

Influence of Health Exercise on Reducing Stress among Pastors' Wives in Pentecostal Churches in Laikipia County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Pastors' wives are an important group of people in the society; they are not only looked upon by their families and congregations for inspiration but they also act as role model for the women in the society. In Laikipia County cases of pastors' wives suffering from depression, burnout, and chronic physical health issues have been on the rise. This has not only affected their individual health but also it has affected their marriages, families and their relationship with the society. The problem is not the stressors but the coping strategies which they have employed such as prayer, avoidance, withdrawal and hope that things will still workout, which have escalated their stress rather than alleviating it. Positive work-related stress coping strategy such as Health Exercise has not been majorly explored. Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of health exercise on reducing stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches in Laikipia County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 166 Pentecostal churches operating in Laikipia County and focused on the wives of the senior pastors of the respective churches. A multi-stage sampling was used; the churches were divided into zones and membership categories. Simple random sampling was used to select fifty churches and fifty pastors' wives from the selected churches. A total of 50 senior pastors' wives were sampled, which was approximately 30 % of the accessible population. Data for the study was collected by use of self-administered questionnaires and guided interview schedule. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and T-test analyses were utilized for data analysis. The study established a negative correlation between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives. Besides an independent-samples T-test indicated that stress levels for pastors' wives exhibiting inadequate health exercise was significantly higher than for their counterparts displaying adequate health exercise. Therefore, the pastors' wives who embraced exercise had lower stress levels. Therefore, the study concluded that health exercise was significantly associated with stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches. It was recommended that the church leadership should avail materials on stress and its remedies to the pastors' wives, the governing organ of Pentecostal churches should organize training for pastors' wives on their church role and work-life balance, Pastors' wives should be encouraged to pursue training opportunities that would aid them effectively discharge their church role and also being educated on the need to create time for physical exercise as it is an effective remedy to stress alleviation.*

Keywords: *Stress reduction, health exercise, coping strategy, Pentecostal Pastors' wives stress reduction*

INTRODUCTION

Most of pastors' wives confess that their husbands are workaholics and make it difficult to find a boundary between family and work as they have offices at home. Research indicates that annually, approximately 3% -15% of the general public are depressed. Additionally, the depression prevalence among the pastors' wives is estimated at 6%-9% (Gauger & Christie, 2013). The degree of depression among the wives of pastors might be influenced by several experiences.

According to a survey carried out by Gaultiere (2017), 80% of pastors' wives feel unappreciated and left out while 56% indicate they have no close friends. The survey indicates that 84% of pastors' wives regard themselves as unqualified and discouraged in their roles while 80% feel pressured to serve in ways that do not fit their talents and expertise. Gaultiere (2017) also indicates that 60% of pastors' wives showed the urge to extend their training to allow them serve the church better, 80% believe their spouses are overworked, 40% wish their spouse had taken a different profession path, 94% feel immense pressure of pastoral ministry, and 50% of clergy families often end in divorce (Gaultiere, 2017). Some of the most prominent effects are separation, family difficulties, and divorce. Pastors' wives are among the top three professionals who are divorced. The demands on pastors especially on time causes tension, fatigue and affect their ability to deal with the typical responsibilities of family life. Consequently, this creates an environment of distrust, less satisfaction, discontent, and lack of happiness and feelings of loneliness and isolation that may lead to separation or divorce (Kayler, 2011).

According to Lazarus stress theory, when people are faced with different stressing events or environment, they tend to employ different stress coping mechanism. Several studies in similar research appreciate Folk man and Lazarus (1980) approach to coping, who define it as "the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them." In attempt to master or neutralize the stimuli that elicits psychological stress, an individual result to different ways of coping with can perverse their wellbeing or affect them the more. According to Lazarus, (1999), an individual apply either one of the two coping mechanism or both, that is solution-focused or emotional focused mechanism. Hence in line with the Lazarus stress theory, the study focus on health exercise and how it influenced stress among pastors' wives.

