

# Prayer Addiction and William Glasser's Positive Addiction

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## ABSTRACT

William Glasser is credited with the idea of positive addictions which are any activities in which a person feels a need or urge to participate and are considered positive even though they may possibly become a form of addiction. Can addiction be positive? This is what this study investigated using prayer addiction. The study adopted a survey design to collect data from 203 adult Christians, aged 20 and above, who participated through voluntary sampling. The research instrument, Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test (PAAT) was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in words, percentages, tables, and figures. The findings revealed that almost all Christians (94%) pray on daily basis with more than half praying in a structured and regular manner. About 13.4% of Christians fit the criteria for prayer addiction. The criteria for prayer addiction includes negative consequences due to praying such as having guilt feelings or bad conscience because one has not prayed (70.9%), having physically/Emotionally/Spiritually hurt or neglected 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 frequency, and manner of praying in terms of structure and regularity weakly and negatively correlated with prayer addiction but significantly ( $r(173) = -.216, p = .004$ ;  $r(173) = -.179, p = .016$  respectively). The study concluded that prayer addiction having negative consequences cannot be positive. Hence, a behavior can be a good, healthy, or positive habit, but not positive addiction.

**Keywords:** Addiction, Behavioral Addiction, Christian Prayer, Positive Addiction, Prayer, Prayer Addiction, Religion, Spirituality.

## INTRODUCTION

As a psychologist and a specialist in addictive disorders, one question many of my students or audience ask is, "Can addiction be positive?" or "Can there be a positive addiction?" There is no doubt that the word 'addiction' often carries a negative connotation (Toren, 2015). Substance addiction (Substance Use Disorders) or behavioral addiction (e.g. Gambling addiction, sex addiction, or internet addiction) appears to have nothing positive. Addiction as an acronym is "Abuse of Drugs Denoting Intoxication, Craving, Tolerance, Impulsivity, Obsession, and Negative thought and feeling" (Egunjobi, 2023, p. vi). The National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA], 2020) defines substance addiction as "a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking, continued use despite harmful consequences, and long-lasting changes in the brain". Because of the effect in the brain, it is termed a brain disease. Vivek Benegal, professor of psychiatry and head of center for addiction medicine at Nimhans, was cited by Desai (2014) to stress that anything that affects the brain's reward pathway and gives a sense of high can be termed as an addiction. Behaviors such as gambling, overeating, watching movie, or having sex can also affect brain's reward pathway and give a sense of high. The difference is that the individual is not addicted to a substance, but to a behavior or feeling experienced by acting out a behavior (Alavi, 2012).

Goodman (1990) and Griffiths (1996) offered criteria for behavioral addictions which include but not limited to

- Recurrent failure to resist impulses to engage in a specified behavior.
- Pleasure or relief at the time of engaging in the behavior.
- A feeling of lack of control while engaging in the behavior.
- Frequent engaging in the behavior to a greater extent or over a longer period than intended.
- Repeated efforts to reduce, control or stop the behavior.
- Frequent engagement in the behavior when expected to fulfill occupational, academic, domestic, or social obligations.
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities given up or reduced because of the behavior.
- Need to increase the intensity or frequency of the behavior to achieve the desired effect or diminished effect with continued behavior of the same intensity.
- Restlessness or irritability if unable to engage in the behavior.
- Interpersonal conflicts between addicts and those around them or intrapsychic conflict within the addicted individual (between the psychological need to engage in the activity and the desire not to give in to the tensions caused by addiction to the activity).
- The tendency to revert to earlier patterns of the particular activity after a period of abstinence or control over the addictive behavior.

Will it be right to consider any behaviors meeting these criteria as positive? Can prayer meet these criteria? Can a behavior that makes one feel high or happy be classified as addiction? It is noteworthy that there are behaviors which associated feelings can drive one forward by creating an inner force that makes one achieve one's dream. For example, addition to praying or to success (Toren, 2015). It is possibly from this perspective that my students or audience say that I am addicted to studies. This, they describe as a positive addiction.

## BACKGROUND

Some activities in which a person feels a need or urge to participate, such as meditation, prayer, studying, or exercising, are considered positive even though they may possibly become a form of addiction. These behaviors are considered healthy therapeutic alternatives relative to negative addictions, such as drug abuse, alcoholism, or cigarette smoking (VandenBos, 2015). These behaviors can be positive addictions.

The term "positive addiction" is credited to William Glasser who claims that positive addictions strengthen us and make our lives more satisfying and enable us to be more confident, more creative, happier, and usually in much better health. Positive addictions, unlike their negative cousins, alcoholism, and other drugs addiction, enhance life (O'Connor, 2014).

