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The Lived Experiences of Black Pastors and Their Self-Care

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty at Governors State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Tracy D. Metcalf

August 2022

The Lived Experiences of Black Pastors and Their Self-Care

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Dissertation Project

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Abstract

Black pastors tend to carry the burden of the Black community, church, congregants, family, and their own personal struggles. How these individuals handle their experiences, stress, and self-care can assist them in creating a healthy life and work balance. There is limited literature on Black male pastors and their lived experiences and self-care practices. This study explored the lived experiences of Black male pastors and how it affects their self-care practices. This study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design. This qualitative approach allows for the Black male pastor's voice to be heard and documented. The findings of this study show that there are several demands of ministry work that are required of the pastor through the eyes of the pastor himself, congregation, and community. They also show that the pastor's support system included the pastor's wife and other pastors. And lastly, they show that pastors feel self-care practices are important and they encourage their congregation to take care of themselves. The pastors, however, reported that they sometimes fall short in taking care of themselves. Black pastors feel they have to be "intentional" when seeking self-care practices. While Black pastors have a huge obligation to the congregation and the community they serve, it is important for them to take care of their self-identity (man, husband, father, etc.) to be effective to their congregation. This study brings additional awareness to the mental health profession to take a closer look at this population and develop appropriate treatment plans that will build trust and confidence and reduce the barriers of seeking mental health treatment.

Dedication

In memory of my loving grandmother, Fannie “Mama” Baker. Mama, I did it! You were one of my greatest cheerleaders. You didn’t say much, but your presence and smile always affirmed how proud you were of me and how much you loved me. Today and every day, I feel your spirit, see your smile, and remember your words “Tracy, I am so proud of you!”

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to give all honor and praise to God for His goodness and mercy throughout this journey. I thank Him for His keeping power. It was a difficult journey, but with God's strength, favor, and peace I was able to stay on the course and finish the race.

I would also like to acknowledge my family. My daughters, Morgan and Nisa, I love you so much! You are my motivation, and I pray that I've made you proud. I hope I've shown you that when you hold on to God's unchanging hand and believe in Him that anything is possible. I thank you for the sacrifices you made in allowing me to follow my dreams to complete my higher education goals. The encouragement and support you have given me throughout this process helped push me forward in spite of obstacles and challenges I had faced. Morgan, my editor, thank you for reviewing my documents to ensure that I submitted quality work. You earned this degree with me. You are a person of few words, but your presence spoke volumes and I appreciate you. Nisa, you were one of my biggest cheerleaders. The words of encouragement you spoke and notes you left meant so much to me. You truly boosted my confidence and helped me realize I could do this! To my mom, thank you for instilling the importance of education and setting the pathway for me to begin this journey.

Dr. Eman Tadros, my dissertation advisor, I am thankful for your support. Your guidance and input throughout this process not only helped me to complete my dissertation, but to submit a document we both can be proud of. Dr. Katherine Atkins, Dr. Tamekia Bell, and Dr. Patricia Robey, my dissertation committee, I appreciate your willingness to join me on this journey and bring your expertise to help me complete the process.

It truly takes a village to raise, encourage, and affirm individuals. To my village: my biological family; the family that I inherited through friendship; and my spiritual family, Second

Baptist Church of Joliet, especially Pastor Larry V. Tyler, THANK YOU! I am grateful for your prayers, words of encouragement, high-fives, and hugs; they meant more to me than you will ever know.

Lastly, throughout this process I listened to many gospel songs and hymnals to give me strength to make it through. I know it was nothing but God's grace that helped and sustained me. Therefore, I would like to end with the lyrics of the Luther Barnes song *God's Grace*:

How did I make it all these years?

How did I make it this far?

Through the valleys and over the hills.

I know it had to be God.

How did I make it through the storm?

How did I make it through the rain?

If you want to know, just how I got here, it's so easy to explain.

It was God's grace [4x]

(God's grace) [4x]

I made it this far.

(I made it this far)

(By the grace of God)

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Individuals who work in a helping profession may carry the heavy burdens of others. They are sometimes the first responders to individuals' crises, trauma, emotional, and spiritual distress. Helping professionals can find themselves responding to and involved in critical and disastrous events, situations, and problems of other individuals and communities. These incidents can impact the physical, mental, and/or behavior of the helping professional's well-being, it can also cause conflict within the helping professional's personal life. (Flannery, 2015). Helping professionals have the propensity for experiencing burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and becoming unwell due to their neglect of taking care of their own well-being (Blount & Lambie, 2018). These individuals have the mindset of making themselves available to service the needs of others while neglecting their own self-care. In a survey conducted by Francis et al. (2017), they found that 43% of their participants mentioned that they felt frustrated when they attempted to accomplish or do things that were important to themselves. It is important for helping professionals to take care of their own mental, physical, and emotional health so that they can be effective in the work they do. Helping professionals who do not take care of their own mental health might find themselves having some impairment in the service that they offer to others (Blount & Lambie, 2018; Chan, Tin, et al., 2020). Pastors are considered helping professionals (Scott & Lovell, 2014), amongst their other roles. In the helping profession, pastors face dual challenges of helping secular and spiritual individuals that are within their congregation and in the community. For the purpose of this study, the helping professionals that will be discussed are individuals who are in the role of pastor or clergyman. This study will seek individuals who identify as male, Black or African American, and are in the role as pastor or senior clergyman.

Background

Research has shown that the pastoral profession has a major effect on the pastor's mental capacity (Scott & Lovell, 2014). Pastors play a critical role in bringing awareness of the importance of well-being and social justice in the communities they serve and around the world (Abernethy et al., 2016). Black pastors are looked at as individuals who stand in the gap for those who are underprivileged, oppressed, and discriminated against (Andrews, 2002). In the Black community, pastors are looked upon as strong vessels in Christ who deliver a message to the community of hope, encouragement, and strength. Black pastors are to instill hope and build resilience for the Black community to believe that better days are ahead and that God is with them. Further, they are looked to as advocates to fight for social injustices in the community and worldwide, especially those injustices that are inflicted on the African American community (Andrews, 2002).

Black churches create an environment that nurtures spiritual and survival skills for African Americans to overcome personal and societal oppression (Andrews, 2002). The spiritual welfare, social support, and health and well-being of African American people have been one of the main goals for the Black church (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014). The Black church is an opportunity for African Americans to develop educational and political strategies to assist them in their daily lives. Black churches build a caring community that cultivates a sense of belonging, unity, and strength among its congregation. Through the church, African Americans receive spiritual guidance, fellowship, development of friendships and social networks. The church is a place where African Americans' personal and public lives intersect to create an atmosphere of therapeutic change within individuals (Avent et al., 2015). It's undeniable that the leadership within Black churches is exceedingly valuable. Black pastors play a very important role within

the congregation they serve and are the pillar of the Black church (Avent et al., 2015). They are the individuals that the African American community seeks out for guidance and help during crises. In the Black church, pastors are valued as credible sources of assistance with social and psychological problems, regardless of their educational background, knowledge of mental health issues, and/or previous experience (Avent et al, 2015). The congregation seeks out pastors for pastoral, spiritual, marital, and individual counseling, as well as guidance on political and daily events. African American clergymen are intimately involved in the lives of congregants, providing counseling for bereavement, marital issues, pregnancy, employment, violence/abuse, drug abuse and legal problems (Spann et al., 2015). The church is seen as a less stigmatized place for African Americans; therefore, they rely heavily on the pastor for directions and solutions (Avent et al., 2015). Pastors of African American churches sometimes act as gatekeepers to the formal mental health system for the African American community (Stansbury et al., 2012). Many African Americans tend to turn to their church for religious and spiritual growth but also for mental development, socio-emotional needs, and support. This quest for help makes the church leaders within the African American culture to be first responders to minor and major crises and stressful situations for their congregation. This constant demand on Black pastors can be exhausting and lead to their own mental distress, due to involvement in the congregation's constant personal, professional, and spiritual affairs.

Pastors not only have the role of leading their congregation, but the Black community also relies heavily on Black pastors of churches within their community for guidance in spiritual, mental, physical, and political arenas (Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). The Black community can be members, members' family, or non-members of the pastor's congregation. These individuals, regardless of their connection with the church, still expect the pastor to be available to them for

service and guidance. The community looks to African American churches for spiritual support and a safe haven from external oppressions that the community may face on a daily basis (Okunroumu et al., 2016). Pastors may provide counseling to those with addictions, mental illness, socio-emotional problems (e.g., bereavement, marital problems, family problems, grief, and self-worth concerns) and employment. These counseling services are not just limited to the pastor's congregation, but the community may seek them out as well. Most African Americans tend to feel more comfortable with seeking mental health counseling and guidance on personal problems from a local pastor. Nearly 40% of the African American population use clergy as their primary source of help for mental health issues (Spann et al., 2015), rather than seeking a trained mental health professional. This may be a result of the stigma surrounding mental illness as being another label on the African American culture to continue to oppress this population. Clergymen are an integral part of mental health care in the African American community (Stansbury et al., 2012). Due to the many health disparities in the African American community, many Black churches have been used as a vehicle to educate the community on health topics (e.g., counseling, mammograms, diabetes, hypertension screening, HIV testing) that incessantly plague the African American community. The African American community also utilizes the church as an opportunity to learn about current affairs that may affect this population and its community (Spann et al., 2015). Black pastors are so busy attending to the community and their congregation's overall wellness that they may ignore their own mental health challenges and neglect to seek the necessary help from a licensed mental health professional (Flannery, 2015).

Black pastors encounter everyday personal life and ministry challenges that can make them feel depleted and/or depressed (Abernethy et al., 2016). This lack of energy can result in minimal time for personal activities, care, or relationships. Pastors have to deal with their own

conflicts while also dealing with the conflicts and issues of their congregation and the community they serve. Black pastors can find themselves being emotionally, cognitively, spiritually, and physically drained due to the many ministerial demands, unrealistic expectations, isolation, and loneliness that they experience in their role (Chandler et al., 2020). As mentioned, pastors can be expected to hold many different roles for their congregation and community. The demand of these roles can put undue pressure on the pastor affecting the pastor's physical and mental health. These duties and roles continue on after the pastor has left the church for the day and can permeate into his personal obligations to himself and/or his family. Sandford (1982) mentioned that the job of a pastor is never finished. These roles and demands, along with the pastor's personal identity and roles, can cause conflict and mental distress for the pastor (Flannery, 2015). The enmeshment of these roles can cause undue stress on the pastor. Unhealthy boundaries of work and personal life can result in stress, depression, and burnout for many pastors (Adams et al., 2016; Jacob et al., 2013; Scott, & Lovell, 2014). Pastors who are unaware of the enmeshment of their pastoral and personal roles can find themselves being unbalanced where their pastoral role could sometimes overpower and overshadow the pastor's personal role and identity. Pastors are so busy tending to the day-to-day spiritual, emotional, and mental welfare of their congregation and community that they may sometimes forget to tend to their own spiritual, emotional, and mental welfare. This action may result in a decline or non-existent practice of the pastor's personal self-care.

Statement of the Problem

In past years, media has reported on several deaths by suicide of White pastors. On July 3, 2020, *St. Louis Today* printed an article titled "*St. Louis megachurch founder's personal journey led to a tragic end*". In this article, it was reported and confirmed that the shooting of

Darrin Patrick, age 49, the pastor of The Journey Church was ruled as a suicide. It was reported that Patrick suffered a gunshot wound within close range under his chin. In addition, in an article published in *USA Today* on September 12, 2019, titled, “*Pastor, mental health advocate Jarrid Wilson dies by apparent suicide, wife reports*” discussed the death of associate pastor Jarrid Wilson, age 30. It was reported that Wilson shot himself with a handgun. Lastly, on December 23, 2018, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article titled, “*A young pastor preached about depression, then killed himself. His widow wants to help others by talking about it*”, discussed the death of Pastor Andrew Stoecklein, age 30. It was not disclosed how Stoecklein completed suicide just that he committed the act at church after his Sunday sermon. These reports brought urged the immediate questioning of mental health issues, or attempted or committed suicide, by pastors of other ethnicities. There is little to no research on Black pastors or media attention on the effects of mental health or death by suicide for Black pastors.

Black pastors have the responsibility of being available to many individuals within church, community, friends, and family. These responsibilities may be a little different from those of their white counterparts because Black pastors typically have to deal with the discrimination oppression and social unrest of African Americans along with the views in which they have of themselves due to the color of their skin. These responsibilities can sometimes be demanding, overwhelming, and bring a great burden on Black pastors. Black pastors may feel as though they have to make themselves available to those in need and to those who call upon them, without thinking about their own personal responsibilities or self-care. The responsibilities of a pastor, like some other helping professions (e.g., firefighter, on-call doctor, etc.) can require them to be called upon 24 hours, 7 days a week, leaving very little time for the pastor to manage his personal relationships/affairs, enjoy leisure time, and/or participate in some self-care

practices. Once the pastor becomes so consumed in his presumed role outside of normal working hours, it can lead to conflicts within his personal relationships and can cause him to neglect his own personal self-care. This can cause mental distress and other health ailments to develop within the pastor.

Black individuals typically have higher rates of physical health problems and sometimes worse health behaviors than their white counterparts (Baruth, Wilcox, et al., 2014). These risk factors can exacerbate the propensity of Black pastors developing mental health issues. In addition to these factors, the inability of some Black pastors to set healthy boundaries and the perception that they have to be available for their congregation 24 hours a day can have a negative impact on the pastor's mental health and his self-care practices (Baruth, Wilcox, et al., 2014).

There has been research conducted on how important it is for individuals to have a healthy work and life balance, but unfortunately, there is limited research on the work and life balance for Black pastors. Further, there is little empirical research conducted on the personal practices of pastors (Chandler, 2009), with the majority of the research being conducted on white pastors. Research involving Black male pastors as participants has been overlooked and few studies have been conducted (Gayman et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2017). Additively, burnout, stress, and depression have been researched and discussed about clergymen of many religious denominations, as well as ethnic groups; however, there has been limited focus on the experiences of African American pastors.

It is apparent that the experiences of Black pastors may look different from their counterparts. In addition to the roles that Black pastors play in their churches and communities, there is also the battle within the Black pastor regarding his identity as a Black man. As a Black

man, pastors may feel that they have a certain image of masculinity to portray to society so that they do not appear weak. The intersectionality of being Black and a male has serious implications to psychological and mental distress that can affect the total well-being of a Black man (Mitchell et al., 2017). Black men may find it difficult to express their mental and emotional distress because they do not want to appear weak or less masculine in the eyes of society and within the profession they hold. This action makes it difficult for Black men to seek professional help in times of mental distress and/or actively participate in self-care practices. Often, it may be difficult to understand the mental distress of Black men due to the nature of how they characterize their own mental and emotional health (Mitchell et al., 2017). Black pastors tend to rely heavily on their spiritual belief and the power of God (Andrews, 2002). Black pastors tend to seek God in their time of distress through prayer by asking for strength, direction, and clarity of their thoughts. They rely on God's Word and The Holy Spirit to guide them, give them clarity, and the vision in which to go. There are several passages throughout the Bible that you can hear Black pastors recite for strength such as Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee"; 1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you"; and Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (King James Version [KJV]). Relying heavily on God is a safe haven that pastors go to when they are in distress. This is the place where they can unburden themselves without the fear of being judged, prosecuted, or information being leaked to others. This practice is an excellent self-care practice for Black pastors; however, it leaves little to no room for pastors to seek support from others during their time of distress (Guzman & Teh, 2016). This is why it is so important to research this population to allow them to narrate their lived experiences and release their deeply rooted emotions. It also allows mental health professionals to develop the

competencies and skills needed to understand the needs, build a rapport, and assist this population in obtaining optimal mental wellness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black male pastors and their views on their personal self-care. The phenomenological inquiry aimed to capture a better understanding and uncover the meaning of Black male pastors' lived experiences and views on their own personal strategies to take care of their mental health through self-care practices. This study explored the position(s) that Black pastors hold and how it influences their ability to take care of their personal needs and care. This study provides meaningful information to mental health professionals that will be valuable in how they treat Black male pastors within their practices. Mental health professionals will have the opportunity to read about a selective group of Black pastors' experiences to better equip them to understand the Black male pastors' experiences as a Black man working as a Black pastor.

Assumptions and Limitations

The study utilized phenomenological research. Creswell (2014) defines phenomenological research as an instance when the researcher uses human experiences regarding a phenomenon as described by participants to conduct his/her study. When using phenomenology, the researcher must adhere to the correlation between the paradigm, methodology and the validation processes to ensure the fairness and trustworthiness of the method and data of the research (Sousa, 2014). The researcher must also ensure that the participants that are chosen meet the criteria of the phenomenon that is being studied. The limitation could include the participants' location, as the researcher may not receive participants

from all geographic areas within the United States and/or from different religious denominations.

Definition of Terms

This section defines terms that will be used throughout this research to help better understand the research topic and the meaning of words as they are used throughout this study.

- **African American:** “Black people living in the United States who are descended from families that originally came from Africa and of African-Americans or their culture; black” (Collins dictionary, n.d., Definitions 1 and 2). This word may be used interchangeably to represent Black individuals as well. The participants will select how they identify.
- **Black:** “Of or relating to any of various population groups of especially African ancestry often considered as having dark pigmentation of the skin but in fact having a wide range of skin colors; *Black* Americans and of or relating to Black people and often especially to African American people or their culture” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definitions 2a and b). This word may be used interchangeably to represent African American as well. The participants will select how they identify.
- **Clergyman:** “A member of the clergy and an ordained Christian minister” (Dictionary.com, 2021, Definitions 1 and 2). The member of the clergy for this research will be the senior leader that is in charge of the church. This word may be used interchangeably to represent pastor as well.
- **Pastor:** “A minister or priest in charge of a church and a person having spiritual care of a number of persons” (Dictionary.com, 2021, Definitions 1 and 2). This word may be used interchangeably to represent clergyman as well.

- **Religious denomination:** “A religious organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 4).
- **Self-care:** “Refers to activities or processes that are initiated and managed by an individual for the purpose of supporting one’s health and well-being, attending to one’s needs, or providing stress relief” (Bressi & Vaden 2017).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Blacks are less likely to seek mental health counseling from a licensed mental health therapist or counselor (Avent et al., 2014). In prior research, it suggests that African Americans tend to seek out formal mental health services less often when needed (Okunroumu et al., 2016). Limited participation in mental health services by Blacks can be due to the stigma of mental illness, historical racial discrimination, lack of culturally informed and trained counselors, lack of culturally appropriate diagnosis and treatment planning, and lack of Black female and male counselors (Briggs et al., 2014). African Americans' mental health is greatly affected by social issues (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, racial injustices, etc.), physical health issues, and personal identity issues that plague many Black communities (Avent et al., 2014). These increasing social and physical health disparities may cause a decline in the mental health of Black individuals. However, with the decline in Black mental health, the percentage of Black individuals who seek professional counseling remains at an all-time low (Avent et al., 2014). There are many reasons why Black individuals are hesitant to seek professional counseling services. Discrimination in the health care system and health disparities among ethnic and racial groups continue to plague our country (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014). African Americans continue to experience higher incidence rates of diseases and other health challenges than any other group (Avent et al., 2014). Despite medical advances, many ethnic and racial groups have not shared equally in the advances in health outcomes and health status (Rowland & Isaac-Savage 2014). This may cause many ethnic and racial groups to lose faith in the healthcare system.

Research has stated that there are many reasons why Black individuals may choose not to seek professional mental health treatment. Some of those reasons are mistrust in the health

system, stigma, fear of being discriminated against, fear of being misdiagnosed, denial of symptomatology, lack of Black professional counselors/therapists, cultural norms, lack of resources (e.g., employment or medical insurance), or their religious rituals or stipulations (Allen et al., 2009; Avent et al., 2014; Gallant et al., 2010; Okunroumu et al., 2016). Stansbury et al. (2012) mentioned that the majority of Black individuals seeking mental health support will contact their local clergy exclusively and will not seek additional care from physicians or mental health personnel. This practice amongst the Black community may cause an increase of mental and physical illness to manifest within this population. It can also cause Black individuals to not be diagnosed, and in turn not receive the proper treatment for their illness. In the African American community, depression and other mental illnesses often go untreated (Spann et al., 2015). This practice may be because of their lack of faith and confidence in the medical system and their fear of being labeled or stigmatized with a mental illness (Okunroumu et al., 2016). Individuals who identify as Black, who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, may feel as though others perceive them as “crazy” or “less than” (Ormond et al., 2019). Black individuals tend to look at a mental health diagnosis as a negative and oppressive label. These perceived obstacles may decrease the likelihood of Black individuals, including those in a role as a clergyman, from seeking help from external professionals. In addition, they may also believe that their role as a Black man and their image as a leader in the community (pastor) could be tarnished if they seek external help from a professional counselor or therapist.

The Black Church

The role of the Black church goes beyond just the spiritual needs of its members. It is also a place that provides social services (health resources, education, food services, financial assistance, and youth programs) as well as being a strong advocate for the Black community in

regard to social justices, discrimination, equities, and other issues (Campbell & Littleton, 2018). The Black church is a support that the community utilizes during times of crisis. Spann et al. (2015) mentioned that many African Americans believe that clergies are a bridge to God when they are facing hardships and need support.

