



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Relationship between Demographic Variables and Religious Commitment among Catholic Consecrated Women in Karen, Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

Ukwa Martina Chinasa¹, Wambua Pius Muasa PhD², Shem Mwalw'a PhD³

Tangaza University, Nairobi, Kenya

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0725.2606>

ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that demographic variables play a critical role in religious commitment. This study aimed to examine the relationship between demographic variables and religious commitment among Catholic consecrated women in Karen Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted correlational survey research design to examine the relationship between the variables of the study. The study employed a sample size of 280 participants using census method which composed the whole target population because it was small and manageable. The data was collected with the demographic details of the participants and Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10). The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis using SPSS Version 26. The results showed that there was a positive and statistically relationship between age and religious commitment among consecrated religious women. The unstandardized coefficient (B) was 0.018 with a t -value of 2.571 and a p -value of 0.011. In addition, the results showed positive relation between years spent in consecrated life and religious commitment. The analysis showed a coefficient of 0.023, a t -value of 2.556, and a p -value of 0.011. Finally, the results showed a positive relationship between level of education and religious commitment with a coefficient of 0.035, a t -value of 2.917, and a statistically significant p -value of 0.004. This brings awareness to Superiors and consecrated religious women on the role of demographic details on religious commitment. The study recommends to Superiors of congregations to continue promoting education among consecrated religious women as one of the ways of enhancing religious commitment.

Key Words: Demographic variables, Religious commitment, Catholic consecrated religious women, Nairobi, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Studies conducted globally have reported relationship between demographic variables and religious commitment. For instance, a cross-sectional study was conducted by Pew Research Center (2020) involving over 5,000 consecrated individuals. Using regression analysis, the study found that older participants demonstrated significantly higher levels of religious commitment compared to younger ones ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). The researchers attributed this trend to the accumulation of spiritual experiences and strengthened vocational identity over time. Similarly, the Center for Applied Studies in the Apostolate (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study with 800 consecrated women, combining surveys and interviews. Their quantitative analysis revealed that higher educational attainment was positively correlated with theological and spiritual engagement ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). The study concluded that advanced education provides intellectual and spiritual resources that enhance religious commitment.

The World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (2021) carried out a global survey of 3,000 consecrated women using Likert-scale questionnaires. Through correlation analysis, they discovered a significant positive relationship between the length of consecrated life and religious commitment ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$). Longitudinal data from the Journal of Religious Studies (2019) further supported this finding, showing that while younger participants exhibited high initial commitment scores (mean = 85/100), their commitment fluctuated over time ($M = 75/100$ after 10 years), unlike older participants whose scores remained stable ($M = 90/100$). However, a report by the Vatican's Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2023) employed a meta-analytic approach across 50 studies, revealing regional variability in the impact of demographic variables. For instance, while education and age were strong predictors in Western countries, their effects were weaker in some African and Asian contexts due to socio-economic factors.

In Africa, empirical research highlights unique patterns influenced by cultural, socio-economic, and educational factors. A longitudinal study by the African Catholic Bishops' Conference (2021) followed 400 young initiates over five years, using repeated measures ANOVA. Results indicated that initial commitment levels were high ($M = 88/100$) but declined slightly ($M = 82/100$) due to external pressures like economic instability ($F(4, 1600) = 12.34$, $p < 0.001$). A study that was conducted in the Journal of African Religious Studies (2022) using a cross-sectional survey of 600 consecrated women, analyzing the relationship between education and religious commitment. Logistic regression showed that those with tertiary education were three times more likely to exhibit deeper theological engagement and commitment than those without ($OR = 3.2$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, a study was

conducted by the Pan-African Catholic Theological Association (2023) using hierarchical linear modeling to examine data from 1,200 participants across 15 African countries. The findings showed that while years in consecrated life positively predicted religious commitment ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), this effect was moderated by regional issues such as political instability ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, the African Institute of Religious Studies (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study with 200 participants, combining surveys and focus groups. Quantitative results showed that higher education was positively correlated with religious commitment ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$), while qualitative data emphasized the role of education in fostering theological depth and spiritual resilience.

