and ministry (Elder, 2009) and lead pastors should encourage the interaction. The relationship between ministers allows for collaboration of ideas and brainstorming problem-solving as some ministers have experienced what the other is experiencing at the present moment.

Summary

The theological perspective for lead ministers helping to promote balancing marriage, family, and ministry among associate ministers was discussed from the vantage point of support from the spouse through understanding the roles wives play in support or lack of support to the minister spouse; health factors for ministers involving the incidence of depression stress, and substance abuse, and support from lead pastor through communication and support staff management. Each facet was supported by scripture and aligns with clear guidance from the word of God. Some identified gaps in literature from the theological frame are centered on ministers suffering from different forms of substance abuse and how it affects marriage, family, and ministry. The next section is the theoretical framework for balancing marriage, family and ministry delves into theories that support the concept while still supporting scriptural edification.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Religion plays a significant role in a secure and healthy marriage and family relationships (Call & Heaton, 1997). When religion and marriage pair in life, other characteristics are affected in a positive way, such as physical and mental health, economic health, and the instance of rearing children (Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Marriage is defined as the union of a man and women making a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other in a way that is naturally fulfilling by bearing and rearing children together and renewed by acts that constitute the behavioral part

of a process of reproduction (Girgis, George, & Anderson, 2012). This study is informed by several theories: attachment theory, kinship covenant, marital enhancement through cognitive self-disclosure, the triangular theory of love, and the family systems theory.

Statistics indicate that 40 to 50% of marriages end in divorce, with 75% of second marriages ending in divorce (CDC, 2019). In 2019, 65% of the adult population within the United States identified as Christians (PEW Research Center, 2019). Therefore, the divorce rate statistics are inclusive of Christian couples, whether in ministry leadership positions or not.

Attachment Theory

In Bowlby's *attachment theory*, the premise is the enduring psychological connection between human beings. The bond may exist between a couple romantically or between a parent or a child. Bowlby created this theory in 1958, and it is still used and relevant today. Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988) introduced the attachment system in adult romantic relationships where the couple is attached and provides a haven during stressful times by providing a sense of security. When parents decide to have children, those children usually become the most important aspect of life for both parents. When God blesses a couple with children, he also gives provisions for raising them. Proverbs 22:6 states, “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” At the same time, God guides children to obey their parents. Ephesians 6:2-3 state, “honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Whether a parent or child, all have a responsibility to love and obey God.

The wife of a minister has role expectations, whether being involved in the ministry minimally for full-time or in some other serving role like ushering or teaching children's church. Often, in the beginning, the wife is 100% supportive, akin to Ruth in the Bible who said, whither

thou goest, I will go (Ruth 1:16). When wives digress from serving in the church, it is usually because of too much pressure placed on her or the husband being too involved and therefore neglecting matters at home, namely her and the children (Brooks, 2008). The pastor's wife's roles have transitioned from being a hostess and keeper of the home solely to roles aligned to more involvement in the church as well as maintaining those same duties at home to free up her husband's time to focus on more pressing clergy matters within the church and the community (Brooks, 2008). Through Bowlby's attachment theory the pastor's wife's attachment to her duties in supporting the church and its members aligns with the attachment she creates with her husband through those duties. Ultimately, the spouse's actions continue to form a stronger attachment to God as well.

Kinship by Covenant

Kinship by covenant is a theory developed by Hahn (2009) that draws on the biblical texts of the father-son relationship between God and his people as well as family. This covenant has a thematic connection to the topic of how lead ministers support the associate ministers in their marriage, family, and ministry. This theory recognizes both parties as equals most of the time and is referred to as the parity covenant (Hahn, 2009). The kinship bond binds the couple together in a mutual relationship determined by a commitment agreed upon by both parties under divine affirmations. The covenant brings the family circle into a tighter circle (Hahn, 2009), with love being the kinship language. This language applies to the family as well as to the marriage bond. Brueggemann wrote that in the ancient world of the Hebrews, the family is the main unit of meaning that shapes and defines reality and a covenant gives a person a context and meaning to his place in the world (1977, p.18). A Kinship covenant is grounded in safety and security by belonging to a family (Maxwell, 2013). The first example of a marital bond kinship covenant

was in Genesis with Adam and Eve. The couple violated the covenant with God, and despite the violation, the progression moved forward to the first family in Noah, to Abraham, to a nation with Moses and the kingdom of David (Maxwell, 2013).

Marital enhancement through cognitive self-disclosure

Marital enhancement through cognitive self-disclosure is another theory where research is directly connected to the topic of marriage, family, and ministry and how leadership encourages a balance between the three. Edward Waring (1988) coined this theory. Waring asserted eight different dimensions for increasing interpersonal intimacy through cognitive self-disclosing. The aspects of intimacy are conflict resolution, affection, cohesion, Sexuality, identity, compatibility, autonomy, and expressiveness.

Self-disclosure encompasses a person's needs, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs towards relationships. When married couples, those involved in ministry, as well as those who are not, are experiencing issues and conflict in their relationship. Waring (1988) believes that to increase their intimacy between each other and enhances the emotional satisfaction and improve family functionality; there must be self-disclosure. Matthew 7:3-4 states that, and why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eyes? Or how can you say to your brother, let me remove the speck from your eye?

The authoritative text indicates that no one should judge anyone else and that each person has issues to work on individually. Adam Clark (2020) offers that the finding fault in others is an enormous discovery as opposed to personal iniquities. Individuals should focus on and know personal defects better than those of others.

The Triangular Theory of Love

The triangular theory of love developed by Sternberg (1986) encompasses commitment, passion, and intimacy. The commitment is the thinking segment of love when a couple decides to love one another throughout any difficulties. Passion is the portion that fuels romance, physical attraction, and sexual desire. Passion motivates the couple to unite with each other. Lastly, intimacy represents the emotional side of love. Intimacy bonds the couple through warmth, sharing, and closeness (Crooks & Baur, 2014).

When couples commit to each other in the sight of God, that commitment means that there is an expectation that they can count on each other. The assurance of being there for one another brings about a sense of safety. The commitment is for a lifetime and should be permanent. When ministry leaders commit in the same way, all of the aforementioned applies to them as well. The added element is that the distraction could very well be in too much of a commitment to doing God's work and not enough of taking care of the marriage relationship and the family responsibilities. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 speak about the benefits of being committed. The three-strand cord between woman, man, and God is not quickly broken.

In a study among 446 romantically involved couples, the triangular theory of love was tested. The study revealed that the correlation between intimacy and the length of the relationship and the correlation between passion and length of relationship was significant and slightly negative, which was consistent with the theoretical assumptions. Intimacy and passion decrease with the length of the relationship. The instance of commitment and length of the relationship showed an increase in commitment to the length of the relationship. This analysis was from a cross-sectional design, and that is the only limitation to the study (Lemieux & Hale, 2002).

Family Systems Theory

The last theory to support this research is *family systems*. According to Murray Bowen (1950s), the family systems theory concept looks at the family as a whole unit as emotionally unified. Bowen believes that even when a family seemed disconnected, there is still a profound connectedness through emotions. This theory, though not necessarily designed from a biblical worldview, describes the patterns of relationships and emotional symptoms in the lives of Christians are the same as the non-believer (Brown, 2020).

Brown also offers that there will always be a lack of acceptance to any theory not wholly grounded in a worldview from a Christian perspective; but that a more significant challenge is to be able to use our God-given capacity to think to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ as in 2 Corinthians 10:5." When family members experience a change, other members of the family feel it. There is a dependence on each other in the family system theory.

Bowen developed eight interlocking concepts to the family systems theory: Triangles-a three-person relationship is the building block for a more extensive family system.

1. Akin to a husband, wife, and God and the three-strain cord mentioned earlier in this work. The tension can be shifted in the triangle. 1 Peter 5:7 says to cast all your cares on him because he cares for you.
2. Differentiation of self- everyone is unique, and even in their uniqueness, they have the power to influence others. However, someone with a strong personality is less likely to be affected by others.
3. Nuclear family emotional process- comprised of four relationship patterns that manage familial issues: marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, impairment of one or more

children, and emotional distance. All of the nuclear family psychological processes can overlap each other.

4. Family projection process- Parents, project their emotional problems on their children. Children can inherit many issues from their parents. If a parent perceives that a child has a particular problem or sickness, those perceptions can be internalized by the child and shape the child's behavior and personality.
5. Multigenerational transmission process- Children develops similar levels of differentiation of self as their parents as taught by the parent. Stages of differentiation affect the family member's lives through health, marital stability, and job success, to name a few. Typically, the higher the level of differentiation, the more stable the nuclear family relationship.
6. Emotional cutoff- when a family member tries to cut off emotional contacts to deal with unresolved problems with family members. On the surface, the person with the issue feels better on the outside, but the problem persists. Emotion cutoff can cause unsolved attachment issues and tension within the family unit.
7. Sibling Position- Research supports the archetype of the older, middle, and younger sibling.
 - a. The idea is that the younger siblings follow the older sibling and fall into the follower role. These positions affect the family relationship when it comes to marital couples.
 - b. Societal emotional process- In a regressive state, it is difficult for parents to have control over their children more so when the parents are less differentiated. These children feel like they can get away with more defiant behaviors such as

experimenting with drugs or alcohol or care less about school. The parents may feel increased levels of anxiety, and the negative impact affects the family unit.

8. The family systems theory (FST), if applied correctly, can assist families in resolving their issues and conflicts. FST is designed to help families' work as a unit to understand each other better and how each person's behavior and actions impact the entire family unit. FST not only helps work through psychological issues but also aids in health issues like anxiety and depression (Kerr, 2000).

Gillian McLean, a Clinical Pastoral Educator, applied family systems theory to his practice. McLean recognized the patterns of relationships that existed in his own family and his professional capacity. He was able to set boundaries with patients and colleagues, which helped decrease the incidence of anxiety and uncertainty. McLean was also able to set boundaries at home. Through the practice of differentiation, McLean was able to affect his entire family system and their internal self-Object perspective (1995, p 206).

In a study conducted by Kuhne and Donaldson (McLean, 1995) into the functioning aspect of five protestant male clergy from day to day, the study revealed the differences between the stereotypical ideas of pastoral work and actual pastoral work being done. The time spent on managerial activities was great. However, the pastoral task was even more significant. The pastors averaged eight phone calls a day, thirteen meetings per day, five ministry trips per day, and eleven work episodes at their desks per day. There were no visible breaks taken, and breakfast and lunch were forgone for meetings. Even during coffee breaks and bathroom breaks, the time was used to provide tours to the facility. The pastors did not end the workday at the office. The pastors took work home and continued to work by utilizing family time to schedule

more meetings or to make church business calls from home. The pastors indicated that their work and position at the church was the most crucial activity during the week.

In another study by Brock and Lawrence (2008) on role strain and marital satisfaction, just over 100 married couples were interviewed. The study occurred from 3-6 months of marriage to well over 36 months of marriage. The researcher used the chronic strains inventory, the support in intimate relationships rating scale, the quality of marriage index, and the Beck Depression Inventory. The findings were not expected. The results showed that when the role strain on the husband was less of an increase, the wives had a more significant decrease in marital satisfaction. Overall, the study revealed the value of mutual support in the marital dyad.

Mental health affects pastors as well as other people in life. In a study of the pastor's perceptions of mental health and collaboration with mental health counselors, studies reveal that spirituality and faith were both beneficial and serve as a catalyst to the recovery process when unexpected life-changing events occurred. The sample size was 111 patients who were 60 years old or older. The patients were diagnosed with depression. Through the use of spiritual and religious therapy, the instance of depression subsided, and the patients started to heal Jackson also points out that several pastors admit that they lack mental health training to assist parishioners. Hence, some have formed a correlation with mental health professionals to support (Jackson, 2017, p. 51).

Transformation and Servant Leadership

There are two theories that relate to the role of the lead pastor to the associate pastor: transformational leadership and servant leadership, which are parallels in many ways, yet differ in leader focus (Patterson, 2003). Burns (1978) birthed transformational leadership in a book entitled, *Leadership*. Transformational leadership is a theory that links leaders and followers like

associate pastors, which increases motivation and morality (Drury, 2003). Robert Greenleaf often coins servant leadership theory. To summarize, servant leadership is leading by serving within an organization as well as for individual's growth. Some of the tenants of servant leadership are valuing people, developing people, building community relationships, having integrity and trust, providing overall leadership, and sharing leadership through a shared vision throughout all levels of an organization (Drury, 2003). Lead pastors must be committed to developing other leaders in the church while expressing a true value in people and a shared vision. The act of building a community is a primary task of the lead pastor but it starts with staff and especially the associate pastor. The lead pastor cannot accomplish the task alone (Drury, 2003).

Summary

The purpose of the theoretical framework was to provide evidence and connect a theory base of variables in support of the need for balance among marriage, family, and ministry in associate ministers. This section highlighted and compared literature supporting attachment theory, kinship by covenant theory, marital enhancement through cognitive self-disclosure, the triangular theory of love, family systems theory, and transformation leadership and servant leadership. Some gaps in the literature presented are the lack of research into the husband as the spouse to the minister; current family system theories that support the changing dynamics of families today; and the impact, if any, into online church ministry duties in addition to traditional church service duties by associate ministers, what impact the additional duties have on marriage, family, and ministry.

Related Literature

This section discusses the importance and basis for the study through discussion on a durable marriage, stable ministry families, clergy leadership satisfaction, pastoral health, and

gaps in literature concerning lead pastor's support in marriage, family, and ministry from the associate pastor's perspective. There are significant amounts of research on marriage, family, and the ministry respective of each other, as well as published works that combine two of the three. All of the research conducted thus far is worthwhile and provides some robust strategies for improving specific issues relating to marriage, family, and ministry. The limitation arises when considering how all three (3) need balancing at the same time to ensure ministers are thriving and excelling in their calling as well as in their marriages and family life.

The goal of this literature review was to encapsulate the research conducted by the pioneers in the field of marriage, family, and ministry and provides reliable feedback on the importance of daily maintenance of all three areas. This review also explored current research, compare and contrast all research to develop a theory that supported lead pastors in understanding and supporting associate pastors in creating a healthy work-life balance between marriage, family, and ministry.

A literature map was used to establish an outline, which helped develop the keywords. Some of the prominent keywords are *marriage, family, ministry, associate pastor, depression, stress, and substance abuse*. This literature review followed a problem that caused a solution order. Some of the databases used were Google Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, and EBSCO. Information was derived from books, peer-reviewed journals, and dissertations mainly from 10 years back. Sources of information dating back further than ten years showed the historical perspective on the topics.

Durable Marriage

In the world of psychology, the definition of marriage is one for debate. Definitions of marriage have shifted from some well-known names such as Plato to Aristotle to Saint Augustine, to Saint Aquinas, to Kant and Hegel, to Marx in the late 18th century.

Some of the definitions of marriage build upon each other's while some are starkly different in meaning. For this research, marriage is referred to as a legal contract and civil status, and a religious rite. All of those references vary by jurisdiction, religion, and culture (Brake, 2016).

Marriage is defined as the union of a man and a woman in the eyes of God consummated through sexual intercourse, performed at a religious ceremony, and sealed through the courts in the form of a legal document. The first covenant of marriage was between Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24, when they were joined together as one flesh.

Marriage presents many benefits to the psychosocial and economic benefits of regular couples as well as ministry couples. In a study designed to look at marriage longevity among African American, seventy-one married couples who had been married for an average of 32 years were interviewed on why their marriages stood the test of time. Some of the reasons cited were their religious practices, such as frequent church attendance, constant prayer, and having faith for a long, happy marriage (Phillips, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012, p. 936).

Blackmon et al. (2005) contend that marriage advances the health of African American women, men, and children. Analyst triangulation (Patton 2002) was used for coding the responses to the open-ended questions. Gottman & Silver (2004) content that the six leading causes of marital conflict are: work stress, in-laws, money, sex, housework, and children.

The study at hand indicated that for husbands, the top six reasons for disagreements were: (a) money, (b) communication, (c) housework, (d) children, (e) love and affection,

(f) sexual relations. For women, the results were (Phillips, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012, p. 944):

(a) communication, (b) money, (c) children, (d) housework, (e) love and affection, and (f) sexual relations. Although this study provided valuable insight into what couples attributed happy marriages to (in this case, church attendance, prayer, and faith), the study is limited in that it solely looked into African American couples who attended church. The comparative date should focus on a more diverse population culturally.

Chaney, Shirisia, & Skogarnd (2016) conducted a study that focused on the connection between religion and its effect on happy marriages in African American couples. Historically and contemporaneously, religion has played a major role in the enhancement of financial, social, emotional and spiritual well-being of African Americans.

Historically, black families have identified five strengths (Robert Hill, 1968) that have aided in the success of their marriages:

- (1) strong religious orientation
- (2) a high aspiration rate to achieve more
- (3) role exchange, where the women step up to support the family
- (4) kinship circle with extended family in the community
- (5) willingness to work

The study used the family strengths framework (Defrain & Asay, 2007) to determine what makes families strong. Through qualitative measures, four themes were evidenced:

- (1) religion was the foundation of marriage
- (2) couples consistently practiced religion
- (3) couples turned to religion during difficult times
- (4) religion transcended race

This study revealed the impact religion had on support for the couples during difficult times. Therefore, clergy should be compelled to set an example for its members. The gaps identified in the study revealed the need for more robust sample sizes, more significant religious denominations, and ways religion and spirituality enriched a stable marriage.

