

**Outcome Research**

Johnson, V. M. & Hargrave, T. D. (2012). *Program evaluation of the Strong Marriages Successful Ministries program*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA. Accessible at the SMSM website under the "Trainings" tab at <http://www.strongmarriageministry.org/trainings>.

Abstract

Studies on marital enrichment programs have identified the positive impact of psycho-educational programs on relationships. However, few studies have assessed a program tailored to clergy spouses who face unique relational stressors. This study examined clergy and seminary couple reactions to marital satisfaction, trustworthiness and positive feelings toward spouse, before and after participation in the Strong Marriages Successful Ministries (SMSM) program, using the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), the Relational Ethics Scale (RES) and the Positive Feelings Questionnaire (PFQ). Results indicated significant increases in trustworthiness and positive feelings toward spouse following participation in the SMSM program. Significant increases in marital satisfaction were not demonstrated. Probable explanations for findings and implications for SMSM program are discussed.

**Findings of Johnson & Hargrave (2012) Outcome Study On SMSM Program**

- Significant ( $t(44) = -3.09, p = .002$ ) increase in sense of trustworthiness of spouse from pre-program ( $M = 25.23, SD = 4.35$ ) to post program ( $M = 26.34, SD = 3.50$ ) participation
- Significant ( $t(44) = -3.29, p = .001$ ) increase in positive feelings toward spouse pre-program ( $M = 103.07, SD = 14.38$ ) to post program ( $M = 106.77, SD = 9.75$ ) participation
- Non-significant increase in marital satisfaction from pre-program ( $M = 15.66, SD = 2.21$ ) to post program ( $M = 15.82, SD = 1.70$ ) may be due to small sample size (i.e., low power to detect change) and high initial level of satisfaction and ceiling effect since average non-distressed RDAS satisfaction score is 15.70 ( $SD = 2.2$ )

**Cultural Applications For Asian/Asian-American (A/AA) SMSM Groups**

**Key Components of Cultural Adaptation**

1. Normalizing and affirming collectivist values by reframing affirmation of constructive affective self-expression for the greater good of the third identity of the dyad (i.e., "Us").
2. Acknowledging shame-based culture by creating a safe and empathic environment made up of others from A/AA descent which allows for minimal disclosure regulated by an A/AA facilitator who models self-disclosure.
3. Leader sensitivity to and awareness of common potential cultural factors that can contribute to participant's abilities to engage in the group and which uniquely influence participant's conceptualizations of love, trust, identity, and safety.

**Qualitative Observations During A/AA SMSM Groups**

- Extreme conflict resolution styles observed in family of origin
- Boundary communication struggles related to filial piety
- Difficulty identifying and articulating affect

**Benefits of SMSM Curriculum Design For A/AAs**

- Psychoeducation model fits well with cultural preference for hierarchical learning
- Provides list of affective words to aid in emotion identification on Pain and Peace Cycle conceptualization and interpersonal communication
- Use of cognitively based interventions with research basis valued by A/AA

**Factors Correlated With Marital Satisfaction in A/AAs**

- Time engaged in shared activities (Hyun & Shin, 2010; Lee, 2000)
- Expression of affection (Hyun & Shin, 2010; Lee, 2000)
- Collaborative problem solving vs. withdrawal (Liu, 2009)
- Positive verbal and nonverbal communication (Juang & Tucker, 1991)

**A/AA References**

- Hyun, S. & Shin, H. (2010). Korean pastors and their wives' marital satisfaction and its predicting factors. *Pastoral Psychology*, 4(59), 495-512. doi: 10.1007/s11089-009-0199-5.
- Liu, A. M. (2009). The effects of perceived immigrant stress, acculturation strategies, and conflict resolution styles on marital satisfaction of Chinese American immigrants. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.
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- Shwu-Huey J. & Tucker, C. (1991). Factors in marital adjustment and their interrelationships: A comparison of Taiwanese couples in America and Caucasian American couples. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 19, 22-31.