
Factors Impacting Pastoral Ministry Satisfaction

*A Comparative study between English and
Chinese Speaking Pastors*

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Abstract

Although called by God, pastors' lives are often defined by loneliness, difficulties, depression, and depletion. The purpose of this paper is to determine what factors make an impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction across English and Chinese speaking pastors. Then, to determine which of these particular factors make the greatest difference for pastors.

This study identified that regular recreation, having a confidant and peer relationships, engaging in spiritual formation, having a healthy family life, developing positive church relationships, receiving adequate training and feedback, all had a positive impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction across Chinese and English speaking pastors.

Out of these factors, English and Chinese speaking pastors consistently demonstrated that the regularity of one's spiritual disciplines for sole purpose of meeting God, and having peers and confidants, were the two factors which showed the greatest impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction.

Ultimately, this paper recommends for pastors to find a *church*; a body of believers whom they can trust and also meet God together.

1. Introduction – What’s so hard about being a pastor?

Called from Above

God has appointed pastors to act as shepherds over His church in order to teach, discipline, protect and feed His sheep.¹ The sheep are God’s congregation, God’s people, and He has appointed a specific leader to watch and protect His people. The pastor is called by God to serve His people. Pastors, then, are on the frontline of God’s ministry of reconciling the world to Himself, by sharing the Gospel and enabling spiritual growth through discipleship.²

However, as much as there is a divine calling on the life of the pastor, it does not exclude the pastor’s life from the challenges of burnout, loneliness, depression, inadequacy, conflict, marital issues, failure and anger. God’s ministry is not easy.

A.D Hart said, ‘The ministry can, from an emotional point of view, be regarded as the most hazardous occupation around.’³ This is because pastors are faced with ‘crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starved intimacy and shrivelled purpose... and many of the rest hold on by their fingernails.’⁴

Too often, pastors work in an environment with undefined responsibilities, little authority to make decisions, unrealistic expectations, ill-defined goals and a lack of concrete growth measurements.⁵ One minister wrote this in a journal article:

‘If I wanted to drive a manager in the business community up the wall, I’d make him responsible for the success of an organization but give him no authority. I’d provide him with unclear goals, ones the organization didn’t completely agree to. I’d ask him to provide a service of an ill-defined nature, apply a body of knowledge having few absolutes and staff his organization with only volunteers who donated just a few hours a week at the most. I’d expect him to work 10-12 hours per day and have his work evaluated by a committee of 300-500 amateurs. I’d call him a minister and make him accountable to God.’⁶

¹ David K. Pooler, ‘Pastors and Congregations at Risk: Insights from Role Identity Theory’, *Pastoral Psychol* 60 (2011), 705-712.

² Edmund Chan, *A Certain King – Intentional Disciple making that redefines success in ministry* (Covenant Evangelical Free Church: Singapore, 2013). Edmund Chan makes a radical call for the Church to come back to her disciplemaking roots. This is not to say that pastors are indispensable because God can achieve His purpose without his pastors, but He chooses to use pastors to lead His church.

³ Peter Brain, *Going the Distance: How to stay fit in a life of ministry* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2006), 39.

⁴ H.B London, Jr & Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (California: Regal Books, 1993), 14.

⁵ Louis McBurney, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor* (Texas: Word Books, 1977), 69.

⁶ Adapted from James Hamilton, *The Pair in Your Parsonage* (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 1092), 10.

Dangerous Calling

Working under these conditions may explain why the 1996 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) found that that 56% of pastors/priests were on the verge of burnout, 19% suffered from burnout, and 4% experienced extreme burnout.⁷

Pastors struggle with different emotional needs because the emotional needs of the congregation can sometimes overtake an awareness of their own emotional needs.⁸ They are prone to a sense of failure, especially when expectations are 'unrealistic, goals ill-defined and a solid measure of achievement lacking.'⁹ The sense of failure, unrealistic expectations and criticism from the congregation can lead to anger. If this anger is not dealt with properly, it can impact their family life and they may treat their spouses and children as scapegoats.¹⁰

Furthermore, many ministers are said to suffer from depression and loneliness, and this has been recognized as a common experience for pastors.¹¹

Burns, Chapman and Guthrie in *Resilient Ministry* noted the following comments made by pastors in the context of discussion groups.

Regarding inadequacy, some said:

When I was in seminary, I was taught how to preach and how to exegete the Scriptures. I wasn't taught how to exegete people... I didn't know that pastoring is dealing with people and their messiness.¹²

Regarding their own spiritual disciplines some said:

It is easy to slip into a weekly grind, getting done what must be done and neglecting my own spiritual disciplines and spiritual health. This is a never-ending struggle.'¹³

Regarding their own emotional well-being, some said:

'Well, you learn to play a game, to put on a mask, which then becomes a way you handle a lot of issues. You're suddenly the holy man that has to put on the holiness

⁷ Peter Kaldor & Rod Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 2001), 9.

⁸ McBurney, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor*, 45.

⁹ McBurney, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor*, 45.

¹⁰ Brain, *Going the Distance*, 85.

¹¹ Brain, *Going the Distance*, 68.

¹² Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman & Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry – What Pastors Told us about Surviving and Thriving* (Illinois: Downers Grove, 2013), 23.

¹³ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 27.

*aura and have it all together. And that's going to come back and wipe you out. It wiped me out.*¹⁴

It is of no surprise, then, that a study by the Francis A. Shaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development's (FASICLD) found being a pastor is a 'dangerous occupation'¹⁵ as 'being a pastor was more stressful than being a doctor, lawyer and politician.' Their findings identified that 70% of pastors were so stressed that they regularly considered leaving the ministry and 35-40% of pastors actually leave the ministry, most after 5 years.¹⁶

Based on the FASICLD, Kreicir conducted an American study at a pastor's conference in Orange County which surveyed 1050 pastors. Some of his findings were that:

- 100% (1050) had a close associate or seminary buddy who had left the ministry due to burnout, conflict or moral failure
- 90% (948) stated they were frequently fatigued and worn out and 71% said they were burnt out and battle depression beyond fatigue, on a weekly or even a daily basis
- 89% (935) surveyed considered leaving the ministry at one time
- 81% said there was no regular discipleship program or mentoring to help deepen the congregation's relationship with God
- 77% said that they did not have a good marriage and 38% said they were divorced or currently in a divorce process
- 75% (790) said they felt unqualified or poorly trained by their seminary to lead and manage the church
- 72% stated they only studied the Bible when they were preparing for sermons or lessons
- 30% said they had been in an ongoing affair or a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.¹⁷

¹⁴ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 249.

¹⁵ This study originated from the *Fuller Institute*, was picked up by FASICLD spanned 18 years. Richard J Kreicir, 'What is Going on with the Pastors in America?' in *Statistics on Pastors*.

<http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/?articleid=36562> (04, April 2015).

¹⁶ Kreicir, 'What is Going on with the Pastors in America?' in *Statistics on Pastors*.

¹⁷ Kreicir, 'What is Going on with the Pastors in America?' in *Statistics on Pastors*.

Healthy Pastors, Healthy Churches

The internal, emotional and spiritual life of the pastor is imperative, because there is a direct link between the spiritual life of the pastor and how he/she interacts with and leads their congregation.¹⁸ The more spiritually healthy the pastor, the more capable they are to lead. People lead out of their emotional dysfunctions, so when the pastor is emotionally drained, spiritually burnt out and mentally tired, there are negative implications for how they make decisions and how they treat those under their leadership.

The importance of the pastoral health is so aptly put by Philip Yancey who asks, 'I wonder how much more effective our churches would be if we made the pastor's spiritual health – not the pastor's efficiency – our number one priority.'¹⁹

There is no greater testimony for the world than a Christian leader who maintains their joy and enthusiasm as they serve their heavenly Father.²⁰ However, with the unending demands, undefined and unrealistic expectations from self and congregation, family pressures, difficult congregation members and crammed schedules,²¹ pastors struggle immensely with maintaining and growing their own emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Perhaps we are only just 'on the cusp of realizing the importance of mental health for pastors.'²²

So what does it take for pastors to be satisfied and healthy in ministry?

Thriving and Surviving in Ministry - the Big 5

In the Burns, Chapman and Guthrie study, 73 pastors across 26 different states in America were gathered and engaged in small group discussions over a 6 year period. They called it the *Pastor's Summit*. Their goal was to answer the question 'what does it take to survive and thrive in pastoral ministry?'²³ After 7 years of studying the participant's personal lives, marriages, families and ministries, they concluded that there are five primary themes for pastoral ministry resilience and fruitfulness. These are:

¹⁸ David K. Pooler, 'Pastors and Congregations at Risk: Insights from Role Identity Theory', 708.

