



Prayer Addiction and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing among the Selected Female Religious Congregation in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the possible relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being among the selected female religious congregation in Nigeria. George Engels's biopsychosocial-spiritual theory guides this study. The study employed an embedded mixed-method research design. The quantitative data was collected using the Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test and the Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing Scale, and was analyzed with descriptive tools and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation) using Statistical Package for the Social Science using the Statistical Package for the Social Science. The census method was used, involving 325 participants. The key findings from the quantitative study revealed that (1) 1 in every 12 female religious is addicted to prayer, (2) the majority of the female religious exhibit a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing, (3) there exists a very weak positive but non-significant correlation ($r = 0.051$, $p = 0.443$) between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being. However, there is a strong significant correlation between prayer attitude and prayer addiction ($r(228) = .181$, $p = .006$ two-tailed; and prayer attitude and psycho-spiritual wellbeing ($r(228) = .300$, $p = .000$ two-tailed). A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from nine sisters selected purposively and presented with narrative analysis. The narrative accounts highlighted a shallow understanding of prayer addiction, with a predominant rejection of excessive or compulsive prayer practices among the sisters and emphasizing a balanced and integrated approach to prayer. The study concludes that while prayer is a lifestyle of the female religious, there is an 8% likelihood of slipping into prayer addiction, which may affect other areas of their lives. Notwithstanding, their high positive attitude to prayers equally boosts their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Also, their prayer attitude does not typically cause psycho-spiritual consequences. The preventative measures against prayer addiction proposed by the participants include spiritual formation, spiritual direction, counselling, community support, and heritage.

Key Words: Behavioural Addiction, Biopsychosocial-spiritual, Compulsive behaviour, Obsession, Prayer Addiction, Prayer Attitude, Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing.

1. Introduction

Addiction is often associated with substance abuse, such as drugs or alcohol. It is not unexpected that the majority of official definitions focus on drug consumption. Notwithstanding these classifications, a growing body of research currently considers some behaviour including those that do not require drug consumption- to be potentially addictive. These behaviours are as diverse as gambling, overeating, sex, sports, video game playing, love, internet use, and work (Griffiths, 2009). Such diversity has fronted the new all-encompassing description of what amounts to addictive behaviour not excluding prayer addiction.

Prayer reflects an attempt to initiate or cultivate a relationship with the Divine. Prayer serves as our coping mechanism for stress, pain, and anxiety (Gray, 2020). They are our ways of self-soothing, unwinding, and taking the focus off uncomfortable feelings. The psychic conviction that God grants answers may provide warmth, motivation, and a sense of intimacy that can reduce stress and provide purpose to life. Levin (2020, p. 61) asserts that prayer can foster a transcendent encounter that usually elicits a sense that a person's existence transcends their physical body and its social and psychological bounds. A significant part of many people's everyday lives is prayer, yet little is identified about the connection between prayer, daily experiences and psycho-spiritual health (Newman et al., 2023). Each person's everyday experiences are reflected in the actual content of their prayers, which has implications for their general well-being.

Studies on the benefits of prayer have revealed that those who pray have many positive physiological and neurological changes (Levin, 2020). Many people use prayer to shift their emotional outlook and suppress negative thoughts (Woodhead, 2016), and those who experience emotional uplift or solace during prayer will pray more. Understanding the power, pervasiveness, and recurrence of prayer experience depends heavily on its emotional resonance and content. According to Himle et al. (2013), compulsive praying and intrusive blasphemous thoughts about religious topics are common OCD symptoms associated with religion, also, hyper-morality, repeating rituals, and repetitive reassurance are common features of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Similarly, stricter approaches/ styles to prayer may give one a sense of being morally superior since they are "doing prayer the right way," or they may

make one feel constrained and isolated (Draper, 2019). This prayer paradox is well-captured by Winchester and Guhin (2019), who demonstrate how, when honestly approaching God, prayer has the potential to be both a problem and a solution. The various aspects of prayer experience can be associated with different prayer outcomes. For example, the quantity of prayer assesses if a routine is present and aids in evaluating the impact of prayer on well-being for a lifetime; it may additionally demonstrate the temporal physiology and the instantaneous consequences of prayer.

According to Kennedy (2018), prayer is an essential component of African cultures and the most revered custom in society. He stated that while prayer can have positive effects on psycho-spiritual well-being, African research also acknowledges that excessive prayer can have negative consequences. Some individuals may grow to be overly reliant on prayer and neglect other important aspects of life, like personal responsibilities, mental health, and social relationships (Kennedy, 2018). According to Paul (2017), many Christians have become so spiritually in tune through prayers that they neglect the place of character and relationship with people. Although many are indeed "heavenly" bound, they have no relevance to humanity. This prayer attitude has cut many people from their families, destroyed marriages and made some persons isolate themselves from people as they think that they are closer to God and more righteous than every other person around them.

