

**An Empirical Study on the Challenges Urban Church Families Face with Regard to
Family Counseling in Bangalore**

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Abstract

Purpose of this study is to determine the challenges families are facing in the churches in Bangalore about family counselling and provide appropriate resources to reduce or remove those issues families are facing. A self-prepared structured closed ended questionnaire was employed for this study to collect the data of 100 families in the churches in Bangalore. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 16 application. Various challenges of family were identified. Data evidently revealed that perception of the pastoral ministry in family counselling is by and large is negative. Families are not satisfied by the pastoral care for the families given by the pastors. Hence, resources are essential to equip the families in the church with the appropriate skills so that families can maximize growing as healthy families in the community life of the church.

Introduction

Families in Bangalore are facing issues in their family life. Especially working families are struggling in striking a balance between work and family life. Both husband and wife try hard to work hard and earn double income to provide better facilities for children and to live a better social lifestyle. However, while both working outside the house, finding it hard to work together in balancing the work and the sacred unity called family. Families seems to have money but no marriage. Families in Bangalore are facing challenges that they are unable

to handle or find solutions to their issues, which eventually leading into rapid breaking of families.

Kakar says that by and large, Indian families are made up of extended family (Kakar, 1978). Over all, a careful study on family indicates that family appears to be a backbone of Indian society and every individual is known and belongs to a specific family. Family is seen as a continuing system in the human society with personal bindings, sharing cultural rituals and social rules even beyond biological boundaries (Boss, 2002). Hence, family is seen as a significant institution of a society. Family appears to be a social road map for society and family. Wherever the human society is developed, marriage and family is also developed. By and large, in the Indian context marriage is perceived as significant remedy for mental illness (Srivastava, 2013).

Bangalore is an important and fastest growing city in India with global influence. It is known as Garden city and ‘Silicon Valley of India’ (L Sudarshan Reddy, Kannamani Ramasamy, 2020) with several multinational IT companies contributing to the Indian economy. Several technological organizations such as HAL, ISRO, IBM, Wipro and Infosys and educational research institutions such as NIMHANS, NLSIU, NIAS, IISc have made their headquarters in Bangalore (L Sudarshan Reddy, Kannamani Ramasamy, 2020). Research has also alarmed that if the city continues to grow and proper infrastructure is neglected, soon Bangalore city will not be a place for human beings to dwell.

Biblical perspective on Family says that it is an institution ordained by God himself. Biblical records reveal that families are prominently both recipients and agents of salvation. It is very clear that both in the Old and the New Testaments families play a significant role. God created a couple or family in His own image not just an individual. Family is a community of heaven, humanity on earth. Parents need to become architects of the family, but it does not seem to be happening in many families in our church today. Families are seeking the

resources in the church for fixing family issues. Genuinely families in India are going through mental health crises, but there seems to be a lack of well-equipped professionals (Sachin Jain, Daya Singh Sandhu, 2015).

Literature Review

In the Indian context, family has been viewed as a sacred institution and considered as a pillar of the society (Ramachandrappa, 2012). Many societies in the world accept and view a family as both significant and sacred institution (Jane E Myers, Jayamala Madathil, Lynne R Tingle, 2011). Religions regard marriage and family with divine design. Hinduism considers the marriage a sacred, Catholics will view it as a sacrament and Christianity considers it an institution ordained by God himself. Garry Collins said that God created family much before the church was founded, hence family is significant (Collins, 1980). Early church father St. Augustine believed that family a sacrament because apostle Paul has mentioned it as a symbol for expressing the love of Jesus Christ to the church. Sociology considers family as the vital unit of human society which nurtures and develops every individual into a social being (Kitano, 1996). Family is a highly valued system in the human society that gives personal bindings, helps in developing socio cultural rules beyond biological boundaries (Pauline Boss, Chalandra M Bryant, Jay A Mancini, 2002). Indian family is like a residential unit to for sharing socio, cultural and economic life (Kulkarni, 1982).