¹⁹ Philip Yancey quoted by Wayne Cordeiro in Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading On Empty – Refilling Your Tank and Renewing your Passion* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009), 69.

²⁰ Larry Osborne, 'Leading with Joy' in *Desiring God – Spiritual Leadership*. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/leading-with-joy> (16 March, 2015).

²¹ H.B London in Conversation with James Dobson in London, & Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, 35-59.

²² Todd Holeman Chair of the department of counselling and pastoral care at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore Kentucky quoted in Amy Simpson, 'Working in the soil of Depletion' in *Christianity Today* (October 2014), 82-83.

²³ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 14.

- *Spiritual formation*

This is the ongoing process of 'maturing as a Christian, both personally and inter-personally.'²⁴ One of the key elements in the spiritual formation process is 'distinguishing self from role', and understanding that there is a difference between *who* pastors are and *what* they do. This distinction has been found to be crucial for spiritual, emotional and family health.²⁵

- *Self-care*

This is the pursuit of an orderly life that entails holistic care across physical, mental and emotional dimensions. This is 'wisdom to ensure, as far as humanly possible, a wise and orderly work that conserves and lengthens a pastor's ministry.'²⁶ Pastors need to steward their lives holistically as their attitudes toward self-care can keep them from 'premature burnout, joyless revival and an unsatisfying experience of living on the edge.'²⁷

- *Emotional and cultural intelligence*

This is the ability to manage one's own emotions well, as well as having the discernment to respond to the emotions of others in their congregation.²⁸ Cultural intelligence refers to understanding and responding appropriately to the sensitivities involved in the diverse cultural backgrounds that exist within the congregation that pastors lead.

- *Marriage and family*

This theme requires recognition that a pastor's emotional, relational and spiritual health is impacted by their relationship with their spouse and their children. One pastor put it this way:

'The most effective way to develop a healthy Church is for me to be a healthy pastor and maintain the health of my marriage.'²⁹

Similarly, Dean Merrill says, 'ministers who do not give attention to their marriage come to regret it.'³⁰

²⁴ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 19.

²⁵ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 254.

²⁶ Brain, *Going the Distance*, 24.

²⁷ Brain, *Going the Distance*, 10.

²⁸ Burns, Chapman and Guthrie identify two key elements to EQ. 'EQ self' relates to the ability a pastor has to attend to their own emotional needs and awareness, and 'EQ others' relates to the ability to discern and respond sensitively to the needs of others around them *in* Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*.

²⁹ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 25.

- *Leadership and management*

Pastoring requires a number of different skills. From public speaking to administration, to stakeholder communication, to conflict resolution, to vision casting etc. Often, many pastors are not trained or are poorly trained in these areas, and many feel inadequate as they struggle to develop leadership skills whilst on the job.³¹ One pastor said:

'When I got out of seminary, I didn't know what I was doing. I was so deficient in the area of leadership. If somebody mentioned a book on leadership, I bought it. I had to self-educate, and I'm still doing that.'³²

These five factors do not function in a mutually exclusive way. For example, a pastor may not be strong in the areas of leadership and management, and this will impact their emotional health if they begin to feel inadequate. This will in turn impact their marriage and family life, and as they struggle to grow and push themselves as a leader, they may begin to neglect their own spiritual formation.

National Church Life Survey Results (NCLS)

An Australian study was conducted in 1996 across 25 denominations with approximately 4400 senior ministers/pastors/priests. The study used the Alban Institute Burnout Inventory (AIBI) to measure factors impacting burnout in Australian Christian leaders.³³

Some of their key findings are summarized in the table below.

³⁰ Brain, *Going the Distance*, 99.

³¹ Jackson W. Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 98, 106.

³² Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 27.

³³ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 9.

Table A. Summary of research findings from the NCLS

Category	Data
Age	Younger leaders aged 20-49 experienced more burnout than did leaders aged 50-70. ³⁴
Ethnicity	Non-English speaking leaders experienced less burnout than did English speaking leaders. ³⁵
Leadership Style	Leaders who were people orientated experienced less burnout than those who were task oriented. ³⁶
View on the Christian faith	Christian leaders who held a literal view of the Word of God experienced less burnout than leaders who did not hold a literal view of the Word of God. ³⁷
View on the Christian faith	Christian leaders who held to a orthodox view of the Christian faith, (God as Trinity, devil being a personal active being, resurrection of Christ) consistently across all measures scored lower on their burnout rates than did those who held to a more liberal view of the Christian faith (God is the source of creative life, denied the humanity and divinity of Christ, resurrection as a parable). ³⁸
Spiritual growth	Those who believed that doubt is an important part of the religious experience scored greater burnout rates than those who strongly disagreed ³⁹
Spiritual growth	Those who experienced 'much growth, through congregation/parish' scored lower burnout rates compared to those who grew individually. ⁴⁰
Personal devotional life	Christian leaders who had a daily practice of reading the Scriptures and praying experienced less burnout rates than those who only prayed in times of stress and need, and were occasional in their Scripture reading. ⁴¹
	Those who experienced some or no spiritual growth scored higher burnout rates than the national average, and no spiritual growth over the past year showing the greatest levels of burnout.
	Those who said that they feel very 'close to God' in everyday life and those who consistently feel 'close to God' in worship experienced less burnout rates compared to those who did not feel close to God in everyday life, and hardly ever felt 'close to God' in worship. ⁴²
Personal devotional life	Christian leaders who said that they were 'delighted' with their children experienced less burnout rates than those who felt otherwise about their children. ⁴³
Family life	Those who were delighted with their marriage life experienced less burnout than those who felt dissatisfied or unhappy in their marriage. ⁴⁴
Family life Recreation and Busyness	Those who agreed that they ought not to take holidays experienced more burnout than those who did. ⁴⁵
	Those who scored 'not busy' experienced a higher burnout rate than those who scored in the mean 'busyness' scale, but those who indicated 'too busy to cope' scored the highest on the burnout scale. ⁴⁶
Congregation size	Those who led a congregation of 300 and over experienced lower burnout rates than those who led congregations that were under 100. ⁴⁷

³⁴ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 22

³⁵ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 23.

³⁶ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 24.

³⁷ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 16.

³⁸ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 34.

³⁹ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 34.

⁴⁰ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 34.

⁴¹ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 36.

⁴² Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 44.

⁴³ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 45.

⁴⁴ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 45.

⁴⁵ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 104.

⁴⁶ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 104.

⁴⁷ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 61.

Spiritual Resources, Job Demands and Job Resources

Grant Bickerton conducted a study with 1018 Christian workers who participated in a survey which looked at how spiritual resources⁴⁸, job demands⁴⁹ and job resources⁵⁰ impacted burnout, work engagement, emotional health and turnover intentions. His study demonstrates the importance of spiritual resources in Christian work.⁵¹

The results showed that drawing on spiritual resources had a positive impact on burnout (i.e. reduced burnout) and increased work engagement. His findings are consistent with both the NCLS results as well as the data presented from the *Pastor's Summit*. Bickerton also identified that job resources had a positive impact on work engagement which in turn reduced turnover intentions.

An interesting finding in Bickerton's research showed that spiritual resources are irreplaceable. Although job resources had a positive impact on work engagement, when job resources are sought after at the neglect of spiritual resources, this would eventually reduce work engagement.

2. My Approach

Aims of my Study

Based on the research conducted by Bickerton, the NCLS, and Burns et al., this study aims to identify the *factors impacting pastoral ministry satisfaction*, and to identify which of these factors have the greatest impact on English and Chinese speaking pastors.

An interesting statistic that the NCLS identified was that non-English speaking Christian workers experienced less burnout than English speaking Christian workers. This study also aims to identify the factors impacting ministry satisfaction in English and Chinese speaking pastors, and whether there are differences in which factors have the greatest impact on satisfaction scores within the two groups.

⁴⁸ Spiritual resources included three major factors. A. One's attachment to God, B. Collaborative coping with God in a season of difficulty and trials. C. Calling to the work, that they were 'designed' to do the work that they were doing in G.R Bickerton, M.H Miner, M. Dowson, & B. Griffin, Spiritual resources in the job demands-resources model in *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 11/3 (2014) 245-268.

⁴⁹ Job demands are the physical, social and organisational aspects that require physical and psychological effort to complete a task.