Psycho-spiritual wellbeing is the absence of the debilitating aspects of the human experience, such as depression, anxiety, anger, and fear - and the presence of positive emotions: finding meaning in life, self-awareness, connectedness, compassion and self-transcendence. Psycho-spiritual wellbeing as quoted in Bash (2004) refers to a person's experiences and the effects these experiences have on him. The psycho-spiritual well-being of individuals is paramount in the formation of a balanced personality for those who live a religious life.

The dynamics of addiction (using a substance to escape from our reality especially painful feelings) can affect our spiritual life, so that religion itself becomes our preferred medication. When prayer is overboard marked by compulsivity and obsession to the extent that it interferes with the daily activities of the individuals, serves as a coping mechanism to escape life experiences, affects the interpersonal relationship between the community members, thoughts and behaviours, it becomes an addiction (Linn, et al. 1994). Certainly, we can use religion and religious activities like prayer to escape from our true selves in the same way that we use drugs or alcohol. When we substitute religious things for a real self, substitute constant prayer and church-going for a real relationship, this can be termed prayer addiction. The fundamental aspect of these prayer traditions is the belief that the one praying is solely in charge of the act of praying and has no control over the result.

Jesus never meant for us to use Him or any other religious things as an escape from the truth of our lives (Linn, et al. 1994), in other words; Christianity was not meant first of all to teach us doctrines but rather, how to process life. Religious practices are helpful when they support our capacity to authentically process life. The more we authentically process life; the more the truth of ourselves unfolds, and the more we reveal God who dwells at the core of our being. If one uses prayer to escape the real-life situation, one may not be living an authentic spirituality and one's psycho-spiritual wellbeing may be jeopardized. Hence this study sought the relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual wellbeing of selected female religious congregation in Nigeria.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study employed the Biopsychosocial-spiritual model (BPS-S) theory propounded by George, L. Engel. The premise of the BPS framework is that the whole person is comprised of biological (genetics, physiology), psychological (cognition, emotion), and socio-cultural interactions (cultural heritage) elements that are systemically and irreversibly linked (Engel, 1977; 1980). He opined that the biomedical model has difficulty accounting for psychological and sociological factors that influence most, if not all illnesses (Doodle Med, 2020). The biopsychosocial-spiritual model is an integrated approach that recognizes the interaction between biological, psychological, social, and spiritual parts of client care and well-being (Beng, 2004). This model is also popularly known as the mind-body connection and is an important concept in the fields of psychiatry, clinical psychology, social work, medicine, and counselling, simply to mention a few.

The Biopsychosocial-spiritual theory provides a holistic conceptualization of addiction that acknowledges the complexity of the disorder and provides guidance toward a solution, which must necessarily be multifaceted and holistic as well. Rather than pointing at one cause of addiction, a person's risk of addiction can be influenced by a variety of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors. The more we understand the Biopsychosocial-Spiritual paradigm, the better equipped we are to work towards successful treatment and cultivate true empathy for individuals struggling with addiction and prevention efforts (Giordano, 2021). Drawing from the themes of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual composition, Engel presented his theory as a way of looking at the human person as a whole to identify the cause of their problems.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to establish the relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The following are the study's objectives:

1. To investigate the prevalence of prayer addiction.
2. To establish the level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing.
3. To determine the relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual wellbeing.
4. To suggest ways of preventing prayer addiction.

2. Literature Review

The recent study carried out by Egunjobi (2023b) in Kenya on Prayer Addiction and William Glasser's Positive Addiction presents an investigation of the possibility of having a positive addictive behaviour such as prayer. A total number of 203 adult Christians aged 20 and older volunteered to take part in the research and participated in an online survey through voluntary sampling. The research employed a survey design methodology and employed both inferential and descriptive statistics. A prayer Attitude and Addiction questionnaire was used to collect data.

Egunjobi described prayer as the key that opens God's door in the attempt to resolve all individual biopsychosociotechno-spiritual challenges. He made a connection between his study and compulsive religious involvement disorders (CRID), which are characterized by compulsively participating in religiously related activities like prayer, meditation, or community activities at the outlay of relationships with family, co-workers, and other people.

The findings presented that 94% of Christians pray every day, and more than half of them do it in a regular, organized way. The prevalence of prayer addiction among Christians is 13.4%. One fits the description of an addict to prayer if they experience negative effects as a result of praying, such as a guilty conscience or negative feelings as a result of not praying (70.9%), having physical, emotional, or spiritual hurt or neglecting the self or others because of praying (20.1%), and having their prayer habit or praying affecting someone or some other important activities (33.2%). The study concluded that prayer addiction cannot have positive effects. Prayer addiction involves negative effects such as loss of control over praying and neglecting the significant other and important activities due to praying. As a result, while the behaviour is a beneficial, healthful, or constructive habit; it cannot be a positive addiction. Hence this present study examined prayer addiction and the psycho-spiritual well-being among religious women.

