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MENTAL HEALTH OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS IN MINISTRY

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MENTAL HEALTH OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS IN MINISTRY

by

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of creative professionals working in ministry. A “creative” is defined as anyone whose job relies on their ability to create and innovate, and the focus of this research is on creatives that serve in church environments where their creativity and spirituality are intertwined with their work. A quantitative research approach was designed to study the creative’s perception on six key-areas of their work/life balance. The resulting survey was administered online to willing participants who identified themselves as creative professionals in ministry. The data found that the creative's perception of their organization as "stifling their creativity" was a statistically significant predictor of a decline in job satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment, and predicted an increased likelihood job-related stress, feeling emotionally drained due to work, and of spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry. The findings are discussed in depth in the final chapter.

KEY WORDS: Ministry, Creative, Burnout, Spirituality

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Introduction

Since early times, creativity in an individual has been correlated to “divine madness” (Daniel, 2021). Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle regarded creativity as a gift from the gods, and outside of rational thought, occurring when a man is “bereft” of his senses. In *Ion*, Plato writes that a poet is “unable to create until he becomes inspired and frenzied, his mind no longer in him,” (Plato & Allen, 1996, p. 14). Since then, stereotypes have plagued artists of all genres to be seen as ‘mentally divergent’, often expecting them to channel their mental health through their work, and output beautiful, original content for the world at the expense of their own sanity. While these thought patterns idealize the concept of a link between creativity and mental suffering, research has given little conclusive evidence towards a correlation between artists and mental disorders (Poole, 2003). Running parallel to the lifestyle of the modern artist is the life of the creative professional in ministry. While still using their unique, imaginative minds to produce content for mass consumption, it is worth considering that they may face other challenges directly related to their specialized work in ministry. While one might think working in ministry would provide a lifestyle of positivity and an elevated mental state through constant spirituality, the reality is that those in full-time ministry can often perceive the work to be quite the opposite. A survey of Assemblies of God-ordained clergy in Minnesota found that 65% were on the verge or suffering from burnout at the time of the research (Visker et al., 2017). Though little research has been done directly into the field of creative artists working in ministry, the adjacent studies referenced in the next chapter provide a comprehensive framework for studies directly related to those artists who serve full-time in a religious setting.

Literature Review

“Creative professional” is a term that has come to encompass any scope of work where original innovation is a key factor in the endeavor including, but not limited to, art, music, design, engineering, business, and nearly any other occupation requiring content to be organized or outputted. All that is required for a person to be considered a creative professional is to see their work as a byproduct of their creative nature, and to consider themselves a member of the collective “creative” (Florida, 2019). In the secular community, “creative” is a term most often used to describe products involving art, music, and performing arts. However, in the context of ministry, a creative can be defined as anyone involved in the creation of any elements of the church product. Some see the Bible as a mandate to be creative that follows the lives of those who serve the church, therefore making the job of the creative a high calling in the church. Seventy-five percent of Jesus’ ministry was done with visuals and storytelling, making the need for innovation to capture an audience an essential foundation for the history of Christianity (Conner, 2016). Creativity is essential to effective ministry.

Innovation is crucial to attain and maintain the attention of the common congregation, and thus, the pressure to live in a state of constant innovation is not uncommon amongst the modern church creative. A study on the life of Yves Congar delves deeper into the relationship between Baptist churches and performative arts and builds a case for their dependence on each other. The author of the study, from Lithuania, has roots in a culture where most identify as Roman Catholic, but reminisces back to how the local theatre community was changed by communist and religious ideals spread through Lithuania, and how the arts were used to wrestle with God in what was considered a moral war (Žukauskas, 2020). As politics, religion, and arts intersect, we can begin to understand another element of what Christian creatives face as they struggle to portray current events on top of the issues their religion already wrestles with. In

2020, when integrating the race riots and COVID-19 pandemic into their representation of the Gospel, creatives faced an unusual challenge, which will be discussed in the following research. Since being sent to work from home during the outbreak of the pandemic, the idea that artists need to be joined in-person to collaborate has been challenged, and the impacts of solitary creativity have yet to be studied. However, a study on musicians and the adverse effects they suffered due to the lifestyle of touring has taken a shocking turn. One study has found that since returning home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the artists' mental health continued to worsen despite having paused a life of erratic hours and nightly judgment from an audience. The mental strain once blamed on bunking in a tour bus and the destabilizing effects of waking up in a new location each day has not been solved by returning to their beds at home. With the results of this study yet to be released, many are speculating the dedication of one's life to music has deeper roots into mental health than previously considered ("Touring may have stopped," 2020). Artists of all types face unique stressors, and when a passion for artistry and originality is converted into a livelihood, the effects of full-time creative work have not been fully evaluated yet.

