



Relationship between Depression and Spirituality Among the Youths of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Depression is one of the excruciating challenges that interferes with the holistic functioning of a person. Spirituality could be considered as a valuable resource in dealing with debilitating existential challenge like depression. This study examined relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. Thus, the following objectives were addressed; to assess the levels of depression, to determine the levels of spirituality, and to establish the relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. The study utilized correlational survey design. It further made use of simple random sampling technique, with a sample size of 40 participants, aged between 18-25 years old. The Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II) and Hardt et al. spirituality scale were employed to gather data. Data analysis was done with SPSS version 26. Findings pointed that 52.5% (n = 21) of the youths had no depression, 20.0% (n = 8) of the youths were at mild depression, 17.5% (n = 7) of the youths had moderate depression, while 10.0% (n = 4) of the youths were at the level of severe depression. It was also indicated that 62.5% (n = 25) of the youths scored high spirituality. The study established a negative but statistically significant relationship ($r = -.450, p = .004 \leq 0.05$) between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. It is recommended that the Church may intensify her focus on the spiritual development of the youth to enhance better youth mental state

Keywords: Depression, Spirituality and Youth

1. Introduction

This study examines relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. It presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objectives, methodology and it further articulates the findings of the study then follow by the discussions and conclusion.

1.1 Background

In recent times, there has been a keen interest among psychologists and the Christian spiritualists on the relationship between depression and spirituality among humans who practice the Christian faith. Human life at times, takes a negative direction where depression may be experienced to greater degree and life could be perceived as meaningless, hopeless and not worth living. It is hardly refutable that depression continues to increase the woes of human beings. Depression is one of the excruciating challenges that likely interferes with the holistic functioning of a person and has drastic effect on human life (Haokip et al., 2021). According to the World Health Organisation, it is a serious mental illness that is the main cause of a worldwide problem (Galloway, 2013). Research has shown that depression negatively impacts young people's meaningful life engagements and increases their risk of developing multiple ailments, including diabetes, HIV infection, and suicide. According to the World Health Organisation (2015), 450 million individuals worldwide are thought to be affected by neuropsychiatric disorders, depression included..

According to the American Psychiatrist Association's (2013) as indicated in the Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a person with depression is said to have five or more symptoms for a minimum of two weeks. Therefore, depression is a type of mood (affective) disease that can recur in a person and be mild, moderate, or severe. Sadness, guilt-ridden feelings, low self-esteem, restlessness, insomnia, hopelessness, meaninglessness, lack of appetite, excessive eating or insufficient eating, fatigue, significant weight loss or gain, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and lack of focus are some of the symptoms of depression (Afen et al. 2022; APA, 2013). Depression and spirituality are critical areas of psychospiritual concerns. While depression may work towards eroding positive life possibilities, spirituality may work towards enabling life in the positive direction, and it is one of the critical dimensions of human life. Mental health professionals are increasingly taking spirituality into account (Agwu & Egunjobi, 2023).

Spirituality has its etymology in the Latin word, "spiritus", which means "breath, breath of life" (Have Patrão, 2021). Thus, spirituality may be seen as an individual experience and strong believe in a higher being that is sacred; omniscient and omnipotent. It is also a part of a person that searches for transcendent meaning as well as purpose in life which permits the person to transcend one's suffering and existential challenges, which leads a person to experience a fresh breath of life (Turker, 2021). Spirituality is an expression of connectedness with the Supreme Being, who is God and who lives among humans (Chukwunonye et al., 2020; Campbell et al., 2010). Some indications of spirituality comprise of expressing spiritual values like compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, generosity, humility, and spiritual direction in discernment, as well as reading spiritually oriented literature, praying in secret, or meditating in solitude, are all examples of spiritual practices (Galloway, 2013). Depression has the potential to erode spirituality, whereas spirituality has the potential to improve wellbeing in the younger generation of humans. In many populations, there is a positive correlation between spirituality and emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. People who identify as highly spiritual experience inner peace, an enhanced quality of life, wellbeing, and self-actualization. Studies on spirituality have further demonstrated that depression results from a decline in spirituality, and that spirituality falls due to a rise of depression (Craig et al., 2006; Mok et al., 2009). In the face of difficult circumstances and a pessimistic outlook on life, spirituality provides people with direction and meaning (Haokip et al., 2021).

