



Effects of Religiosity on Psychological Well - Being of Students: A Case Study of Students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro, Delta State

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the influence religiosity has on psychological wellbeing among students of Delta State Polytechnic. Ozoro. A sample size of 140 students (Males – 85, Females -55) was randomly selected for the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). The research findings revealed a significant relationship between religiosity and anxiety, and loneliness. It is therefore concluded that people who are religious have a high risk for being anxious and lonely, and that certain aspects of religious rituals and activities tend to increase anxiety and loneliness. The study found no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction which means religion does not influence a person satisfaction with life. Religiosity is therefore an important domain in human life since it has the ability to influence psychological well-being. Implications for theory and practice were discussed.

Keywords: religiosity, anxiety, loneliness, students, psychological wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

In nearly all school environments, most especially at the higher level (College, Polytechnic, and University) the students' life can be very stimulating and full of memorable experiences. There, new relationships are established with new friends, lecturers / course instructors participate in exciting social activities and vivifying intellectual discourses. Nevertheless, they also face challenges which accordingly lead to stress which impact on their psychological wellbeing and educational rendition.

As challenging as life is in the real world so it is in our institutions of higher education. For most students school life is beclouded with a lot of uncertainties. As a result of this ugly challenging situations individuals are being exposed to unhealthy life styles amounting to overall breakdown in mental health and overall well-being (Reinberg & Waever, 2010). A lot of people have become more dissatisfied with life, while so many others have lost their self-worth and have resorted to seeking for well-being from other institutions that could reduce their undesirable feelings of self and uncontrollable worries. In their course of seeking for change of these difficult and unmanageable situations some individuals found life fulfilment and relaxation of mind within the umbrella of religion based on their respective beliefs (MacLeod & Moore, 2012).

Some studies suggest that individual beliefs and commitments to religious activities are dependent on whether the individual has intrinsic or extrinsic aims and the value attached to these aims (Strawbridge, et al 2013). Literature had shown that while some individuals use religious participation to reduce the distressing effects of their day to day activities, others indulge in praying to God as a source of getting out of their fears and feel better and confident that nothing bad will happen to them (Reinberg & Weaver,

2010). According to Strawbridge, et al, (2008) active religious involvement increases the chances of living longer than the average by 29%, and participation in public religious practices, such as church attendances, increased the chances of living longer by 43%. Also in a study investigating the role of religion on mental health positive relationship was revealed between frequency of prayers and health outcome (Hays, et al, 2007). Some individuals were found to experience some levels of schizophrenia and depression as well as low self-esteem (Watters, 2005).

Although evidence has shown certain potentials for religiosity to affect positive behavior, in an increasing secular and global society, some researchers question whether religion contributes to or impedes well-being (Diener, Tay, & Meyers 2011). In the early 20th century, Freud considered religion to be a psychological, neurotic wish-fulfilment. By this, Freud believed that religious beliefs were rooted in fantasy and illusion and could be responsible for development of psychosis. This negative view of religion as ensuing mental health have continued into modern time with the writing of persons like Albert Ellis (1988), and Wandel Watters (1992), who have emphasized the irrational nature of religions and their potential harm (Keonig, 2007).

However, the current zingiest of work on religion and psychological well-being seems much more charitable (Cohen & Johnson, 2012). Moreso, Koeing (2007) noted that those negative views by psychologist and other professionals in the field of mental health about religion were not based on systematic research or observations but were rather based on personal opinion and clinical experiences of powerful and influential persons within the field of mental health who had little or no knowledge about religion.

Today, religion is viewed by many as a powerful coping mechanism (Pargament & Parck, 1997) and perhaps uniquely suited system to provide meaning in life (Park, 2005). Furthermore, Frankel (1975) clearly stated the importance of finding meaning in one's life and that religion may assist in supply purpose and meaning in life.

Surprisingly, even Sigmund Freud admitted that ".....only religion can answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly be wrong in concluding that the idea of life having a purpose stands and falls with the religious system" (Freud, 1961/1927, p.25).