Stable Ministry Families

According to the Barna group (2017), in a study conducted on the relational health of pastors through the lens of family, friends, and peers; the results revealed that 42% of pastors surveyed wished that had spent more time with their children of the 175 Protestant senior pastors surveyed. Approximately 27% indicated that they had problems with parenting, and 26% confirmed they were having marital issues. The higher the negative impact on family life, the lower the ministry satisfaction.

Dorothy Patterson, in 2002 published work on minister's wives sharing lessons on marriage, family, and home. Although the book is explicitly written for ministers' wives, there is practical advice and lessons for the family and children of ministry as well. In a survey conducted among pastors and their wives, 63 percent of women and 44 percent of men assert that they believe that the pastorate is a two-person job. Although 78 percent of men and 75 percent of women believe that the wives should be active in some of the church activities and necessary for the success of the husband's ministry; 54 percent of the wives feel that their husband's ministry is his priority and not the family (Patterson, 2002, p. 10). Once a wife can recognize and practice spiritual discipline, she can assume the positions of responsibility to help her husband with God's image at her heart and teach the children solitude in studying God's word and seeking him in prayer.

Bishop (2013, p. 46) affirm that clergy need to take back the authority and control in their homes based on a study conducted on the children of pastors. Approximately 65% of preacher's children indicated that people in the congregation felt that it was appropriate to "tell them what do to." Bishop confers that the authority of parents at home is real and foundational. The lines become blurred when the congregation now has a say in authority over the children as well. Statistics like these may be contributing to the decline in young adults deciding to leave the church altogether, as referenced early in this work.

Bishop (2013) offers that when clergy parents return from the church/work, the discussions between a husband and wives about "how the day went" should not be a regurgitation of the issues and concerns of the day from church work. Bishop refers to work cited by H. B. London (1993, p. 120) called "present but absent syndrome", where the fathers come home and dive right into more work topics at home.

London affirms that when there is a need to converse with the wife about the day's issues, do not engage in that conversation in the presence of the children. Move to another location or delay the conversation to a time when they are not around. Although the study reviewed valuable information that is supportive of the current research, the study was on a microscopic scale. The survey should be expanded to include a broader base of preacher's children.

Clergy families are unique in many ways but experience some of the same events in life as laypersons. To seek, find, and maintain stability, the ministry family's solutions and guidance can be found in scripture. Bishop (2012) researched scriptural help for ministry families that provide a basis for healing and transformation. God created families and family relations because of the importance to God. God considers all of us a part of his family once we accept him as our savior and ask for forgiveness of our sins. The following passages support the many ways God

describes the importance of the family from the blessing of the wife to the gift of children as well as a clear description of what the pastoral leader and clergy family should look like.

Malachi 4:5-6 states,

"look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Psalms 128:3-4 states, "your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children like olive plants all around your table." The scriptural passage celebrates the blessing of family unity. The reference of the wife to the spouse is a sheer blessing as with the gift of children.

1 Timothy 3: 2-5 states,

"So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot control his household, how can he take care of God's church?"

The scriptural text speaks to the pastor's ability to lead his family first before leading a church. It is metaphoric of an increased responsibility within the church. In John 1:12, believers are said to become a part of God's family where family is the central basis for all leadership to include the church. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul instructs that, "if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Aside from scriptural support for ministry families, theoretical support is lacking. Lee (1988) asserts that literature on family life is insufficient and fails to address clergy families

within a conceptual framework. This use of scripture will be used to connect and affirm the design and sufficiency God had for clergy families. The commitment that God requires from clergy is not one taken lightly, and the relationship with him will make his purpose and plan clear. God's design for marriage never stated or presumed perfection. The authoritative text provides the blueprint to handle all of the circumstances in life for all people and especially clergy families. The word of God says, “and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Clergy Leadership Satisfaction

The role of the clergy is often assumed to be satisfying and fulfilling. Job satisfaction as a whole concept is thought to be a practical orientation towards work, be it positive or negative, and happy or sad (Thierry, 1997). To further dissect the facets of job satisfaction, Vogelaar (1990) offers self-actualization, respect, and physical strain as more specific components of job satisfaction. As the libra scales shift towards job satisfaction, the higher the desire to go to work and excel. Hulin (1991) asserts that the higher the job satisfaction, the more committed to the profession.

Pastors who are satisfied with their profession and calling are more likely to stay committed to the office as opposed to those pastors who may not be satisfied (Hulin 1991; Shouk-Smith 1994, Verdieck, Shields, and Hoge 1988; Wilcox 1995; Zondag 2001a). If pastors are not content with their role as clergy, they have options, but the choices may impact others in a significant way.

According to Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978), pastors can elect just to quit and leave the pulpit, or they can turn to what Hulin (1991) calls, psychological withdrawal while continuing to function in their duties but display a decreased amount of commitment.

Pastors need to feel appreciated for their efforts in their jobs. Pastors need to know that what they are doing is getting results, and those statistics are derived from the congregation and associate pastors alike (Ilgen & Hollenback, 1991; Mitchell & Larson, 1987).

In a study on pastoral job satisfaction (Zondag, 2004, p 259), 600 questionnaires were distributed by mail to pastors of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Only 235 questionnaires were returned. The results revealed that 87% of pastors were generally satisfied with their jobs; consequently, 12 % were physically satisfied. The study showed a solid correlation between general satisfaction and psychological satisfaction (Pearson correlation.53, $p < .05$, p. 260).

Overall, pastors were generally satisfied with their work as well as satisfied with the pastoral profession. Therefore, pastors are dedicated and committed to the profession. Pastors were not satisfied with the physical aspects of clergy leadership. Pastors who know how their profession and efforts contribute to the well-being of others are pleased with their profession. This study helps build a foundation for this researchers' thesis towards clergy and their satisfaction in position. Lead pastors must first enjoy and feel satisfied and appreciated to lead others effectively. The gap in the literature reveals a lack of comparison for specific affective behavior between the pastor and associate pastors. The study can be expanded to include different religious sects.

In a recent study by Faucett, Corwyn, & Poling (2013), the relationship between clergy role conflict and ambiguity was measured along with job satisfaction from the viewpoint of relationship and support, denominational involvement, and intrinsic aspects. The participants were from the parish ministry in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. The 6-item scale developed by (Rizzo et al., 1970) was used to measure role ambiguity, role conflict

was measured on a 7-point scale (Rizzo et al., 1970), and job satisfaction was measured with the ministerial job satisfaction scale (Glass, 1976). The ministerial job satisfaction scale consists of 25 items organized for Liker-type scaling.

Overall job satisfaction, relationships and support, denominational involvement, and intrinsic satisfaction were the four outcomes of measurement for the study. In a bivariate correlations study scale, relationship, and support, as suspected, was highly related to job satisfaction. Denominational support and intrinsic satisfaction were not highly correlated. Role conflict and role ambiguity were independent constructs with role ambiguity rating higher than role conflict.

Overall, clergy job satisfaction was high in general. These findings are consistent with past role stress research conducted (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Kemery, 2006). Similar work by Miner et al. (2009) gives credence to the theory that clergy who had a weak internal ministry orientation based on personal religious beliefs undergo ontological insecurities when others challenge those beliefs with opposing views. Miner et al. (2009) revealed that a weak internal ministry orientation is positively related to anxiety, depression, and occupational burnout. On the other end of the spectrum to some of the findings by Miner et al. (2009), Dowson et al. (2006) indicate that clergy with a robust internal alignment resist external pressure, enabling a solid sense of personal peace to face interpersonal conflicts.

This study encapsulates the characteristics of job satisfaction among the clergy. It relates it to different facets that ultimately affect how clergy leadership interacts with others as well as how some aspects of personal health are concerned. The gaps in literature come from the myopic viewpoint of the participant population and some skewed questions from the questionnaire.

Future research is suggested to identify interactions between role stress and job attitudes other than satisfaction, such as commitment and burnout (Faucett, Corwyn, & Poling, 2012).

Pastoral Health

Ministers are no strangers to working long hours a day in and day out. The workday can get even longer during certain times of the year like Christmas and Easter gave engagement requests to attend other services, etc. Many pastors believe that the long hours and frequent trips to other congregation's events are essential to the calling of being a minister (Proeschold-Bell & Byassee, 2018). Ministers have a challenging call in the profession. The expectations from the congregation and staff are higher than most professions. The number of intrinsic factors that lead to external manifestations is also high and varied. Morris and Banton (1994) stated that ministry families experience five external factors while in the ministry:

1. Mobility
2. Financial compensation
3. Expectation and time demand
4. Intrusion of family boundaries
5. Social support

Speight & Speight (2017) also adds that pastors and their wives will experience disappointment, disillusionment, and a variety of stressors. All of these issues can cause a pounding amount of tension on the clergy. Some clergy even start to question their calling, which leads to despair, an ambiguous vision, and growing discontentment (Speight & Speight, 2017).

Tanner et al., 2013; Tanner & Zvonkovic, (2011) affirmed that when clergy has been terminated involuntarily, their health tends to decline. In stark contrast, Proeschold-Bell et al.

(2013) asserted that clergy experience depression and anxiety with the demands placed on them by their congregations and the stress of the job regardless if they were terminated or not.

Although this study uncovered note-worthy themes derived from the research questions, the study did not adequately disclose how the overall health of the clergy was affected in terms of stated statistics. More research is needed to develop a theme for top health issues clergy face given each theme mention, such as trust, abandonment, ambivalence, shock and disbelief, anger, and relief and peace.

There is an emergent trepidation in the overall health of clergy. More pastors are reportedly experiencing one or more of the following (Baruth, Wilcox, & Evans, 2014):

- 93% are over-weight or categorized as obese
- 68% have been diagnosed with hypertension
- 35% have high cholesterol
- 30% have arthritis
- 20% have diabetes

Clergy are assumed to be disciplined enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle due to their level of presumed spirituality. Still, in reality, they undergo abnormal amounts and types of stressors associated with their calling (Baruth, Wilcox, & Evans, 2014). Before this study, there were limited numbers of research material on examining the health of clergy. The study was conducted on the physical health and health behavior of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) pastors. The faith, activity, and nutrition program (FAN) program conducted the 15-month long study within 74 AME churches (Baruth, Wilcox, & Evans, 2014, p. 230).

A series of health screening was conducted to include a four-item version of the Perceived Stress Scale designed to screen and measure the situations in the clergy's life that

caused the most stress. The results revealed that stress and burnout were the two main issues for clergy. Things to note about the study were that some pastors equated being busy to being active, pastors previously erroneously reported practicing a healthy lifestyle out of feeling pressure to say so. There were gaps in the literature. The study was only on African American clergy, the study did not take into consideration the dietary intake log, and the study was only conducted on one denomination, although it encompasses several churches.

The emotional health of clergy is equally essential as physical health. Some pastors have to "feel led" in concert with Romans 8, which speaks of being led by the spirit. Feelings are not the most productive way for clergy to express themselves. In a study conducted at Duke University, 95% (1,726) of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina identified factors that are predictors for depression and anxiety (Proeschold-Bell, Miles et al., 2013, p. 439).

The study participants were mainly white males with a mean age of 52. The number one factor contributing to depression and anxiety was job stress. Clergy participate in some highly stressful events such as grief counseling, congregational demands, and weekly sermons. Clergy were prone to be depressed if they did not engage in enough work in their call to ministry. The study is an ongoing study; however, the data from 2010 did not yield any improvements from the depression and anxiety rates from 2008. More work needs to be done at the seminary level to help decrease the incidence of mental health issues when clergy start their call to ministry in the church (Proeschold-Bell, Miles, Toth, Adams, Smith, & Toole, 2013, p. 445-446).

In another study (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013, p. 73), self-care of clergy was conducted on 99 clergies (30 male and 27 female) in the form of surveys. The years in ministry ranged from 1 to 44 years. Participants were asked about their understanding of self-care. The answers were varied from the participants. Some of the responses were:

- Balancing own needs with the needs of others and demands of ministry in a healthy way
- Making a deliberate effort to balance church work and life balance
- Intentional keeping of balance between work and recreation, time for replenishment, and opportunities for professional development
- Maintaining a good, well-rounded state of well-being and wholeness by looking after themselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually
- Caring for yourself so that you can care for and be there for others
- The process of paying attention to one's own spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being, both to be a responsible pastor but also to be a caring steward of God's gift
- Taking time out for prayer and reading, time out for self, time out with one's spouse and family
- Taking time out for self. Spending time away from work. Taking time to smell the roses
- Taking time out from "being clergy" to be yourself

The study uncovered valuable levels of understanding of self-care from clergy perceptions. The gap in the research rested on not taking a holistic view of well-being for the clergy members. Only one question was asked, and the answers were scattered. The survey used can be designed in a way that allows for a broader pool for questions and answers (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013, p. 73-74).

It is critical for lead pastors to support associate pastors during the early stages of ministry because this time period is when associate pastors need the most support and guidance (Lingenfelter, 2008, p. 123). During those early stages of mentoring, the lead pastor must ask the associate pastor questions about their personal walk with Christ, issues with alcohol, sexual problems, and any other area that they may be struggling in (Lingenfelter, 2008, p.124).

In this age of contemporary leadership, lead pastors must experience self-actualization into their own leadership styles in an attempt to handle the challenges of not only the congregation but also those under his training and care (Crofford, 2014). Lead pastors are gifted by God with skills and abilities to help teach, mentor, encourage, prophesying, and guide others (Romans 12: 6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; and Ephesians 4:7-13). The church as well as other pastors continues to be a hurting organization of people in many aspects of public and private life, but with proper emphasis from the lead pastor, the concerns can be met and overcome with solid leadership and guidance. Veenker (2000) through the development of a program at the Mountain Learning Center designed to assist pastoral members in realizing the need to care for themselves and their families, guided pastors in caring for the health and well-being of the entire congregation, which included the staff. Pastors were invited to retreat-like settings and given tools to address concerns that can emerge in their personal lives and in the congregation as a whole. Johnson (2015) asserts that having a pastoral support system in place positively contribute to the emotional and spiritual well-being for the church and staff.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

This study was essential to the clergy population because there is a growing concern for the overall health status of the clergy. The evidence presented above indicated that the state of health factors for clergy is declining while the age of our ministry population continues to be over 40 years old. The study took an in-depth qualitative look into ways lead ministers encouraged the balance between marriage, family, and ministry not only for themselves but also for their associate pastors. The literature review above also indicated that there are fewer clergy below the age of 40. The findings are associated with the lack of sufficient support the associate/assistant pastors receive from the head pastors. The review also identified the effects on

the clergy family and how each member needs to be supported to maintain a happy and stable life. Although research was found where the lead pastor acknowledges the responsibility of leading other members of the ministry, namely associate pastors, there was a lack of research that described how lead pastors support the balance of marriage, family, and ministry and it creating that balance relates to a decreased instance of stress and depression.

In attempting to find research within the 10-year mark, the majority of the studies proved to date back much further. The last of the recent data indicated that this topic needs more analysis. Locating research material was easy when the topics covered all of the way's clergy help others within the congregation and in the community but not much on help for themselves and their associate pastors. Some of the topics covered during sermons were areas that those same clergy members suffered from themselves.

The research attempted to bridge the gaps that exist between the population's studied, the sample sizes, religious denominations, and improve on the qualitative data used to establish a basis for understanding and implementing the suggested ways to improve balance to ensure the purpose of kingdom work can be continued and enhanced among for years to come. To elaborate on the populations studied, the majority of the research found was explicitly on African American pastors. The base needs to be expanded to include other ethnicities, such as Latino, Asian, and Caucasian. Most African Americans are already predisposed to some of the health factors and, therefore, do not account for the entire clergy population.

Profile of the Current Study

The purpose of this chapter was to examine and review the literature applicable to the study of marriage, family, and ministry, how lead ministers encourage a balance between the three. The literature review created both a theological and theoretical framework for this study, which explored the varied dimensions of the family unit and, more specifically, the effects on the health of ministers when the marriage, family, and ministry are not supported. The health aspect covered was mental health as well as physical health issues. Current literature is not sufficient in exploring ways for lead pastors to positively affect the balanced life of associate pastors. Research on mental health issues related to pastors is scarce. The focus of many studies highlights how pastors handle congregational issues but not those of ministry staff personnel such as associate pastors. The following chapter, the methodology, will show how the development of a qualitative research design assisted in uncovering the gaps that exist in the literature and fill those gaps through further study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Lead pastor support is a critical component in helping associate pastors maintain balance in marriage, family, and ministry. Equally important is the mental health of all pastors. Pastors need to be strong and healthy, physically and mentally to continue to operate in the gift of pastoral leadership. This chapter addresses the following: the research design of the study: research problem, purpose, questions, and design and methodology, setting, participants in the study, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. The research design selected was a qualitative multi-case study because the multi-case study design is commonly used to investigate the perceptions of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research was exploratory multi-case study as it focuses on gathering the occurrence or lack thereof, the associate pastor's perceptions of support from the lead pastor based on the nature of the study (Jackson, 2012). This study utilized triangulated data composed of questionnaires, survey, and interviews to address the research questions.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Answering the call to pastor is an honorable and demanding position selects men and women are gifted in abilities. Lead pastors are charged with responsibilities to the church, community, and members of the pastoral staff to include different ministries. Part of the pastoral staff often includes associate pastors who serve various functions under the direction of the lead pastor. Schwenk (2020) asserts that the absence of effective pastoral leadership adversely affects the spiritual and mental well-being of pastoral staff and the congregation.