Black individuals have a higher rate of using their religious coping strategies in times of crisis, trauma, and medical concerns (physical and mental) than any other ethnic groups (Campbell & Littleton, 2018). Much research has shown that Blacks are less likely to seek help from mental health specialists and are also less likely to continue with follow-up visits after the initial visit (Avent et al., 2014). Blacks are more likely to contact their pastor, rather than a professional or specialist in the mental health field, when a crisis or trauma occurs in their lives (Allen et al., 2009; Hankerson, Lee, et al., 2015; Okunroumu et al., 2016). This is a heavy burden and responsibility that Black pastors must care for while working as a spiritual leader within the Black community (Allen et al., 2009).

The Black Community

The Black community relies heavily on family bonds and community support throughout their lives (Hollie & Coolhart, 2020). The Black community finds strength in having a connectedness with their community through familial and spiritual ties. These bonds provide the Black community with the strength to fight through many obstacles (mental health issues, systemic racisms, etc.; Stansbury et al., 2012). The community will seek help from someone within the community to discuss these obstacles, rather than seeking external help or help from a professional (Okunroumu, et al., 2016).

Mental illness among the Black community is similar to those of the general population (Ormond et al., 2019). Depression among the Black community may be as of result of living in

areas and times where oppression, injustice, and discrimination are on the rise. Several studies on attitudes and beliefs about depression have shown that approximately 63% of African Americans believe that depression is a personal weakness, and almost two-thirds said that they believe that prayer and faith alone would successfully treat depression (Spann et al, 2015). Prayer and faith within the Black community is one of their greatest sources of support when dealing with mental and physical illness, as well as socio-emotional issues (Allen et al., 2009). This practice of prayer, faith and leaning on God when hardships, difficult situations, and crises arise were taught to most Black individuals at an early age. Black clergies are more trusted in the Black community when seeking mental health support rather than a licensed mental health professional to discuss one's problems (Stansbury et al., 2012). Furthermore, Blacks who saw clergy first were less likely to contact other mental health professionals, were more satisfied with the help they received from clergy and were more likely to refer others to a clergyman rather than a mental health professional (Spann et al., 2015).

Further, high crime levels against Black individuals and the daily experiences of racism may cause high levels of stress and other mental illnesses. The Black community has endured a lifetime of mundane and extreme racism, bringing about incessant microaggressions (i.e., intentional or unintentional brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioral indignities; Brooms & Perry, 2016). These situations have caused Black communities to look for leaders to help seek justice where injustice has occurred. The Black church is known for helping the Black community in confronting racial disparities (Hankerson, Watson, et al., 2013). The Black community seeks out their pastors to be a leading voice to help fight against injustice within the community (Campbell & Littleton, 2018). This is another heavy burden and responsibility that

Black pastors are expected to perform and make themselves available to the Black community when needed.

Black Pastors

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, a pastor is someone that oversees a church and has spiritual charge over a congregation or members within that church. In the history of Black churches, there has been a strong cultural bond between the Black community and Black pastors. This bond has allowed Black pastors to be revered as preacher, teacher, civil rights leader, role model, influencer, and leader (Williams & Cousin, 2021). Black pastors have been viewed as gatekeepers who have significant authority and are beloved and trusted by their congregation and the Black community (Baruth, Bopp, et al., 2015). Black pastors have been looked up to as navigators for various challenges (Baruth, Bopp, et al., 2015). These roles have caused Black pastors to be viewed as strong pillars within the Black church and the community (Williams & Cousin, 2021).

Black Male Identity

Racial identity can be associated with the decision-making process of mental health and social outcomes amongst Black individuals (Thomas et al., 2015). Black males have to make meaning of their race and gender identities. Perceptions of their identity can be derived from their parents, influential figures, media, or society. Identity construction is something that will go on through an individual's lifetime (Thomas et al., 2015). Traditional male role norms are multidimensional and encompass qualities that men are taught to value (Hammond, 2012). Western traditional masculinity includes the following behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes: striving for higher social status and power through successful achievement, toughness, independence and self-reliance, restrictive emotionality (i.e., not showing emotions), and avoiding behaviors that

are associated with femininity (Brassel et al., 2020). Black men are expected to adhere to the traditional masculine roles that have been created by the dominant culture, while also navigating through the racial discrimination that occurs based on their ethnicity (Thomas et al., 2015). This pressure can add additional stress as the Black male attempts to stand on his belief of his identity and walk in his traditional masculine role. The Black male has to develop his beliefs and attitudes about what it means to be African American, as well as his role as an African American in society (Thomas et al., 2015). Once again, this can cause conflict and additional pressure within the Black male on his identity and his place within society. This conflict can cause the Black man to conform to the dominant culture of masculinity while attempting to satisfy his role and cultural norms as a Black man, furthermore, a Black pastor. (Brassel et al., 2020).

Brassel et al. (2020) mentioned that some Black men have developed a form of masculinity called “cool pose”. This form of masculinity includes impression management, behavior, and physical posturing to display pride, strength, and control. It is important for some Black men to have such an image so that they can navigate through a society in which they are judged by their ethnicity. This form of masculinity allows some Black men to attain a few societal privileges (higher socioeconomic status, professional employment, and better home ownership) that have been historically reserved for White males. These societal privileges attained by the Black man also allow him to have greater respect and authority within his own community and culture. By obtaining such social privileges, the Black man will often combine his newly acquired privileges to his masculine responsibility and extend his knowledge, possession, and power to his family and the community (Brassel et al., 2020). Black men feel it is their responsibility to take care of their neighborhood and community, and also teach and be a role model to the younger generations. Research by Brassel et al. (2020) showed that Black men

value their masculine role and responsibilities because it grants them respect from others. Research has also shown that Black men embrace more of the traditional roles than White men (Brassel et al., 2020). Further, this study also found that Black men were more dependent on self-reliance than White men. Traditional masculine norms prescribe emotional restriction and self-reliance as appropriate male stress responses (e.g., “boys don’t cry and take it like a man”; Hammond, 2012, p. S232). This behavior of self-reliance within Black men tends to carry over into their professional/career and relational roles. Being able to rely on their own power and resources is a sign of their masculinity. Additively, it is a sign that the Black male is strong and not weak. In Brassel et al. (2020) study, the participants mentioned they had concerns that if they did not perform responsibility “appropriately” that their masculinity would be devalued. The performance of the Black man has to be conducted in a way to show his strength and control so that others will value his masculinity. Black men also have to perform appropriately in the Black community. Black men feel that they have a sense of responsibility to the community in changing systemic structures. In research, Black men talked about making structural changes within the community, state, and at national levels for the betterment of the Black culture (Brassel et al., 2020). Research has documented that males who hold on to a traditional masculine identity may have higher anxiety levels, lower capacity for intimacy, low self-esteem, negative attitudes toward seeking help, and depression (Thomas et al., 2015). Further, investigations found a positive association between depression and traditional masculine role norms that encourage competition, emotional control, stoicism, self-reliance, and avoidance of femininity (Matthews et al., 2013). Individuals that thrive to maintain high levels of traditional masculine role norms are subjected to developing symptoms of depression, among other mental health concerns.

Ethnic identity can shape the behaviors and values in the way one views health behaviors and coping mechanisms (Corneille et al., 2012). Black men tend to seek self-reliance coping mechanisms when dealing with mood disorders. John Henryism refers to the behavior coping mechanism that Black men tend to gravitate towards as self-perception (Powell et al., 2016). He describes this as an individual feeling that he can overcome demands and feelings of being overwhelmed with persistence and hard work. He also states that Black men will lean more on self-reliance because treatment seeking denotes a weakness or a character flaw. Since Black men work to portray the image of pride, strength, and control, seeking help will diminish this image in society. As previously stated, it is important for the Black man to be seen as a person of strength and control who is able to carry his personal responsibilities and the responsibilities of his community. This choice of coping mechanism that the Black man uses can cause the Black man's mental health to diminish due to the lack of support and treatment that can be provided to assist in decreasing the symptoms that he may be experiencing (Powell et al., 2016).

Pastor Identity and His Role in the Church

Christian ministers tend to have two passions in their lives, the love for their family and their love for the ministry and the gospel of Jesus Christ (Potts, 2020). Black pastors have to display strong spiritual beliefs and their lifestyle has to reflect God's image (Guzman & Teh, 2016). His Christian values and attitude must be on display at all times. His congregation and community are watching to see how he handles interpersonal relationships and situations. The clergy is constantly dealing with personal (family, wife, children) and external (congregation, community, etc.) expectations (Johnson, 2012; Morris & Blanton, 1998).

Pastors are the pillars of the Black church (Avent et al., 2015). Being a pastor of a congregation is not a chosen profession; however, it is one that an individual is called or

commissioned. A calling, in its most basic religious sense, denotes a vocation issued by and dedicated to a divine messenger (Schweitzer & Knudson, 2014). This call seeks for the individuals to be diligent and dedicated in everyday work, life, and service, all in the name of the Lord (Payne, 2017). These callings prompt the pastor to engaged in the sense of doing the will of God with a cheerful and loving heart. The calling is a call or request from God. It is a call to service in which the individual serves God in the worldly realm by being an example of God's love and serving the people of God's church (Payne, 2017). Pastors who are called or commissioned into a ministry may refer to several passages within the Bible to accept their calling. In the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible, Ephesians 4:11-12, reads "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Pastors take this passage as a commission from God to do the work of the ministry and to serve God's people. Another passage that pastors may refer to is Romans 8:30 (KJV), "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Lastly, 1 Peter 4:10-11 (KJV), "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Some pastors would assert that they do not choose their calling; rather, it is the calling that chooses them (Hillman, 1996). Since this is not a profession that some pastors seek, but were called into by the Holy Spirit, they may find themselves having to devote countless hours working to do their best because they do not want to fail God. The time and energy that pastors put into their calling may

cause them to become enmeshed with their calling. Neubert and Halbesleben (2015) looked at a calling as a summons from God to approach work with a sense of purpose and a pursuit of excellence in work practices. The pursuit of excellence in the work of the ministry may cause some pastors to forsake other areas (marriages, personal relationships, etc.) because they are giving their all to the ministry. This pursuit of excellence may also impact the pastor's overall mental health. The pastor might become so consumed in displaying the perfect image amongst men that he can lose his true identity in the ministry and forsake his personal obligations (Morris & Blanton, 1994).

Titus 1:7 (KJV) reads "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre..." Pastors may apply this scripture to attempt to uphold his perceived image that he has to be good and righteous at all times. This pressure may cause the pastor to feel isolated and afraid to show his fear because it can be perceived as a sign of weakness to his congregation and community. Morris and Blanton (1994) mentioned that there are three types of church expectation on clergies, including self-demands/expectations, perceived social demands/expectations, and the demands of the congregation. When looking at the self-demands, it was found that clergy would put more unrealistic and high expectations on themselves. This behavior can cause the pastor to lose his identity because he is always working so hard to portray an upright man to his congregation, community, and to himself. This action may cause the pastor to dissociate from his personal identity and concentrate only on his identity as a pastor. This can also contribute to the pastor having a humorless and perfectionistic, attitude making it difficult for him to cope with or seek help with normal stress, along with the stress of being a pastor (Morris & Blanton, 1994). When looking at social demands, clergy have reported that they feel "owned" by their congregation and

that they demand a lot of their time (Morris & Blanton, 1994). This demand can cause a pastor to lose his personal identity once again because he is concentrating on being the person that his congregation and community expects him to be.

Unlike some professions where an employee works a fixed number of hours in a day, pastors live and work in their roles nonstop. Pastors are always pastors; their roles continue even after they leave the church (Perkins, 2003). For some employees, once you have finished your eight or ten hours on the job, you can go home and enjoy the luxuries of your personal life without being interrupted by demands of your job. Clergymen do not have the luxury of working just a 40-hour work week with holidays and vacation time (Morris & Blanton, 1994). If a crisis arises with a member of a pastor's church or community once he leaves his job and is in the comfort of his home, his personal time is disrupted to attend to the matter at hand. For a pastor, his ministry is not a job, it is his way of life (Perkins, 2003). The way of life for pastors is completing their obligations to the church, congregation, and the community. The work of the pastor is twenty-four hours of the day (Perkins, 2003). The pastor is available during vacation, days off, and when he is enjoying time with family. He makes himself available whenever the congregation or community needs him. The work of a pastor can be both satisfying individually and beneficial to the wider community, but at the same time involves sacrifice, compromise, and a willingness to defer personal rewards to achieve the task and responsibilities for others (Madden et al., 2015). Members of the clergy often have difficulty differentiating their self-concept from their own performance within their calling. They often fail to differentiate who they are from what they do in their role as pastor (Crosskey et al., 2015). Ministers often rededicate their efforts to try and meet the demands of ministry, increasing the danger of the ministry becoming their whole life and their reason for living (Crosskey et al., 2015). Pastors

become so entwined with their role that they cannot separate their true self from their pastoral label.

Responsibilities

According to the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, a religious institution is a church, temple, mosque, and other places of worship where individuals gather to support and manage the practice of a specific set of religious beliefs. The highest position in a Black religious institution is the pastor, senior pastor, or bishop. Black churches often use hierarchical leadership to meet the needs of their congregation. Bilkins et al. (2016) describe the hierarchical leadership as senior pastor (e.g., the first level of leadership) who ensures church leaders under his leadership are meeting congregants' needs; associate pastors/ministers (e.g., second level of leadership); deacons/deaconess (e.g., third level of leadership); and congregation caregivers/deacon aides (e.g., fourth level of leadership). A bishop is defined as a senior member of the Christian clergy, usually in charge of a diocese and empowered to confer holy orders. The head minister or pastor is recognized as a pivotal figure in the church (Taylor, et al., 2000). This individual has a certain image to uphold within his family, congregation, and community. Pastors of Black churches command significant influence within the communities and the institution of the church (Corbie-Smith et al., 2010). Clergies' church members tend to have high or unrealistic expectations for their pastors (Adams et al., 2017). These expectations develop the clergy image and add undue pressure to him because he may feel that he must uphold the expectations that the congregation has set forth for him. In addition, some pastors tend to feel "centrally important and indispensable" and to "function as if everything depended upon them" (Crosskey et al., 2015). Pastors may see themselves as one who must do greater good indirectly or directly to those in his congregation and community. He can

put himself high on a pedestal and expect his congregation to do the same. Hillman (1996) mentioned that some pastors may view their pastoral roles as one as: this is what I must do, this is what I got to have, or this is who I am. This perceived image makes it difficult for the Black pastors to tend to his own personal needs and mental health conditions (Crosskey et al., 2015). Perkins (2003) suggests that ministers are so concerned with their roles and identity as a pastor and being available to their congregation and community that their own personal needs are not being met.

The work of clergy possesses some of the same characteristics of a standard employment relationship (Greene & Robbins, 2015). However, clergy work has a religious calling. Clergies believe that their physical, intellectual, and emotional selves are permanently claimed for the service of God (Greene & Robbins, 2015). In the King James Version of the Holy Bible, Ephesians 4:11-12, reads “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” There are many roles that a pastor may be required to perform as a leader of a religious institution. The job description of a pastor is diverse and includes leadership roles that involve constant engagement with others (Adams et al., 2016). The leadership roles may consist of preacher, delivery of ritual and sacraments, pastor, teacher, organizer, and administrator.

A pastor can quickly transition to any of these roles throughout the day. The role of a preacher and the task of delivering ritual and sacraments are usually conducted during the designated day of worship service (Adams et al., 2016). In this role, he is responsible for delivering the Word of God to the church and community. The pastor may return to this role throughout the week to conduct funerals or special services. The delivery of ritual and

sacraments for the Baptist pastor is instituting the Lord's Supper, baptism, and prayers. The Lord's Supper is a reminder of Jesus's ultimate sacrifice when Jesus took up the cross. Further expressed through scripture in the King James Version: "And He bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha." (John 19:17). The soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus head, mocked, and beat him: "And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe. And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands." (John 19:2-3). They nailed Jesus to an old rugged cross: "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take." (Mark 15:24). According to Merriam-Webster, to crucify an individual is to put to death by nailing one's hand and feet to a cross. Then Jesus died, "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost" (Mark 15:37). According to Merriam-Webster, to "give up the ghost" is to die. Because Jesus shed his blood and died for us, Christians believe in the ritual of participating in the Lord's Supper to be reminded of his death, burial, and resurrection, as well as the love Jesus has for us. Undeniably, Jesus instructs us to do this in remembrance of him. According to the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, The Lord's Supper is "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of

that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” Baptism, as described by Braxton (2011), means to be intensively immersed in water. This is a symbol to the world of washing off sins and purifying an individual. This symbolizes the individual affirming his/her relationship with God. Baptism implies a confession of the individual’s sin and a conversion in his/her heart to obey, worship, and serve God (Wood, 2017). It is an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ who has come, Jesus Christ who is, and Jesus Christ who is returning one day (Braxton, 2011). In the King James Version of the Bible, Mark 3:1-6 reads, “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” When baptism is conducted, the words spoken over the individual being immersed in the water are “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Wood, 2017). This is an important ritual in the Baptist church that the pastor is responsible for conducting. Lastly, the pastor is responsible for daily prayer for himself and over his family, congregation, and community. Prayer is a solemn, earnest, or humble request, worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God or a supreme being (Folkins, 2018). During prayer, the pastor may seek to align with God’s will, ask for guidance, and acquire strength to do what God has ordained him to do. Prayer allows an individual to feel that they are in the presence of God, and it is a place where two-way communication can take place between the individual and God (Folkins, 2018). Through prayer, we are transformed and our actions are

changed to become better aligned with God. Prayer should be a daily ritual for pastors and believers in Jesus Christ.

The role of the teacher may be conducted by doing a weekly Bible study or a weekly Sunday school session (Adams et al., 2016). As a teacher, the pastor will teach his congregation and the community lessons from the Bible. Data has shown that Christian education is a major responsibility of the pastor (Siew, 2013). The curriculum will be based on scriptures from the Holy Bible. Teaching may also include topics such as mental health and current political trends (Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). The purpose of the pastor teaching his congregation is to equip his members to share the gospel of Jesus to the world (Siew, 2013). This is according to scripture located in Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV), “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

The role of an organizer and administrator may occur with the day-to-day operations of the religious institution or when church, community, political issues, and cultural events arise (Adams et al., 2016). The day-to-day operations of the church can include being available, not only when a church member has a need, but also if a need in the community arises. Some churches offer food pantries, assistance (financial, prayer, resources) counseling services and other helpful resources to their community member. As a Black pastor there are many social injustices within the community, state, and nationally, in which they may participate in to fight on behalf of their congregation and the community. These injustices range from racial discrimination to workplace inequalities.

As frontline professional caregivers for the congregation, clergy are typically intimately involved with major life transitions such as marriages, birth of a child, and serious illness (Abernethy et al., 2016). Clergy are consulted for a variety of psychological issues, many of which are consistent with their ministerial and religious training such as comforting the bereaved and advising those with physical illness (Taylor et al., 2000). They play a particularly central role for families who are experiencing bereavement. They are available for prayer at hospitals, hospice centers, and members' homes during times of illness and death. They may also be asked to conduct the funeral service for the deceased. The funeral service consists of the pastor delivering a sermon or words of encouragement to the congregation.

There is an increasing number of people within the congregation and the community that look up to pastors for spiritual guidance (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Some members expect pastors to be available and present when life-changing events occur. Clergy plays a critical role in assisting members with handling personal problems (Taylor, et al., 2000). Church members depend on the pastor to make every effort to be present at their time of crisis. In the Black Church, pastors are valued as credible sources of assistance with social and psychological problems because of their status as pastors, regardless of their educational backgrounds, knowledge of mental health issues, and previous experience (Avent et al., 2015). According to Taylor et al. (2000), 39% of African Americans who have a serious personal problem solicit help from a member of the clergy surpassing rates for help from psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, marriage counselors, or social workers. Pastors who are constantly available to meet the needs of their congregation and community can limit the quality time that he has with family and personal relationships.

Pastor and His Family

The way a family functions is important to the well-being of the relationships within the family. Family function is a variable that can affect the psychological development of the family dynamics and the individual members of the family (Morris & Blanton, 1998; Na Deng & Wenjuan, 2021). It also goes to state that family function can be a powerful predictor of the well-being and mental health of the individuals within the family. How the family function reflects on the quality of life at the systemic level of the family (Na Deng & Wenjuan, 2021). The systemic levels of the family include how they problem solve, communicate, roles that each member of the family plays, affective responsiveness and involvement, behavior control and the general function and needs of each member. The family system can include, but not limited to, the mother, father, children, and anyone living within the same household. The way the family moves together in a negotiable and shareable manner affects the well-being of the overall family (Morris & Blanton, 1998). It is also important that the needs, security, satisfaction, and growth within each family member is responded to in a positive manner to contribute to the development of a healthy well-being within each member. Each family member has to feel as though they belong to the family and that there is a sense of commitment to the well-being of the entire family system as whole from all members within the family.