Also, in today's fast paced world of rising political, economic and social instability, one may find it increasing difficult to ward off feelings of anxiety, depression or loneliness (Reinberg 2010; Weaver, 2010). The never ending troubles in North East

Nigeria by Boko Haram, Herders/Farmers clashes in the states of Benue, Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna and Zamfara, etc, and kidnappings and the ever rising price of commodities may bring about a feeling of dissatisfaction in general among Nigerians. In situations like these, people turn to a variety of facets for not only therapeutic purposes but also for prevention of such ill feelings in the future. For many, this sanctuary is found primarily in religion (Ismail & Desmukh, 2012). This probably explains the reason for the influx of religious worshippers weekly as they go for religious activities. In Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro it is ubiquitous seeing students under tree shades, at the sports pavilion, in lecture halls having prayer sessions individually or in groups.

These religious believers go for religious gathering to seek solution to their physical and psychological problems. Various religious practices and rituals are performed to assuage or minimize the psychological effects in the environment. According to Ismail and Desmukh (2012), large proportions find inner peace and contentment by engaging in varied forms of religious rituals and rites. In other words, it means going spiritual. Spirituality which is the state of being concerned with religion or religious matters is to know about oneself and the understanding of some supreme power through which the world is governed. Spirituality is not just about the god and religion, it is something related to elite power, it is a faith which connects a normal human being to their soul. "a person's experience of, or a belief in, a power apart from his or her own existence" (Mohr 2006). Spirituality is the bridge between what we are and where we want to reach or we can say it is hopefulness. Spirituality is the choice of human being to surrender him to one supreme power that is meaningful and desirable for him "An active choice to surrender oneself to God's will" (WongMcDonald, 2000, p. 149). Sometimes people believe on supreme power only to mitigate the

deleterious effects of the life. Spiritual coping has been effective in protecting individuals from the negative effects of death of a loved one, natural disasters, chronic illness, and acts of terrorism (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott, & Kadar, 1997). In other words spirituality is the faith and trust on who save the people from the negative things. Spirituality is the way to reduce the negative effects of life such as: death, stress, illness etc. Spirituality perspective predominately speaks about some power which originates from inside, it also involves a feeling of being connected with one's work and with others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Neck and Millimam, 1994.) to connect with the one's work and others depend upon the individuals.

Previous studies link religiousness to better mental health (Moreira-Almeida, Neto, & Koenig, 2006). Prior research has provided possible mechanisms for why religiousness may provide a buffering effect against stress. The first mechanism is religious beliefs. For example, the conviction that God aids the faithful may allow individuals to develop an optimistic view on coping with the stressor (Maltby & Day, 2003) and provide a larger meaning for why the stressful event occurred (Park, 2007). Second, religiousness encourages the development of positive emotions when faced with stressors, such as gratitude or forgiveness (Krause, 7 2009), while reducing worry (James & Wells, 2003). Third, religiousness may reduce the impact of stressors because of its association with a social support system, increased self-esteem, or a sense of mastery (Hill, 2010). These findings suggest that religion can be used as a coping resource when faced with stressful events (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). In recent times, especially in higher institutions in Nigeria the students' life has been very unstimulating due to a litany of challenges experienced by them. These challenges which eventually impacts on their psychological wellbeing and educational rendition forces them to seek for well-being from other institutions that could reduce their undesirable feelings of self and uncontrollable worries.

Furthermore, findings in recent empirical works in the psychology of religion does indeed show that some aspect of religion (e.g religious attendance or extrinsic religiosity) correlate positively with some index of psychological well-being. For instance, Deiner, Suh, Lucas, and Smith, (1991); Meyers, (1992); Veenhoven, (1984), found that religious people report being happier and more satisfied with their lives compared to non-religious ones. Moreover, this pattern appears to be robust across multiple cultural contexts. Tilounie and Belgoumidi, (2009), have shown for example, that religiosity predicts meaning and life satisfaction in Muslim students in Algeria. Also, Abdel-Khalek, (2010) found that religiosity among Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents was related to better health and well-being and less anxiety. A study carried out by Swinyardikau and Phua, (2001) revealed that religious participation is among the most deterministic predictors of psychological well-being in Singapore. Indeed, Witter, et al, (1985), conducted a meta-analysis of 20 previous studies to find that religious beliefs and participation account for between 2% and 6% of the variation in psychological well-being.

