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Stress levels among Anglican clergy: The beneficial effects of feeling supported

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Abstract

The present study draws on data generated by the Church Growth Research Programme among 1,268 full-time stipendiary Church of England clergy aged 68 or under to test the extent to which the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers (positive affect) may offset the sense of feeling stressed (negative affect), after taking into account a range of personal, psychological, environmental and theological or ecclesial factors. The data found that the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers reduced the levels of self-reported stress after controlling for personal, psychological, environmental, and theological or ecclesial factors. The implications of these findings for the provision of formal support mechanisms within dioceses is discussed.

Keywords: Anglican clergy, stress, burnout, personality, support mechanisms

Introduction

The work-related psychological wellbeing of clergy has been conceptualised in a variety of ways over the past decades, with particular attention given to the notions of stress (Coate, 1989; Fletcher, 1990) and burnout (Sanford, 1982; Davey, 1995; Kaldor & Bullpitt, 2001). Differences in conceptualisation of work-related psychological wellbeing are important because different models of wellbeing carry with them different assumptions regarding the nature and the potential of therapeutic interventions.

The most clearly established model of work-related psychological wellbeing is the one proposed by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). Although originally developed for more general use among the caring professions, the Maslach Burnout Inventory has been employed in research among clergy in studies reported by Evers and Tomic (2003), Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, and Rodgerson (2004), Raj and Dean (2005), Miner (2007a, 2007b) and Doolittle (2007, 2010), Chandler (2009), Joseph, Corveleyn, Luyten, and de Witte (2010), Buys and Rothmann (2010), Parker and Martin (2011), Joseph, Luyten, Corveleyn, and de Witte (2011), Rossetti (2011), Küçüksüleymanoğlu (2013), Herrera, Pedrosa, Galindo, Suárez-Álvarez, Villardón, and García-Cueto (2014), Crea and Francis (2015), and Adams, Hough, Proeschold-Bell, Yao, and Kolkin (2016). Another set of studies has employed a modified form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory especially shaped to reflect the experiences of religious leaders by Rutledge and Francis (2004). This modified form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory has been employed in studies reported by Francis and Rutledge (2000), Francis, Loudon, and Rutledge (2004), Francis and Turton (2004a, 2004b), Randall (2004, 2007), Rutledge (2006), Turton and Francis (2007), and Francis, Turton, and Loudon (2007).

Maslach conceptualises and measures burnout in terms of three component constructs which are described as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and low personal

accomplishment. According to Maslach's conceptualisation the relationship among these three components is sequential. According to this model emotional exhaustion is the lead and primary indicator of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Emotional exhaustion then leads to depersonalisation, and depersonalisation leads to the loss of the sense of accomplishment. The strength of this model is that it generates theories regarding the progressive development of the symptoms of burnout. The weakness is that the model does not offer clear insights into remedial or preventative strategies. It may just not be easy to remove the causes of emotional burnout with which religious leaders are routinely faced day-by-day, especially in a social context in which the work loads of religious leaders increase while the human resources are decreasing in view of falling vocations and eroding income.

An alternative model of work-related psychological wellbeing is the one proposed by the Francis Burnout Inventory (Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2005). The Francis Burnout Inventory was developed specifically for use among clergy and has been employed in research among clergy in studies reported by Francis, Wulff and Robbins (2008), Francis, Robbins, Kaldor, and Castle (2009), Robbins and Francis (2010), Brewster, Francis, and Robbins (2011), Francis, Gubb, and Robbins (2012), Robbins, Francis, and Powell (2012), Barnard and Curry (2012), Randall (2013a, 2013b, 2015), Francis, Robbins, and Wulff (2013a; 2013b), Francis, Payne, and Robbins (2013), Robbins and Francis (2014), Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2015), Sterland (2015), Francis and Crea (2015), and Durkee-Lloyd (2016).