Glasser in 1976 published a book titled, *Positive Addiction*. In the book, he examined two groups of people: those addicted to running and those addicted to meditation. He believes that such addictions offer great benefits because they make one to achieve something positive in life, unlike the destructive effects of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) addictions or other destructive behavioral addictions such as gambling and pornography addictions.

Glasser (1977, pp. 4-5) narrated how he came up with the idea of positive addiction when he stated,

One of the problems I've tried to solve as a psychiatrist has been how to teach people to help themselves grow strong. The stronger we are the better able we are to handle the stresses in our lives and the happier we'll be. People do badly because they're not strong enough to get what they want from life and, lacking

strength, settle for a series of painful compromises that are loosely, but inaccurately, labeled mental illness. To counteract this, the task of any therapist isn't only to help his/her clients grow stronger, but also to teach them ways in which they can do so on their own.

I believe that most people can use positive addiction to help themselves grow stronger. In fact, as I'll explain shortly. Positive addiction doesn't require anyone else; it doesn't even exist in the active presence of others. In short, it's the only truly self-help practice I know.

The idea of positive addiction came to me while I was reading Roger Kahn's *The Boys of Summer*, a book about baseball players. It describes them in their heyday, and what happens to them after they quit playing. The particular team described is the 1953 Championship Brooklyn Dodgers.

One of the players Kahn interviewed about 1970, (who lost hope) after he'd finished playing, was George Schuba. Kahn said, "George, what I have always liked about you was your great natural swing." Schuba explained that when he was 16 years old, he wanted more than anything to become a major league ballplayer. He knew he could field, but he had to learn to lose. He noticed that good hitters had great swings. So, he decided to take a weighted bat to the basement of his house and swung the bat at a piece of string for a target marked with knots into the strike zone. He did this every day for the next 21 years for 600 times a day!

When I read this, something snapped inside of me. I couldn't explain how anyone could show this much discipline for so long. Finally, I arrived at what seemed at first to be a wild explanation – he became addicted to swinging a bat. If he tried to give it up, he'd suffer so much withdrawal he'd have to continue. Schuba doesn't like the idea of addiction, but he agrees that he had a very strong habit. He can remember swinging the bat only 200 or 300 times on several occasions, going to bed, then tossing and turning unable to sleep until he got up, went down to the basement, and swung it the remaining 200 or 300 times to complete the 600.

If Schuba was addicted, then certainly the whole concept of addiction as a negative process would have to be reexamined because there's nothing about swinging a bat that could be negative. If this addiction helped him to the major leagues, it would have to be a positive one.

O'Connor (2014) provided Glasser's six criteria for a positive addiction to any activity:

1. It is something noncompetitive that you choose to do, and you can devote approximately an hour per day.
2. It is possible for you to do it easily and it doesn't take a good deal of mental effort to do it well.
3. You can do it alone or rarely with others, but it does not depend upon others to do it.
4. You believe that it has some value (physical, mental, or spiritual) for you.
5. You believe that if you persist at it you will improve—but this is completely subjective—you need to be the only one who measures the improvement.
6. The activity *must* have a quality that you can do it without criticizing yourself. If you can't accept yourself during this time the activity will not be addicting (emphasis original).

It is evident that religious practices such as prayer and meditation have many health benefits (Luhrmann, 2013). In fact, as Luhrmann noted, prayer is becoming universally accepted that some atheists have gone public with their own prayer-for-health's-sake practice. Of course, prayer seems something positive that according to Mehta (2013), author of *The Young Atheist's Survival Guide*, "Prayers benefit only those believers who say or hear them. Prayer gives them comfort". He continues to state that "I have no problem with 'prayer' as silent self-reflection.

The risk is to think someone else is hearing your thoughts and acting on them”. For Spurgeon as cited by Karol (2016), “*Prayer must not be our chance work, but our daily business, our habit and vocation. As artists give themselves to their models, and poets to their classical pursuits, so must we addict ourselves to prayer*”.