Family, the significant, sacred and fundamental unit of any society in the world, especially in India, going through change and divorce, separation and single parenting seem to be on the rise (Rajeev, 2019). Several families in Asia are under severe attacks (Tan, 2003) and seem to have become storm centres (Collins, 1980). Family is a community of heaven and humanity on earth. Parents of this community of heaven and humanity on earth called family, are supposed to become architects of it; but it does not seem to be happening in families in the church today. The growth rate of family problems is increasing rapidly. All

families have problems (Climebell, 1996), hence many families are disintegrating. Families and problems seem to exist together, hence there is a need to build healthy and godly families who can fulfil God's purpose in the church.

Bangalore city shown an explosive growth and expansion in the recent decades in the fields of software industry, various research and industrial development and multi-national companies and organizations (Heitzman, 1999). Every year nearly 2000 to 3000 well educated families are seeking to fix their family issues in the family in Bangalore (Ramachandrappa S, Kumar Vinodh G C, Kumar Ravi P, 2016). Presently Bangalore city has seven Family courts functioning. Looking at the growing need of the family problems, the department of Law has proposed to establish 11 more family courts. Each day about 50 cases are being filed in the family court in Bangalore (Chaturvedi, 2016). In this total number, five percent are Christian families. This would mean an alarming number for the Christian community as we are a small number of Christians in Bangalore.

Increasing family problems are contributing to the physical (blood pressure, blood sugar, nerve, cardiovascular related problems) and emotional (depression, loneliness, stress, worry) health issue of the couple, creating various health issues among the couples. An empirical investigation has depicted the people with cardio vascular issues seem to have shown lower social and family life (Shervin Ziabakhsh Tabary, Mohammad Rezaii, Ziba Javari Nia, Pegah Goodarzy, Maryam Izanloo, 2014). Marital dissatisfaction has brought health-based consequences. Emotional hurt and trauma create pressure and impact the body with adverse effects on the both physical and mental health of the families. Families in the church need various coping resources to navigate through various dynamics of marital satisfaction.

Methodology

In this study, cross-sectional design is implied, and snowball sampling technic was used in collecting the needed data. Purpose of the study was to determine the challenges the families in the church face and also provide right coping resources to reduce the challenges families are going through. Legally married dual career families are the population or universe of this study. The sample size is 200 (100 husbands and 100 wives), within the age group of 25 to 45 years are included. Families aged above 45 years of age are not included in the study because the advanced aged families could encounter different challenges of the mid-life crises in the family life cycle.

Self-designed structured closed ended questionnaire was employed to study the challenges of the families in the church facing. Among the many denominations in the city, four main protestant denominations largely known in Bangalore were included. They are namely, Church of South India (CSI), Methodist, Assemblies of God (AG), Baptist and independent evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Data analysis is done using SPSS.16 application.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Information

Demographic data has revealed that 100 couples/families (100 men and 100 women) who have participated in this study were legally married and living together. Of the total, 22.5% of the participants are married for less than five year, 20.5% of them married for 6 to 10 years, 24% of them married for 11 to 15 years and 33% of them are married for more than 13 years.

Regarding the spouse working, 51% of the participants have said both husband and wife work, 10.5% of them have said frequently both the spouse work, about 3% of them said seldom both work, 21.5% of them said occasionally both work while 14% of them said never

work. It indicates that majority of the church going families in the church are dual career families.

Nature of the family: From the data that have been collected depicts the tendency of increasing nuclear families is evident in urban areas where 79.5% of the families are nuclear and 20.5% only live in joint families.

Among them, 37% of couples have two children, 29% of them have one child, 12% of them have three children, while 21.5% of the couples have no children. Nuclear family pattern is growing in the cities. This also seem to be affecting the size of the family, where by and large families (37%) have preferred only two children, and 29% of them having one child.

Denominational background: data depicts that 20% of the families attend Church of South India (CSI), 20% of the families attend Methodist church, 20% of them from Assembly of God church, 20% of the families attend Baptist church and another 20% of the families attend Independent protestant churches. It is clear from the study that 20% of each main denominational churches in Bangalore are included in this study. Sudhir Kakar said that in the ancient Indian practice, people usually marry in the age group between 12 to 18, but in the educated urban cities the age of marriage has increased (Kakar, 1978).