Boundaries within the role of pastor and his role within his family can sometimes become blurred. Morris and Blanton (1998) mentioned that there is boundary ambiguity among the overlapping responsibility of the pastor's work and family functions. This is due to the emotional interlocking focus between the families within the congregation, the congregation as a family, and the pastor's own family. This can cause stress within the pastor's family because it can interfere with the pastor's obligations and responsibilities to his own family.

The levels of stress and depression amongst clergymen are a growing phenomenon within the United States, it is showing that their disruptive mood pattern does not only affect them, but it also affects their family as well (Guzman & The, 2016). Clergy and their families do not only face the normative life stress like other families, but they are also vulnerable to additional stress due to their role (clergy, clergy's wife, clergy's children) that they carry (Frame & Shehan, 2021). Some essential ministry stressors for clergy and their families are: (1) personal criticism, (2) boundary ambiguity, (3) presumptive expectation, (4) family criticism and lack of support; and (5) financial constraints (Adams et al., 2016; Guzman & Teh, 2016). The role of a pastor may entitle exceptionally long working hours, conflicting demands, and personal sacrifices (Madden et al., 2015). The pastor's role may affect the relationship within the family dynamics. Being a pastor is often not only stressful for the individual, but it can also be stressful for the spouse and family (Abernethy et al., 2016). The call to ministry carries a world of conflicts. These conflicts can cause stress for both the pastor and his wife. These conflicts range from trying to balance time between ministry and family to attempting to be the leader in the family's financial contributions to provide for the personal needs of the family (Perkins, 2003). Along with this is the perceived lack of support for the marriage and family functions, as well as the overall family dynamics (Morris & Blanton, 1998). Ministry stressors can cause marital problems, divorce, children's issues, and finance problems, in addition to other issues.

It is important for pastors to understand the boundaries of ministry and family life. For instance, research has shown that boundary ambiguity and related stressors negatively impact the quality of life for clergy families (Abernethy et al, 2016). Managing family roles is not easy for clergy and their spouses. Heavy work responsibilities have family implications for most clergy (McMinn et al., 2005). The long hours and financial sacrifices that some pastors experience can

put a strain on their marriage and personal relationships. In a study conducted by Potts (2020), the participants expressed their need to be intentional when scheduling time with the family and their spouses. The study also mentioned how some of the participants discussed that it is important for them to protect their family from the negative issues of the ministry.

There has to be a sense of intimate connection and togetherness within the clergy's family (Morris & Blanton, 1998). This will allow each family member to have a sense of pride in his or her family and within his/herself. Moreover, to be able to stand together in the midst of obstacles and stressful incidents. Clergies and their families live in a fishbowl (Doehring, 2013). Living in a fishbowl is like every action of the leader is judged and criticized by the public in the context of personal integrity or their individual commitment to moral, spiritual, and ethical values (Haumschild & Weber, 2014). The fishbowl concept is that the individuals' lives are open to the public with minimal privacy. The clergyman and his family (wife and children) are being observed in every aspect of their lives. It makes the family feel as though they have to maintain a certain socially desirable and acceptable public image (Morris & Blanton, 1998). Clergy often have spouses and children who are closely watched by church members who impose unrealistic expectations on their lives and on how they should live their lives. The family may perceive that their lives are being observed daily under a microscope causing stress within the individual and the family dynamics.

Pastor's Children

There is limited research on the impact of ministry on pastor's children. However, Guzman and Teh (2016) mentioned that there have been trends of famous pastor's children that chose to wander from the faith and do things that are opposite from what they were taught in the church and at home. In the study by Guzman and Teh (2016), children reported that they had to

keep up the image of being the perfect kid, behaving appropriately, attending events, and being active within the church. They stated that they felt like they could not be “normal” children because the expectation on them was set so high by the congregation. When it came to the male children, they were compared to their fathers and looked upon one day to join the ministry (Guzman & Teh, 2016).

A source of contention between the children and their parents can be the lack of personal time spent with their father (clergyman). According to Guzman and Teh (2016), family bonding time is important to the clergyman and his wife. However, children of pastors have to sacrifice their family time to allow their father to meet to the needs of the ministry (Drumm et al., 2020). The bonding time when not at home is spent together at church activities. In addition, their father, the pastor, is usually attending church activities that limits the amount of time that is spent at home with the children (Perkins, 2003). Attending church activities can limit the amount of personal time with the father because he is sharing his time with the members of the congregation.

Pastor’s children can develop conflicts with their parents due to the pressure that the parents are imposing on them to conduct themselves in a positive manner as respect of being a pastor’s child (Guzman & Teh, 2016). There is tension between the parents and the children because they want to exhibit normal child-like behavior but are corrected and directed to a more appropriate way of action that is deemed socially correct by the congregation and the community. The clergyman’s wife may be seen as the authoritarian parent, at times, due to the absence of the father conducting his ministerial obligations (Guzman & Teh, 2016). This can cause conflict with the mother and her children because they see her as the one who imposes the rules and discipline on them. Also, she has to be the one who constantly reminds her children of

the importance of projecting a positive and socially accepted family image not to tarnish the father's image (Johnson, 2012). Having the title of "pastor's kids" makes it difficult for children of pastors to find a support system during their identity formation (Benjamin et al., 2021). This can cause conflict within the children as they attempt to develop their own identity, causing more tension between them and their parents (Guzman & Teh, 2016).

Pastor's Wife

The clergy's wife, in the eyes of the congregation, may also have to carry herself in a socially acceptable and respectful manner (Johnson, 2012). As previously stated, due to the family being viewed in a fishbowl, the clergy's wife may try to model her actions and image to reflect how the congregation expect her to be and the demands that her husband may have for her as being the wife of a pastor. Clergymen wives have reported that some congregations have also set expectations on them on how they should look, act, and participate in the church and community activities (Johnson, 2012). Clergymen wives have been given the responsibility to handle certain church related duties. The duties include but are not limited to: Sunday School teacher, music director, piano player, having the same Biblical knowledge as her husband, a leader in different areas within the church, always knowing her husband's schedule, keeping record of information about the members and sickness within the congregation, and many other tasks (Frame & Shehan, 1994; United Methodist Church et al., 2009). The wives of clergymen have reported that they are expected to be present and active with the church and its functions (United Methodist Church et al., 2009).

In addition to their responsibilities and expectations, wives of clergy state that their husbands spend too much time on church work, averaging 9.3 hours per day and typically taking only one day off each week from church activities (McMinn et al., 2005). The husband is

spending an average of 9.3 hours per day working on church business, but he also brings his work home adding additional work hours to his load and less time with his wife. Wives of clergymen have reported that one of the most stressing problems within the marriage is that all the time that their husbands spend at the church leaves little time for them to spend with family or devote time to the marriage (Morris & Blanton, 1994). They mentioned that the irregular work hours interfere with the quality bonding time for family and for the marriage (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Stressors reported by wives of clergymen include: lack of defined boundaries between family and work; a “fishbowl” existence; inadequate finances; pressure/expectations from congregation and community to fulfill idealized roles; loss of personal identity; loss of control over personal living environment; adjustments to frequent moves; perception of being second class; lack of tangible results of work; loneliness; lack of social support; work related time demands; unwelcoming surprises; routine absence of spouse/father, lack of parallel growth; lack of spiritual care; and psychological disturbances (McMinn et al., 2005). These stressors within a marriage may cause severe dissatisfaction with the pastoral spouse and cause for emotional distress with the wife and her husband and can result in separation or divorce.

McMinn et al. (2015) conducted five studies exploring the coping strategies of clergy and their spouses. The studies showed that clergymen and their spouses used interpersonal strategies (prayer, mediation, and positive thinking) to cope with the ministerial stress. The studies also showed that the clergymen and their spouses rarely turned to resources outside of their families for support. They looked more at spiritual resources rather than seeking social and professional support for their stress (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Aside from the spiritual resources that clergy wives seek, they also rely on their marital relationship as a coping mechanism. Clergy wives tend to have no friends to confide in due to the fear that it may become gossip within the church or

community (Guzman & Teh, 2016). This can cause the wife to feel alone and isolated and only has her husband to talk to when she is feeling stressed and overwhelmed. This can cause a burden within the marriage because the two are constantly relying on each other to carry one another burden. They don't have an external resource to release some of their disruptive mood patterns and symptoms and to develop other healthy coping mechanisms. However, on the other side it can bring the couple closer together because there will be a constant line of communication between the two.

Pastor's Finances

Financial problems are among the top five stressors of clergymen and their family (Adams et al., 2016; Guzman & Teh, 2016; Morris & Blanton, 1994). However, there is limited research on the actual salaries of pastors. In some households, the pastor's wife may be seen as the breadwinner of the family. It has been reported that 95% of all clergy are underpaid (Morris & Blanton, 1994). The median compensation package for pastors is \$40,000 and the higher median salary is \$45,510 (Dart, 2002). The higher median salary is for those pastors who have been in the ministry a long time and are pastoring a larger congregation. In addition, those very charismatic pastors will also be paid at the higher median salary (Dart, 2002). Some pastor's churches that have a small number of church members cause limited finances to be brought into the churches and as a result the church may struggle financially (Lincoln, 2015). This financial struggle within the church can result in the pastor receiving a minimum yearly salary. For this cause, some clergymen have taken on a second income to help with the finances of the house. It has been reported that the clergy's income is the lowest received in the household for those where the wife has external employment (Guzman & Teh, 2016).

Pastor and His Mental Health

The National Alliance on Mental Illness defines mental illness as a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and interfere with their daily functioning. Two barriers that may stop African Americans from seeking help for their mental health concerns are the stigma surrounding mental health and being considered or labeled as “crazy”. In addition, talking about problems with an outsider (i.e., a therapist) may be viewed as airing one's "dirty laundry," (Williams, 2011). Some of the barriers to seeking mental health services are stigma, denial of symptomatology, an external locus of control regarding their health, preference for an African American counselor, alternative beliefs about the etiology of mental health issues, cultural norms in African American communities, and culture mistrust (Avent, et al., 2015). Of the barriers listed above, the Black clergy may identify with the stigma of mental health, denial of symptomatology, and preference for an African American counselor or spiritual counselor. These perceived obstacles may decrease the likelihood of Black clergy from seeking help from external professionals. In addition, individuals feel that discussions about mental illness would not be appropriate even with family members (Williams, 2011). These perceived barriers are some of the reasons why African Americans are not likely to seek out help for mental health problems. Many African Americans have an understandable mistrust of larger systems, including the mental health system, because of the historical legacy of slavery and racial discrimination in the United States leading to the underutilization of mental health services (Bilkins et al., 2016). Based on the stereotypes that have been inflicted throughout society, Black pastors may be cautious when seeking to address their mental health concerns with external professionals. They also may be cautious due to their

strong ties to their identity in fear that the stigma of a mental health diagnosis could put their image in jeopardy.

Guzman and Teh (2016) expressed that clergy stress is a growing phenomenon in the United States (p. 459). In a study of 1,050 pastors, 90% reported being fatigued and burned out, 71% experienced depression daily, and 81% felt like they had no support system or support programs in place to assist them. Some pastors are so busy helping others that they don't become aware of when they are developing a negative mood pattern that is affecting their daily work and/or interactions with their families. Stress can be caused by many demands from the congregation and for the pastor's own family (Guzman & Teh, 2016).

Ministry work is undeniably stressful. The content of clergy work can be highly emotional, such as when officiating funerals and providing grief counseling (Adams et al., 2016). Clergy are expected to be competent in a diverse range of skills and knowledge sets: as preachers, liturgists, educators, administrators, and pastoral caregivers (Doehring, 2013). They also must learn how to manage the boundaries of these roles along with the roles of their personal lives (e.g., husband, father, son, brother). Managing the demands of work and creating boundaries between work and personal lives can be stressful regardless of what type of work or role an individual is in (secular or spiritual). Pastors are expected to be spiritually and emotionally healthy and always available and ready to serve the spiritual needs of their congregants (Doehring, 2013). The stresses of the ministry can take a toll on the physical, spiritual, and emotional health of pastors (Doehring, 2013). Stressors that clergy face include role conflicts, proliferation of activities, discrepancy between amount of time in administrative duties versus pastoral duties, spiritual dryness, perfectionism, minimal time for study or to be alone, failure of dreams, unwelcome surprise, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure,

loneliness/isolation (which can lead to self-neglect), lack of time with family, and unrealistic expectations of oneself and the congregation (Frame & Shehan, 1994; McMinn et al., 2005). Role ambiguity and work overload relate to the perception of endless demands amidst unclear professional boundaries can be associated with mental stress on a pastor (Muse et al., 2016). Handling the many responsibilities of a pastor, being available to the congregation, and trying to establish healthy boundaries for personal/family relationships can lead to numerous stressors (Adams et al., 2017). Studies have shown that symptoms of stress can be brought upon by the demands and expectation of the role of a pastor (McMinn et al., 2005). These demands and increasing levels of stress can develop healthy-related concerns, as well as depression and fatigue. Pastors' inability to maintain clear personal and professional boundaries can generate a high level of emotional exhaustion (Scott & Lovell, 2015). This mental exhaustion can become so overwhelming that some clergymen may consider leaving the ministry (Guzman & Teh, 2016). While clergy understand the need for personal time and the importance of restorative self-care, for a variety of motivations, conscious, and unconscious they may still neglect their own well-being (Muse et al., 2016).

Pastor's Self-Care Practices

Cultural traditions of spirituality and belief in God within the Black culture and those in spiritual leadership roles are important coping mechanism when dealing with life challenges (Gallant et al., 2010). The coping mechanisms are seen as facilitating self-care. Coping strategies for clergy and their families tend to rely heavily upon their prayer life and spirituality, and sometimes their family and church congregation for support (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Most clergy families turn to their faith in God to cope with difficulties and stress. They utilize spiritual resources, such as prayer and Bible readings, to help uplift them during difficult times. Prayer is

not always asking God for something, but it is a communication where one is building a relationship with God (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Communication is one of joy, sorrow, anger, gratitude, or fear. An individual can use prayer as a way of seeking God's voice and presence for his/her daily journey. Clergy families can believe that through prayer all situations can be handled. These families can believe that God is in control and that he is always present to help them with their cares. These families can believe that a family that prays together will stay together and feel that God will always provide for them especially their financial needs (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Clergy families also teach their children to rely on God and put their trust in him at all times. Clergy families believe that Bible readings can equip and encourage them to handle any earthly situation (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Families can rely on various Bible verses to carry them through such as: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46: 1; KJV); "I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isaiah 45:5-7; KJV); "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33; KJV).

It is interesting that in all the literature review articles there was little to no mention of having a support system other than their spouse. In Potts' (2020) study, almost half (46.6%) of the participants mentioned that they had not structured support available to them. Morris and Blanton (1994) reported that some denominations are aware of the lack of support and the stress that clergy and their spouses experience but only a small minority provided professional support to meet the needs of the clergy and his family. This is disturbing because clergymen need

internal support mechanisms (e.g., ministerial support) and external resources so that they can feel whole. Depending on their spouses to carry their burden is not fair for their spouse and for her mental health.

Conclusion

Research has shown that mental health professionals working with this population (Black males) must be aware of the multiple identities of the Black male and the external influences that can play a part in their lives (Thomas et al., 2015). If a mental health professional can understand the intersection of the Black male identity and external influences and his choice of coping mechanisms, he/she will become better equipped to work with this population. Due to the traditional masculine roles that are expected of men, Black men may select coping mechanisms that can align with their masculinity image but may not be the healthiest way to cope with their disruptive mood patterns and emotions. Finding effective coping skills can reduce negative symptoms that may occur during a stressful period of one's life. Thomas et al. (2015) state that coping can be defined as cognitive and behavioral strategies put in place to reduce and/or manage stress. Understanding identity and developing healthy coping skills are paramount to assisting Black man in dealing with their disruptive mood symptoms (Thomas et al., 2015). Understanding how to assist Black men with coping with negative mood patterns and equipping them with healthy coping skills will give them the tools they need as they navigate through pressure that they endure in their role as a Black pastor.

The lack of boundaries that clergy families encounter negatively impacts marital and parental satisfaction (Johnson, 2012). Balancing between ministry and family is one of the major stressors for pastors (Guzman & Teh, 2016; Johnson, 2012; Morris & Blanton, 1994). In a study by Potts (2020), the participants expressed an interest to devote more time to family. This is a

great interest; however, more actions need to take place for the clergy's family to feel fully whole and valued. Some participants discussed how they would not allow the congregation to put expectations on their family members. They also mentioned how they kept their home a family home rather than an extension of their office or ministry work (Potts, 2020). Research has shown when looking at the marital relationships with pastors and their wives, that lack of social support, time, and finances were some of the topic stressors within their marriage (Abernethy et al., 2016; Adams et al., 2016; Morris & Blanton, 1994). Research in clergy families in the United States have seen an increasing number of clergy marriages resulting in divorce, and some end up having extramarital affairs (Guzman & Teh, 2016). The clergy and his spouse have to understand that communication is not a one-way conversation. It takes open and honest communication between the clergy and his wife and with the parents and their children (Potts, 2020). This can create a pathway to resolving conflict and establishing healthy relationships within the clergy family.

Most families look at themselves as being united because they have to carry the image for the congregation and the community. This perception of being unified reflects in how they handle most of their situation despite the stress and challenges they face as being members of a clergy family (Guzman & Teh, 2016). They tend to report a positive praise of their stresses and negative moods. I agree with the literature regarding positive praise to uphold their positive image in the eyes of the congregation and community. However, this is not healthy behavior to always deal with negative situations. Clergy families should seek additional assistance to help decrease the negative moods and develop additional strategies (keeping in line with their belief) to help them overcome the stressor that they encounter.

In Potts' (2020) study, the top three recommendations (in order from highest to lowest) for pastors in ministry to assist with balancing the ministry and family life were: establishing a financial budget prior to starting their ministry; counting the cost of the spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of the clergy; and the clergy to put forth serious efforts to take charge of his own life. I agree with these three recommendations, as I believe, they are a great start to pastors taking charge of their lives and being present in their family dynamic. If pastors can keep open and honest communication between him and his spouse about the finances of the household and work with his spouse together, it can decrease the strain on the marriage due to the lack of financial support coming for the salary of the pastor. As previously mentioned, studies have shown that pastor income is extremely low, to the point that he may be required to obtain a second job to assist in the household obligations. Therefore, establishing a budget prior and within the ministry with his wife could eliminate some of the financial strain. It is also important for pastors to understand the cost of his ministry. The time and obligations that are required from the congregation can be a strain on his family and his own mental and physical health. To be able to set appropriate boundaries to allow true quality time to be spent not only with his family and children, but to allow time for himself is greatly needed for his overall well-being and for the well-being of the entire family. Lastly, taking charge of his own life is essential. This is allowing God to speak to him and direct him in the direction to go. Many times, pastors allow the congregation to dictate their actions and moves. The pastors have to allow time with God to hear his voice to direct him in the way he should go, instead of allowing the congregation and external forces to dictate his movement and image. Also, the pastor should search within himself and discover who he truly is. This will allow him to get a better understanding of what he values and what drives him to take action. This will also give him a sense of who he is and allow him to be

able to stand on what he believes is true, to walk in his values and morals, and be the man that God has called him to be and the man that he knows that he is. This driven force will allow him to develop a sense of direction and peace within himself, reducing the strain on his mental health, and allowing him to do the will of God's in a humble and loving manner where he will find joy within himself. This is for the betterment of the Black pastor's mental health and daily functioning.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

A phenomenological qualitative design was used to collect data from the participants. “The historic origin of qualitative research comes from anthropology, sociology, the humanities and evaluation” (Creswell, 2014, p 13). The qualitative design was selected to place a personal emphasis on exploring and understanding a particular issue within an individual or group as it pertains to social or human problems (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 2014). The qualitative design allowed an opportunity to have face-to-face contact, whether physical or virtual, with individuals to gain knowledge of the individuals’ perspective on an issue. It allows one to focus on exploring and examining the true human experiences (Shaw et al., 2019). The qualitative design allows the data to be driven from the insider’s (participant) viewpoint, values, individuality, culture, and social justice lens (Almalki, 2016). It is important for this population (i.e., black male pastors), due to the limited amount of research on this population, to have their voices and experiences heard and documented. This approach allowed for the current trends regarding this population’s experiences to be reported. By using a phenomenological qualitative approach, the research and data results were reflected through this underrepresented population’s lived experiences, emotions, and cultural aspects.

Further, phenomenological research is a qualitative strategy in which the participants narrate their human experiences about a phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) also describes this methodology as having a strong philosophical underpinning. The overall aim of phenomenology is to get an understanding of a phenomenon as perceived by participants through the participants’ narrative of their lived experiences. This methodological approach uses in-depth interviews. The interviews may be conducted in the natural setting of the participants. The researcher uses open-ended questions to allow the participant to share his/her

story in the participant's own language. This methodology allows the researcher to have personal interactions with the population in which the researcher is studying. The phenomenological methodology's main aim is to get a better understanding of participants' everyday experiences (Chan, Fung, et al. 2013).