Also, in Kenya studies have shown relationship between demographic variables and religious commitment. The Pastoral Institute in Nairobi (2023) conducted a survey of 250 consecrated women, employing descriptive statistics and t-tests. Findings revealed that older participants (>40 years) scored significantly higher on commitment scales ($M = 85/100$) compared to younger counterparts (<30 years, $M = 75/100$; $t(248) = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$). The Catholic Diocese of Nairobi (2022) analyzed data from 300 participants using multiple regression analysis. Results showed that education level explained 45% of the variance in religious commitment ($R^2 = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), with higher academic qualifications strongly associated with deeper commitment. The National Catholic Institute of Kenya (2023) conducted a longitudinal study of 150 consecrated women over seven years, using growth curve modeling. The study found that longer years in consecrated life were linked to sustained increases in commitment scores ($b = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$). However, a separate study by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Kenya (2024) highlighted challenges faced by younger clergy through thematic analysis of interview transcripts. Key themes included socio-economic pressures and modern lifestyle demands, which affected long-term commitment.

Though global studies have consistently demonstrated the influence of demographic variables such as age, education, and years in consecrated life on religious commitment among Catholic women, significant gaps remain, particularly in regional and local contexts like Kenya. Global research often generalizes findings without accounting for unique socio-cultural and economic factors specific to African countries, leaving a need for context-specific studies. Regional studies in Africa highlight important trends but frequently lack standardized measures and longitudinal designs, limiting their ability to track changes in religious commitment over time. In Kenya, existing studies, though insightful, predominantly focus on urban areas, neglecting rural communities, and rarely explore interaction effects between demographic variables or the nuanced role of contextual factors. These gaps underscore the necessity for a comprehensive study employing longitudinal designs, standardized measures, and an inclusive approach that captures the diverse experiences of consecrated women across Kenya, thereby enriching the body of knowledge and addressing the unique challenges faced by this population. This proposed study aims to fill these critical gaps, providing deeper insights into the relationship between demographic variables and religious commitment among Catholic sisters in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed correlational survey design. A correlational survey design is specifically suited for investigating relationships between variables without manipulating or controlling them experimentally. The design was suitable to examine the relationship between demographic variables of age, education, years of consecration and religious commitment among the consecrated religious women.

The study was conducted in Karen Nairobi. The choice of Karen Nairobi as the study location was important due to its representation of diverse and vibrant religious communities that actively engage in religious practices. As the capital, Nairobi draws a significant number of religious congregations and holds substantial importance for the Catholic faith. Notably, Karen contains the largest concentration of religious congregations within the Archdiocese of Nairobi, making it an ideal setting for exploring the connection between psychological well-being and religious commitment among these women. Moreover, Nairobi presents a rich socio-cultural landscape that influenced the psychological well-being and religious commitment of its residents. The city combines traditional and modern influences, offering a unique context for examining how religious commitment affects the psychological well-being of consecrated women. The fast-paced urban environment, alongside religious practices and traditions, provides a wide range of experiences that can impact the mental health and overall well-being of religious women.

The term "target population" refers to the entire group of individuals or entities that share specific characteristics and are the focus of the study, as defined by Quinlan et al. (2019) and Walliman (2017). For this research, the target population consists of all Catholic consecrated women residing in religious communities within Karen Ward, Nairobi, Kenya. This population comprises 280 consecrated women, who belong to various Catholic orders and institutes. These women have dedicated their lives to serving the Catholic Church, adhering to its teachings, and living a life of prayer, community, devotion, and service to the world. The target population reflects the diverse demographic and organizational characteristics of the local Catholic community in Karen. The women vary in terms of age, the duration of their religious life, their roles within their communities, and the specific religious orders they belong to. This diversity is critical for understanding how psychological well-being and religious commitment interact across different contexts of religious life. Additionally, the population includes women from various nationalities, ethnicities, and tribes, enriching the cultural and social dynamics of the study.

The study employed census method to include the whole population of 280 consecrated religious women as a sample size since the population was small and manageable. The census method provided a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between demographic variables and religious commitment by capturing the diversity within the population, including variations in age, years of consecration, and religious order affiliations.

The data was collected using the demographic variables of the participants and Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10). The demographic variables were age, educational level and years in consecrated life. The religious commitment inventory has two dimensions: intrapersonal (personal devotion, prayer, and faith-based decision-making) and interpersonal (participation in religious communities and sharing of faith). The 10-item survey,

which is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, offers a thorough but succinct assessment of how well these women incorporate their faith into their everyday lives and communal customs (Worthington et al., 2003). Data collection took approximately 21 days, with each participant requiring 30 minutes to complete the survey. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with SPSS version 26. The findings were presented with tables and figures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was set to examine the relationship between demographic variables of age, educational level, years in consecrated life and religious commitment among Catholic consecrated women in Karen Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The demographic details of the participants are presented followed by the findings of the study.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Descriptive statistics was run to examine the age categories of the participants and the results are presented in figure 1.