In the USA, a study was carried out by Lartey (2017), investigation relationship between spirituality and depression in elderly adults. The sample population consisted of individuals 35 years of age and older. The study included 229 people in its sample size and had 1,255 participants as its target population. Daily spiritual experiences, a measure of spirituality, were found to have a statistically significant relationship with depression in all categories of spiritual coping mechanisms identified in the survey. This indicates that participants who reported having more daily spiritual experiences also reported having lower levels of depression ($F(4, 224) = 3.866, p = .005$). Brown-Smythe (2022) in his study among Jamaican college students in the USA indicated that 4% of the young adults who were 15–24 years old reported suicidal ideation, and 25.6% of females and 14.8% of males were depressed with lower spirituality level. Similarly in Indonesia, Sulistiyowati et al. (2022) in their study among students found that 88.0% of the students had high level of depression, while 95% of the students had high level of spirituality. Equally, the study conducted by Haokip et al. (2021) in India, a statistically significant inverse relationship ($r = -0.209, p = 0.05$) between spirituality and depression was established. The study conducted by Lartey (2017) took place outside the African context, while the present study focused on the relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths between the ages 18–25 years at St. John the Evangelist parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

Fadiji et al. (2023) studied the correlations between religious devotion and well-being in South African and Kenyan students residing in South Africa. It was argued that many African teenagers' lives were significantly shaped by their religious practices and dedication. Thus, 471 students from Kenya and South Africa were included in the study's sample; the average age of these students was 22.8 years, with 244 men and 227 women. According to the study, religious devotion was a strong predictor of lower depression levels and emotional well-being. When these direct impacts were compared between males and females, depression and religious commitment did not differ: Religious commitment to emotional well-being is represented by Wald (1) = .89, $p = .765$; religious commitment to social contribution is represented by Wald (1) = .144, $p = .704$ (Schumann, 2020). In 2019, Rousseau and Thomson conducted a survey among South African youngsters, 24.89% of the young people had severe depression and 12.82% had mild depression.

Similarly in Nigeria, Chukwunonye et al. (2020) conducted a study on the influence of spirituality in coping with depression on 150 Catholic priests in the Nnewi Diocese. The research participants ranged in age from thirty to sixty-five. The study's conclusions showed that among priests in the Nnewi Diocese, elevated spirituality had a statistically significant inverse connection with depression ($r = -.844; df(N-2) = 148; P > .05$). Furthermore, the findings indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between sadness and low spirituality among Nnewi Priests ($r = -.844; df(N-2) = 148; P > .05$). In 2020, Olum et al. conducted research in Uganda on the prevalence of depression and its contributing factors among Makerere University students. It was shown that students between the ages of 18 and 25 had a 21.5% prevalence of depression, of which 64.1% had moderate depression. The various studies carried out both in South Africa and in Nigeria demonstrated interesting findings. However, they may not be generalized in the Kenyan context, hence the justification for this study.

In Kenya, a study was conducted by Waite (2017) which examined the correlation between depression and religiosity in a sample of Kenyans living in the twin cities metropolitan area. There were sixty-three people in the sample. The findings showed that 98.4% of participants ($n = 60$) identified as belonging to a particular religion, and 90.4% ($n = 57$) had a religiosity score of 40, indicating great religiosity. No significant relationship was found between the self-reported level of religiosity and the self-reported level of depression among sampled Kenyans ($r = -.192, n = 63, p > .05$). The majority of participants (66.8%, $n = 42$) reported that at least one depression symptom had been bothering them for several days. For about 90% of Kenyans, religious customs are very important to their culture (Pew Research Centre, 2015). About 70% of Kenyans identify as Christians, followed by Muslims (11.9%) and indigenous peoples (1.7%), while 2.4% of Kenyans reported not belonging to any religion (CIA, 2016). The majority of Kenyans have the cultural and religious belief that mental illnesses are closely related to the possession of evil spirits, witchcraft, or curses than actual ailments (Kingua & Njagi, 2013; Putman, Lea, & Eriksson, 2011).