⁵⁰ Job resources consisted of the 'physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that A. helped a person achieve their work related goals. B. reduces the job demands, and C. stimulates personal growth and development.

⁵¹ Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin, 'Spiritual resources in the job demands-resources model,' 245-268.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that this study will yield similar results to the findings of NCLS, Big 5, and Bickerton's research. In essence, that, those who score positively in spiritual formation, feedback, training, family, recreation, peers and a confidant will have a positive impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction. Secondly there will be differences in the results of what impacts English and Chinese speaking pastors.

Method

The overarching method of completing this study can be summarized into 5 major steps; consultation, survey formation and approval, survey distribution, data collection and analysis.

Consultation with my supervisor at the beginning of this study was imperative to help shape the structure, purpose and scope of this study.⁵²

Survey formation consisted of drafting a survey where the questions were framed around the findings of past research. This was done so that the survey could confirm past research, as well as identify new potential contributing factors on this topic.

Approval from the Australian College of Theology moderator was attained before the survey was distributed. Once the English survey was approved, translation of the English survey into Chinese was completed.⁵³

The survey was then *distributed* to pastors via email, where 'survey monkey' was the vehicle used to create the survey and capture survey results.

Finally, results were gathered, analysed and discussed with my supervisor.

In the *analysis of the results*, the questions relating to ministry satisfaction were identified, and different factors were manipulated to measure which particular factor had the greatest difference on the overall ministry satisfaction scores.

⁵² I would like to acknowledge Ps Matthew Jacoby for being my supervisor and assisting me with crafting the research topic.

⁵³ I would like to acknowledge and thank Pastor Norman Chan from New Life Evangelical Church who helped me with the translation of the English survey into Chinese.

3. Findings – What factors matter?

The questions asked by the survey are based upon the findings from the NCLS and the Burns et al. study. The questions cover the major areas of:

- Personal details (age, gender)
- Recreation
- Having a confidant
- Spiritual formation
- Church relationships
- Feedback
- Training
- Peer relationships
- General satisfaction

A list of the questions of the survey can be found in Appendix A.^{54, 55}

Population

The following table summarises the population that participated in this survey.

Table 3.1.1 Summary of survey population

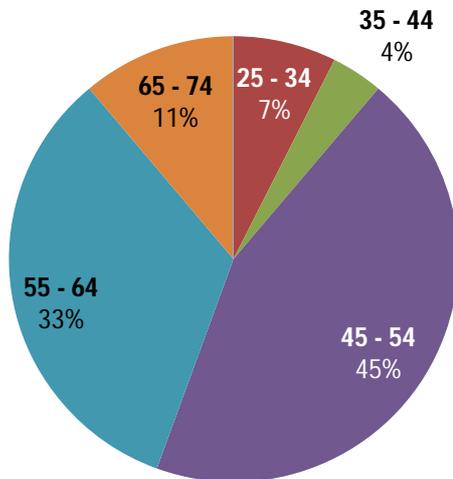
Item	Chinese	English
Total Number of responses	27 ⁵⁶	24
Males	18	21
Females	8	3
Majority Age Bracket	45-54 (44.4%)	25-34 (52.2%)
Average Duration in Ministry	8.3 Years	10 years

⁵⁴ Questions regarding emotional and cultural intelligence have been shown by Burns et al. to be important to pastoral ministry well-being; however, due to the survey format of this study, questions regarding this factor have not been measured.

⁵⁵ It would have been ideal to cover a greater range of factors which impact pastoral ministry satisfaction; however, due to the limited scope of this paper, as well as the comparison between English and Chinese speaking pastors, I have chosen to measure only these listed factors.

⁵⁶ One person in the Chinese speaking survey did not provide a response to gender.

Age Breakdown for Chinese speaking Pastors



Age Breakdown for English speaking Pastors

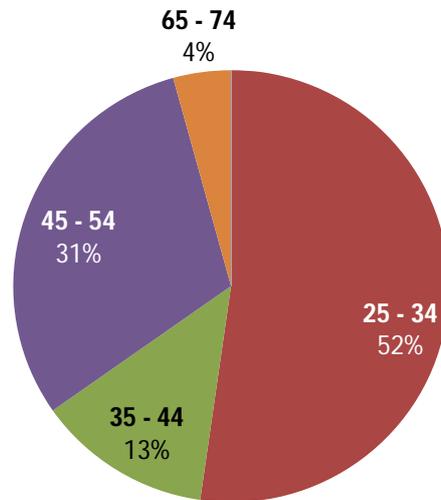


Figure 3.1.1 Age breakdown

A few key observations from the population size are:

- That there are approximately an equal number of Chinese and English speaking pastors included in this study.
- Although the average age of the English speaking pastors is younger, this sample size had a greater collective duration in ministry than the Chinese speaking pastors.
- The Chinese speaking pastors had a higher ratio of female pastor responses than the English speaking pastors.

Differences in Responses by Ethnicity

The following table summarises the weighted average scores on a scale of 1-10 across the different questions regarding recreation, spiritual formation, church leadership, peer relationships, training, family and general satisfaction. The higher the number the 'better' they scored in each specific area. E.g. a 10 on recreation reflects that the respondent rated themselves high on how satisfied they were in recreational activities, compared to a 1 being very unsatisfied with their recreation.

Table 3.2.1 Summary of ethnic differences in responses⁵⁷

Item	Chinese	English	Difference ⁵⁸
Recreation	5.75	6.46	0.71 (E)
Spiritual Formation	7.48	7.35	0.13 (E)
Church relationships	6.28	7.35	1.07 (E)
Feedback	5.81	6.57	0.76 (E)
Training	5.77	4.70	1.07 (C)
Family	5.15	5.78	0.63 (E)
General Satisfaction	8.87	8.69	0.18 (E)

The following graph compares Chinese and English speaking pastors in terms of how many nights they are out on church duties each week.

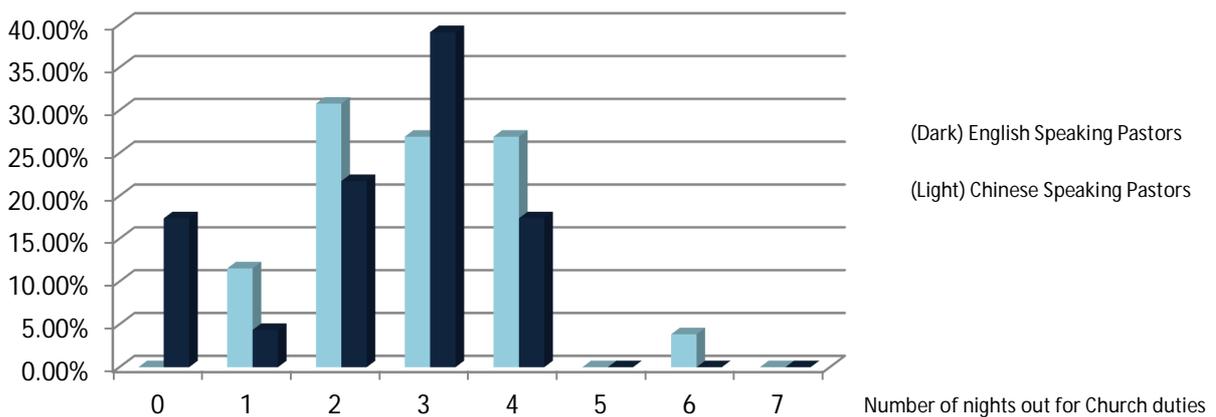


Figure 3.2.1 Nights per week spent on church duties

The following graph shows the responses of Chinese and English speaking pastors on whether they have a confidant whom they feel they can share their struggles with.

⁵⁷ This table does not include data gathered from question 6 (having a confidant), question 11 (number of nights doing church work) and question 16 (spiritual formation). The information regarding these questions will be represented in graphs below. Because these questions were not scored 1-10, including this data in the weighted averages summary table would have skewed the results.

⁵⁸ The bracket (E) for English and (C) for Chinese denotes which ethnic group scored higher in each major segment.