Working in ministry is a unique challenge not everyone will understand. Christianity somewhat stereotypically boasts a life of love, joy, peace, and patience. Unfortunately, the Church as a place of employment can often feel like the opposite of this, resembling a secular business endeavor more than an opportunity to shape lives from a spiritual perspective. Though spirituality offers a much greater sense of fulfillment in life, and the benefits of positively-regarded spirituality can make a drastic change in the mental and physical health of those who rely on it (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2021), those who choose to make it a career calling are likely to find other sources of stress, such as the perceived condemnation for having to remarket a story told for centuries (Tame, 2005). Though not a primary focus of this research, it is worth noting a

study on the hardships faced in ministry found the calling to vocational ministry differs by gender. As women are more pulled towards “caring” areas of ministry, and less towards leadership, it can be concluded women find the “calling” of Christ to be very different than what men in ministry describe it to be. It is found that women do not see success the same, and it is possible they will not understand or receive all the benefits associated with having a calling, such as greater levels of work and career satisfaction (Sturges, 2020). This study remains adjacent to the question about wellness and mental health in the creative fields of ministry and begs a deeper question regarding whether women in creative endeavors find gender to be another struggle in their line of work. When turning to what most would consider an answer during a time of crisis as an occupation, there may be a stereotype that mental health would prove stable through faith benefits. When forced to view their work in the light of what should be considered ‘good theology’ instead of just with the objective eye the secular world allows for, it is possible more stress is added into the equation. Unfortunately, as often churches are desperate for artists to come on board, most key positions in the church typically don’t require a vast amount of ministry training, let alone attending seminary (Keizer, 2002). This can cause a division in the theology of the church, and an added strain on the relationship between creative and Church. Where the church requires a unified team, it often finds division between creative and clergy. When this partnership is missed, placing marketing over ministry can actually do damage to the target audience it intended on reaching. In a haunting video published by a church with the intention of drawing young adults into the life of ministry, the pastor conveniently omits the truths of ministry, such as Christ and the Cross, and while we can assume these topics are absent from the video to maintain its cheerful and positive intention, the video plays out more as propaganda to those who are unfamiliar with the truth and harsh reality of the cause for Christ,

and leaves out the key figures God appointed to model what leadership and servanthood look like (Graef, 1993). A minister examining the positive and negative effects of poor theology in marketing expounds on the video as a cautionary tale, encouraging creatives and ministers to unite to ensure the most accurate version of the Gospel is displayed. While there is light and joy in spreading the message of the Gospel, there are also harsh and painful realities for the congregation to consider, especially for those who are seeking to enter ministry for the first time. While intentions behind creative content in churches are almost always positive, the Bible does not paint a clear picture of how consistent marketing can best be achieved. The closest thing Christianity has to a patron saint of marketing is St. Paul, who was considered one of the greatest storytellers in history for his recounting of God's impact on his life (Tame, 2005). The strain on artists to tell such a weighted story while still maintaining an audience has yet to be researched.

The weight on the artist to constantly output their vision to be marketed, especially as a livelihood, isn't a struggle exclusive to those serving in ministry. All types of artists have experienced the struggle with turning their lifestyle into a product (*Avoiding creative burnout: How 11 artists take care of their craft*, 2019). While a lifestyle of exaggerated expression can potentially manifest into mental illness, no official conclusion has been drawn regarding the mental health standard for artists (Fisher, 2015). In one study, when compared against a control group of talentless individuals, it was found jazz musicians did not suffer disproportionately higher rates of mental illness than the general U.S. population. However, biographies on black artists often conflicted when discussing the musician's mental health. The author of the study concluded sources which emphasized the sensationalist parts of the musicians' lives often misrepresented their mental health to sell more books and periodicals (Poole, 2003). On the contrary, in a study done on performance anxiety, researchers found the rate of mental health