Martin Heidegger developed a phenomenological perspective of being in the world. He called this *Dasein*, which literally means “being” there (Peoples, 2021). He believes that individuals can best represent their world through words and language (Adolfsson, 2010). Heidegger's perspective is concerned with the experience itself (Quay, 2016). Therefore, allowing individuals to be interviewed and to narrate their story will bring meaning and understanding to the lived experiences. The use of interviews are essential to this study to get a better understanding of the “being” of the experiences. Interviews provide a useful way for participants to express themselves and for the interviewer to learn about the world of others (Qu & Dumay, 2011). A phenomenological research design is important in researching this population because it allows for this population's voice, emotions, and experiences to be heard and validated. It could also allow for new trends to be discovered through the voices of this population that have not been addressed in existing literature. Using Heidegger's phenomenological concept in this study allowed for documentation to be recorded on how this population makes sense of the world in their own words, language, and experiences. Due to the ethnicity, religious identification, and values of the researcher, it appeared that the participants felt comfortable to express their authentic feelings and experiences as a pastor throughout the interview process. This allowed for the rapport of the interviewer and participants to gain a mutual respect and understanding for one another. This also allowed for true and authentic experiences to be shared and reported. It is important to understand and respect any potential

power imbalances during the interview process (Creswell, 2014). In this instance, the participants are the experts in their experiences. Corbin and Morse (2003) believed that participants retain considerable power to control the amount they disclose and the degree to which they choose to explore painful material. Throughout the interview process, the researcher validated the participants' feelings and supported the participants' power throughout the process.

The researcher was interested in the lived experiences and self-care practices of the Black male pastors. Using phenomenological method and the interviewing process, the researcher obtained a better understanding of this population's view on how they perceive their experiences in the role of pastor and how they take care of their mental health. The purpose of this study was to bring awareness of Black male pastors' experiences as it relates to their identity, their role as a pastor, and their mental health/self-care practices.

Research Question

The primary research question for this research study is *What experiences or perceptions do Black pastors have that may affect how they view their self-care practices?* The research study seeks to answer the following questions:

- **RQ1:** What lived experiences have influenced Black pastors' mental health?
- **RQ2:** How do Black pastors cope with mental health distress?
- **RQ3:** What support system(s) do Black pastors have in place?
- **RQ4:** What self-care activities do Black pastors practice?

In order to gather information and gain knowledge on the participant's perspective to answer the overarching research question(s), the participants were asked a series of open-ended questions. All participants were asked the same demographic questions (see Appendix A) and interview questions (see Appendix B). When a participant used vague responses, the researcher

rephrased the question to allow the participant an opportunity to expound more on the question(s).

Procedures

After Governors State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval for this research, the researcher proceeded with taking the approved steps to conduct the study. The participants were recruited by using convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Convenience sampling technique is a popular sampling method in psychology (Scholtz, 2021) that allows the researcher to interview whoever wants to participate in the study. Convenience sampling allows the researcher to interview individuals that are easily accessible. However, this study was looking to research a particular group of individuals that must meet the following criteria to participate: (1) Self-identify as Black or African American; (2) Born as male and identify as male; (3) Between the age of 30 – 100; (4) Are ordained as a member of the clergy; (5) Are in the role as pastor or senior pastor of a church; and (6) Three or more years of experience as a pastor or senior pastor.

Purposive sampling was done in a non-random manner that is seeking to identify information based on the phenomena being researched (Serra et al., 2018). Recruitment of participants was done through email blast, in-person announcements, and personal invitations via phone call and email. Additionally, the snowball effect took place where participants suggested additional individuals who may be interested in the research project (Peoples, 2021). Two participants in the study made referrals for potential participants. An email announcement (see Appendix C) was sent to churches in which their pastor or senior leader identified as Black or African American. Religious denomination was not a factor in the recruitment process, as this research was open to all religious denominations. The researcher made an announcement during

a Baptist General State Convention of Illinois meeting to introduce herself, discuss the purpose and the importance of her research, and solicit for participation. Participation was voluntary, open to all individuals born male, identify as a male, Black or African American, and who are in a senior pastoral role. All participants were residents of the state of Illinois.

Participants were scheduled for 60–90-minute interviews via the Zoom platform. The interviews began with each participant being informed that the interview was being recorded. Participants gave their verbal confirmation to agreeing to the recording of the interview. Participants were informed that at any time within the interview process, they could decline and/or stop the interview. The participants were also informed that they could decline to answer any questions in which they did not feel comfortable answering.

Participants

The participants for this research study were purposively selected. According to Creswell (2014, p. 246), when a researcher uses purposefully selected participants, it allows the researcher to find individuals that are specific to the research problem to get a better understanding of the experiences or issues being researched. This research project was interested in a particular population and position /role of the individual. The participants for this study self-identified as Black or African American; born male and identify as male; and held the position of pastor or senior leader of a church. Pastor is defined as “a minister or priest in charge of a church and a person having spiritual care of a number of persons” (Dictionary.com, 2021, Definitions 1 and 2). For this study, the pastor’s religious denomination was open to all denominations (Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, non-denomination, etc.). The participants had to have a minimum of three years of experience in the senior level pastoral role. In an article in the Indeed Career Guide (2021) entitled *How Long Should You Stay at a Job*, experts believe that employees that are on a

job for a minimum of two years have enough time to learn the role and build upon the individual's qualifications. The researcher is seeking a sample size of six participants. Creswell (1998) mentioned that in phenomenology studies the sample size can range from three to ten participants and Morse (1994) stated at least six participants. However, in qualitative research, there is no single guidance on the number of participants that should be included in a sample size. Although, the sample size should be large enough to gather information on the phenomenon being researched (Penner & McClement, 2008; Shaw et al., 2019). The following criteria excluded individuals from participating in this study: (1) Non-Black and Non-African American individuals; (2) Individuals who are born female and identify as female; (3) Individuals who are born female and identify as male; (4) Lower-level clergymen (ministers, deacons, etc.); (5) Individuals 29 years or younger; and (6) Individuals with less than three years of experience as a senior pastor.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a part of the Christian community and may have been in contact with some of the participants in the past. The researcher also noted that there is no personal or professional relationship between her and the participants. The researcher would also like to mention that there is no position of power relationship between her and the participants.

The researcher conducted virtual interviews with participants. The researcher used open-ended questions to engage the participants throughout the interview process. The researcher is a licensed professional counselor (LPC); therefore, she used her counseling skills to observe and note any behavior (verbal and non-verbal) that was displayed throughout the interviews. The researcher's education and professional experiences enable her to assess the behavior, tone, body language, and demeanor of the participants throughout the interviewing process. This knowledge

also allowed her to utilize her counseling skills to develop a strong rapport with the participants and restate open-ended questions, if needed, to allow participants to explore deeper and express their true experiences and perceptions on the researched topic.

The researcher monitored the process and data constantly throughout the process to ensure information gathered and presented was credible (i.e., findings are trustworthy) and confirmable (i.e., unbiased; Peoples, 2021). The researcher reflected on her own thoughts throughout the research to ensure her knowledge or biases of the subject were not interjected into the research. The researcher journaled throughout the process, as a form of reflexivity. Reflexivity is important when conducting qualitative research and is when the researcher takes an analytical scrutiny of the self (Patton, 2015). The researcher took a deep introspection of herself and their beliefs on the subject to safeguard the reliability and validity of the data.

Reflexivity Statement

The researcher is aware of her own beliefs and experiences with this population and the topic researched. The researcher identifies as a Black female. Her spiritual affiliation is with the Baptist faith. The researcher is a member of Second Baptist Church of Joliet, Illinois; Lebanon District Association; and Baptist General State Convention of Illinois. The researcher has established processes and steps to ensure that her own values and perceptions do not influence this research. The steps that the researcher has started begun at the beginning of the research process, prior to the researcher's literature review. The researcher has discussed this concern with a professor in her coursework and was given directions on how to remove the researcher's bias and perception from the research. The researcher journaled to document her thoughts and perceptions throughout the process. The researcher discussed any personal challenges throughout her research with a peer mentor. Chan, Fung, et al. (2013) discuss how a researcher will make

every effort to put aside repertoires of knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences in order to accurately describe participants' life experiences. The researcher adopted an open mind and was willing to learn new facts and information about this population. The researcher did not lean on her lived experiences and did not downplay or override the experiences that the participants were presenting. The researcher listened attentively to the narrative of the participants and stayed present within each interview. The researcher listened to understand and not to respond to the participants. The researcher used scripted open-ended questions with each participant and will only use additional follow-up, restating of questions to allow for clarity or more depth responses from the participants. The researcher created a coding team of two individuals (the researcher and another individual) to review the transcripts and code the phenomenon to ensure that researcher bias did not influence the results of the data. The coding team included one Black Christian female who is employed as an administrator at a medical facility, along with the researcher. This individual has earned a doctoral degree and has completed a qualitative research dissertation project using a phenomenological approach. This individual understood the characteristics of a phenomenological study and knowledge of analyzing research data through a phenomenological lens. This experience, as well as others, has given her knowledge and experience with coding qualitative research. Creating this coding team, helped to reduce the researcher's own values and perceptions from being recorded into the research data.

Research Materials

The information collected for this study was transcribed and given a code number to protect the identity of the participants. The research data was only accessible to the coding team and researcher's advisor, if needed. The research data will be retained for 12 months after the completion of the research project. If the data is needed for a longer period of time, the

researcher will obtain additional consent forms from the participants. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion and approval of the study, prior to the researcher's graduation.

Transcriptions will be shredded with a secure shredding service.

Interviews

The collection of data started with the scheduling of a virtual interview via Zoom platform. Participants were sent a welcoming email (see Appendix D) with the consent form (see Appendix E) attached and information regarding their virtual Zoom interview information. The Zoom information sent to each participant had an access password to allow entry into the meeting. Consent forms completed, and all participants gave a recorded verbal consent prior to the start of the interview. Participants were asked a series of demographic questions (see Appendix A) to ensure that they met the study's criteria. To ensure the participants confidentiality, attempts were made to protect the identity of the participants by removing identifying information from the transcriptions.

The participants engaged in semiformal and semi structured interview. Semi structured interviews allow the researcher to focus on the topic of the research and create an environment of naturalness (Peoples, 2021). The interviews were guided by a set of predetermined interview questions (see Appendix B). All participants were asked the same questions. The questions asked covered three topics (the individual's identity, the individual's identity as a pastor, and the individual's self-care practices) to gather information regarding the overarching research question, *What experiences or perceptions do Black pastors have that may affect how they view self-care practices?*

Data Collection

The researcher is the primary instrument in collecting the data in qualitative research

(Creswell, 2014). The researcher will ensure that “appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data are credible and authentic (Leung, 2015). Therefore, the researcher must put forth efforts and processes in place to demonstrate the steps taken to reduce researcher bias and data trustworthiness. The researcher listed her biases and pre-understanding of the phenomena prior to analyzing the data. A coding team was developed which included, the researcher and an experienced Black professional female (has doctorate degree), to review and code the data. This female had no affiliation with the participants or the subject in which is being studied.

The researcher collected data while she conducted 60–90-minute one-on-one interviews with participants by virtual platform. The virtual interviews were conducted on Zoom platform and were recorded and saved on the researcher’s locked (password accessible only) computer. The researcher also took notes as she identified themes (repeated words and thoughts) as they were presented throughout the interviews. An external vendor, Otter.ai, transcribed the interviews.

Validity and Reliability

The interviews were reviewed and coded by the coding team. According to People (2021), the goal in analyzing the data is to explain the phenomenon. The reviewers identified themes and created categories based on the information provided by the participants. The themes from the reviewers were verified and checked for credible, transferable, and confirmable (Creswell, 2014). When looking at the credibility of data, the researcher made sure the information and data collected was trustworthy. Credibility shows the confidence of the data and its interpretation were truthful. When checking for trustworthiness, the researcher certified that the responses are consistent within the constructs of the phenomena being studied. Transferable is looking to see if the themes and findings of this phenomenon can be generalized across this

population (Creswell, 2014). In this instance, the researcher checked for consistency from the literature that has been published. Moreover, the researcher considered that limited research was available on this population and made a comparison to the information from other clergymen of different ethnicities. Peoples (2021) refers to confirmable as to ensure that the study is unbiased. This was done by the researcher through checks and balances throughout the research and proper documentation to account for the steps taken (journaling, peer debriefing, and external reviewer).

Data Analysis

The researcher used Gadamerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology Analytical Framework to review, understand, and gather themes from the transcribed interviews of the participants. The researcher utilized this approach to assist in ensuring that she conducts trustworthy research and data evaluation. Hermeneutics deals with the understanding and the theory of interpretation and focuses on the lived experiences of an individual (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). This methodology allows the researcher to get a better understanding of the phenomena being studied (Kafle, 2013). Gadamerian is not looking to develop an understanding, but to illuminate the conditions that are taking place in the lived experience the understanding, perception, experience, and the knowing that are taking place in the state of “being in the world” (Malpas, 2018). Gadamerian’s analytical framework contains five-steps: (1) Deciding upon a Research Question; (2) Identification of Pre-understandings (Before Data Collection); (3) Gaining Understanding through Dialogue with Participants (Interview and Diary); (4) Gaining Understanding through Dialogue with Text (Transcribing and Analyzing); and (5) Establishing Trustworthiness (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The researcher used six-stages within Stage 3 (Gaining Understand through Dialogue with Participants), in which the researcher followed in attempt to ensure that the interpretation of the

data was credible and trustworthy. The six-stages were (1) immersion; (2) understanding; (3) abstraction; (4) synthesis and theme development; (5) illumination and illustration of phenomena; and (6) integration and critique (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021).

Immersion is where the interviews are transcribed verbatim (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The researcher hired a third party, Otter.ai, to transcribe the recorded interviews. Once the transcription was completed, the researchers reviewed each transcription to ensure the transcription capture the interview in its entirety and the wording was verbatim. As the researcher was reviewing the transcriptions, she was reading and reviewing to gain an understanding of the whole text. This was the starting point of the data analysis, because the understanding and meaning of the whole text will impact the understanding of every part of the text within the interviews (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021).

Understanding is where the researcher investigates and attempt to get a deeper meaning of every single section or sentence (part) to get an understanding of the meaning and how it fits into the subject matter (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The researcher conducted open coding to capture the expression and phrases that the participants used. The researcher made sure to note the exact wording and details that the participants spoke to ensure that their own words would be used in the data.

Abstraction is where the researchers begin to construct categories (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The researcher began to construct categories based on the review and coding of the transcripts of each participant. The researcher then generated subcategories under the listed categories. The main categories and subcategories were grouped into subthemes. This was the first order of constructs.

Synthesis and theme development are where the subthemes were grouped into themes (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The themes were reviewed to make sure they reflected the full meaning of the entire text. The researcher consistently challenged the themes created to ensure she was getting the full meaning of the whole and there were no bias or the researcher pre-understanding enmeshed into the results. The researcher also consulted with the other individual on the coding team to see if her themes and subthemes were along the same premise of the researcher. If there were any discrepancies or questions regarding themes, the researcher discussed them with the other reviewer/coder.

Illumination and illustration of phenomena is where the researcher links the literature to the themes and subthemes (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The researcher gathered all the themes and subthemes and created a narrative in the participants own words. The researcher reviewed the audio recordings to ensure that she was writing the narrative verbatim from the participants' words spoken in the interviews.

Integration and critique are the final stage where the researcher analyzes the themes and give the final interpretations of the findings (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Once again, the researcher reviewed the audio recordings to ensure that she capture the participants' own words. The researcher reviewed the themes to make sure they reflect the whole. Lastly, she reported the findings based on the participants' narrative of their lived experiences.

The researcher took the above steps to give meaning to the phenomenon being studied and to show the trustworthiness of the data presented in this research. Using Gadamer's philosophical underpinning allowed the researcher to present a phenomenon in such a way where it shows credibility to the participants and their explanation and to the data presented in this

research (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). In addition, it also helped to reduce the inclusion of any researcher bias in the findings reported.

Anticipated Ethical Issues

Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) defines ethics as relating to doing good and avoiding harm. Throughout the research, the researcher was conscious of all actions that could be considered doing harm to the participants. The researcher used critical consciousness during the interview process. Critical consciousness is defined as “thinking (through assessing, analysis, and reconstructing) and being aware from multiples angles from outside in and inside out in the process of creating transparency to all thoughts, actions, and ways of being, taking into consideration different socio-cultural, economic, and political context” (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012, p. 66). The researcher engaged in critical reflection to ensure that she was not involving her lived experiences to project during the interviewing process and the creation and reporting of the data. The researcher kept a journal of any actions and challenges experienced while reviewing the data and documented how she handled them throughout the process.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter primarily focuses on the data collection and results of this research study. The researcher interviewed six senior level Black male pastors who reside in multiple areas throughout the State of Illinois and were affiliated with various religious denominations. The researcher stopped recruiting additional participants when data saturation occurred, meaning that “data no longer spark new insights or reveal new properties” (Creswell. 1998, p. 248). Further, this happens when the information from the six participants began to get repetitive and no new information or themes were introduced.

The participants’ demographic data is listed in Table 1. All participants lived, pastored churches, and held the position of senior pastor of a religious institution in the state of Illinois. Participants were between the ages of 40 to 70, with the average age being 53. The participants’ years of experience ranged from seven to 32 years; with the average year of experience being 17. Three participants had less than 10 years of experience at the senior level of pastoring and three participants had over 20 years of experience. Five participants were married and one of them had remarried. One participant was divorced. All participants had children. Three participants had adult children (18 years old and older); one participant has one adult child and one teenage child; and two participants had children 10 years old and younger. Each participant had some college experience. Four of the six participants held earned master’s degrees. The congregation size of the participants’ churches ranged from 60 members to thousands of members. One church has less than 100 members; one church has less than 200 members; two churches has less than 300 members; one church has less than 400 members; and one church has more than 500 members. Four participants religious denomination/affiliation were Baptist, one participant was Pentecostal, and one participant was African Methodist Episcopal.

Table 1. Participants’ Demographic Data

Participant	Marital status	Age	Level of education	Years of pastoring	Church size	Religious denomination
Participant 1	Remarried	51-60	Masters	31-40	201-400	Baptist
Participant 2	Married	61-70	Masters	21-30	1-200	Baptist
Participant 3	Married	61-70	Master	21-30	More than 401	Pentecostal
Participant 4	Married	31-40	Some college	1-10	201-400	Baptist
Participant 5	Married	41-50	Bachelor	1-10	1-200	Baptist
Participant 6	Divorced	41-50	Master	1-10	201-400	African Methodist Episcopal

Participant 1. He is married; however, this is his second marriage. His first marriage produced children, which are now adults. He has no children with his current wife. The majority of his pastoral career was during his first marriage. He has over 30 years of senior pastoral experience in the Baptist doctrine. He started pastoring at the age of 26. He has been the senior pastor at more than one church.

Participant 2. He is married and has adult children. His wife has been with him throughout his pastoral career. He has over 20 years of senior pastoral experience in the Baptist doctrine. He has been the senior pastor at more than one church.

Participant 3. He is married and has adult children. His wife has been with him throughout his pastoral career. He has over 20 years of senior pastoral experience in the Pentecostal doctrine. He has been the senior pastor at only one church.

Participant 4. He is married and has young children. His wife has been with him throughout his pastoral career. His children are enrolled in elementary school. He has less than

10 years of experience as a senior pastor. He has been the senior pastor for one church and the co-pastor of another church.

Participant 5. He is married and has one adult child and one teenage child. He has no children by his wife. His wife has been with him throughout his time as a senior pastor. He has less than 10 years of experience as a senior pastor in the Baptist doctrine. He has been a senior pastor at more than one church.

Participant 6. He is a divorce father of two children under the age of 10. His children are in elementary school. He was married during some of his time as senior pastor. He has less than 10 years of experience as a senior pastor.

The researcher used a phenomenological qualitative methodology to ask each participants the same set of interview questions (see Appendix B). During virtual interviews, information was gathered to understand the phenomena of this study and to respond to the main research question of *What experiences or perceptions do Black pastors have that may affect how they view their self-care practices* and four sub-questions to assist in capturing the essence of the main research question. The four sub-questions are:

- **RQ1:** What lived experiences have influenced Black pastors' mental health?
- **RQ2:** How do Black pastors cope with mental health distress?
- **RQ3:** What support system(s) do Black pastors have in place?
- **RQ4:** What self-care activities do Black pastors practice?

Several themes emerged from the reviewing and coding of the data/interviews. The results of the themes and sub-themes were constructed from the research question and sub-questions. A summary of the data analysis of themes and sub-themes can be found in Table 2. Additional information and discussion of the themes and sub-themes will be presented after Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Data Analysis of Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes
Demand of ministry	Balancing personal identity, family, and crisis Expectations of the pastor from the members Personal and mental struggles of members Intergenerational membership
Support systems & coping mechanisms	Support teams Faith, familial, and friends Negative coping mechanisms
Self-care practices	Self-care activities Thought process

Demand of Ministry

Participants described that roles the ministry require they participate in such as pastoral, community leader, and counselor. The participants noted that there is not a specific hourly or daily schedule, making it difficult to establish set office hours. Participants described on-call, thus working when needed. Participants also described how difficult it can be to do ministry work when you have to deal with the different personalities of the congregation, which can cause undue stress as the pastor tries to fulfill his roles.

