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**Appraisal Support Dynamics for Protestant Clergy and Their Spouses on
Marital Satisfaction in Dagoretti South Sub-County Nairobi, Kenya**

Eunice Namonywe Emusugut, Dr. Stephen Asatsa, PhD and Dr. Sheba Atieno Okumu, PhD

**Appraisal Support Dynamics for
Protestant Clergy and Their Spouses
on Marital Satisfaction in Dagoretti
South Sub-County Nairobi, Kenya**



¹Eunice Namonywe Emusugut
PhD Student: Catholic University of Eastern Africa

*Corresponding Authors Email:
eunice83809@gmail.com

²Dr. Stephen Asatsa (PhD)
H.O.D Counselling Psychology, Catholic
University of Eastern Africa

³Dr. Sheba Atieno Okumu (PhD)
Clinical Psychology

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to examine appraisal support dynamics for protestant clergy and their spouses on marital satisfaction in Dagoretti South Sub-County Nairobi, Kenya.

Methodology: This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design. The study used a sample size of 273 protestant clergy and their spouses, chosen using a simple random sampling technique for quantitative, and 12 participants who were purposefully selected for qualitative, low and high performance on levels of marital satisfaction. The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) and the Scales of Perceived Social Support were used to collect quantitative data, with the former having a reliability coefficient of 0.834 and the latter of 0.954, respectively. The researcher used both standardized questionnaires and an in-depth interview guide questionnaire to obtain data. Descriptive analysis and thematic analysis were used to examine the data. The data was presented in form of tables. SPSS version 23 for the social sciences was for inferential analysis.

Findings: The results of this study showed a small but statistically significant negative correlation between appraisal support dynamics and marital happiness. The dynamics of appraisal support had little effect on marital happiness. Couples whose feedback-giving styles are more combative tend to report lower levels of happiness in their marriages. On the other hand, this could mean that accessing appraisal support is difficult for protestant clerics and their spouses because of their positions in society as religious authorities who are expected to show highest standards of moral values, which could further strain their relationships.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:

The study was anchored on The Family Stress Theory which was propounded by McCubbin & Patterson in 1983. The study recommends that the protestant clergy and their spouses set up peer to peer support groups that will enable them to overload their marital challenges. This study recommends that the counselling psychologists board should develop a clergy centered psychotherapy that elevates appraisal support in areas of marital relationship.

Keywords: *Appraisal Support Dynamics, Protestant Clergy, Marital Satisfaction*

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INTRODUCTION

Appraisal Support Dynamics (ASD) is a concept that refers to the way in which partners and stakeholders evaluate each other's behavior and provide feedback that can either support or undermine the relationship. ASD is an important factor in marital satisfaction because it can influence how partners and other stakeholders perceive each other and their relationship (Cutrona, 2016). In the context of marital satisfaction, ASD posits that the way partners and other stakeholders perceive each other's support and criticism significantly impacts their overall relationship satisfaction. When individuals feel supported by their partners, friends or other family members during difficult times, they are more likely to experience greater marital satisfaction. The following are elements of Appraisal Support Dynamics (ASD) Perceived partner support, Perceived partner criticism, Perceived self-support and Perceived self-criticism (Cutrona, 2016).

Perceived partner support refers to an individual's subjective perception of the degree to which their romantic partner is available, responsive, and helpful during times of need or stress. This aspect of Appraisal Support Dynamics (ASD) is crucial in understanding the level of emotional and instrumental assistance individuals perceive they receive from their partners. Measuring perceived partner support can be accomplished through validated scales like the Perceived Partner Support Scale (PPSS), which assesses the perceived availability and responsiveness of the partner in times of distress (Malecki and Demaray, 2003). This scale typically consists of items related to emotional comfort, understanding, and practical help, providing insights into the individual's perceptions of their partner's supportive behaviors.

Perceived partner criticism is the subjective perception of negative feedback or disapproval coming from one's romantic partner. This aspect of ASD focuses on how individuals interpret and respond to their partner's critiques or negative evaluations. Measuring perceived partner criticism can be achieved through instruments like the Perceived Criticism Scale (PCS), which assesses the extent to which individuals perceive their partner's communication as critical or disapproving (Hooley & Teasdale, 2016). The PCS typically includes items related to how individuals interpret their partner's feedback and whether they perceive it as harsh or unsupportive.

