

# Description of The Priest's Wife's Stress in Accompanying Husband's Service

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**Abstract:** This article is a literature study that aims to provide an overview of the stress experienced by the Pastor's wife in accompanying her husband's ministry. Being a pastor's wife is not easy. The wife received many demands and highlights while accompanying her husband in carrying out his duties. The pastor's wife has a special role because she is a helper for her husband in serving God. Not only helping in the household but also helping husbands in ministry. The Pastor's wife is expected to be able to carry out two roles at once, namely the internal role as a wife and mother, namely taking care of the household, educating children, managing family finances, planning family needs, and external roles in the congregation, such as having to play an active role in ministry and provide a good response. to the church and be an example and role model for the church. A search for articles on Google Scholar published between 2015 – 2022 using the keyword “pastor's wife stress”, obtained 319 titles but only 7 articles matched. The findings show that the demands on the Pastor's wife cause stress due to the many roles she has to perform in her daily life.

## 1 BACKGROUND

A family generally influences the growth of each member and plays an important role in the existing social system. Thus, in general, family functions are limited by the characteristics of the family itself and depend on the social demands that surround it (Dai & Wang, 2015). According to Dai and Wang (2015), the concept of family stability can be divided into three dimensions, namely family intimacy, family adaptability, and family communication. The level of family intimacy refers to the relationship between family members; family adaptability is the family's ability to cope with environmental pressures, both externally and internally; and family communication refers to interactions between family members. Of the three dimensions, the most important is developing intimacy and adaptability within the family (Dai & Wang, 2015).

Intimacy and adaptability in the family will generally be maintained if there is mutual understanding between members of the family.

Understanding the roles and functions of each family member and carrying out their functions properly will greatly help maintain harmony and harmony in the family. In general, the husband acts as the head of the family whose main task is as a breadwinner to meet the needs of clothing, food, and shelter. The husband also acts as the wife's partner, namely being a loyal friend who is fun and always there in good times and bad times by always making time to talk and spend free time with his wife. The husband must also play the role of protector and mentor of the wife so that she always stays on the right path. Apart from being a good partner for the wife, the husband can also help relieve the wife's duties, such as inviting the children to play or recreation and providing quality free time for the children in between the husband's busy life. In addition to the husband's role, the wife also has a very important role, namely as a companion for the husband and mother who is ready to look after and guide their children. Just like husbands, wives also act as good and pleasant partners or partners for their life partners. The wife is also expected to be invited to discuss various kinds of problems that

occur and also talk about light things. The wife is expected to be a driving force and encouragement for the husband in his daily work (Olson, DeFrain & Skogrand, 2011).

The division of gender roles is needed to maintain family balance in carrying out family functions toward the realization of family goals. Husband and wife agree to share roles and daily tasks, be responsible for their respective roles and duties and maintain mutual commitments (Puspitawati, 2010). This is also regulated in Article 31 of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, namely that the position of the wife is equal to the rights and position of the husband in domestic life and association in living together in society. However, the division of gender roles that are balanced in the family certainly does not fully work well. This is due to the many factors both from within the family and from outside, for example increasing economic needs, high work demands, a large number of working hours, technological advances, and so on.

This demand was apparently not only felt by the general public but also by the Pastor's family. The pastor's duties are many and require extra attention to the congregation which has quite a heavy impact. A literature review on clergy families shows that families are generally faced with a series of events that cause tension which can have implications for their physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health (Aulthouse, 2013). The influence of church ministry on the stability of the pastor's family can be examined in three different dimensions related to preaching, pastoral care, and administrative activities in the church. As preachers, pastors may feel pressure to live out their words because of the high expectations that congregations place on them as model families (Snodgrass, 2014). As a result, pastors transfer these expectations to their family members who may not be able to cope with unrealistic congregational expectations and this causes tension in the family which can make the pastor's family unstable (Hayes, 2010). This can lead to frustration for both the child and the wife especially, especially when they feel that their husband/father's image must be maintained at the expense of their personal life. Thus, it can be concluded that members of the clergy's family cannot be themselves and this robs them of their freedom. The second dimension is pastoral care which involves spiritual and psychological counseling to church members.