Francis conceptualises and measures burnout in terms of two component constructs which are described as emotional exhaustion and satisfaction in ministry. According to Francis' conceptualisation the relationship between these two components is described as one of balanced affect. The two components are not related sequentially but are viewed as contemporaneous and orthogonal. The notion of balanced affect has its roots in the classic

theories of Bradburn (1969). According to Bradburn's theories positive affect and negative affect are not opposite poles of a single continuum but independent psychological phenomena. In this sense it is reasonable and possible for an individual to record both high levels of positive affect and high levels of negative affect. Within the Francis Burnout Inventory, positive affect is operationalised in terms of the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale and negative affect is operationalised in terms of the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry. In this sense it is reasonable and possible for individual religious leaders to record both high levels of satisfaction in ministry and high levels of emotional exhaustion in ministry. According to Bradburn's theories high levels of positive affect are able to offset high levels of negative affect. The strength of the model is that it generates theories about how the problems of poor work-related psychological health or burnout among religious leaders may be addressed in terms of remedial and preventative strategies. Even when it may not be possible to reduce the causes of emotional exhaustion in ministry, it may be possible to explore ways of compensating for high levels of emotional exhaustion by maximising strategies for enhancing the sense of satisfaction in ministry.

Research question

Drawing on this balanced affect model of clergy work-related psychological wellbeing, the aim of the present study is to revisit the unique online survey of Church of England clergy conducted by Voas and Watt (2014) as part of the Church Growth Research Programme in order to test the extent to which the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers (positive affect) offset the sense of feeling stressed (negative affect) while controlling for personal factors, psychological factors, family-related factors, church-related factors, theological or ecclesial factors, and informal support. If, indeed, the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers reduces the sense of feeling stressed, this finding would offer support for the wisdom of the Church resourcing such support mechanisms.

There may be both pastoral and strategic reasons for the Church wishing to reduce the sense of feeling stressed among the clergy. The pastoral reason reflects the duty of care for a responsible employer to mitigate poor work-related psychological wellbeing among the employees. The strategic reason reflects the financial costs incurred by clergy sickness and early retirement generated by poor work-related psychological wellbeing, and the damage that poor work-related psychological wellbeing may inflict on the ministry and mission of the Church.

During the period when this online survey of Church of England clergy was undertaken, a number of dioceses were engaged in strategies designed to offer a new level of professional support for clergy. For example, Walker, Lankshear, and Vann (2018) report on the findings of a study designed to evaluate the effectiveness of professional support offered in an urban diocese (Manchester). According to this study 77% of the clergy found the ministerial development review to be a positive experience, and 74% of the clergy said that they valued the services provided by the diocese in clergy support and training. In a rural diocese, Stuart-White, Vaughan-Wilson, Eatock, Muskett, and Village (2018) reported on the effectiveness of the Accompanied Ministry Development programme in enhancing clergy morale and lowering the sense of isolation among rural clergy.

Research context

Previous research has demonstrated ways in which individual differences in clergy work-related psychological wellbeing, stress and burnout may be routinely related to a range of personal, psychological, environmental and theological or ecclesial factors. Such factors need properly to be taken into account before testing the extent to which the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers (positive affect) may offset the sense of feeling stressed (negative affect).

Two personal factors that are routinely taken into account in research in this field are age and sex. The findings regarding age demonstrate a consistent negative correlation between age and levels of stress or burnout (Francis & Rutledge, 2000; Francis & Turton, 2004a, 2004b; Francis, Loudon, & Rutledge, 2004; Rutledge & Francis, 2004; Francis, Kaldor, Shevlin, & Lewis, 2004; Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2005). What is less clear from this literature is the extent to which this correlation is the consequence of an age effect or of a cohort effect. It is not clear whether older clergy cope better with stress and burnout or whether the cohort of older clergy has now jettisoned those with higher levels of stress through early retirement, ill health, or transfer to secular employment.

There is less unanimity regarding the correlation between sex and levels of stress or burnout. The weight of evidence, however, is that there is no sex difference in levels of stress or burnout (Francis, Kaldor, Shevlin, & Lewis, 2004; Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2004; Francis, Robbins, & Wulff, 2013b).

The psychological factors that need to be taken into account concern individual differences in personality. Two models of personality that have been routinely used in clergy studies are, the three dimensional model proposed by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975, 1991) and the model proposed by psychological type theory (Jung, 1971) as developed by instruments like the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005).