Perceived self-support involves an individual's perception of their own ability to cope with challenges and provide emotional and instrumental support to themselves. This element of ASD relates to an individual's self-efficacy and belief in their own resilience and problem-solving skills. Measuring perceived self-support can be achieved through instruments like the Perceived Self-Support Scale (PSSS), which assesses the extent to which individuals believe they can effectively handle stressful situations and provide themselves with emotional comfort and understanding (Cheung et al., 2019). The PSSS typically includes items related to self-reliance, confidence in coping abilities, and perceptions of one's emotional self-sufficiency.

Perceived self-criticism refers to an individual's subjective experience of engaging in negative self-evaluative thoughts and self-blame during times of failure or distress. This aspect of ASD involves understanding how individuals view themselves and treat themselves when faced with difficulties. Measuring perceived self-criticism can be done using instruments like the Forms of Self-Criticizing/Attacking and Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS), which assesses the frequency and intensity of self-critical thoughts and self-reassuring thoughts (Gilbert et al.,

2019). The FSCRS typically includes items related to the tendency to be overly self-critical and lacking in self-compassion.

Personal anguish can be prevented and alleviated with the use of a buffer like accurate appraisal support. Expressions of helpful information for self-evaluation, confidence restoration, or encouragement are examples of this type of social support. Someone who is trying to boost your self-esteem may focus on your positive qualities, overlooking whatever problems you may be having, or simply express their belief in you. Individuals who receive positive appraisal support report feeling more confident in themselves (Scott & Susman, 2020). This is due to the fact that the strength of our positive appraisals affects how we feel about ourselves. The issue, however, is whether or not the spouses of protestant clergy can take advantage of this wonderful resource. The detrimental consequences of stress on health can be mitigated if people have access to assessment assistance during times of high stress. In addition, having someone to help you form a more positive interpretation of a stressful circumstance can protect you from the harmful consequences of stressors (Lakey & Cohen, 2020).

Marriage is seen as a universal activity where two individuals from different backgrounds, with different interests and with different character traits decide to live together. In most cases, the reason cited for marriage is love. Aside love, other reasons given for marriage, include feelings of belongingness, affection, compatibility, desire, and closeness and tenderness. Over the years people have withdrawn from their marriages and yet there are others who want to withdraw. Mostly when people are asked why they have left their marriages or want to leave, the excuse they give is that they are not satisfied in their marriages (Cherlin, 2012).

Marital satisfaction is an overall evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and function (Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, & Kim, 2002). It has been comprehensively investigated in many studies of marriage and family. Family life and marital satisfaction, in particular, are known as main predictors of overall quality of life. Marital satisfaction can affect not only the physical and mental health of both spouses (Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008; Le Poire, 2005), but also children's development, well-being, academic performance, social skills, and relationships (Cummings & Davies, 2010; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). A gender role perspective has often been used to describe differences in marital satisfaction. Many studies have revealed that marital satisfaction is higher in men than in women (Bernard, 1972; Fowers, 1991; Mickelson, Claffey, & Williams, 2006). These differences were explained by gender differences in roles in marriage, and in expectations for marriage and intimate relationships (Shek, 1995). Women's roles in marriage are nearly always more demanding than their husbands', especially for employed women who encounter additional responsibilities (being wife, mother, homemaker, and employee). Because women and men usually are differently socialized, the emotional expectations of women are often not met by men.

Marriage is also a long-term commitment that limits one's tendency toward self-indulgence, gratification, and self-centeredness. Couples can better prepare and condition themselves for the community in this relationship. Marriage serves as a foundation for social order by reining in selfishness and promoting love for one another (Feder, 2017). Couples are happy when their expectations for their marriage are met, which is the case for most unions. A couple's dissatisfaction occurs when these expectations are not met; moreover, couples who are unhappy in their marriages face a number of detrimental consequences. Abuse can be both physical and

emotional for some couples. This has a negative impact on their overall well-being and productivity.

Okoli, Ezeme, and Ofojebe (2019) confirmed the significance of appraisal support in preventing suffering and increasing marital discontent. Furthermore, the clergy and their spouses were not the focus of their research. The current investigation, which combined a quantitative correlational technique with a qualitative phenomenological one, helped fill this void. Furthermore, the current study limited its focus to the Kenyan population in the Dagoretti South Sub-County of Nairobi County, whereas the previous study did not do so. This is due to the fact that social support and marital happiness of protestant clergy and their spouses may also be affected by cultural variety. This is because having friends and family might help one to cope with stress in a healthy way. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the link between social support and marital contentment among protestant clergy.