*Encyclopedia Britannica* defines prayer as an act of communication by humans with the sacred or holy—God, the gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers. It is found in all religions in all times, and it may be a corporate or personal act utilizing various forms and techniques (Hamman, 2023). Prayer is the second most important act of worship after the testimony of faith in Islam, and it is obligatory and must be performed five times a day at prescribed times (Prayer in Islam, 2013). For the Almighty Allah says: “**Prayer is obligatory for the believers at prescribed times**” (An-Nisaa’ 4:102). While Muslims pray five times a day, Christians are simply to pray every day, at any time, and at all times (cf. Luke 18:1ff; Ephesian 6:18; Philippians 4:6). In the early Church, the practice of seven fixed prayer times have been taught. Hippolytus instructed Christians to pray seven times a day “on rising, at the lighting of the evening lamp, at bedtime, at midnight” and “the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day, being hours associated with Christ’s Passion.” (Chadwick, 1993). For Christians, prayer is a communication with God and according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2623-2649), it can take various forms such as prayer of blessing or adoration, prayer of petition, prayer of intercession, prayer of thanksgiving, and prayer of praise. Also, scriptural prayer, contemplation, meditation, recitation of the Holy Rosary, exorcism/deliverance, etc.

Prayer has been found to help human beings holistically. Prayer is “the key that unlocks God’s door in the attempt to resolve all human biopsychosociotechno-spiritual challenges” (Egunjobi, 2023). It reduces stress, heart rate and blood pressure decrease while praying, it regulates breathing, increases empathy, build relationships with God, others, and self, it promotes emotional and spiritual health (Summers, 2019). Prayer is a religious act, and religion and spirituality have been proven ways to liberate people suffering from any form of addiction (Egunjobi, 2023). There are prayers that can guide the persons with addiction in their recovery such as Dear Lord, please turn my weakness into strength. Transform my suffering into compassion and turn my sorrow into lasting joy. Transform pain into comfort I can provide to others. Allow me to trust in your goodness and find hope in faithfulness, even in the midst of this struggle (JCRecovery, 2020).

Or Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

Use me as an instrument of Thy peace. Where hatred exists, let me sow love. Where injury exists, let me find pardon. Where there is doubt, let me find faith. Where there is despair, let me find hope. Where darkness exists, guide me into the light. Where there is sadness, transform it into joy.

With the benefits of prayer, to think about prayer as an addiction will be disturbing, misunderstood, and be misrepresented (Egunjobi, 2023). Egunjobi also raised the question, how can *Prayer which* is lifting the heart and soul to God and the desire to connect with the Transcendence become addiction? The only reasonable answer will be to conceive this addiction to prayer in terms of a positive addiction.

However, one can talk about Compulsive Religious Involvement Disorders (CRID) which is characterized by compulsively engaging in religious related activities such as prayer, meditation, or religious community activities to the detriment of family bonding, work, and relationship with others. Being around religious related activities is euphoric. Although different from scrupulosity, it can be understood from this perspective. Scrupulosity is a subtype of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) involving religious or moral obsessions, according to International OCD Foundation (2022). A study conducted by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that praying increases the levels of dopamine in your brain (Gupta (2016). Dopamine is the hormone that is associated with feeling good. Prayer is good and praying feels good. In

other words, like addictive substances, prayer stimulates dopamine (feel good chemical) and serotonin (mood chemical) in the brain, changing the reward pathways, and leading to the desire to want to stay feel good. This can become a path to prayer dependency or addiction (Egunjobi, 2023).

Andrew Newberg, as cited by Beebe (n.d), found that engaging in 12 minutes of personal reflection and prayer each day can make a profound impact on the human brain. This activity strengthens a unique neural circuit that specifically enhances our social awareness and empathy and helps us to love our neighbor by developing a heightened sense of compassion and subduing negative emotions. Humans experiencing intensive ecstasy related to religious practice were studied in research reported in the BBC special, “All in the Mind: Understanding the Complexity of the Brain.” The study found an area in the prefrontal cortex that was greatly activated during times of intense religious devotion (prayer) (Brainworld Magazine, 2017).

These point to the possibility of prayer or praying becoming habitual and/or addictive. Can the prayer attitude be positive? Is there a possibility that praying can be harmful to self or others? Can one be possessed by prayer? These questions are what this study sought to answer. If there is nothing negative about praying, then positive addiction is possible, otherwise, there can be no such thing as positive addiction.

## Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate positive addiction using prayer addiction as a case study. It was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the prayer attitudes among Christians,
2. To determine the possibility of prayer addiction,
3. To ascertain if prayer addiction is a positive addiction.
4. To investigate the relationship between prayer attitudes and prayer addiction
5. To assess the gender difference in prayer addiction.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design. The study targeted Christians irrespective of race, ethnicity, or culture. There were 203 adult Christians, age 20 and above, who participated in an online survey through voluntary sampling. The research instrument (Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test [PAAT]) consists of demographic information (Questions 1 – 4), Prayer Attitudes (Questions 5 – 9), and Prayer addiction (Questions 10 – 20). Questions 10-20 were adapted and modified from the Drug Use Disorders Identification Test ([DUDIT], Berman et al., 2002). The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in words, percentages, tables, and figures.

