

THRIVING OR SURVIVING? A STUDY OF NAZARENE WOMEN CLERGY

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The Barna Group surveyed Protestant pastors in March 2022 and found that 42% had considered leaving ministry altogether in the past year. Top reasons they gave for this consideration were stress, loneliness, and political division.¹ London & Wiseman have identified the ministry as an occupation with inherent vocational hazards, such as overwork, stress, lack of adequate preparation, low self-esteem, discouragement, loneliness, conflict, burnout, and family issues.² Clergy sustainability is in peril, the research suggests. Women clergy had higher rates of burnout than men, the Barna study found.³ If ministry in general threatens the personal well-being of clergy of both genders, women clergy face extra challenges. This study attempts to identify those extra challenges and measure whether women clergy are indeed on the brink of disaster.

Literature Review

In her 2023 qualitative study of the experiences of current Nazarene women clergy, Lewis Mowry has identified a number of common negative experiences among Nazarene women clergy that would chill anyone's response to a call to ministry. These include discouraging words from male colleagues and leaders, silence from the same when injustices occur, overly personal questions in hiring and promotion, sexualized feedback on their ministry, being disqualified because of emotions, requests for a "sweeter," more docile disposition, expectations of low or no pay, and enforcement of the "Billy Graham rule."⁴ It is likely that these types of morale-deflating experiences are preventing women clergy from full participation in ministry along with their male counterparts.

Her findings reflect the research of women clergy in other denominations. Carpenter lists eleven factors that keep African American women clergy from moving forward in ministry: "sexism, male clergy, racism, female laity, lack of leadership skills, weak interpersonal skills, lack of mentors, male laity, weak oratorical skills, lack of advocacy, and lack of family support."⁵ Fry Brown identifies similar hurdles for African American clergywomen, such as "issues of burnout, Sabbath, managing emotions, health, illness, self-care, spirituality, and contemplative life," along with spousal support or lack thereof, personal behaviors, mentoring or lack thereof, and "sexual harassment, age discrimination, physical prejudices, token program participation, pastoral appointments, and submission."⁶ She further notes that such issues are "applicable to most women in ministry regardless of ordination status, denominational affiliation, age, or ethnicity."⁷ In her 2013 study of 150 female pastors in "freewill or autonomous denominations,"⁸ including several Baptist groups, Smith found that women clergy may be "just as qualified as – or more qualified than – their male counterparts. However, women are still far less likely to be

¹ Barna Group, "Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year."

² London Jr and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 22; London Jr and Wiseman, *Greater Risk*, 20.

³ Warren, "Opinion | Why Pastors Are Burning Out."

⁴ Lewis Mowry, "Be Sweet."

⁵ Carpenter, *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen*, 116.

⁶ Fry Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?*, xxx–xxx.

⁷ Fry Brown, xxix.

⁸ Smith, *Beyond the Stained Glass*, xiii.

offered such leadership roles [as senior pastors].”⁹ She identifies theological concerns and socio-political issues as the primary obstacles to women in ministry. “In many ways, churches have remained captive to the patriarchal character of the larger culture.”¹⁰

Elements of Thriving

What can be done, if anything, to cope with both general clergy factors and specifically female experiences that lead to burnout and leaving ministry? Barna suggests that soul-care, community, and spiritual disciplines might play a factor in helping avoid the general exodus from ministry.¹¹ In Parkman, Erwich and vanSanne’s 2020 study of sustainability and well-being in pastors, they found seven factors that contribute to these goals. Their seven factors were: spiritual, physical, mental, social, vocational, organizational, and financial.¹² They concluded that “the leader’s well-being initiatives, plus the organization’s well-being initiatives, together provide an ecosystem where the leader can predictably thrive.”¹³ They suggest that, since their study only had 14% women clergy in their respondent group, that some further areas of research should involve “gender differences in the experience of Christian leaders,” and “ascertaining whether there are statistical differences between denominations/theological traditions.”¹⁴