Participant 1 mentioned that pastors must be a part of the community and build relationships with secular leaders. Pastors are at the forefront in developing relationships and partnerships to ensure the church is integrated and knowledgeable about the activities at the community, local, state and national levels. This is very important in meeting the needs of the

community and the congregation that the pastor serves. These relationships will help bridge the gap between the church and community. Participant 1 stated:

At my second church that was where I was introduced more to and these are my words, the pastor beyond the pulpit. Whereby becoming involved with the community, bridging that gap with the religious sector, and politics. If I might say, getting a feel of where the church is in the community other than just that spiritual side. And then the second thing is, with that mindset, it enables me to really be active beyond the pulpit understanding that my work is best seen in what I do outside of the pulpit and that is not just the church catering to the community, but then me myself, bridging that gap between the community and the church.

Participant 3 mentioned that the pastor does not only have to deal with the normal pastoral duties of preparing the message, teaching, and counseling but there are so many additional roles that the pastor also assumes. He discussed that being a community leader is one of the demands of a pastor. It is the pastor's job to build trust with the community, church members, politicians, community leaders, governors, mayors, and other local government officials. He talked about an event that occurred in June 2020, surrounding George Floyd's death. He described:

And so the governor was here, the lieutenant governor and the mayor's we're all out here. Along with other key politicians and had over 000 people out here in June of 2020. Nothing of that size has ever been done out here and with that caliber. And that is when the Lord helped me understand that I have become a community leader as well, so now that's another demand that is on my life. And right now no one could just step in and take that role.

Participant 2 discussed that as a pastor it is important to be available to members no matter time of day. He described

If they (members of his church) call me at 12 o'clock, or one o'clock in the morning, if it is that important for them to call me then it ought to be that important for me to listen to. I may not be able to do nothing. But at least I listened to them.

He also discussed the function of the pastor being and working in the community. The pastor goes out into the community to get people to know Christ and also to be present to help the need of the community. He said:

Success, I will say being out in the community. Especially, I'm looking now at this pandemic, being out in the community working with other organizations to help feed those that don't have it. Being in the community, as far as helping those if they don't have, you know moneys for utilities, if they're facing eviction, etc. Working with those particular people and whoever they are renting from. So, stepping in to try to help them keep their home, especially when they have children.

He also mentioned that since the pandemic, pastors now must worry about the reduction of membership and church finances. He stated:

The other challenge that I'm facing now, which a lot of other pastors I'm discovering is facing, is the church that we knew prior to 2020 has a whole different face now. Because prior to 2020, you know if we had a church, and I just throw out a number, say if you had a congregation of 100 people. Now some churches, and I'm speaking from what I know, churches that say they had 100 people pre pandemic, now are sometimes lucky if they have 15 people. And those are challenges that they're dealing with but then it leads to a whole another challenge. And that is, if I was dealing with a congregation of 100 and now I'm down to, let's say, 20. Those people that used to come to church were the ones given their tithes and offering. Now, the revenue is down. And so how do many pastors, how do we navigate that?

Participant 3 expressed that pastor's work is very stressful and it is a 24-hour job. He conveyed:

Well, all pastors, let's just start in general, a pastor is very stressful work. It is very stressful work, it is a 24-hour job. And I talk with a lot of pastors. And I will say the number one stressor for pastors, and I think this is black and white churches, my pastor friends put it is the mental anguish of this position.

Participant 3 also discussed how important it is for a pastor to attract high quality leaders to assist him in the ministry. He acknowledged that he can't do it all and this is why he attracts high quality leaders to assist him in the ministry. He explained:

I am the leader, it's not about delegating it's about the invisible, it's about providing oversight and direction. If I don't show up, they're gonna call and they gonna find me anyway. And I'm not, and this is one of the elements of this growth that you don't see in

black churches, is I'm not a micromanager. Not at all. I'm going to hold you highly accountable. This church has a very decentralized leadership. I'll give you freedom and then I'll hold you accountable. So, I don't I don't try to oversee everything I trust my leaders. And so that is, this is the hope it will be a part of your paper. This is one of the reasons so many pastors can't attract high quality leaders is because they micromanage them. The people I have here they have their CPAs and MBAs and doctoral degrees, I can't be micromanaged and people smarter than me. But there's a climate of mutual respect and trust, where I don't lord over them and then they're not insubordinate to me. We can argue, we can disagree on things, and we can table stuff. And then when I finally make a decision, there's not an issue even being in disagreement because every single time I would have heard you. But you have to give me the right since I am going to be the one ultimately accountable for the decision to make the final decision when it's a tough one.

Participant 4 believed that in addition to his role as a pastor, that he must be a relevant leader in the community. He believes that his calling is to spread the gospel not just within the walls of the church but also to the community. He stated:

It is my responsibility as a pastor, to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ outside of the four walls of the church, and to lead the church in doing that. So not just to like create evangelism campaigns and things of that sort, but to actually join in and be an example of what evangelism looks like. It's my responsibility to lead as it relates to serving and impacting the community. So again, not just creating outreach opportunities, but actually being on the forefront of those opportunities.

Participant 4 also discussed the late evening work hours of a pastor due to the congregation's schedule. It's difficult to have set hours of a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, because he must be available when his membership is available. He explained:

And most members who work full time, like, when I'm at work during the day. Like it's 11:45 on a Thursday morning, you know, most of my congregates are at work unless they are retired. So, when I have to meet with people usually it's going to be in the evening time. If I can't get a meeting with folks during the day. You know COVID has helped out a lot because it has forced some people to be able to jump on the Zoom. And it's like you don't have to come to the church and meet with me we can get on Zoom call.

Participant 4 also expressed that the different personalities of the congregation can be very demanding of the pastor. He explained that you can't take people where they don't want to go and this can sometimes cause conflict. He stated:

You can't take people anywhere they don't want to go. So, when you have a lot of people that want to grow. But you also have a lot of people that want to stay the same. But raise hell, why they stay the same.

Participant 6 expressed that being a pastor is demanding, as it requires a lot of your time, in addition to the other roles you have. Pastors are always on the clock. Even when a pastor leaves the office/church, he is still on the clock. Members will call with personal needs and expect the pastor to be available to them. He explained:

Preaching requires a lot, and people don't understand just how much it requires. Pastoring requires a lot. Parenting requires a lot. Marriage requires a lot and school requires a lot. And so again, learning how to effectively balance all of that can be overwhelming and tiresome. Because again, you know, you'd never have enough time for your children, you never have enough time for your spouse, you never have enough time for study, whether it be you know, to preach teach, develop vision, you never have enough time for any of that. So, it is a constant balancing act. And again, with ministry, you know, when you leave the office, you're still on the clock. People will call and let you know that, oh, my dad's in the hospital. This person is in jail. I feel this, I feel bad. Because in the black context, the pastor is not just you know, the preacher, he or she is also counselor.

Participant 6 also mentioned that it is hard to be effective in ministry when your church is understaffed. Not having individuals in place can put additional pressure on the pastor. In addition, if the individual in place is not current on his/her skills, this can also cause undue stress on the pastor because he may have to take up additional responsibilities to maintain the some of the day-to-day functions of the church. He explained:

Being understaffed is definitely one of the challenges. I'm currently understaffed at the church with an assistant who is stuck in the 1970s, which was her prime. And so again, trying to pivot and transition and get her get some file and another party, she's part time. And that's, that's just asinine. You know a church of that size having a part time assistant. That's, that's crazy.

Balancing Personal Identity, Family, and Crisis

All participants stressed the importance of balancing ministry work and their personal lives. All participants felt that they have fallen short of effectively balancing these roles and are aware of it and are striving establish healthy boundaries. Some participants felt that they have not

handled their own personal crises properly due to allowing their ministry work to take precedence over their own well-being.

Participant 1 discussed how he was called to be a pastor around the age of 26 or 27. He talked about how he had to learn from previous mistakes that he had made within his ministry, He referred to them as those mistakes that you do when you are a young pastor and not understanding the ins and outs of pastoring and balancing a family. He mentioned that his career in pastoring got most of his time. The participant also stated how everything was pulling him away from the family. He explained:

One of the things in my younger years, I had to learn to be disciplined and to manage my time. I have to confess, Tracy, I learned from the school of hard knocks. Because at a young age, 26 or 27 years old, I was consumed with I had just gotten out of the military simultaneously things happening. Getting out of the military, getting married, and a church calling me to pastor. And so these things happening. And so I had in my mind, that if I'm going to Pastor I want to be one of the best pastors. So, I go back to school. And going back to school full time, pastoring full time (I've always had full time churches), and having little children, I couldn't give 100% to all of that. So, I had to divide myself up. And in dividing myself up it was not an equal division with everything. And I have to say, my career got most of my time. So, thank God for a strong ex-wife who was there to really focus on the children. And then I was there to play with the children for a while then get back to the books or get back to whatever church issue was going on or church events, and that's everything from the local church, to the denominational work, district, state, national. And so constantly pulling you away from the family, as well as the education side pulling you away from the family. But with all of that I still had to manage that time. So, things wouldn't go to tolerably neglected. Ultimately, if I was going to sum it up, I think the family probably was what came out on the shorthand. I'm sure my children would say the same as well as my ex-wife.

Participant 2 expressed how difficult it was dealing with personal issues and staying spiritual in front of the congregation. Participant 2 shared his own personal reaction to familial situation and the pressure that pastors' families are perfect. He explained:

About 15 years ago, at least 10 to 15 years ago ... I'm not gonna sit here on this interview and lie and say that didn't hurt me. Yeah, that hurt me that, that hurt me to the core. So much that I refuse, I literally refuse to talk to ... for at least two or three months. Because it was just, it just hurt me. But then I had a friend of mine, who was my mentor, that I talked to and he says something to me that I should never forget. He said ... he's still

your... and that's one that won't change. And, and so when he said that, I said to myself, he is my ...And so he helped me to understand... But it also helped me to deal with other people I may talk to, to share with them.

He also mentioned how he had to learn to navigate through balancing his role as pastor and his role within his family (wife and children). He discussed how it was be stressful trying to balance all the different roles and demands. He discussed:

And so balancing those challenges of, say 150 members, and then on the other hand balancing what my what children may be going through. And then even with my wife, balancing trying to find that balance of being aware of her feelings where she was being neglected. And I discovered that the scale, where I thought I was doing a good job of balancing everything until I don't know something had happened. And I was constantly going, going, going, going going until I came home and they were all they were all at the dinner table. And when I walked in one of my children looked at me and said, "Where's your ID card?" And I looked at him. And then my other child said, "Yeah, we want to see your ID card. We don't know if you're supposed to be in this house." And that says something to me, that they recognize how they knew what I was doing was for the Lord, it was important. But as same time they want to say..."We here too." We just want our dad. We know are the pastor. But we want our dad. And so my wife was the same way, I know you are the pastor but I want my husband. I want the man that I'm married. The one who I knew. When we first met, we were going on dates and all of that. That's the man that I want. And so I had to take a step back and ask the Lord how do I get back to that? And was it a fast recovery? No. But some kind of way, I can't tell you how. But some kind of way it came back.

Participant 3 explained that at the beginning of his pastoring, he was working an average of 70 to 80 hours a week. Between his regular/secular job and trying to get the church up and running, it was stressful. He explained:

And so I was working an average of 70 to 80 hours a week. Between my regular job and trying to get this thing up and running with the church. And so people who tried to do this kind of thing today, ... What you not going to see is a lot of them definitely falling off, because this requires a tremendous amount of energy. I couldn't start building a new church now at my age of 70, I wouldn't even attempt such a thing. I would be died in two years. I can't do it.

He also mentioned that he did not balance his ministry and personal life well at the beginning of his ministry. Even though he started pastoring later in life and his children were older, he still felt like when he started pastoring that he neglected his teenage child. The participant also mentioned

a story involving one of his children. He mentioned that his child called him an “aggravated man,” because every time he came home, he was aggravated and tired. He also mentioned a time when his wife confronted him about the long hours spent away from home working in the ministry. He discussed:

The kids can answer that better, I can give you some insight. For my..., it didn't bother them because they were off in college. My ...was still in high school. And ... had always had me all the time. Because I've always put my family first. See this before, remember I became a pastor 45. My... was 15 when I became pastor. But they always came first. Because I am the son of an alcoholic. So my dad was never there for anything of my stuff. And I refused to do that to my kids. I refuse to let that happen. So as part of the reason, I thank the Lord that he did not allow me to start pastoring 45 until they were up there. Because once I started pastoring, that I felt I started some ways in neglect my son. And he said it, because he spoiled.

My oldest...back in '97 called me aggravated man. Because every time I came home, I was aggravated. Because I was tired. You know, I'm doing 78 hours a week. And I then I had to realize that wasn't fair to my family. And I said, well I couldn't be mean to the church then I wouldn't have any members. I could do nothing on the job, you know I'll get fired. So, you come home and act a fool you, but that ain't fair because those are the closest people. But it was a tough five years.

And so one day my wife just stopped me on the way out the door. And I am just going to be honest with you she stopped me because I haven't even touched her in two weeks so she knows something wrong. So she said you know I'm concerned about you. So I said find because I've how to just listen. You get defensive. So I said, I know what I'm gonna do. She's gonna talk. And I'm gonna get me some cereal. Because I'm eating cereal., I can't interrupt. So, I let her talk... One of her concerns was the pace I was keeping. I said I used to keep that pace all the time. She said, but you're not that age anymore. I said, okay that hurt. But it's true. So after she finished everything I said, first of all, appreciate that you love your husband and you're concerned about your husband. That's a good thing. I said, all I'm going to ask you is this tell me, what do you want me to do about it? Then she got quiet. Because she didn't understand leadership.

Participant 4 explained how he doesn't always do a good job in protecting his time. He further mentioned that he becomes emotionally unavailable so that he can process things. Then, he stated that for the most part as a pastor, 80% of the time his free time is contingent upon the membership availability. He explained that just because he leaves the church does not mean that his job is finished. His work sometimes continues even when he is home. He explained:

Like when I become emotionally unavailable. Like I'm emotionally unavailable all the way to the extreme. I'm going downstairs to the man cave. I'm watching TV. Don't anybody bother me for a few hours. And I know for me like it's because I'm always processing things and I'm always examining things, specially like on Sunday's. I'm always replaying church in my mind and all the things that I see and all the things that happened in the expressions and things. So I need that time to just kind of, but for them [children], it's more so like, hey, the world hasn't stopped because it's Sunday. So, they still want to engage and they said I'd be needing time just to process. And I'm probably to an extreme. So, I think they will say that Daddy loves church. Um, unfortunately, they will probably say my kids would probably say Daddy loves church too much. Because they are comparing that to wife. And because she spends probably the most amount of time with our children more than I do, like, we are two extremes. Church is way bigger to dad than it is to mom. And I think that they haven't recognized yet because church is job. And mom's job stops when she leaves that building, her job stops. So they get all of mom all the time when she's at home. Because her job stays at work. Sometimes, like dad has to go to meetings at the church in the evening. And so they are like, we got to go to church again. We always at church. I would say 80% of the time is contingent upon the participation of members. And most members who work full time, like, when I'm at work during the day. Like it's 11:45 on a Thursday morning, you know, most of my congregates are at work unless they are retired. So, when I have to meet with people usually it's going to be in the evening time... I think for them, mommy sets the precedent when it comes to availability.

Participant 5 explained that the act of balancing ministry, marriage, and money is a challenge. He mentioned that trying to disconnect from the ministry, even though you don't totally disconnect, to be present with the family is a challenge. There is so much that goes on in a pastor personal life and ministry that can be a heavy burden on the pastor. He stated:

So I was just about to say, and you use a great word that balance. Because it is a balancing act of balancing ministry, marriage and money. Um, and it is a challenge. I think that's the biggest challenge. If I could speak for myself, that I face is that is balancing or prioritizing time with both marriage ministry, you know, and my children. That's the struggle that comes through the success of doing that is being very intentional in those categories. So I think it has to it deals with intentionality.

Yes, and the reason because, um, some things you cannot, cannot change, or, you know, you can't plan for. One of the things that I've done, and I've tried to hold true to this is, I kind of disconnect ministry, per se. You never disconnect totally. But I disconnect about seven o'clock. So seven o'clock is family time. That's what the wife wants. You know whatever I'm doing that's the cut off, unless it's an emergency.

So it's was so much that goes on just in your personal life, but even in ministry life. It is just so much going on. That it's the burden of, you know, all of those categories that we

stated earlier, of marriage, of ministry, of family, finances, of things that's going on, and in our society. You know now just recently, the pandemic, now, the potential war is just so much things that are happening. That when it is time to rest you really don't have that level of rest, because there's so much going on.

Participant 6 stated that trying to balance being a single father, a pastor, and going to school was stressful. Then on top of that, he mentioned that you have to deal with your own personal traumatic experiences and deaths within your family. The participant discussed a personal traumatic experience that he experienced; full details will not be shared to protect the participant's confidentiality. He mentioned that during his time of crisis, there was no support or understanding from his congregation. He also mentioned that during his own personal experiences that he felt like he was not afforded the opportunity to take the time off or away to be made whole after his own personal situations. He stated:

As a single dad, as a divorcee, a student, and a pastor, I'm constantly being pulled from every direction most days. I'm trying to balance being all three. All three things. I mean, and there's a lot more because I'm still a son. I'm still a brother. I'm still you know, a friend.

So sudden deaths, whether it be family members,death was unexpected. And I made the huge mistake of allowing my then employer to rush me back into the pulpit and back into the office. So you know, I didn't have the opportunity to grieve appropriately. I didn't take the time, I needed to really be made whole from that. Because there's a lot more to the story... And people were reaching out, and I didn't have any answers. And so because of the sensitivity of the circumstance, I couldn't, you know tell people this is what's going on. So people became very angry with me and thought that I was being you know. They really made the circumstances about themselves, as opposed to really being present and being of support like I needed. And so it was just, it was traumatic, it was traumatic. Even with my divorce, that was another kind of grief that I had to deal with.

Expectations of the Pastor from the Members

Most participants discussed the unrealistic expectations that their congregation has of them. They mentioned how this expectation is seen through the lens of the Black congregation on their Black pastors. They also mentioned how the congregation's expectation can be a source of stress and mental anguish to them.

Participant 3 mentioned how the expectations that the congregation put on the pastors can cause a pastor to sometime fail. He stated:

Black pastors are held at a higher esteem than white pastors. Many pastors end up failing because many times the Black pastors in the Black churches are more idolized than the White pastors in the White churches. The super high esteem that Black pastors are held to is impossible to sustain. No one should be held to that esteem except Jesus. I tell the church from the pulpit. If you put me on that high pedestal, I guarantee you I'm gonna fall off. And I'm not talking about committing adultery, stealing, I don't do any of that stuff. I'm just talking about, for example you coming to me for counseling about your teenage son. And I say something along the lines of let him grow up and now the mom is mad at me and hasn't been back to the church in 10 years.

Participant 4 explained the expectation from the congregation on him as a young pastor was to follow their lead and attract more young people to the church. He mentioned that the expectations from his congregation affected his mental health. He stated:

I think I reshaped what they've expected. So I think coming in, there was an expectation. And it's funny because I probably I know I do way more than what they expected. Because I would even say the expectation was, you preach, you handle congregational care, kiss baby, shake hands, attract more young people to our church, you're the face of this church. But this board or this group of people, we run the church in the background. That was the expectation, especially being I was younger. I think it was more so like we got this young guy who can grow this church, but we about to run this joker. I think the struggle or the surprise for them was when I begin to operate in the role as an organizational leader. And not just the organizational spokesperson. So when I got in the boardroom with them, and I handed out agendas, and I started getting expectations, and letting them know what I will and what I won't deal with, and things of that sort. When they start seeing me negotiate contracts and renegotiate the mortgage with the bank. When they started seeing me go through the budget and comb through it with like, with a fine toothcomb. And showing that I am a CEO and I'm not just a young preacher. I think that's when it was like, oh, shoot, so we can't do what we want to do. And he is how can I say this, he increased the level of expectation. He's raised the standard. So I think that was a lot of, and with the expectation, it was more like nah, we wanted him to just sit back and do what we tell them to do. We want wanted to decide what he was going to do. And he is coming to here telling us what we supposed to be doing. I think that was that was different from what a lot of them were used to. They were not used to the pastor being an assertive leader.

What else impacts my mental health? Pressure from the congregation, expectations. And I think I've done a pretty decent job at telling them like I know what y'all expect, but I want y'all to be realistic. Like, do you all want a crazy, egotistical, tyrant as a pastor? Or do you all want somebody who is like mentally and emotionally healthy. And if you all,

if you really care about me, and if you care about my mental health you'll give me the time and space that I need to be healthy. And if there are 52 Sundays in the year and I'm preaching 50 of those 52 Sundays, I'm not going to be healthy. Most of my pastor friends who are younger, like around my age, they tried to make it a habit to only preach between 36 and 40 times a year. Out of the 52. And that's different for our contexts. Like even, I would say, yeah that's where the pressure comes from it's from congregations.

