



## **Possible Ways of Enhancing Emotional Intelligence Among Women Religious in Country A**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Women religious devote themselves to a life of spiritual dedication, service, and communal living, actively engaging in ministry and evangelization. To effectively fulfill their roles, they require strong emotional capabilities to creatively navigate the challenges they may encounter. Researchers from various academic disciplines have extensively studied emotional intelligence and have found it to be linked with numerous aspects of both intrapersonal and interpersonal life. This study, explores strategies for enhancing the emotional intelligence of Women Religious in Country A, recognizing its significance in personal and professional development. A qualitative method was employed, which included conducting semi-structured interviews with eight participants selected through purposive sampling. Thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze the collected data, revealing avenues for improving emotional intelligence among women religious in Country A. These avenues include fostering self-awareness and self-acceptance, promoting healthy community living, incorporating reflective practices and meditation, providing ongoing formation through workshops, and learning opportunities, implementing dynamic interpersonal strategies and feedback mechanisms, acknowledging the positive influences of family, environment, and education, and recognizing the importance of subjective interpretation and choice. Based on these findings, recommendations were formulated, including suggestions for future research.

*Keywords:* Emotional Intelligence, Enhancement, Women Religious

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Through the findings of this study, numerous religious institutions will realize the value of emotional intelligence among their members and endeavor to develop it to provide more meaningful witnessing. This study will also inspire vocation directors, teams of formators, and pastoral agents to support initiatives that increase the emotional intelligence of those in their spheres of influence, such as lay faithful, those in formation, and religious women. The results provided an opportunity to investigate appropriate psycho-spiritual interventions for the general wellbeing of these women religious. The insightful information gathered from the study will help women religious in Country A maintain their essential beliefs, have healthier lifestyles, and build closer relationships.

In addition, this research will provide valuable insights for psycho-spiritual counselors, helping them develop personalized interventions, improve assessment techniques, and foster stronger therapeutic relationships with clients. These advancements have the potential to enhance their effectiveness in supporting clients on their journey toward holistic growth and fulfillment. Lastly, the analysis provided in this study will serve as a point of reference for academics, writers, and future researchers working in this field, thereby contributing significant knowledge to the existing literature.

### **I BACKGROUND**

Emotional Intelligence refers to individuals' capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate their own emotions, as well as to recognize, understand, and influence the emotions of others (Goleman, 1995). Furthermore, Goleman asserts that it empowers individuals to guide both their thoughts and behaviors (Tritsch, 2021), highlighting that the emotional and social environments individuals are exposed to during their upbringing can either enhance or reduce their level of emotional intelligence (Sabater, 2021). Emotional intelligence is crucial for personal and professional development, comprising self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. It enables individuals to understand and regulate their emotions effectively, fostering positive interactions and achieving common goals.

Self-awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. It enables individuals to accurately perceive their strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations (Goleman, 1995). Self-management refers to the ability to regulate one's emotions, impulses, and behaviors

effectively. It involves controlling impulses, adapting to changing circumstances, and maintaining a positive outlook even in challenging situations (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Social awareness entails understanding and empathizing with the emotions, needs, and perspectives of others. It involves being attuned to social dynamics, recognizing signals in interpersonal interactions, and demonstrating empathy and compassion towards others (Bar-On, 2006). Relationship management involves effectively managing interpersonal relationships, communication, and conflict resolution. It encompasses skills such as building rapport, collaborating with others, and resolving conflicts constructively (Boyatzis et al., 2000).

Studies on emotional intelligence have been carried out by researchers in various fields and it was discovered that it is related to a variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors such as mental and physical health, social relationships, and work performance. A study by Schutte et al. (2013) opines that a high level of emotional intelligence enables people to express their emotions healthily, and at the same time recognize the emotions of others thereby promoting good relationships and performance. Lekaviciene and Antiniene (2016) examined how various family factors are related to the emotional intelligence level of people in Europe. They discovered that emotional intelligence level is significantly related to some family factors such as family status, the psychological climate in the family, strength of emotional ties between children and their parents, subjective perception of family financial status, and so on.