The literature focusing on exercise and stress is bi-faceted: examining how each of the two variables impacts the other. Exercise refers to the application of regular and structured physical exertion methodologies to increase heart rate or muscle strength. As a result, the term is distinct from physical activity, which may entail significant levels of physical exertion but with no intent for increasing heart rate of gaining muscle. In this context, however, exercise refers to all levels of physical experiences that create an effect on individual's stress levels. The significance of exercise in stress management stems from the multiple sources of evidence that have positively associated physical activity with improved physical and mental well-being (Dimsdale, 2008; Hamer et al., 2006).

Studies targeting the impact of exercise on stress highlight that people who are categorized as fit have better responses for exercise facilitated stress coping (Collier et al. 2008). In addition, since stress has been associated with sedentary lifestyles, it has emerged in psychological research that regular physical activity can initiate behavioural activation that decreases depressive symptoms, thereby setting a better platform for better stress coping, (Barbour, Edenfield, and Blumenthal, 2007). In other studies, for example Stults- Kolehmainen, and Sinha (2014), exercise has been touted as a form of emotional focused coping since it allows individuals to obviate the feelings of displeasure momentarily. In particular, the study by Stetson et al. (1997) found that 60% the participants who were women engaged in physical exercise as a way of minimizing stress. At the same time, exercise is seen as means of avoiding stressors particularly among individuals with low self-efficacy (Stults-Kolehmainen, and Sinha, 2014).

Nonetheless ,there exists evidence of the application of exercise as a stress coping strategy for clergy women. In McMinn et al.'s (2008) study it was observed that about half of all participants, ministers wives, recognize the importance of observing a healthy lifestyle as an antecedent to effective stress management. As a result the interviews mentioned such elements as balanced diets, sleep, massage and exercise as among the major routine practices can promote good health. Similarly, Kyler's (2011) findings indicated that up to 67% of the participants' perceived physical exercise as an effective stress-relieving practice. In this study, the participants highlighted that they engage in such regular physical activities as running, weight lifting, aerobics, and cardiovascular conditioning to cope with stressors in their lives. Furthermore 65% of the participants in this study said that they engage in hobbies for stress management. Under this category, physical activities such as fishing and playing various games were mentioned as the main methods of reliving stress among the interviewed members of the clergy, of whom included pastor's wives. Although these studies confirm the possibility of employing exercising for coping with stress among clergy wives, they do not provide information to justify the efficacy of this practice as a stress coping strategy among this population. Furthermore, the evidence that has been provided in these studies is scanty, which undermined the dependability of these findings.

The reviewed studies indicate an attempt among pastors' wives to employ health exercise in coping with their daily stresses. The studies mostly focused on pastors and not their wives while others have looked at marital stressors among pastors' wives and their ministry performance from a religious perspective which undermines their credibility especially when this issue demands psychological outlook. Furthermore most of these studies have employed qualitative methodologies whose major challenges has been the limitation of small sample sizes coincidental identification of these coping approaches. Owing to these shortcomings, the current study sought to employ a deliberate psychological perspective to examine the influence of health exercise as a coping strategy on work related stress among pastors' wives in Laikipia County.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey focuses on describing the variables that are present in a given situation and in essence describes the relationships that exist in the variables (Johnson & Christensen 2012). The choice of this design was influenced by the fact that its use would yield a description of church-related work stress and coping strategies among the pastors' wives in Laikipia County Pentecostal churches.

The population comprised of 166 Pentecostal churches operating in Laikipia county. This target population only targeted the main and registered Pentecostal churches with controllable and consistent data. The study considered the wives of senior pastors of the respective churches. A multi-stage and simple random sampling was adopted.

The sampling frame comprised the list of all Pentecostal churches as obtained from laikipia Evangelical fellowship. The researcher targeted 30% of the Pentecostal churches in Laikipia, proportionately divided into four membership categories. The sample comprised of 50 senior pastors' wives from the selected churches. A sum of 10 respondents was selected from the churches with less than 100 membership Category : (4 from laikipia East, 3 from Laikipia west, 3 from laikipia North), 17 respondents from churches with 100 to 200 membership category (8 from Laikipia East, 5 from Laikipia West and 4 from Laikipia North), 13 respondents from churches with 201 to 300 membership category: (7 from Laikipia East, 4 from Laikipia West and 2 from Laikipia North), while 10 respondents from churches with over 300 membership categories; (5 from Laikipia East, 4 from Laikipia West and 1 from Laikipia North)

A pilot study was carried out in five Pentecostal churches in Meru county representing 10% of the sample size was considered for the pre-test which was not included in the final study. The study utilized the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha to determine the internal consistency. The study restricted on the accepted correlation coefficient of $r = .70$.

