



Student Spirituality and Academic Performance: A Case Study of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author OBW gave advice and supervised the work. Author OOI carried out the field work and wrote the manuscript. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

There have been varied views about the role that spirituality plays in academic success. Some people either agree or disagree out rightly on the matter. Others are also of the view that the role that spirituality plays in academics is dependent on the level of the student's involvement. These varied views are prevalent because there hasn't been as much research on the link between spirituality and academic success as there has been in the link between spirituality and stress, psychology, coping mechanisms and stress. According to Cox (2011), "There is only limited research examining the potential link between spirituality and academic performance and even the research that exist seems to ask more questions than what it answers and is extremely inconsistent." This research was a case study designed to find out the relationship the spirituality of students has with academic performance in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. The population of the study was approximately 40,000. The convenience technique was used to sample 163 students. The views were sampled through a

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questionnaire. The questionnaire largely comprised of Likert-Type questions. An additional 16 Item Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) adopted from Cox (2011) was used to measure the spiritual levels of students. The study revealed that there was no significant relationship between student spirituality and academic performance. However, spirituality served as a source of inspiration to focus on studies and hard work. The study also showed that, students viewed spirituality in religious terms and tightly knitted spirituality to religion. Recommendations made from the study was that, students who had spiritual inclinations should not see their spirituality as a sure way to success. Students could also learn the virtue of focus and hard work in spirituality and apply it to their advantage in academics.

Keywords: Spirituality; student; academic performance.

ABBREVIATIONS

DSES : Daily Spiritual Experience Scale
KNUST : Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
WASSCE : West African Secondary School Certificate Examination

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

For several years now, there have been several research findings about the impact that man's association with the perceived supernatural world has made on his physical world. Fagan [1] writes, "Research on the effects of religious practice has expanded and now encompasses areas such as health, overcoming addictions, reducing crimes, and reforming criminals". According to Ivtzan [2], research largely shows that religion and spirituality have a positive connection to psychological well-being. The expansion of this area of study has made it simply necessary for some scholars to look into the link between religion or spirituality and academic performance.

Mattis [3] suggests that, the African American culture has spirituality as its core. The same can be said of the African culture. The spirituality of Africans is said to be "embedded in cultural-contextual settings" [4]. Spirituality in Africa can hence be considered as intertwined in the fibre of the general African way of life. The role of the spiritual in the physical sphere of the African life is very involving. The emergence of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions in the African society has in no wise weakened this link. In every society, "Spirituality has served as a personal and communal source of liberation, solace, hope, meaning and forgiveness..." [5].

In the African setting, spirituality has been very core in the sense that virtually everything

physical has got and equal explanation in a spiritual context. African spirituality is almost always placed on the foundation of religion. From a life's first to final breath, there are legions of stories and explanations which rest only in the spiritual. A new born baby is kept indoors until the eight day because it is believed that there are evil spirits which may want to terminate the child's life. Even after the outdoor of the baby, we still observe a high level of carefulness exhibited by its parents so as to forestall any unwanted spiritual occurrences. In the day to day life of the African, physical happenings have spiritual connotations. A person who finds himself tripping several times in one morning may allude to the belief that someone is working out his or her downfall. Even in the positive sense, an experience of itchy palms can mean that a person will soon get some money. We therefore see superstition as a co-existing factor in African spirituality.

1.2 Problem Statement

The prime aim of students is to be successful in their examinations. The hope for a better future inspires students into seeking for academic success with as much strength and ability that lie in their power. From the basic level to the tertiary level of education, there have been statistics which suggest that poor academic performance has led to the eventual discontinuation of students' education.

The Ghanaian Times newspaper of October 1, 2013 reveals that only 53.5% of the 392,000 candidates who wrote the 2013 Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E.) passed. This implies that, 182,000 may not be able to continue their education. According to an article posted on the Citi FM website [6] dated 26th August, 2014, the candidates who obtained the necessary passes in the 2014 West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) were

28.1% of the total number registered. A keen observation of the trend developing along the educational continuum gives the impression that many fall out because of poor academic performance. With the current height on unemployment rates Owusu [7] states that “the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) has indicated that about 50% of graduates from the 2011 [tertiary] graduating year may wait up to 2014 without finding jobs.” The statistics provided by Owusu [7] show that there is high competition for employment and it is only a few who have exceptional academic performance will gain employment.

