

PRAYER: THE EFFECT IT HAS ON DECREASING MARITAL CONFLICT  
WITH HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES

By Michelle Corbett Brown

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

The problem is not much research that shows whether prayer has a positive or negative effect on marital conflict; and which type of prayer is better at combatting marital conflict. The purpose of this quantitative study is to unveil the independent variables (IVs): religious strategies and prayer types that interact positively with the dependent variable (DV), marital conflict, in decreasing the marital conflict with heterosexual couples. The researcher created one survey to include questions from the Behavioral Religiosity Scale, Kansas Marital Conflict Scale, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types, and Prayer for Partner Measure for participants to answer. A sample size of 108 participants was determined by inputting the estimated effect size (Cohen's  $f = 0.15$ ), alpha level ( $\alpha = .05$ ), and power (.90 confidence interval (CI)). The researcher performed MLR to answer the research questions and confirm the hypotheses. The results revealed prayer had a more significant effect. A specific prayer type was revealed to have a more positive effect. However, it was colloquial instead of PFPP as  $H_{a2}$  had predicted. Lastly, no study has all the answers and with further research, more knowledge can be determined to help couples continue to decrease marital conflict.

*Keywords:* prayer, PFPP, marital conflict, colloquial, religious practices

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my maternal grandmother, Mary Henry Corbett, who stated, “Get this girl an education.” She might have thought it was the only thing I could do since house cleaning was not my calling. She had no idea that God had her speak those words to start me on my path. I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my uncle, David Lee Black, who has always had my back and knew my first client: a stray dog. He said I talked to the dog for a long time, and he never returned. I guess he never ran away again. I dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Tiffany Buchanan, and Shanika Brown, who never gave up on me and always encouraged me through this journey. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to anyone who desires to go further but is too scared to do so. All you must do is take a step and watch what happens next.

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## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
Dedication.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Tables .....	8
List of Figures.....	9
List of Abbreviations .....	10
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	11
Overview.....	11
Background.....	11
Historical and Social Context .....	11
Conceptual/Theoretical Context .....	14
Problem Statement .....	15
Purpose Statement.....	16
Significance of the Study .....	17
Research Question(s) .....	19
Definitions.....	19
Summary .....	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	22
Overview.....	22
Conceptual or Theoretical Framework .....	23
Related Literature .....	26
Marital Conflict and Satisfaction .....	27

Marital Conflict and Communication Style .....	32
Marital Conflict and Struggles.....	39
Marital Conflict and Religious Activities .....	42
Marital Conflict and Prayer .....	45
Summary .....	51
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....	53
Overview .....	53
Design .....	54
Research Questions .....	54
Hypotheses .....	56
Participants and Setting.....	56
Instrumentation .....	58
Demographic Survey .....	58
Behavioral Religiosity Scale (BRS) .....	58
Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS) .....	59
Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types .....	60
Prayer for Partner Measure .....	61
Procedures.....	62
Data Analysis .....	63
Summary .....	66
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	67
Overview .....	67
Descriptive Statistics.....	67

Results.....	74
Data Screening .....	74
Assumption Testing .....	76
Hypotheses.....	79
Summary .....	84
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS .....	85
Overview.....	85
Discussion.....	85
Implications.....	88
Limitations .....	89
Recommendations for Future Research.....	90
Summary .....	91
REFERENCES .....	94
APPENDICES.....	120



### **List of Tables**

Table 1: All Data Descriptive Statistics .....	68
Table 2: Multicollinearity Test with VIF .....	78
Table 3: Correlation of Estimates .....	79

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Religious Strategies (IVs) Affect Marital Conflict (DV) .....	55
Figure 2: Prayer Types (IV) Affect Marital Conflict (DV) .....	55
Figure 3: G*Power .....	58
Figure 4: Attending Church (IV) Visual .....	70
Figure 5: Prayer (IV) Visual .....	70
Figure 6: Reading the Bible (IV) Visual .....	70
Figure 7: Listening to or Watching Religious Programming (IV) Visual .....	71
Figure 8: Colloquial (IV) Visual .....	72
Figure 9: Meditative (IV) Visual .....	72
Figure 10: Petitionary (IV) Visual.....	73
Figure 11: PFPP (IV) Visual.....	73
Figure 12: Ritual (IV) Visual .....	74
Figure 13: Marital Conflict (DV) Visual .....	74
Figure 14: Studentized Residuals for Outliers .....	75
Figure 15: Residual Predicted Plot for Linear Regression and Homoscedasticity .....	76
Figure 16: Residual Normal Quantile Plot .....	77
Figure 17: Summary of Fit .....	81
Figure 18: ANOVA .....	81
Figure 19: Indicator Function Parameterization .....	82
Figure 20: BRS Graph .....	83

### **List of Abbreviations**

Akron Area Survey in 1985 (AAS 85)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS)

Confidence Interval (CI)

Confidence Limits (CL)

Dependent Variable (DV)

Independent Variables (IVs)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS)

Mean (M)

Median (MDM)

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)

Number (N)

Partner-Focused Petitionary Prayer (PFPP)

Standard Deviation (SD)

Standard Error of the Mean (SEM)

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

In Chapter One, the researcher introduces the topic of marital conflict and prayer. Praying is a religious act utilized as a conflict resolution strategy when a marital dispute arises between spouses (Evans et al., 2021). This chapter focuses on a background section consisting of a historical and social overview, a conceptual/theoretical framework, and a background summary. Other sections in this chapter are the problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, definitions, and an overall chapter summary.

### **Background**

Conflict is not unusual in a couple's marriage (Rauer et al., 2017), but some couples are not as equipped as others to face and manage those obstacles (Epstein & Zheng, 2017). Conflict resolution strategies vary in style, with strategies aiming to overcome a situation, whether working collaboratively or individually, to end an issue that caused pain and disruption in one's life (Coleman et al., 2014). Although couples utilize secular conflict resolution strategies like improving communication styles (Rogers et al., 2018; Sullivan & Davila, 2014), attending therapy to understand changing behaviors, or acknowledging attachment issues (Gurman et al., 2015), religious strategies are still present. Prayer is a spiritual strategy that individuals use when combatting difficulties in their lives (Kelley et al., 2020). Focusing on prayer and marital conflict is the object of this study due to no overwhelming research regarding prayer and marital strife.

### **Historical and Social Overview**

Marital conflict does not involve one specific problem, nor does it only consist of one behavioral response (Jafari Harandi, 2021). When conflict occurs in marriages, couples have distinctive styles of manipulating those strategies they believe conquer and resolve issues (Yu,

2020). Deciding what to do when it comes to solving conflict, couples might utilize secular or religious strategies they believe will work in their situations (Evans et al., 2021). Some couples resort to using religiosity to aid their marriage (Moore et al., 2021). Religiosity aid individuals in everyday living (Johnson, 2020) because it helps them find their joy and closeness with one another (Wixwat & Saucier, 2021) while serving as a gateway to forgiveness (White et al., 2018).

Religiosity strategies like church attendance (Klausli, 2020), participating in joint Bible reading or perusing spiritual magazines, books, websites, or blogs (Wilmoth & Riaz, 2019), engaging in prayer (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017), or participating together as a couple when praying or attending church (Fraser et al., 2021) assist with improving marriages, provide marital satisfaction, and reduce marital conflict. Religiosity and religious beliefs aid in helping couples relinquish control so that marital conflict would decrease (Batista da Costa & Pereira Mosmann, 2021). When employing religiosity, it includes a prayer that can be seen openly or hidden when performed (Csilla & Martos, 2019).

Researchers examined prayer on multiple occasions; however, more research needs to be completed on prayer and its influence on marital conflict (Beach et al., 2011). Prayer brings relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2008). Religion was vital for participants who participated in a survey geared towards religiosity, prayer, and infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). However, prayer did not significantly stop spouses from committing adultery, which can be considered a marital conflict (p. 415).

According to Suciadi Chia (2021), prayer is a source of hope for restoration, but the study does not mention if hope for restoration extends to marital relationships. In another study, prayer is the go-to when stress and distress occur, but it does not reveal if that includes marital

relationships (Bradshaw et al., 2008). People utilize prayer because they believe God is listening and will respond to them when they call upon Him (Exline et al., 2021). When individuals thought God was listening and responded to their prayers, their actions and behaviors changed from negative to more positive towards others (Szcześniak & Stochalska, 2021).

Couples who knew about prayer and its effects gained their teaching from the elders or community (Balswick & Balswick, 2014). Elders taught their families and communities how to make religion a part of their lives because of their religious beliefs and faiths that brought them through many tough times (Köstenberger, 2010). One ethnographic study revealed that Indigenous people learn from elders how to utilize their faith and prayer in different ceremonies to help them throughout their lives (Clark & Wylie, 2021).

Although prayer is not an unknown practice worldwide, a decline has occurred in the number of individuals with religious beliefs and religious activities (Twenge et al., 2016). Prayer is a social psychological phenomenon due to the social interaction with a recognizable prayer to magical objects, social positions that sway others to pray more frequently, and increased social action through psychological and interactional processes (Sharp, 2012). Prayer unveils selflessness and a desire to see another person excel (Cooper et al., 2019; Skipper et al., 2018).

Couples who required assistance in improving their health and wellness allowed prayer to help them achieve their goals (May et al., 2020). However, in a different study regarding prayer and life satisfaction, prayer assisted with life satisfaction, but a connection was not revealed between marital satisfaction and resolving marital conflict (Jung & Ellison, 2022). Stress can be domineering for anyone, and prayer is an aid in releasing and lowering it (Cooper et al., 2019). Prayer is influential in bridging couples and families (Dollahite et al., 2019; Fincham & Beach,

2014; Kelley et al., 2020) and helping spouses transform their lives for the better (Spencer et al., 2021).

Family prayer provides social support, minimizes, and assuages agitation and pressure among family members (Chelladurai et al., 2018). With prayer applied in marital enhancement programs, it revealed that prayer assists couples, especially when they put their spouse as the focal point and desire the best for them (Beach et al., 2011). Understanding which type of prayer is influential in helping alleviate marital conflict between spouses is another gap explored in this study.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

### *Concepts*

Religiosity comprises “spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and involvement with a faith community” (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006, p. 439). Religiosity is a concept known to assist individuals in making decisions, whether the decision affects them individually or as a couple (Csilla & Martos, 2019). The next concept that is the focus of this study is prayer. Prayer is one avenue to commune with God for oneself or others (Bradshaw et al., 2022). Prayer consists of communicating to God pleasingly and sincerely, not pleasing others (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 6:5-8).

Lastly, the types of prayers are the last concepts that guide this study. One prayer type is partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) which regards speaking to God on behalf of their partner (Fincham & Beach, 2014). Prayer types from Poloma and Pendleton include colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). In colloquial prayer, the individual talks to God using their own words and not the terms of others (Black et al., 2014). Meditative prayer accommodates individuals in reducing stress and distress when they can

reflect during quiet time (Maltby et al., 2008). Petitionary prayer often provides security in believing God is answering individuals' requests (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011). When individuals desire obedience to their religion and leaders, they might engage in ritual prayers that might be memorized or performed out of habit (Jeppsen et al., 2015).

### ***Theoretical Framework***

A relational spirituality framework developed by Annette Mahoney directs this study because it views the relationship functioning between families and religious practices (Pargament, 2013). The religiosity level impacts the manner families operate and maintain their relationships with one another (Mahoney, 2010). This framework has three stages: discovery (dating and learning about one another), maintenance (the use of religiosity to help protect marriage), and transformation (couples either fight or not to save their marriage) (Moore et al., 2021).

While in the discovery stage, individuals do not wait until the last minute to comprehend who and what God will do (Mahoney, 2010). As couples desire to keep their marriages together, they apply necessary techniques that would continue to nurture and strengthen their relationship (Moore et al., 2021), while transformation operates in searching and utilizing techniques that will bond or separate them (Mahoney, 2010). A relational spirituality framework helps determine how religiosity helps frame and develop the relationship between spouses.

### **Problem Statement**

Couples encounter challenges from time to time in their marriages (Rauer et al., 2017). However, only some spouses can manage and counterattack those challenging obstacles (Epstein & Zheng, 2017). Couples do not have to resolve conflicts independently because help is steadily available through books, journal articles, marriage counseling, church, et cetera (Gurman et al.,



2015). Only some utilize identical practices to decrease conflict, with some taking the religious route while others take the secular avenue (Evans et al., 2021). Religiosity often guides individuals in their daily lives (Johnson, 2020). When couples enjoy religious activities, a more optimistic connection often happens (Fraser et al., 2021). Couples experience different emotions when they engaged in religion, and that interaction might bring them closer to each other and closer to God (Wixwat & Saucier, 2021). Religiosity benefits couples who have engaged and confronted conflicts in their marriage while also providing an entrance to forgiving one another that prevents friction from occurring (White et al., 2018).

Prayer helps with wellness through partner-focused petitionary prayer (May et al., 2020) and accepting defeat and relinquishing pride and control through consenting instead of just attacking one another to win (Batista da Costa & Pereira Mosmann, 2021). Another helpful religious strategy that improves marital quality is participating together in religious activities or listening to Christian radio or talk shows (Wilmoth & Riaz, 2019). Prayer has aided in a variety of areas in couples' lives other than wellness, like increasing family bonding (Chelladurai et al., 2018), diminishing stress (Cooper et al., 2019), or aiding in psychological and spiritual well-being using ritual prayers (Vazquez & Jensen, 2020). In uplifting individuals' spirits, colloquial and meditative prayers have been helpful (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). The problem is not much research that shows whether prayer has a positive or negative effect on marital conflict; and which type of prayer is better at combating marital conflict.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to unveil the independent variables (IVs): religious strategies and prayer types that interact positively with the dependent variable (DV), marital conflict, in decreasing the marital conflict among heterosexual couples. Researchers have

studied prayer in the past, but not much research uncovers its full effects on marital strife. The researcher examines prayer against other religious activities and analyzes prayer types to find which type prevails to have a more positive impact on marital conflict.

Participants completed an anonymous online survey to discover the answers regarding prayer and prayer type on the impact of decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples. The researcher created a Google Forms survey from the following instruments: the Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS), Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS), Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale, and Prayer for Partner Measure. The link from the survey was uploaded to Prolific ([www.prolific.co](http://www.prolific.co)), an online research website, to collect data from participants Prolific recruited on behalf of the researcher.

### **Significance of the Study**

Individuals consider prayer necessary and essential when practicing religion and displaying religious acts (Zarzycka et al., 2022). Research has shown that prayer aids marriages with wellness (May et al., 2020), stress (Cooper et al., 2019), and psychological well-being (Vazquez & Jensen, 2020). However, understanding explicitly whether the effects of prayer are directly in connection with marital conflict, the research studies are either too old or not specific enough to answer the question. Conflicts are not unnatural in marriages, and various constructive or destructive strategies target handling and combatting marital conflict (Delatorre & Wagner, 2018). Understanding the role of prayer helps reveal if prayer concurs with being a more constructive and positive strategy.

Marital conflict comes in different forms. According to a study by Dollahite et al. (2019), it was not revealed whether prayer aided in every type of conflict married couples might encounter. Prayer types become vital in dealing with the effects of prayer and marital conflict.

Research has shown that more than one type of prayer exists in combatting different challenges married couples face in their relationship. Prayer types include PFPP (praying for the spouse) (Cooper et al., 2019), colloquial (focusing on oneself), petitionary (asking or pleading), meditative (thinking during a quiet time), or ritual (habit or set prayer) (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). Adding which type of prayer generates a more positive effect on marital conflict will also benefit future research studies.

This dissertation research study is vital to any married couple who desires to utilize prayer as a viable conflict resolution strategy that exerts positive results through the knowledge gained from spouses of different religions and those without a religious background who married those with spiritual experiences. This study reveals to spouses that more than one type of prayer exists, and one of those prayers shows they garner more positive results in decreasing marital conflict. Researchers will be able to utilize information from this study and continue with their research to add vital material about prayer and marital conflict.

In counseling, therapists and other professionals can reveal that prayer is still effective in decreasing marital conflict. However, it discloses that utilizing prayer does not come in just one form. Therapists and other professionals can enlighten their clients about different prayer approaches. They could conduct further research to teach those prayer types to themselves and their clients, giving them more options to choose from when battling marital conflict.

### Research Questions

**RQ1:** Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming?

**RQ2:** Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer?

### Definitions

1. *Colloquial prayer* - When using it, the spouse focuses on sharing God's love and requesting God's blessing for their life (Maltby et al., 2008).
2. *Marital conflict* – Having issues that disrupt a marriage that causes disagreements or arguments, whether the conflict is psychological or physical (Cummings & Davies, 2010).
3. *Meditative prayer* – Listening and being still while waiting for God to respond (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017).
4. *PFPP (Partner-focused petitionary prayer)* – The prayer regards their partner and not themselves (Cooper et al., 2019).
5. *Petitionary prayer*– Asking or pleading to God for their purposes (Jeppsen et al., 2015).
6. *Prayer* – Having a conversation with God or a higher power who provides answers to various situations (Puchalska-Wasyl & Zarzycka, 2020).
7. *Relational spirituality framework* - This framework can be used to understand the relationship one has with God and the obligations one has with Him while looking at the relationship with others (Mattis & Jagers, 2001).
8. *Religion* – Being part of a particular faith or attending a place of worship out of obedience to the faith (Foster et al., 2013).

9. *Religiosity* – The actions one performs learned through religion that guide their faith in producing desired results (Shimkowski et al., 2018).

10. *Ritual prayer* – Praying out of habit or following a set prayer (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017).