Afen et al. (2022) investigated relationship between self-esteem and depression among Africa Nazarene University students in Kenya, they discovered that 10.5% ($n = 276$) of those in the 18–23 age range had borderline clinical depression, 15.6% ($n = 58$) of the participants had moderate depression, while 8.1% ($n = 27$) had severe depression. The study by Waite (2017) was carried out among Kenyans in diaspora, and it concentrated on religiosity and depression. The study by Afen et al. (2022) concentrated on "self-esteem and depression". These various studies did not articulate the relationship between depression and spirituality, and due to paucity of research, hence the justification for this study to be carried out among the youths at St. John the Evangelist parish, located in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

People who suffer from depression face a major existential health challenge, and many believe that spirituality can be a helpful tool in the fight against debilitating conditions like depression. In the midst of terrible life experiences like depression, spirituality provides people with comfort as well as meaning and purpose (Haokip et al., 2021; Koenig, 2012). Galloway (2013) claims that depression is a frequent mental health condition that has a detrimental effect on a person's ability to operate holistically. It is also one of the main causes of sickness in young people, which can result in a variety of behavioural issues. According to Muringo et al. (2021), there is a rise in teenage mental health issues, which has contributed to an increase in deviant behaviours and a sense of meaninglessness in life. Statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019) showed that the youths who are between 18 and 35 years make up approximately 75.1% (35.7 million) of Kenya's population, out of a population of 47.6 million citizens. These youths are faced with different challenges such as anxiety, substance abuse, dysfunctional families, mugging, stress, addiction, peer pressure, and unemployment (Nkonge, 2017). While some of the youths may be involved in spiritual practices through their various religious affiliations, some may find spiritual practices through religious affiliation challenging. According to the majority of Kenyans, religion and spirituality are significant factors in their overall well-being (Pew Research Centre, 2015). The youths of St. John the Evangelist parish in Karen are hardly excluded from the challenges of youth, and they are part of the Kenya youth populace who may be struggling with similar challenges. With the various issues confronting the youths, this research was aimed at investigating relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the levels of depression among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.
2. To determine the levels of spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.
3. To establish the relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya

2. Methodology

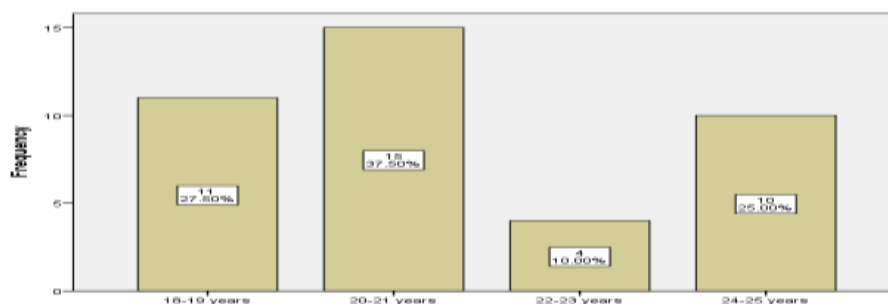
The epistemological framework of this study was based on the positivist approach, which offered the advantage of having universal principles and observable facts that could be recorded (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). In light of this ontological viewpoint, the focus of this study was neither depression nor spirituality but the relationship between the two variables. The study made use of the correlational survey approach and a quantitative paradigm. It further utilized simple random sampling technique, with sample size of 40 participants, out of a target population of 50 youths, aged between 18-25 years old. The Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II) and Hardt et al. Spirituality scale were employed for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistics computed with SPSS vs. 26. The Pearson's Correlation was used in determining the statistical correlation between depression and spirituality. Data collection procedures and ethical considerations were adhered to.