Kiplagat (2019) assessed the Relationship between Psycho-Spiritual well-being and Happiness among Consecrated Religious Women in Kenya. The correlation design with a systematic random sampling technique was used in the study. The target population was 238 and all were used for the study. The satisfaction with life scale (SWL), subjective happiness scale (SHS), spiritual well-being scale (SWB), and psychological well-being scale (PWB) were used to gather data. Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the data. The research also employed Ryff's (1995) conceptualization and assessment of psychological wellbeing taking into account its key features namely, autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life and environmental mastery.

Kiplagat in his study described religious women as consecrated persons to serve humanity, who are expected to have a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing and happiness yet some of them suffer from suicidal ideation, depression and other psychological complications. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .247, p < .01, n = 238$) between psychological wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing and a positive correlation that is statistically not significant ($r = .033, p > .01, n = 238$) between psychological wellbeing and happiness. He posited that additional research on psychological wellness is necessary, as it may have a substantial influence on both the spiritual and happiness well-being of the consecrated religious women. Stressors in life undermine psychological well-being and heighten spiritual disorientation. But spiritual well-being provides a means of achieving personal fulfilment and meaning in life, both of which are vital components of psychological well-being.

A cross-sectional study by Leung and Pong (2021) examined the Relationship between Spiritual well-being and Psychological Health among University Students in Hong Kong. The research involved 500 Chinese students, aged 17-23, who participated in the study either in 2018 or 2019 at two universities in Hong Kong. The study used a 20-item version of the Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM) to evaluate spiritual well-being in three domains: transcendental, environmental, and personal and communal.

The domains of the environment, transcendental realm, and personal and communal domain have Cronbach's alphas .88, .82, and .95 respectively. The results showed a statistically significant inverse association between the spiritual health of students across all dimensions and symptoms of the three psychological issues (depression, anxiety, and stress). The findings suggest that university students who are highly spiritually well-adjusted are less prone to exhibit stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Lower psychological discomfort was linked to all three dimensions of spiritual well-being, suggesting the need for spiritual counselling in interventions for students experiencing psychological problems.

Newman et al. (2023) in the Dynamics of Prayer in Daily Life and Implications for Well-Being found that prayer is a complex construct that reflects the nature of the day and may influence future feelings and reactions. The study involved 350 undergraduate students from a public university in the eastern US who completed questionnaires daily for two weeks. The study was done using naturalistic daily diary methods, the dynamic processes that link prayer to daily events, affective states, and well-being. The data were analyzed with HLM Version 6.

Newman et al. noted that the limitation of some previous studies is that prayer has been conceptualized as a one-dimensional construct. Secondly, they provided descriptive statistics that document the frequency of each prayer type and how much prayer content varies from one day to the next. It also examined the relations connecting daily activities, daily states of well-being, daily emotional states, and daily prayer content. Lagged analyses were conducted to examine the effect of prayer content on well-being the following day. Finally, it examined how individual differences in prayer frequency moderated the lagged effects between prayer content and well-being. In addition to daily events, certain states of well-being might influence the content of prayer and elevated levels of well-being may lead people to feel a closer connection to a divine being, making them more likely to pray.

The study found that certain states of well-being might influence the content of prayer, and elevated levels of well-being may lead people to feel a closer connection to a divine being, making them more likely to pray. However, the study also found that prayer can negatively influence well-being, leading to external attributions, salient experiences, and unfulfilled expectations. The study suggests that the content of individuals' prayers reflects their daily experiences and has consequences for their well-being.

Culbertson (2019) in his study *Development of Spirituality during Addiction Recovery* examined how religious coping (Positive Religious Coping or Negative Religious Coping) is developed. The basis was on how individuals experience a change from NRC to PRC and improve their chances for beneficial treatment outcomes. The researcher aimed to improve the exercise of spirituality as an addition to the addiction therapeutic and healing process in a manner that improves holistic treatment outcomes.

A qualitative methodology and explanatory case study research design were used to identify the issues that added to a transition from NRC to PRC during addiction recovery. Participants comprised four (4) therapists who incorporated spirituality into their all-encompassing treatment regimens and five (5) people recovering from addiction who had gone from NRC to PRC. Every individual who was chosen for this research stated that, in the process of recovering from addiction, they went from NRC to PRC. The instruments used include pre- and post-interview questionnaires, wherein a series of three interviews for Group 1, and one interview for participants in Group 2 were conducted. Member checking and collecting artefacts were used to complete the collected data. These data were analyzed using primary and secondary coding to search for patterns and relationships.

He argued that while some researchers found that unconstructive religious coping (NRC) appears to reduce the effectiveness of spirituality and religion in addiction treatment; they also found that PRC appears to increase the power of spirituality and religion on addiction recovery. However, not all researchers agree that spirituality is related to addiction recovery outcomes. The study established that positive experiences with God, positive personal practices, and positive experiences with others increase personal relationship development (PRC). Participants in Group 1 changed their perception of God, while Group 2 treated shame with forgiveness and confidence, helping clients embrace acceptance and responsibility.

