

Growing Up in Ministry: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Seventh-day Adventist Pastors' Children

Caraballe, Jadsmon G., Bayer, El P., Bibat, Chester C., Toledo, Jhonna G.

Central Philippine Adventist College

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of seven Seventh-day Adventist pastors' children at Central Philippine Adventist College. **Methodology:** Using Moustakas' (1994) framework, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, and analyzed through horizontalization, and thematic clustering. **Results:** Four essential themes emerged: *Always Being Watched*, *Hiding Behind a Mask*, *Getting Lost in the Maze*, and *Growing Through Struggle*. Participants reported emotional exhaustion, hyper-vigilance, and identity tension, yet also demonstrated remarkable capacity for meaning making and spiritual maturation. **Conclusions:** The essence of the experience reveals that pastor's children negotiate visibility and vulnerability, ultimately forging authentic selfhood and faith within the crucible of expectation. These findings informed churches, educational institutions, and pastor-parents in creating supportive environments for pastoral families.

Keywords: Pastors' children, Seventh-day Adventist, transcendental phenomenology, lived experience, ministry

INTRODUCTION

Pastors' Children (PC) often receive a strong spiritual foundation that can bless the family and the congregation. PCs provide leadership opportunities, develop a strong sense of purpose, and experience close familial ties within a nurturing family system. However, this valuable upbringing is continually balanced against intense external pressures and profound internal struggles. Globally, research on "preacher's kids" (PKs) across denominations has highlighted the psychological strain of living under constant scrutiny, often described as a "fishbowl" experience (Bennett, 2025; Forbes, 2025). Yet, within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) context, and particularly in the Philippines, the lived experiences of PCs remain underexplored.

In the American context, Benjamin, Taylor, Turns, and White (2021) described PC as facing distinct challenges in navigating their identity, community expectations, and faith, often defined by external labels that create internal pressures to meet idealized spiritual demands. In Singapore, Genius Mind Academy (2024) noted that PCs "often grow up in the spotlight of their church community" (para. 2), affecting their identity and faith. In the Philippines, existing studies indicate that PCs navigate both unique opportunities and distinct difficulties within their family and ministry environments (Salarda & Rodriguez, 2024; Canesares et al., 2022). These findings highlighted the need for stronger support networks.

Recent observations at the Central Philippine Adventist College (CPAC) indicated that some PC demonstrate lower participation rates in the worship services and ministry activities, have been subject to disciplinary action by the Disciplinary Committee for School Infractions, and a significant number of male PCs do not choose to follow their parents into pastoral ministry (personal communication, March 23, 2026). These realities of PCs lived experiences at CPAC served as the primary motivation for this research, which aims to give voice to their specific experiences within this academic and spiritual institution. While scholarly interest in the lived experiences of PC globally, a specific research gap remains within the Central Philippine Union Conference (CPUC). Therefore, this study sought to explore and describe the experiences of PCs at CPAC, focusing on their personal perceptions of daily life.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore and describe the lived experiences of Seventh-day Adventist pastors' children enrolled at Central Philippine Adventist College, focusing on how they navigate expectations, identity, faith, and personal growth within the context of ministry life.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design. According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand human experiences from the participants' perspectives by identifying the meanings and essences of their lived experiences. This approach is particularly suited for the present study since it seeks to explore and describe the unique experiences of SDA PCs who face sacred expectations (Ndlovu-Bhebhe & Nzangi, 2024; Pastoral Care Incorporated, 2025), social pressures (Reyes, 2025; Kanco-Ackep, 2024) and identity challenges (Benjamin, Taylor, Turns and White, 2021; Kanco-Ackep, 2024) within both church and school. Unlike Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which emphasizes interpretative meaning-making, transcendental phenomenology requires researchers to bracket their own preconceptions to reach the pure, untainted "essence" of the phenomenon. The purpose of this design is not to explain or predict, but to richly describe what participants experienced and how the PCs experienced their roles within the CPAC and CPUC community.

Participants

This study population comprised children of SDA Pastors enrolled at CPAC. All seven participants identified with PCs met the inclusion criteria agreed to participate. The pastor-parents of these participants serve in various locations across the Visayas region of the Philippines while working under the Central Philippine Union Conference (CPUC). To be included, an individual had to: (a) be a biological or legally adopted child of an ordained or licensed SDA pastor currently serving or having served within the CPUC territory; (b) be currently officially enrolled as a student at CPAC for the academic year 2025–2026; (c) be between 18–24 years of age to ensure capacity for reflective articulation of lived experience; (d) voluntarily participate in the study and provide written informed consent for in-depth interviews.

Research Instrument

This study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary instrument. A two-part protocol guided data collection; the first part gathered demographic information and the second part consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the study's purpose. Flexible probes and follow-up prompts encouraged deeper reflection, allowing each unique voice to emerge naturally. The central question was: "What are the lived experiences of Seventh-day Adventist pastors' children at Central Philippine Adventist College?". Interviews took place either face-to-face at CPAC or remotely via Google Meet, following a structured protocol. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and returned to participants for member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2025; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Gathering Procedure

Given this study's aim to understand the nuanced, personal experiences of PC, a qualitative interview approach was selected. Participants were contacted via Facebook Messenger and personal contacts to inform them of the study and invite participation. Data was collected from November 10 to 17, 2025. Six participants were interviewed face-to-face at CPAC, and one remotely via Google Meet. Before the interviews, participants provided written informed consent. To fulfill this purpose, the present study utilized in-depth interviews as its primary data collection method.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this phenomenological study followed Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam approach, providing a systematic framework for analyzing lived experiences of SDA PCs. The procedure began with *epoché*

(bracketing), in which researchers set aside preconceptions, biases by reflexive journals throughout the research process documenting assumptions and personal perspectives before and during analysis. This step was critical because the researchers, as theology students and future ministers within the same denomination, held insider knowledge that could color interpretations. Next, horizontalization was performed, every significant statement relevant to the interview transcript was listed and treated as having equal value without assigning hierarchical importance. Repetitive or irrelevant statements were eliminated. These *invariant horizons* (the remaining meaningful statements) were then clustered into themes through iterative comparison. Approximately 80 categories are grouped into broader units via axial coding and further refined into core themes through selective coding. For each participant, individual textural descriptions, captured the “what” of their experience, while individual textural descriptions addressed the “how” of the experience, the temporal, spatial, relational, and bodily dimensions that contextualized each participant's lifeworld.

