



LIFE SATISFACTION, STRESS TOLERANCE, EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND DEATH ANXIETY AMONG MARRIED AND UNMARRIED PRIESTS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study was conducted to find out and compare Life satisfaction, stress tolerance, emotional maturity and death anxiety among married and unmarried priests. The study participants were 60 priests who include 30 married priests and 30 unmarried Priests, from Jacobite and Catholic churches of different parts of Ernakulam, Kottayam and Idukki Districts, Kerala, who comes in the range of 40-60 years age group. Data was collected using following scales, Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Dr. Neelima Ranjith and Dr. Kumari Bhagavathi G.P (2005), Stress Tolerance Scale which was developed by Reshmy C.S. and Dr. H. Sam Sananda Raj (1999), Emotional maturity scale prepared by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava (1999) and Death-Anxiety Scale which was constructed by Upinder Dhar, Savita Mehta and Santosh Dhar. Findings revealed that there was no significant difference between married and unmarried priests in life satisfaction, stress tolerance, Emotional maturity. But there was significant difference in interdependence a sub factor in emotional maturity scale and also in the domain of death anxiety among priests

KEYWORDS

Life Satisfaction, Stress Tolerance, Emotional Maturity, Death Anxiety, Priests.

INTRODUCTION

The priesthood is practiced in Christianity after the death of Jesus Christ the Savior, but in all religions the priesthood has been a practice for many years. The priests have their rankings, the senior most is the Bishop then followed by priests and deacons.

Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. It is one of three major indicators of well-being: life satisfaction, positive effect, and negative affect (Diener, 1984). In a study conducted by Weaver, A. J., & Koenig, H. G. (2002) among catholic and protestant priests it is found that the protestant priests who are married have less life satisfaction than those of non-married catholic priests. They emphasized that the family life and the unsatisfied sexual relationships with their spouses made the life of protestant priests more miserable than that of the Catholic priests.

Stress tolerance is the personality factor that reflects the amount someone is easily upset or volatile, their tendency to experience negative emotions, and how much they interpret ordinary situations as threatening. The study by Gleason Jr, J. J. (1977) found that certain stressors would emerge as common for both clergy and spouses tended to be affirmed in that eight out of the fourteen greatest stressors in both groups were held in common. The hypotheses that clergy would be more aware of stress in relation to church duties and that spouses would be more aware of stress in relation to their family and personal lives tended to be disaffirmed. Both the clergy men and their spouses have stress but the context is different the men will have stress related to their profession and their spouses will have stress within their family, but both can act as a helping hand for each other.

Emotional maturity means, in essence, controlling your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you. That does not mean we should hide or repress our emotions, instead we can use muscle relaxation, yoga, guided imagery and other relaxation tools to reduce the intensity. Fortunately, we can control our thoughts by becoming aware of our negative and inaccurate beliefs and ideas. Emotional maturity is not related to physical maturity; these two phenomena are entirely different. Emotional maturity is expected to be but, does not grow with your chronological age; which means that no matter how old you are it does not guarantee your emotional maturity.

Death anxiety is anxiety of which the cause of the anxiety is thoughts of death. One source defines death anxiety as a "feeling of dread, apprehension or solicitude (anxiety) when one thinks of the process of dying or ceasing to be" (Farley, G., 2010). In a study conducted by Harding, S. R., Flannelly, K. J., Weaver, A. J., & Costa, K. G. (2005) among clergy men of an Episcopal church of New York and women from New York found explored the relationship between the religiosity, death acceptance, and death anxiety. Belief in God's existence ($r = -0.27$), and belief in the afterlife ($r = -0.25$) were both negatively correlated with death anxiety ($p < 0.01$), and positively correlated with death acceptance (respectively, $r = 0.21$ and $r = 0.22, p < 0.05$).

