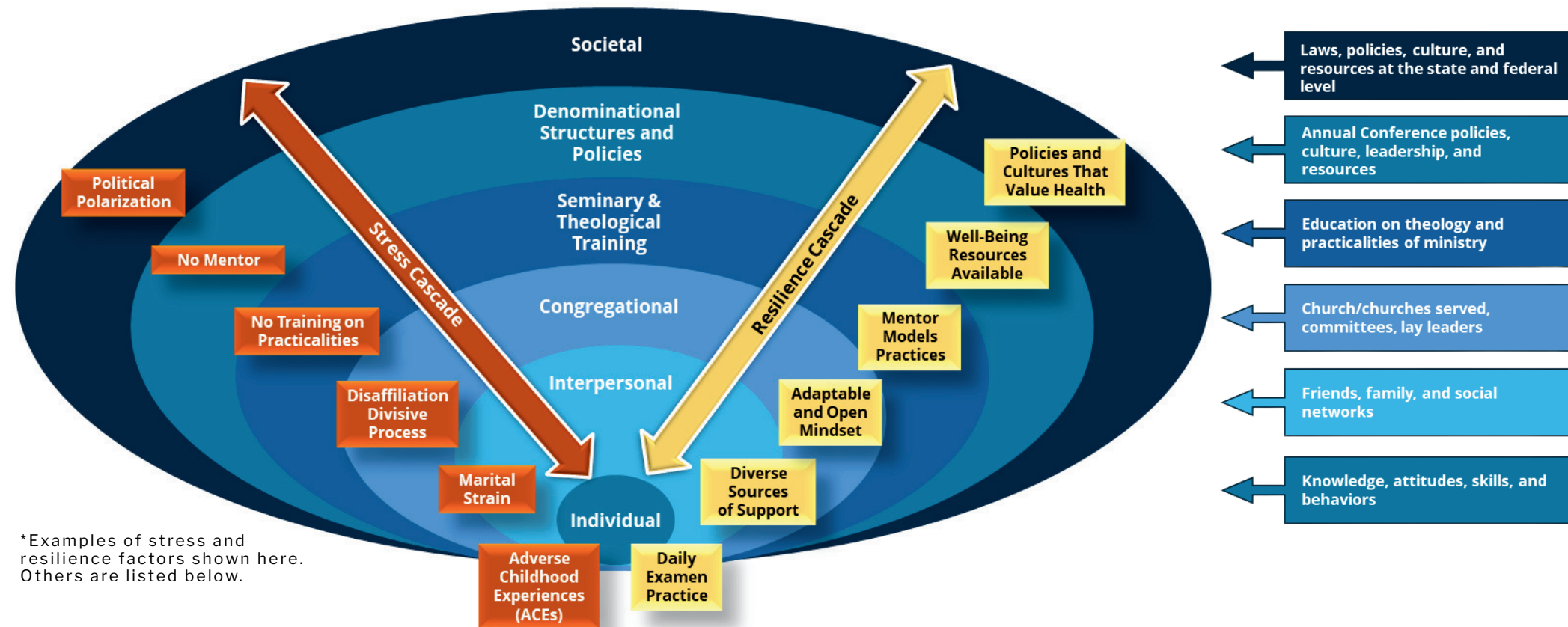


Factors Across Socioecological Levels May Create a Stress Symptom Cascade Potentially Buffered by Factors Generating a Resilience Cascade

Study findings across 18 years of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina identified factors related to mental distress and stress symptom outcomes, as well as positive mental health and ministry satisfaction outcomes. The model here, drawing on work by Lee et al. (2024), indicates hypothesized stress and resilience cascades in which factors may build on each other to increase stress symptoms or resilience. It is possible that resilience factors buffer stress symptoms in the face of stressors. Better health outcomes are achieved by working across multiple levels.



*Examples of stress and resilience factors shown here. Others are listed below.

Resilience is a process of growth in the midst of adversity that results in long-term, increased well-being. It is not an end state or a trait.

- Resilience requires ongoing practices to foster growth in challenging circumstances.
- The process of resilience involves growing and learning.
- Thus, the ‘bouncing back’ analogy falls short – one is ultimately transformed and has new wisdom and capabilities.

Data-Driven Factors of Clergy Well-Being

INDIVIDUAL: RESILIENCE FACTORS

- Positive mental health and spiritual well-being protect against future distress*
- Better physical health*
- Minimizing reactions to stress (mindfulness and Daily Examen practices)
- Process orientation to ministry
- Protected personal time
- Physical activity benefits mental health
- Perceived emotional support

INDIVIDUAL: STRESS FACTORS

- Work stress
- Financial stress
- Depression and anxiety symptoms drive future distress
- BMI related to future depression

INTERPERSONAL: RESILIENCE FACTORS

- More diverse sources of support*
- Feeling cared for by congregants*
- Spousal support

INTERPERSONAL: STRESS FACTORS

- Strained marriages
- Isolation at work

CONGREGATIONAL: RESILIENCE FACTORS

- Expressing care for clergy*
- Adaptable/open churches
- Church morale
- Negotiating pastor's time
- Communication & trust

CONGREGATIONAL: STRESS FACTORS

- Church conflict*
- Life unpredictability

SEMINARY & THEOLOGICAL TRAINING: RESILIENCE FACTORS

- Observing healthy mentors
- Supportive field education
- Trying out coping strategies
- Linking faith identity to health

UMC INSTITUTIONAL: RESILIENCE FACTORS

- Well-being resources
- Itinerancy – growth opportunity
- Mentoring during ordination
- Health encouragement

SOCIETAL: STRESS FACTORS

- Shrinking churches*
- Political polarization*
- Itinerancy – multiple stressors
- Higher BMI in rural areas
- Fewer financial resources in rural areas
- Racial health disparities

*Indicates potentially more important factors.