

Laughter and Well-Being: The Transformative Experiences of Working Mothers

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ABSTRACT. This study explores how laughter therapy transforms the experiences of working mothers, impacting their stress, resilience, and well-being. Six participants engaged in unstructured interviews, analyzed through a descriptive phenomenological approach. Findings revealed that both genuine and simulated laughter offer therapeutic benefits, improving optimism, stress management, and sleep. Laughter's contagious nature strengthens social bonds and promotes shared joy. The therapy fosters emotional resilience, enhances health, and nurtures spirituality, contributing to inner peace. Accessible and holistic, laughter therapy empowers working mothers to face challenges with resilience and optimism, ultimately improving their quality of life.

1.0. Introduction

Laughter therapy has garnered attention for its positive psychological effects, enabling individuals to enhance self-control by objectively assessing situations (Mi-Youn & Suk, 2018). Moreover, laughter therapy has been widely embraced as a non-pharmacological treatment in diverse participant groups and as part of various programs worldwide (Yoshikawa et al., 2019). This unconventional approach incorporates breathing exercises, making it accessible and noninvasive (Elahai & Sharma, 2023). In 1995, Dr. Madan Kataria, a medical doctor in India, originated laughter therapy by combining spontaneous laughter with yoga breathing to enhance mental and physical well-being (Eraydin & Alpar, 2022).

Laughter therapy has shown promising results in various studies conducted in different contexts. In Asian countries, particularly India, laughter therapy has been explored as an effective intervention for improving mental health and well-being (Akimbekov & Razzaque, 2021). Studies have highlighted the benefits of laughter therapy for mothers who reported feelings of happiness and joy, which they attributed to observing their and others' laughter-filled faces and noted positive changes in their children and spouses

who observed their bouts of laughter and merriment (Ko & Park, 2023). Additionally, an Indonesian study found that laughter therapy lowers depression rates in postpartum blues mothers (Apriliana & Wintarsih, 2023).

Therefore, laughter therapy interventions could be effective in reducing depression and improving mental health-related quality of life immediately post-intervention in working-aged people with a diagnosis of depressive disorder (Bressington et al., 2019). The research conducted in the Philippines highlights the significant influence of laughter therapy, showcasing its capacity to reduce stress levels and evoke positive feelings (Bahari & Lorica, 2019). Laughter therapy promotes the expression of laughter through the body rather than just the mind, nurturing a playful innocence and improving resilience toward life's obstacles (Melliza-Descallar & Prado, 2023). Along with its numerous advantages, laughter therapy actively reinforces concrete enhancements, such as improving mental well-being, increasing aerobic capacity, and amplifying engagement in physical activity (Bodeker, 2020). Undoubtedly, laughter is a powerful medicine (Cheng et al., 2019).

Working mothers in the Philippines frequently encounter substantial obstacles in balancing their professional duties with their household responsibilities, resulting in stress, fatigue, financial difficulties, and a lack of support, which hurts their mental well-being. Referred to as "superwomen," they

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are recognized for simultaneously fulfilling multiple crucial roles, including those of a wife, mother, homemaker, and employee (Nosrati Beigzadeh et al., 2021). Within the Adventist Women's Ministry, working mothers have a strenuous time juggling their responsibilities as spiritual leaders, caregivers, and professionals, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed, physical exhaustion, and emotional fatigue. They must navigate the demands of ministry work while also addressing the needs of their families, jobs, and community (Castro, 2023). Upon witnessing these challenges, the researcher was motivated and propelled to conduct the study to explore the lived experiences of working mothers in laughter therapy.

Previous research indicates that working mothers who participate in laughter therapy may experience a decrease in levels of depression, anxiety, and parental stress (Ko & Park, 2023). Moreover, it demonstrates the impact of laughter therapy on mental well-being (Bahari & Lorica, 2019), serving as a complementary approach to promote overall health (Lyle, 2023). Nevertheless, there are research deficiencies in comprehending the encounters of Adventist working mothers within the women's ministry. Limited studies have delved into the firsthand experiences of working mothers among Seventh-day Adventist women. This void underscores the necessity to explore the distinct experiences of Adventist working mothers in the women's ministry within the church, utilizing qualitative research design. Hence the gap in the literature.