crisis in musicians was significantly higher than the general population. While studying 13,000 musicians living between 1950 and 2014, they found shorter life expectancies, and higher incidences of suicide and liver-related disease observed in country, metal, and rock musicians. The suicide rate for musicians was found to be 3.4 times higher than the general U.S. population. (Kenny et al., 2014). It is possible the type of music played could have been the cause for the difference, but it is more likely the type of survey conducted causes opposition in these studies. In another study that failed to find an increase in mental health disorders among a creative group versus the general population in Bangalore, the researchers found significantly more people from the non-creative control group sought mental help, whereas the creative community did not. It is possible they believe being treated would threaten their creativity, although this is just speculation (Pavitra et al., 2007). On another level, the effects of composing music designed to lead a congregation into spiritual engagement have not been studied either, though the effects of this culture-defining music have been weighed on heavily. On the topic of worship as a creative element, is a paper written by the pastor of a church in Nigeria, examining worship as a viable tool for nurturing spiritual growth. This paper concludes church music is a part of the “total work” of all church activities, especially those promoting growth such as Sunday school and youth work. However, the author does not go into the weight of these divine duties on the worship pastor or the songwriters when they create a piece that is to be upheld with such a value. Little is mentioned about the team responsible for recreating the musical works of art drawing the Baptists and the churches of Nigeria together across hundreds of years. These conflicting results leave many questions unsatisfied. Is mental illness essential to creativity? Do mental disturbances provide a sense of inspiration to the artist? Does the burden to innovate counteract

the mental health benefits that religion brings? How are artists in the church balancing the requirement to innovate while telling a story considered timeless?

Though a severe gap in the research of creative individuals who serve in ministry still exists, it is fair to say the adjacent topics have at least been investigated. Artists, musicians, and creatives of secular communities have been checked in on, though, there is still missing information about the demographics and mental health of those who serve frequently in the church, especially those who consider themselves gifted visionaries committed to the calling of Christ in their lives. Whether their burden is lighter due to the nature in which they serve a faith-based organization where one might think a lifestyle of faith would help alleviate the mental strain of creativity, or whether the burden to be constantly innovating is amplified when it comes to the calling and conviction to market the gospel, the answer has yet to be found. Another factor yet to be considered is the mental health of artists in collaborative and team-based settings who have been sent home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether they feel more or less productive since returning to a solitary desk could have a major impact on their feeling of fulfillment, and thus, their overall mental health standing. In this research, studies on professionals in ministry will serve as a buffer to the knowledge gap, and hopefully shed light into a community left alone by the scientific studies.

Methodology

The methodology for this thesis consisted of surveying individuals who identify that they work as a Creative in the context of ministry. For the purposes of this paper, a “Creative” professional will be defined as anyone who finds most of their work in creative endeavors, such as creative directors, graphic designers, videographers, lighting designers, and others.

Quantitative data was gathered using an online survey tool. The research was non-experimental.

The subjects, reached via mass email and social media outreach, were voluntarily surveyed. These surveys were conducted to better understand the working conditions of creative designers within churches, and how their creativity affected their feelings regarding work. The perspectives they shared contribute to a better overall understanding of what they believe can be done to better accommodate their unique working patterns within the Church.

The questions were formatted to answer the research questions outlined within the introduction of the thesis, as well as to gather key demographics, information about how the Creatives serve their ministry, and about how they feel their church leadership is serving them.

Their responses are summarized within the next chapter, and the completed transcripts are listed in the appendices of this thesis. A copy of the initial contact email, consent form, and interview questions are also included within the appendices.

Data Analysis
STUDY RESULTS

Descriptive Statistical Findings

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to evaluate study data in advance of the formal analysis of the six research questions. The following represents the findings achieved in the study's preliminary descriptive analyses:

Demographic Identifying Information

The study's prominent demographic identifying information was assessed using frequencies and percentages. Table ___ contains a summary of findings for the descriptive statistical analyses associated with the study's demographic identifying information:

Table ___

Descriptive Statistical Summary Table: Demographic Identifier Variables

Variable	<i>n</i>	%	Cumulative %
Gender			
Female	14	46.67	46.67
Male	16	53.33	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Age			
18-29	20	66.67	66.67
30-39	6	20.00	86.67
40 and older	4	13.33	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Region			
South	16	53.33	53.33
Northeast	5	16.67	70.00
West	3	10.00	80.00

Mid-West	4	13.33	93.33
Foreign	2	6.67	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Years in Position			
3 Years or less	17	56.67	56.67
Over 3 Years	13	43.33	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Position			
Environmental Director	11	36.67	36.67
Communication Director	6	20.00	56.67
Creative Director	4	13.33	70.00
Other	9	30.00	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00

Prominent Response Variables

The study's prominent response variables were assessed using frequencies and percentages. Table ____ contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analyses associated with the study's prominent response variables:

Table ____

Descriptive Statistical Summary Table: Prominent Response Variables

Category	<i>n</i>	%	Cumulative %
Job Satisfaction			
Very Dissatisfied	1	3.33	3.33
Somewhat Dissatisfied	7	23.33	26.67
Uncertain	2	6.67	33.33
Somewhat Satisfied	12	40.00	73.33
Very Satisfied	8	26.67	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Job Stress			
No Stress	1	3.33	3.33
Slightly Stressed	4	13.33	16.67
Moderately Stressed	12	40.00	56.67
Very Stressed	8	26.67	83.33