Overall Issues Families Facing

Table: 1 Issues Families Face

Challenges	Husband and wife relationship	Children related issues	In-laws related issues	Career related issues	Ego problems	Gender related
Low	14%	20%	27%	22%	26%	46%
Medium	47%	43%	39%	60%	32%	45%
High	39%	37%	34%	18%	42%	09%

Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
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Husband and wife relationship: Husband and wife relationship is perceived to be a challenge of the families in the church to the extent of 47% in the medium category or as a common category and perceived to be of highest category of adequately equipped pastors. However, there is no significant association between adequately equipped and inadequately equipped pastors.

Children related: as a common issue 43% and highest 37% of the families. However, 50% perceive in laws related issues as common and 50% consider it highest issue.

In-laws related: 27% consider in-law related issue as a lowest, but 39% considerate to be common, and 34% consider in laws related issues are the highest in the churches.

Career related; career related challenges are considered low with 22% recognizing them, but 60% of the problems in the family are career related and common while 18% of the churches rank career related issues as a challenge affecting the families today.

Ego related: 26% of the people of the churches consider ego issue of low occurrence, while 32% observe commonly, but 42% recognize t e be highest in the affecting the families in the church.

Gender: 46% of them consider it a while 9% consider it highest prevalence. However, there is no significant association between adequately equipped and in adequately equipped pastors in the families that are going through in the city of Bangalore.

Inadequate Pastoral Counselling Service

Of the 200 participants, 58% of the church families feel they have received adequate pastoral care and 42% feel they have received inadequate pastoral care. There is no significant association between denominations and pastoral care. However, it is important in the context of the church that 42% of the families receive inadequate care from the Pastor. It

is a large percentage in terms of the Pastoral counselling ministry is concerned. Theologically trained pastors are being inadequate in the area of giving Pastoral counselling according to the perception of families (42%). This would make pastors to rethink their pastoral training, and test the efficiency of training regarding Family counselling. Data indicates that families in the congregation are receiving inadequate pastoral counselling even though pastors theologically equipped. If theologically equipped pastors are not able to provide adequate pastoral counselling, then ill-equipped pastors in the area of giving family counselling would be certainly more debatable.

Seeking Advice from Pastor

Table: 2 Called to Counsel Family

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Never	66	33.0
Occasionally	78	39.0
Seldom	16	8.0
Frequently	21	10.5
Always	19	9.5
Total	200	100

About 33% of the church families do not seek Pastoral advice in handling family problems, while 39% of them have sought occasionally, 10.5% of the families have sought frequent help and advice from the Pastor in handling family problems, and 9.5% of the families have always sought advice from Pastor during their family problems, and 8% of the families have seldom sought advice from the Pastor.

Job Priority of Pastors

Table: 3 Job Priority of Pastors

	Low	Medium	highest	P value
Administration	14.5%	46.5%	39%	0.004
Preaching	7.5%	21.5%	71%	0.689
Praying for people	8%	18%	74%	0.646
Meeting families	14.6%	34.2%	50.3%	0.091
Visiting houses	19.5%	30%	50%	0.111
Weekly Bible study	19.5%	30%	50%	0.186
Peoples person	13.5%	33.5%	53%	0.145
Building families	12%	34%	53.5%	0.153

46.5% of the church families feel administration of the church is of medium importance, while 39% feel it is of high importance. There is a significant association between denominations and priority for administration.

About 52. % of the Baptist churches give high priority for administration and 50% of the AG churches give high priority to administration and only 42.5% of the CSI prioritise administration. There is a significant association between the denominations and prioritizing of administration (chi 22.558, df 8, p 0.004).

About 71% of the churches across the denominations observe preaching to be of high importance. However, there is no significant association between denominations and priority in preaching.

About 74% of the church families feel the pastoral need in praying for them as highest while 18% feel it is of medium importance. However, there is no significant association with regard to denominations and with regard to importance for prayer.

Meeting with families is of high importance to 50.3% of the families, and 34.2% consider it as medium importance. There is no significant association between the denominations and 50% of the families consider house visiting as high importance and 30% consider it of medium importance.

