

**CHRISTIAN'S PERCEPTION IN COPING WITH
STRESS RELATED DEPRESSION**

A Case Study of Vantaa International Christian Fellowship (VICF), Finland

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of the study was to explore Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression. A case study of Vantaa International Christian Fellowship, Finland (VICF).

The methodology of the study entails a qualitative research, where 10 Christians from VICF, between the ages of 25-60 were interviewed. Structured interviews were used in order to receive individual views on how Christians cope with stress related depression. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis incorporated seductive and theoretical approach.

The results of the interviews support that, faith been the ultimate foundation of spirituality works effectively by the help of the Holy Spirit through prayers, the word of God, praise and worship in coping with stress related depression. Faith therefore empowers the other teams for effective results. The study also support that, the church is valuable in managing stress related depression through bible teachings, worship, join prayers, group meetings, educative seminars, counselling sessions and fellowship café which empowers other Christians spiritually and socially.

In conclusion, this study suggests that managing stress related depression through prayers, the word of God, praise and worship and the church will reduce the intake of anti-depressants pills and prevent suicide. Therefore, incorporating the spiritual aspect in addition to therapeutic support and medication will speed up the recovery process of those depressed.

Key words: Faith, Christians, spirituality, church, stress and depression.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores Christian's perception of prayer, praise and worship and the church in coping with stress related depression, a case study of Vantaa International Christian Fellowship. The study is narrowed to only Christian belief among other religious doctrine. According to Smart, Christianity is the religion about Jesus Christ and he is the central focus (Smart 1979, 201). This study supports that faith is the foundation of Christian's belief, without faith in the holy trinity which entails, God the father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit, there is no need for spirituality. The study also supports that, faith is absolutely linked to spirituality.

Studying social service, which also entails managing people with social problems and living in Finland where suicide and use of anti-depressant pills are significant social problems, motivated the author to research on the spiritual aspect of managing stress related depression. The author believes, researching on the spiritual aspect of faith, prayer, praise and worship in coping with stress related depression is relevant in addition to medication and therapeutic support. Therefore, incorporating the spiritual aspect may speed up the recovery process as a whole which will be of great significant to the community at large.

The study is relevant for Christians and non-Christians in the community because individuals are unique, hence different methods are used in stress management which may be beneficial to Christians who are stressed or depressed and also non-Christians who are suffering from stress related depression.

Psychology is a discipline relevant in social field. The author used mostly psychological concepts and theories to broaden understanding in managing social problems. The author's option is community social work; but became interested in researching on diaconal work in order to have a diversified mind in the field. Combining psychological and diaconal concepts will be useful for the author's career in the future in managing social problems in the community.

The aim of the study is to explore Christians' perception in coping with stress related depression through, prayer, the word of God, praise and worship and the church. Depression management has been researched from medication and therapeutic support, recently spirituality has been proven to an extent. According to Kavar, over the last ten years, a great deal of research on the relationship between spirituality and psychology, neurology, and treatment outcome has occurred. The pattern of research is consistence; spirituality plays an important role in mental health and positive treatment outcome which is not just metaphysic but evidenced based (Kavar 2012, 59.)

The author was motivated to carry out the research in a Christian congregation to verify whether faith, prayer, praise and worship can enable people cope with stress related depression which is a social problem in our community. Therefore, the main objective of the study is for mental health counsellors and therapists to incorporate the spiritual aspect of those clients who believe in God in addition to therapeutic support in order to speed up recovery for those depressed. The author decided to carry out the study and the research questions are;

1. What are the ways Christians deal with stress related depression?
2. How can Christian faith, prayers, praise and worship prevent stress related depression?

2. BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTS

The study was carried out in Vantaa International Christian Fellowship (VICF) located in Tikkurila, Eastern Vantaa in Minttukirkko. VICF started in January 2009. VICF is an English multinational, interdenominational fellowship, which is evangelical in faith. All Christians are welcome regardless of nationality, race or denomination. VICF has different ministries, ladies only, children, praise and worship and prayer ministries (Vantaa International Christian Fellowship.) VICF- a spiritual home for all was chosen because it has a multicultural background and the author did not want the research to be influenced by cultural factors.

According to Braam et al. (2001) study of European value survey of adults of all ages, only 4 percent of Finns were found to attend religious services regularly; on a 0-12 scale of religious orthodoxy of an average rank of 6.2, Finns scored 2.8 on a 0-5 scale of religious devotion. Furthermore, world's Gallup poll reported that, 28 percent of Finns said religion was important and 70 percent said it was not (Koenig, King and Carson 2010, 86.) The above analysis gives a picture of Finns and their religious involvement. This study reveals Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression which is a significant social problem in the community.

Pargament, Koenig and Perez (2000) has developed measures that describe specific ways people utilize religion in coping with stress representing five religious functions such as; the search for meaning, the search for control, the search for comfort and closeness to God, the search for intimacy with other God, and the search for life transformation through active, passive, interactive strategies, emotion, cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal and spiritual domains. Religious coping measures have both positive and negative outcomes as seen in Fetzer

multidimensional measure of religiousness / Spirituality known as four-item scale of the 105-item measures from seven subscales (Koenig, King and Carson 2010, 95.)

Those five religious functions are significant in a person quest for the supernatural and are the bases of spirituality. The relationship between spirituality and religiousness and mental health on the other hand has evoked interest, passion and contradictory perspectives (Park and Slattery 2013, 540.) This relationship has been of interest to the author and a motivating factor in the study of Christian faith, prayers, the word of God, praise and worship as methods in coping with stress related depression as revealed in the interviews.

2.1 Definitions of key concepts

In order to have a better understanding of some relevant concepts in the study, it is important to define some key concepts such as stress and depression, faith, spirituality, prayer, praise and worship. In this study the above mentioned concepts are defined as;

2.1.1 Stress and depression

Stress is a normal physical response to events that makes you feel threatened or upset in a way. Stress can be expressed through cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral symptoms (help guide.org). According to the respondents, depression is defined as; a period in one's life that one is sad or stressed to a certain degree that he or she cannot think right and may think life is worthless, not seeing any way out to people's problems, and mostly overwhelmed by negative thoughts which may sometimes have suicidal thoughts. In other words, depression refers to a hopeless state in life or loss of hope.

According to Bostwick and Pankratz (2000), depression is defined as an emotional state that ranges from mild and temporary melancholy, lack of motivation and sadness, to a life threatening, long term psychiatric disorder leading to about 9 percent of mortality resulting from suicide (Koenig, Kings and Carson 2010,145). Howard study, distinguishes nine symptoms for major depression which includes; depressed mood, sadness, irritability part of the day nearly every day, diminishing pleasure or interest in daily activities, weight loss or weight gain, significant change in sleeping patterns, marked increase or decrease in movement, fatigue and loss of energy, feeling of worthless or guilt, difficulty in concentration and ideas of suicide or death (Stone 1998, 66). Depression is the cognitive, emotional and physical manifestation of those symptoms mentioned.

According to Biebel and Koenig (2004), there are many causes of depression, ranging from genetic to environment to psychological. Beside genetic and biological causes of depression, there are developmental factors during childhood rearing, social, psychological and behavioral factors that influence depression in its cause and development (Koenig, Kings and Carson 2010,145-147.) Many life events like stressful childhood, traumas, social losses, stressful consequences of substance abuse have had negative impact on a person resulting to stress and depression.

To be diagnosed depressed according to American psychiatric association (1994), a person must exhibit five of the symptoms for a minimum of two weeks and have depressed mood or diminished pleasure or interest on most days for at least part of the day. Once depression has been identified, it's relevant to rank it be it mild, moderate or severe depression (Stone 1998, 66.)

The Finnish association of mental health, states that depression diagnosis are based on the international classification of disease (ICD 10) by W.H.O and the DSM IV (American Psychiatric association). ICD (WHO) is the standard diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management and clinical purposes and the purpose

of diagnosis is for treatment. The SOS center of the Finnish association of mental health has worked on suicide prevention for over forty years and suicide rate has decreased over the past years (Finnish Association of Mental Health.) Suicide prevention is relevant to our community today therefore; the management of depression is significant.

The Finnish association for mental health acknowledged that the interaction between humans and their environment has an impact in mental health. Mental health is considered a resource which keeps on developing throughout life in connection between individuals and their living condition. Mental health is not therefore a permanent or unchangeable state; instead the mental resources of individuals vary according to experiences and situations in life (Finnish Association for Mental Health.) Human interaction has a great impact in stress management when the embodied self needs to engages properly to the society and if not properly done, it may result to stress and depression.

According to Barrett, life events are highly researchable because they are important to the people we study, and the things they are interested in, can also tell us if environmentally induced stress is an important factor in psychopathology in the general population. Events are strategic phenomena on which to focus as the major basis of such stress (Barrett 1979, 11.) Human engagement in the community has a significant impact because environmental factors influence stress.

According to Statistics Finland, the highest suicide rate was recorded in 1990 with a total of over 1500 suicides in Finland. Suicide mortality rate has decreased by 40 per cent in twenty years. In 2012, a total of 873 committed suicide (Statistics Finland, 2013.) Suicide rate has been one of author's motivations for this study (Fig 2, appendix 2). This study aims at investigating Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression through faith, prayer, praise and worship, the word

of God and church fellowship and the possible prevention of suicide in the community.

2.1.2 Faith

According to Wood, faith is the most disputed term in the philosophical and theological vocabulary and can be referred to a specific set of religious doctrine which entails, trust in God, a contrast to knowledge, a deeply secured theological asset or an attitude or posture in the face of the unknown. Though faith is dominant to world religions, the concept also have non-religious uses. Therefore, faith expressed in the Christian religion is a complex multidimensional quality which comprises of a person's intellect, will and behavior, in acts of belief or judgment, trust and obedience (Wood 2010, 606.)

According to Fowler, faith involves an orientation of the will, a resting of the heart, in harmony with a vision of transcendent value and power, which is one's ultimate concern. Faith is therefore, an alignment of the total person, offering purpose and goal to a person hope, strivings thoughts and action (Fowler 1981, 14.) The respondents' defined faith as; being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see (Hebrew 11:1).