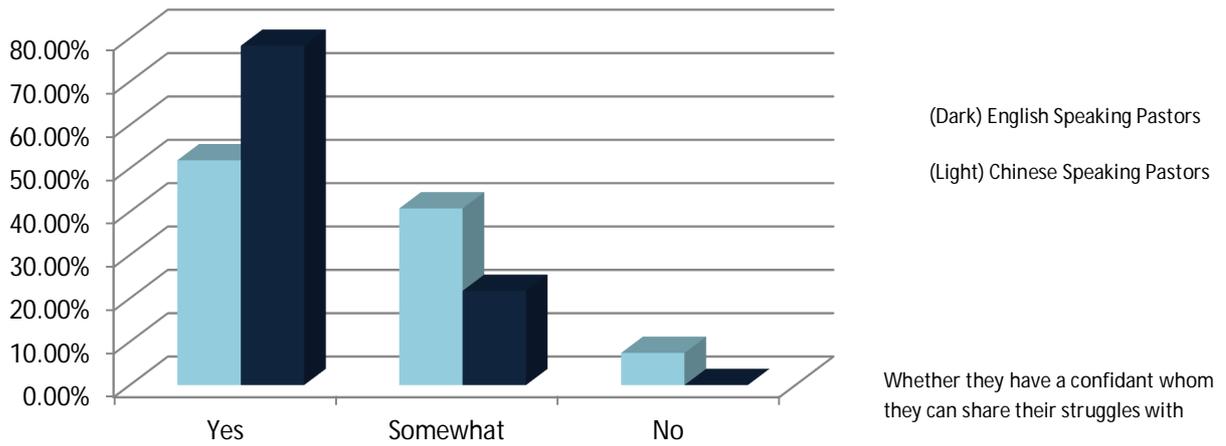
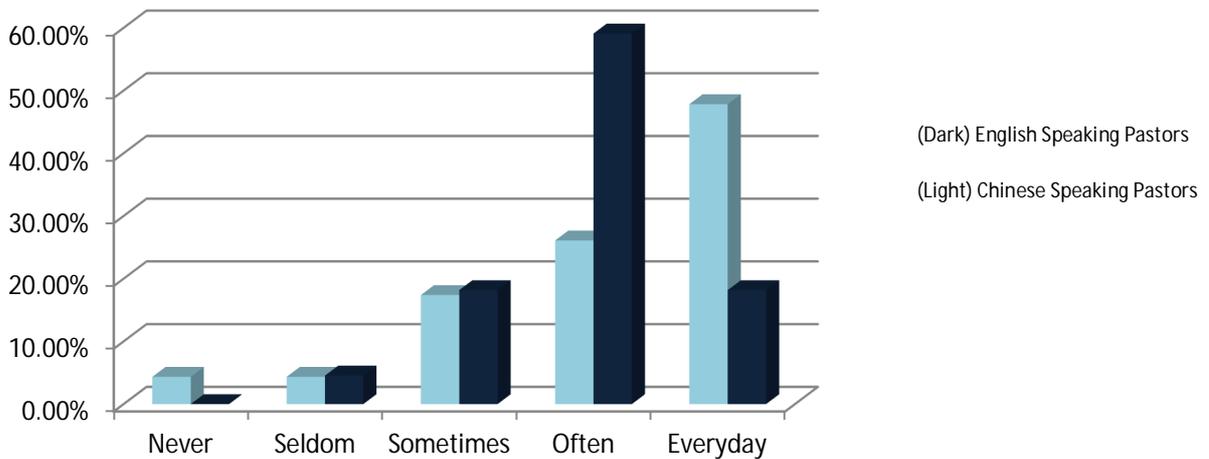


Figure 3.2.2 Percentage of pastors who have a confidant

The general trend is that most pastors have a confidant or somewhat have a confidant who they can share their struggles with.

The following graph shows the responses of Chinese and English speaking pastors on how often they read the Bible and pray solely for the purpose of meeting God.

Figure 3.2.3 Regularity of prayer and Scripture reading



From the above information, a few key observations can be made:

- English speaking pastors rated themselves higher across recreation, spiritual formation, church relationships, feedback, family and general satisfaction.
- One of the major differences was that Chinese speaking pastors reported they generally felt more equipped in ministry than did English speaking pastors.

- The other major difference was that English speaking pastors generally felt like they had better relationships within their churches than did Chinese speaking pastors.
- Chinese and English speaking pastors scored most similarly in spiritual formation and general satisfaction.
- Chinese speaking pastors reported that they would be out more nights a week on church duties than did English speaking pastors.

Impact of Family

The following table shows the impact of family relationships and how that impacts on ministry satisfaction across Chinese and English speaking pastors.

Table 3.6 Impact of family relationships on ministry satisfaction

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
<i>Number of nights away from home doing Church work</i>			
Chinese	Participants who said 3 and less	7.37	-0.11
	Participants who said 3 and more	7.26	
English	Participants who said 3 and less	7.23	-0.10
	Participants who said 3 and more	7.13	
<i>The extent to which ministry was detracting from family time</i>			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.26	0.18
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.44	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.17	0.22
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.39	

Key observations:

- Both Chinese and English speaking pastors reported an equally minor decrease in ministry satisfaction scores the more nights they stayed at home.⁵⁹
- Both English and Chinese speaking pastors reported a positive increase in satisfaction scores when they scored higher on the scale of whether ministry was detracting from family time, i.e. the less ministry detracted from their family time the greater their satisfaction scores.

⁵⁹ This is an interesting statistic. This is the only statistic that shows a decrease in satisfaction when the hypothesis would have been the opposite. This may be because number of nights away from church work is a neutral statistic rather than a personal rating of how it personally impacts their life.

Impact on receiving general feedback from those you work with

The following table outlines the impact of receiving feedback on overall ministry satisfaction scores for both Chinese and English speaking pastors.

Table 3.4.1 Impact on receiving feedback in Ministry satisfaction

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.2	0
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.2	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.14	0.22
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.36	

Key observations:

- Receiving feedback from those whom one works with has minimal to no impact on satisfaction scores for Chinese speaking pastors.
- It makes somewhat of a difference to English speaking pastors.

Impact of Training

The following table shows the impact of feeling adequately trained and how that impacts on ministry satisfaction across Chinese and English speaking pastors.

Table 3.7 Impact of feeling adequately

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.25	0.12
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.37	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.22	0.04
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.26	

Key Observations:

- Across both English and Chinese speaking pastors, those who scored higher on saying that they felt more adequately prepared for ministry also highlighted a general higher satisfaction score.
- The Chinese speaking pastors have a higher impact on ministry than do English speaking pastors.

Impacts of recreational activity with peers and having a confidant in Ministry Satisfaction

The following table outlines the results of Chinese and English speaking pastors in terms of how having recreational activity and a confidant impacts on overall ministry satisfaction. Those who scored 1-5 regarding a particular recreational factor were compared to those who scored 6-10⁶⁰ in that same factor. Their corresponding general ministry 'satisfaction' scores were recorded and averaged. The difference between the two satisfaction scores suggests the magnitude of the impact of a particular 'factor' on overall ministry 'satisfaction.'⁶¹

Table 3.3.1 Impact of Peer recreational activities and having a confidant

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
Peer recreational activities			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.20	0.11
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.31	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.18	0.30
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.48	
Having a confidant			
Chinese	Do you have a confidant (No)	6.53	0.22
	Do you have a confidant (Somewhat)	7.04	
	Do you have a confidant (Yes)	7.26	0.74 ⁶²
English	Do you have a confidant (No)	(None)	0.14
	Do you have a confidant (Somewhat)	7.14	
	Do you have a confidant (Yes)	7.28	
Peer recreation and having a confidant in Ministry			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	6.78	0.89
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.67	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	6.95	0.41
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.36	

Key observations:

- Across both Chinese and English speaking pastors, all who scored higher in recreational activities and having a confidant scored higher in their general satisfaction scores.

⁶⁰ In this study, 1 corresponds to the negative, whilst 10 corresponds to positive. E.g. 1 on recreation would correspond to having no recreational activity, 10 being very satisfied with recreational activity. Refer to Appendix A to view the entire Survey with possible responses.

⁶¹ E.g. those who scored 1-5 on peer recreation were compared to those who scored 6-10 on peer recreation. Then their satisfaction scores were averaged and a difference between the two groups was found.

⁶² This difference corresponds to the 'Yes' satisfaction average scores compared to the 'No' satisfaction scores.

- Recreational activities had a higher ministry satisfaction impact on English speaking pastors, whereas having a confidant had a higher ministry satisfaction impact on Chinese speaking pastors.
- The collective factor of peer recreation and having a confidant in ministry impacted Chinese speaking pastors more so than the English speaking pastors.

Impact of Church Relationships

The following table shows the impact of various church relationships (senior leaders, core team/deacons and congregation) on ministry satisfaction.