Students tend to find the best means for success in academics. Some seek this success through some of the following ways: drug use, examination malpractices, hard work, bribery, spiritual means and other means. Research findings are available to prove that some of the above mentioned means either help students or otherwise.

There have been varied views about the role that spirituality plays in academic success. Some people either agree or disagree out right on the matter. Others are also of the view that the role that spirituality plays in academics is dependent on the level of the student’s involvement. There is therefore the need to conduct an enquiry into the relation between spirituality and academic success.

1.3 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study were to determine the perception of KNUST students on spirituality; identify the ways in which spirituality supports KNUST students in their academic pursuits; and identify the ways in which spirituality hampers the academic success of KNUST students.

1.4 Hypothesis

H₀: There is no relationship between spirituality and academic performance of KNUST students.

H₁: There is a relationship between spirituality and academic performance of KNUST students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Findings from the study reveal the level of influence that spirituality has on academic performance of students in KNUST. This

exposition would help students and other persons in academia to understand the positive or negative impact of spirituality on education.

The study also provides information that is likely to be useful for the purposes of guidance for students and lectures, parents and other people who are involved in the provision and facilitation of education.

Finally, this study is likely to inspire other researchers to embark on similar studies into spiritual, religious and other factors affecting academic performance of students in the various stages of the educational ladder, so that more general information about factors that contribute to standards in education could be obtained and addressed to improve academic performance of students.

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 Spirituality

We find in the intellectual world today that, definitions of spirituality have sprang up in different dimensions and tend to be several times unreliable. They become unreliable when they do not capture some salient unavoidable areas. Rendon [8] asserts that, the different conceptions of the concept of spirituality can range from issues having a direct relation to formal religion to wider concepts like the meaning and purpose of life. In understanding Rendon [8], explanations of the concept can be very restrictive to some people in the world at some point and at another point may embracing of all people in society regardless of any form of affiliations or connexions. Seeing the extent of the scope of spirituality, it will be very necessary to explore the varying definitions of the concept and state how the concept will be used in the research being undertaken.

From the perspective of Dollard [9] spirituality is “concerned with our ability, through our attitudes and actions, to relate to others, to ourselves, and to God, as we understand Him”. This definition makes God a necessary entity in spirituality. Therefore as Rendon [8] explained, this explanation tends to be extremely restrictive. We find that the concept of spirituality as seen by Dollard [9] is measured in terms of a person’s ability. This clearly leads us to the fact that spirituality is in different levels. Current trends of the definition of spirituality that are emerging gives avenue for everybody to be possess it.

The National Institute of Healthcare Research in the United States in reporting on spirituality and health defined spirituality as “the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred” [10]. This presents spirituality as the product of a deliberate enquiry into sacred things. The definition is equally as bias as we find the one provided by Dollard [9]. Though we may find the definitions of Dollard [9] and Larson et al. [10] as bias, some other researchers will commend them since their definitions necessitate the existence of a power external the individual. Spirituality certainly in current intellectual quarters does not limit itself only to the sacred or God.

Astin [11] state that “spirituality points to our interiors, by which I mean our subjective life.” In terms of this definition, he explained that the spirituality of a people cannot be described in the same way we can describe observable behaviour and tangible objects which can easily be identified and quantified directly. Astin [11] further explained some components of spirituality. (1) The spiritual sphere “has to do with human consciousness” by this, he meant that the spiritual world is concerned with what we experience secretly in our individual consciousness. (2) Spirituality encompasses an individual’s “qualitative or affective experiences.” In bringing affective experiences into the definition, he did not remain silent on the point that it also involves our “reasoning or logic.” (3) Spirituality is also definitely concerned with the meaning and purpose we have in life and “our sense of connectedness to each other and to the world around us.” (4) Spirituality may also be linked with parts of our life experiences “that are not easy to define or talk about.” In giving examples, he stated that our intuition, inspiration, the mysterious, and the mystical” were some of those experiences. We find out that, this definition deliberately covers every person in society regardless their faith or belief. In commenting on this definition, Wood and Hilton [12] claim that, though Astin’s definition takes cognisance of the fact that there are the occurrence of unexplained phenomena, it does not “necessitate a personal investment, through belief and action, in forces and powers beyond one’s control.”