### **Summary**

Marital conflict is not anything new that occurs in marriages (Rauer et al., 2017). Researchers try to understand the variety of conflicts spouses encounter that complicate their marriages (Jafari Harandi, 2021). However, the challenge involves revealing the best strategies for any conflict that embarks on a marital relationship. Couples who are baffled or have little to no knowledge of decreasing marital conflict seek assistance from others with experience (Gurman et al., 2015). Guidance might come from the secular or religious world. Secular and religious professionals believe they are giving their best techniques in conquering and diminishing marital conflict, so marital conflict does not lead couples to divorce (Yu, 20220). Various conflict resolution strategies, including prayer, exist to help spouses tackle marital conflict (Evans et al., 2021). The goal of prayer is to assist couples in their marriage with successful results (Kelley et al., 2020).

This study focuses on prayer being the main focal point of religious strategies utilized to comprehend if it has more of a positive effect than other spiritual strategies in decreasing marital conflict. Prayer is speaking with God or a higher power in hopes of receiving answers that will reduce challenges in individuals' lives, like marital conflict, which could include any disagreement between couples (Bradshaw et al., 2022). When looking closely at prayer, prayer types are studied in this dissertation research to help uncover if one type was better at decreasing marital conflict than another. Concepts include religiosity, prayer, and the following prayer

types: PFPP, colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual. The relational spirituality framework guides this study. Relational spirituality framework explains relationships between family members (Mahoney, 2010). Not much research conveys prayer as having a pivotal role in decreasing marital conflict, although the research studies have favored positive prayer as being effective in individuals' lives. The other research gap is that research does not state which prayer type has a more positive effect in combatting marital conflict.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Chapter Two includes the following sections: conceptual and theoretical framework, related literature, and summary. The related literature section contains the following categories: marital conflict and satisfaction; marital conflict and communication style; marital conflict and struggles; marital conflict and religious activities; and marital conflict and prayer. In the marital conflict and prayer section, prayer types are discussed.

Religion being a decisive influence is not an unknown phenomenon in marriages (Köstenberger, 2010). Often individuals respond as they do toward others because of their faith and connection with God (Kroff et al., 2018). However, research has shown that not one single religiosity factor is the cause of successful marriages, especially when handling conflict. No couple could avoid challenges that often might appear and destroy a marriage (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Couples who do not have the skills to stop marital conflict on their own seek assistance from therapists or other professionals who educate and teach them various conflict resolution strategies to assist them in resolving marital conflict (Epstein & Zheng, 2017).

The current study is not regarding whether religion prevents couples from confronting marital conflict but whether prayer continues to help ease and decrease challenges and if a specific prayer type is more effective in reducing marital strife. Numerous studies have contributed to why religiosity is essential for individuals to utilize in their lives; however, researchers have yet to single out the most influential religious factor that causes conflict to subside, especially in marriages (Berc et al., 2017). The current research focuses on religious activities, mainly prayer, that heterosexual couples utilize to help them decrease marital conflict.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

### **Concepts**

Although religion and religiosity might often be utilized or spoken of as being the same matter, they are two separate entities. Religion is related to where people attend church, or it centers around their specific faith, and religiosity refers to the acts one does because of their feelings or attitudes regardless of the religion they may or may not practice (Foster et al., 2013). Religiosity refers to involvement and can often mold individuals' ideas, emotions, personalities, and goals they set for themselves (Shimkowski et al., 2018). According to Lakatos and Martos (2019), religiosity is the primary foundation that guides individuals' behaviors and thoughts of a religious person.

Prayer is the primary focus of this study, although other religious acts have been active in decreasing marital conflict. Prayer is believing a connection occurs between the person speaking and a higher power (Isacco & Wade, 2019). Individuals who might not consider themselves religious or believe in divine power have participated in prayer, regardless of how minute the prayer frequency occurs (Speed & Fowler, 2016). Prayer is a concept and action that is not considered one of a kind but diverse in usage (Puchalska-Wasył & Zarzycka, 2020).

Since praying is unique, different types of prayer exist. Partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) is a prayer that spouses sometimes engage in when they desire to see changes in their marriages and their spouses, especially when wanting to observe positive effects (Fincham & Beach, 2014). By incorporating PFPP, the spouse exhibits and proclaims that their partner's needs are essential and the desire to increase their attachment to one another (Hawkins et al., 2020). When PFPP is activated, marital relationship functioning appears to improve along with



their partner's health (May et al., 2020). In this study, this researcher provides more insight as to whether PFPP or the other prayer types decrease marital conflict.

Colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual are from Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). Individuals pray to a higher power without mimicking or utilizing others' words when they employ colloquial prayer (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2015). Colloquial prayer does not transpire at any staged time or moment; it can materialize when a person feels like praying for any reason (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017).

Meditative prayer comprises individuals thinking and sitting still, often with no loud noises, reflecting on different things regarding God, and sometimes waiting for God to answer their requests or speak with them in general (Maltby et al., 2008). Individuals who apply meditative prayer do not have to be religious because it can benefit anyone who chooses to use it for any situation (Isacco & Wade, 2019). Those who believe in God's presence would often partake in meditative prayer because they are not only waiting for a response, but they believe God's presence would enter while they sit quietly waiting for God to respond to them (Black et al., 2014).

Individuals who focus on what they might receive, such as material goods from God, do so through petitionary prayer (Pössel et al., 2018). Easing one's emotions might occur when utilizing petitionary prayer (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011). Individuals who believe God is present and responding to their requests are optimistic and confident that they will be granted their wishes because of the premises they have learned regarding God and prayers (Paine & Sandage, 2015).

Not everyone utilizes their own words or conducts spontaneous prayers; instead, they invoke God's presence through ritual prayers (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). Ritual prayer involves individuals performing out of obedience either because God commands them or because they are following someone else's protocol (Jeppsen et al., 2015). Quoting or memorizing prayers also can be examples of ritual prayers individuals use to speak to God (Pössel et al., 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Annette Mahoney developed a relational spirituality framework to help understand relationship functioning and religious acts individuals utilize in their marriages and families (Pargament, 2013). The relational spirituality framework regards the relationship spouses have with God and with each other, especially when handling issues that arise from conflict (Mattis & Jagers, 2001). Prayer is not a contemporary act or fashion statement since it has been around for decades (Twenge et al., 2016), but understanding the relationship between it and marital conflict helps further the conversation and research regarding the effects it has on marital strife.

In utilizing the relational spirituality framework, three stages occur: discovery, maintenance, and transformation (Moore et al., 2021). When couples enter the discovery stage, they establish and launch a relationship for the first time (Moore et al., 2021). Partners are not procrastinating but are driven and motivated to understand the intricacies of God and how God could work in their lives and relationship (Mahoney, 2010). In other words, romantic partners take an interest in one another and decide to date, but they do not leave God out of the relationship (Moore et al., 2021).

Once they leave the dating stage and marry one another, spouses become determined and continue to master techniques that guide them and perfect them as they go through different

marriage challenges and stages (Mahoney, 2010). Couples do not rely on just one religious practice, belief, or spiritual community to guide their relationship (Moore et al., 2021). During the maintenance stage, those techniques are utilized to assist in keeping the relationship intact and, hopefully, avoid separation or divorce (Chonody & Gabb, 2019). Also, during the maintenance stage, partners focus on preserving and nurturing their relationship with God (Moore et al., 2021).

Lastly, the transformation stage involves the techniques that aid in saving, keeping, or ending couples' relationships (Moore et al., 2021). In the transformation stage, couples' thoughts and comprehension might alter regarding their relationship with each other or God (Naor & Mayseless, 2020). During this stage, spouses may do all they can to restore and improve their relationship, especially if they desire to please and be obedient to God (Mahoney, 2010). Religiosity does not regard a person's religion or faith (Shimkowski et al., 2018), and prayer is known to occur in various religions (Twenge et al., 2016). Religiosity is not about determining its usefulness in different religions or faiths but how couples behave when manipulating prayer and various types when combatting marital conflict. The relational spirituality framework relates to this study on prayer and prayer types battling marital conflict through their connection with divine power. The results prospectively advance the framework by revealing that prayer and the prayer type decrease marital conflict between spouses.

### **Related Literature**

The literature consists of research studies that examine marital conflict and religious activities with a focus on prayer and prayer types that individuals utilize when they require assistance in their lives and relationships. This review examines marital satisfaction between couples. A second viewpoint of the literature review is the communication style, not just with

spouses but with how therapists communicate. Lastly, the literature focuses on religious activities that guide marital couples in relinquishing conflict, leading to this research study's main center point. Many religious activities aid in assisting individuals, but a closer examination takes place regarding prayer and prayer types that are better at helping in decreasing conflict without conflict leading to divorce.

### **Marital Conflict and Satisfaction**

Researchers often examine what influences what when it comes to marital satisfaction and decreasing conflict. A study of 64 married heterosexual couples discovered that marital conflict is inevitable, but those conflicts do not and will not end a marriage, primarily when interventions are utilized (Rauer et al., 2017). The interventions do not have to be identical, and couples should learn that multiple techniques exist for resolving marital conflicts (p. 511). Although any intervention could reduce marital discord, the study does not mention which method produces a more positive effect (p. 513).

However, a study performed by Sanford (2014) determined that it is not about resolving conflicts that produce marital satisfaction, but marital satisfaction guides resolving conflict (p. 1084). Couples who walk together in their religion have a sacred covenant, but that covenant does not always ensure marital satisfaction will occur (DeMaris et al., 2012). Marital satisfaction revolves around cognitions, emotions, and actions couples have for one another (Hendrick, 1988). Religious homogamy increases marital satisfaction; however, further evidence is vital in comprehending individuals' distinctive values influencing marital satisfaction since personal values are linked positively with marital satisfaction (Olson et al., 2016).

### ***Parenting Challenges***

When spouses commit to becoming parents, another layer of identity crisis is added to the causes of marital conflict (Dong et al., 2022). Not only does parenting contribute to marital conflict and whether marital satisfaction will occur, but spouses' stress levels and mental health will also be affected. A study in China reveals that fathers who exhibit cognitive empathy and understand their wives, especially regarding childcare, can decrease marital conflict and depression (Dong et al., 2022).

Work often interferes with a marriage, which could cause havoc and lead to marital conflict and an unhappy home (Yoo, 2021). A study conducted in South Korea reveals that mothers and fathers have work conflicts, but the mothers have challenges with family to work while fathers are conflicted with work to family (p. 10). Understanding the knowledge gap is seeing other parents who are dual earners to determine if issues still arise between work conflicts.

In addition to spouses' conflict, it sometimes spills over into their relationships with their children (Skinner et al., 2021). A study of 180 families unearths that those parents might overcompensate with their children when issues occur between spouses (p. 1093). To understand the research gap, further research on whether parent-child relationships cause marital conflict that disrupts marital satisfaction is necessary (p. 1094).

Youths introduced to religion and religiosity at an early age generate a positive everlasting relationship with God, assist and bond with their families (Dollahite & Marks, 2019). Prayer and other religious practices have aided in the youth's understanding and utilizing those spiritual interventions to assist them when challenges arise that affect them in their childhood and can help them develop future relationships with others (p. 9). Although learning about

spirituality at a young age has offered positive development, it could also produce conflict between parents due to children not staying with the teachings they learned (p. 18).

### ***Emotions and Gender Differences***

Positive and flattering feelings result from couples who partake in sanctification (Ellison et al., 2011). According to a study by Agu and Nwankwo (2019), marital satisfaction does not always follow those who pledge their lives to Christ. Those who participate in a study might not be able to speak for every couple who walks in marital satisfaction or religiosity due to their socioeconomic status and not being afraid to share their perspectives (Knabb, 2014). When individuals can effectively express their emotions, their emotions often become dysregulated (Thompson, 2019). Emotions come from various issues, and to understand the originating source, further research should occur to learn the cause of the dysregulation and the determining factor that ended it (Gill et al., 2019).

A study of 111 first-married and 108 remarried couples discovered that emotional regulation contributed to marital satisfaction, especially when observing one's gender but not about the first or second time a person married (Frye et al., 2020). Marital conflict appears to be higher among those who remarry than those who are married for the first time (p. 2350). For those spouses who remarried, the study does not reveal the diverse issues that cause an increase in conflict or lower their marriage satisfaction (p. 2350, para. 1).

A study by Jackson et al. (2014) reveals a different outcome involving gender; more research is vital in appreciating the gender differences couples experience when they embark on other life transitions that might affect their marital satisfaction. Gender differences occur when those differences involve religious commitment, and wives desire their husbands to have more religious obligations (Perry, 2016b). Husbands with more outstanding religious commitment

influence their wives to have a higher marital quality than husbands looking to their wives to have a higher religious obligation (p. 336).

Adding to gender differences is how wives desire compatibility in religious affiliations and beliefs that tend to increase marital satisfaction at least in two generations (Hwang et al., 2019). Divorce could directly result when couples do not have similar denomination affiliations (p. 1201). If couples share the same denomination, they often have a better opportunity of fighting marital conflict together than separately (p. 1203).

When determining emotional regulation, researchers must also look at marriages through each stage instead of older unions that understand and apply emotional balance when it comes to marital satisfaction and intertwining with one another (Mazzuca et al., 2019). Attitudes toward love styles cause gender differences and relationship satisfaction among married couples (Neto, 2021). Along with displaying appropriate attitudes, spouses who support one another also rely on their self-perception of themselves and their spouses and the use of religiosity or not (Ross et al., 2021).

### ***Religiosity Level***

The causes and depth of marital tension tend to direct marital satisfaction (Manalel et al., 2019). Sometimes reasons for marital stress can be the level of church involvement. A study utilizing the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) reveals that the higher the church involvement, the higher the level of marital satisfaction (Perry, 2015). In some cases, higher attendance in church activities is more important than the activities' caliber (Wilmoth & Riaz, 2019).

Understanding and acknowledging the religious and spiritual struggles will assist couples in marital satisfaction (Zarzycka et al., 2020). Having spiritual support, including God, might

have a powerful impact on handling conflict attempting to attack them and their marriages (p. 11). Conflict is likely to happen when one spouse is more religious, especially if spouses have not agreed upon the value religiosity has in their lives or marriages (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012).

In a study regarding race and religiosity, higher spousal religiosity indicates a more superb and higher marital quality and satisfaction among diverse ethnic groups; however, whites do not contribute a higher rating than the other races (Perry, 2016a). In a different study about religion and marital satisfaction involving Taiwan, religion does not play a significant role in marriage and happiness, which require further research to comprehend the factors that reveal a relationship between marriage and satisfaction across all religions (Chen & Chen, 2019). According to a study regarding Christian-Jewish marriages, it does not matter if one spouse is higher in religiosity than their counterpart because the marriage still evolves into marital harmony (McDavitt, 2015).

### *Struggles*

Although religion appears to help many individuals, religion can also cause conflict in a marriage because of the internal struggles a spouse might endure that lead to diminishing marital satisfaction instead of increasing it (Abu-Raiya et al., 2016). A study of primarily Christians, Muslims, and atheists reveals that minimal significance occurs among marital satisfaction between the religions; more research is fundamental in detecting if the same results will appear with other faiths (Sorokowski et al., 2019). Inviting religiosity into one's marriage could offer positive benefits regardless of the religion, with children or without (Baharu et al., 2019). The gap in understanding was what role religiosity had in a marriage and how it prevented or resolved marital conflict (p. 111).



## ***Religiosity***

A study on married couples from 42 countries indicates that couples who spend time together participating in joint religiosity activities increase marital satisfaction (Fraser et al., 2021). In addition to participating in activities together, some spouses with identical religious identities increase marital satisfaction (p. 130). To bring forth extra information to this research is to dig deeper into whether a shared religious activity increases marital satisfaction while decreasing marital conflict.

Religiosity assists couples in remaining married and positively affects mental health and well-being (Csilla & Martos, 2019). Religiosity practices may include prayer, church attendance, or partaking in other religious activities (p. 263). However, those religious activities may occur in an open forum or privately (p. 267). The problem is that research does not reveal a sacred act solely responsible for religiosity, being supportive and willing to end the marital conflict, and providing satisfaction (p. 274).

Sometimes marital conflict and satisfaction do not correspond well with one another (DeMaris et al., 2012). Marital conflict might influence parenting challenges, emotions and gender differences, religiosity level, struggles, and religiosity. Because of those challenges, marital satisfaction could be interrupted (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019). Sometimes when couples are undergoing issues, their communication style impacts marital conflict more (Rogers et al., 2018).

## **Marital Conflict and Communication Style**

What hinders people from overcoming marital conflict is the communication between spouses. To take the focus off themselves, some partners place it on each other and start playing the blame game. According to Rogers et al. (2018), a decrease in marital conflict can occur if couples learn how to express themselves by sharing how they feel instead of shifting the negative

talk to their spouses. Incorporating I-statements will assist spouses in tackling demanding situations without always speaking in a defensive mode (p. 6). To further the research regarding the use of I-statements will be to incorporate those statements with the help of prayer to determine if utilizing both decreases marital conflict.

### ***Partner Blaming***

Sometimes what contributes to spouses taking negative shots at one another is the belief that their partner is the issue and not themselves (Sullivan & Davila, 2014). When couples enter therapy to handle the challenges that conceive the marital conflict, the focus is no longer on making a person change for them to be happy with themselves or their marriage (p. 1). As therapists and professionals assist the couples before them, their job is to help them state the problem without shifting it to their partner (p. 10). Further expanding this discussion will be to do a study regarding utilizing prayer when discussing the issue without shifting the blame to the person.

Marriages often depend on the manner couples communed with one another during all moments they encounter throughout their marriage (Li et al., 2018). The conversations and interactions between spouses might eliminate silent moments or encourage further development in operating as a couple (p. 734). A study of 268 Chinese couples who participated revealed that having those daily communication talks amplify and boost spouses' relationships while adding conflict resolution strategies complement and strengthen the relationships (p. 740).