Eysenckian model of personality distinguishes among three major dimensions of personality characterised by the high scoring poles as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Studies that employed this model of personality among clergy have generally demonstrated that the clergy most vulnerable to burnout are introverts who also score high on the neuroticism scale, while the clergy most resilient to burnout are extraverts who score low

on the neuroticism scale (Francis & Rutledge, 2000; Francis, Loudon, & Rutledge, 2004; Francis, Turton, & Loudon, 2007; Turton & Francis, 2007; Francis, Hills, & Rutledge, 2008).

Psychological type theory distinguishes among four personality constructs, each of which is expressed by two contrasting types: two orientations (introversion and extraversion), two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), two judging functions (thinking and feeling) and two attitudes (judging and perceiving). Studies that employed this model of personality among clergy have generally demonstrated that the clergy most vulnerable to burnout are introverts and thinking types, while the clergy most resilient to burnout are extraverts and feeling types (Francis, Wulff, & Robbins, 2008; Francis, Robbins, Kaldor, & Castle, 2009; Robbins & Francis, 2010; Brewster, Francis, & Robbins, 2011; Francis, Gubb, & Robbins, 2012; Robbins, Francis, & Powell, 2012; Francis, Payne, & Robbins, 2013; Francis & Crea, 2015; Durkee-Lloyd, 2016).

Environmental factors include both family-related and work-related issues. Among family-related issues marital status and children living at home have both been examined but without emerging as significant factors. Among work-related issues the number of churches, has been shown not to be a significant factor by Francis and Rutledge (2000) and by Francis, Robbins, & Wulff (2013b). Other factors taken into account have been clerical colleagues and additional responsibilities beyond the local church.

Theological and ecclesial factors taken into account in research among Anglican clergy have built on Randall's (2005) three dimensional model of church orientation as employed in recent studies by Village (2012, 2013). This model distinguishes between the Catholic and Evangelical roots of Anglicanism, between the Conservative and Liberal emphases of Anglicanism, and between the Charismatic and Non-charismatic expression of Anglicanism. While Randall's (2005) application of these categories in respect of scores

recorded on the revised Maslach Burnout Inventory produced some significant findings, this area of research remains in need of further investigation.

Ameliorating factors

Several studies have already set out to explore the effects of a range of personal, professional, or life style factors on clergy work-related psychological wellbeing, after taking into account personal, psychological, and environmental factors. The following examples illustrate these concerns.

Francis and Turton (2004a) tested the thesis that regular engagement with supervision designed to encourage reflective practice in ministry is related to better levels of work-related psychological health. Drawing on data provided by 1,276 Anglican clergymen and employing multiple regression to control for individual differences in age and personality, the study found that supervision was unrelated to levels of emotional exhaustion or depersonalisation, but associated with higher levels of satisfaction in ministry. This finding is interpreted to support the beneficial effect of disciplined engagement with supervision.

Francis, Turton, and Loudon (2007) tested the thesis that companion animals (specifically cats and dogs) may contribute to the work-related psychological health of Catholic parochial clergy and reduce levels of burnout. This thesis was grounded in the considerable literature that has identified social benefits, medical benefits and psychological benefits associated with companion animals across diverse populations. Using multiple regression models to control for individual differences in age and personality, the data indicated that, contrary to expectation, no psychological benefit accrued from owning a cat, while ownership of a dog was associated with statistically significant (but very small) increases in two aspects of professional burnout (emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation). These findings were interpreted to suggest that current pressures among

Catholic parochial clergy in England and Wales are so great that having a dog within the presbytery adds to the burden rather than providing recreational relief.

Turton and Francis (2007) tested the thesis that confidence in prayer is fundamental to maintaining a good level of work-related psychological health among Anglican parochial clergy and that low confidence in prayer is associated with professional burnout. Data were provided by a sample of 1,278 male stipendiary parochial clergy working in the Church of England who completed the modified Maslach Burnout Inventory and the short-form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire together with a scale assessing clergy attitude toward prayer. The results indicated that a positive attitude toward prayer was associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion, lower levels of depersonalisation and higher levels of personal accomplishment. These findings are interpreted in light of a growing understanding of the psychological role of prayer in human functioning.