Weekly bible study is of highest importance is 50% of the families, and 30% consider it of medium importance.

Pastor being a people’s person is of highest importance to 53% of the church families, and 33.5% consider it of medium importance.

About 53% consider the role of building families is of high importance and 34% feel it is medium importance.

Lack of Family Educational Programs

Table: 4 No Family Educational Programs in the Church

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Never	34	17.0
Rarely	52	26.0
Once a Year	50	25.0
Once in Six Months	29	14.5
Once a Month	15	7.5
More than Once a Month	9	4.5
Total	200	100

26% of the families have rarely had family educational programs in the churches, 17% have never had such programs and 25% have had it once a year and 14.5% had it once in six months, 5.5% of them said once in three months, 7.5% of them have said once a month,

4.5% of them said more than once a month. This is a significant association of family educational programs and church denominations.

Program Expectation From Church Families

Table: 5 Program Expectation from Families

	Low	Medium	highest	P value
Family seminars	13.5%	36%	50.5%	0.217
Monthly Bible study	14%	26.5%	59%	0.542
Ongoing teaching	17.5%	37.5%	45%	0.272
Classes on parenting	19%	26%	55%	0.014

There is a significant association between the denominations and classes on parenting. 62.5% of independent churches consider it highest importance (chi 19.239, df 8 p 0.014).

Observing Family Sunday

50% of the families highly recommend observing a family Sunday while 35% recommend it, and 11.5% of them remained undecided on observing family Sundays. If highly recommend and recommend are merged it would make 85% of the families in the church need an annual family celebration in the church. By celebrating family Sunday, it would bring family members together, church families together and the togetherness feeling in the community would be reemphasized and reunion can take place. 11.5% of the families do not want to say anything about celebrating an annual family day, while 3.5% of them do not recommend the celebration of family Sunday. Even though it is surprising to know why they have remained undecided it does indicate the possible reasons. It could be these families

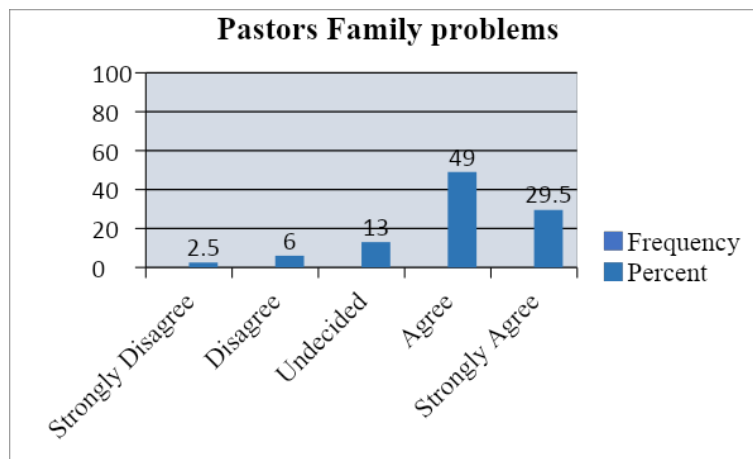
might have been broken families or they are going through serious family problems hence they find ashamed to meet together as a family. There is no significant association between denomination and the need of observing family Sundays.

Extent of Family Problems

44% of the pastors have expressed that there is a certain extent of family problems in the families of their congregation. 28% of the pastors have said that limited extent of the family problems existing in the church families. 20% of the pastors have said that to a large extent family issues are exiting in the churches. 5% of the pastors have expressed saying they are not sure about the families of their congregation having issues. And another 3% of the pastors said there are no issues in the families of their congregations. If we merge limited extent, certain extent and large extent it would make a large percentage (92%) of the pastors agreeing to the fact that there are issues in the families of their congregations.

Pastors Facing Family Issues

Bar graph: 1 Family problems of Pastors



Emerging families also have observed pastors as counsellors. According to the families, 49% of pastors who are family counsellors are themselves are going through family problems, and 29.5% strongly agree on this fact. About 13% of the families do not want to make a comment pastor and his family, hence they remained undecided. About 6% of the

families disagree while 2.5% the families strongly disagree. There is no significance association regarding denominations and pastoral family problems.