### ***Therapy Assistance***

Understanding God and religiosity can be interpreted differently by clients and therapists (Johnson, 2020). However, therapists must be careful with their interpretation because their understanding of God might alienate clients and only show one side without acknowledging the

clients' walk with God (p. 244). This article is to teach professionals about adding God into the therapy relationship to assist their clients further; however, a study about counselors taking this approach will help reveal if religiosity does help them with decreasing marital conflict.

When therapists are assisting their clients, they must not forget to pay attention to gender differences. Gender differences exist when observing attachment anxiety and the way husbands and wives combat it with alcohol consumption instead of turning to religiosity (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Highly anxious wives tend to drink more than less anxious wives when coping with conflict, while husbands who had anxiety drank higher amounts; still, it is not solely due to having pressure or the level of conflict (p. 2400). From the study of 280 couples, men appear to consume higher amounts when they desire to avoid discord and when conflict is present (p. 2401). Another study will clarify if religiosity will be a solution to alcohol consumption, attachment anxiety, and avoidance.

Sometimes when seeking outside assistance, counselors must be willing to adjust their practices to include religiosity, especially for those clients who desire a spiritual intervention to help them with marital conflict. According to a study centered on counselors, they did not agree unanimously on integrating spirituality or religious acts into their therapy practices (Evans et al., 2021). Although the participants might have different definitions of spirituality and Christianity when working with clients, they agree on how each client should treat others respectfully regardless of their religious background (pp. 15-16). A study that will further the discussion will incorporate a religiosity technique with clients irrespective of the counselor's religious background to determine which method has helped decrease marital conflict.

Not knowing how to utilize spiritual techniques prohibits them from being used, which is why couples seek Christian counseling professionals (Bannister et al., 2015). Spouses expect

Christian counseling professionals to know the spiritual methods and teach those methods to them (p. 90). However, it might be more difficult for Christian counselors or any counseling professional to share and incorporate those techniques if their own religious beliefs and attitudes are different from the couples who present before them for help in resolving conflict (Cohen Davidovsky, 2019).

If therapists remember not to overlook the cultural aspects, they will be of more service in enhancing couples' communication styles, especially when resolving conflict (Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2016). Spouses who often look to counseling professionals as experts will anticipate their therapists having a connected relationship with God to help them communicate with Him and utilize his religious activities to improve conflicts (Owen et al., 2014). Those couples who hesitate to seek help can complete a Marriage Checkup (MC) that will detect issues that are on the rise so they can resolve problems before they overtake couples and destroy their marriages (Eubanks Fleming & Córdova, 2012).

Not relying on one technique assists therapists in resolving marital challenges and issues since all couples are unique; each technique provides diverse strengths that spouses can benefit from in developing strategies (Karam et al., 2015). Spouses with more than one technique to choose from will add to their repertoire of skills in battling marital conflict. As therapists assist couples in working on their communication skills to alleviate stress, they must not exclude the conversation on gender stereotypes that often plague how husbands and wives operate and interact in their marriages (Randles, 2016).

### ***Commitment and Satisfaction***

Couples committed to their religion before marrying are more likely to engage in that religion throughout the marital relationship; however, more research is crucial in fully

understanding the numerous factors that could alter the relationship between being committed and religious (Mitchell et al., 2015). One study reveals that communication using exact holy words determines marital quality instead of living with the same faith (David & Stafford, 2015). However, the religious communication style will not matter if words are not appealing or done the way God intended (Dollahite & Marks, 2018).

Sometimes, their ability to remove themselves from the situation blocks couples from communicating in identical styles without making moves to resolve conflicts (Nichols et al., 2015). Spouses might not be able to remove themselves without knowing the challenges. Understanding the blockage between couples is having appropriate marital intervention programs that benefit all backgrounds to discover techniques that coincide with their personalities and communication styles without prohibiting cohesiveness (Chakkyath & Jesus, 2020).

A study of 633 participants indicates that work-family conflict does occur (Worley & Shelton, 2020). The style spouses utilize to communicate regarding the conflict can often lead to additional turmoil that interrupts their marital satisfaction (p. 264). The research gap reveals that work-family conflict is not the primary source of marital conflict, and the other challenge is understanding the dynamics of parents who are separated or divorced to see if a difference occurs between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction (p. 265).

In a study of 431 couples, communication and satisfaction do not incur remarkable results with correlation, which leads to more research in determining if communication causes marital satisfaction or if marital satisfaction influences communication between spouses (Lavner et al., 2016). A study in Iran reveals that communication style does not influence marital satisfaction for divorced couples (Ebrahimi & Ali Kimiaei, 2014). Their emotional state might have hindered those results (p. 461).

When looking at communication and marital satisfaction, research must utilize a sample of more than one nationality instead of the study that just focused on Portuguese, which concludes that negative or positive communication patterns can increase marital satisfaction (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). Religious leaders are sometimes called upon to assist with communication patterns that garner more effective communication and mutual respect for spouses (Johnson, 2020). Nevertheless, the gap occurs when religious leaders do not fully understand their communication style, making it more difficult to help individuals utilize more effective communication skills (pp. 246-247).

Disclosure has been proven in different studies to reveal that it does help with marital satisfaction; however, a closer look at who benefits the most from the exposure is essential to understanding the dynamics of disclosing or holding back when communicating complex issues (Zhaoyang et al., 2018). Part of the cause of a communication error is impulsivity, which can deliver devastating results because research is unclear on the root cause: the person being impulsive, their partner who was on the receiving end, or their perceptions of the impulsivity (Tan et al., 2017). As couples get older with everlasting marriages, communication styles lean towards encouraging instead of hurtful comments to win an argument; however, more research is essential in understanding if the conflict that arises is minor or significant when communicating effectively and positively (McCoy et al., 2017). When compared to dating couples, married couples engage more in holding grudges and anger while those who date remove themselves from the relationship, which leads to understanding why a gap exists between the two and understanding what makes couples hold onto their marriage instead of choosing divorce (Backer-Fulghum et al., 2018). As one thinks of verbal communication that leads to marital conflict and sometimes marriage dissolution, couples' communication love styles are essential to observe

when performing conflict resolution. In a study of 964 couples, sexual communication contributes to marital satisfaction among spouses; however, the survey does not reveal the exact communication style that marked marital satisfaction highly (Velten & Margraf, 2017).

### ***Religiosity Level***

However, in a survey that interviewed Jewish women, religiousness requires more expounding and interpretation before knowing conclusive results regarding a connection between religion and sexual or marital satisfaction (Lazar, 2017). According to Cassepp-Borges (2021), more research on religious similarity's impact on marital conflict and religiosity should be a part of the conversation regarding love styles and communication. Sometimes sexual intimacy connection is the style to enhance if couples remain together and resolve the conflict (Kusner et al., 2014).

One of the challenges spouses often face is the level of religiosity, which hinders how spouses communicate with one another. A study with 550 married couples shows that wives have and desire religiosity more often than their husbands, which can create issues when it comes to communication and conflict (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2016). However, the problem with that study is that it relies on self-reporting that is not observable or complete with an interview (p. 213).

### ***Self***

From a study of 123 couples, self-reporting is not a concept to forget with communication because it alters the perceptions of spouses' beliefs of conflict causes unless more objective viewpoints occur (Ehrlich et al., 2019). Abstract reframing intervention (ARI) allows couples to observe that their self-perceptions control their negative behaviors and whether they feel appreciated by their counterparts (Marigold & Anderson, 2016). However, individuals

with a mental health illness might already have a thought-processing block and might not benefit from ARI (p. 531). In determining self-perceptions regarding proficiency in handling challenges that arise in marriages, researchers must delve further into the causes of proficiency self-perceptions and if depressive symptoms are contributing factors to marital conflict or not (Lee et al., 2019).

While understanding if growth is developing between couples regarding communication, spouses might report self-growth as they look at themselves (Hart et al., 2020). Spouses reflect and decide if they need to make any more changes in their communication styles or behaviors (p.15). Religious and spiritual struggles do not always produce self-growth, but they can reveal how people view themselves (p. 16).

Marital conflict and communication style occasionally halt couples from decreasing issues in their marriage. Some couples with communication challenges seek therapy assistance, especially in helping to stop them from blaming their partners. Other challenges when communication style influences marital conflict are spouses' commitment and satisfaction with their marriage, their religiosity level, and themselves. Their self-perception and self-growth might cause their marital conflict and communication style not to be as cohesive as it could be. Couples must focus on their communication style and the struggles that affect their marriages.

### **Marital Conflict and Struggles**

Another area that couples encounter is marital conflict and struggles. Individuals affected by negativity often will not allow that negativity to affect their positive emotions toward religiosity (Krumrei et al., 2011). How one defines the sacred moments one encounters often determines whether religious and spiritual struggles have positive outcomes (Wilt et al., 2019). Individuals with conflicting attitudes and emotions concerning God often have a rough time



recognizing who God is and struggle with using religiosity to combat conflict if God has not answered prayers in the past the way people believe they should be answered (Exline, Grubbs & Homolka, 2014). However, understanding religious and spiritual struggles relies on self-reporting and not the observable actions that might be seen as objective to determine if attitudes and behaviors match or are opposite of one another when handling conflict (Exline, Pargament, et al., 2014).

Another struggle is moral attitudes, derived from various sources that directed the beliefs one struggles with in resolving conflict (Bernecker et al., 2019). To assist with grasping the extensive list of moral attitudes and those attitudes' backgrounds, conducting more research will aid in narrowing down what helps couples decide whether their moral obligation determines the conflict resolution style (Schafer, 2011). According to a study conducted in Ireland, a difference in religions affect younger couples more than older couples, with a surprising struggle being accommodations of the type of housing spouses live in during their marriage (Wright et al., 2017). Further research will have to be conducted to understand if the apartment or house has the most conflict (p.102). Society and their views on religion shape couples' attitudes regarding religion and the level of religiosity, especially when it involves marriages (Liefbroer & Rijken, 2019).

Couples who possess or experience a particular religion or consider themselves religious influence marital satisfaction; however, further research will disclose if having similar faith beliefs hold their marriage together regarding religiosity (Gurrentz, 2017). According to a survey administered by McDaniel et al. (2013), religion and religiosity are not the leading cause of divorce, but couples' educational and financial resources levels are. For individuals who experience divorce or are on the verge of divorce, their self-esteem is affected and is connected

to religiosity and religion (Bleidorn et al., 2019). However, the research does not look at divorced couples and different religious faiths worldwide to determine if the same results will be observed (p. 19).

One study involving factors that integrate and merge couples as one discovered that religiosity is a factor when couples are dating through technology and not face-to-face dating (Stiff, 2017). However, there is not enough research to determine the impact religion or religiosity has on spouses (Esselmont & Bierman, 2014). According to another study conducted with Catholic families, spirituality and marriages indicate a relationship (Klausli, 2020). However, the presence of the diocese or the participation in the premarital intervention program could have been the cause for an untruthful answer; however, having an independent researcher might produce more sincere solutions (p. 122).

When individuals are at a crossroads in their lives, they need help getting through those crossroads, where utilizing conflict resolution strategies becomes necessary. Conflict resolution strategies provide an avenue of not allowing disagreements and conflicts to remain between spouses (Batista da Costa & Pereira Mosmann, 2021). Sometimes the issues that arise from marital strife are not the most important, but how those spouses choose to work together utilizing the strategies is the best option to overcome conflict (p. 2727). To bring additional insight to the study about what offers a positive outcome for decreasing friction is to add religious strategies as part of conflict resolution.

Marital conflict and struggles are not always about the issues couples face with one another, like finances or parenting challenges. Sometimes those struggles are within their souls like spiritual struggles. They might have difficulty turning to divine power if it does not interject into their lives earlier when they call on them. Those struggles might have them questioning their

faith, especially if they do not have the same faith. Whatever the reason for the challenges, some couples still approach and consult God in locating religious activities to assist them in handling marital conflict.

### **Marital Conflict and Religious Activities**

Religion and spirituality often will be used to have identical meanings; however, they function as two different entities (Wixwat & Saucier, 2021). Religion regards a person's faith and the acts they do because of the belief, while spirituality focuses on the connection one has with God (pp. 121-122). Those who engage in spirituality or religiosity find it to bring them joy and closeness to God and others (p. 123). This discussion occurs from different studies, but additional investigations regarding the religious acts that provide pleasure and intimacy will be beneficial.

Couples might have different solutions to decreasing conflicts; however, this study focuses on the religious activities that assist spouses in settling their issues. Olson et al. (2016) remind readers that religious activities are practical and should not be neglected or rejected. No type is designated to conclude which is more efficacious and beneficial in problem-solving or resolving marital conflict (Goodman et al., 2013). A study on couples engaging in religious bonding is associated with divine struggles and depression (Jung, 2020). However, future research will determine if spiritual bonding affects other spiritual battles and which religious activities that couples do together have any negative association with divine struggles or mental health challenges (p. 522). Couples who do acknowledge the strength of religion do not allow religious activities to pass them by because they summon and ask for divine intervention to help them in various situations they encounter in life (Bronte & Wade, 2012).

One qualitative study of 11 Korean wives reveals that religious activities assist them when they endure marital suffering (Kim et al., 2020). The issues could have resulted from them being in an intercultural relationship with American men or other challenges like gender expectations in the marriage (pp. 536-537). Although they utilize various religious activities, they lack knowledge of which actions prove to work best in the conflict as they navigate the fundamentals of marrying outside their culture (p. 539).

As couples learn about various activities and their proper use of them, they can confirm whether their usage is helpful or not in resolving conflict and providing enjoyment (Day & Acock, 2013). Not only are they increasing their communication style and treatment towards each other, but their sexual satisfaction escalates to a higher peak since they are in one accord when they enjoy those activities together (Dew et al., 2020). Although the religious activities that bring the most remarkable results are unclear, research shows that joint activities and religiosity influence one another (King et al., 2020). According to a study on intercultural marriages, religious activities like prayer and worship provide “energy and peace” (Kim et al., 2020, p. 13).

Christian media consumption is a religious activity known to help relationships by providing helpful advice to those in need in reducing conflicts and improving relationships (Wilmoth & Riaz, 2019). Christian media consumption consists of reading spiritual books, listening to Christian radio, or watching Christian television (p. 8). Although the study on Christian media consumption concerns intimate partner violence, more research is needed from a more comprehensive range of religions to understand the full effects of whether it helps couples with marital quality (p. 15).

Attending church is another religious activity couples often do, whether together, with their families, or solo. Those who attend church regularly and concurrently improve their marital

relationship; however, more research is required to understand the dynamics or beliefs of how attending church influences their marriages (McDonald et al., 2018). Although attending church has its benefits, it does have a downside because it can lead individuals to stay in a disastrous marriage or prevent individuals from returning. After all, they choose a different route in removing obstacles in their marriages, like divorce, which can often be frowned upon in the church (Li et al., 2018). Li et al. (2018) study's results concluded that widowed women have no issues with remarrying, while divorced or separated women might hesitate to remarry. To further understand the dynamics of church attendance, men should be surveyed, including other religions (p. 740).

People add to the lives of others, especially those who have spouses (Jung, 2020). Spouses who engage in religiosity tend to put their spouses' needs over their own (p. 511). Spouses believe their relationships excel and experience more outstanding relationship commitment when participating in religious activities (p. 521). A study on which religiosity activity provides a better positive effect regarding meaning in their partner's life and whether that activity ends marital conflict and increases the importance for both spouses will offer more insight (p. 522).

Incorporating religiosity impacts and creates positive transformations among spouses and families through various religious experiences (Spencer et al., 2021). Religious activities like church attendance, prayer, and religious beliefs help improve and bolster family relationships (p. 1519). The changes the individuals develop that are provided in the qualitative study of 198 married couples not only invigorate but fortify their lives and the relationships between each other and their families (p. 1527). The knowledge gap is discovering if one religious activity will provide the same results and end the marital conflict.

Depending on the person, religion can influence or deter married couples (Kelley et al., 2020). Religious acts such as church attendance, prayer, and other spiritual elements help spouses unite and counterattack conflicts (p. 171). Although religiosity is robust and impactful when handling marital conflict, prayer proves to be the most impactful, whether done individually or as a couple (p. 175). Further discussion on prayer and combatting marital conflict involve looking closely at couples from all religiosity levels, not just the high-functioning religious spouses (p. 169).

When it comes to prayer, it does predict better marital relationships between spouses. However, how often one prays, attends church, reads the Bible, has spiritual conversations, and enjoys other spiritual activities together or separately indicates that couples have an increase in improving marriages and enhancing marital satisfaction (Klausli, 2020). A study with Catholic couples reveals that shared prayer aids their marital satisfaction with one another (p. 120). To offer more detail to this study will include research on marital conflict with prayer and other religions besides Catholics.

Marital conflict and religious activities involve first comprehending that religion and spirituality are not the same despite people sometimes putting them in the same category. Religion regards a person's faith and the reason they partake in religious activities, while spirituality is about the connection with God. To help bridge the connection are religious activities that often invoke peace, satisfaction, and joy, along with decreasing marital conflict. One of the religious activities guiding this research is prayer's effect on reducing marital discord.

### **Marital Conflict and Prayer**

Prayer is essential when displaying religious acts; however, prayer can also be unfruitful and impotent due to how people view prayer and confessing to God (Zarzycka et al., 2022).

These views can lead to individuals not contending well with having a positive and healthy mental health outlook (p. 12). Although the study regarding prayer involved changing scales to meet the needs of Polish individuals, it will be suitable for a follow-up clinical study to research prayer and marital conflict to unveil if prayer has a positive effect on the Polish community and other communities.

