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**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE EXPERIENCE OF
SELECTED UNDERGRADUATES IN A FAITH-BASED
UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between spirituality and academic performance among Undergraduates in a Faith-Based University in Ogun state, Nigeria in order to discover if spiritual development of students is an important part of their overall wellbeing. Through a descriptive survey, 85 students were sampled using convenience sampling. Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Simple linear regression and one way ANOVA were used to test the three hypotheses drawn for the study. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between spirituality and the academic performance of the students. The study also showed variations in students' spirituality based on their gender and academic levels. The study recommends that educational policies that accommodate the spiritual development of students in higher education should be implemented. The study also suggests that educational psychologists, counsellors and other helping professionals should be equipped with skills and techniques to explore holistic approaches to enhancing the overall experience of undergraduates.

Keywords: Spirituality, Academic performance, relationship, undergraduates, students.

Introduction

Education, specifically, higher education, is a vital force in enhancing an individual's capacity, to contribute to national development (Omonijo, Anyaegbunam, Ejoh & Joe-Akunne, 2020). Many universities are established to enhance the academic development of students so that as they graduate from school with a good career paths, being useful to themselves and their societies.

As students gain technical skills in various disciplines however, they also gain emotional, social and sometimes moral development through their curriculum and interactions with peers, faculty and other elements that make up the school life. It has however been observed that an area of education which is the spirituality has not been fully researched, yet it is very vital to human overall well-being (Astin & Astin, 2004; Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Cox, 2011). This is an indication that higher education appears to provide all-round development of students but an extra touch of spirituality is needed to complete the cycle of building the individual student into a wholesome entity with a sense of purpose, direction, and positive character which will complement the academic and other aspects that the non-faith schools emphasize. Spirituality is a vital aspect of education that needs to be fully researched into in as much as recent development and life experiences with spiritual therapies are beginning to accentuate the significance of spirituality in the scheme of human wellbeing and development (Astin & Astin, 2004, Oloyede & Ofole, 2016; Kitjaroonchai & Hungyo, 2019). Meanwhile, Moberg (2010) had opined that scholars appear to be interested in how spirituality relates with other issues of human existence such as health, family, work life, education and so on.

Although past studies (Underwood & Teresi, 2002; Walker & Dixon, 2002; Cox, 2011; Flannery, 2012) were conducted to investigate the relationship, impact and influence of spirituality on students' overall academic performance, these studies have been more from western orientations, leaving insufficient evidence of such research in Africa. African scholars (Omeh, 2010, Okafor & Egbon, 2011, Omotere, 2011; Abdu-Raheem, 2012; Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014; Omoruyi, 2014; Adika & Adika, 2015; Ese & Inegbedion, 2015) had focused on other factors that enhance or hamper academic excellence. Some others (such as William & Isaac, 2016) also focused on aspects of spirituality with psychology, stress as well as students' coping mechanisms. In Nigeria specifically, emerging studies (Oloyede & Ofole, 2016; Zubairu & Sakariyau, 2016) in the area of spirituality and academic performance have also been limited to academic performances in specific subject areas such as Chemistry, Accounting and Christian Religious Studies, overlooking students' overall academic performances.

Furthermore, existing studies on spirituality and academic performance have provided evidences from non-faith institutions (e.g Bryant, 2007; Oloyede & Ofole, Pong, 2017), leaving slim evidence among the faith-based institutions where spirituality is considered as a core value. Recently however, Kitjaroonchai and Hungyo (2019) conducted a research from a faith-based institution in Thailand, leaving room for more studies to explore this unique area of research. Evidences from faith-based institutions in sub-Saharan Africa and specifically Nigeria, appear unavailable. This study is therefore an attempt to bridge such gap in knowledge.