Data for the study was collected by use of self-administered questionnaires and guided interview schedule while the quantitative and qualitative data collected was analyzed using inferential and descriptive data analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic Features of the Respondent

The study sought to examine demographic feature of the respondents who took part in the research. The features examined included age, level of education and size of the congregation by membership.

Regarding the age, 44.4% of the respondents were in 44 to 55 years age bracket, 26.7% aged 36 to 45 years, 20.0% aged 26 to 35 years while 8.9% of the respondents were in over 55 years age bracket. These results implies that a high proportion of the respondents were in their upper mid-life since close to three quarters were aged between 36 to 55 years. The results also show that each age category was adequately represented in the study; hence comparison of stress levels between the age groups could be computed.

Regarding the distribution of respondent by size of church membership, 35.6% of the respondents were in a church whose membership was between 101 to 200 members, 26.7% had a congregation of 201 to 300, 20.0% had a congregation of up to 100 members while 17.8% of the respondents had a congregation of over 300 members. These results indicate that the four categories of church by membership were significantly represented; hence the stress levels of the pastors' wives between the church sizes could be compared

Regarding the educational level, 28.9% of the respondents had diploma qualifications, 26.7% had secondary education qualifications while 6.7% had a first degree qualifications . Moreover, 4.4% had post graduate qualifications while 2.2% had no formal education. These results signify that most of the respondents had some basic form of education since more than two thirds of the respondents had at least secondary education qualifications except from one respondent who had no formal education. This made it more effective since majority of the respondents could respond to the items in the questionnaire without much assistance from the research assistants and the researcher. A possible explanation of the divergent in the respondents' education qualification could be the fact that no qualification or requirements is set up for pastor's wife. Essentially, a pastor's wife is a private person and not directly involved in the public occupation of her husband.

Health Exercise as a Way of Reducing Stress

Health exercise adopted by pastors' wives were examined using nine items that sought to establish influence of health exercise on reducing stress.

Table 1

Health Exercise Adopted by Pastors' wives

S/N	Health Exercise adopted Item	SD		D		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	I always have time to have fun	2	4.4	26	57.8	15	33.3	2	4.4
2	I have a set schedule for doing physical exercise.	4	8.9	21	46.7	3	6.7	17	37.8
3	Most of time I take time to Relax and meditate	3	6.7	17	37.8	18	40.0	3	6.7
4	I always watch my diet to ensure a balanced diet	1	2.2	16	35.6	20	44.4	3	6.7
5	Sometimes I get medical examination of my physical health	0	0.0	19	42.2	20	44.4	3	6.7
6	I get enough time to do my hobbies	4	8.9	26	57.8	13	28.9	1	2.2
7	I always take my meals at the right time.	3	6.7	28	62.2	14	31.1	0	0.0
8	I always take regular breaks	2	4.4	27	60.0	15	33.3	0	0.0
9	I always get enough sleep	5	11.1	20	44.4	18	40.0	0	0.0

According to the results in Table 1: item one sought to establish if the respondents' always had time to have fun as a health exercise. Two third of the respondents' (57.8%) disagreed that they always had time for fun; a third (33.3%) asserted that they frequently had time for fun, while 4.4% strongly indicated that they had sufficient time for fun same as those who firmly asserted that they did not always have time for fun. This result signified that most of the pastors' wives interviewed did not have sufficient time for fun since this view was upheld by nearly two thirds of the respondents..

Item two sought to establish whether pastors wives had a schedule for doing physical exercise. Nearly half of the respondents (46.7%) attested that they had no schedule for physical exercise, 37.8% indicated they had a schedule, and 8.9% decisively indicated they had no schedule. This result implies that most of the pastors' wives interviewed had no schedule for doing physical exercise since only around a third indicated that they had set a schedule for doing physical exercise..