A qualitative study reveals that religiosity is vital to Black married couples with a high religiosity level because they believe it aids them in their relationships (Moore et al., 2021). Prayer is one of the religious acts that spouses turn to when requiring assistance in their marriage (pp. 683-684). However, the study does not disclose whether couples with a lesser religiosity level share the same sentiments regarding religiosity (p. 691). One of the reasons people pray is that they believe God is listening to them regardless of whether they ask, beg, or request something on someone else behalf (Exline et al., 2021). Although the participants were college students, they add to this literature review because people generally desire to know and understand whether God listens and responds to them (p. 2). The results reveal contrasting beliefs; some believe God hears, while others think God disengages for various reasons like cruelty or disinterest (p. 19).

People sometimes struggle with forgiveness but believe praying to God grants forgiveness (Szcześniak & Stochalska, 2021). The challenge is whether people think God will forgive because God is listening or has turned a deaf ear because the person praying has not been connecting with God (p. 2). Individuals believe prayer grants forgiveness because God listens and grants them their requests (p. 8). Further research on whether interpersonal forgiveness is granted in marriages regardless of the marital conflict when spouses pray to God will add to a study conducted.

### *Prayer Types*

Prayer is communication between the person and God, a higher power influencing the outcomes in various situations (Puchalska-Wasyl & Zarzycka, 2020). One hundred seven participants from Poland participated in a study to understand how prayer aids their well-being (p. 420). Through the different dialogues, it unearths that upward prayer, which consists of conversing with God and telling God about Himself, provides another development in how prayer is effective in people's lives (p. 424).

According to Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Type Model, four distinct types of prayer exist: colloquial (the use of an individual's words without assistance from others); meditative (waiting on God to respond, whether through observance or a feeling); petitionary (imploping God); and ritual (quoting from memorized prayers or utilizing a book of prayers) (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). People do not have to confine themselves to using only one style of prayer, and those who have a tough time understanding how to reach God for whatever reason will be able to utilize one of the prayer types Poloma and Pendleton describes.

The various prayer types demonstrate multiple ways of communicating with God to achieve a response and answers to different life situations (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). A study with mixed religions (Christianity, Jewish, and Muslim) uncovered that colloquial and meditative prayer aids in uplifting individuals' mental health (p. 227). Colloquial, meditative, and petitionary prayers are the ones that have influence when it comes to disclosure to God, with no mention of ritual prayers having the same effect (pp. 228-229). Another study examining when and why individuals utilize the different prayers will enlighten the conversation on when to use the several types of prayers.



In an earlier study by Winkeljohn Black et al. (2015), the prayer scale had to be adjusted to fit the different religious groups (Christianity, Jewish, and Muslim). When presenting instruments and surveys to participants, sometimes they will have to be adjusted to be culturally appropriate to receive accurate results, as they do with removing the colloquial questions since they are not suitable for participants with a Jewish religion (p. 213). To fill in the gap regarding the types of prayers, invite participants from all backgrounds, whether affiliated with a religion or not (p. 214).

**Petitionary Prayer.** Sometimes people have an issue with petitionary prayers because they already believe God knows everything, so they cannot understand the point of asking or requesting anything (Kleinschmidt, 2018). However, people believe petitionary prayer can be impactful, especially when praying for others or seeing a better outcome that is not selfish (p. 226). Completing a research study on how couples utilize petitionary prayer in tackling marital conflict is essential to create further discussion and understanding. Also, conducting further research about whether they believe their prayer effectively decreases the marital conflict even if God already knows what is happening in their lives. Prayer is not a casual gesture because many people think prayer is vital in their everyday lives (Pössel et al., 2018). The results from a study comprise higher levels of petitionary prayer exhibiting more depressive symptoms than higher levels of meditative or ritual prayers (p. 354).

**Colloquial and Meditative Prayers.** Colloquial prayer aids in reducing stress and lowering depressive symptoms, which can be helpful when attacking marital conflict (Pössel et al., 2018). Before a person exposes themselves and reveals their desires and needs, they think carefully as to whether they can trust and believe the person can assist them or not (Black et al., 2014). As predicted in the study conducted with various religions, colloquial and meditative

prayers appear to have a positive relationship with handling mental health requests compared to petitionary and ritual prayers (p. 550). The additional knowledge to further this discussion is to determine how one views communication through the diverse types of prayer and whether they believe those prayers result in answers from God (p. 551).

**Ritual Prayer.** Sometimes prayers are like ritual prayers, performed out of obedience to individuals' religious leaders and their religion (Jeppsen et al., 2015). Often when people enact ritual prayers, it might not regard God being in control or people attempting to grow closer to God but more of a necessity and fear of being non-compliant if the prayer does not happen (p. 168). More research is vital to comprehend better the relationship between ritual prayer, answers from God, and decreasing marital conflict.

According to Chelladurai et al. (2018), family prayer is described as a ritual since family prayer is an observed activity that is often set at a specific time or designed to complete a particular purpose. Family prayer includes spouses praying together and involving other family members (p. 850). During family prayer, the family is closer together, receives social support, and reduces tension and conflict amongst each other (pp. 852-855).

A qualitative study of 21 families discovered that church attendance and prayer aid in reducing conflict among married couples and the family as a whole (White et al., 2018). It does not specify which religious act generates the better outcome towards forgiveness or resolving the marital conflict, but prayer is one of the practices couples utilize (p. 91). However, speaking the Lord's Prayer has aided couples walking in forgiveness (p. 690).

The Jesus prayer is an example of a ritual prayer performed to grab God's attention. After couples utilize the Jesus prayer, they report that their psychological and spiritual well-being has been boosted (Vazquez & Jensen, 2020). The Jesus prayer involves God having mercy on

sinner, without the prayer being a prolonged or lengthy prayer but short and can be used at any time and for any situation (p. 65). Those who seek forgiveness repeat Jesus' prayer often (p. 71).

**Partner-Focused Petitionary Prayer.** Prayer is utilized in various religions, especially partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP), because it benefits in helping spouses overcome stress (Cooper et al., 2019). However, when PFPP is exploited for personal gain by praying for the partner to change because the spouse believes it is better for them, then PFPP becomes ineffective (p. 307). So, to understand PFPP's effects, more research is required to learn the prayers partners pray for one another (p. 310). As multiple studies on prayer have taken place, more research to understand the motives and specific prayers that produce results for the individuals praying for themselves and others are essential (Greenway, 2020).

Studies often underrepresent African Americans engaging in intercessory prayer (Skipper et al., 2018). Having more research on prayer and its effects on different races with the hope of including a good sample of each will help with the gap in research on whether intercessory prayer has a positive or negative religious activity in helping resolve marital conflict or not (p. 389). A study focused on Muslim families in the United States discovered that further research is needed to understand the downside of praying for others when the focus is on what the person praying desires to see changed for their reasons (Hatch et al., 2017). Sometimes people pray to have others conform to their standards and way of living instead of asking for divine power to change their perspectives about the people (p. 89).

### ***Importance of Prayer***

Prayer is a topic studied on many occasions, and it has shown great movement in reinforcing and heightening couples' marriages to assist them in remaining together instead of being apart from one another (Fincham & Beach, 2014). However, simply praying amiss does

not benefit couples; understanding their purpose in prayer moves spouses into having marital sustainability (Hatch et al., 2016). Researchers have unearthed that prayer is not one-sided, but when spouses pray for each other, it is what brings results in resolving marital conflict (Lambert et al., 2013). Because of those prayers couples perform, they are part of the reason for their marriages to flourish (Fincham & May, 2017).

Marital conflict and prayer have not been defined if prayer or a specific prayer type is the number one strategy to stop conflict when it occurs. The prayer types all have a unique style that causes challenges to halt. This study examines and unearths a specific prayer type that invokes a more positive effect on decreasing the marital conflict couples experience.

### **Summary**

Marital conflict can occur at any time and for any married couple throughout the marriage. Marital strife can hinder marital satisfaction between spouses. Marital conflict can cause or result from couples struggling with each other or individually. Many different strategies can prevent or halt marital conflict but sometimes the only way couples learn them is through family, religious leaders, therapists, or other professionals. Research has shown religiosity to be a positive influence on married couples.

Religiosity and the effects they have on marriage and decreasing conflict are known. Multiple studies reveal positive associations for married couples who choose to utilize religiosity in their marriages to have more positive outcomes when disputes and other issues arise. Religious activities produce favorable results. More research is required to comprehend if those activities affect marital conflict better than prayer.

However, looking through all the studies in this literature review, no religious activity is concluded to have the best results in decreasing marital conflict. Prayer and partner-focused

petitionary prayer (PFPP) are effective; however, the gap in the literature shows that PFPP might not be as effective if spouses only pray for their spouses to change and perform as they desire. Research should include the motives of the prayer and the spoken prayer to understand the effectiveness of prayer and PFPP in decreasing marital conflict.

This study's primary focus is on understanding the relationship between prayer and marital conflict among heterosexual couples. The goal is to unearth if prayer has a more positive effect than other religious practices in decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples. In addition, the study targets if one prayer type is more effective in combatting marital conflict with heterosexual couples.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

This study measures prayer by comparing it with various religious strategies to ascertain if prayer affects marital conflict with heterosexual couples more than the other strategies. The study also measures if one prayer type positively impacted marital conflict with heterosexual couples more than other prayer types. The assumption is that prayer had a more significant effect than the different religious strategies in resolving marital conflict. Although spiritual approaches have shown to be a force to be reckoned with when marital conflict materializes, the problem does not have one solid strategy to prove to be more effective in resolving marital conflict (Kelley et al., 2020).

Executing a prayer is believed to be a rewarding approach that changed actions and behaviors from negativity to a more positive manner (Szcześniak & Stochalska, 2021), and prayer boosts relationships while aiding couples to be accountable and responsible in settling their differences (Butler et al., 2002). Another assumption is that partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP) would reveal a better effect than other prayer types in conquering marital conflict and increasing marital commitment (Fincham & Beach, 2014). PFPP showed better marriage functioning and health (May et al., 2020) and aided in stopping infidelity (Fincham et al., 2010).

Prolific, an online research website, aided in recruiting participants, and this researcher provided a Google Forms survey link to receive responses from heterosexual married couples. The methods section includes design, research questions, hypotheses, participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and summary. This study provided answers to research questions through information accumulated and shared future studies' recommendations that would continue to aid couples in utilizing religious activities for conflict resolution.

## **Design**

The design is a quantitative study that utilizes surveys or epidemiological research to uncover religious activities that aid in decreasing conflict in heterosexual married couples. Survey or epidemiological research is a method that is well-known in social sciences research due to its ability to record and report on a specific variable within a population to recount and analyze the variable through the data collection received through a variety of methods like questionnaires or personal interviews (Heppner et al., 2015). In utilizing a survey, researchers could obtain information from a smaller sample of a larger population to represent and generalize to a broader population; if the survey mirrored and portrayed the target audience, one wanted to make assumptions about them and their lives (Fogli & Herkenhoff, 2018).

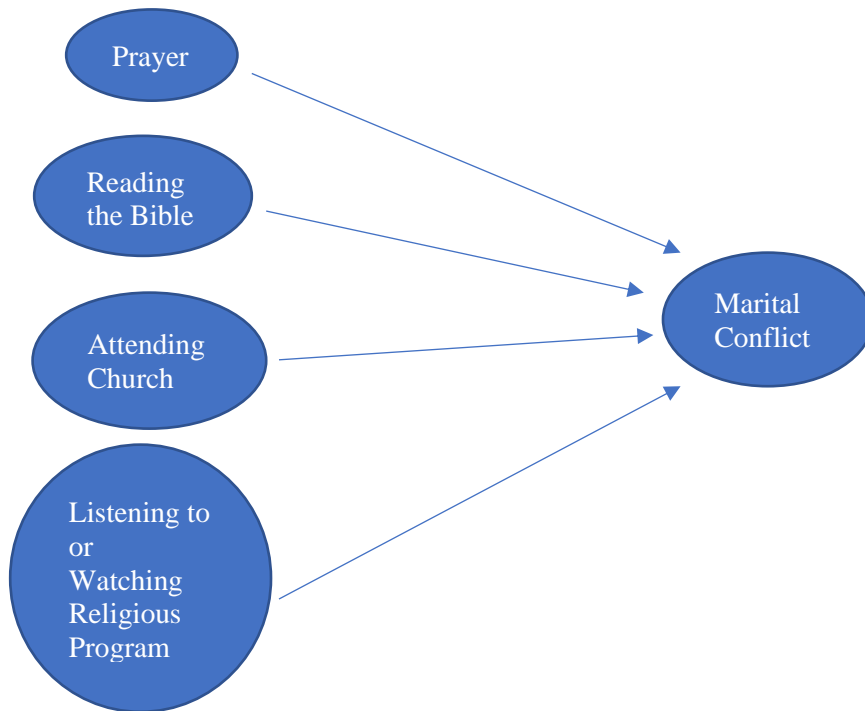
The researcher created one survey to include questions from the Behavioral Religiosity Scale, Kansas Marital Conflict Scale, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types, and Prayer for Partner Measure for participants to answer. The answers relied on the Likert scale to determine the relationship between prayer and marital conflict and between prayer types and marital conflict to understand which prayer type has a more positive effect from the data collection entered in JMP software (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022c). MLR displayed if a positive relationship existed with prayer decreasing marital conflict and PFPP reducing marital conflict.

## **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming? (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1**

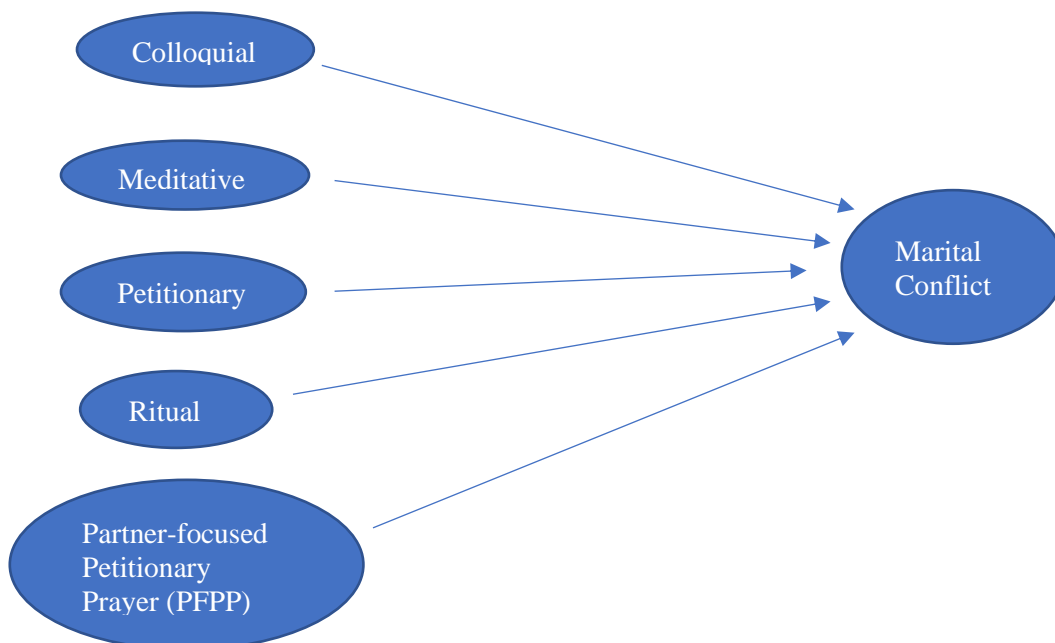
*Religious Strategies (IV) affect Marital Conflict (DV)*



**RQ2:** Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer? (See Figure 2)

**Figure 2**

*Prayer Types (IVs) affect Marital Conflict (DV)*





## **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** Prayer will not reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming.

**H<sub>a</sub>1:** Prayer will reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming.

Praying was a reasonable assumption in having a more significant effect due to couples choosing prayer when their marriages need improvement (Moore et al., 2021).

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** No prayer type will have a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than any of the prayer types.

**H<sub>a</sub>2:** Partner-focused petitionary prayer will have the most positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than the following prayer types: colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual.

The literature review revealed that PFPP was an effective religious strategy that improved marriages and their spouses' health (May et al., 2020) which was why PFPP was assumed to have the most positive effect on decreasing marital conflict between spouses.

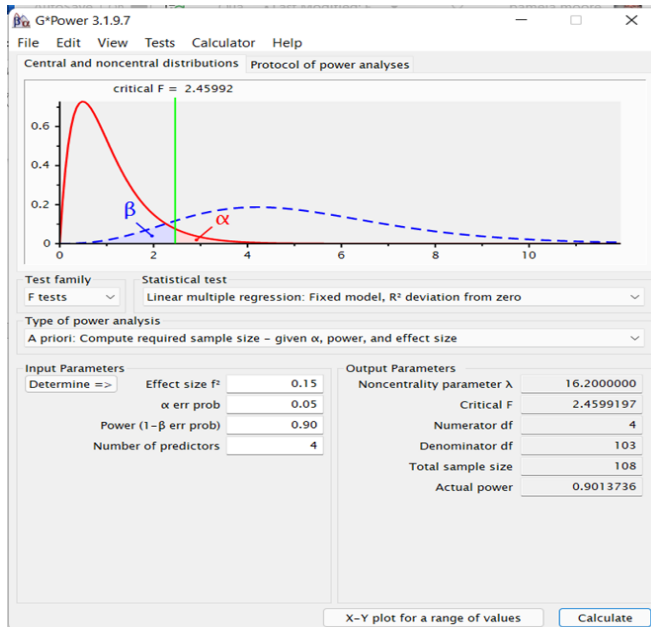
## **Participants and Setting**

The researcher determined participants by meeting the criteria of being between 18 and 90, being in a heterosexual marriage, and participating in religious activities. The study utilized random sampling because it was not biased and could be generalized to the population of married couples, especially if enough participants from diverse backgrounds participated (Heppner et al., 2015). The researcher utilized G\*Power to select the sample size. G\*Power

calculates the number of participants needed for a study after selecting a statistical analysis, an estimated effect size, an alpha level, and preferred power (p. 178). A sample size of 108 participants was determined by inputting the estimated effect size (Cohen's  $f = 0.15$ ), alpha level ( $\alpha = .05$ ), and power (.90 confidence interval (CI)) (See Figure 3).