Webb (2011) notes that pastors often feel pressured by the need to minister to congregations who are hurting and need direction/guidance. Generally, many congregations need encouragement, comfort, and advice on how to deal with stressors in their lives including those related to life's difficulties, illness, family conflicts, and stress from work or social relationships. The third dimension is administrative activities in the church. According to Kleinplatz (2012), pastors should be able to balance administrative life in the church with family life. However, pastors can get swept up in the demands of church administration leaving little time to provide for their family members. Pastors are often at the center of church administrative activities including church development and investment, day-to-day running and operation of the church, developing and implementing church policies, recruitment and training of staff and volunteers, and much more. All of this can take away from the time the pastor needs to spend with the family or taking care of the family.

In addition to the above, the nature of church ministry which also involves a lot of pastoral ministries, sometimes even at unusual hours (not working hours), can drain the resources of the pastor's family and this can be a source of instability for the pastor's family. The stability of clergy families is an area of research that tends to be neglected. It has been noted that clergy families generally live under significant stress which can affect the stability of their family. Gauger and Christie (2013) argue that pastoral work may be the single most stressful and frustrating work profession when compared to medical, legal, or political careers. Gauger & Christie (2013) reported on one study which found that more than 70% of pastors were so stressed and exhausted that they regularly considered leaving the ministry. Seeing how important and difficult the work of being a pastor is, family support, especially from the wife, is very important and crucial in accompanying the husband's ministry.

As a member of a family of God's servants, the Pastor's wife also has a great responsibility to support her husband's ministry in his ministry environment. This can be shown by showing care and concern for the congregation, the church environment, and the surrounding community (Brahmana et al, 2019). In addition to this, the wife is also expected to be able to support the husband's ministry in accordance with his gift or talent, equip

himself to support the wife's ministry in the spiritual field and in daily life, remind the husband to carry out his ministry well in the congregation as God's servant, not to interfere or arrange ministry work. husband, and not to be a stumbling block in the husband's ministry. Seeing these things, it can be assumed that being the husband of a GBKP pastor is not easy. The moral responsibility given to pastor husbands is motivated by the wife's extensive ministry as a pastor and pastoral ministry duties in several churches which demand transfers/moving places of service. The pastor's many duties, where the congregation requires more attention, tend to make the wife feel neglected. Due to the many services that husbands must perform in their daily lives, the wife tends to carry out many roles in her daily life. Such as doing domestic household tasks, taking care of children and husband, to helping the husband's ministry in the church.

The challenges and pressures experienced by the Pastor's wife often bring negative consequences, both psychologically and psychologically and one of them is stress. The stress experienced by a pastor's wife generally occurs because of her choice to remain silent about the problems and challenges she faces so as not to add to the burden that her husband is already carrying (Potts, 2021). This ultimately leads the wife to experience stress and not be prosperous. Many pastors' wives are happy to talk about the problems they are experiencing but ask that their identity be kept secret so as not to have a negative impact on their husband's work (Potts, 2021). Pastor's wives often become wary of whom they allow into their lives and with whom they share their personal problems, which can then lead to prolonged loneliness, resulting in further suffering in their solitude. Douglass Boquist (2011) finds that many pastors, and even more, pastors' wives, have decided that building a wall is the safest course of action to overcome the challenge. Research conducted by Boquist (in Potts, 2021) found that pastors' wives often carry the suffering and pressure they experience in silence. The pastor's wife often has to be ready to listen to others, smiling in all situations. attended invitations given to him, assisted in Bible school activities, and comforted others who were grieving, but no one wanted to listen to his condition. The demands and conditions experienced by the Pastor's wife were not light stressors.

Research on stress and coping among pastors and wives was conducted by Frame and Shehan in

2004 (Potts, 2021), where the results showed that pastors' wives (in the United Methodist Church) experienced far more stress than their husbands. This is due to eight significant stressors, such as increased household chores; denial of the opportunity to own a house according to family needs; disruption of children's social networks/friendships with their environment; clergymen's assumption of responsibility for rebuilding the family in the new community; disruption of work patterns and career plans of the pastor's wives themselves; increased financial burden due to relocation costs due to sedentary service assignments; disruption due to the lack of informal social support networks for clergymen's wives; lack of support from their pastor husbands who are often preoccupied with their own careers.