In expounding on her ideas concerning a “transformed pedagogical dream field”, Rendon [8] writes that pedagogy can be considered spiritual if it “honours our humanity, instils a sense of wonder, sacredness and humility in our

college classrooms, respects and embraces alternate cultural realities, and connects faculty and students in meaningful ways.” This definition falls in the same category as the one provided by Astin [11]. In further writings on education Rendon [8] is of the view that, regardless of the definition one uses for the concept, spirituality is cultural. We therefore can infer that, since culture is universal, spirituality is equally universal. However, Rendon like Astin fails to recognise that the concept of spirituality has to recognise commitment to a greater power.

Jagers and Mock [13] as quoted in Wood and Hilton [12] gave the definition for spirituality as ‘believing and behaving as if non-observable and nonmaterial life forces have governing powers in one’s everyday affairs . . . Although often expressed in God concepts, this ongoing spiritual sensitivity is not necessarily tied to formal church doctrine or participation.” In this definition of spirituality it can be seen that the belief in a greater power such as a transcendent being, a God, supernatural force, ordered universe, and action based upon that belief, is a prime element. For most instances, like Jagers and Mock [13] explained, spirituality is linked with religion. This definition complements the other definitions provided by Rendon [8] and Astin [11] which failed to recognise the existence (whether real or not) of an ‘above nature’ power to which individuals commit or subject to.

Page examined spirituality among Black males (African Americans). The study investigated the link between spirituality and coping mechanisms for young adult, urban, African American males in New Jersey. As elaborated upon by Wood and Hilton [12], Page “found their conceptions of spirituality related to having faith in, practicing, and theological adherence to a religious belief system.” The definition of Page [14] clearly looks bias as it takes into account only those that have a religious affiliation. This definition however is perfect enough for the kind of study that Page [14] went into. The people that Page [14] studied saw spirituality in terms of religion. They considered spirituality to have a necessary link with a power beyond one’s control. This conclusion falls in the same category as the definition given by Jagers and Mock [13]. They both agree that in spirituality, confidence and trust in something is exhibited in a person’s life.

In a multi-year research project which examined the spiritual development of undergraduate students, the Higher Education Research

Institute- HERI [15] defined spirituality as “a dynamic construct that involves the internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness and wholeness, of being open to exploring a connection to a higher power, of transcending one’s locus of centrality while developing a greater sense of connectedness to self and others through relationship and community, and of defining one’s role and place in the world and the universe.” This definition draws attention to the very personal and inner lives of individuals. Spirituality in the sense of the above definition relates chiefly to an individual’s mood and feeling. The internal feeling however does not necessarily obliterate the use of reasoning since the spiritual person still seeks out to develop a sense of connection to others in the immediate environment. HERI [15] continues to explain that, “spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here...” In the analysis of the HERI [15] definition, we observe that the definition of spirituality was not clearly associated with religion as seen in many circles. This gives room for those without a religion to be spiritual. The concept of spirituality should be at best be de-associated with religion which has to do with public and group worship. The description of spirituality as a ‘dynamic construct’ implies that, spirituality can never be viewed as a static construct. Hence its definition cannot be the same over a long period of time. Situations and circumstances may account for the change in definition.

Considering the ideas of spirituality that arise from the various literature reviewed and the highly religious setting of this study, the definition of spirituality as used in this study will be “a person’s ability as revealed in his attitudes and actions, to live in a particular way and to relate to others in a particular way on the basis of the belief that supernatural entities have governing powers in one’s everyday affairs.”

1.6.2 Spirituality and academic performance

There have been varied views about the role that spirituality plays in academic success. Some people either agree or disagree out rightly on the matter. Others are also of the view that the role that spirituality plays in academics is dependent on the level of the student’s involvement. These varied views are prevalent because there hasn’t been as much research on the link between spirituality and academic success as there has

been in the link between spirituality and stress, psychology, coping mechanisms and stress. According to Cox [16], “There is only limited research examining the potential link between spirituality and academic performance and even the research that exist seems to ask more questions than what it answers and is extremely inconsistent.” Clark [17] makes an interesting revelation by asserting that several research works tend to show that people who turn out to be more religious do not have the benefit of education and such conclusions probably were made because of the way in which religion and spirituality were operationally defined.