This study explored and described working mothers' lived experiences with laughter therapy in the Philippines. The findings of this research had the potential to heighten awareness among working mothers regarding the unique benefits of laughter therapy as an effective self-care practice, promoting health and overall well-being. Moreover, the study emphasized laughter therapy as a holistic intervention that fostered stress relief, resilience, and overall well-being. The outcomes of this research could inform the development of tailored support programs for working mothers and offer evidence-based strategies to enhance their quality of life.

2.0. Methodology

Research design. This study utilized the basic descriptive phenomenological research design. The goal of research within a phenomenological framework is to understand the lived experiences of participants, extract the essence of their collective narratives, and provide novel insights and information regarding a specific phenomenon (Moran, 2018). The application of phenomenology is suitable for investigating the lived experiences of working mothers. It concentrated on the rationale and methodology behind their experiences in the context

of laughter therapy. It explained the perspectives that define the phenomenon within the setting of working mothers undergoing laughter therapy within the Adventist women's ministry. In this study, the participants consciously reflected on the reality or essence of the truth of their lives, facing multiple roles and diverse challenges.

Philosophical assumptions. This qualitative study, grounded in a constructivist framework and acknowledging the existence of multiple realities, explored how working mothers experience laughter therapy as a coping mechanism for work-life balance challenges. The researcher actively participated in laughter therapy sessions with the participants, recognizing the value of personal relationships in understanding subjective experiences. Embracing the researcher's values of resilience and positivity, while acknowledging potential bias and employing mitigation strategies like member-checking, the study utilized an inductive approach and descriptive phenomenology to analyze the transformative potential of laughter therapy. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process to ensure fairness and sensitivity in capturing the nuances of participants' lived experiences.

Participants. The study focused on working mothers who were members of a laughter therapy club in the Philippines and utilized purposive sampling to select participants (Andrade, 2021). Purposive sampling involves selecting participants with characteristics relevant to the study's objectives, resulting in more rigorous and trustworthy data and results (Campbell et al., 2020). The inclusion criteria set by the researcher required that participants be in their middle adulthood, aged 40–65, were working mothers, members of the Adventist women's ministry, and had been members of the laughter therapy club for at least one to six months, and actively participated in the regular face to face or online sessions. These criteria aimed to assemble a diverse and comprehensive sample of working mothers whose participation would provide valuable insight into the transformative potential of laughter therapy in various life situations. Furthermore, middle adult working mothers, defined as those aged 40–65, were the focus of this study due to their unique life stage, characterized by significant career and familial responsibilities that heightened stress levels. This demographic was particularly vulnerable to health issues such as cardiovascular disease, mental health challenges, and stress-related conditions, making them ideal candidates for exploring the benefits of laughter therapy. Women report difficulties in changing family relationships and balancing work and personal life. Financial worries and the need for adequate resources are prevalent, often exacerbated by

multiple co-occurring stressors (Thomas et al., 2018). Many experience health issues, including chronic illnesses, which complicate their identity and self-image (Markle et al., 2015). In the cultural context of the Philippines, where societal expectations placed additional pressures on women to fulfill multiple roles, understanding the contribution of laughter therapy to this group offered valuable insights into holistic well-being and resilience.