Associate pastors are experiencing negative incidents in their personal lives and in their role as a member of clergy which adds to stress and depression. Gauger (2012) offer that pastoral

stress and depression can lead to more serious issues of mental health like suicide. Wildhagen, Mueller, & Wang (2005) acknowledge that pastors feel unqualified to handle some issues in marriage and family largely due to inadequate training. Associate pastors need the support and guidance from the lead pastors in dealing with issues related to marriage, family, and ministry. The instance of stress and depression often plague members of clergy as a result of not having proper alignment in the three areas mentioned above. This research was designed to explore the ways lead pastors can assist the associate pastor in finding and maintaining harmony in all areas of life.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore the associate pastor's perceptions of lead pastor's support in the balance of marriage and family with ministry as it relates to the instance of stress and depression. Research is deficient in addressing and highlighting lead pastor's support in helping associate pastor's balance marriage, family, and ministry, therefore, the research is critical to the overall health and longevity of the associate pastor serving in ministry positions. The guiding theory for this research is servant leadership coined by Greenleaf (1970, 1972, and 1977) rooted in the leadership style of Jesus where he served and met the needs of his followers. The servant leadership theory is an approach that focuses on the attentiveness from a leader to his followers, where the followers are empowered, and the leader helps them reach their full potential (Northouse, 2016, p.225). The servant leadership theory is akin to the study of balancing marriage, family, and ministry from the perceptions of an associate pastor on lead pastors. The key constructs of the servant leadership theory align with the duties and expectations of a lead pastor.

Research Questions

This multi-case study design utilized questionnaires and interviews and is guided by the following research questions.

RQ1. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their marriage health and wellbeing?

RQ2. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their family health and wellbeing?

RQ3. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their mental health and wellbeing?

RQ4. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their spiritual health and wellbeing?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do associate pastors perceive support or nonsupport from their lead pastors in addressing life balance concerns?

Research Design and Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative multi-case study enabled the researcher to understand the perceptions of associate pastors concerning support from lead pastors and offer the reasons why that support is essential along with the motivation for the support. Using a qualitative multi-case study research design allowed a deeper dive into uncovering root causes of the problem through exploring the thoughts and feeling of the associate pastors. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research methods involve exploring and understanding the meaning individuals, in this case, attribute to a human or social problem while in the participant's setting. Since qualitative research methods usually occur in a participants natural setting (Jackson, 2012), due to COVID-19 restrictions and concerns, this researcher conducted telephonic interviews for all of the participants. Ethnography research was an option for this researcher however it was not selected as this form of research focuses on a group or a particular culture (Leedy & Ormrod,

2013). Interviews often disclose thoughts and feelings that may present uncomfortable or embarrassing situations from the participant's perspective (Brayda & Boyce, 2014).

Although ministry can be considered a group and a focus group interview would save time and valuable data can be obtained from the group; one negative aspect of group interviews is the fear that one or two participants are dominate and may control the interview causing others to shy away from participating (Jackson, 2012, p.90). Using the surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews allowed the participants the comfort of answering honestly without having anyone else present to hear and possible judge their responses (Jackson, 2012).

Through the use of a survey, questionnaire and telephonic interviews, data was obtained to explore from the associate pastor's perception; the various ways lead pastors provide support for balance in marriage, family, and ministry as it relates to stress and depression. The survey was used to determine the participant's eligibility for the study. Eligibility criteria encompass being an associate pastor, being married, having a family, and experienced some form of stress related to marriage, family, and ministry. After determining that the associate pastors had met eligibility criteria, questionnaires were distributed by email to the participants. The questionnaires were used to delve deeper into gaining richer data on marriage, family, ministry, and stress and depression as they relate to the associate pastor. The questionnaire answers were coded and categorized into themed grouping. Next, telephonic interviews were scheduled and began with questions designed to relax the participants and to get reliable and truthful answers to questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Interviews in a qualitative study allow more flexibility in responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Data from the telephonic interview was transcribed from the recordings for the ease of transferring verbatim responses to questions. The entire study was completed in a six-month timeframe from start to finish.

Setting

The primary setting for the study was located at the homes of all participants from the eight different churches located throughout the State of North Carolina area. The home settings were selected based on preference of the participants as well as with stay-at-home orders rendered by the governor of North Carolina. The majority of the church populations have multiple ministries and programs that each pastor must oversee. Most of the churches had several Sunday services, weekly Bible study, new believers' classes, prayer meetings, Women's Bible study classes, recovery classes, student meetings, young adult meetings, men's fellowship meetings, and ministry connection meetings. Several of the churches had as many as three locations each offering three different service times.

In a quest to capture the results from diverse religious population, some congregations encompassed a multicultural church. The churches were not located near each other and added to the diversity in the study. Some churches consisted of smaller congregations and some were larger churches all representing the state of North Carolina. The majority of the churches had been in operation for well over ten years. This researcher contacted the lead pastor initially to ask for permission to interview the associate pastors on-site at non-service times during the week subject to the associate pastor's availability. Due to COVID-19 restrictions that was changed to contact via email and telephone. This researcher made contact with each lead pastor, provided a letter of intent (Appendix A) and discussed the rationale of the study and gained approval to interview the associate pastors. Selecting a setting that was ideal and comfortable to the participants ensured that the participants were relaxed to elicit honest responses to questions.

Participants

The participants in the study were representative of the eight churches within the state of North Carolina. Each participant served in the capacity of an associate pastor either full-time or part-time. Each associate pastor served in position for at least one year. The one-year minimum was imposed because it gives the pastors time before issues, challenges, and conflicts occur. During the first year of a pastor's position, conflicts arise in their personal lives and congregational duties (Kratz, 2008). The researcher provided each lead pastor with a letter requesting approval to conduct the research with the associate pastors (Appendix A). After the researcher gained the approval of the lead pastors of each church, the researcher made contact with each associate pastor via email and telephone to explain the details of the research and to inform that the participation is voluntary. The participants received a letter of invitation (Appendix C). The letter outlined the details of the study. The letter assured the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or disclosure of identification to anyone. Each participant was asked to sign the letter and a consent form (Appendix B) for review and signature respectively. Once the participants agreed to participate and signed the consent form, a survey (Appendix D) was sent by an anonymous link through Qualtrics. The researcher asked the participants to provide a valid email address in the qualification survey. The results of the qualification survey (Appendix E) determined participant eligibility (Roberts, 2010, p. 203).

The nature of the questions in the survey focused on whether the prospective participants are married with children, feel the need for support from the lead pastors, and have experienced stress and depression. The participants were selected based on the results of the survey sent to the prospective participants. Secondly, A questionnaire (Appendix E) was emailed to each

participant through an anonymous link from Qualtrics. A pseudonym was provided to each participant in the email and was to be used for the duration of the research. Once participants completed the questionnaire, they were contacted for the telephonic interview.

There is no particular age, ethnicity, or gender restriction for the associate pastors in the study. The type of sampling selected for this study is called purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In purposive sampling, participants are chosen for a specific purpose and fit the purpose of sampling associate pastors in particular (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Associate pastors are appropriate for purposive questioning because they are considered the best source for providing relevant feedback to the research study. As mentioned earlier, there is little research that takes a wholistic view from the associate pastor's vantage point.

Each of the eight churches selected had a minimum of one associate pastor on staff. The initial goal was to have at least ten participants. Selecting eight churches was intentional to ensure a larger pool of diversity in participation for the study and for varied and solid perceptions. The sampling type for this study was intentional to gain insight from a specific population; therefore, it was purposive (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The sampling procedures were probability sampling because each of the subsets of the population in the church had a known probability of being selected as the sample (Roberts, 2010, p150; Jackson, 2012, p 100). Once the participants were selected, each was assigned an alias—for example, participant *alpha* or participant *delta*. Part of the criteria of admitting to experiencing stress and depression was adjusted to only increased levels of stress.

Role of the Researcher

The role of this researcher in the study was to serve as the main instrument for administering the survey, questionnaire, and telephonic interview with each participant.

Qualitative researchers collect data through inspecting documents, witnessing behavior, and interviewing participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Multiple forms of data were collected, and this researcher served as the facilitator of the surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews. There were no biases to note for the researcher in terms of the interaction with the lead pastor, the participants, locations or church affiliation. This researcher made a conscience effort to avoid any formal or informal interactions with all parties involved in the research. There is no information searched or exposed on any pastor associated with the eight churches selected for this study.

This researcher attended services via zoom at several of the local Fayetteville area churches involved in the study to observe the church and the atmosphere. The researcher selected participants who are unknown to the researcher. If, in the course of selection, the researcher discovered that a willing participant was known personally, the subject would have been released from participation to eliminate the risk of bias. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) affirm that a researcher must suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences in the stated subject area and undergo with is termed "bracketing" (p 255).

This researcher does not have any personal experience in the field of study involving associate pastors other than being the child of a previous associate pastor at a very young age and therefore does not anticipate the need to bracket. The goal of this researcher was to identify ways lead pastors can encourage and support a healthy balance in marriage, family, and ministry for associate pastors, as it related to the instance of stress and depression. Paalberg and Lavigna (2010) posited that lead pastors believe there is a positive relationship between themselves and assistants within their church when there is total inclusion of both.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were advised of their right to or not to participate in the study. For those who desired and agreed to participate, informed consent was obtained before the start of any research with the participants on the appropriate informed consent forms (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This study involved the use of human participants. Therefore, great care was taken to ensure that no harm was brought on the individuals participating in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 102). Each participant was provided a pseudonym to protect his or her identity before, during, and after the study. This study involved discussing stress and depression as they relate to marriage, family, and ministry. Individuals could consider these areas private and sensitive. Participants were informed upfront about the nature of all aspects of the study, the questionnaires, and the telephonic interviews. The information gained from the participants in the study was secured in a locked file cabinet at the private residence of this researcher. Digital data was filed in a private folder and password protected. The information was not shared with any of the lead pastors representing the churches of the associate pastors who participated in the study.

A debriefing was conducted after the study to clear up any ambiguities and allow participants to ask further questions for any misunderstanding (Sales & Folkman, 2000). Each participant was addressed using the pseudonym that was assigned to them before being interviewed separately to protect the confidentiality of each participant. The privacy of the participant's personal information was protected from public access as well as from others in their organization.

This researcher understood the purpose of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was to protect the participants and ensure they do not experience any harm from any aspects of the

study. The IRB examined the proposed work conducted on human subjects, ensure that informed consent is achieved, and ensured the participant's privacy and anonymity are protected. The researcher used pseudonyms for the participants as opposed to real names. Ethics were strongly enforced from the beginning of the study until the end (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

The IRB members were responsible for approving all proposed research conducted for the study (Roberts, 2013, p. 32). Since the proposed research involved using questionnaires and interviews with a human subject, the researcher gained approval from the IRB before any research his conducted (Robert, 2013). Detailed and comprehensive information set was provided to the IRB detailing how the participants were recruited, and how confidential information obtained was protected (Roberts, 2010). All documents collected in the form of surveys, questionnaires, notes, and recordings from the interviews were password protected on the researcher's personal computer and hard copies kept in a safe at the residence of the researcher.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The qualitative multi-case study design was appropriate for exploratory research designed to capture rich data in the form of surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This multi-case study concentrated on family and religious contexts to gain an insightful real-life perception of lead pastors support on balancing marriage, family, and ministry. To comprehend the full extent of the problem required an in-depth conversation with each participant where open and honest conversation uncovered the experiences. Another reason for employing a multi-case study method of research was for the ability to establish a rapport with the research subjects (Mouton, 2001).

The steps involved in data collection include setting the boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment, collecting data through unstructured and semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual aids, as well as determining the protocol for recording data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal of carefully selecting participants and the site was to help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This section described the types of data collected in the qualitative multi-case study. Typically, data collection in qualitative studies is conducted through observations, interviews, documents, and digital audiovisual materials (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An in-depth description of the data collection methods, along with the instruments, is described below.

Collection Methods

Multiple sources of data collection were used in the study, which is consistent with qualitative studies. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), not only do qualitative study inquirers use several forms of data collection, but they also spend considerable time in the natural setting to gather information from the participants. In the event of the church setting not being a preferred location for conducting the face-to-face interviews, an alternative location was decided. Because of COVID-19 precautions, face-to-face interviews were not possible, therefore, Zoom or a telephonic interview was an acceptable alternative. Triangulation of data is what Creswell & Creswell (2018) describe as data collected through multiple sources, which may include the interview process, observation, and data analysis. This study utilized surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews as a suitable alternative to the preferred method of face-to-face interviews.

Instruments and Protocols

The researcher provided specific information about the instrumentation used in data collection. When using surveys, the researcher should give the survey instrument a name whether it is one already in circulation, one that has been morphed to suit the study better, or if the researcher designs the survey for the proposed study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This researcher used Qualtrics to develop questions for both the survey and the questionnaire that were sent via email to the participants. The telephonic interview questions were developed based on the data collected from the survey and questionnaires. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), each interview should be no longer than two pages in length with space in between each question and answer for dictation of short answers. No more than ten questions were asked of each participant.

Initially, data was obtained through the use of an emailed screening survey. Each potential participant was provided the link to complete a short survey. The survey (Appendix D) was used as a screening criterion for participation. The questions on the survey disclosed basic information on each participant. The questions were used to determine participation criteria for each participant. Some of the questions were centered around whether the participants were actively serving as an associate pastor, had a spouse, had children, access the need for clergy support and if the participant had experienced any issues of stress in their personal lives related to their current position as a member of clergy.

Next, the surveys (Appendix D) were screened for optimal participation of twelve, but ten were selected instead. This researcher determined the acceptability of each candidate for participation in the study. Once the participants were identified, they received correspondence by their email address provided, however the pseudonym was provided for use moving forward.

Upon the commencement of collecting and recording data, real names were not be used from that step forward. All participants selected were contacted via email (Appendix C). As soon as each participant was selected and notified, a second email was distributed to each of the selected participants with a detailed questionnaire (Appendix E) containing ten open-ended questions that probed deeper into areas of family support, and health assessment questions centered on stress and depression, and lead pastor support. The use of open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gather sufficient rich descriptions that provided in-depth insight (Mouton, 2001).

Each participant received an invitation via email to schedule a telephonic interview at their selected location respective of each participant. The calendar contained various time slots by specific days for them to lock in a solid date/time group. Each participant selected a time slot with the pseudonym provided in the email. Once each participant returned the calendar, the researcher confirmed with each participant that they were scheduled for a telephonic interview, or a zoom call.

Procedures

Each interview lasted no more than 45 minutes to an hour with the exception of two that lasted over the one-hour time limit. The interviews were, with participant permission, audiotaped to ensure that there is no influence of bias on the researcher's perspective. Using a recording device allowed the researcher to focus more on the quality of the content in the interview and less on taking copious notes. Although the telephonic interviews were recorded, to reassure the participants had the researchers undivided attention during the interview, the researcher took a minimal number of hand-written notes during the interview.

Surveys

The survey (Appendix D) was used to gather basic demographic information such as, whether or not they are an associate pastor, marital status and, whether or not they have children, and questions to gauge their experience with stress and depression related to the duty of associate pastor. Qualtrics was utilized for conducting the surveys and questionnaires.

Questionnaires

After the screening was complete, a questionnaire (Appendix E) was administered via email to gather a deeper analysis of the associate pastor's perception of needing support from the lead pastors in the balance of marriage, family, and ministry (Ablack, 2000). The questionnaire was designed to elicit a more detailed current and historical account of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.188). The questions were divided into three categories: family support, perceptions of lead pastor support, and mental health issues, such as stress and depression. Stress and depression are known to be present in clergy who present issues with balance in marriage, family, and ministry (Kanipe, 2016; Frisbie & Frisbie, 2014). The questions were formulated based on the literature review in chapter two and served as a precursor to the telephonic interviews. The questionnaire was designed to scratch the surface and was used later to facilitate the deep dive approach in the interview process. The questionnaires were administered prior to the telephonic interview that took place later in the research study. The use of the questionnaires made interviewing a larger number of participants easier, allowed data to be compared, allowed the generation of rich data through open-ended questions, and most importantly, allowed for confidentiality (O'Leary, 2014). The results of the Questionnaire helped guide the interviews and helped dive deeper into answering the research questions. This researcher synthesized and organized the data, while looking for themes derived from the

questionnaires to categorize. The data collected from the questionnaire helped frame the interviews by providing clarity and protocol for the data collection (Ponelis, 2015). This researcher used the fact-based answers obtained from the questionnaires to frame the telephonic interview questions. Providing questions via email is a means to gaining honest answers to very sensitive topics and tend to put the interviewee at ease not being face-to-face to answer (Phellas, Bloch, & Seale, 2011).

Telephonic interviews

Semi-structured interview questions were used during the telephonic interviews because of the usefulness in approach. This researcher established a research protocol to aid in preparing for the interview to ensure the questions asked aligned with the information outcome desired as well as to focus on what was most important to ask during the interview. The use of interview protocol was also used to remind the researcher to reiterate the purpose of the interview and what will happen to the information gained from the interview, to the participants (Patton, 2015). The semi-structured interview questions are located in Appendix F. The questions were developed ahead of time and based on the data collected from the screening questionnaires and surveys. The goal was to ask a moderate amount of semi-structured questions that allowed for more probing questions to be asked of each participant. Interviews are often conducted in a relaxed natural environment of the participants (Ayers, 2014). This researcher attempted to conduct the interviews in the participant's natural setting, however, if it was determined by the participants not to utilize the church as a setting, an alternative location was selected. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, telephonic interviews had to be conducted as opposed to the preferred method of face-to-face interviews. A deeper dive into the responses provided from surveys and questionnaires of the participants was the focus of the telephonic interviews. Face to face

interviews allow the foretelling of historical information as well as allow some level of control over the line of questioning from the interviewer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Procedures

First, this researcher gained the approval to conduct research on human subjects from the IRB (Appendix G), then the lead pastors at each location was contacted via mailed correspondence and via email that asked the contact information for each associate pastor and for permission to contact the associate pastors for the research. The letter thoroughly explained the intent of the research. (Appendix A). The researcher contacted each perspective participant via email and asked if they would be interested in participating in a study. Each perspective participant received two key pieces of documentation, an informed consent form (Appendix B) and a letter of invitation (Appendix C) for participation in the study via email, which explained the details, and selection criteria for participation. Once each participant agreed to complete the informed consent and sent it back to the researcher, the screening survey (Appendix D) was sent via email to each participant. The survey was used to determine who was eligible for participation. The survey (Appendix D) was comprised of five questions ranging from demographic data to questions concerning family and associate pastor positions and health issues.