Table 3.5.1 Impact of church relationships on ministry satisfaction

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
<i>Support from Senior Leadership</i>			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.18	0.08
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.26	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.14	0.25
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.39	
<i>Support from Core Team/Deacons</i>			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.18	0.08
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.26	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.19	0.04
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.23	
<i>Relationship with Congregation</i>			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.2	0.05
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.24	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.19	0.04
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.23	
<i>General Relationship with Congregation, core team and Senior leadership</i>			
Chinese	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.13	0.18
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.31	
English	Participants who scored between 1-5	7.19	0.17
	Participants who scored between 6-10	7.36	

Key observations:

- Across both Chinese and English speaking pastors, all who scored higher in senior leadership support, core team/deacon support and positive relationship with congregation, scored higher in their general ministry satisfaction scores.
- Support from senior leadership is more important to English speaking pastors in their satisfaction scores than Chinese speaking pastors.

- Collectively speaking, a combination of positive relationship with congregation, support from core team/deacons, and support from senior leadership had a similar impact on ministry satisfaction scores for Chinese and English speaking pastors.

Impact of Spiritual Formation

The following table outlines the impact of prayer and Scripture reading with the sole purpose of meeting God and not just for a sermon/study etc.

Table 3.8 Impact of regularity of spiritual disciplines

		Satisfaction Scores (out of 10)	Difference
Chinese	Never	6	1.18
	Never and Seldom	7.18	
	Seldom and sometimes	7.19	0.046
	Often	7.65	
	Everyday	7.52	1.52⁶³
English	Never	N/A	1.95
	Seldom	5.2	
	Seldom and sometimes	7.15	
	Often	7.23	0.07
	Everyday	7.26	2.06⁶⁴

Key observations:

- This factor of pastors' regularity of prayer and spending time in Scripture with the sole purpose of meeting God has the greatest impact on the overall ministry satisfaction scores for both Chinese and English speaking pastors.
- The biggest impacts appear to occur in an increase from never to seldom for Chinese speaking pastors, and seldom to sometimes for English speaking pastors.

⁶³ This is the 'everyday' score compared to the 'never' score.

⁶⁴ This is the 'everyday' score compared to the 'seldom' score.

Overall Results

In light of all this data, the following graphs show which factors have the greatest impact on ministry satisfaction across English and Chinese speaking pastors. They are presented from least impact to greatest impact. These numbers were derived by summarizing the findings from each major factor outlined above.

Difference in overall satisfaction scores

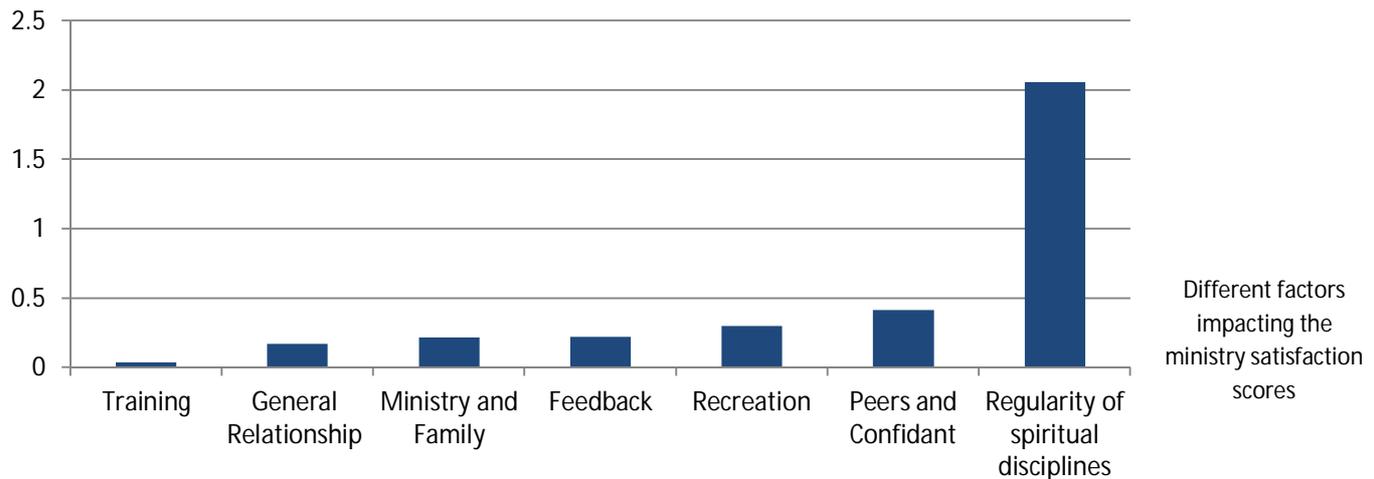


Figure 3.9 Overall order of Factors impacting Pastoral Ministry Satisfaction for English Speaking Pastors

Difference in overall satisfaction scores

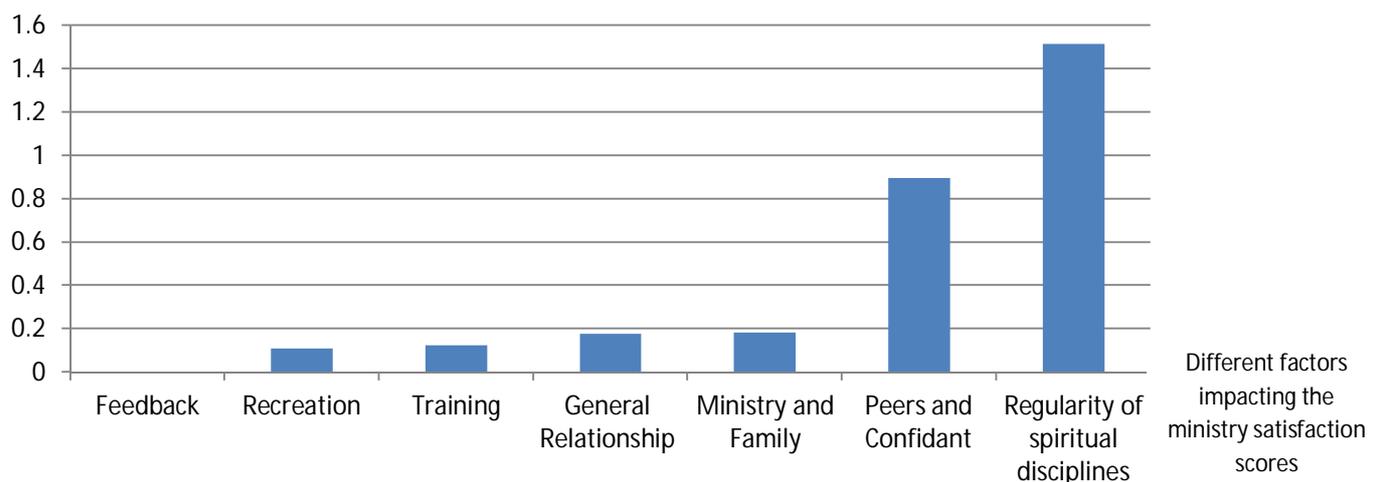


Figure 3.9.1 Overall order of Factors impacting Pastoral Ministry Satisfaction for Chinese Speaking Pastors

Key observations:

- Higher scores on feedback, training, general relationships, family life, recreation, having a confidant, spiritual formation will have a positive impact on one's ministry satisfaction.⁶⁵
- The order of which factors have greater impact on ministry satisfaction is almost *identical* for both Chinese and English speaking pastors (with the exception of feedback and recreation).
- Recreation and feedback play a more important role in the lives of English speaking pastors than they do in lives of Chinese speaking pastors.
- Having a confidant and one's intentionality on practising prayer and Scripture reading for the sole purpose of meeting God are the two activities which impacts most on overall pastoral ministry satisfaction scores for both groups.

4. Discussion – Everything matters but what matters most?

Acknowledgement of Limitations

There are three main limitations of this study that I would like to acknowledge before entering into the discussion on the interpretation of the results above.

Firstly, the number of data points of my study is substantially smaller when compared to that of Bickerton's study and the National Church Life Survey. Therefore, although my results have demonstrated trends, is consistent with the overall hypotheses and reflects results from past research, this study only gives a snapshot of Chinese speaking pastors and English speaking pastors. This is not to say that my results and the following discussion are not credible, but rather, more data points would give this research greater weight.