Following the construction of individual descriptions, the researchers employed imaginative variation, considering multiple perspectives and alternative contexts to distinguish between accidental and essential aspects of the PC experiences. This step was crucial to the transition from individual accounts to universal structures. Finally, a composite textural-structural description was synthesized, integrating all individual descriptions into an integrated account that captures the essential, invariant structure of being a PC at CPAC. Trustworthiness was further established through methodological triangulation, cross-verifying data from seven participants, follow-up clarification interviews via Facebook Messenger, and peer debriefing with research advisors. Credibility was reinforced by ensuring findings accurately represented participants’ perspectives; dependability was secured through the decision-revealing audit trail; confirmability was achieved as findings were shaped by participants’ narrative rather than researcher biases; and transferability was supported by thick description of the research context.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Poth (2025) provided guidelines for researchers to avoid harm to participants: “We must protect our participants, ensure report access, plan for knowledge mobilization, and comply with ethical publishing practices” (p. 384). Upon the approval of the Academic and Research Office and Student Affairs of CPAC, all seven provided written informed consent after being fully informed of the study’s purpose, their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, confidentiality procedures, and potential risks and benefits. The questions were designed not to cause physical or mental harm. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly preserved by using pseudonyms (PC01 to PC07), and all identifying information (specific locations, church names, family details) was removed or disguised in transcriptions and reporting. Only authorized personnel (the three researchers and research advisors) acceded the data; electronic files were password-protected; physical documents were stored in locked cabinets. Oliveira (2014), as cited in Toledo (2022), “The data from this study were kept in a safe storage place and would be retained for an additional six months after the conclusion of the study, and they would be destroyed” (p.71). Finally, findings were reported in an aggregate manner, with quotes attributed to pseudonyms only, and care was taken to avoid quote combinations that could inadvertently identify participants.

RESULTS

Following Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological approach, the data were subjected to reduction, horizontalization, and thematic clustering to identify the essential structures of the PC experience. This systematic approach ensured that the final thematic structure was thoroughly grounded in participants data and analytically defensible. Four themes and 12 subthemes emerged, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Always Being Watched	1.1 Pressure That Hangs
	1.2 Name That Follows
	1.3 Weight That Won’t Heal
Theme 2: Hiding Behind a Mask	2.1 Face That Hides
	2.2 Normal That Slips Away

	2.3 “No” That Grows
Theme 3: Getting Lost in the Maze	3.1 Eyes That Judge
	3.2 High and Lonely Place
	3.3 Home That Hugs and Hurts
Theme 4: Growing through Struggle	4.1 Faith That Takes Root
	4.2 Wisdom Carved in Pain
	4.3 Gift That Burns

Theme 1: Always Being Watched

This phenomenon, metaphorically described by participants as living under “CCTV” (vol. 7, ls. 91-98), created a distinctive psychosocial landscape wherein every action, word, and even private struggle becomes potentially public knowledge. The theme comprised three sub-themes: (a) Pressure That Hangs, (b) Name That Follows, and (c) Weight That Won’t Heal.

1.1: Pressure That Hangs. Participants consistently reported that expectations were communicated not through explicit statements but through an ambient pressure they could feel but not articulate. This unspoken weight created a pervasive sense that they were always falling short of standards they could never fully name or understand. *PC04 captured this paradox with precision: “I haven’t seen a lot of expectations, but I can feel it... I just felt it. Their expectations were really high on me. I really can’t explain what their expectations were. But I felt a lot.”* (vol. 4, ls. 49-139). *PC03 enumerated the comprehensive nature of these anticipations: “As a pastor’s child, the church expects me to take part in church activities, and to be active in the ministry primarily... regular church services, Evangelistic Crusades, and Week of Prayer Meetings”* (vol. 3, ls. 17-22). *PC02 similarly noted: “They expect you to be present, to be active spiritually. You should know how to do this. You should do this because you’re a pastor’s kid.”* (vol. 2, ls. 92-94). *PC06 acknowledged the tension: “People sometimes assume I’m always spiritually strong or know everything about faith. While encouraging mana siya, sometimes it feels like pressure”* (vol. 6, ls. 18-19). *PC03 articulated how the PC label operates across three categories of peer response: “It is divided into probably three categories. The first one is that they expect you to behave positively or properly... Second, they expect you to have negative traits... And the third one is some people don’t really care or are indifferent about it”* (vol. 3, ls. 136-144). Expectation States Theory (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1966) illuminated this phenomenon as the internalization of socially structured beliefs about how individuals should perform based on their social position. The phrase “should know” revealed an assumption of innate religious competence that denies PC the normal developmental trajectory of learning through trial and error. The biblical archetype of Samuel, who was dedicated to the sanctuary from childhood and served faithfully despite witnessing corruption (1 Samuel 1–3), provided a relevant parallel. However, unlike Samuel whose narrative emphasized divine calling and personal responsiveness, contemporary PC experience suggested that congregational expectations often preceded and potentially overshadowed personal spiritual development.

1.2: Name That Follows. If unspoken expectations constituted the atmosphere of PC experience, the burden of the family name represents its gravitational center. Participants described how their actions were never merely personal but always carried implications for their father’s ministry and their family’s reputation. *PC04 articulated this weight with striking vulnerability: “We don’t want to ruin Papa’s name. Because if we have done something wrong in school, our reputation will be ruined... He’s a Pastor’s Kid, so why did he do it? And my Papa’s name will be ruined”* (vol. 4, ls. 55-59). *PC03 explicitly named this dynamic: “My behaviors reflect my parents, and my parents reflect the church”* (vol. 3, ls. 71). *PC02 distinguished between external and internal pressure: “The pressure from church members feels external... The pressure from home, on the other hand, feels internal and personal. It comes from my own desire to live up to my family’s values... Church pressure feels visible and immediate, while home pressure feels quieter but heavier, because it’s tied to my sense of identity and personal responsibility”* (vol. 2, ls. 166-172). *PC06 captured the anxiety embedded in this identification: “Even small mistakes can feel heavier because I know people may associate my behavior with how my father raised me or with his leadership in the church. Whether or not people actually think that, the thought still affects me”* (vol. 6, ls. 46-48). *PC01 noted the financial dimension: “My parents give me pressure sometimes in academics because part of our payment here at CPAC is from the EVC. So it becomes pressuring sometimes because we are not fully paid”* (vol. 1, ls. 35-37). *PC04 similarly acknowledged: “We PK’s have already an advantage when it comes to our financial assistance... If you’re not taking it seriously, then you’re wasting your 60-40”* (vol. 4, ls. 75-76).

Bowen Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) identified this phenomenon as the undifferentiated family ego mass, the emotional fusion wherein family members' identities remained indistinct from one another. The bidirectional reflection created by what Kerr and Bowen (1988) described as low self-differentiation, wherein the PC's susceptibility to dependence on others' approval is amplified by the public nature of their family role. The biblical narrative of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 2:13–22) provided a cautionary backdrop, as their failures resulted in judgment upon their father's priestly line. For contemporary PC, the awareness that their failures could similarly reflect upon and potentially damage their father's ministry created pressure that is both personal and theological. The economic dimension revealed through the EVC program added material weight to the burden of representation, transforming academic performance from a personal matter into a stewardship obligation with tangible consequences for family finances and church resources.