The study investigated the relationship between spirituality and academic performance among selected undergraduates in a Faith-Based University in Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. Given this, this study was carried out within the context of a Faith-Based institution, Southwest

Nigeria. This research was born out of the need to investigate the connection between spirituality and students' academic performance among Nigerian students. Nigerian people have been termed religious (Mooney, 2010; Adetunji, 2013; Alder, 2016) among whom spirituality is taken seriously as a core of the lives of the people; influencing most, if not all of what they do (Chiorazzi, 2015). It is believed that findings from this study will provide information on not only the Nigerian context of the discourse, but also its dynamics as presented in a multi-denominational Faith-Based institution

Literature Review

The concept of Spirituality

Spirituality means different things to different people. The meaning attributed to spirituality is not only copious, but somewhat varied (Mattis, 2000, Bryant, 2007). Most scholars have only advanced operational definitions based on the focus of their studies, hence a non-unified definition. Cox (2011) considered spirituality as an individual's personal relationship with God. This view suggests spirituality as a personal, rather than a collective connection with God; implying that a student's spirituality is strictly about how he or she knows, understands and communicates with God. In line with Cox's perception, spirituality is viewed as believing and worshipping a non-human force (God), who possesses a supernatural power and authority over every facet of one's life, including one's beliefs and practices (Jagers & Mock, 1993; Chiorazzi, 2015).

Conversely, Redon (2005) considers spirituality as situated in cultural meaning and values, rather than being strictly about a belief in the supernatural. To her, spirituality in the context of teaching and learning in higher education is expressed if it "honours our humanity, instils a sense of wonder and sacredness and humility in our college classrooms, respects and embraces alternate cultural realities and connects faculty and students in meaningful ways" (cited in Wood & Hilton, 2014:31). In other words, magnifying the theistic context of spirituality is not the issue but how it translates to humanness; and it is expressed on the platform of culture and the value placed on relationships with others.

Theoretically speaking, the Sacred theory as advanced by Pargament (2013) which corroborates Durkheim, (1912) cited in Omonijo & Anyaegbunam, (2020) states that spirituality is basically a search for the sacred and that spiritual development is defined by three processes namely: discovery, conservation and transformation. According to Pargament, there is an ongoing search in man to find the sacred. When this is found, there is the tendency to preserve or conserve that which was found till it ultimately leads to transformation of the individual. The student at the higher level of education is at that period of emerging into adulthood where in lifestyle choices (including spiritual) are at its peak (Arnett, 2000).

In finding more meaning for spirituality, the words religion, religiosity and religious practices, are terms that are used in past studies to connote spirituality in one sense or another and are therefore sometimes used interchangeably (Astin & Astin, 2004; Mooney, 2010, Cox, 2011;

Hosseini, 2015, Olowookere, Oguntuashe & Adekeye, 2016). Some scholars however argue that they are not one and the same (Wood & Hilton, 2012; Van der Merwe & Habron, 2015). They noted that while religion is a “shared belief system typified by principles, customs, practices, and rites in adherence to God or multiple deities. In contrast, religiosity is the performance of these principles, customs and rites” (Mattis & Jagers, 2001 cited in Wood & Hilton, 2012:31).

To them, religiosity may or may not be a belief in religion because an individual may express religiosity based on cultural practices, without a commitment towards any religious body. To this end, spirituality and religiosity are two different concepts, which though express beliefs, may not necessarily, have the same impetus. In other words, spirituality is a belief in God, and is not necessarily tied to an organized body of religion (Wood & Hilton, 2012). In a similar vein, Williamson (2010) argued that even though spirituality discourses will most times speak to the issue of religion, “the spiritual, need not pertain to the religious” (cited in Merwe & Habron (2015:48). This implies that it is possible to be religious and not necessarily spiritual.