Research instrument. This study entailed conducting unstructured, in-depth interviews with participants to collect detailed and unstructured insights about laughter therapy from working mothers' experiences. The researchers utilized open-ended questions to encourage participants to express their thoughts and explore the "what," "how," and "why" of their experiences. The study concentrated solely on participants' encounters with this phenomenon to fully comprehend their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data collection procedure. To gather data, the researchers conducted interviews with working mothers who were members of a laughter therapy club. Participants, selected based on inclusion criteria and given informed consent, were interviewed either face-to-face (for those in Negros Occidental) or online via Zoom (for those outside the region). Interviews, lasting 45-60 minutes, were conducted in the participants' preferred language (Tagalog or Ilonggo) and included a combination of open-ended questions and probing follow-ups to ensure data saturation. The researchers employed bracketing to minimize bias and prioritized building rapport through informal conversation before and after the formal interview process. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and anonymity, were emphasized throughout the study, and participants received tokens of gratitude for their involvement.

Data analysis procedure. Following Creswell and Creswell's (2018) six-step framework for qualitative data analysis, the researchers began by organizing and preparing the data, which included transcribing interviews and sorting materials. Next, the researchers reviewed all data to gain a comprehensive understanding and record initial impressions. The third step involved coding the data, condensing it into meaningful categories using participant-derived language. These codes were then used to generate overarching themes and descriptions, capturing the essence of the participants' experiences. In the fifth step, these themes and descriptions were presented in a qualitative narrative, integrating findings with supporting data. Finally, the researchers interpreted the findings, drawing conclusions and connecting them to the research questions, existing literature, and theoretical framework.

Ethical considerations. The researchers adhered to ethical standards set by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) and ensured respect for participants through informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. The study focused on laughter therapy for working mothers and highlighted its social value by improving well-being, reducing stress, and enhancing relationships. The researchers ensured participants' voluntary participation, addressing potential risks by providing a supportive environment. With transparency and no financial gain, the researchers shared the study's findings with participants and the broader community. The research was conducted with proper qualifications, adequate facilities, and community involvement, contributing valuable insights into the field of laughter therapy and its benefits for working mothers.

3.0. Results and Discussion

Similar insights were organized into two (2) major themes: Laughter: Contagious and beneficial, real or fake (with two sub-themes: Laughter is contagious and laughter, real or fake, has benefits) and laughter therapy (LT) enhances overall well-being (with four sub-themes: LT boosts physical health, LT improves mental and emotional resilience, LT strengthens bonds and relationships, and LT cultivates spirituality and connection).

Laughter: Contagious and beneficial, real or fake

Working mothers shared their lived experiences on laughter therapy. Similar ideas were organized into two (2) subthemes: Laughter is contagious, and laughter, real or fake, has benefits.

Laughter is contagious. Working mothers engaged in laughter therapy share how its positive effects extend beyond their personal well-being, creating a ripple effect that transforms their families, workplaces, and communities (Rodríguez & Rojas, 2018). They explain that laughter's contagious nature, influenced by mirror neurons in the brain, triggers others to join in, fostering shared joy and connection (Elvaretta et al., 2023). This emphasizes teamwork and social bonding (Billing et al., 2021). Participant 1 stated:

Because of this, my family at home has noticed that I'm always happy, and now they say they're starting to catch on to it as well. (Participant 1, Personal Communication, July 2, 2024)

Participant 3 stated that her laughter tends to become infectious in the home, fostering a more harmonious and joyful atmosphere. This, in turn,

contributes to strengthening the bonds with her children at home (Bonini et al., 2023). She said:

When my laughter is loud, they laugh too because it's contagious. What they say in the lecture is really true: laughter is indeed contagious. Another thing I learned is that laughter really is infectious. That's why my children also start to laugh (smiles). So, when someone laughs, you will also laugh. Yes, that's mirror neurons. Yes, that's why my children also laugh. When I laugh, they laugh too. (Participant 3, Personal Communication, June 28, 2024)

Laughter, real or fake, has benefits. Working mothers engaged in laughter therapy shared that both real and fake laughter provide similar benefits, contributing to their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Participant 1 explains that even when she initially engages in fake laughter during sessions, it often transitions into genuine laughter due to the infectious nature of the activity. This blend of real and fake laughter stimulates the release of endorphins, reducing stress and promoting relaxation (Flaten, 2022). According to participant 1:

To change, the feeling is really good, although sometimes, at first, it's awkward, like the 'ho ho ha ha ha,' when you're laughing but it's not really genuine, you're just doing it because it's part of the therapy. But in therapy, sometimes it's not genuine laughter yet. There will be something good happening in my body when I laugh. Although it's not real laughter. Yes, because the benefits of fake and real laughter are the same. (Participant 1, Personal Communication, July 2, 2024)

Participant 2 stated that she laughs even when she does not feel like laughing, doing so primarily for the perceived health benefits (Law et al., 2018). This emphasizes that both types of laughter can yield significant health benefits, including stress reduction and mental and physical health improvements (Deshpande et al., 2020). She said:

Even my laughter is fake (laughs). When I am extremely busy (chuckles), even if there is nothing to laugh about, I still laugh (laughs). The kind where you do not feel like laughing. But you laugh anyway for the sake of your health. So, you can really fake your laughter. But when it is genuine laughter, it really comes from within; your laughter is

truly authentic. Yes, both fake laughter and genuine laughter have the same benefits. (Participant 2, Personal Communication, July 4, 2024)

The theme of laughter as contagious, real, or fake, presented above, highlights its crucial role in social bonding, psychological well-being, and physical health. Laughter is contagious, fostering group cohesion and emotional synchronization through mirror neurons. Both real and fake laughter offer benefits: genuine laughter boosts mood, reduces stress, and improves health, while even forced laughter can trigger similar positive effects, reducing stress and improving social interactions. This theme underscores laughter's power as a social and therapeutic tool, regardless of its authenticity.

Laughter therapy enhances overall well-being.

Most participants' answers fall under the category of laughter therapy enhancing overall well-being. The answers are then subcategorized under the following subthemes: LT boosts physical health, LT improves mental health and emotional resilience, LT strengthens bonds and relationships, and LT cultivates spirituality and connection.

Laughter therapy boosts physical health. The lived experiences of working mothers engaged in laughter therapy revealed its transformative influence on overall well-being across multiple dimensions. Participants highlighted the physical healing power of laughter. This comprehensive approach contributed to better physical health and played a key role in managing the physical toll of work and family responsibilities. Laughter therapy effectively reduces anxiety levels, making it beneficial for stress management among working mothers. It can be a valuable complementary method for stress relief (Doğan, 2020).

Participants also noted improved cardiovascular health and a boost in immune function, contributing to better overall vitality. Many mothers experienced pain relief, particularly from chronic stress-related conditions such as back pain and headaches (Hajar, 2019). Additionally, laughter therapy led to enhanced respiratory function and better sleep quality, with participants reporting deeper and more restful sleep (Lee et al., 2023).

Interestingly, one participant utilized laughter as an exercise alternative to enhance physical and mental well-being. While traditional exercise may be challenging to fit into daily routines, laughter offers a flexible and enjoyable alternative that can be practiced at home or in social settings (Mawardi et al., 2022).

These examples underscore laughter therapy as

an effective tool for improving stress management and fostering physical health and well-being (Kanbur & Baştetur, 2023; Tremayne & Sharma, 2019). They responded:

I'm feeling better now. Before, my fingers used to hurt when I woke up in the morning, but not anymore. The acidity in my stomach is gone, and I sleep well all the time. It feels like my immune system is getting stronger. My skin is glowing; I feel like my blood flow is increasing. My stress level has reduced, and it seems like my wrinkles have decreased, giving me a more youthful appearance, even though I have really lost weight. (Participant 1, Personal Communication, July 2, 2024)

Of course, stress disappears. My feelings improve when I do laughter therapy because it alleviates my fatigue. When I laugh, I feel a sense of relief. Additionally, my feelings of worry and stress disappear. The pain in my back and breast goes away when I laugh because it acts as a pain reliever by releasing stress and fatigue. (Participant 2, Personal Communication, July 4, 2024)