1.3: Weight That Won't Heal.

The cumulative effect of constant observation and the burden of representation manifested in measurable emotional and physiological responses. Participants described a state of sustained hyper-vigilance that extended into all domains of life. PC07's metaphor captured the essence of this state: *"What I called them is a kind of CCTV, right? I was always being watched if I did something wrong"* (vol. 7, ls. 91-98). PC02 reported: *"Physically, I felt my heart racing and my hands slightly trembling and sweating. My chest felt tight, and my shoulders were tense. What heightened the pressure were the eyes on me—the congregation looking expectantly"* (vol. 2, ls. 144-146). PC03 described: *"By the end of the day, I often feel exhausted, not just physically but emotionally, trying to live up to expectations I didn't set for myself"* (vol. 3, ls. 64-65). PC03 elsewhere termed: *"The internal 'should' feels like a constant weight on my mind and shoulders"* (vol. 3, ls. 97). PC03 detailed comprehensive self-monitoring: *"I must watch my behavior at all times, which includes what I post online, where I go, what I say, and how I interact with others"* (vol. 3, ls. 63-64). PC07 similarly noted: *"Kis-a ginapunggan ko ang akon kalain or kapoy kay basi i-judge nila ko"* (Sometimes I hold back my sadness or exhaustion because I'm afraid of being judged) (vol. 7, ls. 97). PC02 observed: *"Small mistakes feel magnified because people expect me to set an example at all times"* (vol. 2, ls. 63-64). PC07 provided a concrete example: *"May isa ka time nga may nag-comment sa akon about sa akon pananamit—nga daw 'indi bagay' or 'dapat mas simple kay pastor's kid ka.' Bisan desente man akon suot, napabatyag ko nga daw pati akon style ginabantayan gid"* (There was atimme when someone commented on my clothing—saying it 'doesn't suit me' or 'should be simpler because you're a pastor's kid.' Even though my outfit was decent, it made me feel like my personal style was constantly being monitored.) (vol. 7, ls. 132-137). The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework (Felitti & Anda, 1990s) illuminated the patterns of hyper-vigilance, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion reported by participants. While this study does not diagnose trauma, these responses correspond to the toxic stress response that ACEs research identified as the mechanism linking childhood adversity to later outcomes (ACE Aware, 2022). The suppression of authentic emotion as a protective strategy demonstrates what Carmack (2024) identified as the PC's tendency toward "sophisticated performance of religious expectations that masks internal struggle." The extension of scrutiny to personal aesthetic choices illustrated the totalizing nature of the panoptic gaze, nothing remains private, nothing escapes evaluation, and the PC must remain constantly vigilant across all dimensions of life.

This section presented one central theme that emerged from the findings: *Always Being Watched*. The theme described how PC live under constant, unspoken observation that shaped their sense of self and their understanding of the world (Forbes, 2025; Drumm, Sedlacek, and Baltazar, 2020). Within this theme, three key aspects were examined: the burden of the family name (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1998), the biblical caution from the story of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 2:13-22; Guzik, 2025), and the emotional toll of sustained pressure (Sedlacek, 2023). Together, these findings offered a deeper understanding of the unique psychological and spiritual environment that PC navigate daily (Bennett, 2025; Kolawole, 2024). The findings confirm that PC internalize expectations without being directly told, supporting the "fishbowl" metaphor (Forbes, 2025) and Expectation States Theory (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1966). The weight of the family name aligned with Bowen Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), where family identities remain fused. The biblical narrative of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 2; Guzik, 2025) added a spiritual dimension: personal failure may harm a father's ministry. Finally, the Weight That Won't Heal that PC experiences match the Adverse Childhood Experiences framework (Felitti & Anda, 1990s; ACE Aware, 2022), as PC showed anxiety, exhaustion, and hidden distress. This study concluded that churches and families must recognize this quiet but heavy burden.

Theme 2: Hiding Behind a Mask

The second major theme addressed the internal consequences of external pressure: the development of a divided self that navigated between performed identity and authentic personhood. Participants described a conscious, often exhausting process of managing multiple selves across different contexts, while simultaneously yearning for integration and the freedom to be “normal.” This theme comprised three sub-themes: (a) Face That Hides, (b) Normal That Slips Away, and (c) “No” That Grows.

2.1: Face That Hides. Participants consistently employed the metaphor of the mask to describe how they managed expectations by presenting a curated self to the public while concealing their true thoughts, feelings, and struggles. This masking was not deception but survival. *PC04 articulated this with directness: “You just put a mask on your face. Because when it comes to church, you need to behave... they shouldn’t see your bad personality”* (vol. 4, ls. 105-106). *PC02 described the cognitive labor involved: “Part of me wants to be spontaneous, honest, and fully myself, while another part constantly weighs how others will perceive me. Deciding which part to show often depends on the context—who I’m talking to, the setting, and whether it’s casual or formal”* (vol. 2, ls. 288-290). *PC03 explicitly named the fragmentation: “I used to have that personality that I have for myself, for my family, for my friends, and for other people. It doesn’t matter what I feel. When I’m out there, I have to behave in a certain way”* (vol. 3, ls. 168-170). *PC03 described the exhaustion: “It’s generally exhausting, and it creates a feeling of guilt and shame depending on which part of myself I am suppressing to fit in”* (vol. 3, ls. 163-164). *PC04 admitted: “Sometimes I just act like I know the Bible, especially on AY programs”* (vol. 4, ls. 43). *PC06 described oscillation: “I become more reserved about certain interests or opinions because I don’t want them to be misunderstood. For example, I might avoid expressing frustrations openly or joining activities that could be misinterpreted, even if they are harmless”* (vol. 6, ls. 99-101). Bowen Family Systems Theory identifies this phenomenon as differentiation difficulties within emotionally fused systems. The separation of the self into compartmentalized personas constitutes an adaptive strategy that, while functional, impedes the integration necessary for psychological health. From a biblical-theological perspective, this mask-wearing stands in tension with Jesus’ model of authentic relationship with the Father (Njeru, 2024; Emerson, 2024; White, 1898). Jesus, though facing intense scrutiny, temptation, and the weight of redemptive mission, consistently grounded his identity in obedience to the Father rather than in human expectations (Luke 10:38-42). His capacity to retreat for prayer and solitude (Luke 5:16) models the differentiation necessary to maintain integrity under pressure, a capacity participants described as still developing.