Isk and Kaya (2022) conducted research into how the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) quarantine affected the mental health, communication, and relationship satisfaction of heterosexual married couples. The research followed a correlational survey methodology with a descriptive design. Using a snowball sampling method, we were able to enroll 511 married Turkish couples. Online surveys measuring demographic characteristics, perceived stress, conflict resolution styles, spousal support, and marital satisfaction were used to compile the data. As spouses' stress levels rose, the reviewed study indicated that spousal support and marital satisfaction fell, and as spousal support rose, marital satisfaction and constructive conflict resolution rose. Positive conflict resolution and spousal support were also found to have significant relationships with marital satisfaction in the regression analysis. Most notably, a spouse's positive appraisal had a positive effect on marital satisfaction.

However, there was a contextual difference between the reviewed study and the current investigation because the reviewed study focused on Turkish married couples and the current study was conducted in Kenya. The prior study adopted a descriptive strategy that relied on a correlational survey model, while the present investigation adopted an explanatory sequential mixed method design by integrating a correlational quantitative and phenomenological qualitative strategy (Isk and Kaya, 2022). When comparing the two studies, we can see that the reviewed study used a sample of 511 Turkish married couples recruited through snowball sampling, while our own study used a sample of 273 respondents selected through simple random sampling for quantitative data and purposive sampling for qualitative data for in-depth interviews. Turkish married couples were the primary focus of the research that was analyzed. This new research took a look at married Protestant ministers and their families in Kenya's Dagoretti South Sub-County.

The current study used the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) and the Scales of Perceived Social Support (SPSS), while the reviewed study used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Conflict Resolution Styles Scale (CRSS), the Spousal Support Scale (SSS), and the Marital Life Scale (MLS). Mixed-sex couples with full-time children living at home were studied in the United States (Lahey & Cohen, 2020) to determine the effect of positive communication and partner assessments on sexual and relationship satisfaction. Social media platforms (like Facebook and Twitter) were used as part of a survey link research design for this study. Positive partner evaluations were found to be a predictor of greater relationship satisfaction. The examined study has a methodological flaw due to its low sample size (93 respondents) for a study of this scope and scale.

This study aimed to close that gap by collecting data from a wider pool of people (273 in total) in order to draw sweeping conclusions. The reviewed research is deficient in another respect as well; the dynamics of social evaluation support in connection to marital happiness were not examined. This gap was closed by the current study. The understudy was carried out in the good ol' USA. Because of this, the current study was conducted in Dagoretti South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya, to provide necessary background. The purpose of the study by Eagle, Hybels, and Proeschold-Bell (2018) was to investigate the connection between social support (both perceived and received) and mental health issues experienced by clergy in the United States. A total of 1,288 people were surveyed in the study, which relied on a panel survey research design. The results showed that the connection between perceived and actual support was minimal. There was a statistically significant correlation between higher levels of felt support and fewer depression symptoms. As a result of the study's findings, it's unclear how successful many initiatives designed to improve the quality and/or quantity of social support received by clergy actually are.

Eagle, Hybels, and Proeschold-Bell (2018) argued that it may be preferable to improve individuals' feelings of social support using cognitive reappraisal or other forms of positive mental health therapies. However, the study only looked at the clergy and not their partners. This is a difficulty because the clergy spouses' needs in terms of marital appraisal support are not being met. The new research, which included clergy partners, addresses this gap. The reviewed study was an American project. Because of this, the current study filled a gap in the literature by conducting research in Dagoretti South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. Also, although the reviewed study used a panel survey research design, the current study used a correlational quantitative and phenomenological qualitative technique to explain the results. Okoli, Ezeme, and Ofojebe (2019) confirmed the significance of appraisal support in preventing suffering and increasing marital discontent. Njeri (2019) conducted research in Kenya and found that affirmation and positive feedback were significant in improving spouses' happiness.

Theoretical Framework

Social Support Theory (SST)

Social support theory was developed by Don DrennonGala and Francis Cullen, who relied on insights from a wide range of disciplines (Butler, 2017). According to the notion of social support, the existence of stress does not negate the positive effects that various forms of social support (appraisal, emotional, informational, and instrumental) have on an individual's health. According to social support theory, factors like friendship, intimacy, and minimal social conflict, which frequently co-occur with support, are necessary for the full health benefits of social support to be realized (Lakey & Cohen, 2020). The harmful effects of stress can be mitigated by surrounding oneself with supportive people. Social support may operate as a buffer, decreasing the detrimental effects of stressors on strain (Calvo, Cusinato, Meneghet, & Miscioscia, 2020).