Similarly, Mishra and Shrivastava (2018) explored the major factors of emotional intelligence that affect the performance of management teachers in India. They discovered that numerous factors related to personal and social competencies, empathy, proper training, and development, are the major factors of emotional intelligence affecting the performance of these teachers. Also, Bisji et al. (2019) examined the influence of training on the emotional intelligence of adolescents in Jos South LGA of Plateau State, Nigeria. The results showed that training was effective in increasing the emotional intelligence of adolescents. The different training strategies made a great positive impact on the adolescents by helping them in the learning and application of emotional intelligence to their everyday lives. The study recommended that curriculum developers should incorporate emotional intelligence training into the school curriculum to assist in the development of a civilized society.

While research has explored methods for improving emotional intelligence, they have not addressed how to enhance emotional intelligence among Women Religious in Country A. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by exploring potential strategies for enhancing the emotional intelligence of Women Religious in Country A.

*Objective of the study:* This study aims to explore the possible ways of enhancing the emotional intelligence of women religious in Country A.

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## II LITERATURE REVIEW

Several empirical studies have examined potential approaches to enhance emotional intelligence. Khurshid et al. (2018) explored the effect of prevailing curricular activities on the development of emotional intelligence among university students in Pakistan. Using a sample size of 1,775, they utilized a cross-sectional cum descriptive study design with a causal-comparative research approach. The findings revealed that the students at the entrance level were significantly higher in emotional intelligence than the students in the final stage. Hence, the study suggested an adequate design of the curriculum and curricular activities of the universities to develop the emotional intelligence of university students since this kind of intelligence is a key capability for managerial success. This implies that emotional intelligence could be improved when the learning environment is well-equipped with suitable facilities and is free from stress.

In the same line of research, Dubey et al. (2018) in a descriptive study, examined the human factors that influence the productivity of employees in an organization, using a sample size of 150. From the results of the study, it was discovered that most of the participants are only average in their emotional competencies, to this effect, it is recommended that regular programs be held at work by the training and development team. Also, the Management offers sufficient recreational facilities to the employees, ensures effective utilization of manpower, has a regular open session within every department, employs emotionally matured persons, develops the level of emotional intelligence among the existing employees, increases the awareness level among all the employees, regularly conduct 'Emotional Competence' training program, development of emotional stability and appreciate the potential and the talent of the employees.

Erasmus et al. (2022) evaluated the effect of classroom atmosphere on the emotional intelligence levels of 119 South African primary school students. A non-experimental, cross-sectional design was used, with both a comparative and correlational approach. The results showed that there is a substantial link between classroom atmosphere and emotional intelligence. The study also found that pleasure and cohesion were associated favorably with emotional intelligence levels, whereas friction, competition, and difficulty correlated adversely. Accordingly, the study indicated that emotional intelligence is enhanced by a positive classroom climate which provides learners with high levels of satisfaction and cohesiveness and lowers levels of friction, competitiveness, and difficulty.

Furthermore, Hen (2020) examined the contribution of an academic emotional intelligence course to the perceived emotional skills and professional functioning of hospital teachers, using a sample size of 50. The study used a mixed method design which involved focus groups, interviews, course summary papers, and an emotional intelligence questionnaire. The findings discovered an overall increase in the ability of hospital teachers to identify, understand, and regulate their emotions from the beginning to the end of the training. Also, it revealed that teachers felt that their emotional self-awareness, understanding of emotions, and empathic feelings toward their students were improved with the help of the course. Moreso, they recognized that more practice is needed to master these emotional abilities. Remarkably, this research recommended the introduction of academic courses on the management and regulation of emotions into the training programs for teachers and preservice teachers, especially those working in special education frameworks.