Not-wit-standing these findings, considering the link between religiosity and psychological well-being require a balanced approach. According to Cohen and Johnson, (2012), over indulgence in religious activities have the potential of amplifying or increasing unhappiness, depression, and dissatisfaction with life. They further opined that religion involves the whole life, and life involves joy and sorrow.

Religion not only ameliorates the pain of loss, but also evokes and encourages pain. Religion also involves certain worries and stressors. One cannot only take comfort in God's forgiveness and grace, but one can also worry that God is angry (Exline, 2003), absent or to be feared, since the bible commands both loving and fearing or being awe of God; see Deuteronomy 6 or Leveitcus 25 (Cohen and Johnson, 2012). Regardless of the above negative upshots, religiosity still plays a very robust and pivotal role in enhancing individual's psychological well-being. It is against this background that this study is premised on to examine the influence of religiosity on psychological well-being. This research undertaking therefore, aims at discovering the correlation between religiosity and psychological well-being among students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro.

Hypotheses:

- There is no significant relationship between religiosity and anxiety.
- There is no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction.
- There is no significant relationship between religiosity and loneliness.

METHODS

Design and participants

The study employed a cross – sectional survey design. The participants were 150 students of Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro randomly selected from the Department of Business Administration which comprised of 85 male students (60.7%) and 55 female students (39.3%). With regard to levels of study, the selected sample also had the following statistics; HND2 – 60 respondents (42.7%); HND1 – 25 respondents (17.7 %); ND2 – 20 respondents (14.3%); ND1 – 35 respondents (25%).

Measures

Religiosity and Psychological Well – Being Questionnaire

This instrument was developed by the researcher. Section A sampled sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, while the second consists of different scales that were made specifically for each variable under investigation such as religiosity; life satisfaction, loneliness and anxiety. The religiosity scale had three items measuring frequency of prayer per week, religious programs attendance, and importance of God. Frequency of prayer and Religious programs attendance were rated on a 5 point scale ranging from 0 – None to 5 – Five times and above. Sample items included: “How many times do you pray in a week?” and “How often do you attend religious activities in a week?” The importance of God question item was rated on a 4 point scale ranging from 0 – Not important to 4 – Most important.

Sampled item included: “In general, how important is God to you?” The components measuring life satisfaction, loneliness and anxiety, has 12 items scored according to 5 – point Likert response format with options that ranged from Strongly

Agree to Strongly Disagree. Sampled items included: “My religious beliefs makes me unhappy with my life”, My religious involvement leaves me starved of company and isolated” and “Sometimes I become anxious because I feel God is annoyed with me”. These two scales were combined and presented as a single 15 item questionnaire. A 2 – week test re-test reliability coefficient of reliability of .79 was obtained for the scale using the present sample. Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient was used to test hypotheses.

Procedure

The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the research. With the assistance of the Head of Department, copies of the questionnaires were distributed to all interested participants in the selected levels of study. Participants were also assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and they were not required to write their names on the research instrument used to collect data. Out of the 180 questionnaires distributed, 140 were duly completed and used for analysis.

RESULTS

Religiosity

Table 1: Frequency of prayer per week

Options	Frequency	Percentage
None	7	5%
Once	3	2.1%
Twice	11	7.9%
Thrice	19	13.6%
Four	40	28.6%
Five and above	60	42.7
Total	140	100%

Source: Researcher’s field work, 2018.

From the table above it shows that majority of the respondents 42.7 prays up to five times and above in a week, 28.6% pray up to four times, 13.6% pray up to three times, 7.9% pray up to twice in a week, 2.1% pray once, while 5% do not pray at all in a week. This means that majority of the respondents pray up to five times and above in a week.

Table 2: Religions attendance

Option	Frequency	Percentage
None	15	10.7%
Once	22	15.7%
Twice	35	25%
Thrice	48	34.3%
Four	13	9.35
Five and above	7	5%
Total	140	100%

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2018

The table shows that majority of the respondents 34.3% attend religious services up to three times in a week, 25% attend up to two , 15.7% attend once, 9.3% attend four, while 5% attend five times and above in a week.