2.2: Normal That Slips Away. Counterbalancing the experience of fragmentation, participants articulated a persistent yearning to be seen and treated as ordinary individuals rather than as walking representations of pastoral office. This longing for normalcy represented a claim to shared humanity. *PC01’s opening assertion established this theme: “My experience as a pastor’s child here in CPAC is just normal, just like the other kids around”* (vol. 1, ls. 17-18). *PC02 noted: “Social expectation is you’re free to do things here at CPAC because you are not known as pastor’s kids. I feel quite at peace, and nothing feels pressured compared to how I felt in our hometown”* (vol. 2, ls. 32-36). *PC04 confirmed: “It’s better here than there, because you are not too well-known here as a PK”* (vol. 4, ls. 70-71). *PC04 described the ideal: “Even if you’re close, they know that you’re a PK, but they don’t care that you’re a PK. You’re just their friend.”* (vol. 4, ls. 225-226). *PC07 similarly valued “friends nga normal lang mag-treat sa akon” (friends who treat me normally)* (vol. 7, ls. 172). *PC06 noted: “Once they get to know me, they realize I’m just a normal student who struggles and laughs like everyone else”* (vol. 6, ls. 86-87). The insistence on normalcy functioned as both claim and aspiration, asserting that beneath the label resides an ordinary human being. The CPAC context offered unique opportunities for this normalcy precisely because of its relative anonymity, thereby revealing, by contrast, the pressure that accompanies recognition. This quest resonated with the developmental trajectory of Jesus as recorded in Luke 2:52: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” The text presented a holistic account of the intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social dimensions of normal human development within a community. For PC, the desire to be known as normal represented not rejection of their spiritual heritage but a claim to the same holistic humanity that Jesus embodied.

2.3: “No” That Grows. Beneath the mask and alongside the quest for normalcy, participants described an internal landscape of resistance, feelings of being forced, desires to refuse, and occasional acts of withdrawal or defiance

(Kanco-Ackep, 2024; Shanazari, 2022). This internal rebellion represented an assertion of self-esteem against totalizing expectations. PC02 acknowledged: *“There are times that you want to sing, but sometimes, you just want to go to church and sit”* (vol. 2, ls. 151-152). PC02 described the moment of recognizing limits: *“I was busy managing responsibilities and expectations at home while also trying to meet expectations at church, all while being surrounded by many people. I realized I was exhausted, both physically and emotionally, and that no matter how much I tried, I couldn’t just relax and be free. It was in that moment I understood that being a pastor’s kid sometimes means that freedom has limits, and that I need to create space for my own peace actively”* (vol. 2, ls. 318-322). PC03 disclosed: *“There was a time years ago when I felt the most lost. At that moment, I felt like I had lost most of the things that I cared about. That was probably the loneliest I’ve felt in my entire life. I couldn’t even bring myself to pray. That’s when I decided to live for myself and to live however I want”* (vol. 3, ls. 386-389). PC05 reflected: *“Kung sa younger self ni gin ask nga question, I would say nga indi gid ko makapang-indi (If this question were asked to my younger self, I would say that I really couldn’t say no). However, as I grew older, I have learned that saying no is sometimes not hard to say”* (vol. 5, ls. 134-136). PC07 similarly noted: *“Gina-learn ko gid subong nga okay lang magsiling no kung para sa akon well-being, kag indi man na pagdisrespect kundi pag-set healthy boundaries” (I am really learning right now that it is okay no if it is for my well-being, and that is not disrespect but rather setting healthy boundaries)* (vol. 7, ls. 113-119). The internal rebellion represented not rejection of faith or family but assertion of self against the totalizing demands of expectation. The insight that freedom required active creation and that peace must be carved out of a demanding environment represents a crucial developmental step. The capacity to say “no” emerged as a developmental achievement across participants’ narratives, representing what Bowen Family Systems Theory identifies as differentiation: the capacity to maintain connection without fusion and to honor relationships without losing self. This learning, as described by PC05 and PC07, represented the emergence of healthy boundaries that protect well-being while maintaining family connection.

This section presented the second central theme: *Hiding Behind a Mask*. The findings described how PC developed a divided identity to cope with external pressure, balancing a performed self for others with their authentic personhood. Within this theme, key aspects included the use of masks (Waldock, 2023; Carmack, 2024), the longing for normalcy (PC01, PC04, PC06 quotes), and the emergence of internal rebellion as a step toward self-differentiation (Kanco-Ackep, 2024; Shanazari, 2022). The theme Hiding Behind a mask revealed that PC created masks to protect themselves within emotionally fused family systems. This supported Bowen Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), where difficulty with differentiation leads to fragmentation. PC report having different personalities for family, friends, and others, and some even pretend to know the Bible, creating a gap between performed piety and true faith. Against this fragmentation, PC express a strong longing for normalcy, to be “just like other kids.” This resonates with Luke 2:52, which described Jesus growing in holistic dimensions (White, 1898; Njeru, 2024). The CPAC context offered anonymity that allowed some normalcy, showing by contrast the pressure of being recognized (PC02, PC04). Finally, internal rebellion emerged as PC learn to say “no” and develop differentiation, maintaining connection to family without losing their own self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Priest, 2021). This represented a crucial developmental step for PC, navigating the tension between family loyalty and personal identity (Forbes, 2025; Bhebehe, Njiru, & Nzangi, 2024).

Theme 3: Getting Lost in the Maze

The third major theme addressed the relational consequences of PC identity, how expectations shape, constrain, and sometimes distort interactions with peers, church members, and family. Participants described a social world in which relationships must be navigated with constant awareness of the microscope under which they occur. This theme comprised three sub-themes: (a) Eyes That Judge, (b) High and Lonely Place, and (c) Home That Hugs and Hurts.