Olorisade (2019) investigated the influence of secondary school teacher qualification, experience, gender, marital status, and rank on emotional intelligence in selected secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, using a descriptive design and a sample size of 62 teachers. The findings of this study discovered that there were differences in the emotional intelligence of teachers based on academic qualifications, years of work experience, gender, rank, and marital status. In addition, the emotional intelligence of teachers in public schools in Ilorin metropolis is generally high. The study therefore recommended that teachers with longer years of work experience should guide younger and aspiring teachers, that teachers should be constantly exposed to training workshops on emotional intelligence, and that Universities should develop online emotional intelligence measurement tools to help teachers determine areas of strengths and weaknesses and access training tools. All these are geared towards improving the teachers' emotional intelligence as well as promoting the performance of the institution.

The reviewed literature demonstrated the effectiveness of various interventions, such as curricular activities, organizational support, classroom atmosphere, and training initiatives, in enhancing emotional intelligence across different settings, including universities, workplaces, and schools. These findings highlight the importance of addressing emotional intelligence for both personal and professional development. However, despite this extensive research, there remains a significant gap in understanding strategies to enhance the emotional intelligence of women religious in Country A. Consequently, the present study aims to fill this gap by exploring strategies tailored to the unique roles and experiences of women religious in Country A, recognizing the fundamental role of emotional intelligence in their personal growth and professional efficacy.

### III METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, to gather data from eight participants selected through purposive sampling. Guest et al. (2006) demonstrated that qualitative studies, particularly those using semi-structured interviews, can achieve data saturation with as few as 6 to 12 participants. Their findings suggest that even with a small sample size of 8 participants, researchers can reach data saturation, implying that additional interviews may not yield substantially new insights. Thus, the sample size of 8 in this study is methodologically acceptable. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data, involving steps such as familiarization, coding, theme creation, review, definition, and labeling. This rigorous process ensured a thorough examination of recurring themes while minimizing bias.

*Trustworthiness of Interview Guide:* To validate findings and guarantee consistency, tactics including confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility are needed (Kanario, 2024). The researcher confirmed the findings' reliability by extending findings to many contexts, verifying findings using member checking, assuring consistency and transparency through rigorous procedures, and ensuring that the findings are free of biases and preferences.

### IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Possible Ways to Enhance the Emotional Intelligence of Women Religious in Country A*

This study explored possible ways of enhancing the emotional intelligence of women religious in Country A. The interview involved eight participants and Codes were assigned to each of them.

**Table 1**

*Lists of Participants and their Codes*

Participant	Code
1	P01
2	P02
3	P03
4	P04
5	P05
6	P06
7	P07
8	P08

The codes assigned to the participants in the interviews are listed in Table 1 according to the order of the interviews. The interview began on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and ended on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The answers given provide a rich tapestry of methods used by women religious in Country A to develop or improve their emotional intelligence. These responses uncovered seven key themes regarding possible ways of developing emotional intelligence which include: Self-awareness and self-acceptance; living in a healthy community; reflective practices, meditation, and post-realization; continuing formation,

workshops, and learning; dynamic interpersonal strategies and feedback; positive effects of family, environment, and education; and subjective interpretation and choice.

#### *Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance*

All the participants agreed that self-awareness increases emotional intelligence and creates a peaceful, caring, and effectively communicative community environment. For example, P07 remarked: “After working on myself and being aware of my strengths and weaknesses and appreciating the uniqueness in others, I became more understanding of people's behavior by giving them a chance to explain themselves and explore their ideas. I am more relaxed and happier now” (P07, March 6, 2024). Furthermore, a participant emphasized that self-awareness makes it easier to comprehend one's feelings, ideas, and actions, which is essential for preserving harmonious connections within the community. According to P01:

Self-awareness is a conscious management of one's character and feelings. It is a process that one uses to easily recognize herself and other people and access her thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. It helps the relationship with others in the community to flow if not it will not flow. One needs to know oneself to relate well with others. Therefore, a lack of self-awareness will make one not to be aware of what she does not recognize in her emotions, beliefs, and behaviors. The person will get angry when corrected and become antagonistic in her relationship in the community due to denial of the person's thoughts, emotions, feelings, beliefs, and other things that will help the person to relate well with others in the community (P01, February 20, 2024).