Francis, Robbins, and Wulff (2013a) tested the effectiveness of support strategies in reducing professional burnout among clergy serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Drawing on data provided by 744 clergy, and employing multiple regression to control for individual differences in age and personality they explored the impact of five support strategies (defined as spiritual director, mentor, peer group, study leave and sabbatical) on the two scales of the Francis Burnout Inventory (assessing satisfaction in ministry and emotional exhaustion in ministry). They found that none of the five examined strategies served as predictors of lower levels of emotional exhaustion in ministry, but two of the five strategies served as predictors of enhanced satisfaction in ministry, namely having a mentor and taking study leave.

The present study builds on this tradition by exploring the effect of the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers on the perceived sense of feeling stressed.

Method

Sample

The database was created as part of the Church of England's church growth research programme (Church Growth Research Programme, 2013) from an online survey of churches (Voas & Watt, 2014). Invitations to participate were sent in 2013 to 3,735 churches, and 1703 (46%) responded. The survey included a section for clergy to complete, and 1,516 of the responses had all or part of this section completed. The sex and age ratios of the sample were similar to that for all parochial clergy in the Church of England at the time, and there was no obvious evidence of bias (Voas & Watt, 2014). The current analysis is based on 1,268 full-time stipendiary clergy who were aged 68 or under (the current standard retirement age for clergy) and who had full data for all the variables used in the analysis.

Instruments

The dependent variable was a single item assessing level of stress. Participants were asked 'How stressed are you?' and responded using a seven-point numerical scale ranging from 'very low stress' (= 1) to 'very high stress' (= 7). The responses were approximately normally distributed (mean = 4.6; SD = 1.4, mode = 5) with a slight negative skew (skewness = -.45; kurtosis = -.39). The predictor variables fell into four groups:

The first were those related individual differences that might affect proneness to stress or ability to cope with its effects. They included sex (1 = male, 2 = female), age (in years), the four dimensions of the psychological type model, and an emotionality score. Psychological type was assessed using the Francis Psychological Types Scales (FPTS), which have been widely used among Anglican clergy and show good psychometric properties (Francis, 2005; Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, & Slater, 2007; Francis, Robbins, & Craig, 2011; Village, 2011, 2013). In this study, Cronbach's reliabilities were: orientation (E/I) .83; perceiving (S/N) .72; judging (F/T) .68; Attitude to outer world (J/P) .79. Scores for introversion (I), intuition (N), feeling (F), and judging (J) were used in the analysis as INFJ

tends to be one of the most frequent psychological profiles among Church of England stipendiary clergy (Francis et al., 2007; Village, 2011). The emotionality score was based on ten items presented in the same way as the FPTTS items and designed to reflect the neuroticism scale within the Big Five Factor model of personality often employed in research among clergy (see Foppen, Paas, & van Saane, 2017). In each case characteristics of high or low emotionality were presented and the participant asked to choose which was 'closer to the real you'. The number of high-emotionality items chosen was used as a summated rating score, and the scale had a high internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .80$).

The second group of predictor variables was related to individual circumstances that might affect the likelihood of stress. They included marital status, whether or not they had children living at home, the number of other churches for which they were responsible for (0, 1, 2, 3, 4 = >3), whether or not they had other responsibilities besides their parochial duties, and whether or not they had some other clerical support in the parish.

The third group of predictor variables was related to church tradition, theological stance, and charismaticism measured on seven-point bi-polar scales anchored respectively by the phrases 'Anglo-Catholic' versus 'Evangelical', 'Liberal' versus 'Conservative', and 'Not Charismatic' versus 'Charismatic'. These three dimensions have been shown to be useful ways of assessing the range of ecclesial and theological positions found within the Anglican church in the UK (Randall, 2005, 2017; Village, 2012, 2013). Church tradition scores were categorized as Anglo-Catholic (1-2), Broad Church (3-5) or Evangelical (6-7) and used to create two dummy variables: Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical. Theological stance scores were categorized as Liberal (1-2), Middle (3-4) or Conservative (6-7) and used to create two dummy variables: Liberal and Conservative. Charismaticism scores were categorized as Not Charismatic (1-2), Middle (3-5) or Charismatic (6-7) and used to create two dummy variables: Not Charismatic and Charismatic.