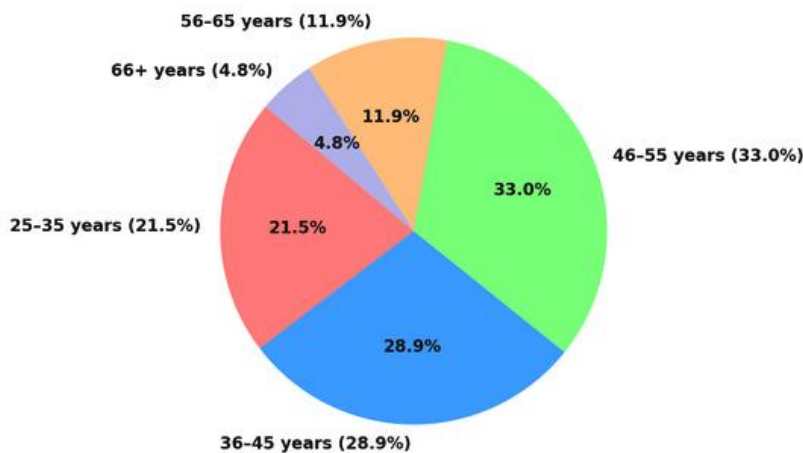


Figure 1: Age of the Participants

The findings showed that 58 respondents (21.5%) were aged between 25 and 35 years, while 78 respondents (28.9%) fell within the 36–45 years age bracket. The highest proportion of respondents, 89 (33.0%), were between 46 and 55 years. Additionally, 32 respondents (11.9%) were aged between 56 and 65 years, and 13 respondents (4.8%) were 66 years and above. These results indicated that the majority of the respondents were middle-aged adults, particularly those between 46 and 55 years. This suggested that most participants had significant life experience and likely a deeper involvement in religious life, which was essential for understanding the study variables. The age distribution was relevant to the study as it reflected a mature group that could offer rich insights into the relationship between psychological well-being and religious commitment. Their stage in life also influenced how they perceived and lived out their religious vocations, impacting their psychological resilience, purpose, and overall well-being.

Years in Consecrated Life

Descriptive statistics was conducted to understand the number of years they have spent in consecrated life. This information is crucial in understanding the level of experience and spiritual maturity among the Catholic consecrated women in Karen Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi. The results are presented in figure 2.

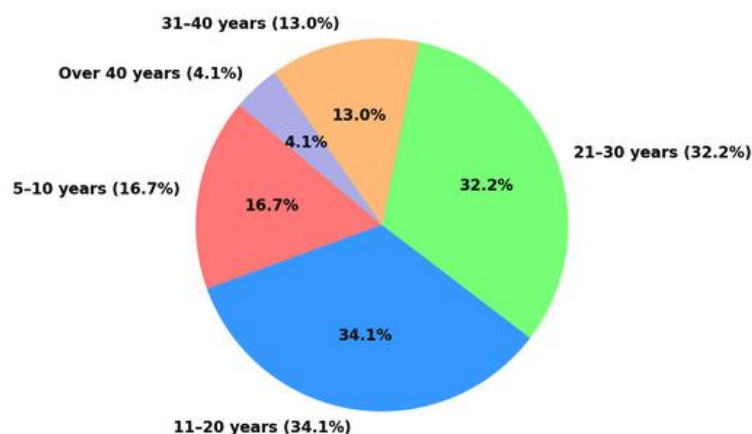
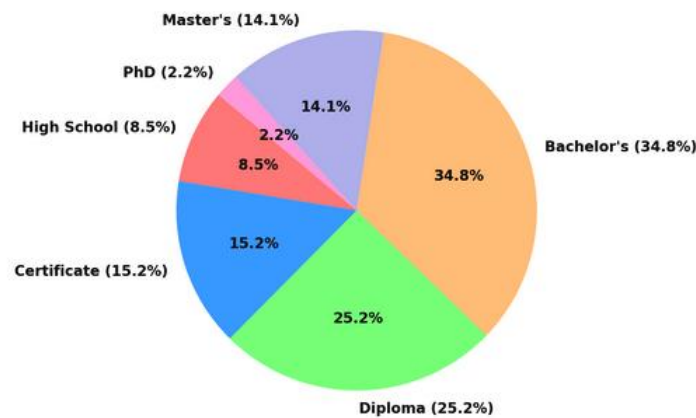


Figure 2: Years in Consecrated Life

The findings showed that 45 respondents (16.7%) had been in consecrated life for 5–10 years. A total of 92 respondents (34.1%) had served for 11–20 years, while 87 respondents (32.2%) had been in religious life for 21–30 years. Additionally, 35 respondents (13.0%) had spent 31–40 years in consecrated life, and only 11 respondents (4.1%) had been in religious service for over 40 years. The results revealed that the majority of respondents—179 out of 270 (66.3%)—had spent between 11 and 30 years in consecrated life, indicating a high level of religious experience and commitment. This was relevant to the study as such individuals were likely to have deeply internalized religious practices and values over time. Their long-term dedication provided rich insights into how sustained religious commitment relate to psychological well-being. Furthermore, the variation in years of service enabled an analysis of how psychological well-being evolved across different stages of consecrated life.