The responsibilities that married and unmarried priests do are the same to find out whether having a partner makes changes in certain dimensions. Some studies had measured certain variables among priests but those studies were limited to catholic priests who are unmarried, so the study is significant in the way that there are no studies which give a comparative analysis between married and unmarried priests.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study participants were 60 priests who include 30 married priests and 30 unmarried Priests, from Jacobite and Catholic churches of different parts of Ernakulam, Kottayam and Idukki Districts, Kerala, who comes in the range of 40-60 years age group. Priests who fall under the age group of 40-60 who are members of Jacobite and Catholic Churches were included. Priests who are of age below 40 and above 60 are excluded. Priests from other congregations except Jacobite and Catholic are also excluded. The following scales are used in the present study: Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Dr. Neelima Ranjith and Dr. Kumari Bhagavathi G.P (2005), it consists of 20 items. Stress Tolerance Scale which was developed by Reshmy C.S. and Dr. H. Sam Sananda Raj (1999). The subjects were asked to fill in the particulars in the answer sheet. There are five response choices corresponding to each item. Strongly agree (A) Agree (B) undecided (C) Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (E). Emotional maturity scale prepared by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava (1999) was used to measure emotional maturity. The emotional maturity scale was also used which deals with the interplay of forces with intensities and quantities in terms of different aspects: (a) Emotional instability (b) Emotional regression (c) Social maladjustment (d) Personality disintegration (e) Lack of independence. Death-Anxiety Scale which was constructed by Upinder Dhar, Savita Mehta and Santosh Dhar was used to rule out death anxiety. The scale consists of 10 items of Yes/No alternatives. The priests of Catholic church recruited using random sampling methods were visited in their respective churches and they were explained about the study and the data was collected in an interview manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Life satisfaction of married and unmarried priests

There was no significant difference between married and unmarried priests in life satisfaction. From the mean standard deviation score it's clear that there is no significant difference between married and unmarried priests in life satisfaction. Both the group reported that they are satisfied with their life. So, it is clear that if they have a partner or not they are satisfied with their life. Life satisfaction is a subjective term, which cannot be defined as a whole. In the case of priests who are married we can assume that they are satisfied with their life having a family i.e. wife and children.

b. Level of stress tolerance of married and unmarried priests

There is significant difference between married and unmarried priests in stress tolerance. There is significant difference in stress tolerance between married and unmarried priests. This can be because the

married priests experience more stressful situations in their life than the unmarried priests because the married priests has to take care of their family, parents, children etc and they have to take care of the household needs along with this they need to take care of the needs in their respective churches. In the case of unmarried priests they don't need to take care of anyone else. They are leading an independent life and all they need to do is the needs of their church. So they don't face stressful situations as that of a married priest, so they feel that they tolerate more.

c. Emotional maturity in five areas of emotional maturity scale among married and unmarried priests

Table 1: Emotional maturity across groups and indices

(n=60)

Index	Marital status	n	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Emotional maturity-emotional stability	Unmarried	30	39.37	5.738	0.209	0.835
	Married	30	39.10	3.986		
Emotional maturity-emotional progression	Unmarried	30	41.17	5.718	1.563	0.123
	Married	30	39.10	4.444		
Emotional maturity-social adjustment	Unmarried	30	39.30	7.178	0.534	0.195
	Married	30	40.13	4.637		
Emotional maturity-personality integration	Unmarried	30	41.37	7.059	0.065	0.948
	Married	30	41.47	4.539		
Emotional maturity-independence	Unmarried	30	30.63	8.096	2.219	*0.030
	Married	30	34.97	6.990		

There was no significant difference between married and unmarried priests in emotional stability may be because the group of people and the type of responsibilities both are dealing with is the same. There was no significant difference between married and unmarried priests in emotional progression, social adjustment and personality integration.

In the dimension of independence there is a significant difference that the unmarried priests experience more independence than that of the married priests. From the mean standard deviation score in the table above it is clear. This may be because the unmarried priests are not attached to anyone in personal level. They live their life independently but the married priests have many limitations because they have family.

d. Death anxiety among married and unmarried priests

There was significant difference between the married and unmarried priests in the level of death anxiety. It is clear from the mean standard deviation score also. This increased death anxiety among the married priests can be a result of their personal life, because the married priests have to take care of their family, children and many responsibilities are assigned to them. In some cases everyone in the family will be dependent on the single person so there anxiety about death can increase. In the case of unmarried priests death anxiety was minimum. This can be because in their life they don't need to take care of anyone else in personal level, they have their own life and they live accordingly, nothing else or anyone else's issues are not going to bother them. If anything happen to them, they are not worried about that that maybe because nobody is dependent on them. That may be the reason for decreased death anxiety among unmarried priests.

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