## FINDINGS

Of the 203 adult Christians who participated in the survey, only 179 responses were valid for data analysis.

### Demographic Information of the Participants

#### Age, Gender, and Marital Status

The participants' ages were between the age of 20 and 80 with the average age of 38.79. There were male (41.3%) and female (58.7%) who participated. More than a quarter (28.8%) of the participants were Catholic priests and religious, 37.4% were married men and women, 23.2% were single, 6.1% were widows, 3% were separated, and one person (0.5% ) is divorced.



## Religious and Prayer Attitudes

This study was interested in examining the religious/spiritual identity and prayer attitudes of the participants.

### Religiosity and Spirituality

The participants were asked about their spirituality and religiosity, most of the participants (71.4%) identified as religious and spiritual as shown in Figure 1. Only about 5% identified as spiritual but not religious (2%), religious and spiritual but not affiliated (2%), and not religious and not spiritual (1%).

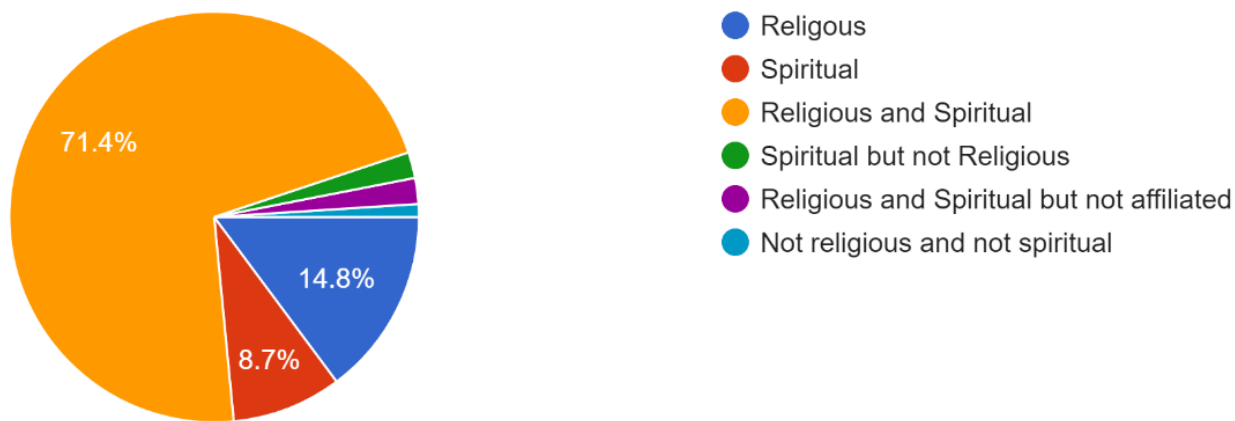


Figure 1. Religious and Spiritual Identity

### Prayer Attitudes

The study found that almost all the participants (94%) pray on daily basis, 2.5% pray only during weekly religious services, another 2.5% pray only when there is need, and the remaining 1% pray when others around are praying. Majority (86.5%) of these Christians pray at least five (5) times a week, 9.9% pray 2 to 4 times a week, 2.6% would pray 2 to 5 times a month, and about 1% pray once a month or less. In terms of regularity and prayer structure, it was found that more than half of the participants (53%) pray in a structured and regular manner as displayed in Figure 2.