However, life events and daily annoyance have been demonstrated to raise strain as evaluated by physical and emotional health. The theoretical and practical significance of social support services in marital satisfaction cannot be overstated. Some forms of assistance rely heavily on the availability of people who can be turned to in times of crisis. For married people, the providers act as a filter for any and all forms of nurturing behavior. The appraisal perspective

hypothesizes that individuals' expectations for receiving help moderate the impact of stress on health outcomes. On the other hand, having supportive friends and family around might help you see stressful situations more positively, which can buffer the impacts of stress. Primary and secondary evaluations are the two main categories. First impressions consist of deciding whether or not the event in question poses any kind of danger. Questions like "am I in trouble?" hinge on assessments of risk, loss, and threat. On the other hand, secondary evaluations verify the reliability of personal and social resources for dealing with the occurrence. As an illustration, consider a person who is asking, "What can I do about it?" According to research (Lakey & Cohen, 2020), those who tend to focus on the bad tend to experience greater emotional pain. The stress-inducing consequences of unfavorable self-evaluations are mitigated when people believe they have access to helpful resources. Take into account the challenges faced by clergy wives in the context of their relationships. The major appraisal could be something threatening like, "I should pretend and smile before the congregation that everything is okay, even if I am in pain." Consider the secondary evaluation: "If I tell anyone, my husband's ministry work will be in jeopardy."

However, these ratings might be less terrifying if the wife of the protestant cleric believed that she was surrounded by kind, supportive, and devoted people. The principal evaluation can be changed to a more optimistic statement such, "I am having marital problems, but I have many friends and family who care about me and are helping me work through this." However, the secondary evaluation may be revised to read, "I have reliable sources of information and emotional support." Emotional reactions to the event would be moderated as a result of these revised assessments. The extent to which one's perceptions of available assistance interact with the unique requirements brought on by the stressful event is a critical factor in determining how one evaluates the situation in the aftermath of the event (Lakey & Cohen, 2020). The stress and coping viewpoint, the social cognitive perspective, and the social control perspective are all branches of social support theory. According to the stress-and-coping perspective, friends and family can buffer the harmful effects of stress on an individual's health. It does this through encouraging the development of more realistic self-perceptions and/or the enhancement of existing strategies for dealing with stressful situations. According to the concept, the degree to which an individual's assessments and coping mechanisms benefit from social support depends on how well that support type coincides with the needs posed by the stressor or the best matching assumption.

Therefore, a person's view of support should mirror his or her account of receiving effective endorsed assistance, and it should also immediately lessen or reduce negative evaluations of stresses (Lakey & Cohen, 2020). From a social cognitive perspective, it is hypothesized that negative self-evaluations, bad emotions, and unfavorable relationships are all linked in cognitive networks that influence one another via distributed activation. The availability of unfavorable evaluations of oneself and others is increased by experiencing negative emotions. Such negative evaluations also contribute to the easiness with which one experiences bad feelings, for example. For instance, they are more strongly and unmistakably felt. Since negative thought is sufficient to activate negative emotion and vice versa, this notion is independent of stressful life events and coping as a core approach. Positive emotions and thoughts are increased, while negative ones are reduced, as a result of positive social interactions (Calvo, Cusinato, Meneghet, & Miscioscia, 2020).

Last but not least, an explanation of how social integration can promote health is most appropriate from a social control perspective. This symbolic interactionist approach emphasized the power of interpersonal bonds in shaping both social and health-related behaviors. Both direct and indirect forms of social control have been postulated (Lakey & Cohen, 2020), such as when an individual exercises self-control over her behavior out of a sense of duty to others (as in the case of children). The social interaction and social support model has a broad appeal because it is not a theory in and of itself. The model's structure is reflected in a wide range of theoretical frameworks. The approach allows for presumed associations to go both ways. There is no consensus on how to define social support.

High inter-correlations emerge when potentially dissimilar thoughts are transformed into dissimilar variables. It is unknown which pathway(s) are being investigated. Many empirical studies focus on specific routes, while others are often ignored. Not all of the paths are being tested in their entirety. Even though one of the seven routes indicates a direct connection, mediation analyses are rarely used. It is not possible to draw broad generalizations about a route from research of its individual components alone (Weinstein, 2017).

Strengths of Social Support Theory

For those who have unrestricted access to and a strong sense of connection within their social networks, social support has been shown to have positive effects (Zanjari, Momtaz, Kamal, Basakha, Ahmadi, 2022). The theory looks to explain how caring for others—whether they be spouses, children, parents, or important others—can boost an individual's sense of worth and sense of community. The idea effectively addresses and illustrates the benefits of evaluative, emotional, informational, and instrumental support for an individual's well-being. These ideas will serve as the study's independent variables.