Nazarene Women Preachers

As a model case, this study shall focus on the Church of the Nazarene. It is a Protestant Christian denomination in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, founded in 1908, that today boasts over 2.6 million members in more than 30,000 churches in 164 world areas.¹⁵ Denominational leaders are proud to point out that the parent bodies that joined together to create the Church of the Nazarene were already ordaining women.¹⁶ The first ordinand among these groups was Anna Hanscome, ordained in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1892 by the Central Evangelical Holiness Association. Anna had birthed the group that formed the church in a weekly women’s prayer group in her home, and the church had started in 1890 with Anna as the assistant pastor under a non-resident supervising minister for two years, following which she was ordained as pastor. Other groups that assembled to form the Church of the Nazarene ordained women in Tennessee by 1899 and in Washington by 1902.¹⁷

Thus, at its founding, 17.7% of ordained ministers were women.¹⁸ This percentage has waxed and waned, with a historical peak in 1930 at 20.7%, with a long period of decline after that.¹⁹ The lowest year, 1985, reported only 5% of total clergy as women. By 2019, the last year for which statistics are available, women represented 23.5% of total ordained clergy in the USA/Canada region, seemingly a high point, but only 11.6% of lead pastors.²⁰

⁹ Smith, 36.

¹⁰ Smith, 36.

¹¹ Barna Group, “Pastors Share Top Reasons They’ve Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year.”

¹² Parkman, Erwich, and vanSanne, “The Predictors of Sustainability and Well-Being in Ministry,” 88.

¹³ Parkman, Erwich, and vanSanne, 92.

¹⁴ Parkman, Erwich, and vanSanne, 94.

¹⁵ “Home - Church of the Nazarene.”

¹⁶ Houseal, “Clergy Women Stats.”

¹⁷ Ingersol, “Ordaining Anna Hanscome.”

¹⁸ Houseal, “Clergy Women Stats.”

¹⁹ Houseal.

²⁰ “Women Clergy Statistics.”

If sustainability and well-being are inherently at risk in the ministry across the board for American clergy, how are Nazarene women clergy specifically faring in this climate? Are they thriving or just surviving? And if they're thriving, what factors promote that? This quantitative study attempts to answer those questions.

Methodology

This study began with a survey of 111 women clergy with surveys gathered in September and October 2023. Five were identified as non-Nazarene, so their responses were excluded. The remaining 106 were ordained and licensed female ministers in various ministry roles: 42% were lead pastors, 43% were staff pastors, and the remainder were interns, students, or other roles. Notably, 45% of respondents worked bi-vocationally in additional secular employment. The age of respondents was well distributed, with 29% aged 41-50, 27% aged 61 and over, 21% for ages 51-60, and 17% at 31-40. Only 6% were 30 or under, but due to the need for education and several years of service prior to ordination, the low number is not surprising. Race identification was at 83% white non-Hispanic, 6% white Hispanic, and 9% represented BIPOC categories. Church size was also well-distributed, with 30% having an average weekly worship attendance of 25-49, 17% of 150+, 14% of 75-99, 12% of 50-74, 14% of 1-24, and 12% of 100-149. When asked about the number of hours they spent in ministry each week, 33% of respondents reported working 31-45 hours, 27% worked 16-30 hours, 24% reported 46-60 hours, with the remaining 14% at 0-15. Years of ministry service of respondents came in at 41% working 21+ years, 26% at 11-20 years, 24% at 6-10 years, 8% at 3-5 years, and 2% 0-2 years. Respondents reported that 52% of them had immediate family members who were also in ministry, and another 17% had another relative in ministry, while the remaining 30% had none.

The survey was administered via SurveyMonkey and was disseminated by a Facebook group for Nazarene Women Clergy as well as through snowball sampling methods that originated with personal contacts of the author, particularly with church leaders who knew networks of women clergy. The survey included 26 questions, some with multiple parts, including demographic, praxis, experiential, and mindset questions. This method proved effective for identifying factors that correlated with thriving, which were used as dependent variables. Factor analyses helped clarify eleven practices or experiences that were used as independent variables.

That process affirmed three of Parkman, Erwich, and vanSanne's seven predictors of sustainability: spiritual, mental, and social, though those terms were not specifically used in the survey questions. In addition, the survey results broaden the research to other factors that contribute to well-being.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Using correlation, we measured seven categories or factors that were drawn from concepts articulated by Haley Barton. For example, respondents were asked to rate how much or little they agreed with the statements "I feel lonely in my leadership role," "My loneliness makes me feel that I am on the brink of disaster," and "I share the burden of leadership with other leaders." These three statements attempted to measure respondents' sense of loneliness, as

discussed by Haley Barton.²¹ All other statements relied on Haley Barton's barometers of strength²² in leadership in similar fashion, as noted below.