Extremely Stressed	5	16.67	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Creative Opportunity			
Rarely	1	3.33	3.33
Sometimes	9	30.00	33.33
Very Often	10	33.33	66.67
Always	10	33.33	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Demonstrate Creativity			
Not Well	2	6.67	6.67
Fair	8	26.67	33.33
Well	12	40.00	73.33
Extremely Well	8	26.67	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Stifling of Creativity			
Never	1	3.33	3.33
Rarely	12	40.00	43.33
Sometimes	11	36.67	80.00
Very Often	6	20.00	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00

Research Instrument Survey Items

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to assess the study's response set data for 17 survey items on the study's research instrument. The study's survey data were addressed using frequencies (n), measures of central tendency (mean scores), variability (minimum/maximum; standard deviations), standard errors of the mean (SE_M), and data normality (skew; kurtosis).

Table ___ contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's survey items on the research instrument:

Table ____

Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Survey Items Represented on the Research Instrument

Survey Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SE_M</i>	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Item1	2.90	1.06	30	0.19	1.00	5.00	0.02	-0.44
Item2	3.33	1.12	30	0.21	1.00	5.00	-0.39	-0.59
Item3	3.20	1.06	30	0.19	1.00	5.00	-0.23	-0.42
Item4	3.63	1.16	30	0.21	1.00	5.00	-0.47	-0.77
Item5	3.63	1.35	30	0.25	1.00	5.00	-0.67	-0.77
Item6	3.33	1.30	30	0.24	1.00	5.00	-0.16	-1.22
Item7	2.70	1.34	30	0.25	1.00	5.00	0.30	-0.99
Item8	2.77	1.50	30	0.27	1.00	5.00	0.16	-1.40
Item9	2.73	1.39	30	0.25	1.00	5.00	0.41	-1.08
Item10	2.57	1.19	30	0.22	1.00	5.00	0.27	-0.72
Item11	3.07	1.11	30	0.20	1.00	5.00	0.02	-0.79
Item12	3.43	1.36	30	0.25	1.00	5.00	-0.40	-1.11
Item13	2.97	1.43	30	0.26	1.00	5.00	0.13	-1.34
Item14	3.60	1.04	30	0.19	1.00	5.00	-0.46	-0.23
Item15	3.43	0.97	30	0.18	2.00	5.00	-0.04	-0.96
Item16	3.50	1.14	30	0.21	1.00	5.00	-0.50	-0.34
Item17	3.67	1.18	30	0.22	1.00	5.00	-0.47	-0.84

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to survey items on the study's research instrument was evaluated using the Cronbach's alpha (*a*) statistical technique. Using the conventions of interpretation of alpha offered by George and Mallery (2020), the internal reliability achieved in the study was considered approximating an excellent level (*a* = .88).

Table ____ contains a summary of finding for the internal reliability achieved across all 17 survey items on the study's research instrument:

Table ____

Internal Reliability Summary Table

Scale	No. of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Survey	17	.88	.83	.93

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95.00% confidence interval.

Findings by Research Question

The study's research problem was addressed specifically through the statement of six research questions. Descriptive, inferential, and associative/predictive statistical techniques were used to address the study's research questions. The probability level of $p \leq .05$ was used as the threshold value for findings to be considered statistically significant. Numeric effect sizes achieved in the study's analyses were interpreted using the conventions proposed by Sawilowsky (2009).

The findings achieved in the study's six research questions and hypotheses are reported as follows:

Research Question #1

To what degree did study participants perceive their organizations as stifling of their creativity?

The statistical significance of study participant mean score perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity was addressed using the one sample t test. As a result, the

finding for study participant perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity was statistically significant ($t_{(29)} = 4.85; p < .001$). The magnitude of effect for study participant perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity was considered large ($d = .89$).

Table ___ contains a summary of finding the analyses associated with research question one:

Table ___
Perceptions of Organizations as Stifling of Creativity

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	μ	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Stifling of Creativity	2.73	0.83	2	4.85	< .001	0.89

Note. Degrees of Freedom for the *t*-statistic = 29. *d* represents Cohen's *d*.

Research Question #2

To what degree were study participant perceptions of creativity stifling within their organizations predictive of their job satisfaction?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity for perceptions of job satisfaction. As a result, the predictive model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 14.16, p < .001, R^2 = .34$), indicating that approximately 33.59% of the variance in job satisfaction is explainable by perceptions of the organization being Stifling of creativity. Perceptions of the organization as Stifling of creativity statistically significantly predicted subsequent perceptions of job satisfaction ($B = -0.85, t_{(28)} = -3.76, p < .00$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions of the organization as Stifling of creativity will decrease the value of job satisfaction by 0.85 units.