3. Methodology

The study used an embedded mixed-method research design. The study location is Nigeria and the target population is 325 professed sisters. Since the population is manageable, the Census method was used wherein the entire population was included in the study. Nine sisters who were not part of the quantitative study were chosen purposefully to participate in the qualitative study (interview). The prayer attitude and addiction questionnaire (PAAT) and psycho-spiritual wellbeing scale (PSWB-S) were used to collect the quantitative data through Google Forms, while the semi-structured interview was used to collect the qualitative data.

The collected data was computer-processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Software version 23. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and standard deviation were used to summarize and describe the key features of the dataset and provided a comprehensive overview of the data to draw a meaningful conclusion. Inferential statistics (Pearson correlation) was employed to determine the relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being among the study participants. The results of the findings are presented in tables. The qualitative data analysis was done using thematic, content, and narrative analysis. Recommendations were made based on the research findings.

3.1 Questionnaires Return Rate

The return rate of the questionnaire issued for the study to gather data is shown in Table 2. This table shows the return rate of targeted questionnaires. Out of the 325 questionnaires that were sent out, 228 were returned, resulting in a return rate of 70%. This means that 70% of the targeted respondents completed and returned the questionnaires, while 30% of the population did not return the questionnaire. Wu et al. (2022) reported that the average online survey response rate is 44.1%. This suggests that the 70% response rate is adequate for this present study.

Table 1

Questionnaires Return Rate

	Targeted Questionnaires	Returned Questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Respondents	325	228	70
Total	325	228	70

Table 2

Sample Matrix for Qualitative Data

Code	Designation	Interview Date
Participant 1	Counsellor	6th March, 2024
Participant 2	Community Member	9th March, 2024

Participant 3	Superior	9th March, 2024
Participant 4	Community Sister	9th March, 2024
Participant 5	Community Sister	10th March, 2024
Participant 6	Superior	15th March, 2024
Participant 7	Community Sister	19th March, 2024
Participant 8	Superior	19th March, 2024
Participant 9	Community Sister	19th March, 2024

4. Presentation of Findings

The analysis of the prevalence of Prayer Addiction among the selected religious congregation in Nigeria was conducted within the scope of prayer attitude and levels of dependence on prayer. The instrument for testing prayer addiction was developed alongside prayer attitude (Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test). This is because addiction does not develop in isolation, but it is an attitude that leads to addiction. Therefore, the test on prayer attitude became a necessary tool in this study for assessing prayer addiction and how they relate to each other.

4.1 Prayer Attitude

The prayer attitude comprises of five questions and is rated from 0 - 4 with a maximum score of 20. "Low Prayer Attitude" ranges from 0 -5, "Moderate Prayer Attitude" ranges from 6 -12, while scores ranging from 13 - 20 stands for "High Prayer Attitude". The findings are summarized in the table 3.

Table 3

Prayer Attitude Test

Range	Freq.	Percentage	Description
0-5	0	0.0	Low Prayer Attitude
6-12	14	6.1	Moderate Prayer Attitude
13-20	214	93.9	High Prayer Attitude
Total	228	100	

The data reveals the distribution of prayer attitudes among the religious sisters and is presented in frequencies and percentages. The majority of the sisters (93.9 %) exhibit a high prayer attitude, while 6.1% of the respondents possess a moderate prayer attitude. From the above analysis, there was no score indicating a low prayer attitude. Given the religious context of the respondents being professed sisters, the prevalence of higher prayer attitudes among them is understandable and expected. It aligns with their dedication to religious practices and spiritual devotion. The high percentage of sisters exhibiting a higher prayer attitude suggests a strong commitment to prayer. This could reflect positively on the spiritual health and practices within the community, indicating a deep-rooted spirituality and devotion among her members. While the data provides insights into the prayer attitudes of the religious sisters, further qualitative research or surveys go deeper into understanding the factors contributing to these attitudes. Understanding the specific prayer practices, spiritual teachings, and communal dynamics within the religious community could provide richer insights into the observed prayer attitudes.

These findings are supported by several studies that have been conducted earlier by some researchers. For instance, Dunn et al. (2001) established that 86% of elders employ prayer as a coping method for stress and that women use prayer to manage stress at a much higher rate than men. Prayer was the alternative therapeutic modality most often reported (84%). This is similar to the majority of the religious sisters in Nigeria who indicate a predominantly higher prayer attitude. The findings suggest a strong commitment to prayer among the religious Sisters, with structured and regular prayer practices contributing to their psycho-spiritual well-being. Their adaptive responses to distractions and interruptions reflect a balance between spiritual devotion and practical engagements with the world around them.