Next a questionnaire (Appendix E) was emailed and used to dive deeper into the specifics of perceived lead pastor support, family support, and health issues related to stress and depression. This researcher relied on the data collected from the questionnaires and interview to gauge the instance of stress and depression the associate pastors may have experienced. Lastly, this researcher used semi-structured interviews because the questions can be developed ahead of time allowing the researcher more time to focus on the content of the interview (Appendix F).

Semi-structured interviews were used as a guide to facilitate a free flow of information for data collection. Open-ended questions were used to encourage a discussion with the participants. The researcher served as the interviewer and the questions were asked during the telephonic interview, which lasted between 45 minutes to an hour, as stated earlier. Since face-to-face interviews were not feasible or safe, the researcher set up Zoom calls or telephonic interviews as an alternative. Once all of the documentation from the research was received and finalized, data analysis took place. Each interview was immediately transcribed from the recording upon completion of the interview.

Data Analysis

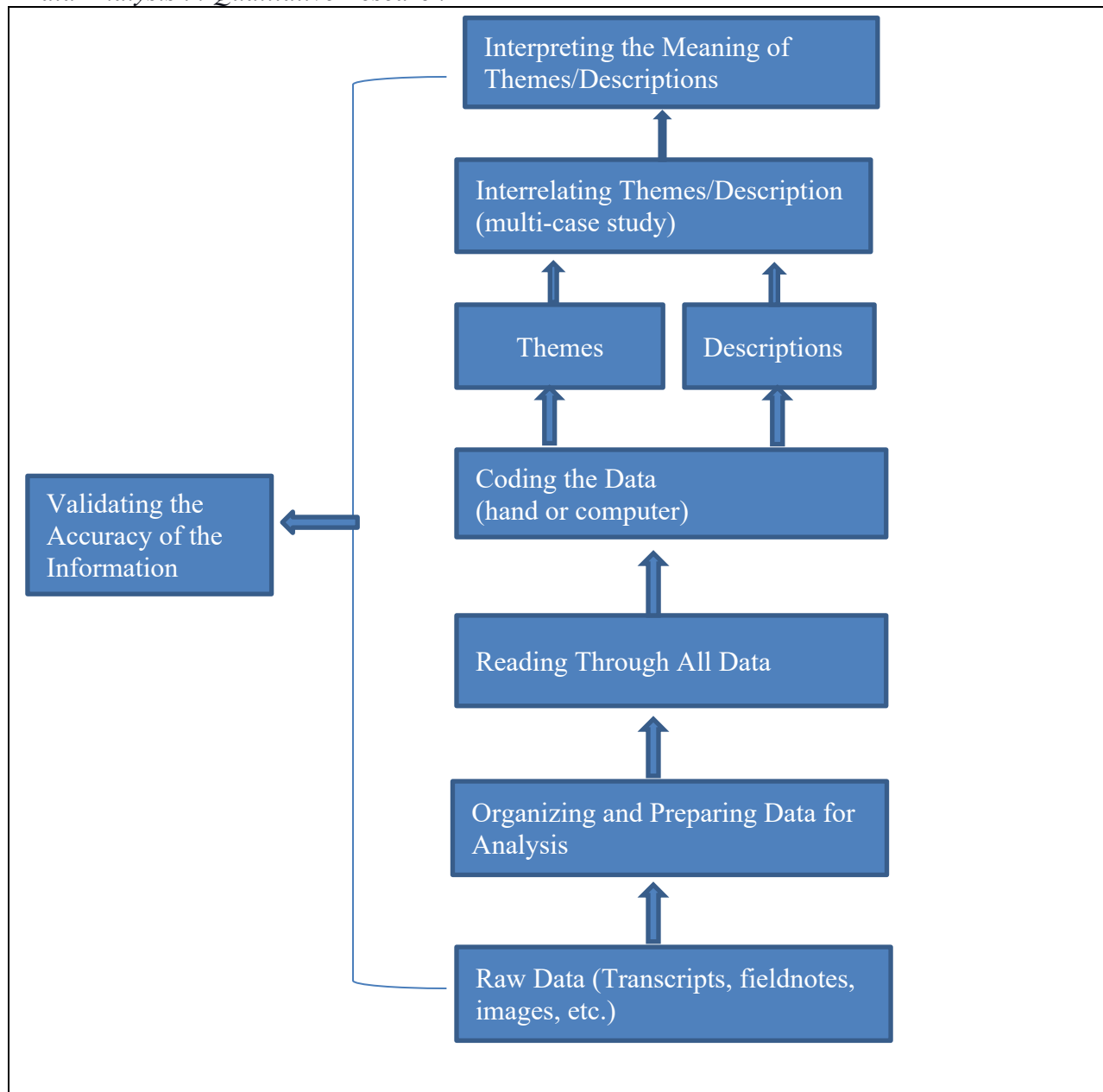
The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the text gained from qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data was collected and analyzed from all ten individuals in the study and then coded. Once the data was coded, themes were categorized and used to answer the research questions.

Analysis Methods

The intent of data analysis was to understand the text provided in the surveys, questionnaires and data collected from the telephonic interviews and use it to find a pattern. The data analysis took place in sequential steps from the specific to the general (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the present study, the researcher identified the coding process used to code the data into themes that were categorized for further analysis which allowed the reader to understand and appreciate how the data was deduced or transformed (Roberts, 2010). The researcher was the instrument for conducting data analysis, making judgments about coding, theming, and decontextualizing, and re-contextualizing data (Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017).

In Thematic Analysis the goal is to search for themes from data collected, which is just like a code (Samuel, 2011). The codes relate back to the literature review. The themes evolve after reading the transcripts and hand-written notes that made up the data. A framework was established for coding each theme in the form of a spreadsheet or matrix. Short answers to subthemes for each participant were annotated for each by subthemes number one to a determined end number. These subthemes were derived from the transcripts. This researcher paid special attention to repetitious topics, metaphors or analogies, similarities and differences, and missing data (Samuel, 2011).

Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194, offer a flowchart for data analysis that is easy to follow and understand (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Data Analysis in Qualitative Research*

Note. This figure offers a look at the sequential steps to follow in qualitative data analysis as a process from specific to general and consisting of multiple levels of analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194).

Raw data in the form of transcripts, field notes, etc. are organized and prepared for analysis after reading through the data; it is coded and further categorized as a theme or a description, then coded as interrelating themes/descriptions (case studies). Finally, the

interpretation of the meaning of the themes/description is determined occurs before validating the accuracy of the information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194).

Coding can either be open, axial, or selective coding. This research elected to use axial coding as it relates back to the core category (which is the central issue of the study) to other categories. A thorough thematic analysis can yield findings that are insightful and trustworthy (Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017). The data analysis procedures are described as:

1. Once the screening questions and surveys were completed, the participants were selected based on the results of the survey in years in the associate pastor position, marital status, expressed issues with stress and depression.
2. The in-depth telephonic, semi-structured interview was recorded (if agreed to by all participants) and hand-written notetaking was utilized to capture key words from the open-ended questions the participants answer.
3. Lastly, axial coding was used to identify any recurring themes obtained from the participant's interviews. According to Saldana (2018), axial coding is useful in interviews, document collection, and videos. Coding allowed this researcher to sift, align, categorize, and thematically sort the data (William, 2019). This researcher ensured that the coding was not prematurely determined to prevent adversely affecting other emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). Although the interviews were not videotaped, they were recorded as mentioned earlier. The process of recording allowed this researcher to capture the rich data provided by the participants.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, data trustworthiness is a primary focal point (Devault, 2019). According to Roberts (2010), the researcher often refers to the concept of validity as trustworthiness (p. 161). There are four key concepts to data trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. This researcher deliberately employed any and all measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. One such way was to explain that participation in the study was 100 percent voluntary and that the participant could drop out of the study at any time without providing any reasons to the researcher. Shenton (2004) asserts that participants should be encouraged to be open and honest from the start.

Qualitative research has continued to grow and be recognized and valued. To conduct qualitative research means conducting it in a manner that produces meaningful and useful results. Data analysis is required for acceptance as trustworthy. The analysis must be accurate, dependable, and meticulous through recording, systematizing, and disclosing methods of analysis with enough details to enable the reader to determine the process as credible (Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017). This researcher reiterated as often as necessary the deliberate efforts to protect the participant's confidentiality in identification and data obtained during the study. The table below shows how researchers address criteria for trustworthiness during each phase of thematic analysis.

Table 1***Establishing trustworthiness during each phase of Thematic Analysis***

Phases of Thematic Analysis:	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness:
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data	Prolong engagement with data, triangulate different data collection modes, document theoretical and reflective thoughts, document thoughts about potential codes/themes, store raw data in well-organized achieves, keep a record of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Peer debriefing, research triangulation, reflexive journaling, use of a coding framework, audit trails of code generation, documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefings
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Research triangulation, diagramming to make sense of theme connections, keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: Reviewing Themes	Research triangulation, themes and subthemes vetted by team members, test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Researcher triangulation, peer debriefing, team consensus on themes, documentation of team meetings regarding themes, documentation of team naming
Phase 6: Producing the report	Member checking, peer debriefing, describing the process of coding and analysis insufficient details, thick description of the audit trail, report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Lincoln & Guba (1985).

This researcher took the data collected from surveys, questionnaires, and the telephonic interview recording and transcribed the data which assisted in coding. The initial coding helped the researcher put the rich description down on paper to start the organization process of data collection. Thirdly the codes were categorized into themes that helped answer the research questions. Fourthly, once the themes had been identified, contradiction between codes and

themes were accessed. If this researcher discovered a mismatch between codes and themes that were too broad, the themes were split into separate themes if necessary. The process continued until the researcher was confident in the correct number of themes was distinctive and coherent. Fifthly, the themes identified were descriptive in what the theme was actually about and what was so interesting about the theme. Lastly, this researcher ensured that the final report was replete with enough information for the reader to evaluate the quality of the research.

Credibility

Creditability was established through the triangulation of multiple forms of data and member checks of data. Triangulation of data asked the same research question of each participant and collected that data from different sources such as surveys, questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and recordings, to answer the research question (Yin, 2018). Triangulation of data was ensured by the construct of validity from the data gathered using surveys, questionnaires, and semi-structured telephonic interviews in the research study. The data collection for this study occurred in a sequential process where this researcher reviewed the data from the surveys and questionnaires while the interviews are occurring (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To elaborate on member checks, the member checks ask the participants to review the data collected from the interviewer and the researcher's interpretation. The participants appreciate the member check method because it gives the security in knowing that their answers have been captured correctly. Therefore, trust is an essential part of the member check process (DeVault, 2019).

This researcher disclosed any background, qualifications, and experiences related to the study. Researcher reflectivity is also essential in credibility. This researcher recorded personal commentary of initial impressions of each data collection session as this plays a role in

progressive subjectivity in monitoring the researcher's own developing constructions, which is essential in building credibility (Shenton, 2004). This researcher provided a thick description of the experience under study. Credibility can be promoted as it aids in conveying actual situations that have been investigated. Shenton (2004) affirms that if a researcher retains a reporting system that defines a series of types in a typology and clarifies the types using real qualitative incidences, the reader will be able to access how far the types embrace the actual situations. This researcher ensured that debriefs were conducted often with supervisors.

Dependability

Dependability is described as relating to reliability and showing that the findings of research are consistent and repeatable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sometimes data is assessed through the performance of data audit. The goal of dependability is not to generalize beyond the sample (DeVault, 2019). Shenton (2004) asserts the close tie between dependability and credibility. Shenton also states that overlapping methods such as interviews and focus groups demonstrate that credibility goes the distance in certifying dependability. This researcher accurately documented the processes in the research and used triangulation to ensure varied means of data collection were used to balance weak data collection points were reimbursed by the use of alternate data-gathering methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability can be strengthened by interviewing multiple participants in the study with the same consistent questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through interviewing, codes are codified and then themes are generated.

Confirmability

Confirmability shows that others can replicate the research data. Confirmability is a way of ensuring that the study measures or tests what it is supposed to measure or test akin to internal validity (Shenton, 2004). Shenton quotes Miles and Huberman's assertion that an essential benchmark for confirmability is the scope to which the researcher admits his or her own biases. Triangulation is used to reduce the effect or inclusion of researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This researcher worked to ensure that the findings derived from the study were the results of the participants as opposed to the preferences of the researcher. This researcher used an audit trail to document the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 208). This researcher used multiple sources of data collection and used them all to corroborate the impressions from the associate pastors being studied from various denominations (Yin, 2018). In other words, this researcher used surveys, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews as a convergence of evidence that all lead to the same finding. Microsoft excel was the computer application used to categorize the data into codes, themes, and subthemes. This researcher made the study available upon request to share the results of the study data for potential reproduction of the research. Confirmability is strengthened through the process of auditing. The researcher had a responsibility to provide the data collected during the research which includes, notes, sampling, reflective thoughts, research materials, the findings and data management (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). All of the transcripts from the interview were maintained in a safe located in this researcher home. All data transcribed onto the computer was password protected.

Transferability

Transferability generalizes the findings in a study and attempts to apply them to other situations and contexts (Devault, 2019). Shenton (2004) takes the previous statement to another echelon and adds that the concern for a study's transferability lies in demonstrating that the results of the study can be applied to a larger population. It was this researcher's desire to conduct the study in a way that was easily applicable to other groups within the clergy setting as well as different ministries and inclusive of other denominations. This study has the potential to be applied to pastoral leaders not only in every Evangelical church but in all denominations both nationally as well as internationally. Although this researcher cannot guarantee transferability, the use of thick description in the study as a database provided the potential of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter Summary

This chapter on research methodology was replete with a qualitative multi-case study design method. This chapter reemphasized the research problem, purpose, research questions, and disclosed the research design and methodology, in summary, used in this researcher study. The chapter also described the setting for the study, the participants, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. Lastly, the data collection methods and instruments used in the study, along with data analysis and a chapter summary were included.

The goal of this research project was to explore the associate pastor's perception of lead pastors support in balancing marriage, family, and ministry, as it related to the instance of stress and depression. The journey for completing a qualitative multi-case study may seem like a daunting and impossible task. However, the word of God says, "But Moses; hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his

hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So, his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (Exodus 17:12).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four focuses on the qualitative data analysis and findings derived from the multi-case study in response to the research questions. The chapter is organized to inform the reader on the protocol, procedures, and measures utilized in data collection, participant selection for the research, the participant demographics, and data analysis and findings. The participants interviewed represented eight churches located throughout the entire state of North Carolina of various denominations. Each participant completed a screening survey to determine eligibility. Once eligible, Qualtrics was used to send each participant a questionnaire. After the questionnaires were completed and sent back through Qualtrics, each participant took part in an interview via telephone. Lastly, the data was analyzed and compared to draw conclusions. Some of the subthemes generated from the analysis were: multiple additional duties as an associate pastor, conversations with spouse about duties as an associate pastor, stress on the mind and body, coping with stress, purposeful life, balance, maintenance of spiritual life, relationship with the lead pastor, marriage training, ideal healthy support, and checking in on associate pastors.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

Eight different churches located in different cities throughout the state of North Carolina were used in this multi-case study. Approval was gained to contact the Lead pastors via email which was a change to the original intent of mailed correspondence. The data was analyzed and compared and conclusions were drawn. Information was compiled from triangulated data in the form of surveys, questionnaires, interview transcript recordings, and interviewer notes. In support of trustworthiness and study replication possibilities, data was carefully compiled initially with the transcription of the interview recordings, researcher notes, and the data from the

questionnaires. The collected data was organized in an excel spreadsheet, coded, and organized into themes.

This researcher read through and digested the answers to the questionnaire several times before any form of annotation was completed. As indicated previously, once this researcher became intimate with the responses, through reading and rereading data provided by the participants, the short answers were carefully analyzed for codes. All codes were annotated in excel by question and by participant. The codes were color-coded and quantified to easily identify like codes. A legend was created at the bottom of the spreadsheet with detailed meaning associated with the colors. The codes were reviewed and consolidated to develop themes based on the number of recurring themes. To support confidentiality, any personally identifiable information was not used in the code, theme, or categorizing processes. Only the perspectives from the participants were captured and used in the compilation of data. This researcher decided not to use pre-determined codes and only use data collected from the participants to develop codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 196). All of the participants held multiple duties as associate pastors. All participants admitted to experiencing stress on the mind and body. All of the participants used studying the Bible, devotion, meditation, music, and prayer as a means of maintaining their spiritual life.