Yob (2011) therefore further argued that “religion has shaped and been shaped by the spiritual experience but does not have exclusive rights to spirituality and in fact must work diligently to prevent losing it” [cited in Merwe and Habron, (2015:48)]. On the other hand, Hill & Pergament (2003) had argued that there are several dangers to this bifurcation of spirituality and religion. First, the polarization of religion and spirituality into institutional and individual domains ignores the fact that all forms of spiritual expression unfold in social contexts.... Second, implicit in the evolving definitions is the sense that spirituality is good and religion is ‘bad’ which overlooks the positive and negative elements that each construct can have depending on if they are used appropriately or inappropriately. Third, religion is often considered a very important aspect of a person’s spirituality so most lay people do not make a distinction between the concepts. Finally, dichotomizing religion and spirituality may ultimately lead to needless duplications in concepts and measures (p.64). This implies that in attempting to explain spirituality, it may be safer not to make it all-inclusive but at best, operationalize its use. This study however, considers spirituality from the Christian perspective and does not differentiate spirituality from religiosity because in the thoughts of Cox (2011), they are interdependent rather than independent.

Allport & Ross (1967) had earlier introduced the terms intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (the I-E construct) to indicate different orientations of spirituality. Intrinsic (I) religiosity connotes a person whose motives towards religion are genuine and a means to an end. An intrinsically religious providing a framework for his life and all he does (Masters, 2013) and so forming the basis for his actions and inactions, extrinsic religiosity indicates being religious for the sake of certain gains such as one’s basic need for social relations and comfort (Masters, 2013), and possibly for personal aggrandizement. Olowookere, Oguntuashe & Adekeye (2016) therefore described intrinsic religiosity as synonymous with spirituality. Spirituality has also been viewed to be multidimensional (Reed, 1999); and can be experienced and expressed in diverse ways”

(Lippman & McIntosh, 2010). This further explains why scholars will rather operationalize their use of the term than claim authorship of its meaning. Expressions of spirituality may be perceived as been through feelings of God's love, thankfulness, beauty of creation (Underwood & Teresi, 2002); through church or fellowship attendance, scripture reading, and praying, fasting, voluntary participation in a service group and a strong belief in God (Cox, 2011; Wood & Hilton, 2012). The expressions of spirituality; such as deciding to create time to read scriptures, pray, fast, serve in a small group, and so on, demonstrate a student's voluntary and personal drive towards his/her spiritual beliefs. In other words, anybody can have a religion and be religious; it takes commitment to be spiritual.

To maintain such level of commitment, a student will have to take out time to engage the supernatural, which has the capacity to take his or her time that could otherwise pass for reading time. The question then is, does this extra time of reading scriptures, attending an hour of prayer, fasting, praying, take a negative toll on students' academic performance (which is their primary purpose as students)? Do students who demonstrate a high level of spirituality also show a high level of academic performance?

Spirituality and Academic Performance

In a quest to find an answer to whether or not the time students take out to receive spiritual instructions, impacts their academics negatively or not, Hodge (2012) examined the students' English proficiency and their release time for spiritual instructions. His findings indicate that students who are released for spiritual instructions "score at least as well as their peers..." (p.1) on the same tests. This implies that being spiritual and expressing it through spiritual activities as a student, does not necessarily hamper academic success.

Rather, studies have provided rich evidence that a strong positive relationship exists between spirituality and academic performance (Line, 2005, Fukofuka, 2007; Mooney, 2010; Cox, 2011; Flannery, 2012; Wood & Hilton, 2012; Hosseini, 2015). In a survey of the Higher Education Research Institute, Los Angeles, Astin and Astin (2004), reported the impact of students' religious/spiritual experiences on their academic subjects, college activities and their behaviours. They found an association between earning "better-than-expected grades" (N.P) and students' high level of religious involvement which entailed reading religious and spiritual texts and literatures, church attendance, as well as singing spiritual songs. Similarly, Hosseini (2015) asserted that an improved spirituality enhances students' academic achievement and wellbeing.