Clark [17] also emphasizes that, the challenge of having less research works on religion and spirituality and their relation to academic success can be blamed on the fact that, historically social scientists have viewed religion and spirituality with contempt. Clark [17] studied the relationship between religiousness, spirituality, and IQ. The study concluded that there is a negative relationship between religion and IQ. Cox [16] claims that, some research studies suggest that academic decline are partly caused by religiosity. When Cox [16] compares such conclusions with Max Weber’s theory of the Protestant ethic, she finds inconsistency. Weber’s theory postulates that there is an inherent nature of discipline in Protestantism which makes adherents of the faith tend to have a stronger principle of hard work. This then leads to the generation of much material gains. Cox [16] asserts that, these material gains could also be in the form of “academic gain.” Cox [16] made mention of another theory that claims that Protestant students are not likely to perform well at secular institutions because such schools tend to present worldviews that conflict with their theology. Beyerlein as cited in Cox [16] postulates that, “some conservative Protestants believe humanism and scientific philosophies endanger the souls of believers, thus, conservative Protestants are less likely to pursue higher education.”

The link between spirituality and education seems to be complicated due to cultural issues. Cox [16] suggests that “generally, African Americans consistently report stronger religious involvement, higher levels of spirituality, and state that religion is more important to them...” this assertion seems to be true because of the variety of social issues that African Americans face which sometimes can be extremely challenging. In this regard, Karl Marx’s view of

religion as opium seems to emerge. "Despite these challenges, African Americans who are more spiritual are also... well-adjusted and have the highest academic performance."

Similarly Jeynes as cited in Cox [16], uses data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey (America). The study demonstrated that very religious Blacks and Hispanic youth achieve better academically than less religious students. The same study uses that as a basis to encourage youth in minority culture who may not be religious to consider religion since they historically perform worse academically than their white counterparts.

In another study by Walker & Dixon cited by Cox [16], spirituality had quite a modest connection with good academic performance, which is high GPA, and academic honour, among African Americans. In the same study, for European Americans, their participation in religious activities had a greater influence on their GPA across semesters.

Wood and Hill [12], explains that, there are several ways in which spirituality supported academic performance. In a research which covered twenty eight (28) subjects, there were five (5) ways in which spirituality supported academic performance. Two (2) of the eleven (11) students were Jehovah's Witnesses, one (1) was a former Jehovah's Witness, and nine (9) were Protestants from various denominations, such as Baptist and Seventh Day Adventist. These are the ways in which students saw that their academic success was supported by spirituality: (1) God served as a confidant, an entity who students could share their issues with; (2) Spirituality served as inspiration for excellence; (3) spirituality provided life purpose, thereby reassuring students of their academic plans; (4) spirituality provided an ability to overcome barriers; and (5) spirituality reduced relational distractions, especially those not aligned with a spiritual worldview.

In seeing God as a confidant, many described their relationship with Him as an interactive one. In this, they could both talk to Him and dialogue with Him on the challenges they faced and even on their successes. Wood and Hilton [12] continue by asserting that, the students who found God as a confidant claimed that their ability to continually have dialogues with God provided them with "a sense of support, essentially reducing feelings of isolation." These

feelings of isolation according to Wood and Hilton [12], "are seen as directly related to Black male persistence and/or academic success in the community college."

In the same study, Students revealed that spirituality served as a source of inspiration for Excellence. They recognised that God or religion or faith played a role in supporting academic success. In their training as children, Wood and Hilton [12] noted that, the subjects indicated they were raised to believe that the pursuit of excellence was a necessary Christian virtue. The pursuit of excellence, according to the subjects, is applicable to every aspect of their lives which may be in the workplace and in relationships with friends including brilliance in academia. The subjects pointed out that, the notion that the pursuit of excellence is a virtue was given to them by family members, pastors, and their local church membership.

According to Wood and Hilton [12], another way in which spirituality helped indirectly was that spirituality provided a purpose for living. As described by the subjects, spirituality also served to make their life purposes clear. They had the belief that "God has a desired outcome for each person, and that this purpose, often equated with a career, is meant to serve, glorify, and benefit God." Therefore outside spirituality, their pursuit of academic success was a fruitless journey. In this journey, god allows them to encounter "barriers and supports." These served as a method of making them ready for tasks they will have to undertake in the future.