Peace justifies faith in Jesus, from which hope is accessed through his grace through the Holy Spirit in a person who believes. Faith is a spiritual gift imparted by the Holy Spirit that enables Christians to believe God for the extraordinary and miraculous work. It is often found in combination with other manifestations such as healings and miracles (Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:6.) Faith and love are gifts of the Holy Spirit which strengthen Christians in their daily endeavors (Church council 2002, 26.)

The Holy Spirit also offer spiritual gifts such as leadership, knowledge, serving, encouragement, healing, prophesy , speaking in tongues and so on (1 Corinthians 12:11). These gifts aim at convincing people of God's love. According to Antola et al., the Holy Spirit enables a person to proclaim the word and also assist individuals to live in accordance to God's will. The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier who is able transform a sinful person holy. The Holy Spirit therefore, establishes the faith that Jesus has redeemed mankind from sin. Christ lives in a person's heart through faith and the reconciliation of that individual's sins takes place when the Holy Spirit reveals God's atoning or compensating sacrifice for mankind (Antola et al, 2006, 16.)

According to respondents, faith connects a person to God through the Holy Spirit. Respondents see the church as a strengthener in their faith as people with different spiritual gifts may be present at a service or prayer sessions thus supporting one another in area of need. Spiritual gifts include; healing, interpretation, prophesizing, speaking in tongues, preaching, evangelizing and so on. Faith therefore empowers Christians in their spiritual endeavors.

2.1.3 Spirituality

According to Wuthnow (1998), spirituality is defined as, all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality (Raymond 2013, 28.) Spirituality is therefore that divine connection to a supreme being. A spiritual person is one who has the Holy Spirit. This person is spiritually minded, and thinks the thoughts of God. The Holy Spirit influences a person's way of perceiving issues. Such individual believes in Jesus Christ, endeavors to follow the instruction of the dwelling spirit, and resist sensual desires and the dominion of sin (Romans 8:13-14).

On the other hand, a person without the Holy Spirit will not acknowledge things from God (Romans 8:9). This kind of person is under the dominion of Satan, and is enslaved to the body and its passions (Ephesians 2:3). In addition, the natural person is not able to understand God and his ways, but instead relies on human reasoning or emotions. Spirituality in Christian perspective is therefore, living the virtue of divinity and these divinity virtues are the fruits of the Holy Spirit which are love, faithfulness, patience, kindness endurance, meekness, self-control, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness and so on (Galatians 5:22-23).

Roehlkepartain et al. (2006) defines spiritual development in childhood and adolescence as; the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental mechanism that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious tradition, beliefs and practice (Oman 2013, 39.)

There are spiritual ways in connecting to the sacred which is addressed differently by the various religious doctrines. According to the study, spiritual development has been a process embedded in a person which grows within the individual as the person engages in life through different events. Spirituality is not something that rises within a day but develops with time as the individual's faith grows.

According to Ursula (2001), spirituality can be linked to all human involvements, rooted from biology of embodied existence, but with a close connection with the imagination of human innovations and resourcefulness with other relationships with ourselves, others and God. Such practices of gathering for silent, reflection and meditation are moments of spiritual strengthening and disclosure. These encounters are not limited to Christian faith but also nourish by the insights of other faiths (Ursula 2001, 8-9.) Spirituality is therefore rooted from the embodied self and its manifestation is seen through people's engagement to a religious doctrine.

2.1.4 Prayer

The term prayer originated from the Latin word “precari” meaning to ask earnestly. Not all prayers are petitionary for there are prayers for confession and adoration (Taliaferro 2010, 617). Petitionary prayers are usually seen as a request or an appeal to an authority, adoration is deep love and respect seen through worship and thanks giving to a deity and confession prayers are those formal statements admitting ones guilt. Respondents believe, Christian’s morals are back up by the Ten Commandments and most people feel guilty living contrary to those norms and doctrine. Therefore, prayers of confession are relevant for Christian’s spiritual life.

According to Spilka and Ladd, prayer can be defined as;

An appeal to a higher power, invariably a deity conceptualized in a rational sense. Prayer can be informal or formal, voiced or silent, exploiting written words, song lyrics, or contemporary utterance; it can be carefully confined or spontaneous, private or public, involving body postures, gesture, oral formulas, repetition, concentration on particular topics, meditation and various emotions; it can be also stimulate or be inspired by our emotions. Prayers are most commonly individuals’ conception largely designed by the doctrine and practices of our religious institutions (Spilka and Ladd 2013, 12-13.)

Prayers entail communication to a superior being or a deity which affirms a person faith. Prayer is the necessary link to receive God’s blessings and power, and the fulfillment of his promises. Numerous bible passages illustrate this principle. Jesus, for example, promised that his followers would receive the Holy Spirit if they persisted in asking, seeking, and knocking at the door of their heavenly father (Luke 11:5-13).

Therefore, prayer and faith commerce’s together in Christian doctrine. If you do not have faith in God you won’t pray to God. However, there are several conditions that must be met in order for Christian’s prayers to be effective; prayers must be made in Jesus’ name (John 14:13-14),prayer can only be effective, if it’s made

according to the perfect will of God (1 Kings 18:1) and for prayer to be effective, Christians must be persistent (Luke 18:1-7 and Matthew 7:7-8).

Pargament and colleagues (1988), acknowledged three distinct appeals to God through prayers in managing stress which include; deferring, collaborative and self-directed prayers. In deferring approach, a person makes an appeal and concludes that the problem is now in the hands of God. In the collaborative style, the individual assumes that the God work together to resolve the challenging issue. And in self-directed orientation, the person recognizes the role and place of God but predominantly regards the problem as resolvable in prayers. Here, the supplicant talks to God about the problem (Spilka and Ladd 2013, 17.) These three distinct appeals are only possible through complete faith and trust in God. And the impacts are related to the degree of self-control over the circumstance.

2.1.5 Praise and worship

Praise and worship is an act of offering glory, honor and thanksgiving to the supreme deity (God). In other words, it is an act of homage or reverence to God. Only the true God deserves to be worshipped can be affirmed in Matthew 4:9, 10; Revelation 9:20; Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 6:13-15; and Revelation 14:9-11 forbids idolatry. Moreover, there are expressions of Christian worship; true worship takes place in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), the key feature of Old Testament worship was the sacrificial system (Numbers 28-29.)

Praising God is essential to Christian worship. It was a key element in Israel's worship of God (Psalms 100:4; 111:1 and Romans 15:10-11), confession of sin was clearly an important part of Old Testament worship (1 Kings 8:30-39; James 5:16). Worship must also include the public reading of scripture and its true proclamation (Deuteronomy 31:9-13; 1 Timothy 4:13). People were instructed to

bring tithes and offerings to worship God (Psalms 96:8; Malachi.3:10). And finally, in New Testament, worship was the celebration of the sacraments-baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42.) People relate differently in terms of worship.

According to Smart, the natural focus of worship is a holy, mystical or spiritual being and is evident in the simple homage of power typical of the Supreme Being. This acknowledgement of the Supreme Being in world religion represents not just power, but mercy, love and goodness as well. The more you concentrate on holiness in worship, the more logical it seems to suppose that it is the only source of holiness (Smart 1996, 92.) Purity is essential when connecting to God because God is holy and holiness is crowned by love which governs all good things.

To summarize, this chapter offers definition of some key concepts of the study such as depression, faith, spirituality, prayer and praise and worship. Depression was perceived, in terms of definition and diagnosis in accordance to world health organization based on disease control and its impact in the community through mortality resulting from suicide. On the other hand, some Christian concepts which are relevant in managing depression as viewed in the other chapters were outlined.

3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORKS

In the theoretical frameworks, the author has focus on certain dimensions of the sacred, the integrated self and the psychology of religion and spirituality. The study of these concepts is relevant in analyzing religious concepts and theories which are used in coping with stress and depression. According to Koenig, King and Carson (2010, 74), religion is a powerful coping conduct people have used to deal with suffering and hardship. Religious coping rate in Scandinavia are generally lower as compared to the rest of the world (Koenig, King and Carson 2012, 74, 85.)

3.1 Religious concepts

Pargament (1997) study defines spirituality as a search for the sacred and religion as a search for significant ways related to the sacred. People are interested in searching for whatever they hold valuable in life (Oman, 39, Pargament and Mahoney, 181.) Sacred are religious doctrine related to God or a god and significant, implies something with great importance or meaning.

Pargament and Mahoney consider sacred matters as vital aspect in psychology of religion. People can consecrate objects theistically as a sign of their belief, images or experiences of God and nontheistically by investing objects with qualities that characterize divinity. People have gone greater magnitude to protect and preserve what they identify as sacred. Sacred aspects of life activate spiritual emotions, consecration offers a powerful personal and social resource that people can extract throughout their lives and loss of the sacred can be detrimental in life for those involved (Pargament and Mahoney, 179.)

According to Pargament study, Christians acknowledges that, Jesus is the ultimate symbol of the incarnation of the sacred on earth. Though he was in the form of

God, he did not equate himself to God but instead acted as a servant being born in the likeness of men (Pargment and Mahoney, 184.)The sacred is mystery and can only be understood with the help of the Holy Spirit.

According to Evans Pritchard (1965), ritual or practical dimension is that aspect of religion which involves such activities as worship, meditation, pilgrimage, sacrifice, sacrament rites and healing activities. Worship is the core of ritual practices in religion and renders praise or honor to God or a god. Pure worship is usually mixed with other activities such as petition and compensation. Because the Lord is the creator, worship implies certain consequences, in which background has been shaped, and the shape is supplied by doctrine and myth which is ethical. Worshipping God is affirming acceptance and acknowledgement of God's qualities as creator (Smart 1996, 10, 89.) According to the respondents, praise and worship acted as a booster in prayers for effective results. And worship is executed through songs and adoration in prayers. They believe praise and worship connects them to God.

According to Feenstra (2010), trinity is that Christian doctrine which holds that, there is one God who is also in three persons. The doctrine though rooted in scripture was not developed at the beginning of the early church reflecting both the sacred writings of the apostles on the worship of Jesus. The rebirth of Trinitarian theology began in the twentieth century. New Testament offers brief hints on the relationship between father (God) and son (Jesus Christ). (Feenstra 2010, 535.)