Demographic and Sample Data

Initially, letters of intent were sent via United States Postal Service to 50 lead pastors located throughout the state of North Carolina. Due to a lack of response, a request was made to the IRB to allow the researcher to send the letters of intent via email to any pastor that had not responded to the mailed correspondence. Ten lead pastors expressed approval to contact their associate pastors. Twelve participants were the desired number of participants for the study.

Twenty associate pastors agreed to participate, however, due to time constraints and incomplete data, ten participants were selected as a minimum based on signed consent forms, completely answered surveys, questionnaires, and telephonic interviews. The instruments used in this study can be found in Appendices D, E, and F. The screening survey (Appendix D) consisted of five questions and were used for qualification purposes to participate in the study:

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
2. Are you currently serving as an associate pastor under the senior/lead pastor at your church?
3. If you answered yes to the previous question, have you been serving as an associate pastor under the senior/lead pastor for at least 1 year?
4. Are you married?
5. Do you have children?

The questionnaire (Appendix E) consisted of ten short answer questions designed to open the participants minds in preparation for the semi-structured interview. The questions focused on the associate pastors' duties, marriage and family, and the lead pastor. The Semi-structured interviews (Appendix F) were conducted after the questionnaires were completed in Qualtrics. An email was sent to the participants with time slots to schedule their interview. On the date and time of the scheduled interview, the researcher thanked the participant for their willingness to participate in the research study which seemed to relax the participants. Each interview began with a short script detailing the purpose of the research, ensured confidentiality, the option to cease the interview without penalty at any time, and permission to record. Once the researcher gained verbal confirmation, the recorder was started and the interview commenced. Each participant was asked a total of two questions and given ample time to answer the questions in free form. Any ambiguous areas were clarified during the interview. This researcher reached out to two participants (Kilo and Sara) for more clarification and elaboration resulting from the

interviews. This researcher added the questions and answers on the interview transcript and sent them back to the participants for review/correction.

Axial coding was used to identify recurring themes from the results of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Coding allowed this researcher to sift, align, categorize, and thematically sort the data (William, 2019). Repeated themes were consolidated into broader categories derived from the data collected from the questionnaires and semi-structured interview and related back to the research questions. This researcher first coded the data derived from the questionnaires. As mentioned previously, there were no pre-determined codes. The codes were then studied before themes were developed and then transferred into broader categories.

The interviews occurred only once. After the interviews were completed, the researcher reminded the participants that the interview transcripts would be provided to them for review and corrections. All of the transcripts were returned within two days. There were only minor corrections made by the participants. The researcher redacted names and any identifiable information from notes taken.

The ten selected participants were given pseudonyms, listed in Table 2 below. Seven participants were male and three were female. Three participants served as associate pastors at Methodist churches, four served at Baptist churches, two were non-denominational, and one was Episcopal. Most of the duty descriptions of the associate pastors were administrative and only one considered himself an executive pastor.

Table 2***Participant Profile and Demographics***

Name	Gender	Role in ministry	Type of church	Fulltime/Part-time	Duty Description
Alpha	Male	Associate Pastor	Methodist	Part-time	Administrative
Bravo	Male	Associate Pastor	Baptist	Part-time	Executive
Charlie	Male	Associate Pastor	Methodist	Part-time	Sermon prep/Bible study
Delta	Female	Associate Pastor	Non-denomination	Part-time	Prayer line/Member checks/Bible study
Echo	Male	Associate Pastor	Baptist	Fulltime	Administrative/Bible Study
Foxtrot	Female	Associate Pastor	Baptist	Fulltime	Administrative/Women's Bible study
India	Male	Associate Pastor	Episcopal	Part-time	Administrative/Bible Study
Kilo	Male	Associate Pastor	Methodist	Part-time	Administrative
November	Male	Associate Pastor	Baptist	Part-time	Worship lead/ Bible Study/New Disciple training/Children's church
Sara	Female	Associate Pastor	Non-denomination	Part-Time	Counseling/Bible study

Data Analysis and Findings

Data analysis for this multi-case study revealed 203 initial codes overall. The result of the content analysis from the questionnaire was deduced to 11 subthemes identified. The themes were displayed and correlated to the participants who identified with that particular theme (Table 3).

The final themes and categories were confirmed once the data from the semi-structured interview was coded and compared to the data from the questionnaire. The use of comparative analysis supports and strengthens the level of confidence for the data collected.

Each participant provided a response to short answer questions through Qualtrics. As affirmed previously, the responses were compared to the responses provided in the interviews. Both were used to answer the research questions. The responses to each question are summarized below and subthemes were tied to each research question.

The following questions were sent to each participant via Qualtrics:

1. Can you describe a typical workweek as an associate pastor? Please include any specific tasks you are responsible for.
2. Please describe the most prevalent conversations you and your spouse have concerning your role as an associate pastor.
3. Please describe a normal week for you and your family. How do you handle any issues that affect your family in a negative or positive way because of your position as an associate pastor?
4. Can you describe your definition of stress?
5. Describe what you do to cope with or eliminate stress that occurs as a result of you being an associate pastor.











Research Question 1






In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive their role as a ministry team impacts their marriage health and wellbeing?

This question was intended to provide data that suggests the roles associate pastors play in their ministries have a profound impact on their personal lives in terms of marriage be it negative or positive. Figure 2 shows participant responses to multiple duties as an associate pastor as well as how many actually communicate with their spouses about those duties.

Figure 2

Subthemes from RQ 1

Participants	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Echo	Foxtrot	India	November	Sara	Delta	Kilo
Themes										
Multiple duties as associate pastor										

Conversation with spouse about duties as associate pastor										
-----------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--

All 10 participants indicated that their marriages are indeed impacted by their roles in ministry. There were three themes that emerged: (1) communication and planning, (2) arguments over lack of family time, and (3) respect and trust.

Communication and planning

Alpha

Alpha was the only participant who indicated that there were no serious issues in this area because he has fewer duties and obligations in his ministry role. Alpha stated that “He considers himself semi-retired which contributes to good communication between him and his spouse.” Planning is also easier for him because he has more time to dedicate to family. Alpha is able to spend more time with his grandchildren because of his limited duties as an associate pastor.

Bravo

Bravo indicated that he and his wife communicate and agree that putting forth the effort to work hard during the week as a pastor works best for them. This effort will make things easier and not feel guilty to do things after hours or to miss some events or programs. This practice decreases the number of arguments they engage in to almost zero.

Charlie

Charlie stated that he and his wife engage in prayer and devotion every morning followed by prayer in the evening. Those times are called “sacred maintenance” and nothing interferes with those precious times. He asserts that his wife has no problem reminding him that he is not the only one that can take calls but he understands that those calls are for him specifically.

Charlie's wife encouraged him to plan to take a day off which he does, but he admittedly does it begrudgingly.

Delta

Delta offered that her stance for handling issues (positive or negative) is to consult and communicate with God and to handle all issues in a way that is pleasing to God. If Delta has an issue that she is not certain how to address, she consults with her pastor, a mentor, or someone who has knowledge in the area and can provide her with wisdom and sound instructions/advice. Her family supports her role as a minister and they expect her to address all issues in a Godly way. Delta prioritizes family time first then work and ministry. Dinner is planned and consumed as a family. Delta offers that the key is to schedule time for each aspect because each is equally important but at different times.

Echo

Echo offered that he and his spouse communicate about prayer concerns and office personnel dynamics. Although he has multiple duties as an associate pastor, those roles have not had a negative impact on his marriage. Echo stated that creating boundaries and creating a calendar works well for planning family events against ministry duties. He admits that there has been some level of tension associated with his role as an associate pastor but nothing too critical.

Foxtrot

Foxtrot offered that she and her husband have a good understanding about her ministry duties. "It is a give and take relationship". There is an understanding that one may have to take a back burner at times. Foxtrot expressed the respect and trust her spouse has for her and her role as an associate pastor.

India

India stated that it is difficult to balance marriage and ministry but the balance he and his spouse exercise helps when they communicate properly. India gives praise to his wife for being a warrior on the home front which allows him the flexibility to focus on his ministry duties.

November

November makes it a point to carve out time for his wife. Fridays are dedicated family time. They attend most church functions as a family and this seems to work. The couple does have arguments about November not being able to spend more time with his spouse at events with friends.

Sara

For Sara, communication and planning are the keys to success and she has developed an “I will not stop” mantra to keep the lines of communication open and flowing.

Kilo

Kilo indicated that communication is good however, the competing priorities are hard on the family. His spouse is good at planning for the family and does all of the duties for the stability of the home. Kilo’s wife is also very active in the church to support him and his ministry. When there are issues, he usually talks things out with his wife and things get back on track.

Arguments Over lack of Family Time*Alpha*

Alpha stated that he and his spouse do not argue often about his duties and they rarely affect their marriage. The only times there are any issues, and it is not often, is when he makes plans and they are disrupted because he is pulled away for church business.

Bravo

Bravo is quoted as saying,

“We have a wonderful relationship together. We spend a lot of time enjoying activities both indoors and outdoors. I head off to work in the morning and she works with children at a local museum. We have dinner together and spend the evening together unless there are meetings, but 9 times out of 10 if someone wants to schedule a meeting when I could or should be at home, I tell them I already have an appointment. I do not consider that dishonest because my appointment is with her. That said, she is very open and willingly allows me to leave anytime an emergency comes up, or an opportunity arises for me to meet with someone that has a difficulty or challenge meeting during the day.”

Charlie

Charlie affirmed that he and his spouse do not argue but he indicated that his wife needs to remind him that he is not that big of a deal and that there are others on staff to whom inquiries can be taken when he thinks he has to shoulder them all. Charlie disagrees with his spouses' assertions about not being responsible for those inquiries.

Delta

Delta offered that she and her spouse do not argue as they are on the same accord with ministry duties and her spouse is very respectful, encouraging and supportive.

Echo

Echo stated that although they maintain a calendar, the nightly meetings, trips away, and missed events such as birthdays still causes issues even when they are planned. Echo offered that these arguments are not critical but they are mainly about time constraints. He reiterated that once they used a shared calendar and committed to not planning major events without each other, things work fine for the most part.

Foxtrot

As stated earlier, Foxtrot and spouse have good communication about both duties and that helps this process. They do not have arguments because of the good communication.

India

India and his wife try to schedule family time which helps create balance but he is often times pulled away for associate pastor duties, and that makes for a not so pleasant time between the two of them.

Kilo

Kilo asserted that he and his spouse argue about him not being present enough for the family, but when they talk things out, they get back on track.

November

November indicated that he and his spouse argue from time to time and when asked to share a particular event he recalls,

“Once my wife’s friend was having a birthday party and we were invited to attend. I committed to going but something came up at church and I had to handle it. My wife was already at the party when I told her I could not attend. She felt alone and somewhat embarrassed. I apologized but it was not fair to her at all”.

Sara

Sara offered that there used to be major arguments with her spouse about her dedication to the ministry. Her spouse felt like he should have been the primary focus. After many prayers and better communication, he has come to respect and honor what she does as a minister.

Respect and Trust*Alpha*

Alpha indicated that he and his wife have mutual respect for each other.

Bravo

Bravo and his wife share respect. His spouse respects him as her husband, a man of God and as an associate pastor. The respect spills over into his spouse. Bravo is intentional about planning time for her and the family.

Charlie

Charlie and his wife have always respected each other even before the children were grown and gone. Now that they are the only two in the home, the respect and trust just gets stronger by the day. Charlie's spouse has learned to trust and respect more because he is able to do a good job of making time for her and his ministry.

Delta

Delta explained that although she does not discuss specifics about her role as a pastor, her husband expresses his confidence that God has called her to pastor. He displays continuous support of the ministry and her role as a pastor. He talks about the vision God has shared with him and he also often says that, "we are a dynamic team and God has a great work for us."

Echo

Echo offered that the manner that he handles his marriage relationship allows his spouse to respect him and his position as an associate pastor. It makes him feel good to know that he is love and respected for what he is called to do.

Foxtrot

As stated previously, Foxtrot expressed that her spouse shows respect and trust for her and her role as an associate pastor.

India

India shared that he respects his wife and she respects him and his role as a minister.

Kilo

Kilo insists that his commitment to ministry is respected by his family. He offered that his wife does respect what he does, it is just a struggle at times.

November

November feels respected by his spouse despite any arguments or other circumstances they may face. Her support for his ministry role is refreshing.

Sara

Sara is very supportive of her spouse and children. She supported her husband in spite of him having major health issues. Her spouse has learned to respect her role as an associate pastor after many years of not being supportive and trusting that she was doing the right thing.

Summary of Research Question 1

Data collection revealed that although associate pastors carry a fulltime load in ministry and in their personal lives, communication and planning are keys to success when trying to balance marital health and wellbeing. Some of the overarching themes centered on setting time to discuss schedules as a couple and making a calendar to visualize what events are scheduled from day to day. Those associate pastors who exercised the communication and planning remedy for finding balance, yet still found that they argued with their spouses, expressed that the main areas of disputes were about being more present for the family and for the spouse. The participants who admitted to having arguments and disagreements, asserted that the main cause of contention was a lack of time for family and missed family events. The majority of the associate pastors expressed respect and trust to and from their spouses and family as a whole. In the table below, the themes and categories are illustrated for research question 1.

Table 3***Emergent Themes and Categories for Research Question 1***

Themes	Categories
Communication and Planning	Talking about schedules Making a calendar Planning date nights Planning family meals Prioritizing spouse/family
Arguments over Family Issues	Lack of being more present Missing kids' events No time for spouse Help with shared responsibilities
Respect and Trust	Support for role as a minister Encourages being available for those in need Believes in abilities as an associate pastor

Research Question 2

In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive their role on a ministry team impacts their family health and wellbeing.

This question was designed to show data that support the impact serving in the associate pastor role has on the family health and wellbeing. Although all ten participants are married and have children, the degree that the family unit is affected by their role in ministry varies greatly. There were two main themes that emerged from this research question: (1) Family time, and (2) Strong spousal support system. Table 5 illustrates the themes and categories for Research Question 2.

Family Time*Alpha*

Alpha does not have any children at home and therefore does not have any issues with family impact on his role as a part-time minister. He and his spouse are free to spend as much time together as they desire.

Bravo

Bravo lamented about the importance of investing time and enjoying his family. The dedication to his family made him prioritize them when his kids were home. Bravo made it a point of shepherding, discipling, and mentoring his own kids before anyone else's. He exclaimed that his wife respects the need for him to be confidential about some things at church so she does not probe for information. Now that his kids are grown, his family needs have decreased. He continues to share things about the church with his children so that they can feel connected. Vacationing with the kids and grandkids are still a priority.

Charlie

Charlie does not have any young children at home and therefore the family unit consist of him and his wife. Although he has adult children, he still values his family in that respect and prioritizing which aides in a positive relationship between family and ministry.

Delta

Delta stated that family time such as dinner is a priority for her. She ensures that she makes time for a sick relative that resides with her family as well. Her duties as an associate pastor coupled with duties from work and home are a bit much, but she manages all areas successfully.

Echo

Echo offers that he makes it a point to schedule family time. He insists that defining boundaries between work and family are a must to implement. Making major plans is something that is decided upon as a family and not any one person. The family uses a shared calendar to schedule their events.

Foxtrot

Foxtrot spends time with family discussing their daily events and her daily events. They talk about bible study and worship as a family. They do not discuss specific things especially if someone has upset her. She offered that she wants church to be church and not put her family in the mix. Foxtrot added that she knows people think pastors discuss everything with their family but the fact is, they do not.

November

November makes time to spend with family at least once a week. The family attends church together. Overall, there are not many issues that cause too much heartache as a family concerning his role as a pastor.

India

India tries to make time for family but often falls short. With two kids at home and a wife, balancing things get tricky. He admits that he wants to do a good job with his calling and with his family so that neither is left short.

Kilo

Kilo recognizes the need to prioritize family but also recognizes it is difficult to keep the harmony. Something is always getting neglected and it is usually the family. The kids feel like they are forced into ministry and they cannot be themselves. Kilo affirms that this could be some sort of rebellion from the kids.

Sara

Sara is committed to being present for her family at all times. She asserts the dedication to caring for her spouse and supporting her children in their school work and extracurricular

activities will occur, no matter what. She lacks rests at times but presses forward with God's grace and mercy. Prayer, Bible study, and worships keep the family intact.

Strong Spousal Support System

Alpha

Alpha expressed that his spouse has always supported him in everything that he has done in their marriage, family, and mostly in his ministry over the years. Not only does his spouse support him but she is also dedicated to her own commitments as a spouse in ministry.

Bravo

Bravo was very clear and concise in stating that his wife supports him in his role as a pastor and he supports her in whatever is important to her.

Charlie

Charlie's wife shows him the utmost respect for his role as an associate pastor. Not having children at home frees up so much time that she can better support him in ministry.

Delta

Delta does not hesitate to expound on the many ways she is supported by her spouse. She is appreciative of his encouragement and the like-mindedness for the vision in their personal lives and in ministry.

Echo

Echo confirms that it is the support of his spouse that gets him through many days. Most of his days are full and can seem overwhelming, but his wife is there for him and takes care of home.

Foxtrot

As mentioned previously, Foxtrot's spouse is wonderful in supporting her and her role as an associate pastor. Sometimes they have to take a backseat for each other and just be there and support the cause. Her spouse is understanding of this role he plays.

India

India cannot imagine what his ministry life would be like without the support of his spouse. When things get hectic, he understands that he needs his spouse to be there for him even if it is just to have her say, "everything will be ok, you can do this."

Kilo

Kilo admits that his spouse is supportive of his role as a pastor, but she does struggle in that area from time to time. He knows that it is a lot for her because in all honesty, it is a lot for him as well.