Holland (2014), studied the relationship between academic engagement, religiosity and spirituality ("partnering with a higher power") among African American urban youth; and his findings revealed that African American university students, attested to the fact that their religious and spiritual beliefs provided a positive support to their academic endeavours. He therefore suggested that it is important for school personnel to know other forms of support that students have for their academic excellence, beyond their families and schools, so as to advise and support them accordingly.

In his article on *Religion, Spirituality, and Intellectual Development*, Kazanjian (2005) argued that religion and spirituality help to equip students with skills necessary to be citizens of their nations and by extension, the world. If this is so, Kazanjian believes that religious identity should not only be emphasized by religious institutions but also by educators, because by reason of the outcomes, it is an “educational obligation”. After over a decade of research on issues bothering around religion and spirituality, Kazanjian and his team, developed five goals that should drive educators towards enhancing the religious and spiritual life of their students. These goals include, amongst others:

1. To respond to students’ learning needs
2. To equip students with the skills necessary to be citizens of the nation and the world
3. To provide an environment in which our students can grow as whole persons.

Several studies have advanced the positive relationship between spirituality and academic performance of students (Walker & Dixon, 2002; Fukofuka, 2007; Flannery, 2012; Wood & Hilton, 2012; Holland, 2014). Most of these studies are however of western orientations and similar studies are yet to be fully explored in sub-Saharan Africa, especially, Nigeria.

Spirituality and Higher Education

Parents who have religious inclinations show concern about whether their children will sustain their religious interests and values, given their characteristic tendency for autonomy (Okunlola, Omonijo, Shaibu, Albert, Okeke et al., 2016). As much as they want them to be sound academically, they desire that balance in spirituality and academic success. Scholars however assert that students develop spirituality while in school; and this development affects all areas of their individuality (Astin & Astin, 2004). The evidence of this dates back to more than five decades ago, indicating that spirituality among undergraduates is not a new development. Hoge (1974), cited in an article of Social Science Research Council (2009) reviewed a host of studies on religious practices and beliefs among college students focusing on trends between 1920 and 1970. Hoge observed that though students demonstrated religiosity in earlier years, there was a decline between the 1920s and late 1930s. A marked increase was however observed from the 1950s, with the major change being a high level of tolerance for various religious views and ideas. While Hoge’s findings may not necessarily provide the indices for/of spirituality, it does give evidence that students identify with God, while on campus.

In a similar vein, Hunt and Hunt (1991) provided a history of the first five decades of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and how her evangelical ethos helped achieve a huge support for students to be involved in foreign missions, etc. Obtaining data through archival materials and interviews with about two hundred alumni of the fellowship, Hunt and Hunt were able to bring out evidence from the 19th century to support the fact that spiritual beliefs and practices among undergraduates, is part of the package for developing students to be functional members of the society.

This is particularly true, given the evidence of Ozorak, (2003) that students' religious commitment was expressed through volunteerism. In other words, students who demonstrated a personal relationship with God, from his findings, were willing to make out time to serve humanity. Furthermore, Hartley (2004) reviewed published literature between years 1989 and 2004 which focused on college attendance and students' religious practices and beliefs. He reported how college life, including religious activities, impacts students' wellbeing; indicating that spirituality is not a disadvantage to student but a plus in all ramifications.

In a similar vein, Astin & Astin (2004) led a survey involving 3,680 undergraduates from various universities and colleges. Their reports reveal a high level of spiritual engagement among students; where, over 50% of them reported placing high value on "integrating spirituality" with their everyday lives, including their studies.

In the light of the foregoing, there is not only evidence that undergraduates can build a life of spirituality while in school, they also show an appreciation for the role that spirituality plays in improving their wellbeing, as well as helping to manage their stress in a way that allows them focus on their academics (Cox, 2011; Hosseini, 2015), thereby enhancing academic excellence.