Secondly, this study predominantly measured external factors⁶⁶ and not internal factors⁶⁷ which impact pastoral ministry satisfaction. Cummins measured the impacts on subjective well-being and covered both external factors (money, relationships) as well as internal factors such as resilience.⁶⁸ It is important to acknowledge that although these studies differ in purpose and nature of participants, they share the common purpose of measuring well-being. As much as internal factors have an impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction, the

⁶⁵ As noted earlier, with the exception of number of nights a week out on church duties.

⁶⁶ These are factors outside the individual such as friends, other people, and training.

⁶⁷ Internal factors are those within the individual such as character emotional development, resilience etc.

⁶⁸ Robert A. Cummins, 'A theory of subjective well-being homeostasis: A contribution to understanding of life quality' in *F. Maggion (ed.) A Life Devoted to Quality of Life*. This paper is still in draft and was sent to me by Ps Lindsay Tunbridge.

nature of this research (being an online survey) made it impractical to measure internal factors such as one's resilience and emotional intelligence/awareness. So, although the discussion focuses on external factors which impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction, there are also internal factors that can have huge impacts on pastoral ministry⁶⁹ which were not measured in this study.

Thirdly, this study does not cover emotional self-awareness. Emotional self-awareness is crucial for any kind of leadership because we lead out of our emotional dysfunctions. Peter Scazzero warns about the danger of leaders who do not attend to their own inner life and says that 'if we are not self-aware, a gap grows over time between who we are in public when we are preaching and who we really are on the inside. That's when it gets dangerous.'⁷⁰

The importance of having emotional self-awareness, especially by looking at where it stems from in one's family origin is emphasised by Ronald Richardson:

*'After thirty-five years of doing ministry and training and supervising clergy, I am convinced that those who are most willing to looking at their own unresolved emotional attachments within their family of origin, who attempt to understand both how their family functions and how they themselves function within that emotional system and who will work on modifying how they function within that system will become the most effective church leaders and pastors over the long haul.'*⁷¹

⁶⁹ Lindsay Tunbridge, 'Suffering servants and flourishing: Theological and psychological perspectives for increasing well-being and lowering anxiety in ministry leaders of Victorian Baptist Churches', *A project submitted to the Australia College of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Ministry (2012)*, shows that the ability to absorb injustices to be crucial for pastoral ministry well-being.

⁷⁰ Peter Scazzero, 'Getting Emotion' in *Christianity Today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/parse/2015/june/emotional-health-check-up.html> (June 2015) in an interview with Daniel Darling.

⁷¹ Ronald R Richardson., *Becoming a healthier Pastor: Family System Theory* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 6.

Comparison with Previous Studies

When looking at the results, all the factors that were measured, when a positive increase was recorded, also had a positive impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction across both Chinese and English speaking pastors. This suggests that these external factors that were measured make a difference in the lives of both English and Chinese speaking pastors' experience of pastoral ministry.

The positive impact of marriage, spiritual formation, recreation, positive church relationships, having a confidant and the importance of training confirms the research conducted by Burns, Guthrie and Chapman.⁷² Although their study was an American study, one key similarity was the number of participants in this study (51) and in theirs (73).

However, a key difference was that the format of their study was small group interviews and conversations conducted over 6 years, whereas this study was a short survey. One of the differences was that the Burns et al. study also demonstrated that emotional and cultural intelligence was important to pastors thriving in their ministry.⁷³ Due to the nature of this study, it was difficult to measure emotional and cultural intelligence in the absence of prolonged conversation with the participants.

Furthermore, this study also confirmed the burnout research conducted by the NCLS study. Their study showed that positive increases in the areas of spiritual formation, marriage and family, peer relationships, recreation and relationship with congregation reduced the average burnout scores of participants. Similarly, in this study, positive increases in these areas also increased their overall ministry satisfaction scores.⁷⁴

However, the key differences in this study compared to the NCLS and Burns et al. study is that this study divided the participants into two different ethnic groups and looked at the degree to which each factor had on pastoral ministry satisfaction. This study demonstrated *across both English and Chinese speaking pastors, the results and principles of thriving in ministry and reducing burnout from Burns et al. and NCLS also apply*. Essentially, these factors make a difference regardless of the ethnic divide. Furthermore, it showed a pattern that *the order of what mattered most* in pastoral ministry satisfaction was almost identical for Chinese and English speaking Pastors.

⁷² This summarizes the major findings from Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, Resilient Ministry.

⁷³ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, Resilient Ministry, 101-131.

⁷⁴ Refer to *Table A* in this Paper.

Order of which Factors Matter Most

Table 4.1 Order of what makes the most impact across English and Chinese speaking Pastors

Order of Impact	Chinese Speaking Pastors	English Speaking Pastors
1	Regularity of Spiritual disciplines	Regularity of Spiritual disciplines
2	Having peers and a confidant	Having peers and a confidant
3	Ministry and family	Recreation
4	General relationship with those in Church	Feedback
5	Training	Ministry and family
6	Recreation	General relationships with those in Church
7	Feedback	Training

Although it may not be apparent from this table, if one was to remove recreation and feedback for both Chinese and English speaking pastors, the order would be *identical*. Refer to the table below.

Table 4.2 Identical Order of the degree of Impact for both Chinese and English Speaking Pastors without recreation and training

Order of Impact	Chinese Speaking Pastors	English Speaking Pastors
1	Regularity of Spiritual disciplines	Regularity of Spiritual disciplines
2	Having a peers and a confidant	Having a peers and a confidant
3	Ministry and family	Ministry and family
4	General relationship with those in Church	General relationships with those in Church
5	Training	Training

This is an interesting finding because both sets of Chinese and English speaking pastors' data was analysed separately and still, the order of what mattered most was consistent. This essentially gives weight to the idea that some factors in one's pastoral ministry life are more important than others, and it is attested to in both English and Chinese speaking pastors. *Order matters even across ethnicity.*

Finally, *regularity of spiritual disciplines* and *having peers and a confidant* consistently showed across both groups as the factors which have the greatest impact on pastoral ministry satisfaction.

The Need for Authentic Spiritual Formation

Spending time with God in prayer, reading Scripture with the sole purpose of meeting God was the factor which showed the greatest difference in satisfaction scores across Chinese and English speaking pastors. All the factors make a difference, but authentic spiritual formation makes the biggest difference.

The importance of spiritual formation is attested to over and over in the NCLS survey, in Burns et al., and in other various books on leadership.⁷⁵ Bickerton's research in particular highlighted that having adequate spiritual resources is like an *irreplaceable* foundation for those involved in Christian ministry.⁷⁶

This all makes sense since Jesus did tell us that *apart from Him, we can do nothing*.⁷⁷ Pastors believe and often teach this passage to encourage their congregation to abide in Christ. Our churches are geared towards developing the spiritual lives of those who attend church. Why then, do pastors find it so difficult to develop their own spiritual lives? One possible reason is workaholism.⁷⁸

Burns et al. suggest that the two major causes for workaholism stems from a belief that 'pastors never work hard enough (that others in the congregation work harder than they do), and the assumption that they are responsible for everything that happens in the Church.'⁷⁹ Pastors then push themselves to work endless hours with malnourished souls and undefined expectations. One pastor put it this way:

"What happens when I skirt my spiritual growth? I replace it with the 'spiritual' tasks of pastoral life. So, for example, it is not unusual to find me substituting sermon preparation for personal worship and Bible study. 'After all,' I rationalize, 'I will be meditation on the Bible.' However, the sustained exchange of ministry duties for spiritual growth results in my becoming an 'inch deep.' The outcome is a

⁷⁵ Books by Richard Foster and Dallas Willard focus on the importance of building spiritual depth in a superficial culture.

⁷⁶ Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, M. & Griffin, B. (2014). Spiritual resources in the job demands-resources model, 245-268.

⁷⁷ John 15:5.

⁷⁸ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 34.

⁷⁹ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 34.