The researcher recruited 116 participants to account for attrition. Prolific ([www.prolific.co](http://www.prolific.co)) handled recruitment to ensure confidentiality and anonymity and received \$2.63 for participating in the study. Participants answered the required demographic questions through Prolific's prescreening before entering the research study through a link created in Google Forms. Participants who met the criteria completed a survey with questions from the following instruments: Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS), Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS), Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale, and Prayer for Partner Measure. All information collected had no identifying markers of the participants who participated in the study.

The participants would be a heterogeneous population to ensure results could be generalized to those population groups (Heppner et al., 2015). Participants have no socioeconomic status, educational level, or living area limits. The inclusion and exclusion criteria to participate in the study include participants 18-90 years old, in a heterosexual marriage, and engaged in religious activities.

**Figure 3***G\*Power*

### Instrumentation

#### Demographic Survey

A demographic survey aids the researcher in performing the most appropriate research study with the necessary participants (Heppner et al., 2015). The demographic survey (Appendix A) ensures the researcher identifies the participants who meet the criteria to participate in this study. Participants are between 18 and 90, in a heterosexual marriage, and used religious strategies.

#### Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS)

BRS (Appendix B) aids in measuring the diverse religiosity practices couples might engage in when marital conflict arises. BRS regarded religious behaviors individuals conducted conspicuously in 1965 (Adamson et al., 2000). Charles Glock and Rodney Stark were influential in developing BRS, with the ritualistic dimension being more focalized (p. 972). BRS is considered a scale to be reliable in measuring religiosity (Fagnani et al., 2021) with a Cronbach

alpha of 0.755 using exploratory factor analysis and 0.906 with parameters methods (Adamson et al., 2000).

BRS comprises four questions that allowed participants to share the amount of time they partook in religious behaviors (Fagnani et al., 2021). The scores range from four to forty through calculating the numbers they provide to the questions (p. 480). The answers range from one meaning never to 10, denoting two or three times a day (Adamson et al., 2000). The greater the score, the more persistent and regular the religious behavior (p. 975). The religious behaviors include church attendance, prayer, spiritual reading, and religious programming via television or radio (Fagnani et al., 2021).

### **Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS)**

A measurement to evaluate and analyze the level of marital conflict couples might engage in throughout their marriage is administered through KMCS (Appendix C). Kenneth Eggeman, Virginia Moxley, and Walter Schumm developed KMCS in 1985, intending to execute a scale during therapy while couples were experiencing marital conflict (Corcoran & Fischer, 2007). However, the spouses are answering questions from three different marital conflict stages through a surveillance lens while in marriage therapy to observe couples' behaviors toward one another (p. 119). KMCS is chosen for this quantitative study because the questions still reflect how spouses view their marital conflict. This researcher is not examining their behaviors toward each other as they answer the questions. For this research study, the word "husband" is changed to "spouse" to avoid confusion about who should answer the questions.

KMCS proved reliable and valid, with a Cronbach alpha of .91 to .95 for men and .88 to .95 for women (Eggeman et al., 1985). The test-retest reliability was consistent and steady at .63 to .92 (p. 175). The three stages consist of 27 questions: the first stage of 11 questions, the

second stage of five, and the third stage of 11 questions (p. 179). The first stage, known as agenda building, is understanding the issues; the second stage is arguing, with couples sharing their point of view regarding the dissent while acknowledging the discord; and the third stage consist of adjustment, negotiating, and compromise (p. 171).

The scores are tallied for each stage, with responses being one for almost never; two for once in a while; three for sometimes; four for frequently; and five for almost always (Eggeman et al., 1985). However, in stage one, questions five, seven, nine, and 11 possess a reverse score; all questions invert except for the question regarding “respect toward you” in stage two; and questions two, four, five, six, and seven in stage three receive a reverse score (p. 171). The higher the score, the lower the conflict (Eggeman et al., 1985).

### **Poloma and Pendleton’s Prayer Types Scale**

Poloma and Pendleton’s Prayer Types Scale (Appendix D) measures several types of prayer to connect to marital conflict. The scale originates from an annual Akron Area Survey in 1985 (AAS 85) from 560 interviews which included questions regarding prayer types, now known as Poloma and Pendleton Prayer Types Scale (Poloma & Pendleton, 1989). The scale comprises 15 questions surrounding prayer types: colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual, which all revealed robust internal reliability except for ritual, which consisted of a marginal reliability coefficient (p. 47). A seven-point Likert scale helps understand answers ranging from one to represent never to seven representing several times a day (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2015). Within each prayer type, the answers are tallied and then averaged with higher scores denoting the more significant application of the prayer type (p. 207).

Prayer types separate into four factors. Factor One is meditative prayer and includes five questions that require a numerical answer and yielded Cronbach’s alpha of .81 (Poloma &

Pendleton, 1989). Factor Two is ritual or ritualist prayer and consists of two questions that retrieved a numerical answer with Cronbach's alpha of .59 (p. 48). Factor Three is petitionary prayer that involves two questions dictating a numerical response that concluded with Cronbach's alpha of .78 (p. 48). Factor Four is a colloquial prayer that includes six questions requiring a numerical answer and yielded Cronbach's alpha of .85. (p. 48).

The prayer scale utilizes a factor analysis that garners the four prayer types (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2015). The scale employs an oblimin and varimax rotation to develop the four prayer types (Breslin et al., 2010). Because Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types scale has been utilized worldwide and can be generic to anyone and any culture, the scale is considered one of the better to use when measuring prayer types (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2015). The downside to applying this scale is that the answers rely on the honesty of participants and confirmatory factor analysis was not the data analysis used to verify answers (Breslin et al., 2010).

### **Prayer for Partner Measure**

Prayer for Partner Measure (Appendix E) assesses PFPP as an effective prayer type in decreasing marital conflict. In 2010, the Prayer for Partner Measure, with a coefficient alpha of .96, comprised four questions to indicate if praying for their partner would alter change with spouses committing infidelity (Fincham et al., 2010). Participants would answer on a five-point Likert scale, choosing between one representing never to five, denoting very frequently (p. 652). The calculated answers revealed more regularity of prayer for the partner if the scores were high (Fincham & Beach, 2014). When the measure was utilized in 2014 by Fincham and Beach, the coefficient alpha was .72, and it revealed that relationship commitment increased through praying for a partner (p. 591).

## **Procedures**

This study commenced with the researcher enlisting participants through Prolific, an online research website, after receiving the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval (Appendix F) to conduct this study. Through the recruitment (Appendix G) process from Prolific, participants completed the demographic survey to ensure they met the required criteria to partake in this research study. The sample size of participants who met the required standards received the survey link created in Google Forms. Participants who did not meet the criteria requirements were thanked for responding, informed that they did not meet the needs to continue with the research study, and instructed to exit the survey. Participants who met the criteria conditions were to the survey questions to complete. The survey was estimated to take approximately 15 minutes to finish from the moment they began it.

Participants read an informed consent form (Appendix H) to acknowledge their permission to participate in the anonymous online survey without asking for any identifying information. The document included the research study's purpose with a notation that they could quit at any time without having their information recorded if they stopped before completing the survey. Participants saw and read the informed consent before answering any of the survey questions.

After agreeing to participate, participants completed one survey from a Google Forms link that included all the questions from the following inventories: BRS, KMCS, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale, and Prayer for Partner Measure. Google Forms is an evaluation tool that was easy to use, provided a single point of entry so that it was less likely to report inaccurate data, and was not limited to one type of technology equipment (Yana et al., 2020).

Participants who completed the survey in its entirety received \$2.63 with a completion code from the researcher that participants provided to Prolific to receive their monies.

The next step consisted of uploading the data into JMP software for easier understanding of data and assisting with multiple linear regression (MLR) data analysis. JMP is a statistical software application developed by the SAS Institute to input and perform data analysis with the capability of producing visuals to observe data (Abousalh-Neto et al., 2021). The last step comprised the researcher examining the results and scientifically writing the information.

### **Data Analysis**

This research comprised a quantitative study investigating the relationship between prayer and marital conflict. The researcher performed MLR to answer the research questions and confirm the hypotheses. This study consisted of two research questions: (RQ1) Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming; and (RQ2) Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer?

The null and alternate hypotheses associated with the research questions: (H<sub>01</sub>) Prayer will not reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming. H<sub>a1</sub>: Prayer will reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following spiritual strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming. (H<sub>02</sub>) No prayer type will have a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than any of the other prayer types. (H<sub>a2</sub>) Partner-focused petitionary prayer will have the most positive effect on



decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than the following prayer types: colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual.

Data analyzed through the lens of MLR assists with observing different IVs to uncover relationships with the DV (Hayes, 2017). For this study, the IVs evaluated were religious strategies and prayer types, and marital conflict was the DV. For RQ1, H<sub>0</sub>1 and H<sub>a</sub>1, MLR assisted with analyzing prayer and other religious practices to disclose whether a relationship exists with decreasing marital conflict. RQ2, H<sub>0</sub>2, and H<sub>a</sub>2, MLR aided in understanding the results from prayer types. MLR enhanced the study by revealing not only one but multiple relationships between variables (Heppner et al., 2015). The results showed which prayer type offered a better result in decreasing marital conflict.

Random selection was selected to aid in ensuring validity and reliability. External validity involves having control of the setting and the expectation that this study could be generalized to different populations who utilize prayer as a conflict resolution regardless of the conflict (Warner, 2012). Type I or Type II errors could occur if results were statistically significant when greater or lesser than the *p*-value (Heppner et al., 2015). The goal was to establish a relationship between prayer and marital conflict and avoid both errors. A sample size of 108 participants was determined using the G\*Power after inputting the estimated effect size (Cohen's  $f = 0.15$ ), alpha level ( $\alpha = .05$ ), and power (.90 confidence interval (CI)) (See Figure 3).

Data screening was performed to detect any errors. Data screening was essential to observe any outliers, correct entry errors, and notice unlikely or questionable data values (DeSimone et al., 2015). As much as the researcher desires to avoid mistakes, the researcher would not overlook the assumptions related to MLR. The first assumption is that a linear relationship must exist between the IVs and DV (Hayes, 2017). The second assumption is that

multivariate normality must exist in having errors in estimation be normally distributed (p. 214). The third assumption is homoscedasticity occurs between variables (p. 71). The last assumption is to have no multicollinearity between IVs, which avoids collinearity (Schroeder et al., 2017). This study revealed no assumptions were violated.

JMP software is responsible for observing descriptive statistics and aiding with outliers and errors through graphic visualizations (Abousalh-Neto et al., 2021). Descriptive statistics reveal information like mean, mode, standard deviation, graphs, and histograms in numerical and visual styles presented scientifically, clearly, and concisely (Vetter, 2017). The numerical and graphical methods data disclose the relationship between prayer, religiosity practices, and marital conflict, which prayer type has a better outcome with marital conflict.

Descriptive and inferential statistics inform individuals about pivotal relationships (Heppner et al., 2015). After reviewing the descriptive statistics, inferential statistics disclose a connection to a broader population other than the sample population (Allua & Thompson, 2009). MLR data analysis unearthed relationships that may reduce levels of marital conflict. Prayer and colloquial prayer were revealed to have a more significant effect in decreasing marital conflict. For this research study, the findings would apply to all heterosexual married couples, not just the participants who partook in this study.

BRS and KMCS were reliable and valid in revealing a relationship between prayer and decreasing marital conflict. Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale and Prayer for Partner Measure helped discover which prayer type yielded a more positive effect when decreasing marital conflict. This study utilized self-reporting on various scales. Self-reporting could be advantageous in multiple ways, like saving time, and is relatively easy to use; however, the researcher would have to use appropriate research inventories to minimize the disadvantages of

self-reporting (Heppner et al., 2015). The limitation was that the instruments utilized relied on self-reporting, which can sometimes be biased and untruthful (DeSimone et al., 2015).

### **Summary**

To understand the religiosity act, prayer, and the relationship it had on marital conflict, the researcher conducted a study evaluating prayer and its impact on decreasing conflict. The study examined heterosexual married couples who experienced conflict and observed if prayer and which prayer type presented the better outcome when combatting marital conflict. To participate in this study, participants had to be 18-90, in a heterosexual marriage, and engaged in religious practices.

BRS, KMCS, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale and Prayer for Partner Measure explored and described relationships between prayer, religious activities, marital conflict, and prayer types. Instruments were reliable and valid in delivering results and applied in a generality overview instead of a private inclusive sector. Data collection occurred from a survey created in Google Forms and administered online through Prolific. The researcher analyzed the data employing descriptive and inferential statistics. Data collection for instruments can deliver low results if participants are not truthful with their self-reporting when answering questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The study aimed to discover if prayer was more favorable to decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming. Along with examining prayer, the study's other purpose was to show if one prayer type is more significant in decreasing marital conflict among heterosexual couples. Chapter Four includes descriptive statistics, results, and a summary of the findings of this quantitative study.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

To complete the descriptive statistics, the researcher utilized JMP software. JMP software aided in capturing visuals that calculated the mean, standard deviation, standard error, and confidence interval (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022c). One hundred sixteen participants ( $N = 116$ ) who were in a heterosexual marriage and participated in religious practices completed Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS) for attending church, praying, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious programming; Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS) for determining marital conflict, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types: Meditative, Ritual, Petitionary, and Colloquial, and Prayer for Partner Measure for partner-focused petitionary prayer (PFPP).

BRS and Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types are broken down further for clarification to capture the data for the individual activities. In Table 1, the number of participants ( $N$ ), mean ( $M$ ), standard deviation ( $SD$ ), and standard error of the mean ( $SEM$ ) are revealed for the independent variables (IVs): religious practices and prayer types, and the dependent variable (DV): marital conflict. In the table and figures, the number changes for participants after the

religious practices due to how JMP calculates the participants. JMP multiplies the participants (116) by the number of questions they completed. From observing the descriptive statistics, prayer is the religious practice utilized more with an  $M = 6.10$  compared to attending church ( $M = 6.10$ ), reading the Bible ( $M = 6.10$ ), and listening to or watching religious programming ( $M = 5.37$ ). Of the prayer types, colloquial prayer was utilized more with an  $M = 5.15$  followed by meditative ( $M = 4.44$ ), PFPP ( $M = 4.22$ ), petitionary ( $M = 4$ ), and ritual being the least utilized ( $M = 3.57$ ). Participants engaged in marital conflict with an  $M = 3.39$ . in Table 1 and Figures 4 – 13.

**Table 1**

*All Data Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	N	M	SD	SEM
Church (IV)	116	6.10	2.10	0.19
Praying (IV)	116	8.42	2.05	0.19
Bible (IV)	116	6.10	2.77	0.26
Rel. Program (IV)	116	5.37	2.92	0.27
Colloquial (IV)	696	5.15	1.70	0.06
Meditative (IV)	580	4.44	1.73	0.07
Petitionary (IV)	232	4	1.81	0.12
PFPP (IV)	464	4.22	1.02	0.05
Ritual (IV)	232	3.57	1.90	0.12
MC (DV)	4292	3.39	1.24	0.02

*Note.* Religious practices in full description: Church represents attending church; Bible represents reading the Bible, and Rel. Program represents listening to or watching religious

programming. MC represents marital conflict. IV represents independent variables. DV represents the dependent variable.

Figures 4 – 13 reveal a histogram with a box plot, quantiles, and summary statistics. In summary statistics, the data for *N*, *M*, *SD*, and *SEM* are the same data reported in Table 1 and will not be repeated when discussing Figures 4 – 13. Figure 4 reveals data for attending church (IV) which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of 10. Answers range between the fifth and eighth quartile with an *MDM* (median) of 7, Upper *CI* (Confidence Interval) = 6.43, and Lower *CI* = 5.78, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot. Figure 5 displays data information for prayer (IV) which shows a minimum rating of two to a maximum rating of 10. Answers range between the 7.25th and 10th quartile with an *MDM* of 9, Upper *CI* = 8.74, and Lower *CI* = 8.11, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with outliers to the left present in the boxplot. Figure 6 demonstrates reading the Bible (IV) data, which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of 10. Answers range between the 3.25th and ninth quartile with an *MDM* of 6, Upper *CI* = 6.53, and Lower *CI* = 5.68, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot.