What I really feel when I laugh is that I sweat, I inhale and exhale, and it really feels like a weight is lifted, as in, my body feels lighter. When you laugh hard, it seems like your immune system gets stronger, and your whole body gets a workout. My immune system functions well, especially after a laughter therapy session. It's relaxing, really relaxing. After we inhale and exhale, the body feels very relaxed. (Participant 3, Personal Communication, June 28, 2024)

Laughter helps me to sleep well. It helps minimize my acid reflux, so goodbye to sleep well, magnesium sulfate or antacid, and even my cardiac drugs. Like before, I always felt weak, but now, I am energetic. I have hyperacidity. I thought it was because of my post-menopausal, which is why I have hyperacidity. But I think laughter is a great factor that decreases hyperacidity because the more you worry, the more you secrete your acids. (Participant 4, Personal Communication, June 27, 2024)

Energy is revived, and there is strength to go on with my schoolwork or housework *again*. But right now, even

by laughing, I can already be energized and forget the weakness that I feel. It also strengthens my immune system. Another health benefit is, as I said a while ago, that I seldom experience allergic rhinitis right now. I know it not only from the food that I eat or the supplements I take but also from the laughter exercises I am doing now and then. (Participant 5, Personal Communication, July 1, 2024).

When I laugh continuously, it feels like exercise because I start sweating (laughs). And then, it seems like it also helps to boost my immune system. If you are feeling any sickness, it disappears. Of course, I believe that laughter therapy is one way to release all my tension. (Participant 6, Personal Communication, May 19, 2024)

Laughter therapy improves mental and emotional resilience. Working mothers engaged in laughter therapy report significant psychological empowerment, enhancing their mental and emotional resilience (Kafle et al., 2023). Amid the challenges of balancing professional and familial responsibilities, laughter therapy creates a safe space for emotional release and mental rejuvenation. Participants highlight its benefits in improving coping mechanisms and fostering a positive outlook, enabling them to easily navigate daily challenges. Working mothers demonstrated how they employ positive coping mechanisms in their daily lives to manage the demands of work and family. Participant 1 thoroughly examines how laughter helps her cope with life's challenges by replacing negative emotions, like anger and frustration, with happiness (Sharma, 2024). She views laughter as a tool for avoiding conflict and maintaining a positive mindset, even in difficult or boring situations. She said:

To face life's trials happily (laughs). I always feel happy. I just laugh, even if it's boring (laughs). It's my laughter therapy, isn't it, rather than fighting with me, for example, even if you don't like it, just laugh, I don't want to fight because if I fight you will really feel something, and when you're annoyed, usually I don't want to be annoyed. So, when I get annoyed, I actually replace it with happiness and laughter. (Participant 1, Personal Communication, July 2, 2024)

Participant 2 points out that laughter therapy improves her emotional state by making her feel lighter and happier. She believes that laughter helps divert negative emotions, such as loneliness, and

transforms them into positive feelings (Zieneldien, 2023).

My feelings also improved. Yes, my feelings got better because of the laughter therapy. That is, it—when I laugh, my feelings become lighter. I feel lighter and happy. All the bad feelings disappear (laughs). Just laugh (laughs). Because when you laugh, your loneliness and feelings get diverted. They are diverted into good feelings. (Participant 2, Personal Communication, July 4, 2024)

Participant 3 emphasizes the importance of maintaining happiness and laughter, even in difficult situations like financial hardship. They suggest that laughter helps to release negativity and cope with problems, creating a sense of relief and positivity despite external challenges (Mbiriri, 2020). Participant narrated:

Sometimes, even when there's no money (laughs), it's important to stay happy (laughing) and not worry about not having food for tomorrow. Just welcome the blessings and laugh off the problems. We just need to be happy. Just laugh at all the problems, like that. I said, thank goodness, I was able to laugh. When I laugh heartily, it feels so good, it's like all the negativity goes away. (Participant 3, Personal Communication, June 28, 2024)

Participant 4 expresses that laughter has helped her cope with stress and stay positive, especially in the demanding academic environment. She believes laughter is essential for managing work-related challenges and maintaining a positive mindset (Sunitha & Talwar, 2024).