*spiritually dry, worn-out pastor with very little 'left in the tank' for others. The 'spring of water welling up to eternal life' has slowed to a trickle.*⁸⁰

Jim Herrington, Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor describe this as *soul neglect* - when leaders and pastors grow busier and busier trying to please more and more people. 'We spend more time in meetings than we do in prayer. We study Scripture, but we do it for other people to convey God's Word to them. Our own hearts are often thirsty for a word from God but who has the time?'⁸¹

Kevin Harney shares his experiences from seminarians where he discovered that they had 'all put aside Bible study from the rhythm of their daily lifestyle.'⁸² What happens then is we have a generation of Christian leaders who begin this pattern of behaviour in seminary or Bible College, who then at the expense of obsessing over the externals in ministry, starve their souls.⁸³ Wayne Cordeiro explains that our souls are like batteries which need to be recharged after energy has been discharged through investing and giving life away to others.⁸⁴

Edmund Chan poignantly notes the *critical need* for spiritual discipleship in this generation, saying that the church is 'a mile wide but an inch deep'. He points out the situation where 'we have the largest church in history, we also have the shallowest.'⁸⁵

Not only is burnout a dangerous consequence of *soul neglect*, but when a pastor's inner life is not nourished by the living water of Christ, it is left vulnerable to be contaminated by others things such as ego, power, approval, bitterness and the wrong ideas of success and self-worth.⁸⁶ Pastors then fall prey to the Devil's definition of self-worth; 'You are the function of your performance plus the opinion of others.'⁸⁷

What can happen overtime in ministry is that pastors reverse God's call from 'come to me you weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest' to 'come to me you who have found rest in Jesus, and you will be given a heavy burden.'⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 33.

⁸¹ Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 131.

⁸² Kevin Harney, *Leadership from the Inside Out: Examining the Inner Life of a Healthy Church Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 27.

⁸³ Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 131.

⁸⁴ Cordeiro, *Leading On Empty*, 88.

⁸⁵ Chan, *A Certain King*, 76.

⁸⁶ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 32.

⁸⁷ James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner, *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 106.

⁸⁸ Ortberg, J. 'The Barnacles of Life – What Dallas Willard taught me about living the Jesus way in Ministry' in *Leadership Journal* (Winter, 2015), 52.

This is why Bill Hybels suggests in relation to scheduling that 'sitting down before God with a *calendar* and a submitted spirit is one of the holiest things you can do.'⁸⁹ This protects the pastor against the potential dangers of workaholism and *soul neglect*.

Not losing sight of the end goal

Nonetheless, given the temptation of workaholism in the pastoral life, pastors need to have a deep and rich relationship with God to flourish in ministry.⁹⁰ So often, as pastors, we strive to develop programs, write materials, complete other important administrative tasks that we lose focus on what the end goal of our ministry is. We are called to see people transformed into the image of Christ, and if this is our end goal, then our personal spiritual transformation needs to be given priority.⁹¹

When leaders and pastors begin to live out their personal transformation in Christ, they come to realize their utter dependence on God, and they hold dearly to the internal work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.⁹² They come to a place of deep trust in Christ and experience the nourishment, nurture and care from God, and God will often use relationships and friendships to accomplish this.⁹³

Why do peers and confidants matter?

The world is becoming a lonelier place. In a recent article in Christianity Today titled 'Look at all the lonely people' it outlined that people over the past two decades have less confidants and close friends. This 'leaves us at a higher risk for a host of physical, social and psychological ailments.'⁹⁴

God has created humans in His image and *it is not good for man to be alone*.⁹⁵ God Himself is a Triune God, three persons yet one, and is communal in nature and bound together perfectly in love.⁹⁶ As His image bearers, regardless of how introverted we may think we are, we are designed and hardwired for relationships. Therefore, there is no substitute on earth for the connectedness that one feels with another human being where trust, belonging, freedom, acceptance, security and safety is present. This is why the Scriptures continue to encourage believers not to give up meeting together and to encourage one another.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Bill Hybels, 'The Secret of Strategic Neglect' in *Leadership Journal* (Winter 2015), 30.

⁹⁰ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 37.

⁹¹ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 30-31.

⁹² Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray* (Illinois: IVP, 1998), speaks about the importance of prayer especially in a busy schedule.

⁹³ Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2005), 53.

⁹⁴ Christianity Today, 'All the Lonely People' 50/11, (2006), 31.

⁹⁵ Genesis 2:18.

⁹⁶ The debate between the substance of God whether He is a Latin Trinity or a Social Trinity extends beyond the bounds of this paper.

⁹⁷ Hebrews 10:25.

Connecting in friendship and investing in confidants are important in anyone's life, especially pastors.

The difference between confidants and peers

Confidants 'are the few people to who we pour out our souls, sharing our deepest feelings and hopes.'⁹⁸ For pastors, confidants 'usually operate outside their organisation's boundary,' but can exist within the Church. Pastors are in the business of people and relationships. Pastors if anything need to be highly skilled in the area of relating to people and connecting with people. However, an Australian study conducted by Paul and Libby Whetham found that there were low levels of intimacy in Church leader's closest relationships.⁹⁹ For leader's whose two greatest commandments have to do with relationships, pastors ought to be experts in trust, belonging, safety and security in relating to people, not only in their lives but also in how they relate to their congregations. The need for healthy confidant relationships is seen because how one relates to the closest to them will often reflect the nature of their relationships with others.¹⁰⁰

An important distinction to make is that confidants are not the same as peers. Confidants are those, whom one feels safe with to share deeply, 'whose interests are perfectly aligned with yours,'¹⁰¹ they care about *you* as a person. Peers and allies are those who 'share many of your values, or at least your strategy and operate across some organizational factional boundary, they cannot always be loyal to you, they have other ties to honour,'¹⁰² they care about what you *do* if it aligns to their values. This study showed that having both confidants and peers/allies are important because both factors when combined make a substantial difference to ministry satisfaction.

However, given the pastor's crammed schedule, their multilayered relationships with people within their Church, the growing trend of society to move in the direction of isolation and carrying the weight of their reputation, many pastors feel *lonely*. Many pastors do not have people in their lives who they can completely trust and feel safe with. McBurney speaks about an experience of a middle aged Episcopalian priest who had become disillusioned with ministry and his calling, and was about to about to quit. The 'most agonizing aspect of his dilemma was having no one with whom he could share his hurt. He felt threatened at the prospect of confiding in a parishioner, he feared that his bishop would blackmail him, and he

⁹⁸ Jerry White and Mary White, *Friends and Friendship: The Secrets of Drawing Closer* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1982).

⁹⁹ Paul Whetham & Libby Whetham, *Hard to be Holy*, (Adelaide: Openbook), 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 50.

¹⁰¹ Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the dangers of leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 99.

¹⁰² Heifetz & Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the dangers of leadership*, 99.

was embarrassed to confess to a colleague.¹⁰³ Many others who participated in the Burns et al. study shared similar experiences of loneliness and an inability to find someone whom they could share their hurt with.

Even though finding peers and confidants is difficult, the results of this study suggest that those who carry a pastoral calling *need to be intentional* about finding confidants and peers to journey the ministry path with. Sharing life with those whom you trust may be difficult to place on a busy schedule, and it will not complete ministry tasks that need to be accomplished, it may also be risky to open up and be vulnerable, but the spiritual and emotional benefits far outweigh whatever costs and risks might be involved.

Although the Burns et al. study was conducted to identify what pastor's said about surviving and thriving in ministry, it accomplished something far greater. It provided a *kind of church* for pastors where they gathered together and engaged in heart-felt facilitated discussion. One pastor in particular shared about the profound impact of participating in this study by stating:

'I don't want to lose this, because I don't have this anyplace else. I hope that if I veer off, you all will come and get me. Because I don't know who in the world, literally, will come and get me if you don't (emphasis mine).'¹⁰⁴

Other pastors who participated in the *Pastor's Summit* said:

'Learning and positive change occur most deeply in the context of relationships'¹⁰⁵

'It was a treat having freedom from being 'on' all the time and to be able to share with mutual understanding about our lives and work.'¹⁰⁶

'The Pastor's Summit was about our health, not the health of our Church.'¹⁰⁷

'My summit group is the only place I can be myself and laugh from my gut.'¹⁰⁸

'Connection with other pastors has been a lifeline. The summit has given me a band of sisters and brothers to journey with, a gift that is immeasurable.'¹⁰⁹

It is ironic that though the *Pastor's Summit* originally aimed to identify the key elements that help pastors thrive and survive in ministry, the format of the study became one of the key

¹⁰³ McBurney, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor*, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 88.

¹⁰⁶ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 88.

¹⁰⁸ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Burns, Chapman & Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 255.

solutions to actually helping pastors survive and thrive. The importance of having confidants and peers that a pastor engages with to share vulnerabilities, joys and pains, is also affirmed by the NCLS. It showed that leaders who had someone they could be honest with scored lower on the average burnout rates.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, another interesting statistic showed that leaders who grew spiritually together in groups had less burnout scores than those who grew individually.¹¹¹ These statistics and testimonials from pastors highlight the significance of living life with confidants and peers in the ministry journey.

Building Resilience

Burns et al. also state the need for pastoral peer fellowship is important because it helps to increase pastors' resilience.