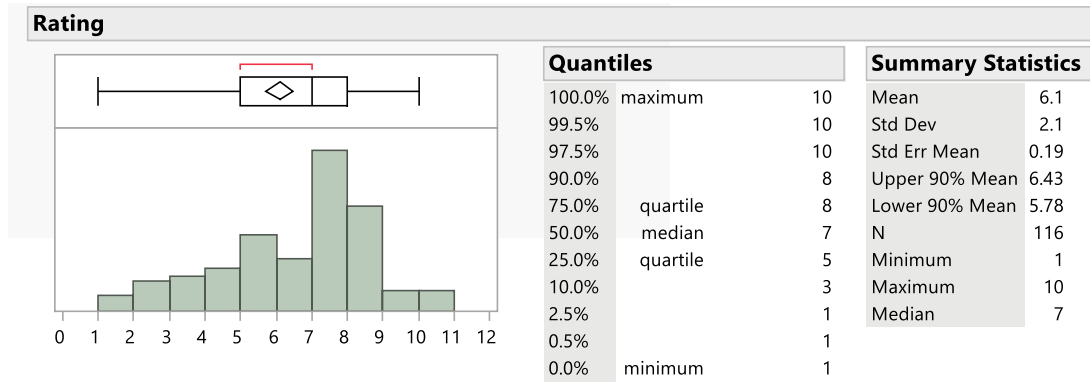
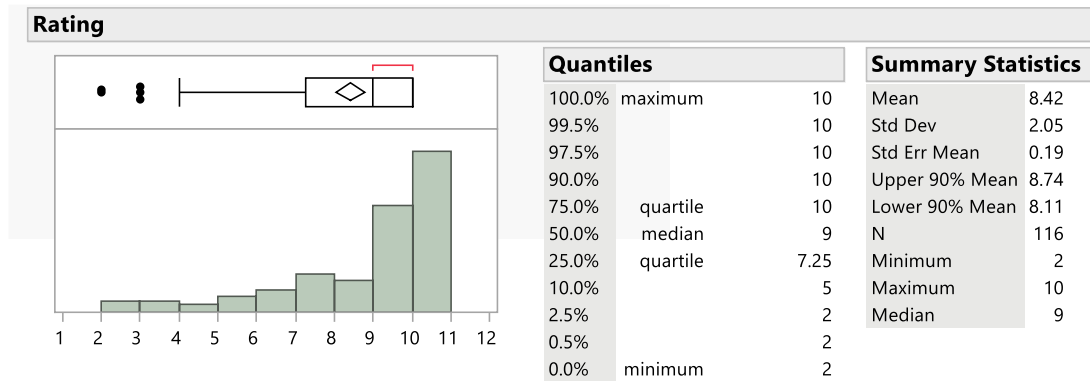
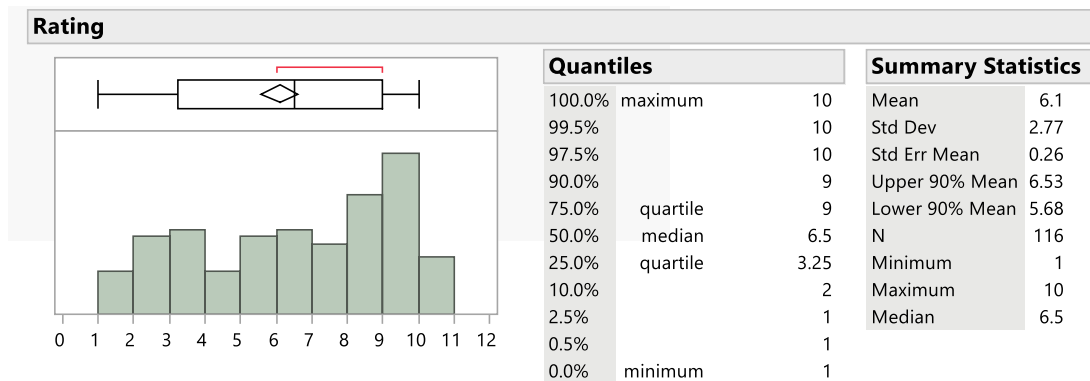
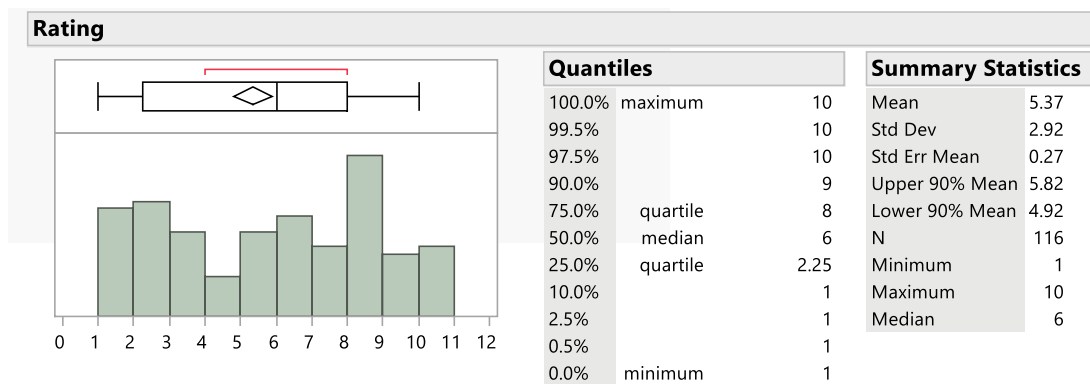
**Figure 4***Attending Church (IV) Visual***Figure 5***Prayer (IV) Visual***Figure 6***Reading the Bible (IV) Visual*

Figure 7 reveals data for listening to or watching religious programming (IV), which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of 10. Answers range between the 2.25th and eighth quartile with an *MDM* of 6, Upper *CI* = 5.82, and Lower *CI* = 4.92, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot.

Figure 8 reveals data information for colloquial prayer (IV), which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of seven. Answers range between the fourth and seventh quartile with an *MDM* of 6, Upper *CI* = 5.25, and Lower *CI* = 5.04, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot. Figure 9 reveals data information for meditative prayer (IV), which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of seven. Answers range between the third and sixth quartile with an *MDM* of 5, Upper *CI* = 4.56, and Lower *CI* = 4.32, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot.

**Figure 7**

*Listening to or Watching Religious Programming (IV) Visual*





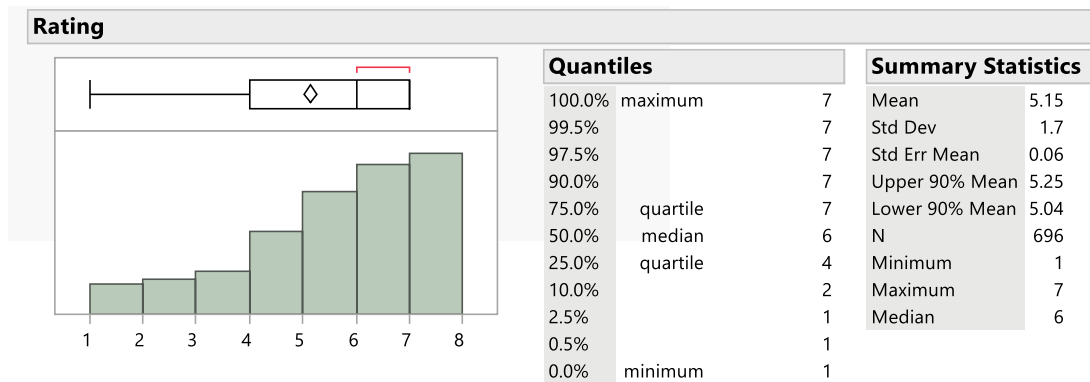
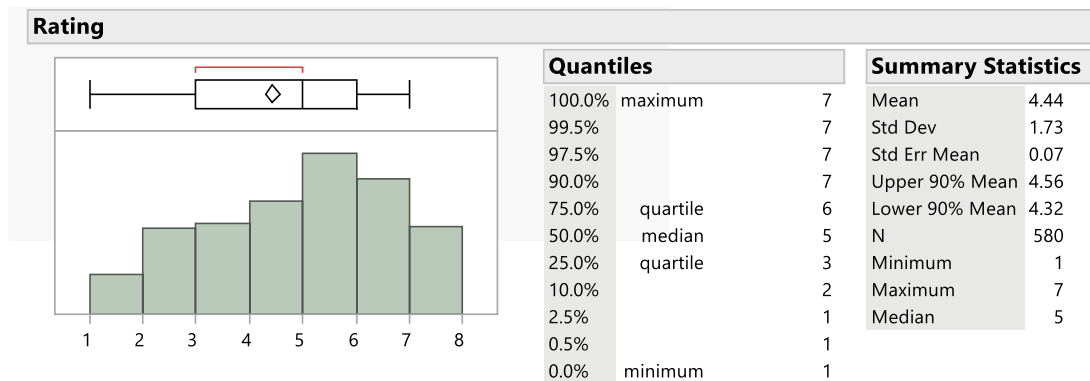
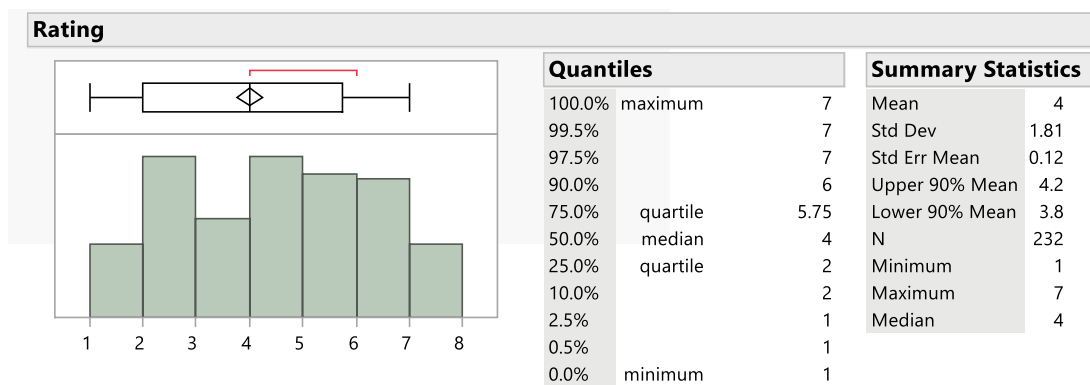
**Figure 8***Colloquial (IV) Visual***Figure 9***Meditative (IV) Visual*

Figure 10 reveals data for petitionary prayer type (IV), which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of seven. Answers range between the second and 5.75th quartile with an *MDM* of 4, Upper *CI* = 4.2, and Lower *CI* = 3.8, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot. Figure 11 indicates data for PFPP, which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of five. Answers range between the first and fifth quartile with an *MDM* of 5, Upper *CI* = 4.3, and Lower *CI* = 4.15, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with outliers present to the left in the boxplot. Figure 12 reveals data for ritual prayer type (IV), which shows a minimum

rating of one to a maximum rating of seven. Answers range between the second and fifth quartile with an *MDM* of 3.5, Upper *CI* = 3.78, and Lower *CI* = 3.36, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot. Figure 13 indicates marital conflict type (DV) data, which shows a minimum rating of one to a maximum rating of five. Answers range between the second and fourth quartile with an *MDM* of 4, Upper *CI* = 3.42, and Lower *CI* = 3.35, with a histogram and boxplot revealing the graphics for the quantiles with no outliers present in the boxplot.

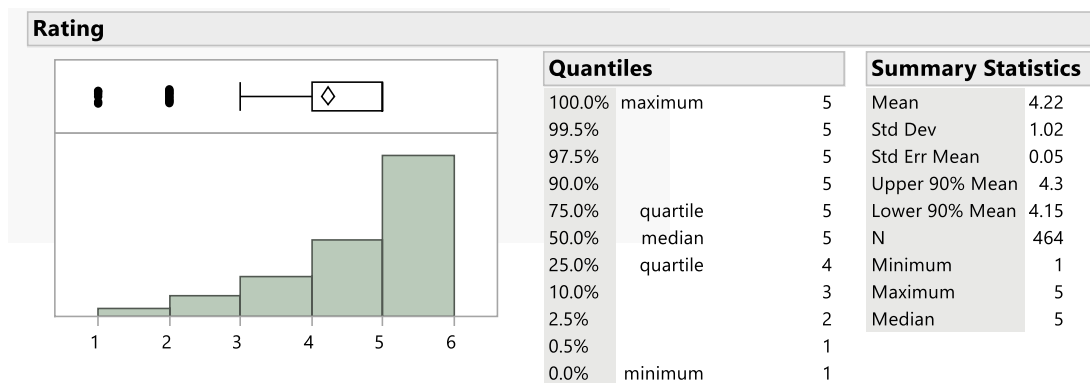
**Figure 10**

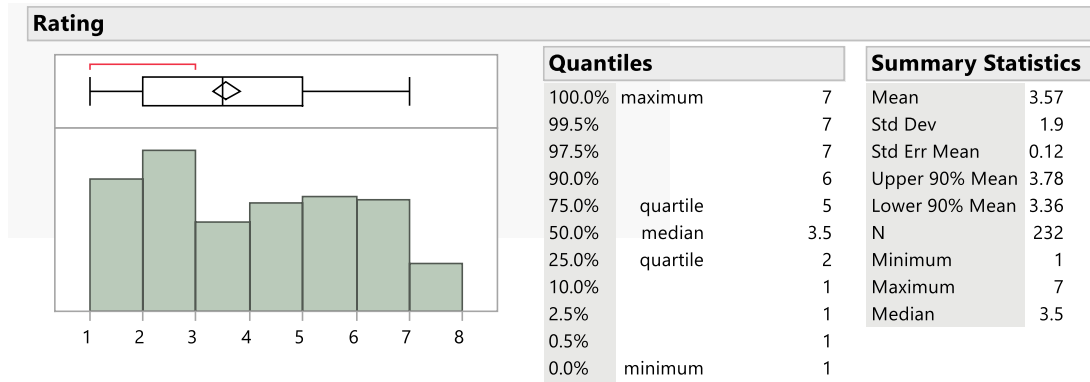
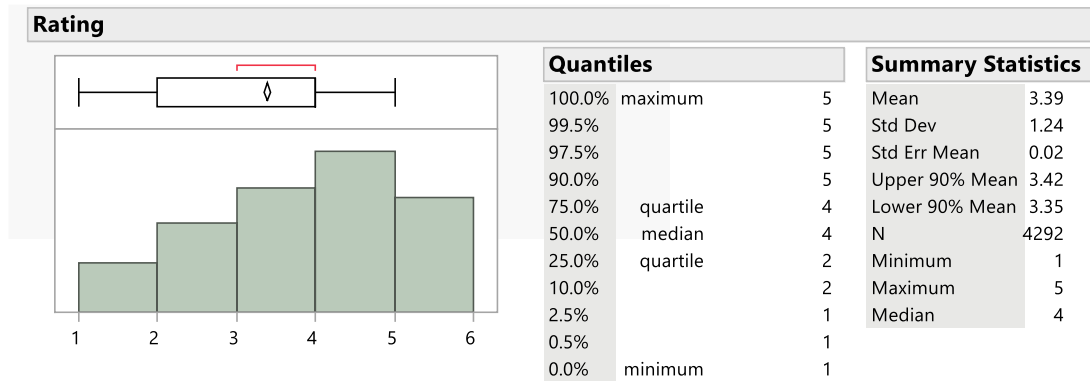
*Petitionary (IV) Visual*



**Figure 11**

*PFPP (IV) Visual*



**Figure 12***Ritual (IV) Visual***Figure 13***Marital Conflict (DV) Visual*

## Results

### Data Screening

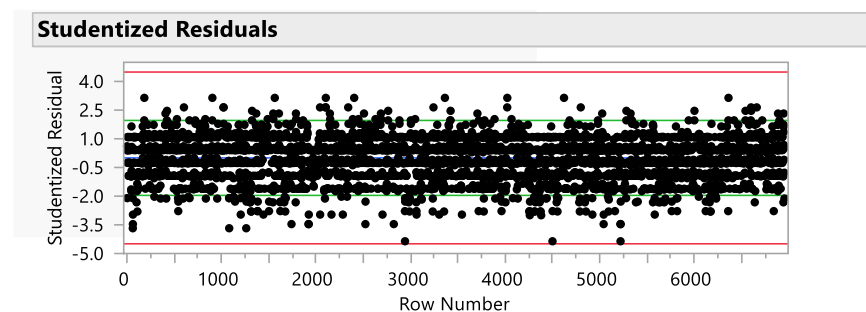
The first step in completing assumption testing was to conduct data screenings. Data screening ensures that data is entered correctly and detects outliers that might be present (DeSimone et al., 2015). The researcher transferred data from Google Forms and checked for missing data by looking at the tables to see if all questions had a response. No question had a missing value. This researcher had to reverse scores in KMCS for questions one, five, seven, nine, and 11 for stage one, which corresponds to questions nine, 11, 13, and 15 in the Google

Forms Survey. In stage two of KMCS, the researcher reversed scores for all answers for questions one through five apart from the question, "respect toward you," and stage two refers to questions 16 – 20k in the Google Forms Survey. Lastly, in Stage 3 of KMCS, answers were reversed for questions two, four, five, six, and seven, representing questions 22, 24, 24, 26, and 27 in the Google Forms Survey.

In conducting data screening, the researcher observed the outliers for each variable. In Figures 5 (prayer) and 11 (PFPP), outliers were present to the left. Studentized residuals were completed for a closer look at the variables to determine if those outliers would be a problem or not (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022e). Studentized residuals are computed by dividing the residual by the estimate of its standard deviation, then observing the information in a scatterplot (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2021c). The red lines represent the outer limits using 95% Bonferroni limits, while the green lines represent the inner limits using individual t-distribution limits (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2021c). Figure 14 shows no data outside of the red lines, with some data outside of the green lines, which means overall, there is no concern for outliers. With data outside the green lines and still within the red lines, possible outliers exist but with minor certainty (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2021c).

**Figure 14**

*Studentized Residuals for Outliers*



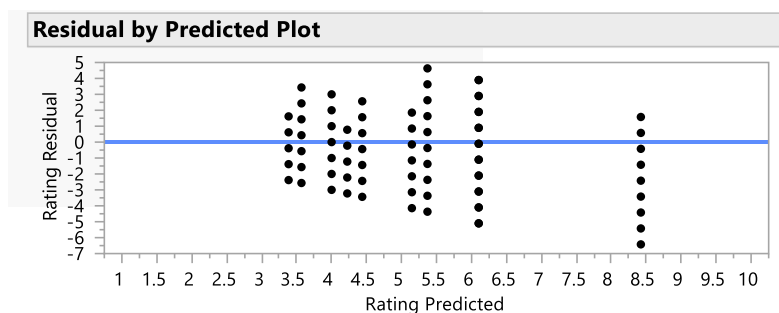
Externally studentized residuals with 95% simultaneous limits (Bonferroni) in red, individual limits in green.