3.1: Eyes That Judge. Participants consistently reported that their identity as PC preceded them into social interactions, activating preconceived notions that created distance and complicated authentic connection. These preconceptions had to be overcome before a genuine relationship could begin. PC03 articulated the typology: *“It is divided into probably three categories. The first one is that they expect you to behave positively or properly... Second, they expect you to have negative traits... And the third one is some people don’t really care or are indifferent about it.”* (vol. 3, ls. 136-144). PC03 continued: *“At some point these expectations alienated me from*

some people as they considered me as someone different, which, of course, has never been the case. Other people tend to have preconceived ideas about me as a minister's child, which makes it slightly challenging to build new friendships" (vol. 3, ls. 129-131). PC04 described how this played out: "They react with distance or caution. Wala sila kis-a gasapak sakon kay ang mga bata ka pastor mga indi kabasag baso something like that (Sometimes they ignore me because they think a pastor's child is pristine or can't do anything wrong) They are afraid that I will judge them. They make assumptions like expecting me to correct them or judge them" (vol. 4, ls. 163-165). PC02 described altered interactions: "One example is when I wanted to hang out or joke around with friends, but I noticed they acted more reserved around me because they knew I'm a pastor's daughter" (vol. 2, ls. 55-57). PC06 noted: "The jokes are usually harmless, but they can create a small distance at first because people assume I'm overly serious or strict" (vol. 6, ls. 92-93). PC07 observed: "Kis-a daw may gamay nga distance kay may iban nga nahuya or careful mag-upod sa akon tungod sa position sang akon dad sa church." (Sometimes there seems to be a slight distance because others feel intimidated or are careful when they are around me due to my dad's position in the church) (vol. 7, ls. 168-172). The cumulative effect is a social world in which authentic connection required overcoming assumptions before a relationship can begin, a relational labor that peers without the PC label do not have to perform.

3.2: High and Lonely Place. A distinctive finding concerned the experience of being placed on a pedestal, elevated to leadership positions precisely because of PC identity. This elevation carried paradoxical qualities: affirmation and pressure, recognition and isolation, opportunity and burden. PC07 described the pattern: "They always choose me to be their religious vice president ever since I was in elementary school until up to now" (vol. 7, ls. 160-161). PC04 offered nuanced interpretation: "I think they saw my potential that I couldn't even see for myself" (vol. 4, ls. 192). PC04 described the weight: "I take all the responsibilities from the officers... I'll carry all of it" (vol. 4, ls. 211-212). PC03 described added weight: "The fact that my father holds a certain position at NOC, that's the one that kind of puts me on the spot" (vol. 3, ls. 122-123). PC03 described the dual nature: "One time I was asked to preach during vesper and it was a huge honor, pero grabi akon kulba kay daw ginahulat nila nga mag hataag ako sang message nga na" (But I was very nervous because it seemed like they were waiting for me to give that message) (vol. 3, ls. 71-72). This phenomenon aligned with Kanco-Ackep's (2024) finding that PC often experienced role confusion and internalized pressure to meet congregational expectations. The pedestal represented both recognition of potential and imposition of expectations. Others see capacities the PC may not yet recognize in themselves, but this seeing carries the demand that those capacities be exercised. From a biblical perspective, this paradox echoes David's experience after his anointing by Samuel (1 Samuel 16). The recognition of special purpose initiated a journey fraught with pressure, danger, and testing before its fulfillment. Similarly, John the Baptist's clear sense of purpose, cultivated within a faithful religious household (Luke 1), required seasons of obscurity and separation before public ministry. For contemporary PC, the pedestal represents an ambiguous gift, an elevation that may precede rather than follow the development of capacities it presumes.

3.3: Home That Hugs and Hurts. The family emerged in participant narratives as both the primary source of pressure and the primary source of support. This complexity reflected the unique structure of pastoral households, in which family and ministry are inextricably intertwined. PC02 provided sophisticated analysis: "The pressure from church members feels external... The pressure from home, by contrast, feels internal and personal. It comes from my own desire to live up to my family's values... Church pressure feels visible and immediate, while home pressure feels quieter but heavier, because it's tied to my sense of identity and personal responsibility" (vol. 2, ls. 166-172). PC03 described a comprehensive family expectation: "My behaviors reflect my parents, and my parents reflect the church" (vol. 3, ls. 71). PC02 credited her mother: "Maybe because of my mother as well. She really helped me and guided me... She never really... was lacking in reminding me" (vol. 2, ls. 199). PC05 noted parental permission: "Akon parents mismo gahambal sa akon nga if indi ko na kaya then untata" (My parents themselves told me that if I can't handle it anymore, I should just stop) (vol. 5, ls. 137-138). PC07 described learning to turn to parents: "I handled it by trying to be strong at first, but eventually I learned to open up to my parents and trust that God understands my imperfections" (vol. 7, ls. 36-37). PC04 offered a poignant message: "Not all PK's have their father with them all the time. And they lack father figure. And that's the side of us we wanted to be understood. We are often misguided or lack guidance from our fathers, especially emotionally" (vol. 4, ls. 362-364). PC03 described long-term consequences: "I have not enjoyed my teenage life nearly as much as a normal teenager does. I was burnt out early in college and had a hard time getting back up. I am still learning how to enjoy my life and discover the things that are meaningful to me. Needless to say, I still haven't got my life figured out and most days I feel lost" (vol. 3, ls. 257-262). The "quieter but heavier" pressure

reflected what Bowen Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) identified as an emotional fusion characteristic of undifferentiated systems. When family identity and religious vocation are interwoven, differentiation becomes both more difficult and more essential. Yet participants also identified parents as a crucial source of support, confirming Yu, Kong, Cao, Chen, Zhang, and Yu (2022) findings, that healthy family functioning and social support mutually influence one another. The financial dimension of family dynamics emerged uniquely in the CPAC context through the EVC program, adding material weight to family expectations. The poignant finding regarding the emotional cost of parental absence aligns with Kanco-Ackep's (2024) observation that pastors' extensive time away from home may create emotional distance from their children, with long-term consequences for identity formation and relational capacity.

This section presented the third central theme: *Getting Lost in the Maze*. The findings described how the identity of being a pastor's child (PC) shapes, limits, and sometimes distorts social interactions (Benjamin, Taylor, Turns, & White, 2021; Kanco-Ackep, 2024). Within this theme, key aspects included the barrier of preconceptions from peers, the paradox of being placed on a pedestal, and the family as both a source of pressure and support (Porras & Balila, 2024). The theme *Getting Lost in the Maze* showed that the PC label organized how others perceive and treat them. This confirmed Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963; Ahmed & Rahman, 2022): even before a conversation begins, peers form expectations that are either positive, negative, or indifferent (PC03). Regardless of the type, these preconceptions created distance that requires extra work to overcome for a genuine connection (PC04; PC07). This supported Kanco-Ackep's (2024) findings that PC faced role confusion and internalized pressure. The paradox of the pedestal is a distinctive finding: being elevated to leadership positions because of PC identity brings both affirmation and isolation (PC07; PC04). Those placed on a pedestal cannot easily step down into ordinary peer relationships. Finally, the family emerged as both the source of pressure and the main source of support (PC02; PC05). Home pressure felt "quieter but heavier" due to emotional fusion, yet parents also model faith and permit boundary-setting (PC02; PC05; PC07). In the CPAC context, financial expectations add material weight, turning academic performance into family stewardship (PC01; PC04). The emotional cost of parental absence due to ministry demands is also significant (PC03; PC04). Together, these findings showed that PC must constantly navigate between others' expectations and their own personhood (Reyes, 2025; Forbes, 2025).