Another participant said that becoming tolerant of oneself and others' flaws is essential to developing self-awareness in daily life. According to her, “self-awareness helps one to learn tolerance as a basic tool. Knowing yourself as an imperfect being, to be aware that others can make mistakes and so excuse them and let go” (P02, February 20, 2024). In addition, P05 said:

There are some situations in which my own emotions have helped me to effectively manage my reactions towards others in my community: First, I must underline the importance of mutual awareness which is knowing myself and knowing others, this is one of the fundamental aspects that has helped me to manage effectively eventual reactions towards others. Some practical situations: My relationship with the candidates in formation, which is my primary assignment now. Sometimes their response to some situations may not correspond to my expectations and I have to take some steps that have helped me effectively; pausing for a while before reacting; understanding the reasons for others' actions; not forgetting that where they are I was one time... there is a process they are going through... not overestimating that they know, and they have to be like... (P05, March 3, 2024).

P08 observed that being aware of and accepting of one's strengths and weaknesses is a necessary step toward genuine relationships and personal fulfillment as she pointed out.

No individual has all the quintessential values of life, so there is a need for a constant struggle for personal development. I try to avoid an imitative personality. I don't live a life fashioned out by my friends or my peer group. Sometimes I get praised, flattered, reprimanded, and even insulted because of the choices I made. Acceptance of self may sound like inaction.... It sometimes requires more effort than complaining, confronting, or clamming up but once you experience the freedom it brings, acceptance can become second nature. I try to relax in whatever situation I find myself in. You know, life doesn't give you what you want but can just send you what you need. Though I get angry or angst, I try as much as I can to communicate or tell myself this is human frailty, and life goes on (P08, March 7, 2024).

The spiritual aspect of emotional intelligence is highlighted by P08's statement that one must accept one's limitations and personal journey while putting trust in divine guidance. She asserted:

Acceptance of one's reality is the core point of all communication, when we are ignorant of our being, our relationship with God and fellow women religious or others remains completely lacking, wanting and destitute. The building of good relationships with others in the community depends on when one is aware of herself and present to herself. You cannot give what you don't have (P08, March 7, 2024).

#### *Healthy Community Living*

Many participants highlighted the very fulfilling nature of living and sharing life with their community members, emphasizing the importance of communal meals, prayers, and the sharing of experiences and ideals. As an illustration, P05 stated: “The aspects of my community life that I find most rewarding emotionally are: Sharing ideas, experiences, apostolate, aspirations, meals, recreation... Community meetings. Praying as women religious and companions on the same journey... Spiritual reading, sharing of the Word of God” (P05, March 3, 2024).

P02 attested that helping one another out, particularly when one is ill, is valued and considered evidence of affection among community members, strengthening their relationship. She stated: “The aspects of my community life that I find to be most rewarding emotionally is care offered by community members such as visits paid to sick members and the tender care given to them. It helps one not to seek love outside the community” (P02, February 20, 2024). P07 added “The support of women religious in the community and the people around me; their encouragement inspires me a lot.” (P07, March 6, 2024). P05 emphasized this further by stating that a sense of a common goal and support among community members foster teamwork and individual dedication to duties. She stated: “I describe the source of inspiration or motivation for completing the task assigned to me as mutual collaboration, trust, encouragement, openness, and tolerance; responsibility in various assignments received; sharing a common mission; their courage to evaluate me or call my attention to some issues; acceptance for what I am and do” (P05, March 3, 2024).

A recurring element that is emphasized in the experiences of P01 and P05 is expressing empathy by placing oneself in others' shoes and appreciating other viewpoints and personal struggles. P01 highlighted:

Putting myself in others' shoes will help me to understand them better rather than using the word 'you should have' which has caused a lot of problems. Sometimes, the person we are telling 'you should have' may not even know what she would have done. She reacted the way she wanted to because that was her personality. Putting myself in the shoes of others will help me to know that I may be a victim of that thing I want to get emotional about or get angry with, so if I am the one, what do I do? There was a time I compared myself with someone forgetting we have different makeup; I should have looked at that using the person's perception to build a good relationship and rapport. Later, I apologized and explained to the person and reconciled with the person. Reconciliation and saying sorry will go a long way to healing, bringing unity back, help in a good relationship with the person and with God. It's important to work through our emotions and face reality (P01, February 20, 2024).