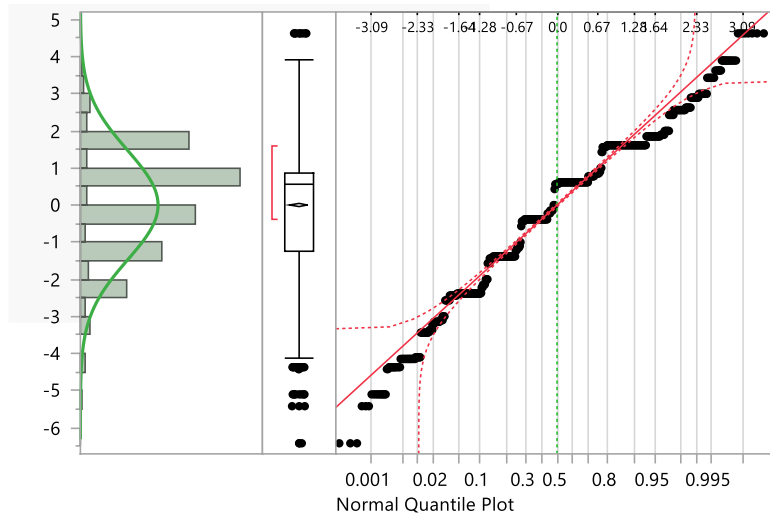
## Assumption Testing

Assumption testing consists of linearity, homoscedasticity, multivariate normality, and multicollinearity. This researcher utilized a residual predicted plot to test for linearity and homoscedasticity. (See Figure 15). The residual by the predicted plot will also reveal nonlinearity and heteroscedasticity (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022f). Residual by Predicted Plot indicates the residuals and predicted values in a scatterplot while recognizing equal variance for linearity and homoscedasticity among plots at the zero point (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022f). The data in Figure 15 indicate homoscedasticity due to where the points lie in relation to the zero-point line. If heteroscedasticity existed, then the variances would not have variances being at the same level in a uniform manner (Warner, 2012). For multivariate normality, a residual by normal quantile plot was completed along with a histogram that reveals normal distribution through the regression line observed on the plot and the bell curve on the histogram (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022f). (See Figure 16).

**Figure 15**

*Residual Predicted Plot for Linear Regression and Homoscedasticity*



**Figure 16***Residual Normal Quantile Plot*

The last assumption test to complete is multicollinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) (See Table 2). A correlation of estimates was utilized to reveal no collinearity (See Table 3). VIF helps determine the influence the independent variables may have on one another, and if the variance is too high, it could cause the data to be unreliable (Hayes, 2017). Although it depends on the threshold researchers decide, most use the rule of thumb: if VIF is above 10, there is cause for concern (O'Brien, 2007). Table 2 is a parameter estimates table that includes the terms, estimate, *SEM*, *t* ratio, *p*-value, and VIF. However, the focus regards the VIF in Table 2 (the religious strategies: attending church, prayer, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious programs all have the identical VIF: 14.05, which is above the threshold of 10. The prayer types: colloquial (5.12), meditative (5.40), petitionary (8.48), PFPP (5.86), and ritual (8.48) were not above 10. Before correcting collinearity, one more test was completed: the correlation of estimates. The correlation of estimates is another visual to determine collinearity (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2021a). When observing each variable individually where they intercept, the values are .20 for attending church, prayer, reading the Bible, and listening to or

watching religious programming (See Table 3). Correlation coefficients range between -1 and +1 to reveal no collinearity (Schober et al., 2018).

**Table 2**

*Multicollinearity Test with VIF*

Parameter Estimates

Term	Estimate	SEM	t Ratio	Prob> t	VIF
Intercept	5.08	0.03	155.34	<.0001	
Church	1.03	0.13	8.07	<.0001	14.05
Prayer	3.35	0.13	26.28	<.0001	14.05
RTB	1.03	0.13	8.07	<.0001	14.05
Rel Prog	0.3	0.13	2.31	0.0208	14.05
Colloquial	0.07	0.06	1.19	0.2324	5.12
Meditative	-0.64	0.06	-9.98	<.0001	5.40
Petitionary	-1.08	0.09	-11.58	<.0001	8.48
PFPP	-0.85	0.07	-12.23	<.0001	5.86
Ritual	-1.51	0.09	-16.22	<.0001	8.48

*Note.* Church represents attending church; RTB represents reading the Bible, and Rel Prog represents listening to or watching religious programming. Prob>|t| represents *p*-value.

**Table 3***Correlation of Estimates*

Row	Int	C	P	RTB	Rel P	CP	MP	PP	PFPP	RP
Int	1	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	-0.38	-0.33	-0.04	-0.26	-0.04
C	0.20	1	-0.18	-0.17	-0.17	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15
P	0.20	-0.17	1	-0.17	-0.17	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15
RTB	0.20	-0.17	-0.17	1	-0.17	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15
Rel P	0.20	-0.17	-0.17	-0.17	1	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15
CP	-0.38	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	1	0.10	-0.03	0.07	-0.03
MP	-0.33	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	0.10	1	-0.04	0.05	-0.04
PP	-0.04	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.03	-0.04	1	-0.05	-0.10
PFPP	-0.26	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	0.07	0.05	-0.05	1	-0.05
RP	-0.04	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.03	-0.04	-0.10	-0.05	1

*Note.* C represents attending church; P represents prayer, RTB represents reading the Bible, and Rel P represents listening to or watching religious programming. CP represents colloquial prayer, MP represents meditative prayer, PP represents petitionary prayer, and RP represents ritual prayer.

**Hypotheses**

Two hypotheses were chosen for their related research questions. To answer the research questions and reveal if the hypotheses were accurate or not, a multiple linear regression was utilized. Although the sample size calculated through G\*Power was 108 with an estimated effect size (Cohen's  $f = 0.15$ ), alpha level ( $\alpha = .05$ ), and power (.90 confidence interval (CI)) (See



Figure 3 in Chapter 3), the researcher increased the sample size to 116 participants to account for attrition. Hypothesis testing was completed through Summary of Fit (Figure 17), analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Figure 18), and Indicator Function Parameterization (Figure 19).

Summary of Fit includes the RSquare, RSquare Adjusted, Root Mean of Square Error, the M of response, and the number of observations that reveal variation in the dependent response (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022a). For this study, RSquare Adjusted is utilized for multiple linear regression (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022d) A value closer to one indicates a significant effect an IV has on a DV (Ozili, 2022). Although the RSquare Adjusted is low for this study (0.29) in Figure 17, it does not negate the significant effect the independent variables have on the dependent value if some of the independent variables are statistically significant (Ozili, 2022, pp. 4-5).

The ANOVA (Figure 18) reveals a p-value of  $<0.0001$  for the whole model. ANOVA reveals the overall significance through the p-value of  $<0.0001$  (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2022b). One more confirmation that shows the statistical significance of the interaction of independent variables with the dependent variable is the Indicator Function Parameterization (Figure 19). When examining the independent variables individually against the dependent variable, the Indicator Function Parameterization is conducted (JMP Statistical Discovery, 2021b). All the independent variables except ritual revealed a p-value of  $<0.0001$ . (See Figure 19).

**Figure 17***Summary of Fit*

Summary of Fit	
RSquare	0.29
RSquare Adj	0.29
Root Mean Square Error	1.48
Mean of Response	3.94
Observations (or Sum Wgts)	6960.00

**Figure 18***ANOVA*

Analysis of Variance				
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Model	9	6205.05	689.45	314.10
Error	6950	15255.36	2.20	<b>Prob &gt; F</b>
C. Total	6959	21460.41		<.0001 *

*Note.* DF stands for degrees of freedom.

*Hypothesis 1*

**RQ1:** Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming?

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** Prayer will not reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming.

**H<sub>a</sub>1:** Prayer will reveal a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming.

The Indicator Function Parameterization reveals the instrument, intercept, estimates, *SEM*, *t* ration, *p*-value, and lower and upper *CI* (See Figure 19). In observing the religious strategies (attending church, prayer, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious

programming) in Figure 19, all had a  $p$ -value of  $<0.0001$  which means they all were significant in having an effect reducing marital conflict (DV). However, when observing which strategy had a more substantial impact, prayer was revealed to have a stronger effect with an estimate of 5.04 compared to attending church (2.72), reading the Bible (2.72), and listening to or watching religious programming (1.99).

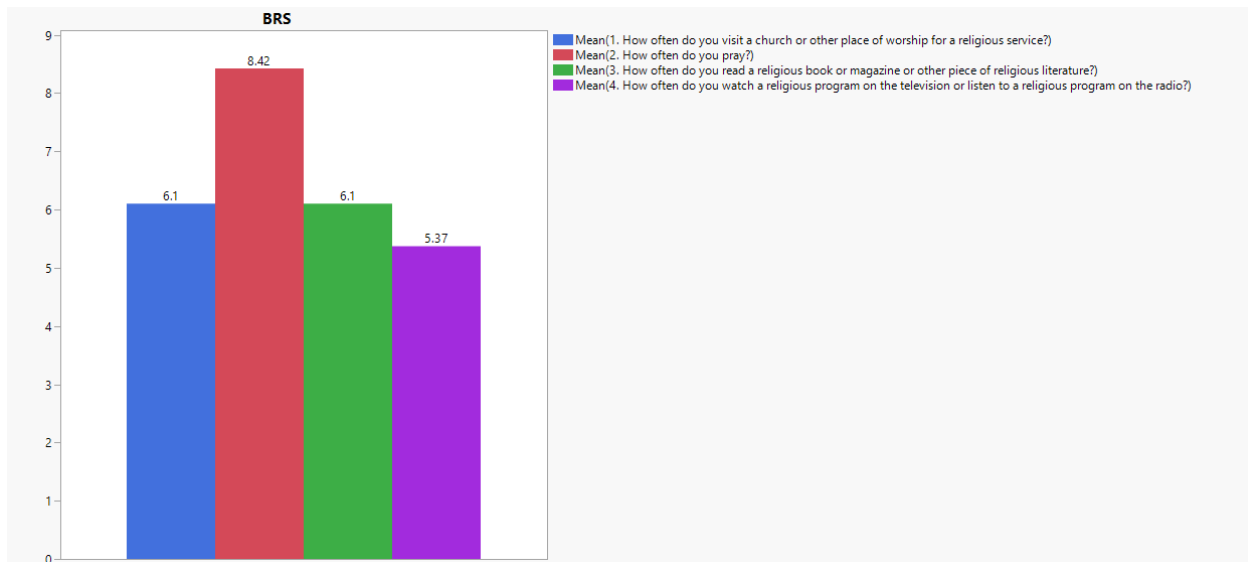
When observing Figure 20, the histogram has all the religious practices together that revealed participants had a higher  $M$  in prayer (8.42) than attending church ( $M = 6.1$ ), reading the Bible ( $M = 6.1$ ), listening to or watching religious programs ( $M = 5.37$ ). The results conclude that  $H_{01}$  was rejected and  $H_{a1}$  is accepted as having a significant effect. The results can be generalized to the population due to meeting the minimum sample size of 108 and the participants meeting the required criteria of the target audience: ages 18-90, being in a heterosexual marriage, and engaging in religious practices. The survey must reflect and portray the target audience to generalize to a broader population (Fogli & Herkenhoff, 2018).

## Figure 19

### *Indicator Function Parameterization*

Indicator Function Parameterization						
Instrument	Estimate	Std Error	t Ratio	Prob> t	Lower 90%	Upper 90%
Intercept	3.39	0.02	149.69	<.0001 *	3.35	3.42
Church	2.72	0.14	19.50	<.0001 *	2.49	2.95
Prayer	5.04	0.14	36.13	<.0001 *	4.81	5.27
RTB	2.72	0.14	19.50	<.0001 *	2.49	2.95
Rel Prog	1.99	0.14	14.24	<.0001 *	1.76	2.21
Colloquial	1.76	0.06	29.12	<.0001 *	1.66	1.86
Meditative	1.05	0.07	16.06	<.0001 *	0.94	1.16
Petitionary	0.61	0.10	6.16	<.0001 *	0.45	0.78
PFPP	0.84	0.07	11.59	<.0001 *	0.72	0.96
Ritual	0.18	0.10	1.84	0.0657	0.02	0.35

*Note.* RTB represents reading the Bible, and Rel Prog represents listening to or watching religious programming. Std err diff represents the standard error difference. Prob>|t| represents  $p$ -value.

**Figure 20***BRS Graph*

*Note.* The questions and colors represent religious practices. Question 1 is attending church in blue, question 2 is prayer in red, question 3 is reading the Bible in green, and question 4 is listening to or watching religious programs in purple. The numbers represent the  $M$  for each variable.

### ***Hypothesis Two***

**RQ2:** Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer?

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** No prayer type will have a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than any of the prayer types.

**H<sub>a</sub>2:** Partner-focused petitionary prayer will have the most positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than the following prayer types: colloquial, meditative, petitionary, and ritual.

In observing the prayer types (colloquial, meditative, petitionary, PFPP, and ritual) in Figure 19, all had a  $p$ -value of  $<0.0001$ , except ritual had a  $p$ -value of 0.0657. The prayer types, except for ritual, positively reduced marital conflict (DV). However, when observing which strategy had a more substantial effect, colloquial had a stronger effect with an estimation of 1.76, followed by meditative (1.05), PFPP (0.84), petitionary (0.61), and ritual (0.18).  $H_{02}$  is rejected due to all the prayer types except ritual prayer having a positive effect (Figure 19).  $H_{a2}$  is denied due to PFPP not having the most positive effect, while colloquial reveals a more positive effect with an estimation of 1.76 than PFPP (0.84). Since colloquial prayer appears to be utilized more with an  $M = 5.15$  (Figure 8) than PFPP with an  $M = 4.22$  (Figure 11), it can be predicted that couples go to colloquial prayer more than PFPP when marital conflict arises.

### Summary

Chapter Four regards answering whether the problem and purpose of this study provide a significant result or not. The problem with this research study to have been conducted is that not a tremendous amount of research reveals the effectiveness of prayer having a more significant effect than other religious strategies on reducing marital conflict. The other problem to explore was which prayer type had a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict. The purpose of this research study was to provide a solution to the problems.

Conducting an MLR was utilized to discover the answer to the problem. In RQ1 and  $H_{a1}$ , it was revealed that prayer has a more significant effect in decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples than attending church, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious programming. RQ2 received effective results but through a different answer other than  $H_{a2}$ . Colloquial prayer and not PFPP were revealed to have a more positive effect in decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

The reason for this study is not enough research has been conducted on prayer, its effect on marital conflict, and which prayer type would be sufficient for decreasing marital conflict. The first goal of this study was to disclose whether the prayer had a more significant effect on decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples than reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming. The second goal was to determine whether a prayer type had a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples. Chapter Five focuses on the discussion of the results of this study, implications, limitations, recommendations for future research, and a summary.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to unveil the independent variables (IVs): religious strategies and prayer types that interact positively with the dependent variable (DV), marital conflict, in decreasing the marital conflict among heterosexual couples. Participants answered questions from the following instruments: BRS, KMCS, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types, and Prayer for Partner Measure. MLR analysis uncovered whether prayer and a specific prayer type significantly decrease marital conflict with heterosexual couples. The results revealed that prayer had a more significant effect. A particular prayer type was shown to have a more positive effect. However, it was colloquial instead of PFPP, as  $H_{a2}$  had predicted.

### **Research Question One**

RQ1: Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming? Some researchers could not discover which religious

practice was effective in helping resolve marital strife (Berc et al., 2017; Goodman et al., 2013). Some couples do not rely on just one religious strategy to help their marriage (Moore et al., 2021). A qualitative study of 11 Korean wives acknowledged that religious activities were helpful in their marriage (Kim et al., 2020). However, the researchers could not share if any religious strategy stood out for having a better effect on their marriage (p. 539).

Church attendance (Klausli, 2020), reading religious materials, and listening to or watching religious programming (Wilmoth & Riaz, 2019) have aided as well with helping couples to function well in their marriages. However, those religious activities did not fare as well with the 116 participants who partook in this survey. Their answers reveal that prayer was the main religious activity they utilized in their lives.

Kelley et al. (2020) revealed that prayer had a more powerful impact than other religious activities. According to the relational spirituality framework, spouses have a relationship with God and each other, and using spiritual practices help spouses function better with one another (Mahoney, 2010). With the results revealing that prayer is more significant than other religious practices, it aligns with the relational spirituality framework since prayer is about connecting with God through communication (Puchalska-Wasył & Zarzycka, 2020), and prayer has improved the marital relationship (Kelley et al., 2020).

## **Research Question Two**

RQ2: Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer? All prayer types except for ritual prayer were observed to have a significant effect on marital conflict in this study. According to Winkeljohn Black et al. (2017), any prayer type can solicit a response from God for any situation in their life. All prayer types serve different roles in communicating with God (Pössel et al., 2018).

Colloquial involves individuals calling out to God using their own words (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2015). Meditative regards reflection and waiting for God to respond (Maltby et al., 2008). Petitionary comprises individuals calling on God for themselves (Pössel et al., 2018). PFPP focuses on spouses communicating with God about their partners (Fincham & Beach, 2014). Lastly, ritual prayer consists of routine, obedience (Jeppsen et al., 2015), memorization, or quotes (Pössel et al., 2018).

PFPP has helped spouses to see positive changes in their marriages and spouses (Fincham & Beach, 2014). Through the incorporation of PFPP, attachment between spouses increases (Hawkins et al., 2020). Spouses' health improves when PFPP is activated (May et al., 2020), along with overcoming stress (Cooper et al., 2019). However, in this study, PFPP was not victorious in being the primary prayer type to exhibit the most positive effect on decreasing marital conflict. A possible reason for PFPP not being the most effective is that spouses chose to speak on their behalf about their needs and wants instead of the needs and wants of their partners. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (New King James Version, 1982, James 4:3). Sometimes the prayer is for personal gain and not really about the spouse.