Participant 6 expressed that the congregation has an expectation of black pastors that is almost Godlike. In Black context, the pastor is not just the preacher, he is the counselor, and so much more to the congregants. He also mentioned that the congregation puts so much pressure on pastors to constantly perform. He stated:

But there's so much pressure on you to constantly perform, I liken it to what's going on in the NBA and with other professional players, professional athletes, you know, people just all they care about is you performing. You know, people can treat you any kind of way, people can talk to you any kind of way, do anything to you. And, you know, because you're making the big bucks you are supposed to perform. And that's all people care about. People don't care that you have sickness, that you have personal issues, that you get tired. And so you have to, like I said, you have to take ownership of your own mental health. Because if you don't, people will, you know they only see their own suffering. And so I haven't reached out to you. So you're supposed to be there for me, even if I call it three o'clock in the morning. You know, you're supposed to reach out to me, even if I don't participate in me giving you information. You're supposed to make every effort because I'm going through this traumatic experience in life. You're supposed to be there for me as the pastor. And that's, unfair.

Personal and Mental Struggles of the Members

The participants discussed having to deal with the mental health and struggles of their congregation, such as suicide attempts, death by suicide, depression, and high levels of anxiety. A participant also mentioned counseling members of his congregation through marriage and family breakups, noting the affect divorce has had on him. Lastly, the death of members in which pastors have grown close to or having to watch members go through the grieving process when a loved one has died.

Participant 2 discussed an incident where he was dealing with a member whose child committed suicide and he was asked to do the eulogy at the funeral. He also discussed the toll of

constantly doing funerals for members and/or their family, and how it affects the pastor's mental health. He mentioned that dealing with the hurts and mental issues of members has had a negative impact on his mental health. He explained

Because I've discovered, if you look at one challenge, then that leads to another challenge. And then that challenge leads to another challenge. And now we are becoming counselors more so than ever before. We're dealing with particularly young people, with funerals for young people who have committed suicide. We're dealing with attempted suicide and things that we really, perhaps were there, but we didn't hear about a lot. But now is coming to the forefront. So how do you deal with it? How do you deal with that mother, that father, whose child has taken his or her life? Not only how do you deal with them, but then I look at and I'm speaking from personal experience where I did a funeral of a person recently who committed suicide. And they were not a member of my church... And so I had to find a way to actually decompress from that. Because it was mentally as how, you know, once I was doing a funeral, I mean, the Lord bless and all of that. But once I was away from everybody, that was the challenge I had to face.

Participant 3 explained how the death of church members can affect a pastor's mental health. Dealing with youth who are suffering from identity crisis and contemplating suicide can have an effect on the pastor. He went on to say that members' issues also affect the pastor, like a longtime couple who the pastor had been counseling decided to walk away from the marriage. It is hard when you are trying to help and then you see it all collapse. The participant mentioned that he read an article that discussed 10 issues that pastors struggle with and the number one was failed marriages of members. He explained:

I've had to change my philosophy to homosexuality, not my belief in scriptures. But in how I deal with them. This thing of just almost hatred, that's unbiblical. And the Lord has had to deal with me. And I'll tell you how he dealt with me; with my teenager sitting in his office threatened to commit suicide... And I got a zillion books on it and read, and began to reshape my philosophy while still maintaining the biblical view. The breakdown of these families. These are other huge thing taken a toll on us mentally as pastors. So, I had a very close member leave. And I didn't feel she left, right, leaving her family. ... Her and I were like this, she hates me now. So, she asked her membership letter, I gave it to her. I made a decision, as you know, I'm gonna try to help her understand what happened to me. And so I sent herself something. I knew her so well and I knew she was not going to respond. ... What I helped her try to understand was that her husband and their divorcing how it affected me. I've been counseling them for 15 years. See people don't understand. So she wouldn't respond. Then the next week, one of my

articles said the top 10 issues that pastors struggle with and the number one issue was failed marriages. I sent that to her. Still no response. Because see, we are unfortunately you know, we do some time, we do transference. You know, it's almost like their lives become ours. It's hard when you are in there trying to help and all that. Then to see it all collapse.

Participant 6 expressed how death of church members affect his mental health. He mentioned that it can be hard to accept sometimes. He stated, "You know, unexpected deaths of what I like to call good members. Some of them just dropped dead, you know, and you pray for them. And it's just like, God has a different plan. And sometimes that's hard to accept."

Intergenerational Membership

The participants discussed that pastoring different generational levels has become a source of stress. The pandemic has revealed the different generational needs within the congregation. Now the pastor has to learn, adjust, and understand different needs of the members (traditional, older, baby boom, and younger). Each generation has different needs and expectation of the church and from the pastor.

Participant 2 discussed the challenges a pastor face when dealing with the different personalities of all the members. He mentioned that you have to know and understand the members within your congregation. Also, while trying to deal with your family life (wife and children's personalities and needs) can be challenging. He explained:

And eventually the church grew to from 15 to 100. I think it was like 170 or 175 somewhere around in there. And so knowing that with those many people, I realized and I'm gonna use the number, I'll just use an even number 150. That's 150 different personalities. I had to deal with. But at the same time, even though there were 150 different personalities, I got to know every single person the idiosyncrasies of every single person in that church. And not only know, I could tell if they walked through the through the sanctuary door I could tell that something wasn't right. And so balancing those challenges of, say 150 members, and then on the other hand balancing what my children may be going through.

Participant 3 mentioned that pastors are now dealing with several generations, baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z. He talked about how hard it can be as pastors get older to deal with change. In addition, having a congregation with multiple generations and understanding that they see things through a different lens. He explained:

They're stuck in their traditions. Yes, they're stuck. And things are moving so fast right now that a pastor who cannot change they are died. And another example. ... So a part of getting older it just is harder to deal with change as you get older. So, my son who was the youth pastor... About two maybe almost two years before the pandemic hit, came with me with the idea of streaming and going online. Which I said no. ... And part of the reason I said no was, we average close to 2500 people before the pandemic. ... I'm looking at a full church of people what do I need to stream for or be online? And the Holy Spirit dealt with me. So he deals with me through movies... And through the details of the movie came the question, what happens when leaders don't change? And I begin to understand that some generations are seeing their worlds much different than mine. So, I told my son, let's go ahead and let's do this. Because I don't fully get, fully understand it we would have been playing catch up. And this is another reason, sometime, when pastors get older they need to come out. You know, I still don't understand earrings and tattoos. But it is a normal part of their world. ... Because, you know, the scripture says there should be a great falling away. So the millennials are part of that group of Gen Z exponential in that group. And so studies have shown over the years that Generation X and baby boomers, which is what I am, lived in sin maybe all way through college and got married. Got married, had kids, and came back to church. Studies have shown this. That's not true for the millennials and Gen Z. They weren't in church, and they don't come back to church.

Participant 4 discussed the generational divide in what the expectation of a pastor should be and how the church should be done. Moreover, how each generation has different expectation of the church. The challenge can be what the church has become to the younger and new generation is not the church that the older Christians are truly ready to accept He explained:

It seems that black church folks, traditionally, is usually relegated to certain age groups. And it is usually older Gen Xers and baby boomers who want church and ministry without accountability. And I would say that's my greatest challenge is we want to be able to serve God with no expectations. There is this desire to do the work of ministry but there is to be no expectations, no accountability. The church is to accept what I give because I don't have to do this. ... And so like that, that generational divide and just how church should be done, that is probably the biggest challenge. And I think that's how I can summarize it, like the generational divide and how ministry should be done. Gen Y who believes one thing, Gen Z another thing Gen X another thing, our millennials

another thing, and then baby boomers another way. ... But like Gen Xers can be people all the way up to 50. In a way, I think that like, we are that group of individuals who still remember what it was like pre social media, we remember what was like before cell phones, and having information at your fingertips. But we also know how to use those things. Popping on Facebook, jumping onto a Zoom meeting, it's not a big deal for us. We have not stuck our sword in the sand of time and said nah, we shall not be moved. With a lot of, you know, our older members even those who have learned how to did and stay saying we ain't about to be setting up a meeting like we want to get together. Like what church is to them is definitely not what churches has become to us. ...But because of my history with this church and because of my tenure in this church, the older generation feel like I should be at the helm of decision making.

Participant 5 stated that different generational levels can be a success and a challenge. In addition, the other side of it bringing those personalities together can bring about conflict having all of them at the table. He shared:

One of the successes, and I think it's probably dual, because one of the successes is bringing different personalities together. But then also, one of the challenges is not having opportunity to bring personalities together. Because the church construct is so many different age ranges, traditional to contemporary to millennial and trying to get all of those type of, you know, age groups together, personalities together that become the challenge.

Participant 6 shared that since the pandemic, the church has taken a different turn from the traditional services that some members were used to. So, when you try to change, you have members who are set in their ways and it is difficult to get them to embrace new methods. He stated:

So that's one challenge, of course, trying to pivot a church post pandemic. Or while in the hills, because we really aren't out of the pandemic, but really trying to pivot the church. Because we realize that we'll never be able to do church the way we've done it in the past. And so again, when you have persons who are set in their ways, you know, trying to get them to embrace new methods is of course challenging.

Support Systems & Coping Mechanisms

All participants reported a similar support system. One participant stated that he does not have a true support system. He mentioned that there are systems in place for him as a pastor, but he doesn't have a true personal support system for himself. Most participants listed having

another pastor as part of their support system for guidance, prayer, and understanding. One participant mentioned that he felt pastors were like a fraternity and many therapists do not understand the things that pastors went through.

Spirituality is important coping mechanisms to deal life stressors and painful events. All participants mentioned that the first place that they go to when dealing with mental distress is to God. They rely heavily on their spiritual faith to get them through tough situations. They are strong in their faith and they put God first. God was the source of their strength to be able to endure the pressure that they dealt with on a daily basis. The participant also had other individuals as their wife, best friends, or another pastor that they

Support Teams

The participants believe that it is important to have an individual in their life to confide in. Most participants felt that their wives are their best friend and that it was important to have such a relationship with their wives. One participant mentioned that some pastors feel as though they don't need anyone, but everyone needs someone in his life. You can't go through life without having someone present with you to help you through.

Participant 1 mentioned that his support team consists of his wife. He discussed the importance of a pastor's wife being his best friend. He explained:

And so support, I believe that your spouse, if you have a spouse; your spouse and people use this loosely. your spouse should be your best friend. And your spouse should not become your best friend, your spouse should have been your best friend to start with. In fact, you supposed to be able to say I married my best friend. And not I got married and she became my best friend. No, that's a little look backwards. And so I say that as I moved from the ex to my current wife. My support is my best friend which is my spouse. ... And so to answer your question, Tracy, it I think it's about friend. You can't make it in this world with that mentality, Oh, I don't need no one. I'm good. Just me and Jesus. Well, Jesus again, handles the affairs of the kingdom through individuals. So you got Jesus, but you've got Jesus and that spouse, and that good friend, or that close person. Even Jesus had an inner circle.

As I matured, and where I am now, and this is where I'm going with this. I've got a couple of deacons, three, four, these are some that I even ordained who are more like brothers than a cohort laborers or coworkers or whatever. And, and these are those you can talk to about things that we were whereby we were not talking about who's going to read the scripture or we're not talking about what needs fixing we can talk as friends and as men and so I appreciate those relationships.

Participant 2 support team consist of another pastor, friends, and sometime his wife. He discussed how sometimes going to a professional counselor can be costly, which could be a barrier for why he doesn't seek external help often. He explained:

I'll always say the one person I turn not is my pastor. ... Another person he's like mentor to me. There's a couple of friends that I have that I can share any and everything with. For the most part, it's hard. Because you don't know as a pastor who you can share stuff with. And then as far as on the professional side. Well, at least not around here, there's not a whole lot of Christian counselors. It really isn't. I know, counselors. As far as Christian counselors, no. There's really not any and then there's one that I do know. I mean, she's a Christian, but I can't afford \$200 an hour. ... So I just turn to my friends or I turn inwardly to myself and just asked the Lord to help. Sometimes I can talk to my wife, but I don't share everything with her.

The support system, I would say, professionally it's is minimum. It really is it? I mean, don't get me wrong. I know, like I said before, I know there are professional counselors in and around our area. I know that. But not all of them are the ones that can address or deal with what a pastor goes through. And so that's, it's a struggle. For me, it really is. It's a struggle. And without the couple of people that I know. And whom I have introduced to other pastors to let them know this person has offered their services to our pastors.

Participant 4 discussed how his support team consists of his wife and pastor friends. He mentioned that during the pandemic how he and some of his pastor friends created a group as an outlet to talk about anything and just enjoy each other company as "men". He expressed:

I am one of those individuals where my wife literally is my best friend in the entire world. No one knows more about me than my wife does. She knows the good, the bad, and the ugly. So, I can talk to her about church. I can talk to her about life. I can talk to her about my mental health and what I'm going through. If I am depressed, I don't have a problem with telling her Hey, I think I am depressed. ... But yeah, my wife is my main support system. Secondly, I have a lot of pastor friends who are in my age group. So I have a text message feed with myself and other local pastors. Like we have a running text feed. And I never will two days go by without us having checked on one another. How are you doing? I'm also part of another group of pastors. This group we actually hangout together. We got started hanging together during the pandemic. We will get together once

a week and smoke cigars together. We will pick one of our houses and sit around. We can talk about church, talk about church folks, not talk about church at all, talk about news, talk about hip hop, and enjoy each other's company to keep our sanity. So those two groups have been life giving.

When Participant 6 was asked about his support system, he mentioned that he does not have a support system. All his closest friends live out of state and they provide the best level of support that they can. He expressed:

I don't have one? Yeah, all of my friends, close, closest friends are in other states or other pastors. So you know, and I will say this, that they have provided the best level of support they can. But like, I don't know, I don't really have many options. Like if I were to say, hey, I need to, you know, do something without the boys. I don't necessarily have a go to, with regard to, you know, a babysitter, you know, a free babysitter. Let me rephrase that. So, yeah, that's sad, but I don't have I don't have much of a support system.

Faith, Familial, and Friends

Some participants mentioned that after they have sought help from their Heavenly Father (the spiritual realm), that their wife was their next source of comfort to talk to when they are distressed. Many participants mentioned that their wife is their best friend. The next source of help is a pastor friend and/or their best friend. Some of the participants mentioned that they had also sought help from mental health counselor/therapist to talk about their personal and marital issues.

Participant 1 discussed that God handles the affairs of the kingdom through individuals and so pastors need to have somebody that they can talk to. He also feels that pastors need a pastor to talk to. He explained:

First of all, turn to God. But at the same time your understanding, and like I said this my motto, God handles the affairs of the kingdom through individuals. And so clergy need to have that somebody that they can talk to. Pastors need a pastor. But if the pastor doesn't have that pastor that he can actually find counsel in and talk to and I'm talking to everything. Because we want to pick what we want to talk about. But having a somebody whether it's a spouse or the best friends, a good friend to talk to. That's number one talk to God, but then you need to have somebody you can talk to because keeping it in is like a pressure cooker.

Participant 2 stated that he has a pastor friend to talk to when he is going through things. He said that they pray together and talk about anything. He also mentioned that his friends know if he is going through something, he can come to him for prayer and a listening ear. He discussed:

But I had a pastor friend of mine that I call and that I could talk to. And just tell him, Look, I just need to talk to somebody but I can't talk to everybody. So, he's like, my prayer partner. And so I was able to talk to him and he does the same thing with me. If he's dealing with something, he's just call and say I just need to talk. I may not be able to do anything but listen, or you know, we pray together. But that is how I deal with it.

Participant 5 stated that during distress he turns to one of his friends, which is a pastor. The pastor he turns to is not black. So, he gets a different perspective on things when he talks to him. He explained:

So normally, you know, many individuals say that a person would turn to a friend or the pastor. I have a person that I can confide in which is another pastor who is not black. That I am able to kind of talk to and work through different situations. ... So, I think that's one of the reasons why even though he is a pastor, he's not a black pastor. And his view, his vantage point is different from mine just based on culture and just the makeup of his ministry and all of that.

Negative Coping Mechanisms

Participants mentioned that pastors do not typically acknowledge ways in which life issues have affected their mental health. Participants also mentioned that they tend not to take care of their own mental health, seek necessary treatment, or develop healthy coping mechanism to deal with stressors. As a result, participants shared that some pastor may develop negative coping mechanisms. These negative coping mechanisms are usually not the true characteristics of the pastor, but the pastor tends to turn to these negative behaviors to help him deal with the stress or suppress what they are going through.

Participant 1 explained that pastors rely on prayers to get them through mental issues and do not seek proper help from an external source, such as a therapist. He also mentioned that pastors sometimes tell themselves that they can shake off the feeling and do not seek help for themselves. He also mentioned that they sometimes deny moments of mental distress. Pastors also start during negative things to compensate for these feelings they are having. He explained:

That's number one talk to God, but then you need to have somebody you can talk to because keeping it in is like a pressure cooker. And that's not helping, you can't sleep, you're walking the floor, and sometimes your actions overflow into other things. And so you start doing things to compensate for these feelings you're having, whether it's drinking or indulging, illicit behavior, you just act out. And the pastor is not exempt from that. He too, will start doing things that is out of the ordinary that is out of his character. And they discover that they only do that when they're feeling these, now this is my term, when they feel like they're off their square. And so when I'm off my square that's when I then start, I'm speaking in general. I then start I don't normally drink but when I'm off my square I get a drink. I don't normally commit adultery but when I'm off my square I find myself doing just things that are just not in your character.

Participant 5 expressed that if a pastor doesn't handle his mental distress overtime, it could cause him to have different outlets. Further, those outlets could be negative coping mechanisms to help him deal with the mental distress he is feeling. He explained:

But when you go outside of our, the black realm of preachers, they teach you that if you don't turn it [ministry] off it does mess with your mental health. And, if you continue to have it all the time it will cause you to have different, I know you are recording this, but like different outlets. So it could be drinking, it could be drugs, it could be whoremonger, could be whatever. So you create a coping mechanism.

Self-care Practices

The participants describe their self-care practices that they currently have in place. The participants mentioned that a lot of these practices have started recently. In the past, the participants did not take time away for self-care activities. The participant discussed how their thought process regarding mental health had to be intentional. Some participants felt that they should just do it and not think about it.

Self-care Activities

Participant 1 stated that his self-activities are intentional. He turns off his phone or leaves it at home. His wife is also involved in making sure that he takes time for himself by scheduling time away for just the two of them. He explained:

I know now when to pull away, when to retreat from the work. I literally Tracy would turn my phone off. Because my phone is on always. And the only way I'm going to get peace is that I turn it off. Even though the office may know, don't call pastor unless it's an emergency. There are still many other people out there who's calling, calling in. So I will literally turn my phone off. Or will leave it at home. Because that's the discipline for me. If I've got it, then I'm going to look at it, I'm going to use it. But if I don't have it on me, I that's one way I retreat. My current wife, she is one who is sensitive enough that she may plan something; and I know she's talked to the church to know my calendar. She'll plan something and it's just a venue. avenue to get away to just to pull away.

Participant 2 discussed that his self-care activities involve doing exercise to take care of his health. Also, spending time with his wife on date night is a form of his self-care activities. He explained:

Well, one now water aerobics. I walk as much as I can. ... My wife and I, this is something that we do and I share with the church. They know Friday night is date night for me. And they know that. And I tell them I don't mind if you call me if it's an emergency. But please, and I tell them please let me have my Friday night. Because I want to spend that time, I really want to spend that time with my wife. I'm doing everything else. But let me have Friday night.

Participant 3 emphasized that self-care is a priority to him. It is a must in his life. That he is intentional about taking care of himself. He disclosed how he makes sure that he attends all his doctors' visits and keeps up with his preventive care. He discussed:

Self-care? I love movies. I get a lot of my illustrations from movies. I have a home theater one of my few real luxuries. I have a real man cave thing. ... I like playing golf now. I've started learning how to play that. ... I get my physical every year, around my birthday. I regularly see my other doctors. ... I do all my preventive stuff.

Participant 4 described his self-care practices as going down to the basement and relaxing. When it comes to working, he will work away from the church to reduce the number of interruptions. He stated:

For me, a lot of times right now it's going down to the basement at my house and it's chilling. Even when it comes to working, oftentimes, I won't work from the church. Because a lot of times I can't get anything done when I am there. People see my truck outside, folks call, and they stopped by.

Participant 6 discussed how he would like to do more with partaking in self-care practices, but he doesn't have the time or finances to incorporate self-care practices in his life on a regular basis. He expressed:

How do I describe my self-care activities not enough, insufficient. That's the best way I can describe it. I need a lot more. So most days, I stay up. My bedtime is about 2 a.m. ... So definitely insufficient, insufficient. ... So I said all of that to say that, you know, my self-care, I put my self-care on the backburner far too often.

Thought Process

The participant discussed what they actually think about taking time to do self-care activities. They discussed how sometimes it is a thought process to actually take the necessary steps to do something for themselves. Many of the participants mentioned the word "intentional". They had to be intentional when it comes to taking time for themselves.

Participant 1 expressed that he discovered that it's best when "I just do it". He mentioned the importance of being spontaneous without going into in-depth thinking when it come to your self-care practices. Just do it. He stated:

And, I say you have to not make yourself do it. But you just have to do it. Don't keep talking, I'm gonna do this, I'm going to do this. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna do it. No, do it. Just do it, be spontaneous. And that's what I've discovered that it's best when I just do it. And I haven't always been able to do that.