Theme 4: Growing Through Struggle

The fourth major theme captured the transformative outcome of the PC journey: the process by which pressure, observation, and struggle are transmuted into wisdom, purpose, and authentic faith. Participants described not merely surviving their experiences but being shaped by them, forged in the crucible of expectation into individuals of depth, resilience, and conviction. This theme comprises three sub-themes: (a) Faith That Takes Root, (b) Wisdom Carved in Pain, and (c) Gift That Burns.

4.1: Faith That Takes Root. A developmental trajectory emerged in which faith, initially experienced as a performance for others, gradually transformed into a personally held relationship with God. This movement from external obligation to internal conviction represented a crucial spiritual maturation. PC02 described this evolution: "The turning point came when I reminded myself that my faith isn't about perfection or meeting others' expectations—it's about my personal relationship with God. That shift felt like a weight being lifted. I started to approach daily spiritual practices with more peace and sincerity, rather than pressure" (vol. 2, ls. 191-193). PC07 described a similar movement: "These expectations challenged my spiritual identity at times. I felt that people expected me to be spiritual because of my family, but not because of my personal relationship with God. However, over time, I learned to build my own connection with God, separate from the expectations of others" (vol. 7, ls. 148-149). PC06 affirmed: "Church expectations taught me that my faith must be personal. Hindi lang kay I'm son of a pastor. It pushed me to develop my own relationship with God and serve him sincerely" (vol. 6, ls. 81-82). PC01 articulated reframing: "I am doing it to glorify God and not to shame Him in front of the people... even though I'm scared... I'm still doing it because it is glorifying God and not for the people" (vol. 1, ls. 135-137). PC05 similarly reframed: "Even though some expectations are negative, I look at the positive side. It has made me a better person and strengthened my relationship with God because I learned that I should not refuse any role in serving the Lord as long as it glorifies God's name" (vol. 5, ls. 85-87). PC04 described insight: "It's actually okay to take your mask off in the church because the church is not a place to put a mask on... It's

okay to be imperfect than to pretend to be perfect” (vol. 4, ls. 109-112). Participants did not merely endure expectations; they reinterpreted them as catalysts for spiritual depth. The shift from “for the people” to “for God” represented the internalization of motivation that characterizes mature faith. This developmental trajectory founded biblical resonance in the life of Samuel, who grew from a child serving in the sanctuary to a prophet who could confront the very system that raised him (1 Samuel 3). Similarly, Jesus’ childhood development in wisdom, stature, and favor (Luke 2:52) occurred within a community yet culminated in a ministry marked by clear differentiation between human expectations and divine calling (Luke 2:41–52; Mark 6:3–4).

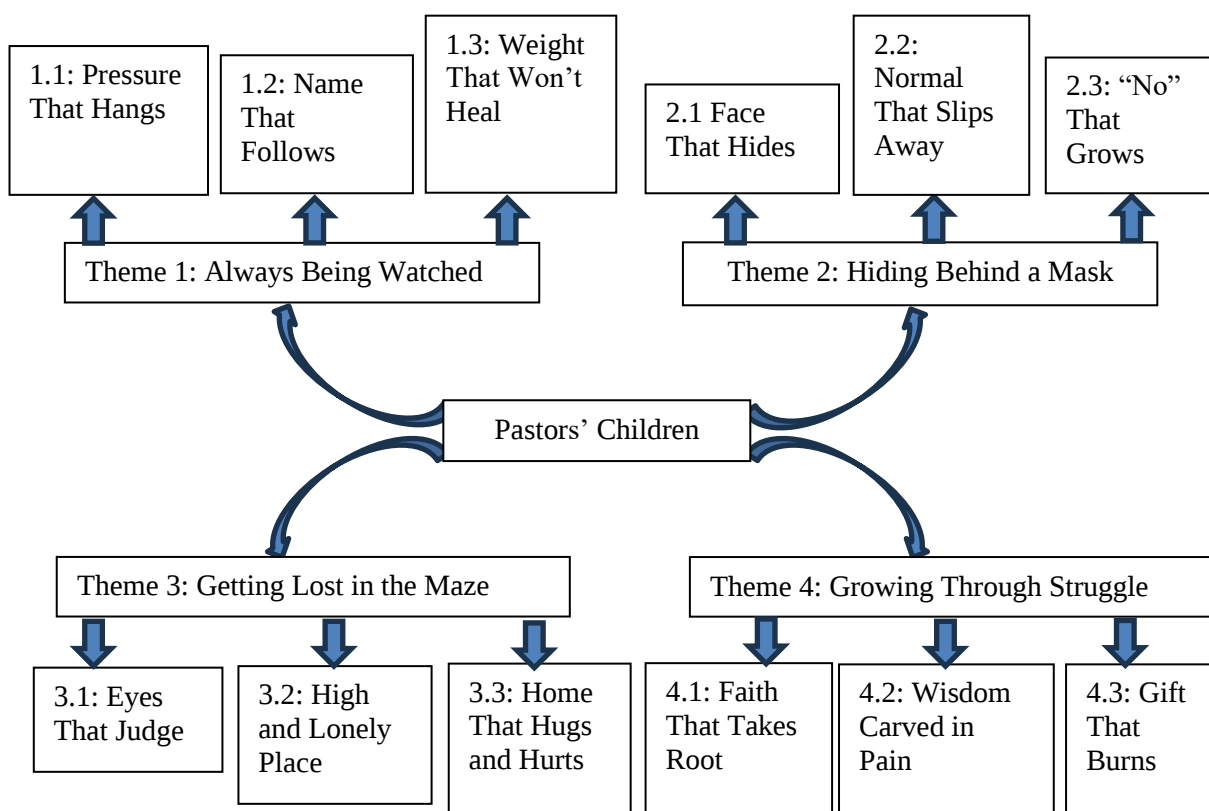
4.2: Wisdom Carved in Pain. Participants articulated a body of wisdom distilled from their struggles, insights hard-won through experience that now inform their understanding of self, others, and God. This wisdom included recognition of shared humanity, rejection of perfectionism, and strategies for managing external evaluation. PC01 stated: “I learned that all of us are equal” (vol. 1, ls. 295-296). PC04 elaborated: “I’ve realized that even though pastors’ kids are human, we’re the same. We have different lives and how we grew up” (vol. 4, ls. 170-171). PC03 extended: “The church is a hospital for sinners, not a paradise for saints” (vol. 3, ls. 297). PC01 reflected: “There were times when people expected me always to be perfect because I am a pastor’s child. It made me realize that everyone makes mistakes and deserves understanding” (vol. 1, ls. 137-138). PC03 integrated theologically: “I know I’m not a perfect person, but there lies perfection. When we understand that we are imperfect, but we have a perfect God” (vol. 3, ls. 293-294). PC04 embraced not-knowing: “I’ve realized that it’s okay. We’re not perfect. It’s okay not to know those things. But be thankful that you are aware of those things that you didn’t know. So that you will still learn about those things” (vol. 4, ls. 173-176). PC04 described sorting opinions: “We need to sort out what opinions they are giving to us... If this can help me, I’ll take it. But if it can’t help me, I’ll leave it” (vol. 4, ls. 131-135). PC02 articulated core truth: “My worth isn’t determined by how well I meet other people’s standards. I’ve realized that I can grow, serve, and excel while still honoring my own pace, feelings, and relationship with God. Ultimately, I am capable, resilient, and enough just as I am even amidst expectations and pressure” (vol. 2, ls. 151-158). PC05 described being “the bigger person” (vol. 5, ls. 79). PC03 articulated purpose: “The only thing that matters is that God is glorified and He uses me as a blessing to others” (vol. 3, ls. 390-391). PC07 integrated dual nature: “I think it’s both. Being highly sensitive to others’ perceptions can be a strength because it makes me more aware, empathetic, and careful with my actions. Pero at the same time, it can feel like a burden” (vol. 7, ls. 258-260). In final integration, participants acknowledged both the privileges and the costs of their PC identity, the gift and the grip of a role that has shaped them indelibly. This dual awareness characterized mature reflection on their journey.