The research likewise revealed that, the greatest way in which spirituality was related to academics was that, it was crucial in "empowering them to overcome barriers that they encountered." Broadly, students stated that as and when they came across blockades, they requested for a miracle from God, with the belief that "God heard their prayers and helped them through whatever barriers they faced." According to Wood and Hilton [12], many of the students did not make much mention of specific situations that spirituality had aided them overcome. Rather, they focused on general issues. They noted that they prayed for good academic performance from God before taking tests, and that He made them have good result. For example, one student said, "if I pray that day when I have a test or something, I ask God to help me pass a test, then it will maybe come true. And then I'll pass a test".

In the Wood and Hilton [12] research, one way that spirituality was related to academic performance was that, it somehow “relational distractions.” Some of the students noted that, their religious beliefs and spirituality prevented them from close interaction with other students who were potential distractions. These students noted that their religious “engaged in partying, substance abuse, womanizing, and other actions that would be considered inappropriate.” As a result of this, these students were of the view that they were well able to pay adequate attention to their studies because relational distractions with other people were either lessened or not there at all.

In relation to the purpose of this study as outlined in Chapter 1 (1.2), the literature that was reviewed explains that, the various ways in which spirituality supports students as asserted by Cox [16] and Wood and Hilton [12] are that, spirituality made students well-adjusted in order to survive in the academic community; God or their deity served as their confidant who they could share their issues with; spirituality inspired them to succeed. The other ways are that, spirituality gave meaning to their educational pursuit; provided an ability to overcome academic challenges reduced relational distractions. Max Weber’s theory of protestant ethic also suggests that, there is an inherent nature of discipline in Protestantism which makes adherents the faith tend to have a stronger principle of hard work. The various literature were not specific as to how spirituality hampered academic performance. Yet Clark [17] concluded that there is a negative relationship between religion (not necessarily spirituality) and IQ. Beyerlein [18] also is of the view that some conservative Protestants may have challenges of pursuing higher education because of how humanism and scientific philosophies seem to “endanger the souls of believers.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study covered students in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. Its investigations were limited to students who belong to the two (2) major religious worldviews on campus: Muslim and Christian students.

The research design employed was the case study design. Baxter & Jack as cited in Cox [16] define the case study as “a research methodology based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group, or event.” The target

population of the study was all undergraduate students in KNUST, numbering approximately 40,000.

The convenience sampling technique was used to select the members of the sample. This technique was used because of the relative advantage of ease, time and cost it presents. For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified the various religious denominations as, Orthodox Christians; Evangelical Christians; Pentecostals; Charismatics; and Muslims. The total sample size was 163. It comprised 44 Orthodox Christians, 21 Evangelicals, and 72 Pentecostal & Charismatics.

Basically, the data that were gathered in relation to this research were from primary and secondary sources. The secondary data was from published journal articles and other published and unpublished sources. The primary data was obtained through the questionnaires administered to the respondents. The questionnaire was mainly close ended Likert scale. The validity of this instrument was grounded in its precise measurement of what it was purposed to gauge.

The academic performance of respondents were measured using the Cumulative Weighted Average (CWA) range they indicated in the questionnaire. Their spirituality was measured with a 16 Item Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) adopted from [6].

The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Frequency tables were developed and the results were summarized in tables. Correlation analysis was also used to show the relationship between the spirituality of students and their academic performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gender of Respondents

In terms of gender of the respondents, data collected from the field showed that 123 out of the 163 students were males while 39 out of the 163 students were females. In percentage terms, males occupied approximately 76% while female occupied nearly 24%.

3.2 Religious Denomination of Students

In Table 1, the religious denominations which the respondents belong to are shown with their

Table 1. Specific religious denomination of students

Specific religious denomination	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Orthodox Christians	44	27
Pentecostal Christians	37	22.7
Charismatic Christians	35	21.5
Evangelical Christians	21	12.9
Muslims	16	9.8
Other Christians	6	3.7
Unspecified	3	1.8
Other Religious Denomination	1	0.6
Sample size (n)	163	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2015)

corresponding frequencies and percentages. It can be seen that, majority of the respondents were Christians. Muslims were 9.8%, and non-Christian, non-Muslim respondents and those who did not specify their religious denominations were 2.4%.