November

November has felt support from his spouse since the beginning of his ministry. He could always talk to her about anything and know that anything he shared was safe with her. As he stated before, it is refreshing to have that kind of support from his spouse.

Sara

Sara indicated earlier that her spouse at one point did not support her in her role as an associate pastor, but overtime and through some rough debilitating illnesses, he has changed his perspective on life and in her role as a pastor.

Summary of Research Question 2

Data from research question two revealed that much like the data from research question one, the family unit and the role of the associate pastor is difficult to manage and balance.

Carving out time for family is recognized as a necessity for most of the ten participants, but getting it right is a struggle. The role of ministry impacts the family wellbeing in ways that are both positive and negative in light of the aforementioned. The associate pastors feed into their families from a ministry standpoint, however, spending quality time consistently is not always a constant occurrence. Most of the associate pastors expressed the desire to do better in balancing ministry duties without neglecting family duties but most fall short.

Table 4

Emergent Themes and Categories for Research Question 2











Theme	Category
Family Time	Having dinner together Studying the Bible Prayer Attending kids' activities Attending church together
Strong Spousal Support System	Dedication to role of spouse in ministry Carries the bulk of home duties Supports spouse at home and in ministry








Research Question 3

In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive their role on a ministry team impacts their mental health and wellbeing. Figure 3 highlights the subthemes that were identified from Research Question 3.

Figure 3

Subthemes for RQ 3

Participants	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Echo	Foxtrot	India	November	Sara	Delta	Kilo
Themes										
Stress on Mind and body										

Coping with stress: pray, meditate, run/walk/yoga										
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The question was designed to showcase the data collected from participants who assert or deny that their mental health has been affected by their role as an associate pastor. Nine out of ten participants have experienced feeling overwhelmed and having stress and or depression. The narratives from the participants are described below. Two themes emerged: stress and depression. The themes and the associated categories were derived from the data and are illustrated in Table 5.

Stress and Depression

Alpha explained that since he is serving minimal duties as an associate pastor that he has not felt overwhelmed nor can he agree that he has experienced stress or depression. Alpha accounts for the one participant that does not identify with stress and depression mentioned previously.

Bravo offered that he is pretty mellow in temperament. He has a high sense of order and priority for his position. He admits he works hard to mitigate drama in his position as well as in the congregation. Bravo believes that there is a certain level of stress in most jobs but it is not always a negative thing. It keeps you on your toes. Bravo makes it a habit of questioning himself to ensure he is not working harder and not smarter. He also makes sure he is not doing something that someone else could be doing. He does not take criticism personal. He also added that he has not felt depression and thanks God for that. He also said that when he closes the church doors at night, he leaves everything associated behind as much as possible.

Charlie admitted to feeling overwhelmed specifically when he had to officiate three funerals within five days. Covid has been a factor is adding stress and depression to his life. He tries to exercise more to help alleviate the occurrence.

Delta has experienced being overwhelmed in feeling like she is the only one called on for additional duties as an associate pastor. She admits to crying to get rid of the pain. Delta shared that working a fulltime job coupled with the workload from ministry is overwhelming. Although she asserts that she has minimally experienced depression; she is under constant stress. She has a lot of responsibilities in all areas of life. Her experience with stress and depression has left her questioning if ministry is truly for her. Delta talks to God to pick herself back up and keep moving forward.

Echo admits that being overwhelmed comes and goes like a tide. Since he is a recovering addict, he offered that nothing is as stressful as that. He also offered that he feels most overwhelmed when the church is in lead pastor transition because he had to carry additional duties and leadership expectations. He has also learned how to listen to his body during those times. He added that he ends up with more health issues when he is overstressed. Echo admitted to experiencing “deep depression” during his time as an associate pastor. He stated that those times were dark and frightening. With the help of fellow pastors and friends, he was able to move past those feelings. Echo’s church partners with a local counseling office that the pastors are encouraged to take advantage and use the resources. Through counseling services, peers, and friends he rose out of the season of depression. His commitment to the church and their support of him makes the fight to be the best possible even in the darkest times.

Foxtrot admitted that she is overwhelmed almost every day. Ministry ebbs and flows and can cause her to feel overwhelmed. The feelings of being overwhelmed affect how she fulfills

her duties in ministry in a negative way. Foxtrot added that she does not have time to spend ministering to others, check on others or family members and she pushes aside pastoral needs as well. She admitted to experiencing stress but not necessarily depression although at times she carries a heavy burden that consumes her and causes a heavy heart.

India does feel overwhelmed with duties as an associate pastor. He accepted the call to ministry and knows that it is demanding but does not want to lose his family in the process or himself. He recalled a time when he was preparing to attend a conference with the lead pastor and his son got sick. He had to leave his son and daughter with his wife for four days and that made him feel stress, depression, and guilt. Through probing, India explained that he failed to tell the lead pastor about the issues at home with his family. If he had to do it all over again, he would have enlightened the pastor to his problems.

Kilo affirmed that just being an associate pastor caused him to be overwhelmed because of his fulltime job and family, and the ministry. He has experienced stress and has high blood pressure as a result. Depression was not mentioned as being something he experienced.

November cannot say that he has felt overwhelmed but describes it as having pressure placed upon him. He did admit that he has felt stress and depression from time to time, but thinks the stress is countertransference from those in the congregation that he comes into contact with. He does not like when people hurt and he wants to get rid of the pain. He admitted that he thinks he has been depressed but does not know if it was real or not.

Sara has felt stress and depression in her time as an associate pastor. Sara stated that she feels stress all the time. She is very detailed and follows a schedule, so when she is asked to do things not on her calendar, she has learned to not feel guilty or pressure to oblige. She declines to commit. She recalled losing one of her close associate pastors to Covid. It was very difficult for

her to get over. That event ushered her into a state of depression and a feeling of loneliness. Sara recalled crying and feeling really down because the pastor that died was attending a church service without a mask along with all of the participants with the exception of Sara.

Summary of Research Question Three

Data collection revealed that most of the participants admit to feeling overwhelmed in their duties as associate pastors. The feelings of being overwhelmed ranged from being busy at fulltime jobs, having family obligation that may be missed, and having too many duties as a pastor. Most of the participants have expressed an abundance of instances with stress and fewer with depression. Overall, stress from serving in ministry roles has affected 80 % of the participants in the study. Many of the pastors have developed coping strategies that seem to eliminate or decrease stress and depression.

Table 5

Emergent Themes and Categories for Research Question 3

Stress	Too many duties Competing priorities at home Lack of focus to ministry duties Sickness Health issues Loss of productivity
Depression	Feeling helpless to family needs Death of loved ones Guilt Frustration Crying

Research Question 4

In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive their role on a ministry team impacts their spiritual health and wellbeing. Figure 4 shows the subthemes from research question four.

Figure 4

Subthemes from RQ 4.

Participants	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Echo	Foxtrot	India	November	Sara	Delta	Kilo
Themes										
Purposeful life: serving God/taking care of family: emotionally, physically, financially		✋	✋				✋	✋	✋	
Balance of physical/menta l health						✋		✋	✋	
Maintenance of spiritual life: Bible study/devotion/ meditation/pa yer/music	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋

The goal of this question was to disclose the data on the spiritual health of the associate pastors and how it is affected by their roles as ministers. The narratives from the participants are described below. Two themes emerged: Time with God and Reading. The themes and categories are illustrated in table seven.

Time with God

Alpha spends time daily reading and studying the Bible. He offered that prayer and contemplation, as opposed to meditation, affects him in a positive way. He spends most of his time with God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and asking for guidance.

Bravo excitedly stated that he has an awesome time of prayer and devotion. His age has offered more depth to his walk with God. Memorizing scripture is something he is working on improving. He asserts that he is asking God to make him more sensitive to his own transgressions and sins so he can walk in “sweeter fellowship with God”. Bravo added that Hebrews 4 has had a profound impact on him this year. Bravo’s voice was soft and humble when

he added that finding rest in God and coming boldly before him at the throne of grace to find mercy in a time of need is “overwhelming”. Bravo interpreted chapter as an invitation to fellowship with his creator.

Charlie stated that he is very happy with his devotional life. He focuses on gratitude at being called into ministry and serving as an associate pastor.

Delta stated that she has a strong relationship with God and spends a lot of time just talking to him and worshipping him for the opportunity to serve. Delta asks God for wisdom and guidance in her marriage and in her ministry. She is humble and also prays for forgiveness if she has mistreated anyone. She also prays that God will teach her how to balance in her life.

Echo admitted that some days he feels very close to God and other times very distant. He recognizes that it is a vulnerable statement for a staff member to make. During the pandemic, being separated from people has allowed him to ask question about faith. He sees this questioning as a positive event that can fuel a deeper sense of spirituality. Regathering at church gave him a huge boost in his faith. Echo spends time with God daily by reading or listening to scripture. He offered that he is very vulnerable to God with whatever is on his mind. He also reflects on wisdom needed for any leadership decision that need to be made.

Foxtrot shared her life verse of Philippians 1:6. She stated that the verse reminds her that this is a progressive journey she is on. Her faith is growing and it is a work in progress. She spends time daily in the word and in prayer. Foxtrot said that it is about putting in place spiritual practices. She was advised early in her ministry not to comingle her personal time with God with preparation for things like Bible study.

India spends a good amount of time studying the word and praying. His spiritual journey has spilled over into his family. He thanks God for his ministry and his family. He says special prayers for his wife whom he sees as a gift from God.

Kilo expressed a strong relationship with God. He spends a lot of time worshiping and talking about everything. The book of Proverbs has helped him strengthen his spiritual journey. Kilo seeks God about his purpose as an associate pastor. He wants to always please God in everything that he does. He prays for his marriage because he recognizes the instance of divorce due to the pressure of ministry on marriages.

November boldly admitted to total dedication to God and spends every moment possible with him. He praises God for his call to ministry. November prays to God for an increase in his service to God. He also asks for wisdom and guidance to be a better man, father, and minister.

Sara is in constant conversation with God. She increases her spiritual self through online ministry where she can share with and learn from others. She enjoys studying scripture. Sara has blocked off time on her calendar to study the book of Jeremiah. She often talks to God about her family and about her finances. Sara is also reading two books for increased devotional time.

Reading

Most of participants collectively referred to reading as captured previously. Reading specific scriptures, reading the Bible as a whole, and reading devotionals are the three sub-categories discussed by the participants. Alpha, Bravo, Echo, Kilo, India, and Sara admit that studying scripture is a regular part of their daily lives. Bravo, Foxtrot, Delta, and November enjoy not only reading scripture but memorizing them as well. Charlie, Bravo, Echo, and Sara use devotional books to increase and expand devotional time. Bravo asserted that he enjoys reading books, namely, *The Power of Transforming Prayer* by J. Oswald Sanders, to enhance his

devotion time. Echo offered that his favorite devotionals were written by authors Tripp's, Rohr, and Bolz-Weber. Echo also enjoys listening to the music of Bruce Springsteen, which he treasures.

Summary of Research Question Four

The data collected from research question four revealed that all ten participants have expressed their role as an associate pastor has had a positive impact on their spiritual wellbeing. Overwhelming responses were supported by spending time with God in prayer, adoration, praise, worship, forgiveness, and being vulnerable. Several participants admitted that scripture was a big part of their spiritual wellbeing along with reading and memorizing scripture, and reading devotional books by well-known authors in the field.

Table 6

Emergent Themes and Categories for Research Question Four

Time with God	Prayer Talking about everything Purpose in Ministry Family prayer Adoration and vulnerability Worship and devotion Confession
Reading	Reading scripture Reading the Bible Reading devotional books

Research Question 5

In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive support or nonsupport from their lead pastors in addressing life balance concern. Figure 5 shows the subthemes from research question five.

Figure 5*Subthemes from RO 5*

Participants	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Echo	Foxtrot	India	November	Sara	Delta	Kilo
Themes										
Relationship with lead pastor: Great/Good/Respect	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋
Marriage training from leading pastor: Never	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋			✋
Ideal healthy support from lead pastor: recognize need for balance in all 3 areas/teach	✋				✋	✋	✋	✋	✋	✋
Checking in on associate pastors			✋			✋	✋			✋

This question was designed to gain data from the participants own words concerning the level of support or lack thereof from their lead pastors when considering balancing marriage, family, and ministry. All ten participants attested to feeling support from the lead pastor in at least one of the areas of balance between marriage, family, and ministry. The participants narratives are located below followed by an illustration of themes and categories for research question five below in table eight.

Need for Training of Work-Life Balance

Alpha asserted that his lead pastor has not communicated directly about needs for balancing marriage, family, and ministry; however, he has encouraged Alpha to make friends within the church as a way of supporting a work-life balance that is largely church-centric on both ends. Alpha added that making friends within the church is a good idea, but it is not exactly

helping to create a balance between work and home life. He asserted that the lead pastor should be “helping them to structure meaningful time away from ministry to engage in quality time with family.”

Bravo contended that his lead pastor does not speak about “balance” but talks about enjoying the fruits of years of ministry labor to keep the home a place of rest and peace. Bravo spoke assuredly about the lead pastor and his personal testament about family. Bravo stated “early in my staff time, he shared stories about his own failure to see his family as his primary ministry before the families of the church.” Bravo offered that a lead pastor should talk openly about associate pastor’s family life, not to pry, but to listen for red flags by asking questions and respect privacy. Since Bravo has a duty to oversee the other associate pastors, he has taken the initiative to discuss family and ministry balance with his peers. Bravo takes time to speak to the associates and interns about their families. In an effort to better assess and understand the family dynamics of the associates, Bravo added that he “probes and pokes where they let me.” Bravo indicated that one measure taken to prevent “burnout” is to speak to the spouses often and simply let them know that he supports them and he explains to them that it is not his desire for them to be a “casualty of ministry.” Bravo does not tolerate using and abusing people. He feels personally responsible to ensure that the staff and the family of staff understand his commitment to the families overall. At the end of the interview, Bravo added, “I encourage our staff that their primary responsibility is the family God gave them. They are to nurture, care for, enjoy, love on and have fun with them.” Bravo expressed that he takes on this responsibility because he knows it is important and he sees this act as a way of helping bridge the gap for the lead pastor.

Charlie remembered a time when the lead pastor was able to take on some of his duties when he needed assistance. He contended that the need for balancing in life is communicated by

the lead pastor when he speaks of the challenges, he has encountered in 40 years of ministry.

Charlie offered that the lead pastor could be quicker to “squelch contention” between the other associate pastors. Although the lead pastor leads admirably through tough times for them, that is one area that could help balance within ministry. Bravo did not elaborate on the specifics of how the lead pastor communicates about the need for balancing marriage and family.

Delta feels like she can talk to the lead pastor about anything because she respects and trusts him. The lead pastor is good at listening and offering solid advice about family issues in particular. She stated that the lead pastor has not communicated a vision for balancing marriage and family but does encourage everyone to take care of family. Delta did offer ways the lead pastor can and should encourage balance between marriage and ministry.

Lead pastors should make sure he/she does an azimuth check with ministry staff to make sure they are ok in their personal lives. Mental health is a big topic of discussion these days, especially with Covid. Lead pastors should organize days and events for ministry staff and family as they do for the entire church. We as ministers suffer from the same issues the people in the church suffer from, we just mask it well. The lead pastor should encourage the congregation to recognize the importance of the associate pastors and their families. There is usually pastor appreciation day but that only honors the lead pastor, what about honoring us as associate pastors? We should be honored as well. We and our families deserve a day as well.

Echo asserted that the lead pastor’s encouragement to take time off for vacation and spend time with family is an expression of support for balancing marriage and family. Echo admits that he feels the lead pastor truly wants what is best for the associate pastors and has their best interest at heart. He has an open mind and a heart for listening. Echo’s voice was warm when he added that “the sentiment builds trust.” The lead pastor has reached out to Echo personally to take time off when he knows Echo is having family issues. The lead pastor does not allow the staff to overextend themselves if they are having family issues. Echo shared some areas the lead pastor could encourage balance.

There are some on staff, sometimes it's me, that do not take vacation days or spend time with family outside of church-life. I would appreciate intentional leadership with all of the staff to coordinate our vacation times so that we can encourage one another to take time off. We are better people and better pastors when we are refreshed and refilled.

Foxtrot expressed that the lead pastor does not necessarily speak about balance but she feels like he encourages it by recommending taking time off, as discussed below. Foxtrot stated that the lead pastor often tells the staff that their family needs are "right now" and this other stuff can wait. He even calls Foxtrot out on these areas if necessary. Foxtrot paused before offering this statement:

I think from what I see in my friends in this role is that the lead pastor has to set the example. When the lead pastor never takes the day off and doesn't encourage you to spend time with your family, you feel like you can't. The lead pastor has to set the example and recognize when the associate pastor needs to take a break. They need to recognize when an associate pastor is not maintaining a healthy balance. When you give all to ministry, family suffers and when you give all to the family, the ministry suffers. Trying to help them balance and encouraging them and talking to them about this is very important.

India admitted that the lead pastor does not speak about the need to balance between marriage, family, and ministry but he does talk to the congregation about it as one body. He talks more about putting God first and everything and everyone else second. India stated the lead pastor contends that God will reward the faithful service and make a way in all other areas. India believes the Lead pastor should take a genuine interest in the associate pastors as a whole by talking about their struggles in their marriage and ministry. If the lead pastor is not well versed in those areas, he should arrange for an outside expert to hold a retreat or conference at least annually. India admits that he did not get much of this training in ministry training. If any of India's ideas were implemented, it would make a huge difference in his life as well as for the other associate pastors.