Weaknesses of Social Support Theory

The social support hypothesis emphasizes the role that social support plays in mitigating stress and maximizing the experience of positive outcomes (Zanjari et al., 2022). As a result, this is good for people's health. However, there are studies that have shown the downside of obtaining too much social support (Zanjari, et al., 2022). This is because a number of factors—financial status, health, and even dependence on day-to-day activities—can affect how happy a couple is in their marriage. Although the theory highlights the need of social support in preventing and managing stress, it does not report on the person's mindset in providing support to others.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design. The study used a sample size of 273 protestant clergy and their spouses, chosen using a simple random sampling technique for quantitative, and 12 participants who were purposefully selected for qualitative, low and high performance on levels of marital satisfaction. The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS) and the Scales of Perceived Social Support were used to collect quantitative data, with the former having a reliability coefficient of 0.834 and the latter of 0.954, respectively. To better understand how protestant clergy and their partners are handling difficulties in their marriage, we conducted in-depth one-on-one interviews with them, using a set of predetermined questions to lead the conversation. Descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis were used to examine the data.

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to examine the connections between appraisal support dynamics and happy marriages. Table 1 displays the results. Personal anguish can be prevented and alleviated with the help of a buffer like positive self-appraisal. This is due to the fact that the strength of our positive appraisals affects how we feel about ourselves. The negative consequences of stress on health can be mitigated if people have access to assessment assistance during stressful times (Lakey & Cohen, 2020). As a result, this may also have an effect on how happy married people are in their relationships.

Table 1: Relationship between Appraisal Support Dynamics and Marital Satisfaction

		Correlations	
		Appraisal Support Dynamics	Overall Marital Satisfaction
Appraisal Support Dynamics	Pearson Correlation	1	-.406**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	228	212
Overall Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.406**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	212	252

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appraisal support dynamics were found to have a weak, negative, and statistically significant association with marital satisfaction ($r = -.406$; $p < 0.05$). The dynamics of appraisal support had little effect on marital happiness. Since both evaluation support dynamics and participants' marital satisfaction had p-values less than 0.05. A decline in marital happiness may result from an increase in appraisal support dynamics. It would imply that providing feedback could become an argumentative process, which would have a negative impact on marital happiness.

Furthermore, this would imply that getting appraisal support is difficult for protestant clerics and their spouses because of the high expectations placed on them as moral leaders in society. This, in turn, could exacerbate marital problems. Clergy women, according to research by Luedtke and Sneed (2018), rely substantially on their marriages because they have few other social supports in their lives. There was a weak, negative, and statistically significant association between appraisal support dynamics and marital satisfaction among clergy and their wives, which is consistent with the current study's findings. This may indicate that protestant clergy and their spouses rely on one another more than on extended networks of family, friends, and romantic partners.

Nonetheless, other research has shown a connection between Appraisal support and marital happiness. According to research by Okoli, Ezeme, and Ofojebe (2019), couples that lack evaluation support are more likely to experience discomfort and have higher levels of marital unhappiness. Affirmation and positive feedback, among other characteristics, were found to increase marital satisfaction in a separate study by Njeri (2019). Challenges protestant clergy and their spouses face in accessing the actual support—whether that be feedbacks, criticism, or even the personality traits of the individual offering support etc.—may explain the current study's weak, negative significant of ($r = -.406$; $p < 0.05$) between appraisal support motion and overall marital satisfaction.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The results of this study showed a small but statistically significant negative correlation between appraisal support dynamics and marital happiness. The dynamics of appraisal support had little effect on marital happiness. Couples whose feedback-giving styles are more combative tend to report lower levels of happiness in their marriages. On the other hand, this could mean that accessing appraisal support is difficult for protestant clerics and their spouses because of their positions in society as religious authorities who are expected to showed highest standards of moral values, which could further strain their relationships.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the dynamics of appraisal support had little effect on marital happiness. Couples whose feedback-giving styles are more combative tend to report lower levels of happiness in their marriages. On the other hand, this could mean that accessing appraisal support is difficult for protestant clerics and their spouses because of their positions in society as religious authorities who are expected to showed highest standards of moral values, which could further strain their relationships.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the protestant clergy and their spouses set up peer to peer support groups that will enable them to overload their marital challenges. This is because the findings of the study indicated that, the protestant clergy and their spouses do not have a place to overload their marital issues due to their status in the society. This study recommends that the counselling psychologists board should develop a clergy centered psychotherapy that elevates appraisal support in areas of marital relationship.

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