3.3 Students' Perception of Spirituality

The data presented on In Table 2 are discussed below. The study revealed that a great majority of the respondents (81%) are in agreement with the fact that the spirituality of any person cannot be explained devoid of the concept of God or Allah. This data is supported by the researches done by Dollard [9] and Larson et al. [10]. Their definition of spirituality necessitated the recognition of a being beyond human power. This also confirms the view of Page as cited in Wood and Hilton [12] who examined spirituality among black (African American) males. He "found their conceptions of spirituality related to having faith in, practicing, and theological adherence to a religious belief system." It suggests therefore that the setting of the

research done by Page [14] has some similarity with the setting of this research. Hence the definition of spirituality, at least, in the context of KNUST should feature the recognition of God or Allah as a being or power beyond human capacity.

Quite a sizeable portion of the respondents in this study (60.2%) also carried the idea that, the reading of the Holy Scriptures of their religion makes a person spiritual. This revelation suggests that spirituality may be necessarily tied to a religion or church doctrine since those scriptures are deemed sacred by believers in those religions. This therefore debunks the report by Jagers and Mockers [13] that although spirituality is often expressed in God concepts it is not necessarily tied to formal church doctrine or participation. It however upholds the old definitions provided by Dollard [9] and Larson et al. [10]. The new trends in the definition of spirituality, including the definition by HERI [15] suggest a clear demarcation between religion and spirituality. The data provided above opposes the idea presented by HERI [15] that

Table 2. Students' perception of spirituality

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
Spirituality cannot be explained without the belief in God/Allah	14(8.6%)	12 (7.4%)	5 (3.1%)	39 (23.9%)	93 (57.1%)
Reading the Bible/Koran makes a person Spiritual	23 (14.1%)	35 (21.5%)	7 (4.3%)	56 (34.4%)	42 (25.8%)
Prayer makes a person spiritual	7 (4.3%)	11 (6.7%)	12 (7.4%)	78 (47.9%)	55 (33.7%)
Accepting other people as they are makes a person spiritual	26 (16.0%)	61 (37.4%)	41 (25.2%)	24 (14.7%)	11 (6.7%)
Being good to people makes a person spiritual	30 (18.4%)	60 (36.8%)	21 (12.9%)	39 (23.9%)	13 (8.0%)

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2015)

draws attention to the very personal and inner lives of individuals. Spirituality in the sense of the definition of HERI [15] relates chiefly to an individual's mood and feeling.

The idea drawn from the data found with regard to this statement is quite similar to that of the statement discussed in the previous paragraph. Since majority of the respondents (81%) see prayer to be a part of spirituality, it suggests that they see spirituality to be knotted to a religion or church doctrine. On the basis of this data the view of Jagers and Mockers [13] that although spirituality is often expressed in God concepts it is not necessarily tied to formal church doctrine or participation cannot be upheld.

The study depicts that a greater number of the respondents (53.4%) did not consent that accepting other people just as they are has something to do with the spirituality of an individual. This may oppose the view of HERI [15] that having a feeling of connectedness to all of humanity an indicator of spirituality. It may also suggest that having an ecumenical world view makes a person less spiritual. The implication of this finding is that, individuals may be quite glued to their religious denomination and less tolerant of others who are unlike them (either in religion, character, culture, race etc.) in their attempt to be spiritual. It may also suggest, in the view of respondents, that an individual's level of tolerance or view on ecumenism has nothing to do with spirituality.

The data also depicts that majority (55.2%) of the respondents disagreed on the assertion that acts of goodness towards other people make a person spiritual. It is directly in opposition to the HERI [15] view that charitable involvement is an

indicator for spirituality. According to HERI, charitable involvement assesses the behaviours of subjects. These behaviours could be participation in community service, giving of alms, counselling, and lending helping hands to friends who had to grapple with personal problems. The view of respondents in this research in comparison with assertion by HERI thus indicates that, acts of goodwill and kindness may not necessarily be indicators of a person's spirituality.