Kilo discussed the topic of balance quickly and was somewhat reluctant to share too much information. He started by saying the lead pastor is a great guy and a great leader. He admitted that he did not want to say anything negative because it was not fair to do so. Kilo did speak positively of the lead pastor by offering that he encourages him to take time off and that is supportive in Kilo's eyes. Kilo paused and stated, "it is not like I have to be told to take time off but it is nice when he encourages it." Kilo asserted that the lead pastor does not speak about balance specifically but he thinks he recognizes the need to take care of family. After a few seconds of silence, Kilo said, "oh, he also does a good job of delving the work up between the associate pastors and that helps with balancing as well." After circling back to areas, the lead pastor can encourage more balance, Kilo offered that he thinks the lead pastor should not only encourage time off but also teach on why it is important and how ministers can cope with life and ministry. Kilo added that maybe having some small group discussions would help as well.

November stated that balancing family and ministry is not a specific topic the lead pastor discusses. The lead pastor does possess great wisdom and often offers ways to strengthen their walks with God along with how to be more effective spiritual leaders in the church. November stated that he honestly feels that the lead pastor could spend time helping us find ways to stay balanced and realize the need for family time. He could start by having some sort of ministry leadership couples' events. November chuckled and stated, "The funny part is that we have a marriage ministry at the church but we associate pastors do not really see ourselves in that population because we are ministers."

Sara excitedly expressed her appreciation for the lead pastor's support and teaching about balancing ministry and family. The lead pastor conducts training three times a year and does individual counseling sessions with each associate pastor complete with scripture references.

Sara stated that the lead pastor has taken the time to get to know each pastor and their families and stays in constant contact to make sure that everyone is doing well. Sara offers that a lead pastor should have parenting classes, have conversations with husbands and wives, start a department for husbands and wives, have fun activities for kids to experience God and create opportunities for family to learn about purpose in life. Sara believes that if the lead pastor is intentional in those areas it can be viewed as support for balancing family and ministry.

Encourage Time Off

Although Alpha does not have issues with time off personally, he was able to harness historical times when it was an issue. He does recognize this issue with other associate pastors. Alpha informed that he would like to see the lead pastors help associate pastors' structure meaningful time away from ministry to engage in quality time with family.

Bravo shared his experience in talking to the lead pastor about family and ministry. He also thinks that a lead pastor should speak to the spouses and ensure the spouses know he supports them and that it is never appropriate to use and abuse the spouse nor the associate pastor. As mentioned earlier, Bravo added that the associate pastors should always be encouraged by the lead pastor to place the family God blessed them with first. They should be nurtured, cared for, loved, and have fun with them.

Echo touched on this area earlier and stated that the lead pastor has encouraged the ministry staff to use their vacation time to spend with family. When he has had family issues, the lead pastor has encouraged time off as opposed to overextending himself at church. The only area Echo would like to see emphasized is intentional leadership to make sure all staff coordinates their vacation times. Although the lead pastor encourages the vacation, not everyone

takes advantage of the time. Echo asserted that they are all better pastors when they can refresh and refill.

Foxtrot stated that the lead pastor does not speak about balance but expressed it through encouraging time off to spend with family. She added that he says, “your family needs you right now and this stuff can wait.” Foxtrot offered that she feels a lead pastor should encourage time off, set the example, and recognize when the associate pastors need a break. He should also recognize when an associate pastor is not exercising balance. She stated that “when you give all to ministry, family suffers, and when you give all to family ministry suffers.”

Kilo’s responses were very intentional and he spoke with passion about the need to balance. Kilo stated that anytime the lead pastor encourages him to take time to spend with family, it is support for balance from his perspective. Although the lead pastor does not speak about balance, he encourages the associate pastors to take time off for family. Kilo would like to see the lead pastor not only encourage family time as he does, but to teach and explain the importance of it and how ministers cope with life and ministry balance. Small group discussions would be helpful as well. This researcher sensed an appreciation for the support Kilo receives from the lead pastor. Kilo was adamant that this was not meant to bash the lead pastor in anyway.

Lead by Example

Bravo, as mentioned previously, recalled the lead pastor used his personal failures in making his own family a priority as a teaching tool. To Bravo, the level of transparency shared by the lead pastor makes him trust and respect him even more. Bravo sees himself and the lead pastor on one accord.

Delta appreciates the influence the lead pastor has had on her development overall. The lead pastor leads by example in following the call into ministry and what it means to be spiritual. She thinks that organizing days and events for associate pastors and their families would be helpful. She also added that the lead pastor should encourage the congregation to recognize the importance of associate pastors and their families just as the church does for the lead pastor and her family.

Foxtrot added that the lead pastor leads by example and expresses his spiritual practices. He offers great recommendations for further reading and talks about things he experiences and that he feels may help the associate pastors.

India briefly added that the lead pastor is a great teacher and he displays what he teaches especially in spiritual matters.

Lack of Trust in discussing Mental Health

Alpha describes the support from the lead pastor as helping shape applied theology. He contends that he appreciates the support and respects training provided by the lead pastor in meetings about staff-parish relations. Alpha did not express emotion or excitement in his responses; however, he did indicate that he would be ok with discussing mental health issues with the lead pastor out of respect for him as a leader.

Bravo's voice was pleasant and seemingly happy to offer that he does not have any issues discussing mental health issues with the lead pastor should it be necessary. He admits that he may get "unhinged and unbalanced and may need therapy."

Charlie felt very inclined to share all matters of marriage, family, and ministry with the lead pastor because the lead pastor encouraged him to and it is a way to learn and be mentored.

Charlie's tone of voice increased as he admitted that he does not have a problem talking about mental issues with the lead pastor but he has not discussed to date.

He encourages me to discuss mental health because he knows the dangers of not discussing and sweeping things under the rug.

Delta took a deep breath before responding to the topic of mental health. Delta's voice was low and quiet. Mental health is not an area Delta would discuss with the lead pastor only because she does not want to come across as unfit. As discussed earlier, Delta believes lead pastors should make it a point to do an "azimuth check" on ministry staff just to make sure they are ok in their personal and ministry life. She offers that mental health is a big topic of discussion these days since the pandemic and associate pastors are human and suffer from the same things members in the church suffer from.

Echo's voice was calm and pleasant when he expressed that he has no issues speaking to the lead pastor about issues in his ministry or personal life, to include mental health. He is encouraging and a great listener. Echo respects that in the lead pastor. Echo admits that he has not ever spoken to the lead pastor about mental health.

Foxtrot took a moment to respond but did recall the lead pastor talking about mental health but not with her personally. She admits that she had never really thought about this topic until asked about it during the interview.

India stated that because of the position the lead pastor takes, he does not feel comfortable speaking to him about family matters. He only mentions good news stories to make sure the lead pastor feels confident in his abilities to conduct ministry duties. India does not think it is appropriate to talk about mental health with the lead pastor. He contends that he would speak to a licensed counselor first. India does not think the lead pastor would think positively of any member of the ministry team who is struggling mentally. He feels like the lead pastor has to deal

with the congregation and all of their issues, dealing with him would be too much and quite the disappointment.

Kilo said that the lead pastor is a great mentor and excellent at communication. Kilo offered that he knows a few pastors who quit early in their careers because of stress and pressure in ministry. The lead pastor is very good at helping him stay focused and tries to distribute work evenly among the associate pastors. Kilo was adamant in expressing the he would never discuss mental health issues with the lead pastor. He stated that mental health is a serious subject and he would only talk to a professional. He added that the lead pastor is not trained for mental health.

November does not feel like he would discuss mental health with the lead pastor because he wants him to be confident in his abilities to lead. November offered, *“we are all adults and should know how to handle our own affairs.”*

Sara proudly expressed her confidence in the lead pastors’ abilities and feels comfortable speaking to her about anything to include mental health. She believes in spiritual healing and the lead pastor is a good spiritual coach who does express the need for balancing family and ministry. Sara explained that she was almost in a very dark place in her life with her daughter but the lead pastor was there for her and she even spoke to her husband, who practices a different religion. Sara’s tone was pleasant and she spoke with passion when providing detailed information.

Table 7

Emergent Themes and Categories for Research Question Five

Need for Training on work-life Balance	Conferences Working groups Couples’ retreats
Encourage Time off	Schedule vacation Step-back from duties Check on minister’s wellbeing Family first focus

Lead by Example	Share Personal experiences Teach on family importance Display concern for Associate Pastors
Lack of trust in discussing Mental Health	Sign of Weakness Fear of Judgment Lead pastor not a trained Professional

Summary of Research Question Five

The data collected from the participants concerning research question five disclosed overwhelming support from the lead pastor in areas of ministry, spiritual health, and time off from duties. Seven out of ten participants indicated that the lead pastor does not speak about the need to balance marriage, family, and ministry. Three out of ten describe the lead pastor's encouragement by telling them to take time off for family vacation or simply to spend time with family. Five out of ten did not feel like discussing their own mental health with the lead pastor is appropriate or something that they would ever do. Overall, the participants would like to see lead pastors encourage family time, hold events for family and couples, and provide guidance on ways to balance marriage, family, and ministry.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The use of a multi-case study allowed the researcher to gain rich insight into the perceptions of the participants in the study. The use of qualitative research methods permits questions that begin with what and how, used to explain why certain things occur (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of triangulated data increased the degree of credibility during the study. During the study, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and interviewer notes were used to capture relevant data. The participants were open to discussing their truths both in the short answer questionnaires as well as during the interviews. The participants were honest in their responses and took their time to make sure they communicated effectively. When questions directly related to mental health were asked, many of the participants took a long pause to gather

their thoughts before answering. Those who expressed experience with depression, started the conversation with phrases such as, “I may be wrong but I think it was depression”, etc. This researcher would offer responses such as, “I understand” and “thank you for sharing, can you elaborate?” This researcher even commented to one participant that he was brave. This seemed to encourage the participant to go into deeper details concerning mental health. The selection method for specific subjects was necessary as they had to meet specific criteria to participate.

The implementation of the questionnaire administered through Qualtrics and the semi-structured interview questions used were appropriate for carving out rich descriptive data from the participants, but this researcher feels that more questions would have uncovered areas that would have not only enhanced the data but revealed more areas for further study. Expanding mental health questions such as: (1) Describe what mental health is to you? (2) Tell me how your mental health has changed, positively or negatively, from the beginning of your career as an associate pastor to now? And (3) What makes you feel comfortable speaking to the lead pastor about your mental health and what makes you feel apprehensive about speaking to the lead pastor about your mental health? Conducting the interviews via telephone offered pros and cons to the process. This researcher believes that providing sensitive information over the phone made sharing more relaxing for the participants. A con to the use of a telephonic interview prohibited the researcher from observations of facial expressions and body language. The use of in-person interviews or web-conferencing would have allowed better visual cues from the face and body presented by the participants.

One weakness of the research design resides in the use of semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. Although participants were allowed to express their perceptions, many went over the allotted time of 45 minutes to an hour. The longer than anticipated interviews caused the

researcher to spend a large amount of time replaying the recording to capture relevant information as well as rereading notes taken during the interview. This was a tremendous amount of transcription and content analysis. This researcher's use of excel for coding, theming, and categorizing was sufficient, however, the use of a coding system may have been cleaner and time saving once the system was familiar to the researcher. Soliciting the help from an organization like the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) could have produced more participants willing to participate in this study. The use of the SBC may have decreased any apprehension or pressure for some participants who may have declined to participate. Having the lead pastor directly involved in allowing access to the associate pastors would have been eliminated. The convention could have aided in a larger number of pastors to participate in the study simply because the convention has access to many pastors in a database.

The use of pseudonyms, not mentioning the church affiliation, or even the particular city the churches and participants were located in aided in the exercise of confidentiality as well as honest feedback. The use of a recording device supports reliability of the data collection as and decreases the need for taking too many handwritten notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.199-200).

In conclusion, the use of a multi-case study yielded what was expected by coding, theming, and categorizing data from the perceptions of the lead pastors. The sample size met the minimum requirements but was rich with descriptive details because of the deliberate construction of the interview questions. After the interview recordings were transcribed, they were transferred into a word document and sent to each participant for a review and correction, if necessary. Almost all of the participants approved the transcription of their interview without the need to correct. Not many corrections were necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Five is to present the conclusions resulting from the research data and analysis. The chapter provides the reader with the purpose of the research, the research questions, conclusion, implications, and applications. The chapter also provides research study limitations, suggestions for further research, and a summary.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study sought to explore the associate pastor's perceptions of lead pastor's support in the balance of marriage and family with ministry as it relates to the instance of stress and depression.

Research Questions

Consistent with the multi-case study design, the following questions are used to guide the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

RQ1. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their marriage health and wellbeing?

RQ2. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their family health and wellbeing?

RQ3. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their mental health and wellbeing?

RQ4. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their spiritual health and wellbeing?

RQ5. In what ways, if any, do associate pastors perceive support or nonsupport from their lead pastors in addressing life balance concerns?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This section reviews the conclusions of the research questions. This section also discusses the theoretical and theological implications, research limitations, suggestions for further research, and a summary of the findings.

Research Conclusions

The research findings revealed a strong associate pastor perception for lead pastor's support of marriage, family, and ministry, as it relates to stress and depression. The rich and descriptive responses to the research questions, provided by the participants, offered a clear understanding of the thoughts and feelings the participants share as well as ways to enhance support for a more successful overall life. The following section provides a synopsis and conclusion of each research question. The themes for each research question are identified in italics below.

Conclusions for Research Questions

Conclusion to RQ1. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their marriage health and wellbeing?

The first research question sought to understand how associate pastors perceived their role impacted their marriage health and wellbeing. The research findings offered overwhelming support in each participant revealing that their marriage is impacted by their positions as associate pastors in a positive manner. All of the participants have *multiple roles* as an associate pastor. All of the participants feel they have good and healthy marriages, yet only 50 % feel the need to *communicate* with their spouses about their duties as an associate pastor. Those participants who neglected to talk about their roles as associate pastors expressed the notion that the less the spouse knows about the duties, the less discomfort the relationship experiences. The

other half who willingly discussed their associate pastor duties affirmed that talking about those roles helped their spouses understand them more and in return the marital relationship was better.

The themes generated from RQ1 were: Arguments about the lack of family time, absence from children's events, and a lack of time for the spouse. Most of the participants *admitted to having arguments about the lack of family time, absence from children's events, and lack of time for the spouse*. Literature support for this area stated that multiple duties contribute to negative consequences for work-life satisfaction, especially for the family (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2015). The results also indicated that some helpful measures to decrease a negative impact and enhance a positive impact rests in having *open communication* with the spouse in *planning* daily and weekly events for the spouse and family with respect to pre-determined pastoral duties. Ministry couples protect the family by making it a priority and fulfill their responsibility and calling as a family to the church. This relationship connects the family to the church in a positive way (Gunter, 2011).

Several participants admit that having their *family as a priority* over everything is essential for a healthy and successful home and career. Literature suggests and supports the perceptions of the participants in, "Pastors experience tremendous joy from preaching and pastoring, but most recognize that being a family man and raising kids is a priority" (Zimmerman, 1998). One huge component to having a positive impact on the marriage health and wellbeing of the associate pastors is *respect and trust* to and from the spouse. Ephesians 5: 33 instructs husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands. Wives must love the husband and provide for him as much as he provides for her. The analysis here points to mutual respect in a marriage which is also a sign of trust.

Conclusion to RQ2. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their family health and wellbeing?

The second research question explored how associate pastors perceived their roles as ministry roles impacted their family health and wellbeing. The research indicated a clear and succinct conclusion for the impact pastoral roles have on the family as a whole. The associate pastors perceived that their family health and wellbeing are positively impacted by their roles in ministry. Nine participants admitted that balancing family with pastoral duties has its challenges but with proper attention and dedication, those challenges can be overcome (Hahn, 2007). Most of the participants with younger children at home offered that it is a struggle to be *present for the children's extra-curricular events, and planning and following through with family time*. Some participants admitted that they can prioritize to be present for the children's events. Several participants have dinner together, study the bible, pray, attend activities for the kids, and attend church as a family. Navey (2014) offers techniques that align with ministry roles having a positive impact on family health. Notably, having family night once a week, read the Bible together, pray together, and participate in some form of ministry as a family, are the most common acts performed by the participants to enhance family health. All of the participants provide credence to *strong spousal support* as a positive aspect of their ministry role and its effect on the family. All ten participants gave praise-worthy affirmations to the level of support their spouses displayed both in *being present in their ministry* as well as being totally dedicated to all aspects of *caring for the family*. Two participants attested to no longer having children at home but still try to incorporate them in family time as much as possible to enhance the family connection.

Conclusion to RQ3. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their mental health and wellbeing?

The third research question addressed the associate pastor's perception of the impact their roles have on their mental health and wellbeing. Associate pastors perceive their ministries are impacted mostly negatively by their mental health and wellbeing. The research indicated that 80% of participants can identify with feeling *stress* from their roles as associate pastors (Stetzer, 2018). Four participants admitted to having experience with *depression* but all were able to recover. Echo provided an in-depth response to feeling overwhelmed with associate pastor duties which led to other health issues.

“Being overwhelmed comes and goes like the tide some years. Often, it has been during times of transition (in-between pastors) when I have carried additional responsibilities and leadership expectations. These times have taught me to listen to my body for feedback. I will end up with health issues that have traditionally only come to the surface when I am overly stressed. Now, that I am aware of these symptoms, I pay attention to them when they arise and scale back or take time off to reset things.”

