

Level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing among Master's Degree Students of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute, Nairobi, Kenya. An Affiliate of Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the level of psycho-spiritual well-being of the Master's Degree students of the Nairobi Campus of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute (PSI) of the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation, an Affiliate of Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria. The growing academic, emotional and existential demands of postgraduate study have heightened concern about students' holistic wellbeing, especially in spiritually orientated institutions. Despite the emphasis on psycho-spiritual formation in such institutions, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of students in faith-based educational institutions. The purpose of the study was to assess the level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing of Master's students of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute. The study used a quantitative research approach with a descriptive research design. A census method was adopted because the population size was small (33 Master's students, 15 males, and 18 females) enrolled at the Institute. The findings showed that the students had a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing (Mean = 4.58, SD = 0.50) on a five-point scale. The low standard deviation indicated uniformity of responses among participants, implying that the majority of students had a good psycho-spiritual health and balance. The findings present that the institute provide a psycho-spiritual environment. The communal living, spiritual formation programs, psycho-spiritual counselling and reflective practices were beneficial for student's psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Keywords: Psycho-spiritual wellbeing, Master's students, Psycho-Spiritual Institute, spiritual formation, wellbeing, Nairobi, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing academic, social, and existential pressures in postgraduate education have led to growing concerns regarding students' psycho-spiritual wellbeing. At institutions with a psycho-spiritual orientation, such as the Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi, it is essential to investigate how students perceive stress and how this relates to their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. This research seeks to quantify this relationship and explore demographic and contextual variables relationship.

Background to the Study

Psycho-spiritual wellbeing has emerged as a critical construct in understanding the holistic wellbeing of individuals which include priests and religious men and women who dedicate their lives to spiritual service. Wellbeing, broadly defined, encompasses an individual's positive and healthy functioning, including the ability to obtain resilience and boldness in times of distress, pain, and suffering (Layard, 2010). The concept of psycho-spiritual wellbeing integrates psychological dimensions, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and mental health—with spiritual dimensions, including connectedness to self, others, the universe, and the divine (Egunjobi, 2024).

Religious priests and religious are expected to demonstrate healthy behaviours and relationships, being spiritually and emotionally stable, and capable of handling life's challenges positively (Ellison et al, 2001). Due to the nature of their vocation, ministry, and communal life, they are anticipated to possess higher levels of

psycho-spiritual wellbeing. They undergo extensive formation programmes addressing human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, moral, communitarian, and psychological dimensions (Onyekwelu et al., 2024). Despite these formation efforts, research indicates that levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among clergy and religious vary significantly based on contextual factors, including exposure to trauma, cultural dynamics, and institutional support structures.

The Psycho-Spiritual Institute (PSI), as an institute of integral formation and holistic healing center for priests and religious and lay, occupies a unique position in nurturing the psycho-spiritual health of its members. However, limited empirical research has been conducted specifically on the psycho-spiritual wellbeing levels of priests and religious associated with such institutes. Existing studies have examined psycho-spiritual wellbeing among male formees in religious congregations (Koffi et al, 2025), priests following the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (Habimana et al, 2024), clergy during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sepaiyan et al, 2024), and survivors of violent attacks (Uvihi et al, 2024). These studies reveal that while many religious professionals maintain high levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing despite adversity, significant variations exist that warrant further investigation.

Understanding the baseline level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among priests and religious of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute is essential for developing targeted interventions, enhancing formation programs, and ensuring that those who serve as healers and spiritual guides are themselves holistically healthy. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among priests and religious of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of holistic education, one that integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. Institutions that are spiritually grounded, such as the Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, play a unique role in nurturing not only academic excellence but also psycho-spiritual growth. However, while the academic and spiritual goals of such institutions are well-articulated in theory, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical research exploring the lived experiences of students, particularly in relation to how stress affects their psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Despite these concerns, there is a lack of systematic, data-driven understanding of how perceived stress levels relate to psycho-spiritual wellbeing within this unique academic and spiritual context. Most existing studies on student wellbeing focus on psychological stress and general coping mechanisms, with limited attention to spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, much of the available research is conducted in secular institutions, leaving a knowledge gap concerning students enrolled in faith-based or spiritually grounded educational environments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing among master's degree students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi, Kenya. The study will explore how demographic and educational factors relate with both perceived stress levels and psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Research Objectives

To assess the levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among master's students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute.