## **2 REVIEW AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

Research on pastors' wives is still limited. This is because research focuses more on husbands as pastors. The limited number of studies has brought the author's concern considering that the role of the wife as a companion to her husband in carrying out his services is very significant. As a woman who carries out a dual role (as a wife, mother, and husband's service companion) is certainly not an easy thing. Many demands and challenges must be experienced by the wife and of course, this is not healthy for the psychological well-being of the wife. These pressures and challenges can cause stress on the wife and of course, will have a great impact on harmony in the family and the husband's service. This literature review was conducted to answer questions: What factors cause stress on the pastor's wife?

## **3 METHOD**

Based on the results of a literature review conducted by the author, there are quite a lot of writings about pastors' wives in general. It's just that the writing is generally in the form of writing from various kinds of websites or personal blogs that talk about the demands, duties, or roles of a wife in accompanying her husband and taking care of his family. The results of further investigations found that there

were not many specific studies regarding the stress experienced by pastors' wives. By using the keyword Pastor's wife stress in the google scholar database with a span of 2015-2022, 319 titles were found but only 7 articles matched.

This indicates that there is still a great need for more in-depth research on pastors' wives because the studies that can be carried out are very broad and of course will provide positive input for the church as an institution/organization to pay more attention to pastors and their families (children and wife).

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stress has become a part of everyday life, from waking up in the morning to falling asleep late at night. Modern findings show that most people today are under constant pressure but are also trying to balance work life with home life. Today more and more people are experiencing health problems related to stress such as depression, insomnia, heart attacks, and high blood pressure. This situation seems to be present in almost every walk of life. Nolen-Hoeksma, Grayson, and Larson (1999) show that today women are more prone to despair and passivity over important aspects of their lives than men, and this may be related to the distraction and burden that comes with it. It may also be due to the fact that women tend to be more sensitive. While this may be a problem among women in general, clergymen in the 21st century have special problems that demand special study and research.

Today most of our modern lives are spent experiencing at least one type of stress. A person can experience stress in many ways such as death, divorce, job, marriage, shopping, moving, driving, weather, car problems, financial credit or debit, laundry, cleaning the house, studying for a test, grading student homework papers, and having a baby, raising children, going to college, planning a wedding or going on vacation. In certain situations, it may be stressful for one person, but enjoyable for another.

The way each person reacts to a situation generally depends a great deal on a person's emotional state, personality traits, religious beliefs, and a number of other reasons. Pastoral wives of the 21st century face many challenges that were not typical of previous generations. Yet the expectations of the church and society regarding their roles have not changed much over the years.

They are faced with challenges related to expectations for pastoral ministry, both from the church and society as well as other personal stressors in everyday life. In addition, at this time pastor's wife generally also has goals for personal education, career, and psychological needs that might bring a lot of stress in her role as pastor's wife. In general, Pastors have a lot of experience in training or mentoring related to their role as God's servants, but very rarely do we hear of training for wives to play the role of pastor's wife.

Based on the results of the literature review, it is known that stress on the pastor's wife is caused by several factors, such as expectations and demands on the role of the wife, the husband's ministry, loneliness, and role conflict.

### 4.1 Expectations and demands on the role of the wife

Being the center of attention in the congregation is a common thing that is often experienced by the pastor's wife. From the way of speaking, the way of worship, the style of dress, the way to dress up, how to deal with problems that the congregation is experiencing, and so on, it is often the focus and discussion in the congregation. Some of the congregation's expectations may have been influenced by the pastor's wife who previously served at the church; congregations may want the new pastor's wife to be like or better than the previous pastor's wife (Knight-Johnson, 2011). Some churches stick to the 19th-century model, where the wife served as an unpaid assistant (Murphy-Geiss, 2011).

Congregational expectations have the strongest influence on pastoral family time management. Family-sensitive congregations, for example, proactively take responsibility for ministry tasks, making it possible for the pastor as husband to prioritize his family and encourage him to use his days off (Knight-Johnson, 2011). This allows for pastors and wives more freedom in defining the roles they will embody and increases the ability of wives to take a highly independent approach to be listed.