Coping Resources

Families in the church need coping resources to live a satisfied family life. Families have indicated that their friends in the church are going through various kinds of family issues. Empirical investigation and literature reviews have revealed that families in the church need coping resources in the specific areas of family life such as resolving issues, parenting, well equipped pastors in Counselling, Communication, and happiness. These coping skills will strengthen the families to be healthy families and help them in maximising the satisfaction in the Christian family life. Adequately equipped pastors in the areas of family counselling would help the families in the church to receive right coping resources and reduce or remove the family issues that are existing among the families in the church. Coping resources will help families balance their work, family and spiritual life. There is a need of a handbook to equip counsellors in the church to support the families. Handbook will cover all the resources needed for the church families to live a satisfied and healthy family life.

1. Pastors need to be equipped: Pastors who are adequately equipped in the area of Family Counselling and therapy would be helpful in providing right skills to the families when they approach the pastors for help. Every church has families with various stages of the family life cycle, hence well-equipped pastor in the field of Family counselling would build families. families have expressed that they prefer to seek Pastor's help to resolve their family issues first than approaching the legal supportive organization.

2. Family life related education: Family related education programs in the church would benefit the families at all stages of the family life cycle. Bible shaped family life studies will enhance the commitment to God church and family. Church is made up of families, hence there are children, young adults, adults, senior citizens and single parents.

Family related education will bring wholistic growth among the families in the church.

Empirical study has depicted that families in the church have expressed their willingness to learn various aspects of family life education from church. Family life related education is helpful resource to apply as families face both regular and irregular challenges.

3. **Family Counselling Department:** In the church practicing family counselling will attract families avail the Christian perspective Bible shaped family therapy. Church would involve in nation building by opening family counselling department. It will reduce the number families approaching the family court for resolving their family issues. Family counselling department in the church can serve as a catalyst for building healthy families. When church helps the families with counselling, in turn these families can extend the help to their friends and colleagues in the society.

4. **Communication and happiness:** Indian families spend a lot of resources on inaugurating a family. Parents invest on children's wedding hoping their children will have happy and healthy family life. At the same time, boy and the girl also dream for building healthy and happy family. Human beings cannot exist without Communication; hence a family or marriage is built on the Communication (Carole A Barbato, Elizabeth E Graham, Elizabeth M Perse, 2003). Husband and wife need right skills for relating to each other and relating to parents and in-laws. There are two types of Communication, they are verbal and non-verbal Communication. In the context of family, non-verbal communication is more used than verbal as parents and children communicate. Communication is a good virtue and also a key to function as a healthy family (Fowers, 2007).

Communication can start a war or stop a war; hence families need to have right skills to apply how to relate to the parents and in-laws. These skills can reduce or remove many problems that create tension and unrest in the family relationships. Study has indicated that families need to learn new techniques and skills to adjust and handle situations with each

other and parents in-laws. ENRICH Marital Satisfaction has included Communication and happiness as integral part of the healthy family life.

5. Reliance on God: Families need to depend God for their daily spiritual manna and strength to face the challenges. There is an uncertainty in every aspect of life on earth, hence it is highly commendable for the families to rely God for. This will help the families to stand strong when the challenges hit the families in their various stages of family life cycle. Depending or reliance on God would give energy, strength and confidence to face any emergency or accidental situations hit the family.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This empirical research was intended to investigate the challenges the families in the church are facing. There is an urgent need to reduce or remove these challenges. Building healthy families in the church is the need of our time. Healthy family does not mean that families will not have problems, but it means, when there are problems, they need to have resources to apply and reduce or remove the family challenges. This study helps families who are seeking enrichment in their family to maximise their satisfaction in the Christian marital life. Church needs to be intentional in catering to the needs of the families their church. Various coping skills provided here would enhance the quality and marital life of Christian families.

Recommendations

- Pastor's perspective on family counselling in the church needs to be studied.
- This study was limited to age group of 25 to 40. Challenges of the families beyond this age group may be different.
- There are different psychometric scales are there to study the challenges of the church families.

- This study opens innovation and gives way to the further research on the church families and their challenges, hence this study is not an end.

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