Feenstra study supports that, God is seen as father of all (Ephesians 46; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6). Jesus is also seen as Lord in (Act 7:59; Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 8:616:22; Philippians 2:11 and as God in (John 1:1-2, 18; 20:28) in the New Testament. Early Christian spoke of Jesus as Lord and God for both son and father are honored. New Testament reference of the spirit includes doctrine from the trinity even though the spirit is closely related to the work of Christ (Feenstra 2010, 535.)

The holy trinity is an important concept in Christianity as Christians believe in God, Jesus Christ and the holy spirit for the holy trinity is seen as one. The holy trinity can be illustrated in John 1:1 which states; "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God". The word is God, and Jesus Christ is the word of God. The word is spirit and can only manifest in a person if he or she believes. Respondents believe, they can be linked to God through the Holy Spirit for their faith is centered on the trinity.

The narrative dimension of religion, perceives faith as the form of life which expresses loyalty to the past and acknowledged hope in future. Faith holds on to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as a profound meaning for individual Christians while hope gripped the future. Hope has been vital in the early church but modern time virtues have tended to secularization. Secular humanists hope that better things would appear in the future as a result of progress out of evolutionary sense of development (Smart 1996, 210.)

According to Smart, among many Christians, hope has faded, except for those who believe in the second coming of Jesus. However, if the theological virtues strongly relates to the mythic or narrative dimensions, the impact of the experimental dimension is confusing (Smart 1996, 211.) In the narrative dimension of religion, faith dwells in hope for the future for both Christians and secular humanist. For Christians hope and trust God are the secret of their faith while secular humanists believe in the evolution.

Kavar's integrated self-model denotes that individuals operate within self in four dimensions; Sociohistoric, the embodied, the engaging and spiritual. Experience in one dimension is braided with the others and failing to consider any one of these four dimensions is to disregard the scope of human experiences and the integral way each dimension constitute to individual identity. All four dimensions are engaged in all human activities even though a particular activity may primarily reflect or impact a particular dimension (Kavar 2012, 16.)

In this study, the author focused on the spiritual dimension which is part of who we are as human beings on a genetic and neurological level. The spiritual dimension is unique just like the other three dimensions. The spiritual dimension of the integrated self allows people to experience issues more than what is seen in the physical. According to this model; the spiritual dimension is that of transcendence towards factors more than is apparent in the experience of the other dimensions. Spiritual dimension is manifested in the embodied dimension through different interpretation of issues in respect to different cultural meaning, purpose and value in a person's life (Kavar 2012, 24-25.) The spiritual dimension work closely with the other three dimension because culture has a great influence on people, the embodied self-engages to activities in the society and if not manage properly, causes stress.

3.2 Earlier research on religion and mental health

Shreve- Neiger and Edeltein (2004) research on the relationship between religion and mental health states that, the existent of several limitations makes data difficult to interpret. The research support that, few studies are experimental in nature without a longitudinal relationship between variables and mental health outcome making accurate interpretation difficult (Park and Slattery 2013, 541.) Data interpretation on religion and mental health studies do have limitations, because of the nature of concepts which cannot be tested scientifically.

According to Pargament, major life events affect people spiritually, emotionally, socially and physically. Disaster or crisis can be viewed through a spiritual understanding as a threat, challenge, losses or opportunity for growth in whatever the individual holds sacred (Pargament, Falb, Ano and Wachholtz 2013, 560.) These three dimensions of the integrated self-correlate to the spiritual ego of an individual.

According to Kohl's research (2009), spiritual practices can be both positive and negative. In spiritual involvements, people often report a sense of loss of self-stepping outside of self, and individuals whose belief provide a context for explaining the dynamics of spiritual experiences often find this loss of self as a positive sign while those without a framework for understanding the experience may become fearful, anxious, or avoidant. When a spiritual encounter is unknown, incomprehensible, or unfamiliar, the result is increase anxiety, fear, or self-doubt (Kavar 2012, 62.)

Kavar supports that, stress therefore increases for those who have a negative or fearful description of spiritual experiences whereas those who describe spiritual experiences in positive terms realize stress reduction. Spiritual issues should be handled with care, because if certain cautions are not taken the effect will be detrimental to people. Koenig hand book of religion and mental health; suggest that clinicians' understanding of the beliefs and ideas of different religious traditions is relevant to be competent clinicians. In other words, knowledge of Islam, Buddhism, or specific indigenous belief system is needed to work with client who abides to those particular belief systems (Kavar 2012, 60.)

Master and Hooker, study on spirituality and mental health observed that depression can shake one's religious faith or lead to its rebirth. Sometimes, both occur following the state of the depressed. In contrary, religion, spirituality and health are multidimensional with different components. Master and Hooker literature suggests that, religion and spirituality have a consistence protective relationship with the risk for mortality in healthy population when religious beliefs have a negative impact on clients (Master and Hooker 2013, 534).According to this study, Christians trust the word of God which offers them direction and a way forward with life.

According to Sorajjakool (2008) research on examining treatment for depression, pointed the role of spirituality as it evolves over the course of treatment. When

initially presenting for treatment, depression creates the experience of disconnecting from self, from others and from God. At that time, clients often report of loss of spiritual connection or an ability to use spiritual resources that are typically a source of strength or comfort (Kavar, 2012.) Spirituality therefore, plays an important role in mental health and treatment outcomes.

3.3 Positive and negative religious coping effect on stress and depression

Koenig, King and Carson, acknowledged quantitative and qualitative studies aimed at assessing an individual's overall general level of religious coping without directly asking about it (Koenig, King, and Carson 2012, 95). Religious coping may have both positive and negative outcomes. According to Pargament study, Christian's believed in God's assistance and direction during challenging life situations are valuable in religious coping (Pargament 1997, 288.)

Baetz and Toews (2009) research describe two categories of religious and spiritual expressions: intrinsic and extrinsic. An intrinsic orientation to religion and spirituality categorizes beliefs and practices based on internalized beliefs that support a sense of personal security and empowerment which leads to decrease in depressive symptoms and an increase in the overall mental health whereas, a status in relationship to the deity and self-justification, leads to increase depression and a decrease in overall mental health features and coping effect (Kavar 2012, 62.) According to the study, respondents were empowered by their faith and total trust in God which affected them positively during stress thus preventing them from depression.

According to Koenig, King and Carson, major factors influencing peoples response to religious coping is their level of distress. Negative emotional states and challenging life situations motivate individuals to use religious coping whereas ,

when life is great and resource are in abundant, people are less connected to religious coping(Koenig, King and Carson 2012,95.)

Pargament et al. perceives positive religious strategies as; spiritual connectedness, benevolent religious reappraisals, collaborative religious coping and seeking spiritual support which tends to be more beneficial in analytic review of research on religious coping and psychological adjustment to stress. (Pargament, Falb, Ano and Wachholtz 2013, 564.) The above mentioned strategies are relevant in people search for spiritual understanding. According to this study, respondents were empowered through testimonies from other Christians and also from social network, pastoral care and the church in general during crisis.

Pargament et al. study states that, religion as a defense is like most stereotypes whereby many people focus on their faith to reduce anxiety and obtain comfort and support in times of stress. Most religious traditions provide members with passages that encourage them to acknowledge and mark difficult life transitions rather than disclaim them (Pargament, Falb, Ano and Wachholtz 2013, 561.) Koenig study states that, the practice of psychiatry, psychology and the role of religion and spirituality is relevant in stress management, coping with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, recovery, and psychosis. Koenig also focus on the integration of religious belief within the context of the provision of therapeutic intervention (Kavar 2012, 60.)

Kavar's study supports that, spirituality can play a role in coping stress in the early treatment. Based on one belief system, there can be an openness to find solutions to personal problems like depression and in later treatment, as a client begins to analyze the pattern, schemas and experiences of depression, spirituality can be the basis as the clients explores a sense of meaning within the depression itself (Kavar 2012, 65.) Spirituality can therefore be a source of meaning and purpose in life taking the depressed to a healthy sense of self.

According to American Psychological association (2008), a national sample of almost 1,800 respondents indicated what people do to counter stress. A total of 37 percent considered prayer as a means to cope with stress giving it the eighth place in the study. Of those mentioning prayer, 77 percent regarded it as their most effective stress- management activity and 75 percent of them placed going to church and attending religious services in second place (Bernard Spilka and Kevin L.Ladd, 19.) All respondents in this study acknowledged the impact of faith, prayers, praise and worship, and church as factors enabling them cope with stress thus prevent them from been depressed.

According to Kavar, mental health professionals need to develop competency in addressing spirituality and its role within a person's life. Research has proven that spirituality can enhance a person's health and well-being positively as well as negatively. Beliefs about the nature of deity shape the meditative experience which is positive for mental health as well as orientation of belief and practices which could be detrimental (Kavar 2012, 62.)

Brown and Colleagues (2007) study, examined a sample of 192 depressed medical outpatients in Pittsburgh on bases of patients' personal illness model. A total of 48 percent indicated recovery from depression as a result of their faith in God. Religion coping was measure by two items which interacted what they perceived as the cause of depression. Among those who believed medical illness has cause their depression were associated with poorer psychosocial functioning on bases of religion coping effect (Koenig, King and Carson 2012,104.)

According to Pargament, Ensing, et al. (1990), project on religion and coping, stated that, spiritual support is achieved through a more comprehensive spiritually based coping activities scale. Items on the scale reveals several components of support such as emotional reassurance by trusting God who they believe would not allow terrible issues happen to them and therefore sought God's love and guidance in solving problems. Thus those who reported more spiritually based coping also

related better adjustment to life crisis. Spiritual support therefore involved collaborative form of religious coping in which individuals work together with God to solve a problem (Pargament 1997, 289.)

Koenig, King and Carson assessment on negative religious coping related to anger envisaged as an act of punishment from God and is pleading for mercy from God out of desperation, or feels alone or deserted by God or members of a community is detrimental to people. Therefore, encouragement of negative emotions in individuals like anger ,persecution, abandonment, demonic oppression and so forth causes stress, depression, anxiety or other depressed state of mind (Koenig, King and Carson 2012,97.)