In addition, P05 stated:

I believe strongly that I have to give special attention to being human, my humanity in relating with others, putting myself in their conditions/situations, I try to give others space, my time to listen to them, to respect them...I manage my emotions by identifying and accepting them; giving them a name; living in the moment; and thinking and being positive about situations around me (P05, March 3, 2024).

According to P01 and P06, contemplating the lives of saints and the good examples set by older community members can be quite motivating for carrying out community responsibilities with passion and love. P01 stated: "My sources of inspiration or motivation for completing the tasks assigned to me is looking at the senior/elderly women religious who are living exemplary lives in the community. Also, Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Mother Mary" (P01, February 20, 2024). P06 added by saying: "What inspires me to complete my task is prayer and life of Saints especially Mother Theresa of Calcutta and also things I learned from both my initial formation and ongoing one" (P06, March 3, 2024).

P05 stated that the secret to productive teamwork is to treat colleagues with respect, recognize their accomplishments, and look out for their welfare. She stated:

In my apostolate, I try to collaborate with my coworkers by acknowledging their contributions and the services they are rendering. I try to treat them with respect and show them my humanity in caring for their wellbeing, respecting their dignity and human rights...Showing appreciation for any service they are carrying out. Offering them all the necessary facilities to carry out the assignments they received. Showing concern about their situation or family challenges (P05, March 3, 2024).

According to P08, smoother collaboration in apostolate activity is made possible by open and effective communication as well as a readiness to listen to others and adapt to their needs. According to her, "Effective communication is not just verbal but understanding individual personality which comprises attitudes, tone of voice, body language, and being sensitive to the other's physical and psychological conditions. Tend to adjust to whatever state they are in and be ready to forgive" (P08, March 7, 2024).

#### *Reflective Practices, Meditation, and Post-Realization*

P07 emphasizes the importance of reflecting or meditating to consider one's thoughts, actions, and impact on others. This exercise helps one identify their feelings and make sure their behaviors are in line with their internal values. P07 stated:

Meditation/Reflections: self-awareness comes from reflecting on my thoughts, words, and actions as I communicate with others. I try to identify how other people react in each situation. I show empathy by considering the feelings of others more than mine. I evaluate myself often to be conscious of the things I do and say. I try to know myself, which helps in determining my internal standard of right and wrong. It is my beliefs and behaviors that help determine this standard. I am open to feedback from others. I pray for God's direction and guidance (P07, March 6, 2024).

Using techniques like those mentioned by P01—silence, introspection, time for emotional processing, and understanding—is essential for controlling emotions and reactions. According to P01:

Enhancing our spirituality through Jesus and Virgin Mary, the Bible, the life of Saints, Congregational documents, having a Spiritual Director, and prayer. Being conscious of who we are as public figures in the Church, in society, and in the environment where we are, and knowing the implications of whatever negative feelings or energy we have displayed (P01, February 20, 2024).

Acknowledging instances in which empathy was insufficient or misguided encourages reflection and personal development. P07 and P08 talked about how important it is to process and manage emotions after realizing a lack of empathy. They frequently turn to reflection, prayer, or asking for forgiveness as strategies for emotional control and harmony restoration. P07 explicitly brought this up when narrating a time she failed to show empathy and the actions that were done to make amends. P07 said: "I had an experience in which I felt I should have been more empathic. During my examination of consciousness, I realized that I failed to perform an act of charity and I felt sad. However, I accepted my fault and apologized to the sister in my community and went for confession" (P07, March 6, 2024). Also, P08 said:

Knowing yourself and understanding what drives your attitudes and emotions is the first step to self-knowledge and self-control. I managed my emotions by letting go of blame, anger, and hurt and replacing the negative emotions with forgiveness and gratitude. Life goes on. Opportunities will still come someday to make amends (P08, March 7, 2024).