Table ___ contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used to address research question two:

Table ___

Predicting Job Satisfaction by Perceptions of Creativity Stifling within the Organization

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95.00% CI	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	5.96	0.65	[4.64, 7.29]	0.00	9.23	< .001
Stifling of Creativity	-0.85	0.23	[-1.32, -0.39]	-0.58	-3.76	< .001

Research Question #3

To what degree were study participant perceptions of creativity stifling within their organizations predictive of their perception of job-related stress?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity for perceptions of job-related stress. As a result, the predictive model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 13.50, p < .001, R^2 = .33$), indicating that approximately 32.53% of the variance in job-related stress is explainable by perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity. Perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity was statistically significant in predicting job-related stress ($B = 0.71, t_{(28)} = 3.67, p < .001$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions the organization as stifling of creativity will increase the value of job-related stress by 0.71 units.

Table ___ contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used to address research question three:

Table ___

Predicting Job-Related Stress by Perceptions of Creativity Stifling within the Organization

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95.00% CI	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	1.45	0.55	[0.31, 2.58]	0.00	2.61	.014
Stifling of Creativity	0.71	0.19	[0.32, 1.11]	0.57	3.67	< .001

Research Question #4

To what degree were study participant perceptions of creativity stifling within their organizations predictive of their perceptions of spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity for perceptions of spiritual burnout as a result of working in the ministry. As a result, the predictive model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 5.29, p = .029, R^2 = .16$), indicating that approximately 15.90% of the variance in perceptions of spiritual burnout as a result of working in the ministry is explainable by perception of the organization as stifling of creativity. Perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity was statistically significantly predictive of perceptions of spiritual burnout as a result of working in the ministry ($B = 0.57, t_{(28)} = 2.30, p = .03$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity will increase the value of perceptions of spiritual burnout as a result of working in the ministry by 0.57 units.

Table ____ contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used to address research question four:

Table ____

Predicting Spirituality burnout as a result of working in ministry by Creativity Stifling within the Organization

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95.00% CI	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	2.11	0.71	[0.66, 3.56]	0.00	2.98	.006
Stifle of Creativity	0.57	0.25	[0.06, 1.08]	0.40	2.30	.029

Research Question #5

To what degree were study participant perceptions of creativity stifling within their organizations predictive of their perceptions of feelings of spiritual fulfillment at the workplace?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity for perceptions of spiritual fulfillment in the workplace. As a result, the predictive model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 6.95, p = .013, R^2 = .20$), indicating that approximately 19.90% of the variance in perceptions of spiritual fulfillment in the workplace is explainable by perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity. Perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity was statistically significant in predicting perceptions of spiritual fulfillment in the workplace ($B = -0.77, t_{(28)} = -2.64, p = .01$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity will decrease the value of perceptions of spiritual fulfillment in the workplace by 0.77 units.

Table ___ contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used to address research question five:

Table ___

Predicting Feelings of Spiritual Fulfillment at the Workplace by Creativity Stifling within the Organization

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95.00% CI	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	5.07	0.83	[3.36, 6.77]	0.00	6.10	< .001
Stifle of Creativity	-0.77	0.29	[-1.37, -0.17]	-0.45	-2.64	.013

Research Question #6

To what degree were study participant perceptions of creativity stifling within their organizations predictive of their perceptions of feeling emotionally drained from your work?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of perceptions of their organization as stifling of creativity for perceptions of feeling emotionally drained from work. As a result, the predictive model was statistically significant ($F(1,28) = 11.62, p = .002, R^2 = .29$), indicating that approximately 29.32% of the variance in perceptions of feeling emotionally drained from work is explainable by perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity. Perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity was statistically significant in predicting feeling of being emotionally drained from work ($B = 0.76, t(28) = 3.41, p = .002$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions of the organization as stifling of creativity will increase the value of feelings of being emotionally drained from work by 0.76 units.