Pargament support that, people who speak negatively about religion are those discontented with members of a congregation as the remarks that, congregational members and clergy let them down or deserted them in time of ultimate need. Other also express negative feeling toward God in dealing with traumatic events (Pargament 1997, 290.) People express negative feeling of abandonment and disappointment during crisis if church members could not attain expectancy level.

To summarize, religion coping has both positive and negative outcomes depending on the level of the circumstance and the way the issues are handled. One of the objectives of this study is to incorporate spirituality in to therapeutic support in order to speed up recovery process for those depressed. Therefore, belief systems based on religiosity on positive belief aspects should be encouraged, while punitive belief customs should be discourage.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative interview oriented research with a case study of a Christian congregation (VICF). Qualitative research seeks to understand the actions and practice in which individual and groups engage in everyday life and meanings ascribe to their experiences. According to Silverman, the methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that the study can provide an in-depth understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from a purely quantitative methodology (Silverman 2011, 22.) Structured interviews were used to get a better understanding of individuals' experiences in coping with stress and depression from a Christian congregation.

4.1 Research design

The target group was members of VICF, from the ages 25 years to 60 years. The topic was introduced to members of the congregation and participation was voluntary. Selection covered members with different nationalities so that answers would not influence culturally. Respondents were from Europe, Africa, South America and Asia.

The interview questions were designed into three perspectives; the first section entailed an understanding of key concepts like, faith, spirituality and depression (Appendix 1). Here the author wanted to know if the respondents understood those concepts. The second part of the questions from 10-18 were framed to measure, how stress or depressed a person is presently or had been in the past. The author evaluated the depressed state of the respondents through analyzing their responses. And the final section from questions 19-22 were structured to enable the respondents offer their personal opinions on how they manage or are able to

cope with stress or depression and their recommendations for those depressed in the community.

4.2 Data collection process

A total of 10 Christians from VICF were interviewed using structured interviews (Appendix 1) with the use of a tape recorder. The research method used was, selection based on voluntary participation for those interested in the study, interviews were conducted with the use of an audio tape recorder, data transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were transcribed with a total of 32 pages.

The topic was conceived and the research questions were formulated. Interview questions were structured to answer the research questions. The author searched for previous studies and theories related to spirituality and depression but could not find studies related to the chosen topic from English theses of other Universities of Applied Sciences. The author finally searched for studies on spirituality and depression from other previous authors with concepts related to the topic.

The author used materials from previous studies and came out with a research plan which was presented to the VICF administration; author's case study, which was approved by the VICF authority. The author proceeded by contacting potential research participants and presented the objective of the study, asking if they could participate in an interview. Contacts were exchanged to easy communication with those who accepted to participate in the interviews.

Appointments were scheduled either at the author's home or homes of the respondents. The author decided to undertake all the interviews at home premises because of the sensitivity of the topic and also wanted the respondents to open up fully and feel safe. Finally most of the interviews took place at respondents' homes.

Interviewed questions were sent to respondents by email before the actual interview, since English was not the mother tongue of most respondents.

The interviews were conducted between 05.02.2014 -15.02.2014. A total of 10 respondents from VICF were interviewed and each lasted between 30 to 45 minutes using an audio tape recorder. Among the 10 interviewees' 4 respondents were interviewed individually while 3 couples were also interviewed. Initially the author wanted to interview all participants individually but some couples got interested in the study, so they were interviewed in pairs. The paired interviews did not have any significant impact in the study, couples responded individually to the questions and responses were related to their personal experiences. Coupled interviews were analyzed individually because questions were asked separately. Therefore, couple interviews did not affect the study in any way.

During the actual interviews, the topic was once more introduced to the respondents and emphasis of confidentiality was made clear in relation to ethical considerations. Reasons for a tape recorder was made know to respondents; for transcription purposes. The questions were asked chronologically, during the interviews. There was a pause at question 10 which needed brief explanation because the questions were structured in such a way as to evaluate how stress or depressed a person is or had been.

Respondents' opinion about the questions were requested at the end of the interview, reason been that, the topic was sensitive and questions were personal, it was therefore, necessary to know the state of mind of the respondents. All the respondents were satisfied with the questions; as it made them reflect on their relationship with God. On the other hand, some acknowledged that some of the questions were challenging.

4.2 Data analysis

According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes in a data set. Thematic analysis minimally organizes and describes your set data in details and further interprets various aspects of the research topic. Thematic analysis involves a number of choices which are not made explicit but which need explicitly to be considered and discussed. The theme does not necessarily depend on quantifiable measures but whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun, and Clarke 2006, 9-10.) A theme summarizes important information in relation to the research questions representing design answers within a data set. Thematic analyses enable unclear subjects to be clarified.

To be familiar with the data, themes were identified. The author read and re-read the transcripts, noting down initial records. Generating initial code was the next step. The author coded interesting elements of the record in a systematic way across the entire data set, gathering data relevant to each other. The codes were processed into themes, these themes work in relation to the coded extracts and entire data set generating thematic map of the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 35).

4.3 Ethical issues

According to Silverman, there are a number of goals which aims at achieving ethical research; ensuring that people participate voluntarily, rendering people's comment and behavior confidential, protecting people from harm and ensuring mutual trust between researcher and people studied. Two ways are relevant in achieving these ethical goals and includes; ethical guidelines and thoughtful and ethical responsible research practice (Silverman 2011, 97.)

Ethical consideration in respect to social science research must be respected. Respondents had the right to quit at any time. Respondents also had the right to review and make enquires about the research to fully understand the main concept of the research. Mutual respect must be reciprocal. The tape recorder was to be used only for transcription and future back up.

Silverman states that, when reports of observation or interviews are presented, it is common sense to protect the identities of the people you have researched and also to ensure that they understand and give their consent to the study (Silverman 2011, 94.) Confidentiality is the key word as concerns ethical consideration because the topic was sensitive. In accordance to the sensitivity of the study, respondents' identities were not disclosed. Respondents quotations were distinguished by letters of the alphabet from letter A-J and these letters were taken chronologically without any connection to respondent's identity.

5. FINDINGS

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides valuable description of the overall data with details examination of some aspects of the data. Themes were examined using semantic approach; the identified themes were examined considering surface meaning of data without going beyond responses not made by participants. According to the respondents, three main core values were identified; God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit forming the holy trinity. The holy trinity is therefore, three persons' in one and respondent's faith were based on the holy trinity. Faith was the basis foundation of the other themes, which helps to strengthen their spirituality. Thematic analysis which was the primary research method enabled the author to identify and organize key themes from the data set.

The six main themes identified had sub themes (Table 1). Christian faith was based on the holy trinity which was the core foundation theme. The four themes identified are; the word of God (BIBLE), prayer, praise and worship and the church. All four themes identified were linked to faith meanwhile stress or depression which was the fifth theme was not link to the other themes. Stress / depression was not connected to the other themes, reason been that, its concept is completely opposite to the other themes. According to the study, stress / depression can only be connected to the other themes through faith in the trinity from which other themes merged together to manage stress / depression.

Faith is the core theme, without faith, prayer, word of God, church and praise and worship are meaningless. The arrows show the connection of the themes. Black arrows indicates that, faith empowers four themes while the brown arrows indicates their connection to each other and the blue arrow shows how a stress or depressed person can have a rebirth by believing in God through these themes.