The fourth group of predictor variables comprised two items related to the kinds of support that might ameliorate the levels or effects of stress. The first was based on the question ‘Among your family, colleagues and contacts, do you have someone with whom you are able to be completely honest, who encourages and supports you and is really concerned for you in your daily life and work?’ The forced-choice answers were ‘none’ (= 1), ‘yes, one other person’ (= 2), ‘yes, two other people’ (= 3), and ‘yes, three or more other people’ (= 4). This response was treated as an ordinal measure of ‘Informal Support’. The second item asked ‘How much support do you receive from professional advisors?’ and was binary coded as ‘Very little support’ or ‘Some support but not enough’ (= 1) and ‘A reasonable amount of support’ or ‘A great deal of support’ (= 2).

Analysis

Bivariate correlations were used to indicate which were the best single predictors of stress, and where effects might be indirectly due to correlations among the predictors themselves. The main analysis consisted of fitting a series of hierarchical linear regression models. Predictors were added successively in groups: personal factors (model 1), psychological factors (model 2), family-related factors (model 3), church-related factors (model 4), theological or ecclesial factors (model 5), and support factors (model 6).

Results

- insert table 1 about here -

The clergy in the sample were predominantly male (81%) and their average age was 53 years (Table 1), which is in line with the profile of full-time stipendiary clergy in the Church of England (Church of England, 2013). The type preferences were for Introversion (55%) over Extraversion (45%), Intuition (56%) over Sensing (44%), Feeling (59%) over Thinking (41%), and Judging (76%) over Perceiving (24%), which is also in line with other studies of Church of England stipendiary clergy (Francis et al., 2007). Emotionality scores

ranged from minimum to maximum possible (i.e. 0 to 10) and averaged 3.1 (SD = 2.5), suggesting most clergy were emotionally stable but some were not. In terms of individual contexts, just under half had children living at home, just over half had more than one church in their care, 8 out of 10 had some other responsibilities, and around two thirds had some other clerical support in the parish. In terms of ecclesial position, there was a roughly even distribution across the three traditions, with Broad Church being the largest group (37%) and Anglo-Catholic the smallest (29%). Around half were in the 'middle' theologically, with fewer conservatives (21%) than liberals (30%). Around a quarter were classed as charismatic and the same proportion as not charismatic, with the bulk of the sample falling between these two positions. Over 90% of the sample reported that they had some informal support from family or colleagues, and for over a third this was three or more people. Formal support was less frequent, with over a third reporting they received very little or not enough.

In terms of the independent variable, stress, 23% of the sample scored 3 or less, indicating low levels of stress, 19% scored 4 (the middle point of the scale), and 58% of the sample scored 5 or more on the 7-point scale, indicating higher levels of stress (with 6% scoring 7 and a further 21% scoring 6). Given a seven-point rating scale, over half of these clergy answered above the midpoint, indicating that many perceived they were under some stress.

Bivariate correlations suggested that the main factors associated with higher levels of stress were age, introversion, emotionality, having children at home, and being theologically conservative (Table 2). Both informal and formal support were associated with lower levels of reported stress. There were also some correlations between predictor variables. Older clergy were less likely to receive support, to have children at home or to be extraverted. High emotionality was associated with being female, with introversion (but not the other type

dimensions), and with low levels of support. These correlations suggested it was necessary to use multiple regression to identify unique predictors of stress.