#### *Ongoing Formation, Workshops, and Learning*

Several participants, particularly P05 and P06, placed a high value on continuing education and learning and pointed out that seeking knowledge through reading, workshops, and expert advice is a method for personal improvement. Among the methods P05 mentioned for improving emotional intelligence

are “various workshops/seminars/programs, personal/psychological accompaniment, counseling, to always maintain that sense of learning, sharing of experiences” (P05, March 3, 2024). In addition, P06 mentioned that “Seminars and workshops on emotional development; emotional development courses can be included in the curriculum in formation houses; personal development through books and research are necessary for promotion of emotional intelligence among women religious in Country A” (P06, March 3, 2024). Furthermore, P01 said:

To be mature, there should be resources for ongoing formation, having resource persons and a resource centre; workshops and seminars; provisions of psychological enhancement through lectures, etc.; positive self-talk that leads to maturity, bearing in mind that one can err and so ask for forgiveness (01, February 20, 2024).

#### *Dynamic Interpersonal Strategies And Feedback*

Participant P07 said that knowing one's habits and how they affect communal life requires being open to feedback, whether it comes from one's assessment or that of others. She stated:

In my congregation, we have what we call participatory leadership. We work as a team; we have monthly meetings where we discuss issues and the growth of the community. Here, we bring our ideas, opinions, and suggestions for the development of the community. Everyone is free to talk. We also evaluate ourselves and work, and give room for feedback.

According to P03, interacting with people by sharing feelings, active listening, and empathy raises one's emotional intelligence and self-awareness. She stated: “The strategies I currently employ to increase my self-awareness and manage my emotions are self-talk, listening to my inner voice, and sharing my feelings with my closest friend in my Congregation” (P03, February 22, 2024).

#### *Positive Impact of Family, Environment, and Education*

According to P01, a supportive home, and educated background promotes a child's healthy emotional growth. When one is representing their group and faith, in particular, these elements serve as standards for proper conduct and responses. P01 asserted:

Good positive training, formation, growing in a positive environment, a good educational background, a positive family history, positive mindset, to crown it all with a healthy spirituality will help in the development of emotional health, and reacting to things positively. Remembering that I have a positive, healthy environment, family and educational background helps me to live an exemplary life, it helps me to refrain from whatever I want to do even in my reactions, having in mind that being a religious, I am an example, that I am representing my congregation, family, myself, and the Christianity I am proclaiming. All these serve as guidelines to me. My family background, the peaceful environment where I grew up, and my positive family history. Remembering that I am from a very respected family; my family and religious background also help me to build and develop my emotions positively. However, those who have a chaotic family background or environment might be affected by the way they behave. All these play a lot of part in our relationship with others and with our fellow women religious even though sometimes friends and the environment can affect us once we abide by what we are taught it will go a long way to create a healthy environment and community living and relationship with those around us (P01, February 20, 2024).

Participant P02 emphasizes the need for a caring atmosphere and a strong educational basis for spiritual maturity and human development, saying:

A positive upbringing helped me in my personal development. I grew up in a family with a good prayerful and educational background and these influenced my spiritual and academic development. My environment helped me to become who I am today. Just like a healthy environment makes a positive impact on the life of an individual, likewise, an unhealthy environment affects individuals negatively (P02, February 20, 2024).

In affirming this, participant P04 states: “Education has widened my scope and perception. It has shaped me positively through my religious congregation, formation courses, and contemporary courses” (P04, March 1, 2024). Furthermore, P03 credits her school experiences for instilling in her the values of obedience, accountability, and organization. Her story also shows how strong work ethics and close family ties have been cultivated by family experiences of perseverance and unity. She pointed out:

The impact my present environment had on my emotional development is the ability to see and judge certain situations or things from a different perspective and in a more mature way. The impact my educational background had on my emotional development is that it helped me to be very obedient, responsible, organized, and have the ability to take proper care of my belongings and so many other things. In my family, we all grew up very strong and hard-working. We love each other dearly and every year we gather together to have a family prayer and also celebrate. The impact my spirituality had on me is the ability to understand the value of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, meditation, and contemplation (P03, February 22, 2024).