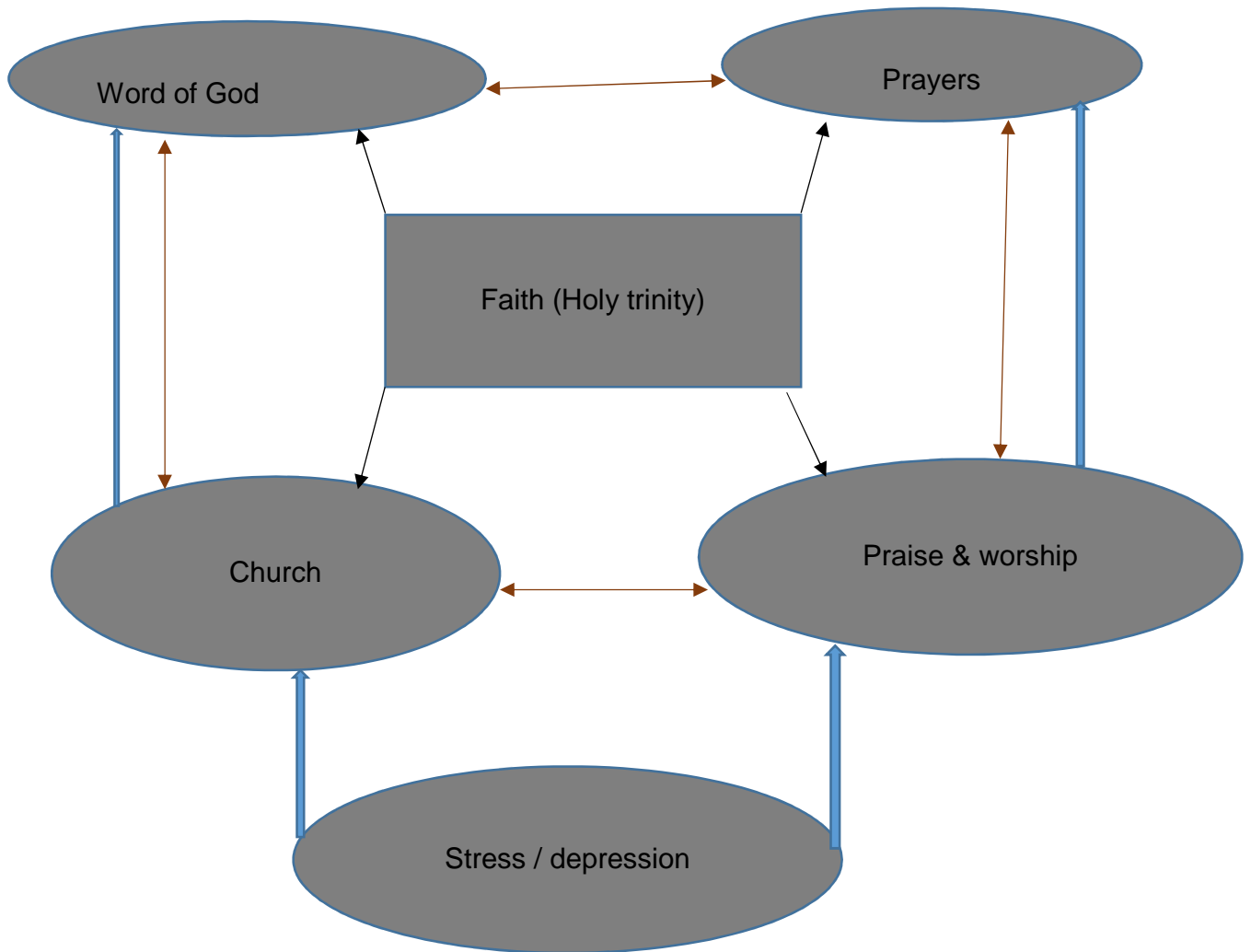


FIGURE 1. Thematic map of six main themes and their relationship

TABLE 1. Themes and sub themes in thematic analysis

THEMES	SUB THEMES
Faith based on the holy trinity	Word of God, prayer, praise and worship and the church.
The word of God (BIBLE)	Holy Spirit, hope, trust, bible reading, and bible teachings.
Prayer	Communication with God, and trust.
Praise and worship	Positive feelings, strengthener and fellowship
Church	Bible teachings, fellowship, worship, and social network and social support.
Stress / depression	Hopeless state, overwhelmed by negativity.

5.1 Faith and Spirituality

According to the study, faith or believe is the main foundation of Christianity. The respondents' defined faith as; believing in something be it living or non-living things. Faith in other words, is seen as the representation of one's affiliation in

terms of religion. Faith can be used in several contexts but as Christians, they believe in Jesus, the son of God.

In the study spirituality was seen as the actual practice of faith through the Holy Spirit which connected a person to God. Faith is therefore linked to spirituality. The respondents define spirituality as; the ability to realize that, there is a spiritual realm not just the physical world. And believe God is a spirit and for a person to connect to God, he or she must believe in God and when a person believes, the Holy Spirit operates in that person's life and connect the person to God.

Respondents supported that, Jesus made a promise to his disciples saying, he will send them a comforter and teacher, "the Holy Spirit". Human are therefore made of, the body, soul and spirit and when a person believes in God, that person's human spirit which desires issues of the flesh is transformed with the help of the Holy Spirit enabling the person to desire features of God as stated in the bible. According to the respondents, two spirits exist in the world, good and evil spirit. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Jesus in man while the evil spirit is demonic spirit from Satan. Christians connect to their supreme deity or God through the Holy Spirit, which can only manifest through faith or believe in the trinity.

All respondents acknowledged that, faith is their identity which defines them. Understanding of the word of God through faith and trying to put it into practice has transformed their whole life enabling them live a righteous life. In relating to the question; what way does your faith defines you, a respondent expressed that;

I live in this world but I am not of the world because the Holy Spirit dwells in me and I have the light of Jesus which makes the difference. My faith is my identity and I am a citizen of heaven (Interviewee A.)

All respondents acknowledged that, they sometime fall in to sin which makes them feel guilty but commit it to God in prayers for forgiveness and for God to strengthen their weaknesses which enables them regain peace and moves forward in life

since Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. One of the respondents said;

My faith defines me in such a way that my personality has changed and I feel more righteous than before, my understanding that Jesus was without sin has helped me greatly because he is my mentor, sometimes I fall into sin but I do my best to be righteous(Interviewee H.)

All respondents believe faith is that ultimate foundation where Christians can be linked to God in worship, prayers, praise and worship as stated in the word of God. Faith / believe been the core theme, helps to strengthen them through the other themes. Respondents believes that a person can only be conscious of sin if the Holy Spirit dwells in that individual enabling the person' spirit to conceive features of the spirit not earthly desires leading to righteousness. Respondents' experience of spiritual growth has been, reading the word of God (the bible), bible study, prayer, praise and worship, fellowship and the church as seen below.

5.2 The word of God (BIBLE)

Bible reading was an important tool for spiritual growth for most respondents. Eight respondents read the bible on daily bases and lives by the word. Two sub themes cropped from reading the bible, hope and trust were positive feedback the bible offers. Respondents also believe that, faith is released by speaking the word, therefore the words released in faith in accordance to God's plan produces positive results.

Respondents supported that, Christians must believe in the power of the word in other to receive God's promises as stated in the bible. For those promises can only be fulfilled by faith. For it is written in the bible, God created the heaven and earth by his word (Hebrew 11:3). According to respondents, the main foundation of their spiritual growth was actually God's word. They believe in God and the bible,

understanding his ways and trying to know him better was accomplished through reading the bible. One respondent said;

I read the bible daily, and I want to live as God wants me to live and wants to live as the bible tells me to. The bible is my handbook of daily living. When issues are done contrary to what the bible demands, I feel guilty but commit it in prayer to God (Interviewee C.)

Respondents believe that, the word of God which is their guide in life strengthens them through committing their situation to God in accordance to the bible and they believe one of God's principles in prayer is to request in accordance to the word of God. They trust in the word which gives them a positive feeling for they believe God never fails. In response to the question, how do you experience spiritual growth, one respondent said that;

The word of God which is the bible is my guide on earth. This guidebook offers answers to issues about life and directs me to live a holy life. (Interviewee B.)

Respondents rated the bible as their rock and solid foundation. They trust in the bible teachings which guides and directs their actions. The bible offers them guide lines about the Christian morals as stated in the Ten Commandments, giving them a clear picture of what is right and wrong in God's sight. According to Joyce Meyer, God's word, the bible, is truth. It teaches man a way to live that produces life. God's word has stood the test of time and has been proven in millions of people's live over thousands of years and works if respected. The word of God has impacted her life personally and other in an amazing way (Meyer 2010, 48.)

5.2.1 Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit (counsellor) gives people understanding of the word. The respondents believe in the word, trust in the word and hope for the manifestation of the word through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The bible affirms the birth of the

Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. According to Douglas, in the New Testament Christian congregation was born at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. The events of Pentecost aroused astonishment, as apostles were suspected of being drunk. Peter assured them of the word spoken by Prophet Joel, of the out pouring of God's spirit upon the people. After Peter's speech, people were asked what to do and they were advised to be converted and to receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for their sins to be forgiven (Douglas 2006, 15-16.) One respondent affirms that;

The Holy Spirit guides a person with the word. When the Holy Spirit speaks, you will perceive it. It's difficult to explain but when the Holy Spirit is activated in you, you can easily distinguish what is of the Holy Spirit and the devil (Interviewee J.)

Respondents supported that, the Holy Spirit strengthens a person by placing bible scriptures in the minds of believers relating to their circumstances thus empowering them spirituality to endure the pain preventing stress or depression. They also believe the Holy Spirit directs and guides their thoughts and ways.

5.2.2 Hope and trust

The word of God offers hope and strengthens a person. All respondents believe in the word of God which provided them hope as they trust in the word of God (John 14:1). One respondent said;

The word of God impacted my life greatly, the word is taken literally, meaning all promises are mine, I believe and trust in the word of God, for example, it is stated in the bible that, he will provide for, he is my provider, he will protect for, he is my protector. The word is my foundation in which I put my trust in and manages daily issues in life (Interviewee F.)

Christians believe in the word of God as stated in the bible in 2 Samuel 7: 28 that, God words are trustworthy and have promise good things to his servants.

According to respondents, Christians are strengthened when stressed by believing, trusting and hoping for a better tomorrow for God never fail as stated in the bible.

5.3 Prayers

According to the respondents, prayer is an expression of their faith. A person can pray only if that person believes in God who is invisible. For prayers are efficient and is the only way to communicate with God. Respondents believe that, a person can only be connected to God through prayers with the help of the Holy Spirit. This connection is efficient if there is faith.

Spilka and Ladd study supports that, prayer is often the best attempt to enforce direct control, which indirectly enhances one's sense of internal control (Spilka and Ladd 2013, 17). Respondents believe when they pray in faith, God will definitely answer their request according to his will. Therefore, trusting their heavenly father for the best offers them peace, thus helping them cope with stress and depression.

5.3.1 Belief

According to respondents, belief is the core foundation to answered prayers. If you do not believe or trust something, you would not devote yourself to it. Prayers are therefore, a confirmation of that trust or belief in God. Some respondents responded to the question, are prayers efficient as;

From my experience, I have noticed that, if I am sincere to God in prayer, he listens. I might not be praying physically but meditating in spirit for God knows my thoughts. I trust in my prayers because I know the Lord answers all my prayers. I am bold to talk to non-Christians about prayers because God answers my prayers. If a person is honest

and open up to the Lord and prays in faith, miracles happen (Interviewee B.)

I call prayer, the most secret weapon to lay down any burden. Prayer is the only defense to fight the devil and reduces anything that stresses me. Prayer is more efficient in my life thus help me cope with stress (Interviewee C.)

I believe in prayers, I have seen prayers answered, God does not always answer immediately but I believe he listens to me and in his own time, he will answer. Not always like I want because God knows what is best for me. Sometimes he may say yes, no or wait. God says, seek him first the kingdom of God and all will be added on to you (Interviewee A.)

According to all respondents, prayers have impacted their lives greatly. Prayer offers them the right direction in life and also transforms their lives daily. Prayer is the key aspect to link a person to God. Janssen, de Hart & den Draak (1990, 72), see prayers as an individualized ritual while Hine, (1981, 404) states that prayers are self-generated rituals. Such analysis displays the complexity, flexibility and richness in prayers which are manifested in our everyday life.

Baesler (2003) research states that, prayer shares a primary aspect of ritual in communication (Ladd and Spilka 2013, 446). Prayer is therefore seen as a ritual or act of communication connecting an individual to a supreme being. It is a dialogue between the supplicant and a supreme being.