Research Questions

What are the levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among master's students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Theory, developed by Egunjobi, (2023) operationalizes psycho-spiritual wellbeing through five core components: self-awareness, connectedness, meaningfulness, compassion, and self-transcendence. Each component contributes uniquely to the overall construct while maintaining interdependence

with the others. Self-awareness refers to the ability and habit of paying attention to one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, including considering patterns in thinking and making sense of the world (Sekharam et al, 2023).

Connectedness encompasses the sense of connection one has with oneself, others, and the wider world, including family, community, nature, and the divine (Watts et al., 2022). Egunjobi (2024) identifies five types of connectedness: intraconnectedness (connection to self), interconnectedness (connection to others), ancestral connectedness (connection to ancestors), cosconnectedness (connection to the universe), and supraconnectedness (connection to the transcendent/God). Meaningfulness is the capacity to experience a sense of importance, significance, value, recognition, and purpose in life (Egunjobi et al., 2024). Steger (as cited in Egunjobi, 2024) defines meaning in life as the ability to make sense of and comprehend one's life while having purpose.

Compassion involves treating oneself and others with kindness, accepting imperfections, and acting to ease the pains and sufferings of others (Egunjobi, 2024). Self-transcendence is an individual's ability to go beyond, expand, and dissolve personal boundaries, elevating oneself toward a more spiritual experience that fosters connection with the entire universe (Egunjobi, 2024).

Empirical Studies on Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Among Religious Professionals

Koffi et al. (2025) conducted a mixed-methods study assessing psycho-spiritual wellbeing among 285 male formees from different religious congregations at Tangaza University, Kenya. The study revealed high overall psycho-spiritual wellbeing ($M=3.9768$, $SD=0.54009$), with all five components scoring above 3.9. Qualitative interviews indicated that family experiences promoting self-expression, respect for individuality, and connection to cultural and religious practices fostered strong self-awareness and emotional maturity. The study recommended further exploration of elements that enhance psycho-spiritual wellbeing among formees.

Habimana et al. (2024) investigated psycho-spiritual wellbeing among priests in selected Catholic dioceses in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The study employed an embedded mixed-methods design with 162 participants (quantitative) and in-depth interviews. Findings indicated high levels of self-awareness ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.77$), connectedness ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.816$), compassion ($M=4.36$, $SD=0.820$), meaningfulness ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.65$), and moderate self-transcendence ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.777$). Regression analysis revealed that genocide experiences explained 14.6% of psycho-spiritual wellbeing variance, with physical experiences showing strong positive effects ($b=0.649$, $p=0.004$) and emotional experiences showing negative effects ($b=-1.347$, $p=0.000$). The study concluded that spirituality served as a vital coping resource despite profound trauma.

Sepaiyan et al. (2024) examined the psychological influence of COVID-19 on psycho-spiritual wellbeing among 119 priests and religious in Ngong Diocese, Kenya. Using Carol Ryff's psychological wellbeing model and a convergent parallel design, the study found that 66% of respondents reported being psychologically affected by the pandemic, with 45% affected to a moderate extent. Psychological effects (loneliness, anxiety, fear, stress, trauma) had a positive and significant correlation with psycho-spiritual wellbeing ($r=0.490$, $p=0.000$), explaining 24.0% of the variation. Notably, a unit increase in psychological effects was associated with a 0.599 unit increase in psycho-spiritual wellbeing, suggesting that challenges paradoxically deepened spiritual connection through increased reflection, prayer, and community support (Pirutinsky, Cherniak, & Rosmarin, 2020).

Uvihi, Asatsa, and Egunjobi (2024) investigated the relationship between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and psycho-spiritual wellbeing among 316 survivors of Fulani herdsmen attacks at St. Ignatius Mission Mbalom, Makurdi Diocese, Benue State, Nigeria. The study found that 82% of respondents exhibited high levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing despite 78% showing traces of PTSD symptoms (mean PTSD score=46.25, $SD=13.75$). The Pearson correlation between PTSD and psycho-spiritual wellbeing was negative and significant ($r=-0.477$, $p<0.01$), indicating that higher psycho-spiritual wellbeing was associated with lower PTSD symptoms. Coping strategies identified included spirituality, farming, charity work, prayers, community unity, counselling, and spiritual direction. The study recommended integrating mental health services into faith-based settings.