The MLR analysis revealed that colloquial and not PFPP was most effective. Colloquial prayer focuses on spouses telling God about themselves and asking for a change in their lives (Maltby et al., 2008). Colloquial increases individuals' mental health (Winkeljohn Black et al., 2017). Using colloquial does help individuals lower stress and decrease depressive symptoms (Pössel et al., 2018). Colloquial does help support the relational spirituality framework through its relationship with God by spouses using their own words (Black et al., 2014). Their words help



alleviate stress (Pössel et al., 2018) and overcome mental health issues that have taken a toll on their lives and marriages (Black et al., 2014).

### **Implications**

Although marital strife might come, God desires for spouses to seek His face (1 Chronicles 16:11). The results reveal that the Christian worldview is related to this study because the participants utilized religious practices, with prayer being the most effective. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) is what God told individuals to do. Spouses pray because they believe God is listening to them (Psalm 17:6). Through praying, God alleviates the pain (Psalm 4:1).

This study did help reveal that prayer does have a higher volume of usage and a more significant impact on decreasing marital conflict than attending church, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious programming. Prayer is not an unknown topic and has helped many couples navigate various intricacies spouses encounter throughout their marriage (Fincham & Beach, 2014). When spouses seek assistance from God, they communicate with him through prayer (Moore et al., 2021). Prayer will continue to play an essential role in marriages for those who believe in spirituality and religion. Professionals who assist couples needing therapy will not be limited to only one strategy to have them implement when marital conflict arises.

Spouses who turn to professional counselors for assistance with their marriages will be able to share that the results revealed that talking to God about themselves does aid in reducing marital conflict. Colloquial prayer reminds individuals that speaking on one's behalf is not terrible since it has shown an improvement in marriage (Maltby et al., 2008). Colloquial prayer aids in diminishing stress (Pössel et al., 2018). Lastly, colloquial prayer helps those with mental health struggles that sometimes interfere with having an enjoyable marriage (Black et al., 2014).

Those individuals who believe in spirituality and religious practices will rally behind the results and continue to use the religious practices more. The individuals who have difficulty believing in praying or utilizing their own words to get a prayer through might not agree with those results. However, this study shows that couples believe in religious practices and use them in their lives for themselves and their marriages. Professionals who assist those couples who come to them for help will be able to help the spouses add to their list of strategies that decrease marital conflict.

### **Limitations**

One of the internal validity threats that could have limited this study was the selection of participants. The choice of participants should be random, when possible, to avoid an internal validity threat (Heppner et al., 2015). The steps taken to minimize the threat to the selection of participants were that the researcher utilized an online research website that would maintain anonymity so the researcher would not oversee the selection of participants. With the selection of participants, one hopes honesty occurs to ensure the reliability of the data through self-reporting (Warner, 2012). In mitigating this limitation, no identifiable information was collected, which allowed participants to answer to the best of their ability without repercussions.

The other internal validity threat to this study was attrition. Sometimes participants do not remain in a study for various reasons. When participants are no longer a part of the study, then the analysis may no longer be a good representative of a more significant population (Heppner et al., 2015). The G\*Power in Figure 3 reveals the sample population of 108, but to account for attrition, the researcher recruited additional participants and ended up having 116 participants.

The external validity threats to affect this study were the participants and setting. When studies do not have participants from various backgrounds, the study might not be as strong

(Heppner et al., 2015). Due to this researcher not collecting participants' background information to account for generalizability for every heterosexual couple, the external validity threat for participants occurred. The only criteria for this study were being between ages 18 and 90, being in a heterosexual marriage, and participating in religious practices.

Settings are necessary because, for some studies, research will be strengthened when they are conducted in different locations (Heppner et al., 2015). This study's setting was entirely online, with participants answering questions. When only utilizing an online method to answer questions, some of the issues that occur are not reaching those participants who do not have internet. Another problem with using an online format is that people might randomly choose answers without much effort. Some individuals are not tech-savvy in navigating the survey.

In mitigating the online survey limitations, participants agreed to have the internet and understand how to fill out a survey through their agreement with Prolific ([www.prolific.co](http://www.prolific.co)). However, to limit dishonesty, the researcher had to rely on participants, to be honest with their answers. With KMCS, the survey is usually completed in person to observe couples' reactions when answering questions because they are in the middle of marital conflict. For this study, the purpose was not about who was having marital conflict now but the religious strategies they utilize when it happens.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research recommendations include combining a quantitative and qualitative method to receive better results on prayer and prayer types that decrease marital conflict and explore the religious strategies that different cultures or religions utilize in their lives and marriages. Using KMCS is typically given to couples experiencing marital conflict, so therapists can observe nonverbal cues and help determine if their written answers match their nonverbal

cues (Eggeman et al., 1985). A possible study design is including therapists in the qualitative study to help form themes from their observations and the spouses' words. It would be informative to hear from marital couples about what they believe the best religious strategies would be to assist them when trouble arises in their marriage.

Another recommendation is to have a larger sample size that includes couples from diverse backgrounds. This study did not specify if the participant had to be of a particular faith, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic or educational level. A more diverse group of participants will help generalize the sample to fit the population of heterosexual married couples. Since marriage is no longer husband and wife but same-sex partners, comparing results with both sets of marriages will help determine if religious activities are still helpful regardless of the type of marriage. Some religions might utilize religious practices differently for a variety of reasons.

One last recommendation would be to conduct a longitudinal study. Longitudinal studies help explore data over time (Heppner et al., 2015). Since marital conflict can occur anytime about anything, collecting information over time will help share whether prayer and prayer types help whenever and whatever marital disharmony is happening between spouses. Those couples utilizing religious strategies will be able to share if they wait until the conflict arises to use a strategy or if they have been using those strategies before the dispute arose.

### **Summary**

Religiosity is not an unknown act utilized in marriages (White et al., 2018). However, the problem is that not one religious strategy has been identified as having the most significant effect in decreasing marital conflict. The purpose is to uncover the IVs (religious strategies and prayer types) that positively affect marital conflict (DV) in heterosexual couples. In discovering the answers regarding the religious strategy and prayer type, this researcher conducted a quantitative

study that utilized the instruments: BRS, KMCS, Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types, and Prayer for Partner Measure.

The research questions to be answered: (RQ1) Does prayer have a more significant effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than the following religious strategies: reading the Bible, attending church, and listening to or watching religious programming? (RQ2) Does one type of prayer have a more positive effect on marital conflict with heterosexual couples than other types of prayer? MLR analysis aided in answering the research questions. Prayer and colloquial prayer had the most significant effect on decreasing marital conflict. This study increased awareness and provided another avenue for couples and professionals to use when marital conflict arises.

Limitations existed, but this researcher took steps to remove the internal and external validity threats. The internal validity threats included the selection of participants, dishonesty, and attrition. The external validity threats comprised participants and settings. The steps to remove the threats included retrieving participants through Prolific, adding more participants to the study, relying on participants, being honest, and using an online survey. However, the external validity threat not removed entirely was having participants from diverse backgrounds. This survey did not require a diverse background from all levels of society. The only information required was that every participant had to be between the ages of 18 and 90, be in a heterosexual marriage, and participate in religious activities.

Lastly, no study has all the answers, and with further research, more knowledge can be determined to help couples continue to decrease marital conflict. Future research includes a mixture of a quantitative and qualitative study design to understand better what marital couples share verbally and nonverbally. Another recommendation is having a larger sample size with a

broader diverse background for generalization for all married couples. A longitudinal study will help examine how spouses will function over periods when marital conflict arises throughout their marriage.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Demographic Survey**

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 90?
2. Are you heterosexual?
3. Are you married?
4. Do you participate in religious practices?

## APPENDIX B

### Behavioural Religiosity Scale (BRS)

The following questions relate to your religious behaviour. In order to answer the questions, please choose 1-10 from the list below, which corresponds with the response which you feel most closely fits your pattern of behaviour. Please answer all the questions.

1. How often do you visit a church or other place of worship for a religious service?
2. How often do you pray?
3. How often do you read a religious book or magazine or other piece of religious literature?
4. How often do you watch a religious program on the television or listen to a religious program on the radio?

1 = Never; 2 = Once a year but usually no more; 3 = Two or three times a year; 4 = Six or seven times a year; 5 = Once a month but usually no more; 6 = Two or three times a month; 7 = Once a week but usually no more; 8 = Two or three times a week; 9 = Once a day but usually no more; and 10 = Two or three times a day

Source: Adamson, G., Shevlin, M., Lloyd, N. S. V., & Lewis, C. A. (2000). An integrated approach for assessing reliability and validity: An application of structural equation modeling to the measurement of religiosity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(5), 971-979.

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## APPENDIX C

### Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS)

Please use the following scale and indicate how often you and your spouse engage in the activities mentioned in each question. Please indicate how often by recording the number in the space to the left of each item.

1 = Almost never; 2 = Once in a while; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Almost always

When you and your spouse are beginning to discuss a disagreement over an important issue, how often:

1. Do you both begin to understand each other's feelings reasonably quickly?
2. Do you both get your points across to each other without too much trouble?
3. Do you both begin to appreciate each other's points of view on the matter fairly soon?
4. Does your spouse seem to be supportive of your feelings about your disagreement?
5. Does your spouse tell you that you shouldn't feel the way you do about the issue?
6. Is your spouse willing to really hear what you want to communicate?
7. Does your spouse insist on contradicting many of your ideas on the issue before he/she even understands what your ideas are?
8. Does your spouse make you feel that your views, even if different from his/hers, are really important to him/her?
9. Does your spouse seem more interested in justifying his/her own point of view rather than in understanding yours?
10. Does your spouse let you feel upset or angry without putting you down for it?
11. Does your spouse blame you for any of your feelings of frustration or irritation as if they were mostly your own fault, none of his/hers?

After you and your spouse have been discussing a disagreement over an important issue for a while, how often:

1. Are you able to clearly identify the specific things about which you disagree?
2. Are you able to identify clearly the specific things about which you do agree?
3. Are you both able to express how the other feels about the issue?
4. Are you both able to express the other's viewpoint nearly as well as you could your own viewpoint?

5. Does your spouse's facial expression and tone of voice convey a sense of:

\_\_\_discouragement; \_\_\_frustration; \_\_\_anger; \_\_\_bitterness; \_\_\_disgust; \_\_\_self-pity (for himself); \_\_\_condescension; \_\_\_cynicism; - \_\_\_resentment; \_\_\_respect toward you; \_\_\_hostility

About the time you and your spouse feel you are close to a solution to your disagreement over an important issue, how often:

1. Are you able to completely resolve it with some sort of compromise that is OK with both of you?
2. Do you end up with very little resolved after all?
3. Do you quickly bring the matter to a conclusion that is satisfactory for both of you?
4. Do you realize the matter will have to be reargued in the near future because at least one of you is still basically unhappy with the apparent solution?
5. Do you find that just as soon as you think you have gotten things resolved, your spouse comes up with a new idea for resolving the issue?
6. Does your spouse keep on trying to propose things that are not mutually acceptable ways of resolving the issue at hand?

7. Does it seem that no matter what you suggest, your spouse keeps on finding new, supposedly better solutions?
8. Are you both willing to give and take in order to settle the disagreement?
9. Are you and your spouse able to give up some of what you wanted in order to bring the issue to a close?
10. Are you and your spouse able to keep coming closer together on a mutually acceptable solution until you achieve it?
11. Are you and your spouse able to reach a mutually acceptable contract for resolving the disagreement?

Source: Eggeman, K., Moxley, V., & Schumm, W. R. (1985). Assessing spouses' perceptions of Gottman's temporal form in marital conflict. *Psychological Reports*, 57(1), 171-181.

<https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1985.57.1.171>

Permission: Dr. Walter Schumm consented for KMCS to be utilized for academic research on May 31, 2022.

**Note:** Received permission to change the word to spouse for husband from Dr. Walter Schumm on July 27, 2022.

Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
To: Brown, Michelle  
Wed 7/27/2022 6:54 PM

Using spouse would be fine.  
Walter

**From:** Brown, Michelle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 27, 2022 3:58 PM  
**To:** Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [External] Re: Kansas Marital Conflict Scale  
**This email originated from outside of K-State.**

Am I able to change husband to spouse since they will be filling the scale out or will that mess up the scale?

**From:** Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 27, 2022 4:29:35 PM  
**To:** Brown, Michelle [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [External] Re: Kansas Marital Conflict Scale

The scale was not intended to be gender biased; any question that could be asked for a husband should be able to be asked for a wife or whatever partner is of interest.  
 My apologies if the sample showed otherwise.  
 Thanks,  
 Walter Schumm

**From:** Brown, Michelle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 27, 2022 11:31 AM  
**To:** Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [External] Re: Kansas Marital Conflict Scale  
**This email originated from outside of K-State.**

Hi Dr. Schumm,  
 A question came up about the KMCS - do both husband and wife complete the whole scale or are there specific parts that are just for the wife and some for the husband? I ask because certain questions only ask about the husband's response.

Thanks,  
 Michelle Brown

Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
 To: Brown, Michelle

Thu 11/24/2022 9:21 PM

Feel free to publish it.

Walter Schumm  
**From:** Brown, Michelle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 23, 2022 9:27 PM  
**To:** Walter Schumm [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [External] Re: Kansas Marital Conflict Scale

**This email originated from outside of K-State.**

Hi Dr. Schumm,  
 You permitted me on May 31, 2022, to use KMCS for my dissertation, and I need to make sure I can also publish it in my dissertation. I passed my final dissertation defense and am working on publishing my dissertation.

Thanks,  
 Michelle Brown  
 Liberty University

## APPENDIX D

### Poloma and Pendleton's Prayer Types Scale

Answer questions between 1 = Never to 7 = Several times a day

#### Factor 1: Meditative prayer

1. How often do you spend time just "feeling" or being in the presence of God?
2. How often do you spend time just quietly thinking about God?
3. Spend time worshipping or adoring God?
4. Spend time reflecting on the Bible?
5. Ask God to speak and then listen for his answer?

#### Factor 2: Ritual or ritualist prayer

1. How often do you read from a book of prayers?
2. How often do you recite prayers that you have memorized?

#### Factor 3: Petitionary prayer

1. How often do you ask God for material things you may need?
2. Ask for material things your friends or relatives may need?

#### Factor 4: Colloquial prayer

1. How often do you ask God to provide guidance in making decisions?
2. Thank God for his blessings?
3. Ask God to forgive you your sins?
4. Talk with God in your own words?
5. Ask God to lessen world suffering?
6. Spend time telling God how much you love him?

Source: Poloma, M. M., & Pendleton, B. F. (1989). Exploring types of prayer and quality of life: A research note. *Review of Religious Research*, 31(1), 46-53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3511023>

Permission: May use for Research/Teaching



## APPENDIX E

### Prayer for Partner Measure

Answer questions between 1 = Never to 5 = Very frequently

1. I pray for the well being of my romantic partner.
2. I pray that good things will happen for my partner.
3. I ask God to watch over my partner.
4. I pray for my partner to reach his/her goals.

Source: Fincham, F. D., Lambert, N. M., & Beach, S. R. H. (2010). Faith and unfaithfulness: Can praying for your partner reduce infidelity? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(4), 649-659. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019628>

Permission: Dr. Frank Fincham consented for Prayer for Partner Measure to be utilized for academic research on May 31, 2022.

Francis Fincham [REDACTED]  
To: Brown, Michelle

Thu 11/24/2022 7:05 AM

Yes, of course. Good luck.

**From:** Brown, Michelle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 23, 2022 10:25:55 PM  
**To:** Francis Fincham [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [External] RE: Use of PFPP questionnaire  
Hi Dr. Fincham,

You permitted me on May 31, 2022, to use the Prayer for Partner Measure for my dissertation, and I need to make sure I can also publish it in my dissertation. I passed my final dissertation defense and am working on publishing my dissertation.

Thanks,  
Michelle Brown  
Liberty University

## APPENDIX F

### IRB Approval Letter

#### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 18, 2022

Michelle Brown  
Pamela Moore

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1196 Prayer: The effect it has on decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples

Dear Michelle Brown, Pamela Moore,

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 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). 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).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) 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.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Social Media Recruitment**

ATTENTION MARRIED COUPLES: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to comprehend if prayer is more effective at decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples than the following religious activities: reading the Bible, church attendance, listening to, or watching religious programming. Prayer types will be explored to reveal if one prayer type has a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict for heterosexual couples. To participate, you must be between 18 and 90 years of age, be married, be heterosexual, and participate in religious practices. Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey, which should take about 15 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click the link provided at the end of this post. A consent document will be provided as the first page of the survey. Participants will receive \$2.63 in compensation at the end of the survey.

To take the survey, click here:



## APPENDIX H

### Consent Form

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** Prayer: The effect it has on decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples

**Principal Investigator:** Michelle Brown, Candidate for Ed.D., Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be between the ages of 18-90, in a heterosexual marriage, and participate in religious practices. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to comprehend if prayer is more effective at decreasing marital conflict in heterosexual couples than the following religious activities: reading the Bible, church attendance, listening to, or watching religious programming. Prayer types will be explored to reveal if one prayer type has a more positive effect on decreasing marital conflict with heterosexual couples.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Complete an anonymous, online survey via Google Forms, which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include understanding the effects prayers have on decreasing marital conflict.

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

#### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Liberty University  
IRB-FY21-22-1196  
Approved on 8-18-2022

#### How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated \$2.63 for participating in this study. A completion code will be provided after the full completion of the survey. Compensation will then be received through the payment account participants have set up with Prolific.

#### Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey.

#### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

#### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Michelle Brown. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Pamela Moore, at [REDACTED].

#### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

#### Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.