4.3: Gift That Burns. In final integration, participants acknowledged both the privileges and the costs of their PC identity, the gift and the grip of a role that has shaped them indelibly. This dual awareness characterized mature reflection on their journey. PC03 enumerated gifts: “Growing up, we are hedged on every side. We have everything that we need to support us spiritually. We have the education for it, we have the family for it, we have the friends for it, the community for it” (vol. 3, ls. 243-245). PC04 affirmed: “As a PK, it opens doors to lead, to have exposure in leadership” (vol. 4, ls. 202). PC05 noted: “Being a pastor’s kid is not so bad; there are benefits like moving around and meeting many people. It has made my childhood and experiences deeper and more adventurous” (vol. 5, ls. 144-145). PC03’s testimony of loss: “I have not enjoyed my teenage life nearly as much as a normal teenager does. I was burnt out early in college and have had a hard time picking up from there. I am still learning how to enjoy my life and discover the things that are meaningful to me. Needless to say, I still haven’t got my life figured out and most days I feel lost. I was like, I became an adult” (vol. 3, ls. 257-265). PC03 articulated inevitable obligation: “I was born in the ministry. And everything that I have and will be achieving in the future or who I will become in the future, I must return back to the ministry. So basically, no matter who I become, in the end, I should and will return to the ministry. It feels like an inevitable obligation I can’t escape. It brought me so much pain as much as it brought me privilege. I do not think that I have found my personal calling yet” (vol. 3, ls. 273-277). PC01 summarized: “Looking back on my past experiences up to today, I am very grateful and thankful for everything I experienced. Whether positive or negative, I am thankful because it helped shape who I am today” (vol. 1, ls. 349-351). PC02 affirmed: “For the overall experience, it’s meaningful. I am very grateful for it” (vol. 2, ls. 518). PC07 concluded: “Looking back on my experience, I see that those expectations helped me shape my spiritual maturity. Even though sometimes I feel pressured, today I understand that these experiences strengthened my faith to our God and taught me responsibility and humility” (vol. 7, ls. 246-248). The integration of gift and grip reflected the biblical pattern observed in David, whose early

experiences protecting flocks developed courage and faith that later enabled him to face Goliath and lead a nation (1 Samuel 17:34–36; Guzik, 2025; Njeru, 2024). The pressures of his youth became preparation for the demands of his calling. Similarly, John the Baptist's formation in a faithful religious household cultivated the spiritual discipline and moral focus that characterized his prophetic ministry (Luke 1:80). For contemporary PC, the crucible of expectation, while painful, may constitute the very formation that equipped them for their own unique purposes. The testimony of gratitude alongside grief revealed that meaning is found not in the absence of struggle but in the transformation that struggle enables. As PC02 beautifully expressed, the PC identity becomes a mosaic where “pieces of different experiences, lessons, and challenges carefully fitting together” form “a unique image of faith that is personal, resilient, and still growing.”

This section presents the fourth central theme: *Growing Through Struggle*. The findings described how PC transform pressure, observation, and struggle into wisdom, purpose, and authentic faith (Thompson, 2023; Bennett, 2025). Within this theme, key aspects included the shift from performing faith for others to personally knowing God, biblical examples from Samuel and Jesus, the hard-earned wisdom of shared humanity, and the final integration of both gifts and costs of the PC identity (Kolawole, 2024; Forbes, 2025). The theme Growing Through Struggle showed that PC do not simply endure expectations; they reinterpret them as opportunities for spiritual depth (Long, 2025; Emerson, 2024). Faith that begins as performance for others gradually becomes a personally owned relationship with God, moving from “for the people” to “for God.” (PC01; PC02; PC07). This developmental journey resonated with Samuel, who grew from a child in the sanctuary to a prophet who could speak truth to the system that raised him (1 Samuel 3; White, 1890; Njeru, 2024), and with Jesus, whose holistic growth in wisdom, stature, and favor (Luke 2:52) led to a ministry marked by clear differentiation between human expectations and divine calling (Emerson, 2024; Njeru, 2024; White, 1898). The wisdom PC gained includes a fundamental recognition of shared humanity: that everyone makes mistakes, and the church is a hospital for sinners, not a paradise for saints (PC03; PC04). They learn that worth is not determined by meeting others’ standards but by divine approval (PC02; Long, 2025). Finally, PC integrated both the privileges of their upbringing, wherein early ministry exposure, leadership skills, adaptability, and spiritual community, and the costs, such as lost childhood, premature maturity, and difficulty relating to peers (PC03; PC04; PC05). Despite the pain, participants consistently express gratitude, recognizing that struggle shaped them into individuals of depth, resilience, and purpose (PC01; PC02; PC07). This pattern mirrors biblical figures like David (1 Samuel 17:34-36; Guzik, 2025) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:80; Njeru, 2024), whose early pressures served as preparation for their callings.

Figure 1. Simulacrum of the Lived Experiences of SDA PC



The Simulacrum of the Lived Experiences of SDA PC visually represented the multilayered reality of PC, as revealed through the four major themes identified in Chapter 4. At the center stands “Pastors’ Children,” representing the core identity and personhood of the participants, affirming that, despite external pressures, the PC remained the subject of their own experience. Radiating outward from this center are four interconnected layers: Theme 1 (Always Being Watched) formed the environmental perimeter of constant observation; Theme 2 (Hiding Behind a Mask) represented the internal response of wearing masks and managing multiple selves; Theme 3 (Getting Lost in the Maze) captured the complex social dynamics of relationships; and Theme 4 (Growing Through Struggle) constituted the transformative core where pressure is transmuted into wisdom and authentic faith.