Educational Level

Descriptive statistics was conducted to understand the educational qualifications of the Catholic consecrated women who participated in the study and the results are presented in figure 3.

**Figure 3: Educational Level**

The findings revealed that 23 respondents (8.5%) had attained a high school level of education, while 41 (15.2%) had certificate qualifications. A total of 68 respondents (25.2%) held diplomas, and the largest group, 94 respondents (34.8%), had obtained bachelor's degrees. Furthermore, 38 respondents (14.1%) had master's degrees, and a small number, 6 respondents (2.2%), had a PhDs. These results indicated that the majority of the respondents were well-educated; with a significant proportion (76.3%) holding post-secondary qualifications (diploma, bachelors, master's, or PhD). This educational background was relevant to the study as it suggested that the respondents had the cognitive ability and reflective capacity to understand, assess, and report on aspects related to psychological well-being and religious commitment. Their levels of education also have influenced their approach to religious life, personal development, and mental wellness, offering depth and reliability to the insights gathered in the study.

Relationship between Demographic Variables of Age, Educational Level, Years in consecrated life and Religious Commitment among Catholic Consecrated Women in Karen Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

To establish the relationship between the demographic variables of age, educational level, years in consecrated life and Religious Commitment among Catholic Consecrated Women in Karen Ward, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya, a multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between Demographic Variables of Age, Educational Level, Years in consecrated life and Religious Commitment

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	2.150	0.442	—	4.865	0.000
Age	0.018	0.007	0.185	2.571	0.011*
Years in Consecrated Life	0.023	0.009	0.198	2.556	0.011*
Education Level	0.035	0.012	0.216	2.917	0.004**

Results from table 1 showed that there was a positive and statistically significant association between age and religious commitment. The unstandardized coefficient (B) was 0.018 with a *t*-value of 2.571 and a *p*-value of 0.011. This suggests that, on average, older participants tended to report slightly higher levels of religious commitment compared to their younger counterparts, when the other factors were accounted for. In addition, the findings showed there was a positive correlation between years spent in consecrated life and religious commitment. The analysis showed a coefficient of 0.023, a *t*-value of 2.556, and a *p*-value of 0.011. This implies that women who had served longer in consecrated life were more likely to

report greater levels of religious commitment, suggesting a reinforcing effect of religious vocation over time. Lastly, the results showed positive correlation between educational level and religious commitment with a coefficient of 0.035, a t -value of 2.917, and a statistically significant p -value of 0.004. This finding indicates that higher educational attainment was related to increased religious commitment, possibly due to enhanced understanding of religious teachings or more developed personal convictions. The regression results showed that age, years in consecrated life, and education level each had a positive and statistically meaningful relationship with religious commitment among the participants.

The findings of this study were consistent earlier studies. For instance, the finding that age was positively associated with religious commitment aligns with the work of Wink and Dillon (2002), who found that religiosity often deepens with age as individuals seek meaning, inner peace, and continuity in later stages of life. In the current study, older participants reported slightly higher religious commitment levels, which may reflect a long-term internalization of faith practices and beliefs over time. Koenig (2015) similarly noted that older adults often turn to religion as a central source of coping, community, and purpose, especially within structured religious settings like consecrated life.

The positive relationship between years spent in consecrated life and religious commitment observed in this study also echoes findings from Joseph (2021), whose study in India showed that the duration of religious service was a strong predictor of personal religious depth and psychological stability. This suggests that the religious vocation itself reinforces spiritual behaviors and attitudes over time, gradually solidifying commitment. As consecrated women grow in their roles and responsibilities within religious communities, their sense of vocation likely becomes more central to their identity, resulting in deeper levels of commitment. Ogbonnaya et al. (2017) made similar conclusions in Nigeria, emphasizing that long-term spiritual engagement fosters a sense of purpose and belonging, which are critical components of psychological well-being.