- insert table 2 and table 3 about here -

Table 3 presents an incremental regression model constructed in six stages. When the psychological factors were entered into the equation after the personal factors (model 2), emotionality emerged as the single most effective predictor of stress. The effect of introversion was reduced, but still statistically significant. The age effect remained significant, suggesting younger clergy had slightly higher stress on average than their older colleagues. Adding family-related factors (model 3) showed that having at children was a factor promoting some stress. Interestingly, the age effect was no longer significant, suggesting it arose because younger clergy were more likely to have dependent children. Adding church-related factors (model 4) made no appreciable difference to the power of the model, suggesting stress was equally likely whether or not clergy had multiple churches, a team of clergy or additional responsibilities. The addition of theological and ecclesial factors (model 5) showed that Anglo-Catholics and conservatives reported slightly higher levels of stress, on average, than those in other traditions or with more middle-of-the-road or liberal theological positions. The addition of the two sources of support left just formal support as a significant predictor of lower stress (model 6). It seemed that those who had informal support tended also to have formal support, and, of the two, formal support from professionals was more effective in lowering stress.

Discussion

This study set out to explore stress levels among Anglican clergy through the lens of the balanced affect model of work-related psychological wellbeing, drawing on a rich resource of data provided within the context of the Church Growth Research Programme (Voas & Watt, 2014). Specifically the study set out to test the extent to which the sense of

feeling supported by professional advisers (positive affect) may offset the sense of feeling stressed (negative affect). This specific research question was nested within the context of a wider research perspective taking into account the effects of personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (emotionality, orientation, perceiving process, judging process, and attitude), environmental factors (home-related and church-related), and theological or ecclesial factors (Anglo-Catholic versus Evangelical, Liberal versus Conservative, and Charismatic versus Non-charismatic). The following five features of the data deserve discussion.

First, the response to the dependent variable, the question concerning the sense of feeling stressed revealed that 58% of the Anglican clergy scored above the mid-point of the scale; and of these 27% scored 6 or 7 on the 7-point scale. These findings are consistent with the map of the levels of stresses across five areas experienced by Anglican clergy serving in rural areas reported by Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2015). In that study Francis, Laycock, and Brewster distinguished between five core sources of stress for rural clergy. In terms of the burden of visibility, they found that 45% of clergy were stressed by the overlap between professional and personal life. In terms of the burden of presence, 59% of clergy were stressed by being unable to respond to the needs of everyone. In terms of the burden of distance, 41% of clergy were stressed by the distance and time spent travelling to hospitals and crematoria. In terms of the burden of isolation, 31% of clergy were stressed by lacking colleagues for daily prayers and sharing of ideas. In terms of the burden of administration, 56% of clergy were stressed by doing paperwork for several churches. The present study confirms the high level of stress and negative affect experienced by Anglican clergy.

Second, the data presented in the correlation matrix confirm the findings from previous research that psychological factors provide the strongest predictors of vulnerability to stress and to negative affect. In accordance with the earlier findings published by Francis

and Rutledge (2000), Francis and Turton (2004a, 2004b), Francis, Loudon, and Rutledge (2004), Rutledge and Francis (2004), Francis, Turton, and Loudon (2007), Turton and Francis (2007), and Francis, Hills, and Rutledge (2008), the clergy most vulnerable to burnout are introverts who score high on the index of emotionality. The fact that clergy most vulnerable to stress can be identified by routine psychological testing could be employed to implement preventative strategies for the most vulnerable. Programmes of self-awareness and stress-reduction strategies could be helpful for these individuals.

Third, the data presented in the regression models support the findings of Randall (2005) that theological and ecclesial factors provide additional prediction of vulnerability to stress and negative affect. Anglo-Catholic clergy and Conservative clergy experience significantly higher levels of stress in comparison with Broad Church clergy and clergy who occupy the middle way between liberal and conservative convictions. The fact that theological and ecclesial factors make a significant difference to levels of perceived stress requires further investigation and invite theological reflection. In other words, stress management for clergy is a theological issue as well as a psychological issue.

Fourth, the data presented in the correlation matrix demonstrate that positive affect (the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers), as well as negative affect (the sense of feeling stressed), is in part a function of personal and psychological factors. In terms of personal factors, clergywomen are more likely than clergymen to feel supported by professional advisers; younger clergy are more likely than older clergy to feel supported by professional advisers. In terms of psychological factors, extraverts are more likely than introverts, feeling types are more likely than thinking types, and emotionally stable individuals are more likely than emotionally labile individuals to feel supported by professional advisers. In other words, the sense of feeling supported by professional advisers

is partly shaped by the personal and psychological background of individual clergy as well as by objective provision.