3.4 How Spirituality Supports Academics

The data presented in Table 3 indicates the responses of respondents on how spirituality supports academic performance. The data is discussed below.

It was revealed that quite a number of the respondents (55.8%) believed that high spirituality leads to academic success. This finding substantiates some of the five (5) ways in which Wood and Hilton [12] claimed that spirituality helped in academic performance. Wood and Hilton noted that, spirituality served as an inspiration for excellence. They also noted that spirituality provided ability to overcome barriers. This connotes therefore that, spirituality is actually a very major source and motivation for good academic performance in students. As a result of these findings and others Wood and Hilton are of the view that it is very important to affirm students spiritually.

The outcome of the study revealed that a great majority (72.4%) of the respondents consented that spirituality makes students to focus on their studies. This affirms the assertion by Wood and Hilton [12] that spirituality provided life purpose,

Table 3. How spirituality supports academics

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
High spirituality leads to academic success	11 (6.7%)	41 (25.2%)	20 (12.3%)	51 (31.3%)	40 (24.5%)
My spirituality makes me focus on my academics	5 (3.1%)	18 (11.0%)	22 (13.5%)	83 (50.9%)	35 (21.5%)
My spirituality makes me to work extra hard in my studies	9 (5.5%)	18 (11.0%)	23 (14.1%)	75 (46.0%)	38 (23.3%)
Because of my spirituality, miracles happen and I get better results	12 (7.4%)	16 (9.8%)	21 (12.9%)	70 (42.9%)	44 (27.0%)
Because of my spirituality, I can balance academics with other commitments	7 (4.3%)	7 (4.3%)	25 (15.3%)	82 (50.3%)	42 (25.8%)

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2015)

thereby reassuring students of their academic plans. This revelation thus suggests that, the hope of having a desired academic performance as a result of one's spirituality keeps one focused.

Quite a sizeable portion of the respondents (69.3%) in this study were of the view that spirituality makes students work extra hard in their studies, This affirms Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic as mentioned in Cox [16]. Weber's theory postulates that there is an inherent nature of discipline in Protestantism which makes adherents the faith tend to have a stronger principle of hard work. This then leads to the generation of much material gains. Cox [16] asserts that, these material gains could also be in the form of "academic gain." It should however be noted that Weber's theorisation was specific to Protestants and not all religious or spiritual people.

The data depicts that majority (69.9%) of the respondents believed in academic miracles and that they had experienced some before. The concepts of miracles may be outside the scope of science but can be considered to be very significant in this study. If through spirituality, mystical events occur to help students excel in academics, then spirituality is very necessary in academia. This view holds as long as these miracles do not defeat the purpose of education in imbibing knowledge. This means that, miracles that help students to internalise knowledge in education is beneficial to education whilst those which tend to provide success in examinations without the student acquiring knowledge are detrimental to the goal of education.

The study revealed that great majority (76.1%) of the respondents carry the view that their spirituality helps them to balance both academic activity and other commitments. This research is indirectly in agreement with the HERI [15] assertion that spirituality is "a dynamic construct that involves the internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness and wholeness, of being open to exploring a connection to a higher power, of transcending one's locus of centrality while developing a greater sense of connectedness to self and others through relationship and community, and of defining one's role and place in the world and the universe." The study reveals that a person's spirituality enables that individual to do multiple tasks in a lifetime.

3.5 How Spirituality Hampers Academic Success

The data presented in Table 4 indicates the responses of respondents on how spirituality hampers academic performance. The data is discussed below.

The results presented by the study reveals that an overwhelming majority (90.2%) of respondents disagreed with the fact that a high level of spirituality leads to poor academic performance. This data further confirms the findings in 4.2.1 which show that high spirituality leads to good academic performance. Thus this finding also substantiates the view of Wood and Hilton [12] that spirituality helped in academic performance. Apart from being an inspiration for excellence, Wood and Hilton also noted that spirituality provided ability to overcome barriers. This connotes therefore that, spirituality is actually a very major source and motivation for good academic performance in students. As a result of these findings and others Wood and Hilton are of the view that it is very important to affirm students spiritually. This finding also suggest that, spirituality cannot be detrimental to academic performance.