The finding that education level was the strongest predictor of religious commitment ($p = 0.004$) is particularly noteworthy. This result aligns with studies such as Alwell and Mall (2021), who reported that Catholic nuns with higher levels of education demonstrated greater engagement with both theological understanding and religious practice. One possible explanation is that higher education enhances not only intellectual engagement with religious teachings but also fosters a deeper capacity for critical reflection, ethical reasoning, and personal conviction. Rosmarin et al. (2014) also observed that religious individuals with more education tend to develop more mature spiritual perspectives, which may be more deeply integrated into their sense of self and daily behavior. Additionally, Nyambura and Ochieng (2022) found that religious commitment among Catholic women in Kenya was significantly influenced by education and exposure to pastoral training. Their participants who had attended theological seminars or attained post-secondary education reported higher satisfaction in their spiritual life, supporting the present study's conclusion that education is a reinforcing factor in one's religious journey. Taken together, these findings confirm that demographic characteristics such as age, experience in religious life, and education are not merely background variables, but rather play an active role in shaping the depth of religious commitment among consecrated women.

CONCLUSION

Demographic variables of age, years of service in religious life, and educational level, were found to have relationship with religious commitment. Middle-aged consecrated women and those with more years of service in religious life reported higher levels of religious commitment. Additionally, higher levels of education appeared to support deeper introspection and stronger integration of faith and personal values. The study recommends that formation programs be adapted to meet the diverse needs of various demographic groups within religious communities. For instance, younger consecrated women or those who are new to religious life could benefit from targeted mentorship, vocational guidance, and personal development initiatives. Additionally, educational programs that foster intellectual engagement and reflective thinking about religious teachings should be promoted as tools to enhance both spiritual and psychological growth.

REFERENCES

- Africa. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 45(2), 210-225.
- African Catholic Bishops' Conference. (2021). *Demographic Influences on Religious Commitment in Africa*. African Catholic Bishops' Conference.
- African Institute of Religious Studies. (2023). *Education and Commitment Among Kenyan Consecrated Individuals*. African Institute of Religious Studies.
- Alewell, D., & Moll, T. (2021). An exploratory study of spirituality in German enterprises. *Management revue*, 32(1), 1-27.
- Catholic Diocese of Nairobi. (2022). *Educational Attainment and Religious Commitment Among Consecrated Women*. Catholic Diocese of Nairobi.
- Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. (2022). *Education and Religious Engagement: A Global Perspective*. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.
- Institute of Pastoral Studies. (2023). *Religious Commitment and Demographic Variables in Nairobi, Kenya*. Institute of Pastoral Studies.
- Joseph, S. (2021). Cross sectional study on the association of daily spiritual experience on mental well-being during covid 19 among the African students in India. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*, 16(4), 196-204.
- Journal of African Religious Studies. (2022). *Education and Commitment Among African Consecrated Individuals*. Journal of African Religious Studies.

- Kenya National Catholic Research Institute. (2023). Years in Consecrated Life and Commitment in Kenya. Kenya National Catholic Research Institute.
- Koenig, H. G. (2021). Religion and Mental health: Research and clinical applications. Cambridge University Press.
- Ogbonnaya, F. C., Rasheed, A., Okechukwu, E. C., Jighly, A., Makdis, F., Wuletaw, T., ... & Agbo, C. U. (2017). Genome-wide association study for agronomic and physiological traits in spring wheat evaluated in a range of heat prone environments. *Theoretical and Applied Genetics*, 130, 1819-1835.
- Pan-African Catholic Theological Association. (2023). Regional Challenges and Religious Commitment in Africa. Pan-African Catholic Theological Association.
- Pew Research Center. (2020). The Role of Age and Experience in Religious Commitment. Pew Research Center.
- Quinlan, D., Vella-Brodrick, D. A., Gray, A., & Swain, N. (2019). Teachers matter: Student outcomes following a strengths intervention are mediated by teacher strengths spotting. *Journal of happiness studies*, 20(8), 2507-2523.
- Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. (2023). Demographic Variables and Religious Commitment: A Global Overview. Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
- Walliman, N. (2019). Your research project: designing, planning, and getting started. *Your Research Project*, 1-416.
- World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations. (2021). Global Trends in Religious Commitment Among Consecrated Individuals. World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations.
- Worthington Jr, E. L., Wade, N. G., Hight, T. L., Ripley, J. S., McCullough, M. E., Berry, J. W., ... & O'Connor, L. (2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory--10: Development, refinement, and validation of a brief scale for research and counseling. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 50(1), 84.