4.2 Prevalence of Prayer Addiction

According to Egunjobi (2023), the prayer addiction test consists of eleven questions. Questions 5–18 are scored on a scale of 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4, while questions 19 and 20 are scored on a scale of 0, 2, 3, or 4. While the maximum score is 44, the cut-off point is 25, an indication of prayer addiction. The scores between 0- and 24 indicate no existence of prayer addiction. A score of 25 or higher indicates a high likelihood of severe prayer addiction.

Table 4

The prevalence of Prayer Addiction

Range	Frequency	Percentage	Description
0-24	209	91.7%	Non- Existent Prayer Addiction
25 and Above	19	8.3%	High Prayer Addiction
Total	228	100%	

From the presentation in Table 4, it is notable that 91.7 % of the participants show no sign of prayer addiction. This is an indication of a balanced attitude to prayer practices within the religious community. However, a small fraction (8.3%) of the participants exhibit a high level of prayer addiction indicating a subset of individuals who may have a more intense or fervent prayer practice which has negatively impacted their work and interpersonal relationships. Although there seem to be lower percentage of the female religious who exhibit High prayer addiction, this percentage is not negligible. It implies that 1 in every 12 female religious is addicted to prayers.

Understanding the factors influencing prayer addiction levels among religious sisters could provide deeper insights into their spiritual journey and the effectiveness of spiritual formation within the religious community. The findings underscore the importance of addressing prayer addiction within the selected religious group in Nigeria while also recognizing the significance of prayer in their spiritual lives. Interventions aimed at promoting a balanced approach to prayer and providing support for individuals struggling with excessive prayer habits may be beneficial for enhancing overall psycho-spiritual well-being within the community.

The data underscores the varied approaches to prayer addiction among the religious sisters, highlighting the complexity of spiritual practices within the religious community. The interview responses from the sisters provide insights into their prayer patterns and attitudes towards excessive and compulsive praying. The participants describe their prayer patterns as flexible, simple, and not characterized by excessiveness or compulsivity. They emphasize that their prayer life is harmoniously integrated into their daily routines, reflecting a balanced approach to prayer that does not feel forced or obligatory. Prayer is viewed as a relationship-building experience with God, a source of inspiration, and a means of finding peace and consolation. There is a common theme of rejecting the notion of excessive or compulsive prayer within their responses. Few respondents also acknowledged the presence of prayer addiction in the community. For instance, Participant 8 in her response to the possibility of prayer addiction acclaimed:

The term prayer addiction is somehow new to me but I will approach it based on what I know about addiction. Anything addiction is not positive. Prayer addiction for me is excessive praying/ fanaticism. When prayer is excessive, I mean doing it at the wrong time or leaving something I need to do at a particular time, it can become an addiction and it is not a positive act. (Interview, 19th March 2024)

Some participants highlighted that prayer should be a natural and desired act, not something done merely to fulfil a sense of obligation or to avoid punishment. They express a belief in the importance of praying when genuinely disposed and avoiding any form of pressure or compulsion in prayer practices. A participant mentioned a potential negative consequence of excessive and compulsive prayer, which is the experience of not being able to concentrate or enjoy prayer because it feels like a mechanical or obligatory routine rather than a heartfelt communication with God. This insight highlights the importance of authenticity and genuine connection in prayer practices to avoid potential distress or disconnection during prayer. Prayer thus, is viewed as a meaningful, flexible, and enriching aspect of their spiritual lives rather than something that leads to distress or negative consequences when practiced excessively or compulsively.

The interview responses also highlight several issues that may arise when someone becomes addicted to prayer within a religious circle. The participants identify various issues associated with prayer addiction, such as self-righteousness, guilt feelings when prayers are missed, rushing through prayers, neglecting one's responsibilities, and using prayer as a cover-up for underlying psychological problems. They further mentioned the potential misuse of prayer to avoid responsibilities or neglect important tasks, emphasizing the importance of engaging in genuine and sincere prayer that provides a sense of direction. Participant 8 commented thus:

Addiction to prayer for me is an abuse of prayer and can lead to behaviours such as acclaiming self-righteousness, an overly critical attitude towards others, spending excessive time in prayer activities while neglecting community activities, living isolated life, and feeling holier than others. These attitudes and behaviours can create challenges in relationships, community dynamics, and the authentic practice of spirituality. (Interview, 19th March 2024)

Additionally, the interviews suggest that personality traits, family background, life challenges, emotional stress, psychological issues, and the desire for social recognition may contribute to prayer addiction. This agrees with the research carried out by Giordano et al. (2016), who stated that researchers have established that there is a robust connection between trauma and addiction. This implies that going through difficult life challenges can push a person into one type of addiction or the other. Some individuals may turn to praying excessively as a coping mechanism or as a way to seek validation or social status, potentially exacerbating issues related to addiction.

The responses underscore the complex interplay between psychological, emotional, and social factors that contribute to prayer addiction. The respondents also highlight the importance of discerning healthy prayer practices from potentially harmful addictive behaviours and the need for balance, self-awareness, and genuine spiritual engagement in the context of religious life. This finding affirms the surmise of Beng (2004), who acknowledged that the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual components interact to promote holistic well-being, and a mind-body connection is necessary to preserve balance in our way of life.