Four categories were potentially positive in their effect on thriving: self-perception of "Success," feelings of "Rest," degree of "Listening" to God, and degree of surrender to "Obeying" God. The other three were on the negative, non-thriving side: feelings of "Loneliness," degree of "Sacrifice" made for the ministry, and a conviction that their calling was an "Impossible" task. These categories were measured using a 7-point Likert scale of agreement with the various statements.

The first positive dependent variable, self-perception of "Success," combined response to two statements: "I feel successful in ministry" and the reverse of "I feel like a failure in ministry." A Cronbach's *alpha* of .683 confirmed moderate reliability. The scores of the first question were averaged with the reverse of the response to the second question to create the "Self-perception of success" composite measure.

The "Rest" dependent variable, at a Cronbach's *alpha* of .721, combined the following statements: "I have a rhythm of rest and work in my life," and "I take time for Sabbath rest each week." Again, these were averaged to create the "Rest" measure.

Degree of "Listening" to God was determined by averaging the responses to the statements "I am aware when God is getting my attention" and "I take time to ponder what God is saying to me." These two statements were moderately correlated with a Cronbach's *alpha* of .589. Because the *alpha* level was lower than desirable, a correlation was also run to confirm that the two variables were sufficiently correlated ($r = .418, p < .01$) for measuring the same construct, and the results support that they do. The dependent variable of "Listening" was created from these statements.

The "Obedience" to God dependent variable showed a significant negative correlation ($r = -.370, p < .001$) between two statements: "When a decision needs to be made, I struggle to accept God's will over my own" and "When someone is harsh, critical, or complaining about my ministry, I can pray for the situation without anger." These two variables were combined into a composite measure by averaging the reverse score of the first question and the score of the second.

The first negative dependent variable, "Loneliness," had a Cronbach's *alpha* of .723 combining the three statements noted above: "I feel lonely in my leadership role," "My loneliness makes me feel that I am on the brink of disaster," and the reverse scored question "I share the burden of leadership with a team of other leaders." The values of the first two questions were averaged with the reverse score of the last to create the "Loneliness" composite measure.

Two statements combined for the "Sacrifice" dependent variable (*alpha* = .937). These were, "I feel that I sacrifice my family's needs in favor of ministry responsibilities," "My family feels that I sacrifice their needs in favor of ministry responsibilities." The "Sacrifice" measure was created through the same averaging technique as before.

Two statements also loaded together in the variable called "Impossible" (*alpha* = .830.) They were "In my personal spiritual life, I sense God is calling me to something that feels

²¹ Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*, 155–67.

²² Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*.

impossible,” and “In my leadership role, I sense God is calling me to something that feels impossible.” The combined average was used as the composite measure. Since all these questions were based on 7-point scales, the resulting composite measures for all dependent variables remained in the 1 to 7 value range.

Independent Variables

Spiritual Disciplines. Three composite independent variables were identified in the questions about spiritual disciplines. Exploratory factor analysis (principal components, Varimax rotation, Eigenvalue < 1.0) showed that Bible reading and prayer loaded together ($>.66, r = .255, p < .01$), creating an independent variable we called “*Devotions*.” Silence and solitude also loaded together ($>.80, r = .61, p < .001$), which we labeled as “*Solitude*.” Finally, fasting and private retreat loaded together ($>.64, r = .30, p < .01$) to give us the variable of “*Self-Denial*.”

Self-Care Variables. A factor analysis of eight self-care measures resulted in a couple of factors with surface validity, and a couple of other factors that lacked clear loadings of multiple variables. Therefore, a correlation table was used to examine the relationships between items that seemed to measure similar concepts. Frequency of “sleep” and “eating healthfully” were correlated ($r = .385, p < .001$) and similarly loaded together on a single factor which we called “*Body Care*.” A composite measure with that name was created through averaging scores. Another self-care variable was identified when “time with friends” and “time alone” loaded together and were confirmed by correlation ($r = .288, p < .01$) to measure a similar concept, creating the “*Respite*” variable. Among the remaining variables, “exercise,” “time with family,” and “regular doctor visits” failed to correlate as well if at all with other variables.