5.3.2 Communication to God

According to the study, prayer is the way to communicate with God. All respondents believe in prayers and believe answers depend on God for he knows what is best for his children, so the answers could be instant yes, wait or no. Respondents acknowledged that, prayers were considered an expression of their

faith used when faced with challenges whereby a person could not manage by human ability or when they wanted to thank and worship God.

Ross (1950, 63) study of 1,700 young people found that, the two most common reasons given for praying were that, “ God listens to and answers prayers and thus helps them in time of stress”. (Spilka and Ladd 2013, 18.) Prayer is seen as an aspect in coping with stress because the participant believes God listens and answers prayers so there is hope for the problem causing stress.

According to the study, faith is the main foundation for effective and positive outcome of prayers. Therefore, prayer offers a feeling of peace which supports a more productive way of viewing a problem. Self-controlling factors influence prayers greatly .High deferring controlling factors results to increase distress while low controlling factors result to decrease in stress. According to Spilka and Ladd, prayer is part of a large religious and spiritual complex, highly entangled by massive beliefs and experiences that comprise personal faith and religiosity (Spilka and Ladd 2013, 21). Prayer is seen as an aspect of hope, trust and a means to commune with God in faith

5.4 Praise and worship

According to the study, praise and worship is an important aspect in coping with stress related depression. Respondents acknowledged that praise and worship enhances prayers, for a person cannot be in God’s presence when sad. Therefore, for God’s spirit to be dominant, praise and worship is vital. Praise and worship therefore, strengthen and gives positive feelings when stressed.

5.4.1 Strength

Strength can be defined as the quality or state of being physically strong. The study supports that, praise and worship is seen as a strengthener by all respondents when faced with challenges in life. All respondents acknowledged that, praise and worship songs empower them through the melody and wordings of gospel music which enriches their minds and makes them feel immediately uplifted and peaceful. Some respondents expressed that;

Praise and worship boost up me, it energize me just like energy drink gives energy to a person. It transforms the atmosphere and the situation which help to connects me to God (Interviewee J.)

If you know God better, you would want to worship him more and more. God is awesome and I just want to acknowledge how great he is. For I truly love God. Worship must not be by singing only but God can be worshiped by obeying his words (Interviewee A.)

5.4.2 Positive feelings

This study support that, praise and worship songs were the greatest tool used by respondents to change their thoughts. Respondents encouraged Christians to worship and praise God through music and songs for God is great and king above all gods as stated in Psalms 95:2-3. Respondent supports that, gospel music changes a person' mood as some people meditate on the wordings of the songs which connect them to God as they worship God through those songs. Worshiping God activate the Holy Spirit in a person and connects that person to God. Music was a pull factor to some respondents who were attracted to attend a particular church because of the praise and worship team. One respondent related to the impact of praise and worship as;

Praise and worship changes my mood involuntarily. When I pray, praise and worship God, I feel closer to God which offers me peace (Interviewee G.)

5.5 Church

According to this study, the church is considered a house of worship. The church has a great significant to Christian's believers. Respondents related to the church in many positive ways. The following sub themes came up from the church. The church was seen as a house of worship, bible teachings, prayer, praise and worship, and social network. Respondents supports that, people do have different gifts, for example, speaking in tongues, interpretation, preaching, teachings, singing and so on therefore, people are exposed to enjoy the benefits of these spiritual gifts when gather in a group or in church. A respondent said;

The church provides fellowship and Sunday service which draws me closer to God. I get good teachings from the church. People with different spiritual gifts are found in the church. Worshiping together helps me connect more to God (interviewee D.)

Some respondents acknowledged that, Sunday service brought them closer to God. Two interviewees acknowledged that, they do not frequently read the bible, which is not good, so Sunday service strengthen them with the word and also prays that, God should help them in their area of weakness so that they can read the bible more often.

According to this study, the church is valuable for social support and spiritual growth through bible teachings, worship, and fellowship, join prayers and group meetings. Believers support one another in area of need during such gatherings. Whiteley (1964) study support that, public worship offers participants with collective meanings that can help connect those present in community worship through

rituals performing functions thus strengthening the group and committing individuals to their common faith (Ladd and Spilka 2013, 447).

5.5.1 Bible study

This study supports that, bible study been a crucial aspect of spiritual growth is rooted from the church. Respondents believe that, bible study directs a person to live a moral life in accordance with the Ten Commandments from Christian doctrine. Respondents acknowledged the fact that, interpretation of the word of God is important because some bible scriptures can be interpreted only by the help of the Holy Spirit or a preacher as they are strengthens by the word of God. The church offers bible study for Christians which empowers them spiritually.

All respondent, read the bible individually, 80 percent on daily bases and 20 percent not every day. Respondents who did not read the bible every day realized it was a weakness in them and are praying for God to strengthen them. Some respondents said, other Christian's channels like TV7 are beneficial as it also strengthens them with the word.

5.5.2 Praise and worship

According to respondents, praise and worship in church was quite different from individual praise and worship. Praise and worship was relevant to all respondents and functioned as a booster to their prayers. According to respondents, when people gather in a group to worship God, in songs or whatever form, the grace is so powerful. The bible states that; when two or three come together in my name, there I am with them (Matthew 18: 20).One respondent acknowledged that, praise

and worship was one of the main factors which attracted her to church as an early Christian convert.

Praise and worship was the main factor which took me to the church when I became a Christian. I was going to church only to listen to music which gave me joy and peace before knowing how awesome God is (Interviewee I.)

5.5.3 Social network

This study supports that church is a forum for social network. Fellowship was a great aspect of social support for all respondents. Respondents supports that, fellowship had great impact for new Christian converts assuring them the feelings of belonging and oneness. Respondents acknowledged that, been together with other Christians empowered them spiritually than been alone because they believe other Christians are a family and supporter in areas of need.

White (1964), study supports that, public worship which denotes cultural signs and symbols convey collective meanings which strengthens the group committing individuals to their common faith (Ladd and Spilka 2013, 447). A respondent expressed opinion on the impact of fellowship of Christian as;

If you put a piece of wood in the fire it does not burn but when many woods are put together, there will be a big fire (Interviewee E.)

According to the study, Christians acquired social support through their participation in other activities besides Sunday services. Those activities include; VICF ladies only which takes place every last Friday of the month, Thursday prayer meetings, and VICF young adult meetings and men evenings. During these meeting sessions, members pray together, study the word of God, fellowship together sharing their testimonies and worries and even have sauna especially during men's evenings. These activities empower Christians spiritually and socially.

According to the study, these social groups enhances social identity among participants in a way different from other social groups because they believe, there exist divine connection among members through love which is the greatest commandment in Christian doctrine.

Some respondents acknowledged pastoral care as essential in their Christian life. Hope has been an influential aspect when faced with challenges through prayer with the pastors, church leaders or in church. Respondents acknowledged that, pastors have always supported them in prayers whenever they were called upon. Therefore, pastoral care is relevant for Christian growth through prayers and counselling sessions for Christians faced with challenges.

This study supports that, love shared by other nationals has affected them positively. Respondents support that, fellowship café arouse a feeling which could be compared to that from a family only. Respondents also acknowledged that, VICF members are lovely with no discrimination in terms of nationality, race and ethnicity. Taylor (2007) study states, social support promotes mental health and safeguard stress (Park and Slattery 2013, 548). Respondents support that, love experienced by such gathering offers individual joy and peace, helping them to forget worries of life and also enables them build up social network. Testimonies shared during such gatherings strengthen them.

5.6 Stress related depression

Stress and depression is relevant to the study because the authors' objective was to find out Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression. Since selection was random, the author did not have the opportunity to interview solely depressed Christians. The interview questions from 10-18 (Appendix 1) offers an indication on a how stressed or depressed a person is or has been the past. All

respondents acknowledged that, they have been sad, down cast and stress up in several occasion since it's a normal phenomenon in life but the difference has been, how stress or depression has been managed in Christian perspective. In responds to the question, have you ever been downcast, gloomy or sad, one respondent answered;

Yes of course, everyone feels sad, gloomy or downcast at times but it takes only few minutes for me to recover because God gives me peace (Interviewee D.)

According to the study three respondents had experienced depression some years back and their greatest weapon was discovering who Jesus is. While three respondents were almost at the point of been depressed and others had just been stressed up for a while but were able to overcome by the help of God. Three respondents expressed their experience in three situations. The first person has suffered from depression, the second was almost depressed and three respondent believes stress related depression could be prevented through Christ as;

Depression is the hopeless, emptiest, lonely feeling. It is not fun. I suffered it; I felt lonely and depressed but was saved by Jesus when I became a believer and accepted him as my savior (Interviewee H.)

I see depression as a sickness which needs help but as a Christian, I will advise any depressed person to meet a church counsellor to advice and pray with you (Interviewee B.)

I do not give a chance to depression because I came to realize that it messes and waste a lot of time. For as long as Jesus is alive, real and true, I have no reason to be depressed (Interviewee F.)

5.6.1 Managing stress related depression

According to the study, prayer has been the greatest instrument when emotionally, socially or economically stressed or depressed among all respondents. Communing with God helped them in those dark moments in their lives.

Respondent support that, prayers back up negative thoughts as stated by a respondent;

I always tell God, I can manage a situation as long as God speaks to me. My mechanism is to run and be in his presence until God speaks because God alone gives me joy and strength (Interviewee F.)

The study also support that praise and worship are significant input in managing stress related depression. A combination of praise and worship followed by prayers gave the best result for all respondents. Jackson and Bergeman (2011) study states that prayer and worship correlate positively with personal control which leads to improved wellbeing (Ladd and Spilka 2013, 448). In response to the question; does your faith have any significant in managing stress some respondents admitted that;

Praise and worship has been activated in my life during those periods I was faced with challenges. It's a bridge that gives one balance of finding happiness in life. I have learnt about praise and worship from my husband. Before I was shy but now, it is part of my everyday life. Praise and worship is my strength. Sometimes I just listen or participant in it by singing and dancing (interviewee B.)