4.3 The Level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing

The psycho-spiritual wellbeing scale designed by Egunjobi et al. (2023) to measure the level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing of individuals consists of five domains; Awareness, Connectedness, Meaningfulness, Compassion, and Self-Transcendence. Each domain has five questions, summing up to twenty-five questions. In each subset, the mean score is derived by adding up the total score and divided by five (5). The scale rating is as follows: 1.00- 1.79 indicates "Very Low", 1.80- 2.59 "Low", 2.60- 3.39 "Moderate", 3.40- 4.19 "High", and 4.20- 5.00 "Very High".

Table 5

Level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing

	N	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Scores	Std
Awareness	228	1	5	4.3	0.7
Connectedness	228	1	5	4.4	0.7
Meaningfulness	228	2	5	4.3	0.7
Compassion	228	2	5	4.3	0.7
Self-Transcendence	228	1	5	4.3	0.7
Total /5	228	1.4	5	4.3	0.7

The mean scores for Awareness, Connectedness, Meaningfulness, Compassion, and Self-Transcendence are all notably high, ranging from 4.3 to 4.4. The standard deviation of 0.7 suggests relatively low variability around the mean, indicating a relatively consistently high level of psycho-spiritual well-being among the religious sisters. The data suggests that the sisters generally possess a very high level of psycho-spiritual well-being. This indicates a strong sense of awareness, connectedness, meaningfulness, compassion, and self-transcendence among the religious sisters, which are essential components of spiritual health and fulfilment. The findings reflect positively on the spiritual practices, communal dynamics, and overall well-being within the religious community.

The interview responses from the respondents provide a comprehensive overview of how prayer influences their mental, emotional, and spiritual health positively. The first participant described prayer as a source of healing, comfort, and calmness that helps them navigate life's challenges. Prayer serves as a coping mechanism, offering them a sense of satisfaction, joy, and peace after communing with God. They express how prayer transforms their perspective, allowing them to see the world through the eyes of the Creator and fostering balance between their emotional and spiritual well-being. For instance, participant 1 expressed thus:

For me, prayer is a means of cleansing my mind and emotional turmoil, providing clarity and strength to face difficulties with a sense of composure. It is seen as a conduit for maintaining mental clarity, emotional stability, and spiritual resilience in a world filled with distractions and complexities. Prayer improves my physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, and strengthens my bond with God and my sisters in the community. (Interview, 6th March, 2024).

The findings suggest that respondents demonstrate favourable levels of psycho-spiritual well-being across various domains, including awareness, connectedness, meaningfulness, compassion, and self-transcendence. These findings are validated by those of Leung and Pong (2021), which states that the higher the level of spiritual well-being, the higher the level of psycho-spiritual well-being. The responses underscore the transformative power of prayer in enhancing the psycho-spiritual well-being of this religious group. Prayer is depicted as a vital source of energy, inspiration, and connection with a higher power that sustains them in their daily lives, enabling them to live a balanced life. It is portrayed as a practice that not only brings inner peace and insight but also strengthens their relationship with God and their neighbours in the community and beyond. These findings agree with Nizeyimana et al (2022) who found that practices like personal prayer, forgiveness, and learning about spirituality are important for holistic healing.

4.4 Relationship between Prayer Addiction and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing

The study aimed to examine the correlation between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual wellbeing among the selected religious sisters in Nigeria. The relationship was established by using Pearson Correlation test.

Table 6

Correlation between Prayer Addiction and Psycho-Spiritual Well-being

		Prayer Addiction	PSWB
Prayer	Pearson Correlation	1	0.051

Addiction	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.443
	N	228	228
Psycho-spiritual Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	0.051	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.443	
	N	228	228

The correlation analysis between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being (PSWB) reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.051. This value indicates an almost non-existent correlation between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being. The p-value of 0.443 suggests that this correlation is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the relationship observed could have occurred by random chance. This finding agrees with the findings of Mengga et al. (2023), that there is no significant connection between the frequency of prayer and mental health. However, in as much as the number of those addicted is insignificant in this study, it cannot be neglected.

In practical terms, this analysis indicates that there is a very weak relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being based on the data collected from the 228 participants. There is no known study which has correlated this before. The lack of a significant correlation between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being suggests that the tendency towards prayer addiction did not show a clear direct impact on the psycho-spiritual well-being of the sisters in this study. Since this research set to find a relationship between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being but found no significant relationship, this study saw the importance of checking other factors which might have contributed to the manifestation of prayer addiction in the small minority (8%).