Fifth, the data presented in the correlation matrix suggest that perceptions both of informal support and formal support are associated with lower levels of stress, while at the same time the perception of informal support and the perception of formal support are significantly positively correlated. The regression model, however, suggests that the real impact of positive affect reducing negative affect is routed through the perception of formal support. In this sense formal support is crucial in lowering levels of stress.

Sixth, the findings from the present study stand alongside findings from earlier studies that have suggested that a range of personal, professional, or lifestyle factors can exert positive effects on reducing levels of clergy stress, burnout, and negative affect, including regular engagement with supervision designed to encourage reflective practice in ministry (Francis & Turton, 2004a), confidence in prayer (Turton & Francis, 2007), having a mentor (Francis, Robbins, & Wulff, 2013a), and taking study leave (Francis, Robbins, & Wulff, 2013a).

Conclusion

Working with the balanced affect model of clergy work-related psychological wellbeing, this study has suggested that clergy who feel that they receive support from professional advisers also report lower levels of stress, compared with clergy of comparable sex, age, psychological profile, and theological and ecclesial formation. This finding raises further research questions concerning what experiences underpin such positive perceptions and how diocesan structures may best promote the view among Anglican clergy that they are well supported in this way. What is, however, already clear from the present analysis is that the positive experience of professional support far outweighs the positive experience of personal support from family and friends. This suggests that there is something special for

Anglican clergy in feeling that the Church itself may be investing in their wellbeing and promoting their sense of personal and professional worth.

Inevitable weaknesses with the present study arise from the very nature of the re-analysis of data largely collected for other purposes. The two core variables in these analyses, namely the measure of stress and the measure of formal support, could both have been much stronger. The findings, however, are of sufficient merit to encourage further research of this nature to employ both richer measures of stress, burnout or negative affect, and a more nuanced measure of perceived formal support.

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Table 1 *Profile of sample (N = 1,268)*

| | | % |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----|
| Age | under 40 | 8 |
| | 40-49 | 27 |
| | 50-59 | 46 |
| | 60-69 | 19 |
| Sex | Male | 81 |
| | Female | 19 |
| Marital status | Single | 11 |
| | Not single | 89 |
| Children at home | Yes | 48 |
| | No | 52 |
| Other churches | 0 | 49 |
| | 1 | 18 |
| | 2 | 12 |
| | 3 | 9 |
| | >3 | 12 |
| Other responsibilities | Some | 80 |
| | None | 21 |
| Other clergy | Some | 67 |
| | None | 33 |
| Church tradition | Anglo-Catholic | 29 |
| | Broad Church | 37 |
| | Evangelical | 35 |
| Conservatism | Liberal | 30 |
| | Middle | 49 |
| | Conservative | 21 |
| Charismaticism | Not Charismatic | 25 |
| | Middle | 51 |
| | Charismatic | 24 |
| Informal support | None | 7 |
| | One person | 33 |
| | Two people | 26 |
| | Three or more people | 34 |
| Formal support | Very little or not enough | 35 |
| | Reasonable or a great deal | 65 |