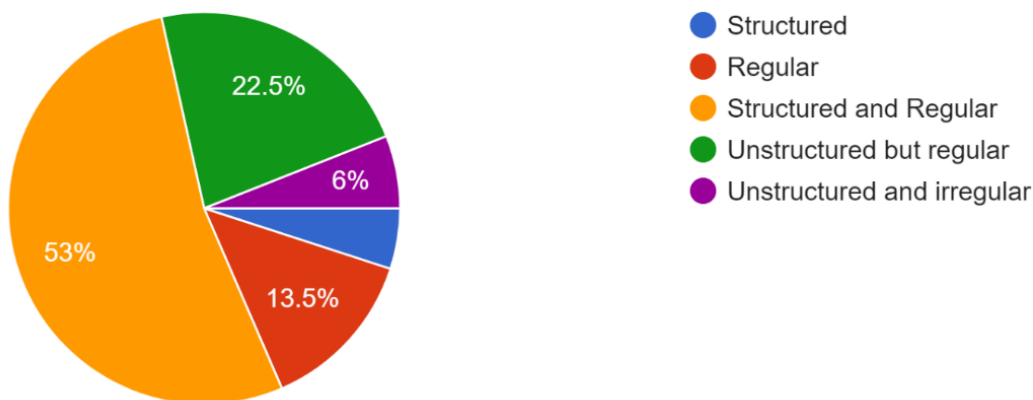
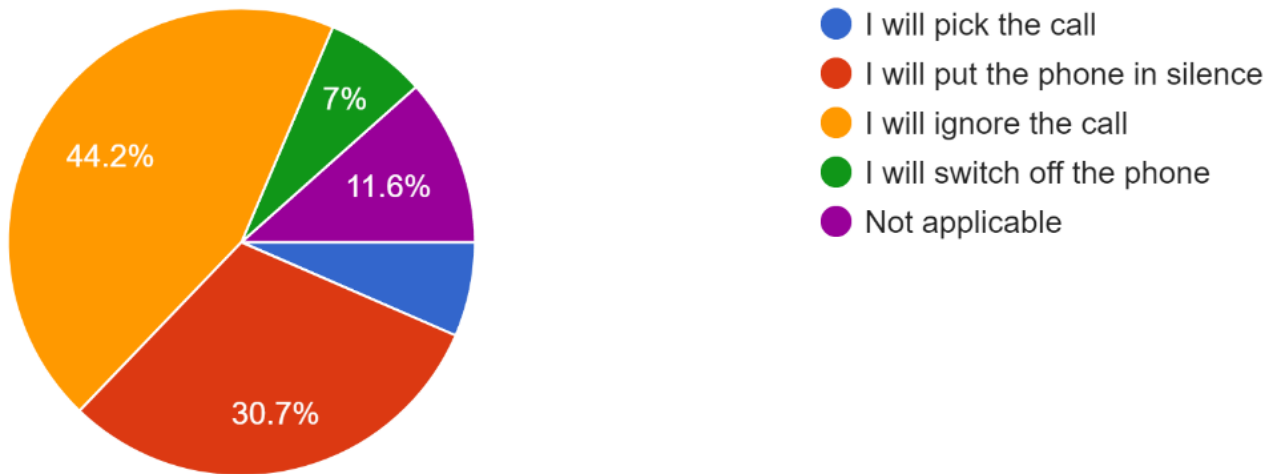
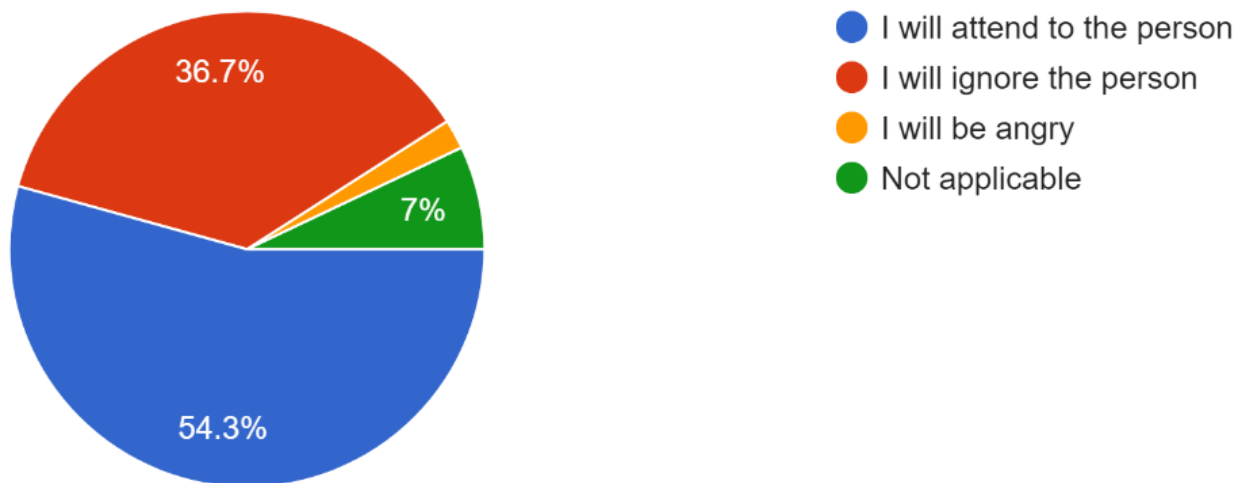


Figure 2. The Structural and Regularity of Prayer

The attitude to prayer was also examined by investigating the possible reaction when there are phone and/or human distraction/interruption while praying. As shown in Figure 3, majority (81.9%) of the participants indicated that if a phone rang while praying, they would either put the phone in silence, ignore the call or switch off the phone. However, when it concerned human interruption, Figure 4 shows that more than half of the participants (54.3%) would attend to the person who interrupted while praying.