According to Egunjobi (2020), our interaction with the object of our addiction is central to addiction. This implies that addiction does not emerge in isolation, but may have some factors that influence its occurrence. Addiction encompasses more than simply substance and alcohol abuse; it also involves behaviour and attitude; hence attitude may collapse into addiction. Based on this reflection, the developer of this instrument found it necessary to test prayer addiction in conjunction with prayer attitude. This study, therefore, tries to check the prayer attitude of the respondents about prayer addiction. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Correlation between Prayer Attitude and Prayer Addiction

		Attitude	Addiction
Prayer Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.181**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	228	228
Prayer Addiction	Pearson Correlation	.181**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	228	228

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

The correlation between prayer attitude and prayer addiction can be described as weak positive but highly significant $r(228) = .181$, $p = .006$ two-tailed with a 99% confidence level. Based on this correlation analysis, the study samples of prayer attitude and addiction appear to be positively correlated in a statistically meaningful way. As established earlier, it is evident that prayer attitude has a significant relationship with prayer addiction. Put simply, the 8% of the participants' indicators of addiction is not negligible, and might have resulted from the influence of the prayer attitude of the participants. Egunjobi (2022) in his study stated that "if staying connected with the Transcendence results in neglect of significant others, duties, and missing appointments, then it calls for serious attention". This deduction agrees with the findings of the correlation between prayer attitude and prayer addiction.

Since the study set out to establish the association between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being but found none, the study deemed it important to find out factors that would have contributed to high prayer attitude and high psycho-spiritual well-being since prayer addiction would affect psycho-spiritual well-being. This study thereby established a correlation between prayer attitude and psycho-spiritual well-being. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8*The Correlation between Prayer Attitude and Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing*

		Prayer Attitude	Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing
Prayer Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.300**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	228	228
Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.300**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	228	228

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

The correlation between prayer attitude and psycho-spiritual wellbeing can be reported as moderately positive but highly significant $r(228) = .300$, $p = .000$ two-tailed with a 99% confidence level. The p-value associated with this correlation is less than 0.01(.000), which means that the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

This significant association implies that the participants' psycho-spiritual well-being correlates with their prayer attitude. Put another way, people who approach prayer with an open or positive attitude may be in better psycho-spiritual health than people who approach it with a closed or negative mindset. This relationship might result from prayer's beneficial benefits on mental and emotional well-being, which include fostering emotions of inner serenity, a sense of purpose or meaning in life, and a connection to a higher power. It implies that a person's prayer attitude can have a huge influence on their psycho-spiritual well-being. The participant's high level of psycho-spiritual well-being may have also been the cause of their high level of prayer attitude.

Owing to the sisters' participation in spiritual direction, spiritual formation, counselling, and embracing the congregation's heritage, achieving a high level of psycho-spiritual well-being and a positive prayer attitude is definite and attainable. This may also be a contributing factor in keeping the attitude to prayer from becoming addictive but facilitates their psycho-spiritual well-being.

4.5 Ways of Preventing Prayer Addiction

The responses provided by the religious sisters offer various perspectives on the causes of prayer slipping into addiction within a religious context and possible ways of preventing prayer addiction. The participants mentioned a range of factors that may contribute to prayer transitioning into addiction. These factors include a lack of security within the community, blaming others for personal issues, unresolved problems or challenges, hypersensitivity to guilt or sin, a regimented lifestyle, imbalanced spirituality, psychological trauma, escapist tendencies, fanaticism, inability to share difficulties, and shallow faith. The participant 5 echoed thus:

It is important for sisters to understand the true nature of prayer and there is need for a genuine connection with God rather than using prayer as a means of avoidance or escape from challenges. Cultivating a sincere heart, trust in Divine Providence, upholding the spiritual formation of our Foundress and nurturing a loving relationship with God is an essential aspect of preventing prayer from slipping into addiction. (Interview, 10th March, 2024).

Furthermore, some participants expressed that family influences, personal problems; psychological issues, regimented lifestyle, and a closed-minded approach to difficulties can be identified as potential causes of prayer addiction. The responses provided a multifaceted understanding of the potential causes of prayer slipping into addiction, emphasizing the need for self-reflection, genuine connection with one's faith, developing a positive self-image, and a balanced approach to spiritual practices to maintain a healthy relationship with prayer and avoid potential addiction.

Several participants highlight the significance of self-awareness, accepting challenges with good faith and trust in God, seeking spiritual direction, engaging in psycho-education, and prioritizing spiritual formation as strategies to prevent prayer from slipping into addiction. They stress the importance of fostering a supportive and non-judgmental environment within their community where sisters can freely share experiences and burdens. The responses also underscore the value of promoting a holistic approach to spirituality, integrating prayer into daily activities; viewing every action as a prayerful offering, maintaining a sense of faithfulness to God, and appreciating the work of God through active engagement in physical and mental tasks.