Prayers cannot be much effective without praise and worship. Praise and worship helps bring a person in to the present of God. Prayers are like rituals for believers and one cannot pray with a sad spirit. It is said that, if your atmosphere is not conducive God cannot dwell in it. If you are sad then you cannot pray with a sad spirit. If you are depressed or sad and wants to pray, you must begin by praising God. Prayers can be more effective if you are been brought to the present of God through praise and worship. Praise and worship moves hand in hand with prayers (interviewee C.)

According to the study, sharing with spouse or close relation was another way in coping with stress. Three respondents believes in sharing with spouse first before committing it into God's hands in prayer and all acknowledge that, it is a weakness in them because they believe the right way is to commit it first to God. Respondents believe it is better for two or more people to commit an issue to God.

For the bible says where two or three gather together in God's name, he will be there (Matthew 18:20).

The study also acknowledges that fellowship with other Christians was another means in coping with stress related depression. Respondents believe that when Christians come in fellowship and share their testimonies, it strengthen them because it reminds them that God is awesome through miracles in peoples life as it activate believers faith. Respondents also support that, just believing that Jesus died on the cross and said it is finish which meant all their problems were taken with him to the cross and his resurrection affirmed complete victory offered them assurance, joy and peace.

Nature was another aspect of stress management among some respondents. Going for a walk and looking at the beauty of God's creation took their minds off their problems at times. At such moments they commune with God as they walk because they believe he is the ultimate solution to all problems.

5.6.2 Impact of faith in managing stress related depression

According to the respondents, faith anchor to that voice which says "I will never fail or for sake you". The word of God is activated because the human spirit has been transformed through the Holy Spirit, which guides and direct believers in every steps. The respondents acknowledged that, faith has been the main foundation of hope when faced with challenges. Respondents also support that faith is having hoped that there is a creator, God who is taking care of all things. Faith offered them that positive feeling that God can change their situation as stated in Mark 9:23 that, all things are possible for those who believe. So the respondents exercise their faith by believing for a possible solution to their hopeless situations in life. One respondent responded to the question, how your faith defines you;

I cannot imagine life without faith; I do not know where I would have been today. Faith is so important that I cannot do without it. I had a difficult childhood but I have left them behind. It does not matter what I went through before. If you believe in God, you will be happy (Interviewee A.)

Respondents believe that God is all powerful, all knowing, everywhere and unchangeable which gives a person the full assurance because God is greater than their problems. Whenever there is no faith, attitude is always negative but faith gives assurance, hope or positive outlook. According to respondents, Jesus is their hope and joy in everyday life. One respondent answered the question, does your faith influence your attitude when down cast, sad or depressed;

My faith influences my attitude a lot, if I did not believe or trust God, I might have committed suicide ever since but because I believe that my redeemer, Jesus lives and I know what to do when sad or when faced with challenges beyond human control. At such moments I immediately go to praise and worship songs on you tube which relieves me from stress (Interviewee C.)

Pargament (1997, 182) study, describes how prayers relates a person to God. He acknowledges three approaches, self-directives mode which entails that though an appeal has been made, one is responsible for handling tasks encountered in life or collaborative approach which entails individuals and God work together and lastly, the deferring method suggests that whatever is to be done is fully in the hands of God (Ladd and Spilka 2013, 448-449). These perspectives indicate how prayer relates a person to God and how results are been influence. Christians are empowered because they believe their request has been heard and will definitely have answers to their requests giving them hope when faced with a hopeless situation.

5.7 Recommendations from the interviews

For recommendation, the author decided to narrate respondents' perception in dealing with stress related depression and how it could be useful to the community. One respondent related her personal, work experienced and belief to people depressed expressed as;

We Christians know the only thing that can make people complete is Jesus Christ and since this nation, Finland has turned their back towards this truth, I think they feel hopeless because they do not see any reason to live. They should find their way in Jesus. Finns deals with depression with anti-depressant pills, therapist and others. Which are good approaches because people have the opportunity to talk to an expert about their problem .But encourages depressed people to talk to God who is their creator because he has all answers and knows everything. It is exciting been a Christian and talking to God. As a pharmacist, I see clients getting anti-depressant pills month after months and even in higher doses or new drugs added but it will never solve the problem. It will help temporary but admits that, Jesus is the right drug (Interviewee D.)

Another respondent considered depression as an unfilled gap or space in man. A person is made up of the body, soul and spirit and if the spiritual area has not acknowledged God, that person can never be happy and will never find peace. He recommended those depressed in the community to search for God and fill that gap;

Saint Augustin quotes, our souls were created with a certain space that cannot be filled by man except God. Without any relationship with God that space is empty, and our souls or spirits within us remain restless. People can try everything but can only experience temporary satisfaction so far as that space has not fulfilled that relationship with God, man will remain hopeless and certainly depressed. That is why some depressed people get into drinking and drugs which leads them to more devastating outcome (Interviewee E.)

Another respondent acknowledge the power of believing in Jesus as the way the truth and the life in resolving stress and depression and recommend other to try Jesus too.

In Finland, we know the community is suicidal in quote, some of them do not want to believe in anything but as per my faith, I do not want to judge other believes, but I have tested mine and I think is the best. Faith in God is the best thing. To conclude in a sentence, I will say "Try Jesus" it is hard to tell someone depressed to try Jesus, the person might think you are crazy but I talk out of experience and I have seen that, Jesus never fails .If not of Jesus I won't be where I am today (Interviewee C.)

One respondent who had suffered from depression who was save after accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and savior recommended to those depressed to;

Never give up. We are different beings but we should not compare ourselves with others. We should understand God loves us for who we are and we should allow God to use us since he is the answer to all our problems. To talk to God is difficult to many people, it is written in Matthew 7:7 "ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you". We should commit all our problems to God for absolute solution (Interviewee H.)

A respondent recommended those depressed to open up to God and give Jesus a chance in their lives;

My recommendation would be to guide depressed people in getting to know God. Emphasis has been place on man doing something to God in most beliefs but the Christian faith believes in Jesus, first reaching out for man. I believe, if the depressed could be able to take God's view of their lives, they would be amazed on the positive impact in their lives. If the depressed will know God's goodness, mercy, favor, grace and ability to turn things around even the impossible situations, if only they could just give Jesus a chance in their lives, they will be amazed on what he will do (Interviewee J.)

Another respondent acknowledge her personal experience from her past life in managing a very challenging situation which lasted for a year and was almost depressed and praise God for his glory in her life as she devoted much of her time

during those challenging moments to study the word of God. She was successful in dealing with depression by accepting Jesus as her Lord and savior. She has also seen friends suffering from depression and recommended depressed people to;

As for recommendation for those depressed in the community, I will say, it's a difficult question to me personally because I have those people around me who are depressed. I have tried to bring them my thoughts that God is the answer but I think they might need medical help. If you are really depressed, you need medical help and counselling. Two people are better than one. The circle at that time a person is depressed is so small with no hope or positive thinking. Getting out of the circle of thoughts is challenging (Interviewee B.)

It's relevant to also pray for those depressed and share your thoughts together. Taking a depressed person out of that circle is very important and also searching the will of God is most secure. I will conclude that, knowing God is relevant and also contacting a counsellor for a counselling session in order to move forward is important and contacting a medical doctor if necessary(Interviewee B.)

During my gloomy moments which lasted for a year as earlier mentioned, I had some negative thoughts in my mind about guilt and believed Satan was putting all the negative things in order to make me feel low. I was reading the bible most often and even got answers to my thoughts in the bible and realized God was just answering my worries. I sometime had straight answers from the word of God. One God's servant was praying and teaching me the word in the bible and I was able to survive. Glory be to God. (Interviewee B.)

All respondents recommended those depressed to read and study the bible, pray, obey and test God. Respondents believe, everyone can test God because he has promised to take care of mankind. If a person is honest to God, he or she will see how powerful and amazing God is. In summary, respondents supported that; those depressed should give Jesus a try because he is the center of everything in connection to God.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the study, religion can promote a sense of belonging with God and individual beliefs may supply people with motivations, hope and meaning relevant for those faced with challenging social problems. This study aimed at investigating Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression in VICF. The results reveals that, Christians deal with stress related depression through the word of God, prayers, praise and worship and the church as seen below.

6.1 Results of the study

According to respondents' experiences, faith or believe in God was the foundation in managing stress related depression. Without faith, Christians would not pray, or read the bible or believe in the teachings of the bible, or praise and worship God and even go to church. Faith therefore, empowers Christians with hope and trust when life seems hopeless and their trust in God enabled them to seek God when faced by challenges in life. Respondents supports that, where there is hope, peace also reigns. According to Joyce, positive thoughts full of faith and hope, produces a positive life while negative thoughts, full of fear and doubts, produces negative lives. Discouragement destroys hope and without hope a person will give up, which is what the devil desires (Meyer 2000, 97.)

According to the study, hopelessness is the major cause of depression, understanding the key to hope which entails believing or trusting God through the word of God strengthens Christians thus helping them cope with stress related depression. The word of God (BIBLE) is their strength, respondents quoted inspiring words from the bible which strengthen them when distress for example, people should not be anxious about anything in life but in prayers and thanks

giving ,people should present their request on to God who gives peace and understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

Respondents believe in the assurance of the word of God that, God will never leave or abandon them for they should not be afraid or be discouraged (Deuteronomy 31:8). The word of God empowers Christians who trust in God's word during challenging circumstances in life for they are strengthened by those promises in the bible. Respondent believes that, if they offer their request to God in faith, he answers. The answer can be yes, no or wait. So they believe since their request has been made know to God, they do not need to stress on the issue again because God is their father and will give his children whatever they need according to his will since he knows what is best for them.

According to the study, Christians are strengthened through the help of the Holy Spirit which enables them understand meaning of biblical scripture relating to their life situations. Respondents believe knowledge can be acquired from bible teachings from preachers during Sunday services, group meetings or television programs. These teaching from the bible enables them live life in accordance to the bible. Christians are empowered by relating scriptures to their life situations.

According to Meyer, we must get knowledge of God's truth in us, renew our minds with the word of God stated in 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5 which strengthen people to destroy strong control over imposing features that raises against the knowledge of God and the weapons are the word of God, praise and prayer (Meyer 2000, 95).The word of God, prayer and praise strengthens Christians.