So, it is one thing that laughter has helped me a lot in coping with my problems. If it were not for laughter, ma'am, hahaha (laughs). I do not know what would have happened to me, hehehe (laughs). Before, I used to be a worrier, but now I have learned to stay positive. If we did not laugh, what would happen? (laughs) hahaha. We are in the academe, and it's really exhausting with all the work, so we just need to stay positive. (Participant 4, Personal Communication, June 27, 2024)

Participant 5 highlights that intentional, loud laughter helps release emotions, providing strength, peace, and emotional stability. She believes

combining laughter with deep breathing promotes positivity and that laughter therapy has improved her mindset, especially in the workplace (Rammal et al., 2024).

I have to really intentionally laugh loud, laugh loud so that I can express, and put away my feelings. After that, it gives me strength, it gives me peace, and it assures me that I am okay. Laughter also gives me stable emotions, especially if laughter is combined with deep breathing. It helps me to be positive-minded. In the workplace, I became more positive after the orientation on how laughter therapy should give you many benefits. (Participant 5, Personal Communication, July 1, 2024)

Participant 6 claims that laughter therapy helps alleviate sadness and anxiety, promoting a sense of happiness and mental relief (Amici, 2019). She suggested that they let go of worries through laughter and improve their emotional and physical well-being. She stated:

I no longer worry about problems. I just let things be, and if laughter contributes to my good health and strength, then I just do that. After a laughter therapy session, if you were sad, you become happy. If you have a lot of worries in your mind (hands towards the brain), after the therapy, it feels like everything is just fine because that's where the happy mood comes in. (Participant 6, Personal Communication, May 19, 2024)

Laughter therapy strengthens bonds and relationships. Working mothers engaged in laughter therapy report significant improvements in their social relationships. Through shared laughter sessions, they find a sense of camaraderie and connection with others who face similar challenges. These women highlight that laughter acts as a bridge, breaking down social barriers and fostering a supportive community where they can freely express their emotions (Klein, 2023). The therapy enhances their ability to bond with colleagues, family members, and peers. Mothers often share that the lighthearted interactions during laughter therapy translate into improved communication and harmony at home, allowing them to reconnect with their children and partners more positively. This practice becomes a tool for nurturing relationships, reducing social isolation, and enhancing their capacity to handle the dual responsibilities of work and family life (Dunbar, 2022). Participant 2 said:

It is better to laugh in a group because you can feel good laughing with others. Many are better than one. (Participant 2, Personal Communication, July 4, 2024)

Participant 3 says that despite occasional disagreements, she encourages her husband to focus on happiness rather than negativity. She emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive attitude in their relationship, and he agrees with this approach (Ryoo, 2019). She said:

Yes, sometimes my husband tends to be negative. I tell him, for example, that we should not argue. Since we are older, we should focus on being happy (smiles). It is inevitable for couples to have disagreements, but when I do not tell him to be more positive, he responds with, Alright, let us do that. In our relationship, I emphasize that we should just be happy. (Participant 3, Personal Communication, June 28, 2024)

Participants 4, 5, and 6 emphasize that laughter therapy fosters social connections and improves relationships (Troitskiy et al., 2021). Participant 4 highlights how laughter strengthens family bonds and enhances understanding and patience. Participant 5 focuses on laughter's role in socializing with like-minded people and its broader social benefits. Participant 6 underscores how laughter strengthens relationships, fosters connection, and creates a positive, relaxed atmosphere, particularly in interactions with children, students, and coworkers (Bo, 2023). They shared:

Laughter therapy helps me to meet people always especially online. It helps me to learn from others' experiences with laughter therapy. Laughter also enhances my relationship with others, especially with my family and other people. And it also helps my relationship with them. This makes me appreciate others well and always provide positive feedback. Laughter enhances my family relationship because it helps me be more understanding, patient, and considerate. (Participant 4, Personal Communication, June 27, 2024)