In sum, the interview responses reflect a proactive and reflective approach to addressing potential issues related to prayer addiction, encompassing strategies such as counselling, returning to foundational values, seeking community support, and fostering a healthy balance between spiritual devotion and practical engagement in daily life improves psycho-spiritual wellbeing. This affirms the study done by Azizah et.al (2023), who opined that in experiencing positive experience with God, the development of positive personal practices and positive experiences with others is essential in providing mental and spiritual-religious well-being. In a similar vein, Leung et al (2023) assert that spiritual intervention as a journey of spiritual growth encompasses various dimensions such as divine power, guidance, inspiration, scripture, comfort, progress, personal experiences, and prayer can lead to a process of spiritual transformation.

5.1 Discussions

The study established that the prevalence of prayer addiction among religious sisters is small (8.3%), but not negligible. It shows a situation where 1 in every 12 female religious under study is addicted to prayer. The study also highlights potential challenges associated with prayer addiction, such as self-righteousness, guilt feelings, inadequate interpersonal relationships, and neglect of responsibilities. Notwithstanding, the qualitative findings show the understanding that there is a healthy and balanced approach to prayer, with participants emphasizing the importance of genuine connection and rejecting excessive or compulsive prayer practices. They view prayer as a meaningful, flexible, and enriching aspect of their spiritual lives. This portion of the study boils down to the common sayings, "Too much of a good thing is bad", "All things are good in moderation", and "A surfeit (excess) of anything, even good things, is pleasing only to fools."

The data analysis on the level of psycho-spiritual well-being showed that religious sisters generally have a very high level of psycho-spiritual well-being. All the participants scored above 4.20 which portray a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. This indicates a strong sense of awareness, connectedness, meaningfulness, compassion, and self-transcendence among the professed sisters, which are essential components of spiritual health and fulfilment. The findings reflect positively on the spiritual practices, communal dynamics, and overall well-being within the religious community. This is expected as religious women engage in different activities and live in environment which is psycho-spiritually stimulated. They pray, they engage in charity works, they are communal oriented, and practice self-care.

The correlation analysis between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being (P-SWB) was not significant. The data does not provide evidence to support a significant impact of prayer addiction on the psycho-spiritual well-being of the participants. It implies that the level of prayer addiction does not necessarily predict or affect the participants' psycho-spiritual well-being in this study. However, another correlation was conducted between prayer attitude and prayer addiction. This showed a significant relationship between the two variables. This implies that prayer attitude has a significant effect on the being addicted to prayer. Having a regular way of praying and liking it can lead to a healthy habit of prayers. But if this praying habit becomes excessive, a way of escaping other life challenges makes one insensitive to the needs of others in the community or makes one to neglect other community activities, it can slip into addiction. Furthermore, it was shown that the correlation between prayer attitude and psycho-spiritual well-being is also significant. The result reveals that the prayer attitude of the participants has a positive influence on their psycho-spiritual well-being; the high level of prayer attitude could be a result of the high psycho-spiritual well-being possessed by the sisters. In the same light, the high level of psycho-spiritual well-being may have been influenced by their high level of prayer attitude.

To prevent prayer addiction, the participants stressed the need for sisters to cultivate a genuine connection with God (spiritual formation), and heritage, seeking spiritual direction, and counselling. The sisters advocate for holistic spirituality, self-reflection, and supportive community environments to avoid unhealthy obsessions with prayer and promote psychological and spiritual well-being within their religious community.

5.2 Conclusion

The study among the selected female religious congregation in Nigeria highlights a small but not negligible amount of prayer addiction but also a balanced and meaningful approach to prayer, emphasizing genuine connection and rejecting excessive and compulsive prayer practices. Participants demonstrate a strong self-awareness, empathy, and a connection to their spiritual beliefs, showcasing qualities of self-compassion and resilience. The correlation analysis between prayer addiction and psycho-spiritual well-being was not significant, but significant relationship between prayer attitude and prayer addiction, and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The preventive measures for prayer slipping into addiction suggested were seeking spiritual direction and fostering a balanced approach to prayer for maintaining spiritual well-being within the community among others.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

1. Comparing the experiences of the selected female religious congregation with other religious groups to understand variations in prayer practices, beliefs, and their influence on psycho-spiritual wellbeing.
2. Designing and implementing intervention studies to evaluate the effectiveness of specific strategies aimed at preventing prayer addiction or promoting a balanced approach to spiritual practices among the religious sisters.
3. Investigating the impact of cultural and societal factors on prayer practices and psycho-spiritual wellbeing within the religious community.

5.4 Recommendation

1. Religious Superiors need to promote a positive spiritual culture by promoting balanced prayer practices, accessible psycho-spiritual counselling, mental health care, and programs enhancing self-awareness and emotional intelligence.
2. It is crucial for the religious sisters to uphold a healthy and balanced approach to prayer. Regular self-reflection and self-awareness is encouraged to prevent prayer from slipping into addiction.
3. Formators need to include training on recognizing and addressing potential signs of prayer addiction among the sisters in their formative programs. Guidance for the formees needs to focus on steering the sisters towards a balanced spirituality that effectively integrates prayer into daily life.

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