Table ___ contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used to address research question six:

Table ___

Predicting Perceptions of Feeling Emotionally Drained from One's Work by Creativity Stifling within the Organization

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95.00% CI	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	1.56	0.63	[0.26, 2.86]	0.00	2.46	.020
Stifle of Creativity	0.76	0.22	[0.30, 1.21]	0.54	3.41	.002

Conclusion

The goal of this research is to study the impacts and effects of creatives' perception of creativity stifling within their ministry, and how it affects their work, perceptions of community and spirituality, stress levels, and other areas of their lives. The data produced by the research instrument were found to be highly reliable, and the research instrument was validated by the findings, as well as by other research on creativity and organization in the secular field. To start, the key variable of “stifling creativity” stood out to be incredibly predictive of creatives’ perception of other areas in their lives, and when creatives answered that they perceived their organizations as “stifling” their creativity, their responses to other questions about their work and life satisfaction generally took a negative turn. When workers report feeling that their creative freedom is limited by the ministry they work for, this research shows that they become significantly more likely to suffer from job-related stress, decreased job satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment, as well as higher perceptions of feeling emotionally drained from their work and spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry.

While this research is specifically impactful regarding the variable of “stifling creativity” as it intersects with spiritual fulfillment and spiritual burnout, its correlation to the creatives’ lack of job satisfaction was not surprising and has been noted by other researchers in the field. A study conducted in China of 28 companies found that organizational culture consent significantly raised the job satisfaction of creatives. When a dynamic organizational culture was present in the workplace, it boosted creatives' flexible aspirations and job satisfaction. Interestingly, they did not find the same correlation between organization culture consent and job satisfaction between non-creative workers as was present with the creative workers (Zhang & Wang, 2021).

The correlation between spiritual fulfillment and creativity is an area that has seen little research, however, the variable of “stifling creativity” predicts a statistically significant decrease

in spiritual fulfillment, and a significant increase in perception of spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry. While a secular control group would be helpful in defining exactly which work stressors most effectively predict spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry, the literature in this area suggests a possible perceived condemnation for having to remarket a story that their faith is built on (Tame, 2005). In an organic conversation after completing the survey, one creative in the study, despite feeling positive about their experience in ministry, stated that their feelings regarding marketing the ministry and the consumption of their work were “a constant struggle.” They went on to say, “Is it better to sell useless garments that are going to be, like, nothing? It is better than to be ‘selling’ eternity’s significance?”

Recommendations for Further Research

Despite this area of research standing to fill in a large gap of missing knowledge for those creatives that serve in ministry, there is still far more work to be done. In order for creatives to be understood and accepted as unique individuals with unique work stressors within the church, more research is due using non-ministry creatives as a control group to identify what stressors are specific to ministry life and set apart from more secular lines of work. The challenges that arise when viewing the Gospel from a marketing perspective may be different than the challenges faced by non-religious creatives, and rightfully so. To believe that creatives are not set apart to spread the Gospel through their work would mean that the Gospel is nothing more than a product to be marketed.

While the work completed in this study required a very narrow sample of creatives, it does limit the generalizability of the results. What was found in this study may not necessarily apply to other categories of organization or business or be projected onto other types of employees. However, the parallels found between this study and other research done in the field

raise prominent questions and promising results for more diverse studies with a control group. Another adjacent study of ministry suggests women do not view the idea of “success” in the way men do, and as they are often pulled into more “caring” aspects of ministry, they may find the “calling of Christ” very different than what men describe it to be. These results imply that women may not reap the greater levels of work and career satisfaction that having a “calling” provides to men (Sturges, 2020). It would be worthwhile to examine and compare the stressors that men and women face and determine to what degree the gender difference affects the job satisfaction, spiritual fulfillment, and burnout of creatives.

It is ultimately the goal of this study to assist the Church in understanding the calling that creatives perceive to be upon their lives through their spiritual commitment to the faith, and to not only take advantage of their unique gifts for the growth of the Kingdom, but to also care for them in a way that caters to their specific needs. According to this study, when employing a creative as a part of the ministry, a margin of creative freedom and license to interpret the Holy Spirit within the work must be allotted by the organization. The lack of creative liberty, in line with the study’s variable of perceived “stifling creativity,” is a significant predictor of negative perceptions developing within the creative. Creative behaviors increase when employees feel psychological empowerment, especially through ethical leadership, which suggests that negative perceptions of leadership can prove damaging to creative behaviors within the workplace. Ultimately, if the Church seeks to gain a creative product, it must first nurture its employees across all creative categories.

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Appendix A

Initial Contact Email

Good afternoon,

My name is Anna Fawkes. I'm a Communication student at Southeastern University in the School of Honors studying mental health of creative professionals in ministry. Since 2014, I've served most of my free time in church media, specifically as an audio technician, lighting designer, and creative content producer. Upon later starting my career in ministry, I began to experience elevated stress, a lack of creative passion, and even a decline in mental health related to burnout. This experience has led me to study what causes this response and how creativity as an occupation within the Church differs from other jobs.