Gender and Spirituality amongst Undergraduates

Scholars who study spirituality among college students have also shown interest in gender variations and expressions of spirituality. In his study on *Gender Differences in Spiritual Development during the College Years*, Bryant (2007) used a national and longitudinal sample of 3,680 college students across 13 spiritual characteristics and explored the personal and educational factors associated with changes in spirituality during college. He found a marked gender difference in spiritual qualities and inclinations of the students based on their "religious identity, peer relationships, and science exposure" (NP). He discovered that females generally showed higher levels of spirituality, than their male counterparts. Bryant's findings align with those of other studies such as Ozorak (2003); UCLA (2004); Jules, Hamilton, Brands, Gastaldo, Wright et al. (2015).

Some scholars claim that since religion as an agent of socialization, grooms' females to be committed and submissive [Brannon, (2010), cited in Jules, et.al. (2015)], this may be transferred into their personal relationships with God and may be responsible for their high reports on spirituality. Ozorak (2003) however warned that one should not be quick to judge one gender as better than the other because males and females' perception of relationship with God may differ. While the males in the study of (Bryant 2007) indicated higher on 'religious identity', their counterparts were lower on the same. E.g. being protestant or catholic enhanced a greater sense of commitment/ spirituality in males than in female students; who derived theirs from peer group influences. Female students who had religious friends, tended to be influenced towards attending religious groups on campus, which females that sense of 'I am spiritual'.

Spirituality and Academic levels

Bryant, Choi and Yasuno (2003), had posited that students' religious involvement generally reduces during the school years. Their perceived weak religious participation may make some of them feel less spiritual, i.e. their personal assessment of themselves as declining in church attendance, and so on, may make them doubt their spiritual maturity. Similarly, the National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose, as reported by Astin and Astin (2004), also revealed that the spirituality of students seemed to decline across three years of college. Astin and Astin observed that among all the factors considered, reduced religious service attendance was top on the list. While 52% of the sample reported to have attended service more frequently in their earlier years in school, than in later years, only 9% underscored that they grew stronger in spirituality as they advanced in their college years. In spite of this data, the students agreed that spirituality is "very important" (p.7) to their lives and integrating spirituality into their lives, was the way to go.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design since it required the opinions and perceptions of the participants, as regards their relationship with the transcendent; required their self-report on their spirituality and their academic performance. The study included undergraduate students from a faith-based private University in Ota, Ogun State; Nigeria out of which 85 students were sampled out of 110 originally selected. The sample was based on the fact that 23 out of the original selection were invalid. The technique used for sampling was convenience sampling, which allows for selection based on ease of finding available volunteers. The choice of this technique was due to the limited time frame available to complete the study. The participants covered 100-400 level students.

Personal Spirituality and Academic Performance Scale (PSAPS) was employed to measure students' spirituality and self-reported CGPAs. This is a self-developed scale which has two sections. Section A was used to obtain some basic information, including their CGPAs, while B was used to measure some dimensions of spirituality. PSAPS is a 10-item scale, based on a four-point Likert range- Always, often, rarely and never (1-4). The items indicated high internal consistency reliability, as Cronbach alpha was 0.766. Face and content validity were also obtained through an initial pilot and expert advice.

The PSAPS was scored after retrieval from participants. Maximum score obtainable was 40 and minimum was 10. A mean score of 28.1 was obtained and was used to separate levels of spirituality into high and low. Scores from the mean and above (28.1 and above) were rated as high in spirituality, while those below were rated as low. Data obtained was collated, entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 tool and analyzed by same. Inferential statistical methods were used for the analysis. These included, Pearson Moment Correlation, Simple regression analysis, t-test for independent samples and One-way ANOVA.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between spirituality and academic performance among Covenant University students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the spirituality of male students as compared with females.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in spirituality of students among academic levels

Testing of Hypotheses and Results

The results of findings from this study are presented below. They are based on the hypothesis that guided the research.

H₀₁. There is no significant relationship between spirituality and academic performance among Covenant University students.