The understanding that can be drawn from the study is that, majority (92%) of the respondents did not agree with the idea that because of their spirituality, they did not find it necessary to study much. This suggests that, spirituality does not lead a person into shirking responsibility. This may suggest that, spirituality rather compels students to study. This affirms Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic as mentioned in Cox [16] and referred to in 4.2.3. Weber's theorization was specific to Protestants and not all religious or spiritual people. Weber's theory postulates that there is an inherent nature of discipline in Protestantism which makes adherents the faith tend to have a stronger principle of hard work. This then leads to the generation of much material gains. Cox [16] asserts that, these material gains could also be in the form of "academic gain."

Considering the outcome of the research, it is marked that most (90.8%) of the respondents were not in agreement of the statement that their spirituality did not support them to get time to study. It thus seem to affirm the fact that, spirituality rather clears all distraction that will prevent academic success. Wood and Hilton [12] provided this as the fifth way in which academics

Table 4. How spirituality hampers academic success

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
High spirituality leads to poor academics	93 (57.1%)	54 (33.1%)	12 (7.4%)	4 (2.5%)	0 (0%)
Because of my spirituality, I don't see it necessary to study much	97 (59.5%)	53 (32.5%)	7 (4.3%)	5 (3.1%)	1 (0.6%)
Because of my spirituality, I don't have time to study	85 (52.1%)	63 (38.7%)	10 (6.1%)	5 (3.1%)	0 (0%)
Because of my spirituality, I don't like to study with people of other religions/spiritualities or consult them for academic help	108 (66.3%)	46 (28.2%)	6 (3.7%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2015)

Table 5. Correlation between spirituality of students and academic performance (CWA)

		Academic Performance (Cumulative Weighted Average)	Spirituality
Academic Performance (Cumulative Weighted Average)	Spearman's rho	1.00	.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.323
	N	156	156
Spirituality	Spearman's rho	.080	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.323	-
	N	156	156

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2015)

was supported by spirituality. Students were of the view that spirituality minimizes distractions. As a result of this, these students were of the view that they were well able to pay adequate attention to their studies because relational distractions with other people were either lessened or not there at all. This is most likely to give ample time to students for studies.

The outcome of the study shows that many (94.5%) of the respondents did not agree that their spirituality prevented them from studying with people of other religions or consult them for academic help. This shows that respondents differentiate between academic work and spirituality. They therefore may interact with people of other faiths for the purpose of academics and allow their spirituality prevent them from benefiting from the good in other people. This affirms the view of HERI [15] that spirituality is indicated by Ecumenical Worldview. This does not mean the respondents participate in those religious traditions but that he or she seeks to understand other traditions and cultures.

In the quest to investigate into the relationship between the spirituality of students and their academic performances (CWA), the

researcher adopted Spearman's rho Correlation to measure the level of relationship between the two variables (students' spirituality and CWA).

3.6 Correlation between Spirituality of Students and Academic Performance (CWA)

Spearman's rho Correlation showed that there was no significant relationship between the two variables ($0.323 < 1$). Based on the results obtained from this model, the study concludes that there is no significant relationship between students' level of spirituality and academic performance at KNUST. Thus, the alternate hypothesis (There is a relationship between spirituality and academic performance of KNUST students) was rejected. Other factors may substantially influence students' academic performance and not their level of spirituality as one may think. This is inconsistent with the idea of Cox [16] that spirituality does have an important impact on academic performance.

4. CONCLUSION

The summary of this study can be an admonishing to students that spirituality being a

part of one's life should not negatively affect a person's academic performance. It rather equips and keeps students focused and disciplined in their commitments.

The correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between a person's spirituality and academic performance. This puts all students on the same level in their quest for success. Other factors may account for academic differences but spirituality, on the basis of this research does not account for academic failure or success. Spiritual and religious students may however take advantage of the discipline associated with spirituality and apply it in their quest for academic success.

Based on the above findings in the research, the researcher would like to offer the following recommendations.

Students who tend to be very spiritual and religious on campus should not bank on their spirituality as a sure way of obtaining academic excellence. Personal commitment and determination can make them merit good performance in academics.

Due to the advantage of focus and determination inherent in spirituality, students can use spirituality as a source of motivation to be focused and hardworking. Though this cannot independently lead to academic success, it can be an indirect precursor to it.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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