Table 3: Importance of God

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Not important	13	9.3%
Somewhat Important	27	19.3%
Important	70	50%
Most important	30	21.4%
Total	140	100%

Source: Field work, 2018

The table above shows that about half (50%) of the respondents sees God as important, 21.4% said God is most important, 19.3% respondents indicated that God is somewhat important, while 9.3% said that God is not important to them.

Testing Hypotheses

In analyzing the data, the Pearson’s Product moment correlation coefficient is used. The formula for PPMC is

Where:

N = Number of items

X = Options

Y = Responses

Σ = total

D/f = N-2

Hypothesis 1

Table 4: Correlation of Relationship between Religiosity and Anxiety

Options	X (Options)	Y Responses	XY		
SA	4	210	840	16	44100
A	3	155	465	9	24025
D	2	90	180	4	8100
SD	1	45	45	1	2025
	10	500	1530	30	78250

Ho: there is no significant relationship between religiosity and anxiety

Hi: there is a significant relationship between religiosity and anxiety

Table 5: Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Religiosity and Anxiety

		Options	Responses
Options	Pearson Correlation	1	.998**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	4	4
Responses	Pearson Correlation	.998**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	4	4

Note:**p <.002. *p <.01. N = 4

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Result Interpretation

Since the calculated “r” (0.998) “p” (0.002) is greater than the tabulated value of 0.99 at 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis II

Table 6: Correlation of Relationship between Religiosity and Life Satisfaction

Options	X (Options)	Y Responses	XY		
SA	4	68	272	16	4624
A	3	82	246	9	6724
D	2	125	250	4	15625
SD	1	207	207	1	42849
	10	482	975	30	69822

Ho: There is no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction.

Hi: There is a significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction.

Table 7: Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Religiosity and Life Satisfaction

		Options	Responses
Options	Pearson Correlation	1	-.949
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.051
	N	4	4
Responses	Pearson Correlation	-.949	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.051	
	N	4	4

Note: **p <.051. *p <.05. N = 4

Result Interpretation

The calculated “r” (-0.949) “p” (0.051) is lesser than tabulated value (0.95) at (0.05) the level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis III

Table 8: Correlation of Relationship between Religiosity and Loneliness

Options	X (Options)	Y Responses	XY		
SA	4	61	244	16	3721
A	3	89	267	9	7921
D	2	160	320	4	25600
SD	1	230	230	1	52900
	10	540	1061	30	90142

Ho: There is not significant relationship between religiosity and loneliness.

Hi: There is a significant relationship between religiosity and loneliness.

Table 9: Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Religiosity and Loneliness

		Options	Responses
Options	Pearson Correlation	1	-.984*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
	N	4	4
Responses	Pearson Correlation	-.984*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	4	4

Note:**p <.016. *p <.01. N = 4

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Result Interpretation

Since the calculated “r” (-0.984) and “p” (0.016) is greater than the tabulated value of 0.95 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at investigating the effects of religiosity on psychological wellbeing of students in Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. The findings revealed a significant relationship between religiosity and anxiety which is consistent with previous findings, for example King and Shafer, (1992) found that higher levels of religiosity was related to personal distress such as anxiety.

The study also found no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction, this finding is similar that of Bergin, (1991); Ibitoye and Sanuade, (2005). In each of their studies they found no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction.

Finally, the study found a significant relationship between religiosity and loneliness. This is consistent with Watters, (1992), he concluded that religious beliefs were responsible for the low self-esteem, depression, loneliness and even schizophrenia.

CONCLUSION

The study tested three hypotheses, a significant relationship was found between religiosity and anxiety, and loneliness. It can therefore be concluded that people who are religious have a high risk for being anxious and lonely.

Also that certain aspect of religious rituals and activities tend to increase anxiety and loneliness. The study found no significant relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction which means religion does not influence a person satisfaction with life.

Religiosity is therefore an important domain in human life since it has the ability to influence psychological well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- Religious leaders should learn to put into consideration the psychological wellbeing of their listener when delivering sermons, and also they should avoid using threat as a way of complying compliance, as this will help to reduce anxiety and increase well-being.
- Clinicians and counselors should include level of religiosity in clinical diagnoses when it has to do with cases of anxiety.

- Clinicians should not neglect the role religion plays in well-being, while clergies should also embrace and take courses in psychology as this will enable them deal effectively with issues that pertain to well-being and emotion.

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