Human Resources Variables. Nine questions about negative experiences with male clergy were subjected to factor analysis (principal components, Varimax rotation, Eigenvalues > 1.0) and produced two factors in a rotated component matrix. The independent variable of “*Clergy Disrespect*” came from strong loading (.75 and higher) in a rotated component matrix of “criticism in front of others,” “private criticism,” and “unsolicited advice.” Their reliability as a measure was confirmed (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .834$). They were combined into a composite measure through averaging the scores of the three variables. Further, “*Clergy Harassment*” was produced by strong loading on a second factor (.76 and higher) of “flirtation,” “sexual harassment,” and “inappropriate sexual contact.” Their use as a scale was confirmed through Cronbach’s α (.826). The three measures were combined into the “*Clergy Harassment*” composite measure as an average score. It is important to note that only 12% of respondents indicated disrespect from another clergy was often or frequent. Instead, 58% reported this happened seldom or never. No women clergy reported experiencing harassment often, but 3.8% did indicate such behavior happened some and another 19.1% reported that it did happen, though seldom. Only 77.1% of women clergy had not experienced sexual harassment by our measures.

An identical exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the same questions related to lay people. A similar “*Lay Disrespect*” factor emerged but included additional variables. In addition to “criticism in front of others,” “private criticism,” and “unsolicited advice,” as loaded on the clergy measure, this factor added “voiced disapproval of your role because of your sex” and “flirtation,” the latter of which had previously loaded on harassment when it was from colleagues. All variables loaded at .66 or higher. These five items were confirmed as a scale with strong reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .846$). A “*Lay Harassment*” factor resulted from two of the same items as the “*Clergy Harassment*” with the removal of flirtation. The two items, which

loaded above .80, still were confirmed as a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .790$). Both factors were turned into composite independent measures through averaging scores of the various variables that loaded on the factors. Lay disrespect, that received from non-clergy affiliates in the church, was reported by 12.5% of women pastors. Only 44.2% reported seldom to never being disrespected by this group. Harassment was less common from the laity with 7.6% having experienced some harassment, 19% saying it happened seldom, and 73.3% reporting not having such experiences.

Three questions measured the level of support respondents received from male colleagues, female colleagues, and district leadership. These were tested to see if they measured a single concept and showed moderate reliability as a measure with a Cronbach's α of .669. We named this independent variable "*Support*." The average score of the three questions was used as a composite variable.

Analysis

Researchers ran regression on each of the seven dependent variables, the characteristics we identified with thriving or not thriving. The hierarchical regressions all loaded demographic variables into a first block. These included Age, Average Worship Attendance, Hours Worked in Ministry, Hours Worked Bi-vocationally, Time in Current Ministry Assignment, and total Time of Ministry Service. A second block included seven variables related to human resource issues including the *Support* measure, *Lay Harassment*, *Lay Disrespect*, *Clergy Harassment*, *Clergy Disrespect*, and the stand-alone questions "Have you ever had a sabbatical?" and "Have you ever taken maternity or other health leave from your ministry?" A third block included the three measures of self-care and the three measures of spiritual discipline (*Body Care*, *Respite*, *Social Devotions*, *Solitude*, and *Self-Denial*).

Perceived Success. Four independent variables emerged as having influence on the respondents' self-perception of *Success*. In the first block, Age was an indicator with older women having higher self-perceptions of *Success* ($\beta = -.492, p < .001$). Those who pastored larger churches also had higher perceptions of their level of success ($\beta = -.257, p < .01$). In the second block, when human resources variables were added, age continued to be a significant factor ($\beta = -.290, p < .01$), as did weekly worship attendance ($\beta = -.271, p < .01$). Having a more recent sabbatical was also positively related to feelings of success ($\beta = .299, p < .01$). When third-block variables of *Self-care* and *Spiritual Disciplines* were added, those same three significant variables from block two continued to predict success as shown in the first column of Table 1, but none of the *Self-care* or *Spiritual Discipline* measures helped improve the explanation as that block failed to add significantly to success perceptions. Thus, Age, Church Size, and Recency of sabbatical were more influential than these self-help and spiritual discipline measures for Nazarene women clergy. Most respondents (58%) reported agreement with the statements measuring self-perception of *Success*. Another 36.1% were neutral, while 5.8% reported negative self-perception of *Success*.