Table 1: Showing Correlation between Spirituality & Academic performance

Variables	1	2	Sig.
1.CGPA	1	.263*	
2.Spirituality	.263*	1	.016

Correlation is significant at *P<. 05

Key 1 = CGPA 2 = Spirituality

Table 1 reveals a positive correlation between spirituality and academic performance since $r = 0.263$ and P value is 0.016 which is less than 0.5. This implies that there is a positive relationship between spirituality and academic performance; hence the H₀₁ which states that there is no significant relationship between spirituality and academic performance was rejected.

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis showing the Relationship between Spirituality and Academic Performance

	R	R ²	F	P	β	t	Sig.
Constant						4.394	.000
Spirituality	.263	.069	6.019	<.05	.263	2.453	.016

- a. Dependent variable: Academic performance
- b. Predictor variable: Spirituality

Table 2 is a simple regression analysis showing the ability of spirituality to predict academic performance ($\beta = .263$, $P < .05$). Specifically, spirituality accounted for 6.9% variance in academic performance of students. This implies that as students' spirituality increased, their level of academic performance significantly increased, further corroborating the significant relationship between spirituality and academic performance and fails to confirm H₀₁.

H₀2. There is no significant difference in the spirituality of male students as compared with females.

Table 3: Test for Independent Samples showing the difference in spirituality based on gender.

	N	X	SD	Df	T	Sig.
Male	35	26.826	5.24957	80	-2.537	.013
Female	47	29.5745	4.52887			

From table 3 above, calculated t-value of -2.537 is greater than t-critical of -1.99 ($t(80) = -2.537, P < .05$), indicating a significant difference in spirituality of male and female students. By implication, female students ($\bar{X} = 29.6$) had higher level of spirituality than their male counterparts ($\bar{X} = 26.8$). Therefore, the H₀ 2 which states that there is no significant difference in spirituality of male and female students was rejected.

H₀3. There is no significant difference in spirituality of students among academic levels

Table 4: One-way Analysis of Variance showing the Difference in Spirituality of Students by Academic Levels.

From table 4, calculated f-value of 4.377 is greater than f-critical of 2.758 ($F(3) = 4.377, P < .05$), indicating a significant difference in spirituality based on academic levels. In the light of this, H₀ 3 which states that there is no significant difference in spirituality of study students among academic levels was rejected.

Table 5: Scheffé Post Hoc test showing Spirituality by Academic levels

	1	2	3	4	X	SD	N
1	-	3.59259	-.75000	.14583	29.333	3.00000	27
2	-3.59259	-	-4.34259	-3.44676	25.7407	4.03440	16
3	.75000	4.34259	-	.89583	30.0833	5.17449	9
4	-.14583	3.44676	-.89583	-	29.1875	5.15388	24

The mean difference is significant at *P < .05

Key 1 = 100L 2 = 200L 3 = 300L 4 = 400L

The result in Table 5 further shows the significant difference in spirituality based on academic levels. From the result, there exists significant difference in spirituality between 300 level students and other levels (Mean diff. = -4.345, $P < .05$). While the other levels appear similarly low in spirituality, 300L was high, corroborating why the H₀ 3 which states that there is no significant difference in spirituality of students among academic levels was not confirmed.

Discussions

This study from its first hypothesis, found a significant relationship between students' level of spirituality and their academic performance. The finding aligned with previous studies which posit that spirituality has positive associations with academic performance, especially as it helps students maintain a sense of purpose, manage their stressors; overcome their limitations and reduce their distractions (Fukofuka, 2007; Cox, 2011; Wood & Hilton, 2012). Spirituality enhances the internalization of positive values (Olowookere, et.al, 2016) which may make a student discipline enough to stay in class, maintain a healthy social network as well as stay out of trouble, including examination malpractices. It is therefore safe to say faith

and school are related; hence faith can be well integrated into the school's teaching and learning process (Astin & Astin, 2004; Fukofuka, 2007).