Two of the ten participants affirmed no experience with *stress or depression* while serving as associate pastors. One participant admitted to being a recovering addict. This participant stated that the addiction was much more stressful than anything in ministry but did admit to still experiencing stress (Gates, 1988). Literature presented by Califano & Sheehan affirmed that religion and spirituality are important and oftentimes, determinative factors in treatment and recovery from addiction (2002). Another participant associated stress as “not being all bad” and stating that some stress is actually healthy. The instance of recognizing that stress can be positive is supported in literature by Frisbie & Frisbie (2014). The most prevalent form of *stress relief* for all participants were through *prayer, meditation, and some form of exercise, namely running, walking, or yoga*.

Conclusion to RQ4. In what ways, either positively or negatively, do associate pastors perceive that their role on a ministry team impacts their spiritual health and wellbeing?

The fourth research question explored the impact ministry roles had on spiritual health from the associate pastor's perception. The research suggested that all ten participants indicated their roles as associate pastors had a positive impact on their spiritual health. The participants offered that *spending time with God* and *reading the Bible*, specific scriptures, as well as other *devotionals* has accounted for the positive impact their roles as pastors have on their spiritual health. Half of the participants indicated that there is purpose of life through serving God and taking care of the family emotionally, physically, and financially. All of the participants identified with *studying the Bible, meditation, prayer, and devotionals* positively contribute to maintenance of spiritual life. Devotional and Biblical readings shift from scriptural text to real life. The whole person is involved when one meditates on the text and it is akin to a divine encounter with Christ (Walker, 2020).

Theological literature supports guidance for pastors in all matters to include marriage, family, and ministry. 1 Timothy 3: 2-5 offers guidance on balancing marriage and ministry. A few of the participants offered specifics on what they read and study. Philippians 1:6 is a scripture that gives confidence to one of the three female associate pastors, Foxtrot. Participant Sara shared that book of Jeremiah is the book of the Bible currently being read and studied.

Conclusion to RQ5:

The fifth and final research question focused on the crux of the research by exploring the impact lead pastor support has on addressing life balance concerns from the associate pastor's perspective. The conclusion for research question five rests in a lack of support from the lead pastor in helping associate pastors balance between marriage, family, and ministry. All ten

participants admitted that they have a very good relationship with the lead pastors replete with respect for the lead pastors and that respect being reciprocated. However, 80% of the participants affirmed that the lead pastor has never conducted any form of training of balancing marriage, family, and ministry. Research suggests that many pastors perceived their roles as consisting of preaching, counseling, and visitations. Changes in clergy dynamics necessitates the inclusion of key roles involving exercising strong pastoral leadership with teaching and training (Crofford, 2014, p. 51). Roughly 70% of the participants stated that the lead pastor *should conduct training on balancing marriage, family, and ministry*. Two out of ten participants offered that their lead pastors have conducted training that focuses on the balance of family and ministry and how helpful that training is to them in life. One participant asserted that the lead pastor used her own life events to emphasize the importance of balancing their lives with ministry admitting that some of those lessons were hard lessons learned. Servant leadership, developed by Robert Greenleaf is the flagship theory that strongly supports the role of the lead pastor. The lead pastor of participants Delta and Sara display servant leadership as described by Northouse (2016, p.225).

All participants offered ways lead pastors should exercise more support for the life balance of the associate pastors. The associate pastors described ways to exercise support in not only conducting training, as stated earlier, but also by ensuring vacations are scheduled and taken, couples retreat options, leading by example showing transparency for personal experiences, and expressing the importance of family first. Literature suggests that pastors should model and indwell doctrinal truth while observing, getting to know, and walking through life with those in ministry (Wilson & Hiestand, 2016, p. 158)

One area that the majority of the participants do not feel comfortable discussing with the lead pastor is that of mental health. Some of the participants admitted that the issue of mental health is discussed in the congregation but not with the associate pastors specifically (Burnette, 2016; Johnson, 2016). The reasons for the associate pastor's reluctance to discuss mental health with lead pastors vary but are mainly for *fear of judgement and lack of mental health training* for the lead pastors. One participant's response to experiencing mental health issues can be posited here because he did not share with the lead pastor his personal issues with family while serving in a support role to the lead pastor while away from home.

India's family struggles caused stress, depression, and feelings of guilt that he did not feel comfortable sharing with the lead pastor. He also indicated that the lead pastor is not well versed (trained) in mental health issues. Literature indicated that only a small ratio of 5:40 pastors feel comfortable turning to lead pastors for issues with depression and none felt the lead pastor had sufficient training in the area of mental health (Johnson, 2016, p. 58). Many of the participants feel supported by the lead pastors in the areas of spiritual, vocational, and intellectual components, however the lead pastor lacks emphases on balancing God-given dimensions such as family and ministry roles (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2013).

Employment of a Servant leadership style by the lead pastor enhances organizational effectiveness and increases performance of (associate pastors) by prioritizing relationships between them and the members of ministry (Exantus, 2011). Servant leaders serve the needs of others. This includes being attentive to the needs of associates by listening, coaching, empathy, healing, awareness, stewardship, and growth which can lead to associate pastors becoming leaders themselves (Exantus, 2011, p. 36).

Lead pastors should establish clear boundaries for duties and hours worked to balance home and clergy life in light of the associate pastors on staff. The instance of burnout, stress, depression, and other mental health issues can be decreased or eliminated if lead pastors promote self-care which in-turn, promotes a higher level of satisfaction for work and functionality for associate pastors (Vaccarino & Gerritsen, 2014, p 71-73).

Research Limitations

The study was limited to a specific geographical area within the state of North Carolina. Expanding the research area could have yielded a more diverse population and demographic. Another area of limitation was in diversity. Although many of the churches were multicultural, the majority of the participants were male and Caucasian. The lack of diversity in the participants may be due to the lack of associate pastors in smaller churches, namely African American churches where there is often only one pastor, the lead. Historically, African American churches subscribe to a top-down leadership hierarchy. The lead pastor of most African American churches has the authority to hire and fire staff including assistants (Trader-Leigh, 2008).

Another limitation was in only having ten participants for the study. The study would have benefited from having more participants and having more time to conduct the research. The use of more participants would have added to the reliability. When exploring the relationship between Senior pastor leadership style and job satisfaction of associate pastors, 155 pastors from 12 churches were polled over a six-month time period (Lee, 2005, p.10). The inclusion of lead pastors in the study could have served as a cross comparison analysis between the perceptions of the associate pastors and those of the lead pastor.

Implications for Further Research

This study focused on the perceptions associate pastors had on lead pastor support in marriage, family, and ministry. However, expanding the study to include all religious affiliations, all ethnicities, and all pastors would capture even more descriptive data than this study offered. The study can also look within religious affiliations for the same perceptions. Further research can compare female and male perceptions of the same study. McQuillan & Gehrmann wrote an article that addresses the impact of religious denominations on mentality and behavior (2017). They assert that religious affiliation is a determinant in thoughts, behaviors, and mentalities.

Another area for further study can be found in looking at the perceptions after year one as an associate pastor compared to year five and beyond. The perceptions of the associate pastor in the earlier years of ministry would be compared to the perceptions as the associate pastor has become more experienced. As mentioned earlier, during the early years of pastoral position, more conflicts arise in their personal lives as well as in congregational duties (Kratz, 2008). The study would look at in what ways, if at all, do perceptions change over time from the early years of being a pastor to later years. This research did not find any current research that specifically looked at a one-to-five-year comparison. In addition to the above implication, the use of the SBC can provide greater access to more ministers who may be willing to participate without fear of reprisal or risking the chance of being identified.

This study can also be used as a catalyst for more specific research with particular ministries in the church, such as, focusing on the perceptions from marriage ministry pastors, or children's ministry pastors. The study can also be conducted in reverse order by looking at the perception of lead pastors on the support they provide to their associate pastors. Several studies

have been conducted on the work-life balance for women in ministry (Fish 2008; Moss, 2020; Steeves, 2017) and stress levels in women in ministry. A cross comparison between male and female pastors' work-life balance and stress levels can reveal differences and similarities between the genders.

A new potential area for study was revealed during the research. The potential for associate pastors to assume the responsibility for lead pastors in areas left uncharted may determine areas lead pastors do not feel inclined to further cultivate. This area can also reveal the perceptions associate pastors feel in assuming this responsibility.

Summary

The research demonstrated that associate pastors believe their ministries are indeed impacted by the lead pastor support concerning marriage, family, and ministry as it relates to stress and depression. The analysis of the findings reported from the participants was supported by the answers to the research questions. The conclusions showed that associate pastors' marriage, family, mental health, and spiritual health and wellbeing are impacted by their roles as ministers.

The implications of the study can be fully appreciated with further research. With further research on this study, the call to ministry life can be experienced with a healthy balance in marriage, family, and ministry, with a decrease in stress and depression. The longevity of pastors can be extended with an understanding of what the needs of the pastors are and how to achieve their needs. Lead pastors benefit from the study by recognizing where they need to focus in guiding and helping their associate pastors achieve success in all aspects of life.

The results of the study have not only shed light on the perceptions of associate pastors, but they have also allowed the participants to self-reflect and better assess where they are in their

need to balance in their personal and ministry lives. Two of the most notable take-aways from the research was one, the suggestions for the lead pastors to support associate pastors in balancing marriage, family, and ministry. The other take-away was, although all associate pastors respect and trust their lead pastor, sharing personal mental health issues is still a struggle and would not be considered appropriate to discuss. As stated earlier, lead pastors must take an interest in all aspects of associate pastor's wellbeing. Philippians 2: 3-7 speaks to the lead pastor,

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but name himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (NIV).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LEAD PASTOR'S LETTER OF INTENT

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

LEAD PASTOR'S LETTER OF INTENT

Date:

Mr. John Doe/Mrs. Jane Doe
Senior Pastor of X church
1234 Street Name
Fayetteville, NC 29310

Re: Letter of intent/Permission to conduct research study

Dear Mr. Doe

I am requesting permission to conduct a research study on the associate pastors at your church. I am a doctoral candidate in Liberty University's School of Divinity located in Lynchburg, VA. I am in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation. The study is entitled Lead Pastor Support in Balancing Marriage, Family, and Ministry as it Relates to Stress and Depression: A Multi-case study. This study seeks to explore associate pastors' perceptions of how their lead pastors support them in balancing their marriages, families, and ministries along with the accompanying stress and depression related to the associate pastor position.

I am requesting that you allow me to contact all associate pastors at your church. Once you grant approval to conduct the research and you provide the contact information of all associate pastors, I will email each one to ask if they are willing to participate. Participants will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, participate in an in-person or Webex interview, and review the transcripts of their interviews. I would also like permission to conduct the face-to-face interviews at your church, if face-to-face is preferred by your associate pastor(s), provided there is a conference room setting available. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, issues, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at ykmcbride@liberty.edu.

If you agree to allow the study, please sign below and return this letter in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Humbled by grace,

Yolanda K McBride, Liberty University

Approved by:

Print your name and title here, sign and date

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

CONSENT FORM

Lead Pastor Support in Balancing Marriage, Family, and Ministry as it Relates to Stress and
Depression: A Multi-case study
Yolanda McBride
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to participate in a research study on the level of support needed from senior pastors to ensure a healthy, balanced home and ministry life for associate pastors, while decreasing the levels of stress and depression in their lives. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, currently serving as an associate pastor under a lead pastor for at least 1 year, married, and have children. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Yolanda McBride, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine the level of support needed from senior pastors to ensure a healthy, balanced home and ministry life for associate pastors while decreasing the levels of stress and depression in their lives.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an online questionnaire through Qualtrics. This should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in either an in-person or Webex interview. This should take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.
3. Review your interview transcript that will be provided to you via email three days after the interview. This should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You will need to confirm the transcript's accuracy or return any corrections by email within three days after receipt of the transcript.

Risk: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefit: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used for future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer and deleted after they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be stored in a locked safe and shredded after three years. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings and transcriptions.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contact and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Yolanda McBride. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 713-380-0804, or email her at ykmcbride@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Joseph Butler at jebutler@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Please notify the research if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understand the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INVITATION

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear Invitee,

My name is Yolanda McBride. I am a doctoral candidate in Liberty University's School of Divinity. I am kindly inviting you to participate in a study that I am conducting entitled, Lead Pastor Support in Balancing Marriage, Family, and Ministry as it Relates to Stress and Depression: A Multi-case study. The purpose of my study is to determine the level of support needed from senior pastors to ensure a healthy, balanced home and ministry life for associate pastors, while decreasing the levels of stress and depression in their lives.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, currently serving as an associate pastor under a lead pastor for at least 1 year, married, and have children. Participants will be asked to complete an online questionnaire through Qualtrics, participate in either an in-person or Webex interview, and review their interview transcript for accuracy. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire, 45-60 minutes to complete the interview, and 15-20 minutes to complete the review of the interview transcript. Interview transcripts will be emailed to you three days after the interview. Interview transcripts should be returned to me within three days of receipt at the email address provided below. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to verify your eligibility for this study, please contact me at ykmcbride@liberty.edu. I will email a screening survey to you to confirm that you are eligible to participate in the study.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If I inform you that you are eligible to participate in this study based on your responses to the screening survey, please sign the consent document and return it by email to ykmcbride@liberty.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Humbled by grace,

Yolanda K McBride, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

APPENDIX D: SCREENING SURVEY

**ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING
MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO
STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY**

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

SCREENING SURVEY***Eligibility***

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
2. Are you currently serving as an associate pastor under the senior/lead pastor at your church?
3. If you answered yes to the previous question, have you been serving as an associate pastor under the senior/lead pastor for at least 1 year?
4. Are you married?
5. Do you have children?

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Your feedback will help address the concerns of balancing marriage, family, and ministry from the associate pastor's perspective. For the following questions, please answer to the best of your ability. If you do not feel comfortable with any of the questions below, you do not have to provide an answer. Should you have any questions during any part of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me. Remember, participation is solely voluntary and you are free to change your mind at anytime.

1. Can you describe a typical workweek as an associate pastor? Please include any specific tasks you are responsible for.
2. Please describe the most prevalent conversations you and your spouse have concerning your role as an associate pastor.
3. Please describe a normal week for you and your family. How do you handle any issues that affect your family in a negative or positive way because of your position as an associate pastor?
4. Can you describe your definition of stress?
5. Describe what you do to cope with or eliminate stress that occurs as a result of you being an associate pastor.
6. Please describe your idea of a healthy and purposeful life.
7. Please describe what you do to maintain a spiritual life.

8. How would you describe your relationship with the lead pastor?
9. Describe a time when the lead pastor conducted training for you and other associate pastors on marriage, family, and ministry.
10. Describe your ideals of healthy support from a lead pastor in balancing marriage, family, and ministry.

APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Interview Protocol

Date:

Participant Pseudonym name:

Interviewer:

Script to be read before each interview:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and take part in this interview for my research project. The purpose of this study is to explore your perceptions of lead pastor support in balancing marriage, family, and ministry as it relates to stress and depression. Everything that we discuss is completely confidential. Although I will be developing a cumulative report based on the information you provide, your name will not be used or linked to the information nor will your church name be identified. This interview will occur only once. This interview should only take 45 minutes to an hour of your time.

I would like to audio-record the interview with you. Your name and church affiliation will not be included in any part of the recording nor in the transcript. The recordings will be transcribed and then deleted. Any notes taken during the interviews will be stored in a locked safe in my home for 3 years and then deleted.

If at any time during the interview you request that I stop recording, I will cease all recording at that moment. If you desire to stop participation during any part of the interview, the interview will be stopped at that moment. I will email you the interview transcript three days after the interview for your review and correction, if necessary. Please email the corrected interview transcript back to me at ykmcbride@liberty.edu.

Marriage health and wellbeing

1. Describe how you balance your marriage and church duties without neglecting either role.

2. Have you and your spouse ever had an argument or disagreement surrounding your duties as an associate pastor? If so, can you describe the event?
3. Can you tell me if you feel comfortable speaking to the lead pastor about marriage issues? Why or why not?

Family health and wellbeing

1. Do you spend time talking to your family about your ministry role? If so, can you describe that for me?
2. Can you tell me how you balance your family's needs with your role as an associate pastor?
3. Can you tell me if you feel comfortable speaking to the lead pastor about family issues? Why or why not?

Mental health and wellbeing

1. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the duties of being an associate pastor? If so, can you describe that for me?
2. Have you ever felt stress or depression in your ministry role? If so, how did you cope?
3. Can you tell me if you feel comfortable speaking to the lead pastor about mental health issues? Why or why not?

Spiritual health and wellbeing

1. Can you describe where you are spiritually today, devotionally speaking?
2. If you spend quality time with God, describe the areas of your life that you discuss most often, good or bad.
3. If the lead pastor has influenced your spiritual health, can you describe that for me?

Lead pastor support/nonsupport

1. Tell me about a time when you felt support in your role as an associate pastor from the lead pastor.
2. Has the lead pastor communicated with you about the need to balance marriage and family? If so, can you describe that vision?
3. Can you describe any areas that a lead pastor should focus on to encourage ministry support staff in family and ministry balance?

APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

ASSOCIATE PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD PASTOR SUPPORT BALANCING
MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY AS IT RELATES TO
STRESS AND DEPRESSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

(Yolanda K McBride)

Liberty University
(JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY)

IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 12, 2020

Yolanda McBride
Joseph Butler

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-20 Lead Pastor Support in balancing marriage, family, and ministry as it relates to stress and depression: A case study

Dear Yolanda McBride, Joseph Butler:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.