**Figure 3. When Phone Rings while Praying**



**Figure 4. When a Person Interrupts while Praying**

### Prayer Addiction

As found in the appendix, the items 10 to 20 on Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test (PAAT) dealt with

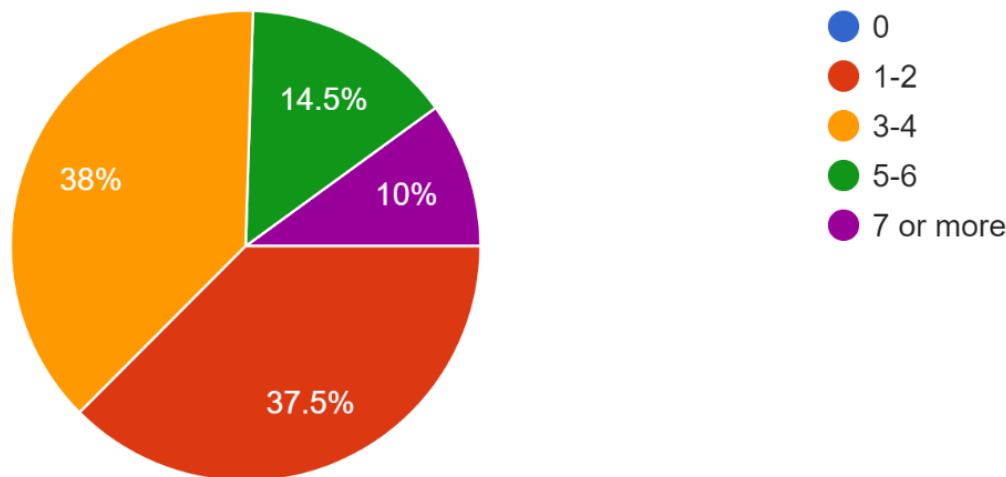
prayer/praying addiction. Out of 44 total score on this scale, a score of 25 or more is an indication of prayer addiction. Table 1 shows that 13.4% of the participants have indication of prayer addiction.

**Table 1. Prayer Addiction Scores**

Score	Frequency	Percent
0 – 11	15	8.4
12 -18	86	48.0
19 – 124	54	30.2
25 and above	24	13.4
Total	179	100.0

Notable about addiction indicators are four questions addressing frequencies, cravings, loss of control, and negative consequences due to prayer.

Participants were asked about how often they pray on a given day. About a quarter of the participants (25%) indicated praying 5 or more times on a typical day when they pray as shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. Frequencies of Prayer on a Given Day**

When the participants were asked about having cravings or strong desires to pray, almost all (97.2%) indicated feeling so at least once a month in the last six months.

Concerning the loss of control, most of the participants (65.4%) indicated that they were not able to stop praying once they started at least once in a month in the last six months. Also, about a half of the



participants (46.9%) show that because they were praying, they did not do something they should have done. Despite that 21.9% of the participants had relatives, friends, or someone else worried or complained about their praying habit, they (46%) were still not able to change their attitude to prayer.

Some participants also indicated negative consequences if they did not pray as well as through their prayer habits. About 83.7% of the participants had guilt feelings or a bad conscience because they did not pray, and about 33.2% indicated that their prayer habit affects someone or some things such as work, meeting, and/or important activities/duties. In the same way, 20.1% of the participants admitted that they had physically/Emotionally/Spiritually hurt or neglected themselves or other persons because of praying.

### Prayer Addiction and Gender

Although Table 2 shows that there is gender difference in prayer addiction with female being prone to prayer addiction than male, Table 4 shows that there is a very weak negative relationship between prayer addiction and gender  $r(179) = -.096, p < .05$ , and this relationship is not significant.

**Table 2. Prayer Addiction by Gender**

		Score on PAAT				Total
		0-11	12 – 18	19 – 24	25 and above	
Gender	Male	2.7%	17.9%	14.5%	6.1%	41.3%
	Female	5.6%	30.2%	15.6%	7.5%	58.7%
Total		8.4%	48.0%	30.2%	13.4%	100%

**Table 3. Relationship between Prayer Addiction and Gender**

		Gender	Addiction Indication
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.199
	N	179	179
Addiction Indication	Pearson Correlation	-.096	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	
	N	179	179

### Relationship between Prayer Attitude and Prayer Addiction

Table 4 shows that among the indicators of prayer attitude, there were only significant relationship between frequencies of prayer and the nature of prayer in terms of structure and regularity. Frequency of prayer and prayer addiction were found to be significantly but negatively weakly correlated,  $r(173) = -.216, p = .004$  while prayer structure and regularity, and prayer addiction were found to be significantly but negatively

weakly correlated,  $r(173) = -.179, p = .016$ .