The simulacrum emphasized that these four themes are not discrete stages but mutually influencing dimensions of PC experience. The outward layer of constant observation penetrated inward, shaping the hidden self, complicating social navigation, and ultimately contributing to the transformative growth at the core. Conversely, the wisdom developed at the core radiated outward, enabling PC to navigate social complexities more effectively, manage the hidden self with greater integration, and endure constant observation with increased resilience.

In its totality, the simulacrum represented the essential structure of the PC experience: a dialectical journey in which external observation generates internal fragmentation, complicates relational connections, and ultimately culminates in transformed identity and meaning. The PC at the center lives always in the gaze of others yet must find spaces where the mask can be removed, and authentic selfhood expressed, emerging from the crucible of expectation, not despite their experiences but through them.

DISCUSSION

At its core, the PC experience is characterized by the negotiation of visibility and vulnerability. The PC lives always in the gaze of others yet must find spaces and relationships where the mask can be removed, and authentic selfhood expressed. This negotiation required the development of differentiation, the capacity to maintain connection to family, church, and community while preserving a sense of self distinct from these relationships. The differentiation achieved is not separation but integration: the PC comes to hold their identity as a gift and a burden, a privilege and a cost, an inheritance and a personal responsibility.

The theoretical frameworks illuminated this journey. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1979) explained the foundational importance of secure relationships that enable exploration and return. Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) provided the language of differentiation essential to understanding how PCs navigate fused emotional systems. Expectation States Theory (Berger et al., 1966) accounted for the social processes that generate and reinforce the PC label and its associated expectations. The ACEs framework (Felitti & Anda, 1990s) illuminated the stress responses that prolonged hyper-vigilance can produce, without pathologizing the PC experience.

The biblical-theological framework provided both warning and hope. Hophni and Phinehas cautioned against the corruption that may arise within religious households when parental discipline and personal accountability fail. Samuel demonstrated that authentic spiritual development could occur even within flawed institutional contexts. David’s journey revealed how early pressures can prepare one for a call. John the Baptist modeled the formation possible within faithful families when children are nurtured toward their own sense of purpose. Jesus Christ embodied the perfect integration of human development and divine calling, navigating scrutiny and pressure with unwavering connection to the Father.

Comparison with prior research confirms and extends existing findings. Benjamin et al. (2021) identified external labeling as a primary challenge for PCs; our participants similarly reported that the “pastor’s kid” label preceded them into social interactions, creating distance and requiring additional relational labor. Kanco-Ackep (2024) found that PCs experience role confusion and internalized pressure; our theme *High and Lonely Place* adds nuance by showing how being placed on a pedestal is both an affirmation and a burden. Unlike some previous studies that emphasized negative outcomes, our findings highlight a strong capacity for meaning-making and

spiritual maturation, consistent with resilience research (Werner, 1997; Long, 2025).

The essence of the PC experience, therefore, is the forging of identity and faith within the crucible of expectation, a process marked by struggle and growth, pain and privilege, fragmentation and integration. The crucible made them. Not despite it, but through it, they gained the authenticity, compassion, and resilience that expectations had always wanted but never achieved.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded

1. PCs live within a panoptic environment of constant observation that generates measurable emotional and psychological effects, requiring intentional coping strategies to support well-being and the emergence of authentic selfhood.
2. Differentiation challenges within pastoral families, where identity remains fused with family role and congregational perception, necessitate the development of healthy boundary-setting as a crucial developmental achievement for PC navigating the tension between family loyalty and personal identity.
3. Labeling processes operating through congregational expectations significantly shape PC identity formation and social interactions, yet participants demonstrated a remarkable capacity to reframe these labels through meaning-making and spiritual growth.
4. The biblical archetypes of Samuel, David, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ illuminate both the struggles and transformative potential inherent in growing up within religious contexts of high expectation, offering models of authentic faith development amid pressure.
5. Ultimately, the PC journey, while marked by unique pressures and high costs including lost childhood and premature maturity, produces individuals of depth, resilience, and purpose who emerge from the crucible not despite their experiences but through them, forged into persons capable of authenticity, compassion, and personally possessed faith.

The researchers offer the following recommendations, recognizing that the well-being of PCs is a shared responsibility.

For Churches

- Encourage PC to be themselves instead of expecting perfection.
- Let PC decide how and when to be involved.
- Acknowledge that PC are still growing and learning, not automatic role models.
- Create opportunities for PC to express their feelings and concerns without judgment.
- Balance church duties with schoolwork and personal time.

For Schools

- Refrain from expecting automatic high achievement from PC; treat each student as an individual.
- Recognize that PC often experience heightened academic and social expectations;
- Adopt flexible academic policies and promote faculty awareness of challenges faced by pastoral families.
- Enhance counseling services to address the specific school-related challenges that PC encounter.
- Develop programs that help PC build identity, manage emotions, and balance school and family responsibilities.

For Pastor Parents

- Provide roles that build confidence and spiritual growth; help children prepare beforehand to ease anxiety associated with public roles.
- Offer feedback without linking it to the “pastor’s child” identity.
- Avoid last-minute ministry requests and honor the child’s limits.

- Regularly affirm the child's efforts to strengthen their sense of belonging and self-worth.
- Set distinct boundaries between ministry and family life, and practice child-centered parenting; and create a home environment that supports emotional, spiritual, and social growth.

For Pastor Children

- Talk honestly with parents about needs and pressures to build mutual understanding.
- Pursue flexible academic support and counseling to help balance responsibilities.
- Accept that imperfection is a natural part of growth.
- Allow yourself to learn and mature without the pressure to be perfect.
- Limit responsibilities when they interfere with rest, school, or personal time.
- Build friendships or join groups where you can express yourself freely.
- Practice mindfulness and stay physically active to manage stress.
- Connect with God in ways that feel meaningful and personally owned.

For Future Researchers

- Include PC from different sects and denominations and from various divisions and unions to examine how context shapes experiences.
- Focus on the eldest children, who often carry greater family and ministry responsibilities.
- Follow PC over time to trace the development of emotions, faith, and personal growth.
- Employ surveys and questionnaires to gather measurable data on PC's experiences.
- Expand the focus beyond PC to study the experiences of the whole pastoral family, including spouses, to understand how ministry pressures affect family dynamics, marital relationships, and overall well-being.

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