Furthermore, this study found from its second hypothesis that there was a significant difference between male and female students' level of spirituality. Females showed a significantly higher level of spirituality than males and this outcome aligns with past studies, which suggest that female students show a greater commitment to spiritual matters than their male counterparts. In this study, more females than males indicated attending early morning prayers, including those who scored low on spirituality. This may be what Bryant (2007) considers the cognitive and affective measures of spirituality, since it has that element of commitment to certain rituals within a faith-based context. Again, females have been said to be more peer group inclined when it comes to what gives them a sense of spirituality (Byrant, 2007). Females tend to gravitate towards the religious affiliations of their religious friends; and when they fulfil this, they believe they are spiritual. Most of the males, who scored high on spirituality, claim that they belong to service groups and they will not be coerced before they pray. Also extant in literature, is the fact that males are generally higher risk takers than females (Jules, et.al, 2015) and so may not mind the consequences of not attending church for instance.

Apart from the above, the study also revealed a significant difference in spirituality between academic levels, especially between 200L-300L. Other levels indicated no significance. Existing literature (e.g. such as Astin & Astin, 2004, Rowe, 2014) indicates that students decline generally in their spirituality as they advance in campus life; especially in church attendance. Most participants in this study showed high attendance in church service, even when they fall low on other elements of spirituality such as daily bible reading, praying, fasting once a week, and so on. High attendance here may be due to the fact that chapel attendance is compulsory for all students and strict punitive measures are taken against defaulters. This study in line with Krause, Hayward, Bruce and Woolever (2013) have inferred that church attendance alone, cannot be termed as spirituality. Other features of spirituality must also be maintained if it must qualify for commitment.

In the light of the foregoing, it may therefore be safe to state that given the characteristic tendencies of adolescents and undergraduates, who will rather spend their time reading, chatting on social media platforms, watching movies or/and listening to music (Odukoya, Adekeye &

Okunlola, 2016), having a student deliberately choose to pray, read scriptures, fast once in a week, attend a joint hour of prayer and/or enlist in a service group, indicate the value such student attaches to such elements of spirituality. And while it may be compulsory in a faith-based institution such as the context of this study, for every student to attend chapel service, it is absolutely voluntary and personal to pray, read scriptures, fast once in a week, attend a joint hour of prayer and/or enlist in a service group, and so on. This study therefore submits that being spiritual has nothing to do with poor grades, but has everything to do with enhancing values that promote good grades among undergraduates.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

This study is not without its own limitations, just like other researches. The study was carried out within a faith-based institution in a State in Nigeria. Its findings may only apply to the context and not necessarily generalizable to other faith-based institutions outside the State or outside Nigeria. Also, convenience sampling has the disadvantage of sometimes not representing the population as a whole, as well as being biased by the volunteers. Nevertheless, this study could set the stage or provide a framework to replicate the study in other institutions.

Again, the sample size for this study was small, considering the nature of the study and the population of the study. Being a descriptive survey, it may be important to consider larger samples in subsequent studies. Furthermore, secondary sources of students' CGPA could be used to obtain more authentic academic performance records. Other studies could also explore qualitative options of data collection such as interviews and focused group discussions. Also, a comparative study between faith based and secular universities could be explored.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Accumulated scholarship reveals rich empirical evidence that spirituality is a positive correlate of academic excellence. Leveraging on existing literature, the forgoing has been about an attempt to investigate if the positive relationship between students' spirituality and their academic performance, as defined in previous studies, holds true in the context of a faith-based institution in sub-Saharan Africa. It also attempted to check whether there are variations in students' spirituality based on their gender and academic levels. Findings from the study indicate a similar result of a positive correlation between academic performance and spirituality; and while female students show a higher level of spirituality compared to their male counter parts, variations among academic levels appear slim. The study recommends that educational policies that accommodate the spiritual development of students in higher education should be implemented. Educational psychologists, counsellors and other helping professionals should be equipped with skills and techniques to explore holistic approaches to enhancing the overall experience of undergraduates.

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