Item three sought to establish whether Pastors wives took time to relax and meditate. Two fifths of the respondents attested that they had adequate time to relax and meditate, 37.8% disagreed, 8.9% were not sure while 6.7% decisively indicated that they had sufficient time to relax and meditate same as those who firmly asserted that they rarely had time to relax and meditate. This result suggests that the pastors' wives did not have sufficient time to relax and meditate since only less than half of the respondents attested that they had adequate time to relax and meditate.

The item four sought to establish whether pastors' wives adhered to a balanced diet. Majority of the respondents (44.4%) concurred that they always watched their diet to ensure a balanced diet, 35.6% disagreed and 6.7% firmly asserted that they watched their diet while 2.2% steadfastly indicated that they did not watch their diet to ensure a balanced diet. Hence, most of the pastors' wives interviewed were not keen on their diet intake to ensure a balanced diet since only less than a half of the respondents indicated that they keenly observed their diet.

The item five sought to establish whether pastors wives occasionally took medical examination. The results indicate that 44.4% asserted that they took medical examination for their physical health, 42.2% disagreed, while 6.7% strongly asserted that that they sometimes sought medical examination for their physical health. This result suggest that majority of the pastors' wives interviewed did not seek for medical examination for their physical health since only less than fifty percent indicated that at times they got medical examination for their physical health.

Item six sought to establish whether pastors wives had enough time for their hobbies. A high number of the respondents (57.8%) testified that they did not have sufficient time to do their hobbies, 28.9% attested that they had enough time, 8.9% strongly disagreed, while 2.2% firmly asserted they had enough time. This result implies that most of the pastors' wives interviewed had inadequate time for their hobbies since only less than a third of the respondents indicated that they had enough time for their hobbies.

The item seven sought to establish whether pastors wives always took meals at the right time. Nearly a third of the respondents (62.2%) disagreed that they always took meals at the right time,

31.1% attested that they took meals at the right time while 6.7% strongly disagreed that they took meals at the right time. To a large extent, this result implies that, the wives of pastors interviewed did not adhere to the right meal time as only less than a third of the respondents indicated that they took meals at the right time.

Item eight sought to establish whether pastors wives always took regular breaks. Majority of the respondents (60.0%) disagreed that they took regular breaks, 33.3% concurred that they took regular breaks, 4.4% strongly affirmed they did not take regular breaks. This result suggests that, the wives of pastors to a large extent did not factor in regular breaks in their schedules since only a third of the respondents testified that they always took regular breaks.

The Item sought to establish whether pastors' wives always had enough sleep. 44.4% disagreed that they always had enough sleep, 40.0% concurred that they always had enough sleep, 11.1% strongly disagreed they always had enough sleep. Hence, the results suggest that, to a large extent, the pastors' wives interviewed did not have adequate sleep since only two fifths of the respondents reported that they had adequate sleep..

Moreover, the study sought to examine the extent to which health exercise reduced pastors' wives stress levels. 40.0% of the respondents reported that health exercise reduced pastors' wives stress levels to a little extent, 26.7% stated moderate extent influence, and 20.0% opined large extent influence while 13.3% of the respondents indicated that health exercise reduced pastors' wives stress levels to a very large extent. These results suggest that, the pastors' wives interviewed had the opinion that health exercise reduced pastors' wives stress levels to a moderate extent since a third of the respondents believed that health exercise reduced pastors' wives stress levels.

Health Exercise and Stress Level Comparison Analysis

A T-test was performed to examine the difference in stress levels between pastors' wives exhibiting adequate health exercise and those with inadequate health exercise was examined using a T-test.

Table 2: Health Exercise and Stress Level Comparison Analysis

	Health Exercise	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress Level	Inadequate Exercise	25	31.32	6.56
	Adequate Exercise	20	20.15	8.00

Results illustrated in Table 2 showed that the mean stress level for pastors' wives displaying inadequate exercise was 31.32 (SD = 6.56) while that of their counterparts was 20.15 (SD = 8.0). This means that stress levels for pastors' wives exhibiting inadequate health exercise was higher than that of their counterparts displaying adequate health exercise.