Two dependent variables from the first block, plus several HR variables from the second block of the additional regressions, showed variable influence on the remaining dependent variables. Those that were significant in earlier blocks maintained that significance as the different blocks were added except where noted. Thus, only the influence of independent variables in the full model are shown here for simplicity. The dependent variables in the remaining regressions were *Listening to God*, *Loneliness*, *Sacrifice*, *Rest* and *Obedience*.

Listening to God was influenced by four variables in the full model. Age and the disciplines of *Devotions*, made up of Bible reading and prayer, both had a significance of $p < .001$ ($\beta = -.477$ & $.421$ respectively). The older the respondent, the more she felt able to hear God's voice, and the same result came from increased *Devotions*. *Body Care*, made up of sleeping and eating well, showed less influence ($\beta = .235$, $p < .05$) but was still important to *Listening to God*. Surprisingly, *Lay Harassment* was also significant ($\beta = .364$, $p < .01$). The more sexual harassment from lay people the respondent experienced, the more likely she was to be *Listening to God*. A solid 99% of respondents reported agreement that they experienced *Listening to God*, with only 1% neutral and no negative responses.

The regression for *Loneliness*, one of the more negative dependent variables, produced significant results. Age was significant in the first block only ($\beta = .271$, $p < .05$), but that influence did not remain when the second and third blocks were added. The only two factors making a respondent feel lonely were the presence of Lay Disrespect ($\beta = .454$, $p < .001$) and *Time with Family*, ($\beta = -.250$, $p < .05$) where less self-reported sacrificing of family time was equated with greater feelings of loneliness. Interestingly, none of the other spiritual disciplines made any effect on feelings of loneliness. Half of respondents (50%) reported not feeling lonely, with 31.1% at neutral, and 18.9% reporting feelings of loneliness.

Two practices related to respondents' feelings of *Sacrifice*. Frequency of taking *Maternity Leave* was significantly related to feelings of sacrifice ($\beta = -.246$, $p < .05$) in the second block, but that effect disappeared when *Spiritual Disciplines* and *Self-care* were added in the third block. *Lay Harassment* became significant when the third block was added ($\beta = .296$, $p < .05$) and the lack of exercise was similarly related to those feelings ($\beta = -.231$, $p < .05$). The higher the frequency of practicing both taking maternity leave and exercise, revealed the less participants felt they were sacrificing their families for the sake of ministry. *Lay Harassment* experience corresponded with greater *Sacrifice*. Respondents were split almost evenly in their feelings of Sacrifice. While 41.9% felt they were overly sacrificing for ministry, slightly less than a third (29.5%) were neutral, nearly the same percent (28.6%) had little to no sense of their sacrifice.

The dependent variable of *Rest* was influenced by *Self-care* and *Spiritual Discipline* variables. *Time with Family* significantly correlated with *Rest* ($\beta = .236$, $p < .05$). The *Solitude* discipline was also influential ($\beta = .255$, $p < .05$). In both cases, the more they practiced these activities, the more they felt they received rest. Notably, the self-care practice of *Respite* had no significant impact, though it cannot be ruled out as a potential factor if the sample had been larger. The majority of respondents, 59.4%, said they felt adequately able to rest. Another 23.6% were neutral, and 17% expressed a lack of rest.

The dependent variable of *Obeying God* was more of a struggle for the women who pastored in larger churches ($\beta = .362$, $p < .01$). The length of time the pastors had been in their current role was positively related with the struggle to *Obey God* ($\beta = .234$, $p < .05$). This effect only emerged in the third block of the model shown in the table but was absent in earlier blocks. *Lay Harassment* continued to have an influence ($\beta = .419$, $p < .01$), as it had with other aspects of thriving, along with Lay Disrespect ($\beta = -.410$, $p < .01$). The more harassment a clergywoman experienced, the easier they found *Obeying God*. However, the more *Clergy Disrespect* a respondent experienced, the more she had difficulty surrendering to *Obeying God's* will. One remaining influence was the interesting correlation between *Regular Doctor Care* and the ease of *Obeying God* ($\beta = .362$, $p < .05$). It seems that the impetus to have one's own way versus surrendering that autonomy extends not only to one's relationship with God, but also one's

doctor. The majority (61%) of respondents reported positively regarding their ability to obey God, but 31.4% were neutral, and 6.7% reported negatively on this ability.