“Creative professional” is a term that has come to encompass any scope of work where original innovation is a key factor in the endeavor. In the context of the church, this can apply to creative directors, communicators, content creators, environmental designers (AVL), worship musicians, and others. If you believe your present work may fit this description, I would appreciate hearing from you!

The goal of this study is to answer, “What kinds of challenges do creative professionals in ministry face that directly affect their mental health?” Because of their unique environment that separates them from the rest of their industry, I want to survey and interview those who identify themselves as creatives within the Church culture in order to better understand their daily stressors so we can learn how to serve them, and further implement a plan to reduce negative impact on mental health.

To participate, I ask that you would complete a 15-minute survey consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions about your current work and life serving within the church. Upon completing the survey, you will be entered into a drawing to win a \$25 Amazon gift card. Your answers will be kept confidential, as we want to provide everyone the opportunity to freely share how working in ministry has affected you. Though your name and email address will be collected, contact information will only be available to the primary and co-researcher, and used only for sorting, extended interview, and raffle purposes. More information about the survey and extended interview can be found in the consent form provided in the first page of the Google Form survey, or by contacting Anna Fawkes at agfawkes@seu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anna Fawkes

Appendix B

Survey Consent Form

Title: Mental Health of Creative Professionals in Ministry

Investigators: Adrienne S. Garvey Ph.D., Anna G. Fawkes

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to survey creative professionals in ministry about their work habits, daily stressors, and feelings related to their workplace in order to better understand and serve their needs. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

What to Expect: This research study is administered online. Participation in this research will involve one questionnaire pertaining (#) questions with multiple-choice and some short-answer options. You will be expected to complete the questionnaire once. It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete this survey. Upon completion of this survey, you will also be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card.

Risks: There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you; however, you may use this as an outlet to express your feelings anonymously.

Compensation: No direct compensation will be provided.

Your Rights and Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent in participation in this study at any time.

Extended Interview: At the end of the questionnaire, you may opt-in to participate in a future optional extended interview. This extended interview will be held by the researchers virtually, face-to-face, at a mutually agreed upon time. Upon opting-in, if you are selected to participate

you will be contacted via the email address you have provided with details about the next steps. Your participation in this extended interview is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent in participation in this study at any time.

Confidentiality: Only the researchers will have access to the data to ensure confidentiality and no personal identifiers, such as a name or personal description, will be publicly released. The data, digital or hard-copy, will be locked away or password protected. Digital copies will be deleted and the hard-copy records will be shredded within 5 years from the time of this study.

Contacts: You may contact any of the researchers at the following email addresses should you desire to discuss your participation in this study and/or request information about the results of the study: Adrienne S. Garvey Ph.D. at asgarvey@seu.edu and Anna G. Fawkes at agfawkes@seu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB office at irb@seu.edu.

If you choose to participate: Please click NEXT if you choose to participate. By clicking NEXT, you are indicating that you freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study and you also acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age.

It is recommended that you print a copy of this consent page for your records before you begin the study.

Appendix C

Survey

DEMOGRAPHICS

Please select **one** of the following.

1. What is your gender?
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. I prefer not to say
2. What is your age?
 1. 18-29
 2. 30-39
 3. 40-49
 4. 50-59
 5. 60+
 6. I prefer not to say
3. Where is your current ministry located?
 1. Northeast US
 2. Midwest US
 3. South US
 4. West US
 5. Other (please specify)
4. What is your denomination?
 1. Baptist
 2. Methodist
 3. Pentecostal
 4. Lutheran
 5. Presbyterian
 6. Non-Denominational
 7. Other
5. What is the current weekly attendance at your church?
 1. Less than 50
 2. 50-150
 3. 151-350
 4. 351-500
 5. 501-800
 6. 801-2000
 7. 2000+

CHURCH DYNAMICS

Please select **one** of the following.

Bolded items are to be reverse-coded.

1. What is your primary role within your workplace?
 1. Creative Director
 2. Communication (Graphic/Branding Design, Website, Social Media, etc.)
 3. Content Creation (Videography, Photography, Editing, etc.)
 4. Environmental Production (Audio, Lighting, Visuals, Broadcast, etc.)
 5. Worship Musician (Vocalist, Instrumentalist, etc.)
 6. Other (please specify)
2. How long have you been serving in this specific position?
 1. Less than 1 year
 2. 1-3 years
 3. 3-5 years
 4. 5-10 years
 5. 10+ years
3. What is your current level of satisfaction at your job?
 1. Very Satisfied
 2. Somewhat Satisfied
 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 4. Somewhat Dissatisfied
 5. Very Dissatisfied
4. How often are you allowed the opportunity to be creative within your job?
 1. Always
 2. Very often
 3. Sometimes
 4. Rarely
 5. Never
5. Do you feel you are able to demonstrate your creativity well in your current job?
 1. Very Satisfied
 2. Somewhat Satisfied
 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 4. Somewhat Dissatisfied
 5. Very Dissatisfied
6. **How often do you feel like your creativity is stifled while at work?**
 1. **Always**
 2. **Very often**
 3. **Sometimes**
 4. **Rarely**