3. FINDINGS

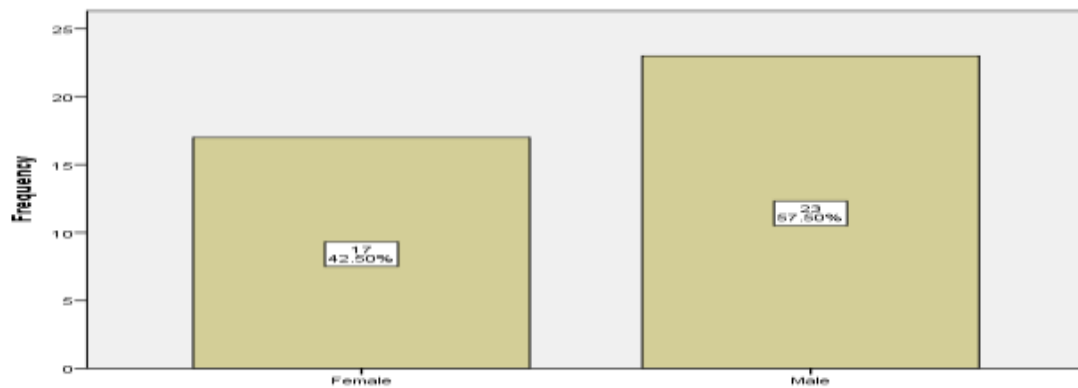
This section presents the findings of the demographic characteristics. it also articulates findings in relation to the objectives of the study which are; levels of depression among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya, levels of spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya, and relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

Figure 1

Age



As seen in Figure 1, results showed that 37.50% (n = 15) of youths were within the age range 20-21 years, 27.50% (n = 11) of youths were 18-19 years, 25.00% (n = 10) of the participants came under 24-25 years, while 10% (n = 4) of the participant were 22-23 years old. The different age groups between the age 18 and 25 were well represented.

Figure 2*Gender*

Findings from Table 2 shows that there was a good representation of the participants by gender. Although there were more males (57.50%) than females (42.50%).

Levels of depression among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

The first objective of this study sought to investigate the levels of depression among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. Results are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2*Levels of Depression among the Youths*

1. Levels of depression	2. Frequency	3. Percentage
4. No depression	5. 21	6. 52.5%
7. mild depression	8. 8	9. 20.0%
10. moderate depression	11. 7	12. 17.5%
13. Severe depression	14. 4	15. 10.0%
16. Total	17. 40	18. 100%

According to Table 2, results revealed that more than half (52.5%) of the youths showed no depression. However, only about 10% of the youths indicated signs of severe depression.

Levels of spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

The second objective of this study was to examine the levels of spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. The findings from the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3*Levels of Spirituality among the Youths*

19. Levels of Spirituality	20. Frequency	21. Percentage
22. Low	23. 10	24. 30.0%
25. Moderate	26. 5	28. 7.5%
29. High	30. 25	31. 62.5%
32. Total	33. 40	34. 100%

As seen in Table 3, results pointed that most of the youth (62.5%) showed high level of spirituality, while 7.5% of the participants were at the moderate level of spirituality.

Relationship between Depression and Spirituality among the Youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

The third objective of this study intended to establish the relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. The Pearson coefficient analysis was used. Findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

<i>Relationship between Depression and Spirituality among the Youths</i>			
		Depression	Spirituality
Depression	Pearson Correlation	1	-.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	40	40
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	-.450**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	40	40

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

As seen in Table 4, findings indicated a negative but statistically significant relationship ($r = -.450^{**}$, $p = .004 \leq 0.05$) between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

4. Discussions

This section discusses the findings of the study in connection with the objectives which are; levels of depression, levels of spirituality, and relationship between depression and spirituality among the Youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

Results revealed that most of the youths (52.5%) were not depressed, while 47% of the youths were at mild to severe depression. These findings pointed that some of the youths may not be struggling with depression. However, the study further established that some of the youths are faced with depression which is ranging from mild depression to severe depression, and this is a matter of critical attention on this young population. It is likely that depression could increase among the youths owing to the different challenges they experience in life. Amaltinga and Mbinta (2020) affirm this by postulating that depression among the youthful human population occur due to numerous life challenges. These challenges may include loss of loved ones, sickness, academic underperformance, divorce and separation of parents, neglect and rejection in family, lack of holistic support in families, economic hardship, unresolved adverse childhood experiences and genetic predisposition (Sabaté, 2004).