Developing resilience is imperative to pastoral ministry well-being. Although my study did not delve into the internal factors which contribute to health, Tunbridge conducted such a study and suggested that the ability to absorb injustices was imperative to pastoral ministry well-being. His study tested a six week program which was developed from the Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah on Baptist pastors in Victoria. This program educated pastors on the suffering nature of God's servants, and how God uses suffering and injustices to accomplish His purposes. His results indicated that after the program, pastors showed lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of well-being.¹¹² Therefore, arming oneself with the mindset to absorb injustice is a key factor in pastoral ministry well-being. In a similar vein, Samuel Chand in his book *Leadership Pain – The classroom for growth* affirms the importance of the ability to absorb pain in leadership promotion and longevity.^{113,114}

¹¹⁰ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 53.

¹¹¹ Kaldor & Bullpitt, *Burnout in Church Leaders*, 34.

¹¹² Tunbridge, 'Suffering servants and flourishing', 17.

¹¹³ Samuel Chand, *Leadership Pain – The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015).

¹¹⁴ Mark Sayers in an interview with Daniel Darling, when asked, 'if there is a key word for contemporary pastors and leaders, what would that be? His response was *Resilience*. Mark Sayers, 'Friday Five Interview: Mark Sayers' in *Christianity today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/parse/2014/march/friday-five-interview-mark-sayers.html?start=3> (March, 2014).

5. Conclusion – Where is your Church?

Gary Gunderson and Larry Pray in their book *Leading Causes of Life* aptly point out that:

*'One of the ironies of our time is that many people who serve in caring professions experience poor health. Perhaps the most ironic of all is the strikingly below average health of clergy. Age for age, clergy have significantly greater incidences of chronic disease, heart and GI tract conditions, and stress, which is a bit embarrassing for a group preaching about life every week. Clergy today have, on average, a pattern of health that is significantly worse than the average American.'*¹¹⁵

The primary application point for my research can be summed up in one question. *Pastor, where is your Church?*¹¹⁶

It is interesting that Pastors work so tirelessly to create environments so that people can connect with Jesus, be engaged with service and feel belonging in a life group. They speak on platforms and write materials for the congregation to grow in their faith. Churches have mission statements which are centred on connecting with God and connecting with people. Pastors teach and preach the two greatest commandments. Yet it is ironic and almost hypocritical that pastors work so hard to create for others what they lack so deeply in their own lives - *experiencing church*.¹¹⁷

Pastors need to find a church where they can experience fellowship with peers and confidants with whom they can share, laugh, cry, be themselves, and feel like others in that church will be able to carry their burdens. A small group of people who share similar life experiences, people they can trust, confidants, who gather around the person of Jesus Christ and grow in their spiritual life journey together. Gary Collins suggests that one of the best antidotes to loneliness for anyone is a healthy church community.¹¹⁸

Rev Chris Pemberton shared in a seminar conducted at the Melbourne School of Theology on the subject of *Living in the Red Zone (Burnout)*¹¹⁹ that he has a small group of men who meet a few times a year, and each time they meet, they would simply wait upon the LORD for

¹¹⁵ Garry Gunderson and Larry Pray, *Leading Causes of Life: Five Fundamentals to Change the Way You Live Your Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009).

¹¹⁶ The mark of a church according to Donald Robinson can be considered as gathering of believers centred on meeting Jesus. Donald Robinson, *Selected Works Volume 1* (eds. Peter G Bolt & Mark D Thompson, Australian Church Record/Moore College: Sydney, 2008).

¹¹⁷ Church here is not attending another service, but a gathering of likeminded believers who share a similar level of maturity and experience to gather around the person of Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁸ Gary Collins, *Christian Counselling* (Texas: Word, 1989), 101-102.

¹¹⁹ 'Red Zone' referring to burnout in ministry.

about an hour and a half for one person in particular, and pray, encourage, build up that one particular person.¹²⁰

Imagine what our churches would look like if every pastor had a small group of trusted confidants, who fellowshiped regularly not for the sake of creating another event, but simply because they loved and trusted each other, and had a desire to grow in their love for Jesus together. Imagine if this level of trust and depth they had with these few trusted confidants started to spread into their families and the churches they lead. Imagine if these *pastor churches* were so edifying that what would occur in these meetings became the model for how their churches were run.

Pastors need a place where they can feel like they are a member in a church. This looks like a church community where they can share life and grow spiritually together with those in that community. Pastors who have such communities will benefit greatly as this may increase their ministry satisfaction, wellbeing and resilience.

Where to from here?

Perhaps this type of ministry may already exist, but this research suggests a real need for pastoral church communities where pastors can *experience church* with others pastors/leaders to share their burdens, connect spiritually and emotionally, and worship God together.

¹²⁰ I attended this seminar and this was the only thing I remember in all that he shared.

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APPENDIX A – Survey Questions (English and Chinese)

English Survey

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Number of years in Vocational Ministry
4. How often would you engage in hobbies/activities which recharge your energy levels?
5. How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend with your friends engaging in social activities?
6. Do you have a confidant with whom you feel comfortable sharing your personal struggles with?
7. How often do you receive feedback from the people with whom you work?
8. To what extent do you feel supported by your senior leader (if applicable)?
9. To what extent do you feel appreciated by your deacons/elders/core team?
10. To what extent do you feel unfairly treated or regarded by your congregation?
11. In an average week, how many nights would you be out with Church duties?
12. To what extent do you feel unfairly treated or regarded by those on your leadership team?
13. To what extent do you feel that ministry is detracting from family time?
14. Looking back how well prepared do you feel you were for ministry?
15. In a year how many days would you spend on a personal/spiritual retreat?
16. How often do you read the Bible/pray with the sole purpose of meeting God (not for sermon writing or leading a study)?
17. How excited do you feel when you go to Church on a Sunday?
18. When you come back from holidays, do you look forward to getting back to ministry?
19. Do you see yourself in ministry in 5 years time?
20. If another Church offered you a similar position to what you are in now, how happy would you be in considering that role?
21. How happy would you be to take on a different role within your own Church or another Church?
22. To what extent do you find your role stressful?
23. How often do you feel like you hear from God (through Scripture or other means)?
24. How often do you find God is confronting you with things about yourself that he wants to change?
25. Looking back 5 years, do you have regrets about the way you responded and dealt with ministry situations?
26. Looking back, how much would you say you have changed over the past 5 years?
27. How would you rate your spiritual vitality compared to when you first started ministry?
28. What advice would I tell myself if I could speak to the 'me' when I first entered ministry?
29. Anything else to add?

Chinese Survey

1. 性别?
2. 年龄?
3. 从事神职工作年数
4. 你经常参与兴趣活动以补充你的活力
5. 你满意你能够付出来与朋友社交的时间量
6. 你有知己朋友可以自在的和他分享个人的挣扎吗?
7. 你经常从同工收到反馈意见
8. 你经常从你的领导教牧处得到支持吗?
9. 你感觉到你在执事\长老\核心团队中受到欣赏的程度
10. 你觉得受到会众不公平和不尊重对待的程度?
11. 平均每个星期有几个晚上你为教会事工外出?
12. 你觉得你被领导团队不公平对待和不尊重的程度?
13. 你觉得事奉带来对家庭分散关注的程度?
14. 从现在回顾, 你觉得在你当初进入教牧工作时的准备足够吗?
15. 一年中有多少天分别出来, 特用在个人反思\灵修上?
16. 你经常读经\祷告, 只是为了与上帝沟通 (而不是为写讲道稿或带领学习)?
17. 周日到教会你会有怎样的兴奋程度?
18. 当你结束休假, 你期盼回教会事奉的热情程度?
19. 在未来五年你觉得你还会在教会事奉吗?
20. 如果另一个教会提供一个与你现教会事奉相同的位置, 你会如何高兴的考虑这份工作?
21. 你会高兴接受一个与现时不同的新事奉岗位 (在现时或另一教会)?
22. 你感到工作有多大压力?
23. 你觉得经常可以听到上帝与你话语 (通过读经或其他)?
24. 你经常发现上帝要求你正视面对你的老我, 作出改变吗?
25. 回顾过去的五年, 你在对教会事奉回应和处理上有遗憾的地方吗?
26. 回顾在过去五年里你有多少改变?
27. 与你刚开始事奉相比较, 你如何给自己的灵命打分?
28. 如果我可以和"我"说话, 我会给刚进入事奉时的自己怎样的建议?
29. 还有要补充的话吗?