Table 3: Health Exercise Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	df	P- Value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Stress Level	Equal variances assumed	2.880	.097	5.15	43	.000	11.170	2.170
	Equal variances not assumed			5.03	36.6	.000	11.170	2.219

An independent-samples t-test indicated that stress levels for pastors' wives exhibiting inadequate health exercise was significantly higher ($M = 31.32$, $SD = 6.56$) than for their counterparts displaying adequate health exercise ($M = 20.15$, $SD = 8.0$), $t(43) = 5.15$, $p < .001$. in Table 3. Hence, the study established a significant relationship between health exercise and stress among pastors' in Laikipia county.

Health Exercise and Stress Level Correlation Analysis

An examination to check whether different results could be arrived at in regard to the relationship between health exercise and stress levels among pastors' wives was carried out using a Pearson product-moment correlation.

Table 4: Health Exercise and Stress Level Correlations Analysis

		Stress Level	Health Exercise
Stress Level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	45	45
Health Exercise	Pearson Correlation	-.685**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	45	45

These results did indicate that a negative correlation existed between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives, Pearson's $r(45) = -.685$, $p < .001$. Hence, the relationship between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches in Laikipia County was statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Findings in this study established that two third of the pastor' wives disagreed that they always had time for fun as a health exercise .These findings i contradicts with (Kyler's ,2011) findings which indicated that up to 67% of the participants' perceived having fun as an effective stress-relieving practice.

Moreover, it was established that majority of the pastors' wives did not scheduled time for exercise. These results disagree with the finding of (McMinn et al. (2008) who observed that about half of all participants, ministers' wives, recognized the importance of doing physical exercise for effective stress management where it was observed that about half of all participants, ministers' wives, recognize the importance of observing a healthy lifestyle as an antecedent to effective stress management. As a result the interviews mentioned such elements as balanced diets, sleep, massage and exercise as among the major routine practices which can promote good health.

The study also established that high number of the respondents did not have sufficient time to do their hobbies which revealed that most of the pastors' wives interviewed had inadequate time for their hobbies. This result is contradicts with the finding of (Kyler (2011) who established that 65% of the pastors' wives engaged in hobbies for stress management. Under this category, physical activities such as fishing and playing various games were mentioned as the main methods of reliving stress among pastors' wives.

It was also established that health exercise reduced stressed among pastors' wives s that health This is because the pastors' wives who participated in health exercises were able to cope with the challenges that are faced by pastors in their churches .These results were in agreement with the findings of Dimsdale (2008) who positively associated physical activity with improved physical and mental well-being.

In addition, an examination to check whether different results could be arrived at in regard to the relationship between health exercise and stress levels among pastors' wives was carried out using a Pearson product-moment correlation. These results did indicate that a negative correlation existed between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives.Hence, the relationship between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches in Laikipia County was statistically significant. This translated to the fact that the T-test results and the correlation results were in harmony as both established a significant relationship between health exercise and stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches in Laikipia County. These results upholds the findings of Collier et al. (2008) who asserted that that people who are categorized as fit have better responses for exercise facilitated stress coping. The results also correspond well with the finding of Dimsdale (2008) who positively associated physical activity with improved physical and mental well-being. The findings had an agreement with the observation of Barbour et al. (2007) who asserted that regular physical activity can initiate behavioural activation that decreases depressive symptoms, thereby setting a better platform for better stress coping. These results imply that pastors' wives who had time for fun, took time to relax, and were regularly engaged in physical exercise had better chances of coping with stress

than their counterparts who rarely engaged physical exercise. Besides, having enough time to sleep, taking regular breaks, taking meals at the right time and enjoying one's hobby was highly associated with lower stress levels. This would mean that physical exercise improved the productivity of a pastor's wife as she would feel generally happy, and be more tolerant and patient thus improving her interpersonal skills with the congregants which is vital in executing her role in church.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that pastors' wives who had time for fun, took time to relax, and were regularly engaged in physical exercise had better chances of coping with stress than their counterparts who rarely engaged physical exercise. Besides, having enough time to sleep, taking regular breaks, taking meals at the right time and enjoying one's hobby was positively associated with lower stress levels. This means that physical exercise improved the productivity of a pastor's wife as she would feel generally happy, and be more tolerant and patient thus improving her interpersonal skills with the congregants which is vital in executing her role in church. Thus, health exercise was negatively correlated with stress among pastors' wives in Pentecostal churches in Laikipia County.

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