**Table 4. Relationship between Prayer Attitude and Prayer Addiction**

		I see myself as	I Pray	My Prayer Life is	If my phone rings when praying	If someone interrupts me while I am praying	Addiction Indication
I see myself as	Pearson Correlation	1	-.113	-.128	.010	-.071	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.140	.092	.903	.370	.654
	N	173	173	173	153	162	173
I Pray	Pearson Correlation	-.113	1	.239**	-.028	.034	-.216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.140		.001	.731	.667	.004
	N	173	179	179	158	166	179
My Prayer Life is	Pearson Correlation	-.128	.239**	1	-.011	-.124	-.179*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	.001		.896	.111	.016
	N	173	179	179	158	166	179
If my phone rings when praying	Pearson Correlation	.010	-.028	-.011	1	.128	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.903	.731	.896		.121	.685
	N	153	158	158	158	149	158
If someone interrupts me while I am praying	Pearson Correlation	-.071	.034	-.124	.128	1	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.370	.667	.111	.121		.830
	N	162	166	166	149	166	166
Addiction Indication	Pearson Correlation	.034	-.216**	-.179*	.033	.017	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.654	.004	.016	.685	.830	
	N	173	179	179	158	166	179

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## DISCUSSIONS

This study addressed the idea of positive addiction using prayer addiction as a case study. Glasser (1976/1977) proposed positive addiction as a healthy behavioral addiction in contrast to the negative view of drug and behavioral addictions.

## Positive Addiction

Glasser's theory or idea about positive addiction is plausible and reasonable if one looks at it from its face-value. One can say that we are all dependent on food in one way or the other. Getting hungry is a form of withdrawal syndrome in form of shaking, feeling dizzy or weak. Yet this is not classified as addiction, and if it is, it is a positive one. In the same way, one can be dependent on medication for life as prescribed by one's primary physician, but dependence on medication is not addiction (Szalavitz, et al., 2021). The very reason DSM-V eliminated the dependency to mean addiction (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016). On the other hand, a healthy or positive habit or behavior can be used to replace any behavior that is considered negative or unhealthy. For instance, methadone is used as a substitution for heroin or other opiates with the principle of targeting the mechanisms of tolerance and cross-tolerance to prevent opioid intoxication and withdrawal (Stotts, 2009). Unfortunately, there are increasing reports about methadone abuse and addiction (Juergens, 2023; Hesse, n.d.). The question is, will methadone addiction be positive or negative?

The findings of this study shed light on this. The study used prayer or praying as a case study. Christians are known as prayerful or praying people. According to Oates (n.d.), praying is how a Christian grows a deeper relationship with Christ and how they know the direction Christ wants his/her life to go in. This study sought to know if someone can be addicted to prayer and if this addiction is positive or can be likened to any other addictions.

## Prayer Attitude

The first objective was to examine the prayer/praying attitudes of Christians. In a world where people seem comfortable with self-identification as spiritual, viewing religion (especially Christianity) or being religious as limiting and judgmental, and shying away from being religious, the findings of this study show that most Christians would identify as being religious and spiritual. That is, they not only identify as followers of Christ (religion), but they also follow and practice Christ's teaching with a sense of purpose and meaning. This agrees with a comprehensive study of more than 230 countries and territories by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life which found an estimate of 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children, representing 84% of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion (Pew Research Center, 2012). Almost all these Christians pray daily, structurally, and regularly for at least 3 times on a given day. Christians are instructed in the Bible to pray in the spirit at all times and on every occasion (Ephesians 6:18). Majority will not want to be disturbed by phone calls while praying. However, more than half of them acknowledged that they would attend to someone who may need their attention while praying. This shows that these Christians value human persons and human connectedness as a reflection of a connection to the divine rather than material attachments (to phone). In other words, whatever one does to others, it is done to God (Cf. Matthew 25:40), and as St. John put it "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." (1John 4: 20).

