

# Chapter 19

## Measuring Clergy Effectiveness: The Development of the Clergy Effectiveness Scale

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### ABSTRACT

*A review of the current literature showed that clergy effectiveness (CE) instruments were inadequate due to age, insufficient content validity, and/or based on secondary criteria. The premise of this study was that an instrument built upon qualitative data reflective of 21st-century ministry paradigms is needed. Such data did not exist until DeShon identified 64 personal and behavioral characteristics of clergy deemed to enhance effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to operationalize the characteristics identified by DeShon. Staff and lay leaders in churches of various sizes from five different denominations were selected using a snowball technique ( $N = 397$ ). Scale optimization resulted in a final three-factor instrument consisting of 14 items: professional competence (five items), socially adept (five items), and inclination to lead (four items). Scale reliability was substantiated by Cronbach's alpha scores of .89 (professional competence), .94 (socially adept), and .73 (inclination to lead).*

### INTRODUCTION

The act of empirically assessing clergy effectiveness (CE) gained prominence with the development of the Ministerial Activities Scale (MAS) by Kling (1958). However, in more than 60 years since Kling, only six instruments have been created that demonstrate proper construct and content validity in published empirical studies (Nauss 1996). In addition to the MAS, the instruments identified by Nauss (1996) were the Presbyterian Inventory (PI; Klever & Dyble 1972), Ten Faces of Ministry (TFM; Brekke, Strommen & Williams 1979), Profiles of Ministry (POM; Schuller, Strommen, & Brekke 1980), Ministerial Effectiveness Inventory (MEI; Majovski 1982), and the Clergy Evaluation Instrument (CEI; Nauss, Schmiel & Sohns 1992). A few additional validated instruments have been developed since Nauss but

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are adaptations of one of the just-referenced instruments. For example, Nauss (1989, 1994) and Bunn (1998) developed adaptations of the MAS.

Critical to the development of any scale is the criteria used to select the specific scale items (Haight 1980). Within the context of CE, one must first determine the appropriate clergy behaviors and characteristics that are representative of effectiveness. Such criteria are usually identified through in-depth qualitative research. Such was the case with the above-referenced instruments. Nauss (1996) pointed out that all six were built upon the research from only two qualitative studies; the Ministry Study (MS) in 1957 was the basis for the MAS and PI, and the Readiness for Ministry Study (RMS) conducted by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the mid-1970s was the basis for the development of the POM, TFM, and MEI. The CEI utilized both the MS and RMS studies in its development.

One concern with the above referenced instruments is the age of the qualitative data used in their development. As previously stated, the validated instruments being used to measure CE were developed from the qualitative research conducted for the MS as reported in Kling (1958) and the RMS as reported in Schuller, Strommen, and Brekke (1980). The social, cultural, and technological changes that have occurred since these studies were conducted have significantly altered clergy behaviors. For example, when the MS and RMS studies were conducted, communication from clergy consisted primarily of live preaching, print media, and phone calls. More than 40 years later, the ubiquitous presence of the Internet necessitates an online presence, as well as the utilization of social media by clergy members (Waters & Tindall 2010). Furthermore, these studies were conducted at a time when globalization was primarily an academic concept, rarely considered by the general public (James & Steger 2014). Today, globalization affects not just worldview paradigms, but also ecclesial organizational values. Most significant, it is reasonable to think the technological advancements and changing worldview paradigms that have occurred since the MS and RMS were conducted have also altered congregant perceptions of the behaviors and characteristics that contribute to CE. In other words, congregant perceptions of CE would be expected to be different in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century than they were in the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. While it is true that some of the instruments developed from the MS (Nauss 1989, 1994) and RMS (Aleshire 1990) have been updated, the qualitative data that support these instruments is unchanged.

A second concern with the above referenced instruments is the sample used in the qualitative research to identify effective clergy behavior. Although the RMS continues to be the most extensive qualitative study of CE ever conducted (47 denominations), its sample was not truly representative of the clergy spectrum within the United States. Specifically, as described by Schuller, Strommen and Brekke (1980), the RMS was conducted through 200 seminaries that were part of the ATS. This eliminated denominational clergy/lay respondents not linked with such a seminary (e.g., almost one-half of those associated with the Southern Baptist Convention; Schuller, Strommen and Brekke 1980). Furthermore, only 16% (801 of 4,995) of the RMS respondents were part of what could be considered an evangelical denomination. There was no representation from a Pentecostal denomination. In contrast, the RMS contained significant representation from what are often referred to as mainline denominations and even included representation from groups that do not possess a Christian orthodoxy—Universalist and Jewish. Such a sample appears to have skewed the data in such a way that it reflected a traditionally liberal theology with an emphasis on social action behaviors on the part of clergy. Indeed, one of the eleven themes, *ministry to community and world*, emphasizes *aggressive political leadership* (cluster 18), *ecumenical pluralism* (cluster 8), and *development of community services* (cluster 13). Furthermore, clergy behaviors that prioritize evangelism (cluster 19) were viewed as *undesirable*. In short, the sample used to determine CE in the RMS did not accurately reflect the perceptions of those from more conservative faith traditions.

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