The flip side of the congregation being insensitive to the pastor's family can be seen as "ignorant or unaware of the personal needs and relationships of the pastor and his family." These congregations can create multiple bonds within the clergy's family, creating conflict and exhaustion.

Congregational sensitivity to ministry time reflects their level of understanding that both pastors and wives need time support outside of their roles in the church. When the church is highly sensitive, families may begin to feel as if the church truly believes that their needs must come first (Ashley, 2020).

#### **4.2 Husband's ministry**

Another factor that can cause stress among pastors' wives is the husband's busy ministry which results in very little time with the family. Ross (1980) and Dudley and Kilcher (1981) show that from the results of research conducted, lack of time with family is a major problem. Some of the complaints of the wives in this study include husbands who are always on standby 24 hours a day and 7 days a week in their service causing family time to be sacrificed because it is not a top priority, Hackley (1990) also agrees with this view. While this complaint may not be a common trend among all pastors, there is an agreement in the literature that a lack of family time can be a stress factor, especially for pastors' wives.

#### **4.3 Loneliness**

Another challenge the pastor's wife faces is loneliness. According to research conducted by Cordeiro (2009), it is known that 56% of pastors' wives say that they have no close friends. Stamper (2016) found that isolation is one of the main causes of mental health problems among pastors' wives. The pastor's duties, which move from place to place of service, cause the wife to not have close friends who can be used as a place to pour out her heart. Likewise, the husband's busy work in the ministry adds to the loneliness of the pastor's wife. Blaikie (1979) states, "Not only is family life disrupted, but in many cases, pastoral wives find that they are left to raise their children on their own, largely because of their husbands' busy lives and services also being performed at night. Loneliness is mentioned as one of the triggers of stress among pastor's wives. Rokach (2001) found that adults generally cope better with loneliness than others, and women tend to cope better with loneliness than men. It should be noted, however, that in Hansson's study, loneliness has been associated with depression, anxiety, and

interpersonal hostility (Hansson, Carpenter, & Remondet, 1986). While not all pastors' wives experience loneliness, most of them do not have close friends due to frequent relocations, congregational expectations, and a host of other stressors.

#### **4.4 Role conflict**

Douglass (1961) and Denton (1962) revealed that one of the causes of stress experienced by pastors' wives is the role conflict being carried out. As described above, in her daily life the pastor's wife performs several roles at once which unknowingly bring about inner conflict or inner conflict. The role of wife, mother, and husband's companion is a role that is not easy for a pastor's wife to carry out. Especially in accompanying the husband's ministry, where the expectations and demands of the congregation are very high for the pastor's wife. The wife is expected to be an example in serving God in the midst of the congregation, so her activeness in church activities, such as worship for women/mothers, visiting sick congregations, being active in the choir, and so on sometimes brings conflict when confronted with her role as a mother or wife. This conflict can occur if at the same time the demands of these roles must be carried out simultaneously. For example, when a wife is faced with the condition of a child who is sick and worship activities that require her to be physically present. This situation is not easy to handle, because both are important matters and have a significant impact on the family and husband's services. This example often occurs with the pastor's wife who is young and has just had a child.

Another factor that causes stress related to the role is the expectations of the husband. Ross (1980) describes a pastor's wife as neither a priest nor a layperson. He further explained that while a husband may not see his wife as a minister, he does expect her to perform certain ministry duties as well as household duties. The congregation, on the other hand, does not view the pastor's wife as a layperson and thus expects her to take on more ministry roles than other women in the church. For them, the wife is an extension of their pastor. Dobson (1995) notes that the pastor's hope is not only directed to his wife but also to his children so that they can behave well even though as a father he does not have enough time to pay attention to and take care of the children's education.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that being a pastor's wife is not an easy thing. This is because there are many demands and roles that must be carried out in daily life, both as a mother, wife, and husband's service companion. The demands of the role cause the emergence of psychological pressure which has an impact on the emergence of stress. The stress experienced by the pastor's wife is caused by several factors, such as expectations and demands on the role of the wife, the husband's ministry, loneliness, and role conflicts.

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