The dependent variable of feeling that their task was Impossible was not influenced by the variables in this study. No significant models emerged, so further analysis was not done. Nevertheless, 61.3% reported feeling that their calling felt impossible, with 22.6% at neutral and 16.0% reporting not feeling so.

Table 1 – Results of hierarchical regressions of six dependent variables

	Success	Listening	Loneliness	Sacrifice	Rest	Obedience
Age	-.261*	-.477***	-.046	-.199	.045	-.046
Ave church attendance	-.294**	.007	.019	.07	.034	.362**
Hours worked in ministry	-.008	-.041	.018	-.089	-.044	-.075
Hours worked bi-vocationally	.046	.121	-.027	-.104	.170	.178
Time in current ministry role	.066	.136	-.045	-.051	-.030	.234*
Time in ministry career	-.047	.195	.121	.066	-.017	-.028
Support of others	.137	.079	-.047	-.011	-.047	.076
Clergy harassment	--.018	-.186	.095	-.005	-.153	-.165
Clergy disrespect	-.042	.241	-.144	.024	.161	.108
Lay harassment	--.007	.364**	-.097	.296*	.032	.419**
Lay disrespect	-.168	-.222	.454***	.142	-.130	-.410**
Recency of sabbatical	.292**	-.048	-.103	-.202	.146	-.053
Frequency of Maternity Leave	.074	-.024	-.094	-.227	.042	-.076
Body care	-.053	.235*	.058	-.047	.110	.039
Respite	.188	-.123	-.134	-.138	.211	-.186
Time with Family	.123	.012	-.250*	-.080	.236*	.198
Regular Doctor Visits	.033	.046	-.045	-.001	-.194	.289**
Exercise	.023	-.064	-.119	-.231*	.035	-.040
Devotions	.119	.421***	-.165	-.001	.102	.064
Solitude	-.004	-.097	-.0408	.016	.255*	.154
Self-denial	-.053	-.076	-.074	-.085	.128	.220
Adjusted R ² - full model	.509	.292	.371	.316	.316	.246

Note: Standardized *beta* (β) scores are reported with significance *p* levels indicated as * < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001. The Adjusted R² for the full model reveals the proportion of the variance explained by the model.

Discussion & Conclusions

The majority of Nazarene women clergy reported, as might be hoped for, a finding of thriving, rather than just surviving, in answer to our research questions. Respondents self-reported being successful in their ministry at 58%. Thus, 42% were either neutral or negative about their self-perceptions of success. That happens to be the same percentage of ministers who thought about leaving ministry in the past year in Barna's 2022 survey.²³ While our study didn't specifically ask about leaving ministry, one can imagine that those who don't feel successful would be most likely to think that way. However, rather than simply a dichotomy between successful and unsuccessful reports, our study found that 42% reported a less successful feeling and 36% reported being neutral about their success. Only 6% reported a negative success perception in our survey.

Barna reported that loneliness and stress were two of the main causes of ministerial burnout among Protestant preachers.²⁴ London and Wiseman's longer list added overwork, lack of adequate preparation, discouragement, low self-esteem, conflict, burnout, and family issues.²⁵ Fry Brown's study of women clergy adds health issues, self-care, having a Sabbath, managing emotions, spirituality, and the contemplative life, along with spousal support and mentoring. She also notes some human resource concerns for women clergy.²⁶

While not all of the items above were tested in this study, many of the potential factors raised by these scholars influenced measures of thriving from Barton's list of seven factors that were used in this study – Success, loneliness, rest, listening, sacrifice, obedience, and impossible.²⁷ Beyond the few (6%) who reported that they felt unsuccessful, 19% felt lonely, 17% lacked rest, and none reported negatively to Listening to God. A further measure against thriving was sacrifice where 42% felt like they sacrificed too much. Less than 7% reported negatively on their ability to obey God, but a full 61% reported that they felt their call from God was “impossible.”

Thus, if these seven factors are the measure, more than 4 out of 5 Nazarene women clergy were avoiding the negative end of the scale on all but two measures. Sacrifice was the area in which women thrived the least, though feeling their calling was impossible was also more negative humanly, that is, without divine intervention. Because it might be seen as a badge of honor to say that the work of ministry is impossible, the over 60% high response on that measure may not directly show a lack of thriving. Perhaps it is because of this that the Impossible measure was unaffected by any independent variables in the study. Further research should use the same measure for Nazarene male clergy to see how they compare, and for female clergy generally. In addition, further research could cast a wider net to include respondents of minority races and ethnicities or of other nationalities, as this survey was most likely responded to by North American Nazarene clergy, a region that represents only 20% of the denomination globally.