Research consistently demonstrates that access to psycho-spiritual resources significantly impacts clergy wellbeing. Habimana et al. (2024) found that while 91.4% of priests agreed that spiritual exercises improved their wellbeing, only 66.7% frequently attended counselling sessions, and mean scores for access to adequate resources ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.16$) and diocesan counselling departments ($M=2.48$, $SD=1.30$) were relatively low. This gap between spiritual resource availability and psychological support availability highlights an area requiring attention in religious institutions.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on psycho-spiritual wellbeing among religious professionals, several gaps persist. First, limited studies have specifically examined priests and religious affiliated with psycho-spiritual institutes, organizations explicitly dedicated to integrating psychological and spiritual formation. Second, existing research has focused on crisis contexts (genocide, pandemics, violent attacks) rather than normative assessments of wellbeing in stable formation environments. Third, comparative studies examining how different religious congregations or institutes influence psycho-spiritual wellbeing outcomes remain scarce. Fourth, the relationship between formation duration, formation quality, and psycho-spiritual wellbeing levels requires further investigation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research Methodology refers to a systematic investigation that focuses on quantifying data and analyzing numerical information to explain phenomena, identify patterns, test relationships, and make predictions. It is grounded in the principles of objectivity, measurability, and replicability. This methodology is commonly used in the social sciences, health sciences, education, and other fields where researchers aim to test hypotheses, measure variables, and draw generalizable conclusions based on empirical evidence.

Research Design

This study used a Descriptive Research Design. The study was carried out in Psycho-Spiritual institute among 33 masters' students studying psycho-spiritual therapy and counselling. Target population is the total number of participants in the given area of research. The geographic and temporal characteristics of the target population need to be described, as well as types of units being included.

Table 1 Target Population

Participants	(Participants)	Target population
Masters Students		
	Male	15
	Female	18
	Total	33

Sampling Procedure

Census as a method. Census is a method in which data is collected from every member of the entire population being studied, rather than selecting a subset or sample. In research terms, it involves complete enumeration of all the units in the population of interest.

In this study: *Level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing among Master's Degree Students of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute, Nairobi, Kenya*, a census method is justified because:

1. **Small Population Size:** With a total of 33 students, the population is small enough to include everyone without being logistically or financially burdensome.
2. **Comprehensive Representation:** A census ensures that every student's experience is captured, increasing the accuracy and generalizability of the findings within that specific group.

3. Eliminates Sampling Bias: Since no one is excluded, the risk of sampling bias is eliminated.
4. Higher Credibility: The results are more robust and reliable because they reflect the entire population, not a sample.

Data Collection

Data were collected using standardized questionnaires, distributed to all Master's students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi, Kenya. Given the relatively small population size ($N = 33$), a census approach was used, ensuring full participation and comprehensive representation of the target population. The questionnaires were distributed in printed form during class sessions, with adequate instructions and ethical guidelines explained beforehand. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to encourage honest responses. Completed questionnaires were returned on the same day to minimize attrition and ensure high response rates.

The Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Scale developed by Egunjobi et al. (2023) is designed to assess individuals' experiences of integrated psychological and spiritual health. It examines areas such as Meaningfulness, connectedness, transcendence, Self-awareness and Compassion. The scale was developed within an African context and takes into consideration African spiritual and cultural constructs, making it highly appropriate for use in Kenya. Construct Validity: It captures the multi-dimensional nature of psycho-spiritual wellbeing, aligning with the holistic philosophy of institutions like the Psycho-Spiritual Institute.

The Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Scale by Egunjobi et al. is psychometrically sound, contextually appropriate, and aligned with the study's objectives. Their use ensures the collection of valid, reliable, and meaningful data to explore the relationship between perceived stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing among the target population.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

It is vital that everyone involved in research adhered to the ethical framework within which they should operate. Hence, ethical considerations in this study included informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, honest report of findings and provision of appropriate references of the sources for the study. The research therefore strived to adhere to all the ethical procedures required in research of this nature.

Data Analysis

In addressing the research objectives, a variety of statistical techniques were employed based on the nature of the research questions and the scale of measurement of the variables involved. explore the *descriptive levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing* among master's students, descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were utilized. This approach was appropriate for summarizing the central tendencies and variability within the data, thereby offering a clear overview of the students' general experiences regarding stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Overall, the choice of statistical tests was guided by the level of measurement and the specific research question, ensuring that each analytical method aligned with the study's objectives and the nature of the data collected.