Participant 4 mentioned that his thought process is being intentionally off, being intentionally unreachable. And letting people know that. So, it's about being intentional. He explained:

Because I do take time out. I just don't think that I'm always intentional about it. I just do it. When I check out, I'm checked out. When I don't answer phone calls after church. And I'm looking at my phone and like, no it has to go to voicemail. I am off. And I do take that time. I think that I need to be intentional about how I spend that time. So that when I'm taking time to prioritize my own mental health, I have a plan of action. So being intentionally off, being intentionally unreachable. And letting people know that hey, I'm not available at this time.

Additional Data

The participants were asked a series of interview questions (see Appendix B) during the interview process to gather information for the primary research question for this study. The last question asked of each participant was *“Are there any experiences as a Black pastor that you had experienced that the researcher has not explored that you would like to add to this research?”*

The participants shared additional information that they felt was an important addition to this study to give individuals a better understanding of the Black pastor, his role, his responsibilities, his emotions, etc. The participants asked the researcher to include the following information in the study. Therefore, at the request of the participants the researcher is adding additional information below that is relevant to the Black male pastor.

Pastoring Versus Preaching

During the interviewing process, Participant 1 felt it was important to explain the difference between pastoring and preaching. He stated that preaching is our gift. Preaching is the calling whereby it, comes naturally. Because it is your gift from God. What a pastor does on Sunday morning, the average person would have to work the entire month to do. Because it is a

gift that over time becomes perfected with God's help. In addition, with preaching the pastor is worshipping just like everybody else.

In addition, pastoring is meeting the needs of the people. Participant 1's definition of pastoring is creating relationships, whereby you can meet the needs of your church and of the congregation. And the needs of the people are not just spiritual. For example, if a member needs housing, the pastor should be able to direct the person to housing. If a member needs a job, the pastor should be to assist the member in getting a job or direct the member to the resources to obtain a job. This is why relationships within the community, local, and national leaders is important. Church membership should have its privileges. Participant 2 stated that the church needs to be a director where it can direct people where they are to go. Therefore, if the pastor is not connected, then the church won't be connected. This is why it is important for the pastor to be connect to the people and organizations who can make things happen.

Black Pastors Versus White Pastors

The last question asked of every participant was "*Are there any experiences as a Black pastor that you had experienced that the researcher has not explored that you would like to add to this research*"? Five pastors discussed the difference between Black and White pastors and the church they pastor. Participant 1 stated there is a big difference in Black church and White church. He mentioned that when he attended a White seminary, his reasoning for attending was because he was called to preach and he wanted to enhance his spiritual gifts. However, he explained that when his White counterparts attend seminary it is because they want to preach and they are attending seminary to get their credentials. They also attend seminary so that they can get a church or job within the church ministry. This differs from most Black pastors, where Black pastors are called by God and they attend seminary because they are called and already

pastoring. Another difference is the spiritual element, God speaks to the pastor and then the pastor speaks to God's people, versus a board speaking to the pastor and the pastor doing what the board tells them to do. And the board never asked the pastor, well, what did God say? The board says, no, this is what is going to be done? Participant 1 stated that some black churches operate like that. However, the majority of the black churches believe that God speaks to the pastor and the pastor then speaks to the people

Participant 2 expressed that some of the White pastors that he knows, their churches recognize that their pastor needs a break. Their congregations want to keep their pastor at the church so they will allow them two weeks paid vacation, or they will send them on a vacation. He gave an example of one of his White pastor friends whose church is getting ready to send him and his wife to Hawaii. They are not paying for it, rather the members are paying for it. He stated that the members are sending them away because they want their pastor to be rested. Participant 3 mentioned the high expectation that is placed on Black pastors. He stated that Black pastors are more idolized than White pastors are. That the Black congregants put their pastors on a high pedestal.

Participant 4 explained his views on Black congregants tithing versus White congregants tithing. He mentioned that Black individuals and White individuals view tithing and offering differently. He stated:

Black individuals tithe faithfully, but almost like a subscription for them. Black individuals, older members and baby boomers, treat their tithes like they treat life insurance; they pay their tithes like clockwork. They can be pissed off with the pastor, pissed off with the church, but they will continue to pay their tithes, because they are not about to mess up their church membership. Because if something happens and they die, they need to be able to have their funeral at the church. That is not what giving is. Giving is an act of worshiping. It is not you investing in this company (church) that you want partial control in. It is not me worshipping God or giving to advance the Kingdom of God; but it's me giving because I want to be a part of an organization, I have influence in. That is unbiblical.

Participant 5 discussed the fear that Black pastors have if they take time away from the church. He mentioned that:

White churches encourage their pastors to take time away to reenergize. At Black Baptist church, there is always a fear to take an actual sabbatical. Pastors of other races they are very intentional in taking a month or two away to be in the presence of God to decompress and rejuvenated to come back. Black pastors feel that if we leave too long, when we come back our keys won't work.

Black Congregations

Throughout the interviewing process, many participants expressed deep concern regarding the number of expectations that black congregants have for Black pastor.

The participants want the black congregation to understand that their pastor is human too. That pastors struggle just like everyone else. And just like congregants sometime decide that they need a break from church and don't come to church. Pastors also need some time away from the church to go somewhere else and be poured into. They want the congregation to know that if they truly loved their pastor, they would allow him time away. Allow him time to take a sabbatical and go on a vacation without disruption so that he can rejuvenate himself. Participant 2 stated that:

He wished Black churches will come to understand that pastors notice there are 52 Sundays in a year. However, don't expect the pastor to preach 52 Sundays. Because if churches continue to demand this of the pastor, they are actually sending him to an early grave.

The participants were concern that their congregation would not be accepting of them taking time away from the pulpit to take care of their mental health. By actually taking a Sunday off and attending another service to be poured into or just taking a day off to take in some self-care practices. Participant 4 stated, "if the congregation cares about the pastor, and his mental health; then they should allow him the time and space that is needed to be healthy." The participants stressed the fact that they are human too and being human means having family obligations,

enjoying your family, and enjoying hobbies from time-to-time. Participant 2 voiced “members of Black churches need to understand that he is human too with a family that he would love to make sure he is around to watch them grow up.” He expressed that the congregations in the black community need to recognize that if they say that they love their pastors, show him that you value him. He then followed up with a statement that:

A person does not run his/her car 24 hours. At some point, the individual parks the car and allows it not to be used. Why don't they allow pastors to take a break and spend quality time with their family as husband, father, and grandfather.

All pastors described how they love what they do. They love their ministry, and they love and support their congregation. They love when the church can grow together in Christ, when new Christians feel Christ for the first time, and when older Christians learn something new when they have been on Christian journey for a long time. The participants in this study showed a deep love for God, their family, their church family, and their community.

The Slippery Slope of Pastoring

Participant 3 expressed that he felt it was very important to mention some things that cause pastor to fall. The participant mentioned the readings of Ravi Zacharias. He stated:

In one of Mr. Zacharias readings he mentions the 3 G's that a pastor needs to watch for. The 3 G's are gold, girls and glory. The gold is money. Money can cause a lot of pastors to fall. Some pastors would never commit adultery, but they have been sleeping with money a long time. Money is their thing. So, when they get it, they buy cars and other expensive material things. There is nothing wrong with having nice things but when it dominates you that's the problem. Then it's the girls/women. My pastor informed me that women in the Black church are occupational hazards. Occupational hazard because the women come after the pastor. The more successful the pastor is, the more they come after him. And sometimes, pastors fail in this area because they are not willing to own up to their attractions. So, pastors end up falling because many times the Black pastor in the Black church is idolized. The third “G” is glory. Now this is a very slippery slope. Pastors have to watch that they don't become full of glory that they think their success is because of something they have done. Pastors have to put their dependence in God and allow God to humble them.

Summary

All participants described how the ministry work and life balance was not always equal. And how the ministry work got the greater attention and the family, as well as himself, was neglected or put on the back burner. They discussed how the demands of ministry work is a 24/7 job without allowing for sufficient time off to disconnect, rejuvenate, and focus on being in presence of God for himself and not for his role as a pastor (praying for others, preparing a sermon, preparing to teach, etc.). Demands of ministry work can come for the Black congregation's expectations for the Black pastor to be available 24/7 to service their own personal needs (deaths, counseling, visiting the sick and shut in, etc.). All participants mentioned that self-care and balancing ministry work and life is important and that they have failed at it in the past. However, many of the participants stated now they are "intentionally" making sure that they make time to take care of self and spend time with spouse, those that were married, so that they can remain mentally health to care for themselves, family, and congregation that they lead.

Many of the participants shared the same sentiments of why it is difficult for Black pastors to seek external help from a counselor. The participants discussed that for so long, the black community, especially in the pastor community, feared the stigma of mental health and being labeled unstable if they sought help from a counselor. Participants believed that if the congregation or community knew that they were seeing a therapist that they may feel as though the pastor is unfit to lead the church or community. This belief has stopped some pastors from seeking help from a mental health counselor.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the implications for the counseling profession, recommendations for Black congregations, and future research that can be conducted to continue to bring awareness of this population. It will also give an understanding of the research question and how it is relevant to current research. In addition, the findings of this research will show relation or lack of relation to current literature. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore Black pastors' experiences, their self-care practices, and their support system. This section summarizes and discusses the main components of the study.

This study gave space to Black male pastors to discuss their lived experiences as it relates to their roles as a man and as a pastor. Moreover, how those roles affected their perception of their self-care practices. In recent years, the Black pastors' role has evolved into a leading figure in the Black community addressing multiple issues that affect Black individuals (Williams & Cousin, 2021). The reason the researcher felt it was important to conduct this study on this population is due to the limited research on the Black male population, as well as those holding pastoral positions. The qualitative research method allowed the participants to narrate their story in their own language. The phenomenological design was used to allow for elicited descriptive interpretation of the pastors' lived experiences. Phenomenological research strictly focuses on the lived experiences (Peoples, 2021). The researcher believed it was important to allow for the experiences of Black male pastors to be documented to inform counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals of the experiences and beliefs of this population to become better equipped professionals in working with this population.

This research project included the voice of six Black male pastors who narrated their experiences as a man and as a pastor. The participants also discussed their perception of self-

care, their support systems, and their view on mental health. Each participant engaged in genuine dialogue regarding his experiences and view of taking care himself. One participant appeared a little guard and gave less in-depth responses. However, all material given throughout all interviews were relevant and true to the experiences that each participant faced.

The themes developed from the series of interviews with the participant correlates with some of the findings of the literature that was researched for this project. The themes developed from the interviews are demand of ministry, support systems and coping mechanisms, and self-care practices. Demand of ministry had the following codes: balancing personal identity, family, and crisis; expectations of the pastor from the members; personal and mental struggles of the members, and intergenerational membership. Support systems and coping mechanisms codes were support systems; faith, familial, and friends; and negative coping mechanisms. And the last theme self-care practices codes were self-care activities and thought process.

Theme: Demand of Ministry

Pastors from Black churches noted several issues associated with leading a congregation. Some of the issues noted were lack of available time, demand of competing with members' priorities, and lack of clear or demanding communication between pastor and church leaders (Baltic et al., 2015). Perkins (2003) mention that pastors are always on the job and that their job continues after they leave the church and after normal business hours. It is a 24 hour and 7 days a week responsibility. Each participant felt that the role of the pastor was a 24/7 job. Participant 2 mentioned that he was available to his members regardless of the time. He explained that if a member calls at 12 a.m. that he should be available to listen. Participant 3 mentioned that pastor's work is stressful and that it is a 24-hour job carrying many roles.

The literature mentioned that Black pastors carry many roles, preacher, teacher, civil rights leader, role model, influencer, and leader (Williams & Cousin, 2021). This holds true to the participants' view of their role and many responsibilities as a pastor. Pastors hold numerous and diverse roles within the church and community (Baruth et al., 2014). All participants felt it was their responsibility to be active in the community and to be a voice for their congregation and the community they serve. Participant 2 expressed how he sees himself as a mentor and role model for his congregation. He shared how some of the young members in his church may not have a father figure at home and he has found himself to be that mentor to those young men. He also stated that one of his greatest compliments was for one of his young male members to say that he wanted to emulate him. Participant 2 thought that was a great compliment, but he also reminded the young man that he has faults too. Participant 3 stated that community leadership is a demand on the pastor's life. He further discussed how it is the pastor's job to have integrity and build trust with the community. Participant 4 discussed how it is important for him to be a relevant leader in his family, church, and community. He mentioned that it is important not only to talk about community work but to also be seen doing the work. He is the type of pastor that is hands on and will be seen working along others in the community.

Balancing Personal Identity, Family, and Crisis

The literature talked about the boundaries of work and family that a pastor tries to establish. It talked about how sometimes the boundaries within the role of pastor and his role within his family can sometimes be blurred (Morris & Blanton, 1998). All participants mentioned that at one point of their ministry that the lines were blurred or non-exist because the ministry work got the majority of their time and concentration. Many pastors can find themselves married to the ministry (Greene & Robbins, 2015). This component can cause them to sometimes

neglect their family because they are spending more time with the ministry and different roles within the ministry. All participants agreed that they had at one point allowed the scale of the ministry to overpower their home life. However, that was never their intention. All participants agreed that it was their initial goal to balance their ministry work and home life so that their wife and children would not feel neglected. They wanted to be present for their wife and children. They wanted to make sure that they affirmed their wife and children's feelings. They never wanted their wife and children to feel as though they made a choice between them and the church and that the church won. All participants mentioned that they are now doing a better job in establishing and keeping healthy boundaries between ministry work and family. They may not always get it right, but they acknowledge that they are a work in progress. The three older participants mentioned that they now have a better handle on establishing healthy boundaries because their children are adults. Participant 1 mentioned that a lot of the older pastors had to learn from the school of hard knocks to value quality time with family and to take care of themselves.

Expectations of the Pastor from the Members

The expectations that the members put on the pastor can be extremely stressful. African American families rely heavily on their spirituality as a source of support, and this includes relying on their pastors for guidance and support during many life stressors (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). Many of the participants stated that the congregation's expectations can be a source of stress for them due to their unrealistic expectations. The high expectations from the congregation in relation to the pastors can be a major source of stress for pastors (Abernathy et al., 2015). Participant 4 addressed how his congregation expected him to preach and grow the ministry with more young people and do what they tell him to do. He stated that some members with longevity

at the church feel as though they have the right to run the church and sometimes run the pastor. This can bring about conflict with the pastor and members of the church. Participant 6 discussed how the congregation expects the pastor to just perform. No matter what is going on in the pastor's personal life, the congregation feels as though the pastor should perform when they call him without providing him with any support when he is going through.

Once again, the expectations are unrealistic because pastors are human too. They have their own personal struggles to deal with, as well as balancing others' issues and struggles. Participant 4 stated that just like the congregation likes to take a Sunday off, so does the pastor. Pastors become overwhelmed with the congregation always expecting them to be in service 52 Sundays a year. The participants mentioned that they need time away just like members need time away. Participant 2 mentioned that congregations should not expect their pastor to preach 52 Sundays a year because if they do, they are sending their pastor to an early grave. He feels that Black pastors should be allowed to take time away from the pulpit to go and get ministered to just as he ministers to his congregation.

Personal and Mental Struggles of the Members

Research has shown that African Americans are less likely to seek formal mental health services from a licensed counselor or therapist when needed (Okunroumu et al., 2016). African American fear of the stigma and being labeled crazy or mentally ill has cause them to seek support or comfort from their spiritual beliefs and their spiritual leader (Ormond et al., 2019). This caused many African American clergies to deliver mental health services to their congregation and families (Allen et al., 2009; Okunroumu et al., 2016). Many participants talked about how they had to deal with members personal and mental struggles (divorce, suicidal children, grieving members, etc.). How they became their members' therapist. Participant 3

discussed how he had been counseling a married couple and the wife decided that she wanted to leave the marriage. This action affected the pastor tremendously. He mentioned that she didn't understand how he felt about her decision to leave her family and to make matter worse, she didn't respond to any of his messages where he shared how this affected him as her pastor, friend, and counselor. Pastors have feelings as well, and they hurt just like everyone else when someone (wife, children, family, friend) they care about is hurting and shut them out. Most participants discussed how the pandemic brought about new mental challenges within their congregations that they now had to deal with. Some of the challenges within the pandemic were members dying, dealing with the grieving church members, and conducting funerals for children who had died by suicide. All of this has taken a toll on the pastor's mental health.

Intergenerational Membership

There was very little to no literature on the views of different generation levels within a congregation and how that could affect the pastor and the delivery of service for churches. There was one academic journal that discussed giving habits (tithes) across the life span. However, it didn't discuss the expectations of different generations on the church and their views of what church means to them. Herzog and Mitchell (2016) reported that in a study of American religious congregants that the younger generation mentioned that they give to the church because this is what they were taught by their parents. Pastors interviewed in this study reported that the role of the parents is what cultivate the giving attitude of the younger generations.

The participants in this study would disagree with the findings in the above-mentioned literature. The participants mentioned that the younger generations have a different view and expectations of church then the parents and the older generations. Since the pandemic, the younger generations have embraced the online model of Sunday worship service. Participant 4

mentioned how during the pandemic many of his congregation had attended service online, however, many of the older generation complained and wanted service to be held in-person. He discussed the shift in the way service is now being presented, in-person and online. He mentioned that some of his members still prefer the online method, while his older members are stuck in the traditional way of service and would attend the in-person service. He also mentioned that being online has allowed him to reach individuals outside of Illinois. This has caused tension with some of the older members because they questioned how individuals can be members of a church and not live in the same state or attend in-person. This is going back to the traditions and mindset of the older members. Participant 6 also discussed the challenges of pastoring an intergenerational congregation in which trying to get information from congregants to update their systems. He mentioned how some of the members were reluctant to give information to enter into the system so that the church could reach them during time of need, check on them, or send them church news. In 2020, the time of need arose with the COVID pandemic, and members were upset that no one had reached out to them. Participant 6 stated, how could the church reach out to them when they didn't have updated information? So, trying to pivot the church with the changes of post-COVID and getting members to embrace the change. Participant 6 also stated that it is difficult and challenging because some members are just set in their ways and traditions.

Theme: Support Systems & Coping Mechanisms

In Potts' (2020) study, almost half (46.6%) of the participants mentioned that they did not have a structured support system available to them. This study showed that five out of six participants had a structured support system. They had individuals in which they felt that they had access to in times of distress. Participants mentioned that they utilized their support system

as needed. Participant 1 discussed his support system is like insurance, you don't always submit a claim, but it is there when you need it. Participant 3 mentioned that he doesn't have a problem utilizing his support system but most important he listens to the advice given. Participant 5 mentioned that he utilizes his support system daily. He described how he talks to his pastor friend every single day.

Faith, Familial, and Friends

All participants in this study reported that they first relied on their faith in God to guide and carry them through times of distress. McMinn et al. (2005) study reported how clergymen and their spouses rarely turned to external resources for support, rather they rely on one another for support. The data in this study showed that for Black pastors, their wives were a support mechanism when they were in times of distress (Guzman & Teh, 2016). They would talk to their wives and seek their support. In addition, all pastors reported that they also had another pastor friend or their pastor to confide in when they were in distress or needed an outlet.

In addition to their faith and wife, many participants discussed having their own pastor, a close pastor friend, or other good friends (non-clergy) to talk to when they were in distress. The literature did not discuss these additional outlets (own pastor, pastor friend, and non-clergy friends) that the participants mentioned in their interviews. Participant 2 mentioned that he talked to another pastor when he is in distress. That he can talk to this individual about anything and they have a relationship in which when either party is in distress or just needs to talk, the other one would be available. He also mentioned that he has a mentor that is a pastor that he confides in as well. Participant 4 mentioned that besides his wife, who knows everything about him, he has two groups of young pastors that he checks in with daily and monthly. He mentioned that his one group is where they meet and talk about any and everything. This group also do things based on

their individual interests such as watch basketball games, go golfing, smoke cigars, etc. His second group mainly talks about ministry work and encourages one another. Participant 5 expressed that he intentionally has a White pastor included in his support systems. This individual brings a different perspective that the participant appreciates and welcome. He mentioned the traditions of Black pastors and how sometimes they are stuck in traditions and afraid of changing. Whereas when he talked with his White pastor, he's not concern about the Black traditions but trying to assist him in becoming whole as a man and as a pastor.

Unfortunately, not all participants had a very strong support system. Participant 6 discussed how he has a pastoral support system, but he does not have a true support system for himself. The pastoral support system consists of pastors who are available for one another. The common denominator for this group is that all the individuals are pastors. He mentioned that he has friends that are located outside of Illinois and that they support him the best way they can.