Table 2 *Correlation matrix of independent variables*

| | Stress | 20 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|-----|
| 1 Female | .04 | .07* | -.03 | .00 | -.10*** | -.16*** | .16*** | -.16*** | -.05 | -.07* | .03 | .09** | -.15*** | .11*** | .09** | .03 | .06* | .01 | -.01 | .01 |
| 2 Age | -.07** | -.08** | -.18*** | -.09** | .07* | -.06* | .04 | -.08** | .06* | -.01 | .04 | .10*** | -.44*** | -.02 | -.03 | .00 | .05 | -.09** | .11*** | |
| 3 Introversion | .10*** | -.12*** | -.21*** | -.13*** | .11*** | .03 | .04 | -.08** | .05 | -.04 | .00 | .06* | -.13*** | .07* | .12*** | .22*** | -.08** | -.15*** | | |
| 4 Intuition | .00 | .05 | .10** | .10*** | -.13*** | -.08** | .06* | -.01 | -.06* | .10** | -.02 | -.04 | .16*** | -.12*** | .04 | -.43*** | .02 | | | |
| 5 Feeling | -.03 | .08** | -.01 | -.02 | .01 | -.18*** | .09** | -.17*** | .01 | .07* | .06* | .10*** | .00 | .01 | -.01 | -.24*** | | | | |
| 6 Judging | .03 | .01 | .00 | -.08** | .09** | .12*** | -.02 | -.02 | .11*** | -.06* | .01 | -.05 | -.11*** | .13*** | -.01 | | | | | |
| 7 Emotionality | .39*** | -.16*** | -.13*** | -.02 | -.01 | -.05 | .11*** | -.08** | -.02 | -.05 | -.05 | .00 | -.01 | .08** | | | | | | |
| 8 Single | .05 | -.04 | -.04 | -.09** | .14*** | -.02 | .05 | -.17*** | .22*** | -.06* | .00 | -.06* | -.32*** | | | | | | | |
| 9 Children at home | .07** | .05 | .11*** | .13*** | -.12*** | .11*** | -.09** | .17*** | -.14*** | .06* | .02 | -.06* | | | | | | | | |
| 10 Other churches | .04 | -.01 | -.05 | -.06* | .00 | -.11*** | .11*** | -.12*** | -.02 | .06* | .11*** | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 Other roles | -.01 | .01 | -.04 | -.06* | -.02 | -.06* | .05 | -.10*** | .04 | .02 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 Clergy support | -.01 | .07** | .03 | .02 | .01 | -.02 | .02 | .02 | -.03 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 Anglo-Catholic | .03 | .03 | -.03 | -.23*** | .33*** | -.13*** | .31*** | -.46*** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 Evangelical | -.02 | -.05 | .07* | .45*** | -.27*** | .45*** | -.44*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 Liberal | .02 | .01 | -.03 | -.25*** | .26*** | -.34*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 Conservative | .06* | -.05 | .07* | .21*** | -.05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 Not charismatic | -.03 | .00 | -.04 | -.33*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 Charismatic | .01 | .01 | .10** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 Informal support | -.10** | .25*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 Formal support | -.21*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 *Hierarchical regression of stress level*

| | Model | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>Personal factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Sex | .04 | .01 | .02 | .02 | .03 | .04 |
| Age | -.07* | -.07* | -.03 | -.03 | -.03 | -.04 |
| <i>Psychological factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Introversion | | .06* | .06* | .06* | .06* | .04 |
| Intuition | | .00 | -.01 | -.01 | -.01 | .00 |
| Feeling | | -.01 | -.01 | -.02 | -.01 | .00 |
| Judging | | .03 | .03 | .03 | .02 | .03 |
| Emotionality | | .38*** | .38*** | .38*** | .38*** | .36*** |
| <i>Family-related factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Single | | | .04 | .04 | .04 | .03 |
| Children at home | | | .09** | .09** | .09** | .09** |
| <i>Church-related factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Other churches | | | | .05 | .05 | .05 |
| Other clergy support | | | | .02 | .02 | .03 |
| Other responsibilities | | | | .00 | .00 | .00 |
| <i>Theological and ecclesial factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Anglo-Catholic | | | | | .07* | .07* |
| Evangelical | | | | | .00 | -.01 |
| Liberal | | | | | -.01 | -.01 |
| Conservative | | | | | .08* | .07* |
| Not charismatic | | | | | -.04 | -.03 |
| Charismatic | | | | | .01 | .01 |
| <i>Support factors</i> | | | | | | |
| Informal support | | | | | | -.02 |
| Formal support | | | | | | -.15*** |
| Adjusted R^2 | .01 | .15 | .16 | .16 | .17 | .19 |
| ΔR^2 | - | .14*** | .01* | .00 | .01* | .02*** |