Participant P04 talked about how her cultural identity and exposure to spiritual practices—such as St. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises—have greatly influenced her outlook on life and her behavior. She stated:

The exposure to spiritual exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola in apostolic spirituality has been of tremendous help in guiding my thoughts and actions. Family history also plays a major role: my Mum has been very supportive and a source of courage for me and others, a challenging support that makes me stronger. They have helped me to live my religious calling (P04, March 1, 2024).

According to P06, the community's spiritual activities and liturgical life stand out as important sources of emotional fulfillment since they provide a strong sense of purpose and belonging. She asserted: “All aspects of my community life are rewarding emotionally but mostly the liturgical aspect” (P06, March 3, 2024). For spiritual beliefs and practices, P04 and P07 asserted that a strong connection to their faith, God, and spiritual exercises fuel their

commitment and motivation. "My source of inspiration is the joy of serving the Lord" (P04, March 1, 2024). Also, P07 mentioned that: "My source of inspiration is God himself, who entrusted this work to me, I got my inspiration too by the life of the Saints (P07, March 6, 2024).

P05 discusses how environment, education, family, and spirituality all work together to strengthen a person's sense of self, sense of purpose in life, and dedication to a religious vocation. She said:

The environment over time and years, educational background, family history, and spirituality have had a strong impact on my emotional development. All these realities accompanied by everyday experience have helped me to understand better who I am, what the purpose of being in this world is, and my vocation as a religious (P05, March 3, 2024).

P06 and P07 centered on how their upbringing influenced their ability to understand emotions, effectively regulate them, and cultivate empathy for the feelings of others. In line with P06: "The impact environment, educational background, family history, and spirituality created in my emotional development is that they helped me to learn what feelings/ emotions are, and how to manage those feelings both on myself and others" (P06, March 3, 2024). Supporting this, P07 indicated by saying: "Through the impact of environment, educational background, family history, and spirituality, I can recognize, express, and manage feelings at different stages of life and have empathy for the feelings of others. Also, increased emotional intelligence, and positive moods" (P07, March 6, 2024).

#### *Subjective Interpretation and Choice*

P08 discussed the freedom to choose how one reacts to their upbringing, education, family background, and faith. She placed special emphasis on the individual's ability to use these influences to promote moral growth, identity, and emotional support. P08 expressed:

You know in life we make choices consciously and unconsciously. The path our lives take is largely determined by the choices we make day in and day out. The environment, educational background, family history, and spirituality have a positive impact, but I am the subject, I still have the right to choose what I do with them, either to continue with them or unlearn them. They have provided me with emotional support and unconditional love, and it has kept me on. They have shaped my identity and belonging from a young age, they have created learning opportunities and intellectual stimulation, facilitated my socialization, preserved cultural and traditional transmission, and guided my moral development (P08, March 7, 2024).

In summary, these responses underscored the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence development, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various factors. They elucidate a holistic approach to self-awareness and emotional regulation, integrating spiritual, relational, and personal dimensions. Participants highlighted the significance of community engagement, lifelong learning, introspection, and reliance on spiritual guidance. Empathy emerged as a pivotal aspect, evident in participants' efforts to understand and empathize with others, alongside their introspective practices. Moreover, they emphasized the harmonious impact of a rich spiritual life, supportive family, quality education, and nurturing environment in fostering emotional stability, compassion, and responsibility. Individual autonomy and choice were recognized as essential elements in harnessing these influences for emotional and spiritual growth.