Negative Coping Mechanisms

The literature did not go into details of some of the negative coping mechanism that pastors may develop when they neglect to take care of themselves or properly deal with life struggles. The literature discussed that dissatisfaction could occur in martial and relational areas, emotional exhaustion, and inability to maintain physical and mental health (Abernethy et al., 2016). However, it does not discuss the behaviors that a pastor my perform to cope with those struggles/dissatisfactions. The participants of this study wanted to make sure that it is mentioned that sometimes pastors do not handle the struggles of life in a healthy manner. One of the reasons why a pastor may not seek professional help or help from others is because he has learned to internalize his issues. Participant 2 admitted that sometimes he would just take his problem to the Lord in prayer, which lead him to internalize his problems. Participant 1 explained the situation

in depth. He mentioned that a pastor can sometimes be off his square. He further explained that when a pastor is off his square, the things that the pastor normally would not do, he finds himself doing when he is distressed. These things can include drinking alcohol, committing adultery, and other things that is normally not in the pastor's character. Participant 4 echoed the same sentiments, that sometimes when pastors are unable to cope, they may find themselves doing things out of the ordinary and creating negative coping mechanisms to deal with their struggles such as stepping out on their marriage.

Theme: Self-care Practices

All participants understood the importance of self-care practices, but some did not make it a routine practice to take care of themselves. Most clergy relied heavily upon their prayer life and spirituality as a form of self-care (Guzman & Teh, 2016). Most clergy turned to their faith in God to cope with difficulties and stress. They utilized spiritual resources such as prayer and Bible readings to help uplift them during difficult times. This was their form of getting away and conducting self-care activities. However, the participants in this study mentioned that they sometimes found it difficult to spend time with God for themselves. Their time of studying the Word of God always turned to them preparing for a sermon or Bible study. And their prayers were usually for their congregation and others.

Self-care Activities

Participants knew the importance of taking time away to do self-cares activities but did not do it on a regular basis. Most participants mentioned that they had a man-cave in the home in which they could retreat to and getaway for some quiet time or to watch television. Participant 3 discussed how he loves movies. So, he would find himself in his man-cave for hours watching movies. He mentioned that he sometimes gets illustrations for his sermon from the movies he

watches. He also breaks away and golf with some of his closest friends. Participant 2 mentioned that he does water aerobics and walks as much as he can to take care of himself. He also mentioned that he takes Friday evening off to spend with his wife. He informs the church to only contact him in an emergency and explained how important it is for him to spend this time with his wife.

Thought Process

Potts (2020) mentioned that one group in his study, desired to be more intentional about planning and doing things for themselves and with their wives. Most participants in this study stated that their self-care practice had to be intentional. Participants mentioned that it was challenging to think of taking care of themselves. Some were just learning how to take time off for their self. Participant 5 mentioned that he is enrolled in several cohorts that are teaching pastors and ministers have to practice self-care. So, it is a teaching process. Participant 5 also mentioned that he has to be intentional in meditating with God sometimes for himself and not as a pastor. Participant 4 also mentioned how he had to be intentional in seeking the Lord and reading the Bible for himself and not for the creation of a sermon for Sunday morning. He further stated that he has to be intentional to seek out non-religious books to read for pleasure and empowerment. Participant 1 stated that you just have to make yourself do it. Don't keep talking about what you are going to do, just do it. The researcher encouraged the participants to be intentional and try to be more deliberate in taking time out for themselves.

When it comes to mental health, all participants mentioned that they are strong advocates for mental health. They discussed the importance of mental health with their members and even encourage their members to seek help from a licensed professional. Participant 2 mentioned that he wishes that the stigma of mental health would no longer plaque the black community because

there is nothing wrong with seeking help. Participant 1 mentioned that Black pastors tell their congregants to see a licensed professional, but we will not go see one for our problems.

Participant 5 mentioned it is a challenge for pastors to seek external help because they are afraid of being seen unfit to run the church or that their congregation may replace them. This is once again why it is so important to take the stigma off of mental health in the black community.

Participant 2 stated pastors should feel free to say, I am not okay to his congregation but also say but I will be okay. Pastors have to understand they are not immune from having problems or mental disruptions in their live. The Bible tells us that a “man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1; KJV). This scripture explains how no one, not even pastors, are not exempt from hardship or mental disruptions. Participant 1 mentioned that pastors need to take care of themselves and get the help they need and come out of denial and admit that they have problems. It is okay to disconnect sometimes for your mental health just because you are disconnected from answering a phone call or attending church services doesn’t mean that you are disconnecting from God. Pastors have to be reminded that they can still serve God in any capacity; you don’t always have to serve him just in the role as a pastor.

Implications

The stress on pastors can be difficult to handle without the proper support systems in place to help release the stress and assist in developing health coping mechanism. Many of the pastors mentioned that they have or are seeing a licensed therapist. However, some pastors mentioned that it can sometimes be difficult for them to afford a licensed counselor/therapist that is charging anywhere from \$150 to \$200 an hour. In addition, they mentioned finding the right therapist is difficult. Many of the participants felt as though they have not found the right therapist to build a rapport with. Some participants have had several counselors/therapists and

have not found the right fit. Some participants mentioned that there are not many Christian counselors within their areas. Another barrier is that there are not many Black counselors. One of the participants mentioned that he was looking for an older woman, or somebody who was at least familiar with the faith or with church ministry. He went on to state that sometimes it hard to find a counselor/therapist because of their perception of ministry and their perception of pastors. Also, their thoughts of what pastors should and should not do, and what pastor should know spiritually on how to handle their problems. One participant stated that some counselors don't counsel the man, but they counsel his spirituality, his position, and his faith. Another participant stated that he feels that counselors can't deal with what Black pastors go through. The comments and feelings of the participants reflect some of the findings in the literature. Ormond et al. (2019) mentioned that some barriers that African American individual may face when choosing not to seek formal mental health services: (1) mistrust (historical context, biases, and lack of cultural competency); (2) socioeconomic factors; (3) social stigma; (4) misunderstanding of psychologist and/or lack of cultural competency; and (5) lack of mental health awareness.

Counselors

This study has brought out some current trends that can affect Black male pastors' mental health and self-care practices. This study brought forth the voice of Black pastors so that mental health professionals can get a better understanding of their perspective and experiences. The results of this study can assist counselors in treating this population. This study also informed counselors some factors and experiences that impacts Black pastors' mental well-being.

Counselors can use this study as a point of reference to build rapport and start conversations with this population during their sessions

Counselors can use the data from this study to understand that one of the barriers of Black pastors seeking therapy is the cost of the sessions. Financial problems are among the top five stressors of clergymen (Adams et al., 2016; Guzman & Teh, 2016; Morris & Blanton, 1994). It has been reported that 95% of all clergies are underpaid (Morris & Blanton, 1994). Some of the participants in this study discussed limited finances to participate in self-cares. Counselors can create a reasonable sliding scale or income-based sliding scale to open the opportunity for Black pastors to attend counseling sessions. In addition, they can develop a certain number of pro bono sessions a year that can be offered to Black pastors. The American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) Code of Ethics Section C describes how counselors should consider providing services to individuals at little to no cost. As counselors create offer services for free or at a lower cost for pastors, they can go out into the Black religious community and educate the community on mental health and market this new initiative. Being present in the community can start building trust between the Black community and mental health counselors (especially with White counselors). Also, counselors can be advocates on the state and national level in the fight to reduce health care disparities among the Black community.

Counselors can also find time to be involve and participate with the Black community, so that they can familiarizes themselves with the culture and true perspective of the community and their religious belief. This can be done by attending events (e.g., Black History month, Black vendor fairs, community/block parties, Juneteenth, etc.), so that the community can develop a relationship and trust with mental health professionals. Mental health professionals working side-by-side with the Black community can help reduce the stigma of mental health among Black individuals. Having counselors out in the Black community can give them the true essence of the culture that cannot be captured in an academic course.

Counselor Education

Educating counselors on the unique perspectives of this population is important so that counselors can effectively work with them. Bringing forth the voice of Black pastors is key to helping mental health professionals get a better understanding of their needs so that they can continue to build an environment of trust with this population. This study showed the importance of preparing future counselors, during their master's and doctoral programs, to meet the needs of unique populations.

Counseling programs should integrate diversity (spirituality, ethnics, gender, age, etc.) topics into their curriculum. Diversity topics should not be discussed in just one or two courses, but it should be incorporated in every course within the program. Students should be introduced to different populations throughout the entire program. Creating activities that would involve students actively being a part of ethnic, religious, and generational groups that are different from their own. These activities can include pairing classmates of different populations together for a semester to talk about different ethnic, spiritual, etc. experiences or pairing classmates of different populations and requiring them to spend tens contact hours with that classmate in their environment for the semester. During the activity each student would have to journal what they thought about the population prior to the assignment, what they learned, how they felt being in a new environment, etc.

Another assignment counseling programs can incorporate into their curriculum is that three advocacy projects have to be conducted prior to graduation. The advocacy project will require students to go out into the community and work with underserved, underprivileged, and marginalized populations. The projects should include bringing more awareness to mental health and trying to reduce the stigma of it, working with legislators and non-for-profits to find funding

to bridge the gap of health disparities within this population, and attending cultural events to enhance the student's cultural awareness. Expanding the instructional space from classroom and academic textbook to field work and real individual experiences can also improve multicultural group counseling skills with CITs.

Counseling programs should also intentionally seek to hire faculty from different ethnic backgrounds to bring in diverse perspectives and cultural experience-based pedagogy. The perspective that these individuals can bring to the classroom can introduce CITs to real-life experiences that may not be published in their course books. It can also add authentic dialogue between the professor and counseling students, including a question-and-answer period.

Outside of the classroom, this study can be included in presentations to counselors and CITs. The researcher has submitted a proposal for the Illinois Counseling Association 2022 Fall Conference to present some of her findings to mental health professionals and students. The researcher is willing to do a formal presentation or roundtable discussion to bring awareness of the findings in this study and to discuss the experiences and needs of Black pastors to mental health professionals and students.

Pastoral

The data and results of this study inform pastors of the importance of taking care of their mental health. The results showed that there are common experiences that affects a pastor's mental health, as well as his overall character. This study can be used as a guide to start the conversations with pastors to begin to take better care of their well-being.

The researcher plans to attend the Baptist General State Convention of Illinois board meeting in October to present the findings of this study to a group of Black male pastors. The researcher plans to allow time during the meeting for the pastors to have open and honest

discussions about the findings. The attendees will be asked about their experiences and to discuss their similarities and differences from what is reported in the study. The researcher and attendees will create a plan of action and develop self-care activities for pastors to utilize. After the meeting, the researcher will provide the attendees with resources available to help them during times of distress and pamphlets on the importance of self-care, signs of depression, and time management. Lastly, the researcher will encourage the attendees to continue the discussion with other pastors and ministers within their churches. She will also offer her services to present this study at churches and conferences to help pastors create self-care plans to better take care of their mental well-being.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the lack of viewpoints from different genders. This study focused primarily on the Black male perspective of pastoring and their experiences and did not include the perspective from a Black female pastor. Black women and men experience different struggles and their interactions with family and church may look different. Also, women and men have different viewpoint regarding where and who they seek support from in times of distress. Lastly, the self-care practices between Black women and men may look different.

Also, bringing in the different point of views from other religious denominations. In this study, 80% of the participants were affiliated with the Baptist doctrine. To include other religious denominations to the study may introduce the different needs or expectations that congregations from different religious denomination may pose on the pastor. Further, it can discuss the different traditions within the other religious denominations and how they impact the pastor.

Another limitation is the church size. Many participants pastored churches less than 300 people. One participant pastored a church where the congregation was way over 2000 and

another pastored a church with over 500 members, with their perspective and experiences being different from those who pastored smaller congregation.

Lastly, the location of the participants can be seen as a limitation. All participants were from the Illinois area. Expanding the recruitment to include participants from across the United States to gain the perspective from those in a city, suburban, rural, etc. environments. Pastors whose churches are in small communities/suburbs may see a greater support and trust from the community they serve rather than those pastors who churches are in larger cities.

Future Direction

There is limited literature on the different generational levels within a congregation, urging a future study to investigate this topic. The study can discuss the expectations of the different generational levels of membership of the church and of the pastor. Further, it can discuss and compare the past and current traditions and how they are effectively working together in the churches. If research could be done on this topic it could give pastors a better understanding of how to deal with their congregation across all generations and better equip pastors to work with diverse populations. Additively, it can give mental health counselors meaningful information on the conflicts that their clients (pastors) could be facing and equip them to better understand their clients' (pastors) mental distress or exhaustion.

The last question of this study was *Are there any experiences as a Black pastor that you had experienced that the researcher has not explored that you would like to add to this research?*

The majority of the participants mentioned the difference between Black and White pastors. Conducting a study to show the similarities and differences of the roles of the Black and White pastors, would be advantageous. Also, comparing the struggles that each pastor faces. In addition, exploring the expectations that the Black congregations versus the White congregations

pose on their pastors would be informational and provide a huge contribution to the current literature.

Lastly, a study can be conducted on the experiences of the wife of the Black pastor. Throughout this study, the participants mentioned how much they relied on their wives for personal support. The pastor's wife has to take on this heavy load, in addition to taking care of the children and home. Therefore, getting their perspective on their role as the wife of a Black pastor and their struggles of balancing their husband and the pastor. Also, getting an understanding of the wives' support system and self-care practices would be essential. This study can also be done on the experiences of the children of Black pastors.

Conclusion

There is a misconception that some people believe, as well as pastors, that pastors are immune from the challenges of life and associated suffering, but this study found that pastors are human too. Pastors are individuals who suffer from daily human experiences, hurts, deaths, marital problems, divorce, singleness, children's issues, and many more circumstances. Pastors desire to receive support, comfort, and understanding, just like the individuals they serve. Pastors need continual support from their family, friends, congregation, and community. Pastors also need to know that their congregation and community understand that it is okay for them not to be okay and to allow them the time they need to rejuvenate. They need continuous prayers and time away to focus on themselves.

According to the participants in this study, their work is a religious calling. Some clergymen believe that their entire being/identity is predicated on their service to God (Greene & Robbins, 2015). However, Black pastors need to understand they need to take care of themselves, come out of denial that they can walk on water, and realize that they do have

problems (personal, spiritual, mental, etc.) that can affect their mental capacity. They have to be reminded that they are human too. Just because you are a pastor, you are not exempt from the trials and tribulations of this world. Job 14:1 tells us that “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” No one is exempt from issues. It is time for Black pastors to stop covering up the issues that they are experiencing and get the help that is available to them through external resources (secular and spiritual counselors). As Participant 2, stated it is okay for pastors to say, “I am not okay, but I will be okay”. It is time for Black pastors to be true to themselves and to say “I’m not okay” and seek the help they need to become mentally healthy and whole.

Black pastors are a unique population due to the many culture standards and expectations from the church and community that they have to carry, along with the different set of issues (social injustice, social unrest, discrimination, racial disparities, poverty, etc.) that they may endure personally. It is the researcher’s hope that this study will help current and future counselors to understand this population. Further, that it will provide some insight on how to work with this population and assist them in building therapeutic interventions that will help this unique population. This study is important because it brings awareness to some of the experiences that Black pastors have been through and some of the emotions that they carry. Working with this population, without proper or current research, will do more harm than good to this population while in a therapeutic session. Therefore, it is important for studies to continue to be conducted on this population, so that mental health professionals can get a better understanding of their experiences, thoughts, and emotions to better serve them.

Black pastors understand mental health. They are aware that their mental health has been impacted at some point throughout their ministry work. Removing the stigma of mental health,

especially within the Black community, may improve the willingness of Black pastors to seek help for their mental distress. The researcher would like to see more counselors partnering with the Black community and advocating in society, politics, and businesses to remove the stigma of mental health. It is the prayer of the researcher that other studies would be conducted on this population, first so that their voices and experiences can be documented. Secondly so that we, as mental health professionals, can better serve this population in our therapeutic sessions and within our communities. Lastly, the researcher's prayer is that this study will be read by pastors near and far, so that the message will get out to Black pastors that *it's okay to not to be okay and that you no longer have to suffer alone.*

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Appendix A

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your relationship status (marital or single)?
3. How many children?
 - a. Ages?
4. What is the estimate size of your congregation?
5. How long have you been pastoring at a senior level?
6. Level of education?
7. What denomination are you affiliated with?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the person you are today?
2. What are some expectations that you have for yourself?
 - a. As an individual
 - b. As a pastor
3. What are some of your successes and challenges as a pastor?
4. How would you describe your immediate family structure?
5. What is your perception of your role as a father/husband within your family structure?
6. How do you think your immediate family would describe you?
7. What are some of your successes and challenges in your role within your family?
8. How do you define mental health?
 - a. How has your/this definition shown itself in your life?
9. What experiences have you encountered that you may feel have impacted your mental health?
10. What is your attitude regarding taking care of your own mental health?
11. Where do you turn when you need help or are experiencing difficult situations?
12. What is your view on seeking help for external support?
13. What does your support system look like?
 - a. How do you utilize your support system?
14. How would you describe your self-care practices?
15. Are there any experiences as a Black pastor that you had experienced that the researcher has not explored that you would like to add to this research?

Appendix C

Email Announcement

Invitation to Participants in a Qualitative Research Study

The Lived Experiences of Black Pastors and Their Self-Care Practices

My name is Tracy Metcalf. I am a Black Christian woman enrolled in Governor State University's Counseling Education and Supervision doctoral program. It is my desire to conduct my dissertation project on the experience of Black pastors. I am interested in understanding the unique experiences of Black male pastors and want to give them an opportunity to express their experiences and self-care practices. Allowing the Black male pastor to express his narrative will equip the field of counseling in obtaining a better understanding on how to provide services to this unique population.

Participants: 6 male adults who:

- Self-identify as Black or African American
- Born male and identify as male
- Between the age of 30 – 100.
- Are ordained as a member of the clergy
- Are in the role as pastor or senior pastor of a church
- Has been in the pastor or senior pastor role for 3 or more years.

Once you have responded to participant in the research, you will be asked to complete a screening survey. If you are eligible, you will then be asked to complete a consent form and a demographics questionnaire prior to scheduling a virtual interview. The questionnaire will be sent via email and completed through SurveyMonkey. Once the questionnaire is received, you will be contacted to schedule a 60-90 minute virtual interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. This research project will take place January 2022 through May 2022.

If you are interested in this research or have any questions or concerns, please contact me at youcanbhappy@gmail.com or 815-483-8035.

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

Tracy D. Metcalf, MA, LPC, NCC

Doctoral candidate, Governor State University

Appendix D

Welcoming Email

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project, "The Lived Experiences of Black Pastors and their Self-Care Practices". Your interview is scheduled for (date) via Zoom. Your Zoom meeting information is listed below.

Also, please sign the attached consent form and send it to me electronically approving your participation in the research and your understanding that your interview will be recorded. Thank you again and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Have a great evening!

Tracy Metcalf, MA, LPC, NCC

PhD candidate, Counseling Education and Supervisor

Your meeting information is below:

Join Zoom Meeting

Appendix E

Consent Form

Governors State University

College of Education

Division of Psychology and Counseling

Title of Research Study: The Lived Experiences of Black Pastors and Their Self-Care

Principal Investigator: Tracy Metcalf (student investigator)/Dr. Eman Tadros (advisor)

Key Information:

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to participate or not.

More detailed information is listed later on in this consent form.

- I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the lived experiences of Black male pastors and their view on their personal self-care. This research is to get a better understanding and uncover the meaning of Black male pastors' lived experiences and views on their own personal strategies to take care of their mental health through self-care practices.
- Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty.
- You will be contacted to schedule a 60-90 minute virtual interview.
- The risks of participating in this research are no greater than those experienced in daily life.
- This study may not benefit you directly, but it may help mental health professionals when working with Black male pastors within the mental health arena.

Why am I being asked to participate in this research study?

I am asking you to participate in this research study because there is little to no research on Black male pastors and their experiences in their role and how they incorporate self-care practices to cope with life daily challenges and experiences.

What should I know about participating in a research study?

- Whether or not you participate is up to you. You can choose not to participate.
- You can agree to participate and then later change your mind.
- Your decision to participate or not participate will not be held against you or result in penalty.
- You can ask all the questions that you want before you decide to participate.
- You do not have to complete or respond to any question that you are uncomfortable with.
- You can withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

What happens if I agree to participate in the research study?

- You will be asked to answer demographic questions and participate in a 60–90 minute interview.
 - An interview will be scheduled at an agreeable date between you and me.
 - The virtual interviews will be conducted via Zoom.
 - The interview will involve a series of open-ended questions about your experience as a Black male pastor, including your self-care practices.
 - You do not have to respond to any question that you are uncomfortable with.
 - You can withdraw from participation in the interview at any time without penalty.

- Please note the interview will be recorded.
- After the interview, you have the option of requesting a copy of the transcript for your review.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

- The risks of participating are no greater than those experienced in daily life.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

- Participation in research is voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate.
- You can withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?

- You can leave the research study at any time, and it will not be held against you.
- Any information collected prior to withdrawal will not be used.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

- Each interview will be transcribed and given a code number to protect your identity.
- Research data and materials will be safely stored in separated locked file cabinets at Governors State University.
- This data will only be accessible to me and my advisor.
- Research data will be retained for 12 months after the completion of the project.
 - If data is needed for a longer period to time, I will obtain an additional consent form from you.
 - Audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion and approval of dissertation project prior to graduation.
 - Transcriptions will be shredded with a secure shredding service.

Data Sharing