There are benefits, as I have told you, because I am also a sociable person; by joining, I can have that socialization with others with the same mindset of people, and laughter would give you benefits social-wise (clears

the throat). (Participant 5, Personal Communication, July 1, 2014)

Because in terms of dealing with the kids, students, and coworkers, being happy becomes contagious. As for social benefits, laughter improves relationships because it strengthens bonds between people and fosters a sense of connection. Also, laughter can enhance communication by creating a relaxed and positive atmosphere. (Participant 6, Personal Communication, May 19, 2024)

Participating in laughter sessions fosters shared joy and connection, deepening relationships at home and in the workplace. These sessions offer a sense of community and belongingness. The lived experiences of working mothers regarding laughter therapy under this sub-theme indicate that laughter profoundly improves their interpersonal relationships. Group laughter is particularly beneficial, providing a shared sense of joy and strengthening bonds. Additionally, laughter enhances interactions with children, students, and coworkers, reinforcing social ties and helping maintain positive relationships, especially in family dynamics (Choe & An, 2021).

Laughter therapy cultivates spirituality and connection. Working mothers engaged in laughter therapy describe it as a spiritual practice that enhances their mindfulness and deepens their relationship with God. They share that laughter allows them to release emotional burdens, center themselves in the present moment, and reflect on the blessings of life. This practice helps them cultivate gratitude, recognizing laughter as a blessing from the Lord that sustains them through life's challenges. Additionally, they find that the spiritual uplift from laughter strengthens their ability to face their responsibilities with faith and optimism, allowing them to nurture more harmonious relationships with their families and approach challenges with a God-centered perspective (Edgar, 2020). Through laughter therapy, they feel spiritually refreshed, more connected to God, and better equipped to spread positivity in their homes and communities (Sharma, 2024). Participant 3 stated:

What I actually do is pray, then smile. That is, it. (Participant 3, Personal Communication, June 28, 2024)

Participants 4, 5, and 6 highlight that laughter therapy enhances their spiritual well-being and strengthens their relationship with God (Situmorang, 2023). Participant 4 emphasizes that laughter deepens her faith and helps her trust in God's ability

to overcome life's challenges. Participant 5 views laughter as a gift from God, providing spiritual and physical healing and helping her relax despite ongoing problems. Participant 6 stresses that laughter helps her avoid dwelling on problems, trusting that the Lord will provide support. They shared:

Laughter motivated me to study more about the love of God. Then, laughter therapy enhances my spirituality. It improves my relationship with God. God wants us to be happy because our enemy wants us to be sad. But with God, you can overcome every obstacle in life. I just entrust all my problems to God. Obstacles in life may not go away, but the Bible says, *Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice.* (Participant 4, Personal Communication, June 27, 2024)

It makes me appreciate the author of laughter more, my God and Savior Jesus Christ. During and after the laughter therapy, I think of my redeemer and Lord Jesus, who wants me to be always healthy and active, especially in the work of God. After doing that, although the problem is still there, the heart is already relaxed. It is a medicine that comes from God, a natural medicine that God has provided for human beings to do away with the sickness that many of us are experiencing. Laughter is a blessing from the Lord. (Participant 5, Personal Communication, July 1, 2024)

Also, if problems arise, I don't dwell on them. Let it be. I know that the Lord will help me. (Participant 6, Personal Communication, May 19, 2024)

Synthesis

This research highlights the transformative effects of laughter therapy on the well-being of working mothers, emphasizing its physical, psychological, social, and spiritual benefits. The study reveals that laughter therapy reduces stress, enhances physical health, boosts mood, and improves sleep quality. It strengthens social bonds by fostering positive interactions within families, workplaces, and communities and shows that both real and simulated laughter offer similar therapeutic effects. The contagious nature of laughter, triggered by mirror neurons, amplifies its impact across social environments. Additionally, laughter therapy promotes spiritual well-being, helping mothers cultivate mindfulness, resilience, and a deeper connection to God, enabling them to navigate daily stresses with greater inner peace. Overall, laughter

therapy is presented as a holistic tool for enhancing health and resilience in working mothers.