The results of this study are consistent with those of Rousseau and Thomson's (2019) study of young people in South Africa, which indicated that 24.89% of young people had severe depression and 12.82% had moderate depression. The results of Olum et al. (2020) in Uganda were also supported by these findings, which showed that among students aged 18 to 25, the prevalence of depression was 21.5%, with 64.1% of cases being classified as moderate (Afen et al., 2022). Depression is a staid existential threat to human life. Due to the possible contribution of depression that could lead to the extinction of human life, the youth who may be struggling with depression with the support of the Church leaders may collaborate with counseling psychologists to journey with the youths, and in so doing, they may restore their holistic functioning and find life more meaningful.

Levels of Spirituality among the Youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya.

Findings pointed that 62.5% ($n = 25$) of youths scored high spirituality, 30.0% ($n = 10$) of the participants had low spirituality, and 7.5% ($n = 5$) of the participants were at the moderate level of spirituality. High score of spirituality among the participants is a possible indication of commitment in prayer, meditation, and love of God, love of self and neighbor and works of mercy, and regular participation in spiritual activities within the youth forum and the larger Church. Those with moderate and low scores on spirituality may still be growing in the Christian spirituality. Conceivably, they are yet to establish their firmness in spiritual exercise such as prayer, bible reflection, and meditation, love of God and neighbor and consistent active participation in their Church activities. Spirituality among the youthful human age is a fundamental source of strength and progressive youth development, which could set a firm bases for a sound sense of identity and responsibility (Cheon and Canda, 2010; King, 2003).

The results of this investigation support those of Brown-Smythe (2022) in his study among Jamaican college students in the USA pointed that 14.8% of the participants had lower level of spirituality. Additionally, the findings also confirmed those of Sulistiyowati et al. (2022) in Indonesia, and found 95% of the learners had high level of spirituality, which was an expression of their love for God and neighbor and having a sense of the sacred. Spirituality is a critical aspect of human life, where belief in the Supernatural Being could give hope, consolation and healing in existential challenges confronting youths. Thus, spirituality can be taken as a valuable resource in dealing with unbearable human situations. Humans are embodied spirit who yearn for spiritual connection with a higher being (Nikfarid, 2020). The Church leaders may be constantly present in the youthful population and consistently organize different spiritual activities for their spiritual formation so as to pave way for more spiritual growth.

Relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya

The study found negative and statistically significant relationship ($r = -.450^{**}$, $p = .004 \leq 0.05$) between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. These findings imply that an increase in one variable leads to a corresponding decrease in the other variable; the higher the spirituality, the lower the depression and vice versa. Spirituality could offer humans wellness and healing in their

excruciating life experience like depression. Haokip et al. (2021) amplify this by submitting that one of the contributions of spirituality is the power it brings in restoring meaning, purpose, and hope to humans.

These results are consistent with those of Lartey (2017) in the United States. It was established that a statistically significant link was found between daily spiritual experiences as a measure of spirituality and depression, indicating that higher levels of daily spiritual experiences were associated with lower levels of depression among research participants. The results of this study support those of Haokip et al. (2021) in India, who found a statistically significant inverse relationship between spirituality and depression. These findings also corroborate the findings of Fadji et al. (2023) in South Africa, and they revealed that religious commitment significantly predicted lower depression. A similar finding was also established in Nigeria by Chukwunonye et al. (2020). The results showed that among priests, elevated spirituality had a statistically significant inverse connection with depression. The place of spirituality in human life becomes fundamental, as it gives humans hope, meaning, and enables a deeper connection with the Supreme Being who is capable of healing and restoring humans to wholeness. The practice of spirituality among youths is recommendable for holistic healing and positive life endeavours.

5. Conclusion

This study was focused on the relationship between depression and spirituality among the youths of St. John the Evangelist's Parish in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. Research revealed a statistically significant and adverse correlation between depression and spirituality. It is hardly refutable that depression may be an obstacle to meaningful life engagement and its likely contribution to life extinction. The Church pastors and mental health specialists may work in collaboration in organizing mental health seminars and programs on spirituality for the youths of the Church. The Church leaders may prioritize the spiritual formation of their youths so as to build a positive firm foundation on the Supernatural Being

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