The study findings align with prior literature, providing insights into strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence among women religious in Country A. For instance, Lekaviciene and Antiniene (2016) highlight the role of family dynamics in shaping emotional intelligence levels, emphasizing the importance of family support and healthy familial environments. Similarly, Mishra and Shrivastava (2018) stress the value of proper training and development, echoed in the present study's exploration of continuing formation and workshops. Khurshid et al. (2018) discuss the impact of curricular activities on emotional intelligence development, resonating with the present study's focus on tailored educational programs. Dubey et al. (2018) underscore the role of organizational support in enhancing emotional intelligence, reflecting the present study's emphasis on dynamic interpersonal strategies and community support. Furthermore, Mishra and Shrivastava (2018) and Dubey et al. (2018) emphasize personal competencies and reflective practices, mirroring the present study's identification of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and reflective practices as key factors. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing learning, supportive environments, and personal growth in developing emotional intelligence among women religious.

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## **V CONCLUSION**

This study examines possible ways of enhancing emotional intelligence among women religious in Country A. A qualitative method was employed, which included conducting semi-structured interviews with eight participants selected through purposive sampling. Thematic content analysis facilitated a structured review of the data, revealing insights into strategies aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness and self-acceptance; living in a healthy community; reflective practices, meditation, and post-realization; continuing formation, workshops, and learning; dynamic interpersonal strategies and feedback; positive effects of family, environment, and education; and subjective interpretation and choice.

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## **VI LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The data collection method employed a self-reporting approach, which has the potential to introduce social desirability or biases.

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## **VII RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations for different categories of women/female religious are made based on the findings of this study.

*Individual Female Religious*

It is imperative that each female religious cultivates greater self-awareness to boost emotional intelligence and promote community harmony. To improve their emotional intelligence, they should be aware of their own and others' strengths and shortcomings, value the individuality of others, practice silence, introspection, constructive self-talk, and emotional processing as well as spot times of empathy. In dealing with possible unresolved emotional issues from their childhood, family background, education, or spirituality, they should seek expert assistance, including spiritual guidance and counseling, among others.

*Female Religious Community Members*

Female religious communities ought to be a place where healthy living is promoted through shared experiences, meals, and prayers as well as shared life and mission. Thus, members of the community should cherish and look out for one another, especially in trying times. Senior members of the community should conduct themselves becomingly as an example for the younger members. To ensure a healthy community, every member should show consideration for one another and communicate honestly. Community members should embrace spiritual disciplines and the liturgical life of their community to stay connected to their faith and charism. They need to evaluate their lives and work and should also welcome criticism for growth and improvement.

*Formators*

Formators have a responsibility to be mindful of the many factors that could impact a formandee's emotional development, such as exposure, family, environment, faith, educational background, and cultural identity. Thus, they ought to provide a loving environment to support the growth of those they form, particularly in spiritual maturity, obedience, responsibility, and organizational skills. Such an approach to formation could increase the formandee's sense of self, understanding of the purpose of life, and commitment to religious vocation. Formators should closely guide formandees from the beginning of formation to assist them in forming the behavioral routines required to promote their emotional intelligence. They are to encourage the formandees through counseling. It is expected that appropriate counseling could contribute to their development as well-rounded future leaders for their congregations and communities.

*Administrators*

It would be beneficial for administrators of women religious institutions and communities to concentrate on assisting their members in developing greater self-awareness, independence, and fulfillment through seminars, workshops, continuing education programs, emotional development programs, personal and psychological support services like counseling, psychotherapy, spiritual guidance, and expert advice. More attention should be given to developing and enhancing their institutions' nurturing settings and emotional growth initiatives. In addition, they need to hold frequent open sessions and provide their members with adequate recreational opportunities. The goal of all of these is to promote the emotional intelligence of women religious, which will boost organizational dedication, productivity, and efficiency while motivating and inspiring members to be patriotic in their religious vocation.

*Admission Committees/Officers*

It might be useful for those responsible for admitting young women into religious institutions to utilize emotional intelligence tests and psychological wellness evaluations when deciding which members to admit or advance to a given stage of formation. This will help for easy evaluation of candidates' psychological and emotional skills and acceptance of emotionally mature applicants.

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## VIII SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestion for further exploration is provided:

- i. Conducting a cross-sectional study to explore emotional intelligence levels among women religious at different stages of their religious life (e.g., novices, professed sisters, senior members) and assess how these levels correlate with various factors.

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