Interpretations of Results

What are the levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among master's students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute?

Table 4 Level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PSW Being Level	33	4	5	4.58	.502

The psycho-spiritual wellbeing of master's students at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi was measured using a 5-point scale. The results indicated a high average level of wellbeing ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.50$), with scores

ranging from 1 to 5. These findings suggest that students generally experience strong psycho-spiritual health, with minimal variability across the sample ($N = 33$).

These findings indicate that, on average, students reported very high levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. A mean of 4.58 on a 5-point scale suggests that the majority of students feel spiritually and psychologically well-balanced, engaged, and supported. The low standard deviation (0.50) indicates that responses were fairly consistent across participants, showing minimal variability in how students perceive their psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

This high level of wellbeing could be attributed to the nature of the academic environment at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute, which likely includes spiritual formation, counseling support, reflective practices, and community life—all of which foster psycho-spiritual growth.

Summary of Findings

The objective was the analysis of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among Master's students revealed a high average level of wellbeing ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.50$) with scores ranging from 1 to 5, across a sample of 33 students. The relatively low standard deviation indicates consistency across participants, suggesting that most students reported similarly strong levels of psycho-spiritual health.

Implications of the Findings

The findings contribute to the growing body of research that highlights the interplay between academic demands and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The moderate stress levels observed may support theoretical perspectives suggesting that spiritual engagement and meaning-making serve as buffers against extreme stress. This reinforces the relevance of integrated psychological and spiritual frameworks in understanding student wellbeing in faith-based or psycho-spiritual learning environments.

The high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing results is encouraging for administrators and faculty at the Psycho-Spiritual Institute. It is indicative of the fact that current programs—such as spiritual formation sessions, counseling services, retreats, and group reflection—are effective. However, sustaining these outcomes requires ongoing support and intentional program evaluation, particularly during periods of increased academic stress or personal difficulty.

Policy Implications

These findings suggest that institutional policies should continue to prioritize spiritual development as a core educational objective. Investment in chaplaincy services, counseling programs, and spiritual mentorship should be maintained or expanded. Furthermore, routine assessments of students' wellbeing can help track changes over time and inform data-driven enhancements to the curriculum and student services.

Institutional policy should support the integration of mental health and spiritual wellbeing programs within the academic calendar. These could include mandatory wellness sessions or access to trained psycho-spiritual counselors. Additionally, stress assessments could be conducted periodically to monitor student mental health and inform proactive intervention strategies.

Institutional policies regarding student wellbeing and academic support should take a universal approach, recognizing that students at all levels may experience similar stress patterns. A standardized support structure across all academic levels may ensure that no group is underserved or overlooked based on assumptions about their stress vulnerability.

Limitations of the Study

One notable limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size ($N = 33$), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or other academic institutions. With such a limited sample, statistical power is reduced. Additionally, the use of the chi-square test of independence may be less reliable with

small sample sizes, especially when expected cell frequencies in the contingency table fall below recommended thresholds.

The correlational design does not involve manipulation or control of variables. Therefore, external factors that could influence the results (e.g., academic workload, family background, or cultural beliefs) are not accounted for. The correlation study is cross-sectional (data collected at one point in time), it provides only a snapshot. It cannot track changes over time or the evolution of the relationship between perceived stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Another limitation of the study is the contextual nature of the sample, which was drawn exclusively from a faith-based institution. Such environments often place strong emphasis on spiritual formation, reflective practice, and community support, all of which may contribute to elevated levels of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to students in more secular or diverse academic settings where spiritual and psychological resources may vary significantly.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should replicate the current analysis using a larger and more diverse sample to determine whether similar patterns of perceived stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing persist across broader populations. Including participants from a range of academic institutions would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing in higher education contexts.

Additionally, qualitative approaches could provide deeper insight into how and why students at various stages perceive and manage stress. Future studies could also employ a longitudinal design to track changes in perceived stress across academic semesters.

Comparative studies involving both faith-based and secular institutions may offer valuable insights into the role of spirituality in shaping students' experiences of stress and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. By exploring how different institutional environments influence these factors, future research can provide a deeper understanding of the protective or mediating effects of spiritual formation on student mental health.

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