- 5. Never**
7. How often do you pursue creative passions outside of your job?
 1. Always
 2. Very often
 3. Sometimes
 4. Rarely
 5. Never
- 8. How would you rate your stress levels at your job?**
 - 1. Extremely stressed**
 - 2. Very stressed**
 - 3. Moderately stressed**
 - 4. Slightly stressed**
 - 5. Not at all stressed**
9. Please check all work-related stressors that apply to you.
 1. Organisation culture
 2. Bad management practices
 3. Job content and demands
 4. Physical work environment
 5. Relationships at work
 6. Change management
 7. Lack of support
 8. Role conflict
 9. Trauma.
 10. Other (please specify)

SINCE BEGINNING THE JOB

Please mark a number from **1** to **5** based on each of the following experiences

1 - Never experienced, 3 - Somewhat experienced, 5 - Consistently experienced

- 10. **Difficulty in concentrating on creative projects? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Loss of joy in creative activities outside of work? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Loss of joy in activities you used to enjoy? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feeling emotionally drained from your work? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feeling “used up” at the end of the work day? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feeling burned out from your work? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of worthlessness, or resentment associated with your work? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Negative feelings towards coworkers? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Negative feelings of comparison with others? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Loss of interest in collaborating creatively with others? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of success in separating your work from your personal life? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feeling like your church genuinely cares for you? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of spiritual fulfillment at your workplace? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of spiritual fulfillment outside your workplace? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of community within the workplace? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Feelings of community outside the workplace? 1 2 3 4 5**
- 10. **Spiritual burnout as a result of working in ministry? 1 2 3 4 5**

WORK ENVIRONMENT SCALE

Please answer the following as **TRUE** or **FALSE**

Items marked with an asterisk are to be reverse-coded.

Involvement

1. The work is really challenging _____
- *2. There's not much group spirit _____**
- *3. A lot of people seem to be just putting in time. _____**
4. People seem to take pride in the organization. _____
5. People put quite a lot of effort into what they do. _____
- *6. Few people ever volunteer. _____**
7. It is quite a lively place. _____
- *8. It's hard to get people to do any extra work. _____**
9. The work is usually very interesting. _____

Peer Cohesion

1. People go out of their way to help a new employee feel comfortable. _____
- *2. The atmosphere is somewhat impersonal. _____**
3. People take a personal interest in each other. _____
- *4. Employees rarely do things together after work. _____**
5. People are generally frank about how they feel. _____
6. Employees often eat lunch together. _____
- *7. Employees who differ greatly from others in the organization don't get on well. _____**
8. Employees often talk to each other about their personal problems. _____
- *9. Often people make trouble by talking behind others' backs. _____**

Supervisor Support

- *1. Supervisors tend to talk down to employees. _____**
2. Supervisors usually compliment an employee who does something well. _____
- *3. Supervisors tend to discourage criticisms from employees. _____**
4. Supervisors usually give full credit to ideas contributed by employees. _____
- *5. Supervisors often criticize employees over minor things. _____**
6. Employees generally feel free to ask for a raise. _____
- *7. Supervisors expect far too much from employees. _____**
8. Employees discuss their personal problems with supervisors. _____
9. Supervisors really stand up for their people. _____

Work Pressure

1. There is constant pressure to keep working. _____
2. There always seems to be an urgency about everything. _____
3. People cannot afford to relax. _____
- *4. Nobody works too hard.** _____
- *5. There is no time pressure.** _____
6. It is very hard to keep up with your workload. _____
- *7. You can take it easy and still get your work done.** _____
8. There are always deadlines to be met. _____
9. People often have to work overtime to get their work done. _____

The original WES actually contains 10 subscales; however, only four were relevant to this study and those were the only ones included here. When scoring each subscale from the original scale, each time an item is endorsed with a “true” answer (or a “false” for reverse coded items), that item is assigned a “1.” At the end of each subscale, the number of endorsed items (or “1’s”) is summed. This is done for each subscale and also the entire 90-item scale. Those scores are then standardized using tables produced by the scale’s creators. Those standardized scores can then be used to compare the work environment being studied to other work environments.