This study confirmed Parkman, Erwich and vanSanne's findings that both a clergyperson's personal practices as well as the organization's practices in which they operate

²³ Barna Group, “Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year.”

²⁴ Barna Group, “Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year.”

²⁵ London Jr and Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk*, 22; London Jr and Wiseman, *Greater Risk*, 20.

²⁶ Fry Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?*, xxx–xxxi.

²⁷ Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*, 155–67.

play a role in clergy sustainability and well-being.²⁸ In our study, self-care and spiritual disciplines (personal practices) emerged as having as much impact on clergywomen's thriving as the variables we labeled as "human resources" issues ("organizational" in Parkman, Erwich and vanSanne), particularly disrespect and sexual harassment from the laity. In fact, none of the self-care or spiritual discipline practices significantly influenced more than one of the various aspects of thriving other than "time with family," while the impact of harassment and disrespect from congregants, even while somewhat infrequent occurrences, were impacting multiple dependent variables in this study. This suggests that such actions, when they do happen, must be monumental to a clergy member's ability to thrive. More research should be done on those factors.

Further, we confirmed Lewis Mowry's anecdotal evidence of experiences of disrespect and sexual harassment among Nazarene women clergy,²⁹ even though disrespect incidents are frequently for only a few (12.5%) and harassment is never frequent but occurs some for 7.6% with the laity and for 3.8% with clergy. While she found many stories of lack of support from district and denominational leadership, we were unable to confirm the effect of such lack of support directly. Her findings of being disqualified because of emotions, requests for a "sweeter," more docile disposition, and expectations of low or no pay were not measured in this study. (However, we do note that 25% of respondents indicated their ministry role was currently for no pay.) We did confirm in a similar vein that 42% of women clergy reported feeling disrespect from other clergy at least some, but only 12% thought such disrespect was frequent or more. That disrespect was not a factor in any of the measures of thriving in our study. Further research should include questions measuring the effects of Lewis Mowry's findings on thriving.

The fact that disrespect and sexual harassment from laity proved so influential to thriving not only confirms what Lewis Mowry and others have found, it also suggests that there is work to do in this area specifically. Like most churches and denominations, the Church of the Nazarene does not have a Human Resources department or even policies that might address these issues. We urgently encourage denominational attention to protecting itself from liability by establishing policies and procedures to deal with sexual harassment claims. One quarter of women ministers report such experiences within the clergy, (though flirting was included in our clergy measure, something that may not lead to a civil claim), and a similar number report harassment experiences from the laity. While these experiences may not be frequent, a single episode may result in significant harm. Other mitigation measures such as an educational campaign for laity, clergy training in recognizing and avoiding sexual harassment, and clear no-tolerance messaging from denominational leadership could help serve to ameliorate the situation.

Meanwhile, Nazarene women clergy themselves have the tools at their disposal to help them cope with the pressures of ministry, both the universal ones and the female-specific ones as well. Self-care practices and spiritual disciplines are within reach of all. Getting enough sleep and eating right helped ministers thrive in the area of listening to God, as did the regularity of making time for Bible reading and prayer. Making sure to spend time with family and in solitude helped women ministers feel rested. Exercising lowered the feeling of sacrificing too much for ministry. Surprisingly, perhaps, having regular doctor visits helped women clergy feel they thrived in the area of obedience.

²⁸ Parkman, Erwich, and vanSanne, "The Predictors of Sustainability and Well-Being in Ministry," 93.

²⁹ Lewis Mowry, "Be Sweet."

Other factors not surprisingly influenced feelings of success. Being in ministry at an older age and in a larger church helped women clergy feel more successful, as did having a more recent sabbatical. Finally, the newer one was to her current ministry role – perhaps because of answering a recent call to a new position – the more she rated herself as thriving on the obedience measure.

Perhaps because of the added challenges of being a woman in ministry, women clergy must be especially purposeful in engaging in the helpful practices they can control, even more so than their male counterparts. Thriving – and not merely surviving – is shown here to be a real possibility for the Nazarene clergywoman.

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