4.0. Conclusion

This research underscores the profound and transformative role of laughter therapy in enhancing the holistic well-being of working mothers. By addressing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of health, laughter therapy emerges as a powerful intervention that significantly reduces stress, improves physical health, fosters emotional resilience, strengthens social connections, and nurtures spiritual growth. The findings reveal that genuine and simulated laughter activates similar therapeutic effects, making laughter therapy an accessible and versatile tool for promoting overall well-being.

Furthermore, the study highlights the ripple effect of laughter, amplified by the activation of mirror neurons. This contagious nature of laughter fosters a positive emotional environment, deepening social bonds and creating joyous moments among working mothers, their families, and their communities. These findings emphasize the critical role of laughter therapy in empowering working mothers to navigate daily challenges with greater optimism, resilience, and fulfillment.

By offering an integrative approach to health and well-being, laughter therapy proves to be an invaluable resource for improving the quality of life among working mothers. Its wide-ranging benefits position it as a vital intervention for promoting holistic health and enhancing the overall well-being of individuals in both personal and social contexts.

5.0. Limitations of the Findings

The present study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the relatively small sample size may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of working mothers, as it may not fully capture the diverse experiences and nuances of this demographic within the broader context of their lives. The study does not delve into potential drawbacks, limitations, or challenges associated with applying laughter therapy in specific contexts, leaving these aspects unexplored.

6.0. Practical Value of the Paper

The findings of this study underscore its significant practical value, offering insights that extend beyond theoretical contributions to address pressing needs in professional, familial, and community settings. For working mothers, the study affirms the transformative role of laughter therapy in fostering resilience, alleviating stress, and enhancing overall well-being. This insight is particularly valuable in

workplaces where stress and burnout are prevalent. By integrating laughter therapy into wellness initiatives, organizations can create supportive environments that enhance employee satisfaction, foster team cohesion, and improve productivity. Community organizations and support networks for working mothers also stand to benefit greatly. The study highlights the potential of laughter therapy as a cornerstone for fostering connection, mutual encouragement, and stress relief. These outcomes are particularly relevant in a world where working mothers often juggle multiple roles and responsibilities, underscoring the need for accessible and meaningful interventions.

On the familial front, the research demonstrates how laughter therapy can transcend individual benefits, enriching relationships within the home. Families that adopt laughter therapy as a shared activity can create emotionally nurturing environments, fostering deeper connections and a culture of positivity and mutual support. Healthcare and spiritual organizations further underscore the practical value of this study. For healthcare providers, the findings advocate for using laughter therapy as a complementary intervention for stress-related conditions, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, offering a noninvasive and cost-effective approach to improving patient outcomes. Spiritual groups, meanwhile, can frame laughter as a manifestation of divine grace, cultivating gratitude, mindfulness, and spiritual resilience among members. The integration of laughter therapy into educational settings also illustrates the study's broad practical implications. By incorporating laughter therapy into the training of counselors, social workers, and community leaders, educational institutions can equip professionals with effective tools to address diverse population needs, ensuring that the transformative benefits of laughter therapy reach marginalized and underserved communities.

7.0. Directions for Future Research

This study opens several opportunities for future research to expand the understanding and application of laughter therapy. Comparative research could examine its effectiveness alongside other stress management techniques, such as mindfulness or exercise, to identify unique benefits. Studying laughter therapy's effects on diverse groups, such as fathers, adolescents, students, or the elderly, could broaden its scope.

Further research could focus on incorporating laughter therapy into clinical settings as a complementary treatment for chronic illnesses or mental health challenges. Cross-cultural studies would help tailor laughter therapy interventions to different communities by understanding cultural influences on its reception and effectiveness.

8.0. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

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