In this study, all respondents supported that, prayer; praise and worship were important coping methods for stress related depression. Respondents believe praise and worship together with prayers gave effective results as it activated the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. Respondents support that, when they worship God in songs, especially wordings from gospel songs offers believers

assurance on God's promises and joy. They also believe God is activated when he is worshiped.

The study also supports that the word of God, prayers and praise and worship changes a person's physical mode and circumstances which activates a person's spirit, the activated spirit enables a person to perceive only the features of God which are love, joy, peace, holiness, and hope which empowers a person on full assurance in life, thus eliminating the hopeless state of mind which causes depression. The study supports that, for prayers to be efficient there must be faith in God, without faith prayers are inefficient. Respondents supports that, prayer gave them positive feelings knowing that God has heard their request and believes God will answer at the right time helped them overcome stress and depression because there is hope as they trust God.

In the study, depression was seen as a hopeless state in life which can be managed by God alone through the help of the Holy Spirit. Respondents believed that, accepting who you are and trusting God through persistence prayers, reading the word of God and praise and worship and the church were the best results in coping with stress related depression. Respondents believed that, the emptiness in life resulting from depression can only be filled by connecting to God.

According to the study, the church has great significant in coping with stress and preventing depression through social support group and ministries like ladies only evening, Thursday's ladies meeting, men's evening, counselling sessions, educative seminars especially multicultural relationships, fellowship café and so on. Activities during such gatherings include; fellowship, prayer, word of God, sauna and so on. These social group, ministries and other activities like bible studies empowers Christians spiritually and socially through social networks promoting social integration, also reduces loneliness which has been one cause of stress. Furthermore, testimonies shared during group meetings and Sunday

services encourage other Christians thus helping them cope with stress related depression.

According to the study, 70 percent of respondents are presently contented with their life while 30 percent are partially and learning to be contented with their lives. Those who are partially contented are hoping for a better life through God's grace because they believe God's time is the best and are fully assured to wait patiently for the Lord to act at his own appointed time.

To summarize, this study supports that Christian faith, prayers, the word of God, the church, praise and worship are Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression. This study denotes that, the church empowers Christians through fellowship creating a social network where people share their experiences with one another, pray, worship God in a more powerful way, uplifting those stressed or depressed. Some respondents supported that, incorporating spirituality with therapeutic support and medication for those who believe in God can help those depressed.

Moreover, bible teachings offer spiritual wisdom which strengthens Christians. Some respondents believe depression solely rooted from disorder need spiritual counseling, therapeutic support and medication for speedy recovery. This study has identified themes from Christian's perception in coping with stress related depression, therefore, incorporating the spiritual aspects to therapeutic care for those clients who belief in God will speed up recovery.

6.2 Practical relevance to the community

According to this study, the church has greatly empowered Christians socially in the domain of health care and education with a positive outcome to the community. This study supports that, church attendance, prayer meetings and other social

gatherings has showed a decreases in stress, and an increase in self-esteem which has given individuals hope and a greater sense of purpose in life. This study also supports that, trusting God helps in coping with stress which may result to many health complications. It is therefore important to manage stress before it becomes complicated.

This study admits that Christians are able to manage stress through prayers, praise and worship and others by fully believing in God because it is their faith which activates the Holy Spirit which directs them in life. This study denotes new trends in dealing with stress related depression for the future of our community. Thus the study is relevant for health practitioners since depression has resulted to mortality in the community through suicides. According to respondents, managing stress will reduce the intake of anti-depressants pills. Therefore, incorporating the spiritual aspect in addition to therapeutic support and medication will speed up recovery in the management process.

According to respondents, social support empowers Christians through social network which gives them a positive feeling of belonging because loneliness and the dark weather were some of the causes of stress related depression. Respondents supported that, Finland is a country where the weather alone especially the darkness in winter causes many people to be moody. Therefore, attending group meetings and accepting nature as, God's creation, and focusing on the positivity about life, through love for humanity may eliminate suicidal thoughts in people resulting to the reality of living a happy life. A positive mind is a healthy mind which influences a person's attitude.

According to the study, pastoral care which entails prayers and counselling has been supportive to Christians especially marital counselling as emphasis are been placed on biblical principles about divorce which is also a social problem. Respondents' acknowledged that, the church promotes educational seminars on

multicultural marriages where experts with Christian background educate Christians free of charge.

According to the study, most Christians want to live as stated in the bible, following Christian morals by following the ten commandments (Exodus 20 :1-17) which decreases the occurrences of crime, domestic violent, alcohol abuse, the use of drugs and so on which are social problems faced by people in the community. Christian's free will support for mission work is used to provide support to poorer communities during crisis.

The study brought out the Christian perception in coping with stress related depression. Some respondents believe one can enjoy life and live a happy life by trusting absolutely on the creator God for guidance, provision and protection. This study is relevant not only to Christians but also diaconal workers, social workers, counsellors, psychologist and therapist who are managing people with social problems who believes in God.

To summarize, the church enrich Christians spiritually by teaching them the word of God, through bible study and preaching .Understanding the word of God transforms believers morals thus impacting the community positively by enhancing social support and network . Church fellowship activate social network which enforces the sense of belonging thus reducing loneliness as a cause of depression. Therefore, a healthy mind set is good for individuals and community at large preventing stress, depression and suicide.

7. EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The study was sensitive and interesting as it covered two important domains, spirituality and mental health which are crucial in our community today. The objective of the study was reached and the study enabled the author learn more on the spiritual ways of coping with stress related depression from Christians point of view. The author's option was community social work, therefore the study enabled the author to understand both positive and negative religious coping methods when dealing with clients in the future who belief in God or a god.

7.1 Evaluation

It was challenging framing interview questions to cover the whole cope of work. The author decided to focus on three main areas, definition of vital concepts to see if the respondent has a clear picture of what they are talking about, measurement scale, to evaluate the present state of the client on how depressed or stress they are and lastly, questions were geared towards answering the research question on stress/ depression management.

The interviews provided the author with a clear modality with no changes as to the formulated questions. Initially the author wanted to interview just individuals but ended up having three couple interviews. The author was afraid that couple responses in the interviews may influence their partners' view but individuals expressed their own views. When the topic was introduced to the interviewees, it was made clear by the author for respondents to give their personal opinions to the questions.

The respondents were flexible and passive. Drafting appointments was easy and most interviews were scheduled at respondents' premises except one organized at

the authors' home. The authors' greatest fear was language barrier especially to the Finns but that was not a problem because VICF is an English congregation and everyone understands English to an extent. All interviews were conducted in English and data transcribed in English.

The tape recorder was useful for transcription. Data analysis was simple and the author was able to read and reread the transcripts in order to identify codes in data set and which were later considered themes. Data was then analyzed using thematic analysis which provided the final results and conclusion.

The most challenging aspect was receiving theoretical concepts on faith, prayers and material from previous studies. The author tried to get materials from other English studies in applied science universities in Finland but could not get any. The author had to search books relating to psychology of religion and spirituality, philosophy of religion, faith, mental health and prayers and found materials from authors in Amazon web page. The author drafted a work plan which was strictly followed.

7.2 Evaluation of the ethics of the process

Ethical awareness is fundamental in social work practice. The ability and commitment to act ethically is relevant for a positive output to services rendered to clients. Confidentiality is relevant in this field of study since it involves managing social problems. The study was sensitive so the author was conscious in data analysis in order to prevent respondents' identity.

Christian's contacts were taken solely for communication during the research process. During the interviews, respondent's had the right to leave if they found it challenging. The purpose of the research was made known to the respondents before interviews were conducted. Respondents' consent were requested for the

use of a tape recorder which was strictly for transcription purpose. The author requested permission for the study from the church administrators by submitting research proposal which was then approved before the actual interviews.

7.3 Professional development

This study enables the author understand Christians perception in coping with stress related depression. The topic was interesting to the author since stress has always been managed through therapeutic support and medication. So the author was interested in knowing the spiritual aspect from Christians which was remarkable. The author acquired knowledge from the interviews, previous studies and theoretical frameworks especially on psychological and philosophical concepts especially religion and coping with stress and depression.

Developing the interviews and framing the whole process was educative and offers the author new techniques in future research. Working with a multicultural group enabled the author gain knowledge in working with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Thematic approach was new enabling the author improve in qualitative study .The research was sensitive; therefore knowledge on ethic taught in school was fully applied in the analytic process. Professional ethics are relevant in social work which will be useful in the future. Combining theories to match with data was challenging. Also setting data in reference to academic standard was challenging thus improving authors' experience in research.

This study has given the author, a broad knowledge about issues related to diaconal work even though the author's option is community social work. The author believes when faced with future challenges related to stress related

depression with clients with spiritual need, a reflection of this study will be relevant for better management.

To summarize, the author's professional development has evolved from theories in class, assignments, group discussion, field visits, projects, practical placements, seminars and the final thesis itself. Most of theories studied in school were implemented practically in the study. Thesis entails academic writing standard which is important for the author's future careers in research or projects.

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APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions.

A.

Personal background information:

1. Age:
2. Sex:
3. Nationality.

B

1. What is faith?
2. What is spirituality?
3. Is faith linked to spirituality?
4. How do you experience spiritual growth?
5. Does VICF or any church have an impact on your spiritual growth?
6. In what ways does your faith define you?
7. What impact does the word of God have in your day to day life?
8. Are prayers efficient?
9. Does praise and worship have any significant in your life?
10. Are you contented with your present status?
11. What is depression?
12. Have you ever been downcast, gloomy or sad?
13. Have you ever lost interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed?
14. Have you experience sleeping disorder?

15. Have you felt worthless, guilty in life?
16. Have you been face with challenges that you could not concentrate or take decisions in in life?
17. How often are you stress up or depressed?
18. What are the things that make you sad, downcast or depress?
19. What relaxes you most when you are emotionally, socially or economically stress or depressed?
20. Does your faith have any significant impact in managing stress or depression?
21. Does your faith influence your attitude when you are down cast, sad or depressed?
22. Which recommendation can be given to depressed people in our community today?

APPENDIX 2: SUICIDE STATISTICS

Figure 2. Suicide mortality 1970-2012 in Finland