## Prayer Addiction Indication

The second objective was to determine the indication of prayer addiction. This is key to this study. This study shows that about 13.4% of all Christians displayed indications of prayer addiction. To be very prayerful will be a positive attitude among Christians. Prayer is a source of strength for Christians, and it is the strongest point of divine connection with God. Billy Graham was quoted to say, "A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian" (Quotefancy, n.d.). But to say that a prayerful person is addicted to prayer may be absurd (Egunjobi, 2023). This is where Glasser (1977) can be well understood. Prayer is positive, and as such, being addicted to such behavior or activity will be positive irrespective of the level of addiction. At

least, studies have shown that praying increases the levels of dopamine in the brain (Gupta (2016), and that engaging in 12 minutes of personal reflection and prayer each day can make a profound impact on the human brain (Beebe (n.d). A compulsive praying attitude and praying and feeling not to stop will all be a pattern of a prayerful person. This is expected and it will be accepted. This is positive within Christendom.

### **Is Prayer Addiction a positive Addiction?**

The third objective of this study was to ascertain if prayer addiction is a positive addiction. Prayer is good and healthy as it is “the key that unlocks God’s door in the attempt to resolve all human biopsychosociotechno-spiritual challenges” (Egunjobi, 2023). Yet, “All that is gold does not glitter” says J.R.R. Tolkien. St Paul also said that not everything that is good that is profitable (Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). Although it is debatable, there can be bad prayers. Also, when prayers can be overwhelmingly positive and sincere, their results can be harmful (Dossey, 2016). This is evident as this study found that prayer addiction may not be positive as it may seem. This is because the participants exhibited or experienced some negative consequences. The negative effects or consequences include, being angry when one is interrupted during prayer (2%), having guilt feelings or bad conscience because one has not prayed (withdrawal syndrome) (70.9%), one or anyone else been physically/Emotionally/Spiritually hurt or neglected because of one is praying (20.1%), and prayer habit or prayer affecting someone or some other important activities (33.2%). Aside feeling guilty or bad conscious because one has not prayed which can be excused for a prayerful person, other negative consequences are as serious as found in AOD addiction and other behavioral addictions.

This relates to Glasser’s (1977) own story of how he came about the word ‘positive addiction’. Schuba could remember swinging the bat only 200 or 300 times on several occasions, going to bed, then tossing and turning unable to sleep until he got up, went down to the basement, and swung it the remaining 200 or 300 times to complete the 600. If Schuba was addicted, then certainly the whole concept of addiction as a negative process would have to be reexamined because there’s nothing about swinging a bat that could be negative. If this addiction helped him to the major leagues, it would have to be a positive one. (p. 5).

Schuba had negative experiences similar to withdrawal syndrome. He couldn’t sleep because he couldn’t complete the number of swinging the bat he used to do. That wasn’t healthy as he needed rest. Of course, the result was the ability to perform better but lack of sleep could make him physically and psychologically break down. It is a form of obsession with the count of 600. This is addiction and it appears not positive.

Schuba himself doesn’t like the idea of addiction, he agreed that he had a very strong habit. This is a point to ponder. One may ask, Is addiction a habit? There is a difference between habit and addiction, though, they are closely related as both are learned behavior. However, where habits can be changed or modified, addiction is very difficult to overcome. “Addiction is an obsessive, compulsive, possession” (Egunjobi, 2023, p. 18) and it is chronic. It may require a therapeutic intervention. It cannot be equated to a habit. Habits can be good and/or bad. “Good habits are those repetitive actions or behaviors you want to repeat. They have positive physical, emotional, or psychological consequences” (Waters, 2021). However, addiction by its very nature is not positive. It is destructive.

### **Relationship between Prayer Attitude and Prayer Addiction**

This study also investigated the relationship between prayer attitudes and prayer addiction. The study shows that the frequencies of prayer and structure or regularity of prayer significantly correlated with prayer addiction; though, these relationships were negative and weak. Of course, there may not be addiction to prayer or praying if it wasn’t frequent or regularly structured. The repetitiveness of prayer suggests tolerance and the likelihood to want to do more as most Christians (67.7%) in the study indicated.

## Relationship between Prayer Addiction and Gender

The last objective was to assess the gender difference in prayer addiction. Christian women seem to exhibit prayer addiction indicators than Christian men. Although the relationship between prayer addiction and gender was very weak.. That women show the symptoms of prayer addiction than men is also supported by the reports of Pew Research Center (2016), which shows that globally, 83.4 percent of women identify with a religion, compared with 79.9 percent of men, meaning that there are about 100 million more religiously affiliated women on the planet than men.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that one can be addicted to anything including prayer which is usually conceived and appraised as positive. Prayer addiction involved negative effects such as loss of control over praying and neglecting loved ones and important activities due to praying. With these kinds of effects prayer addiction cannot be positive. William Glasser's behaviors that fit into 'positive addiction' may be better understood and classified as habits, not addiction, and nothing is positive about addiction.

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## APPENDIX

### Prayer Attitude and Addiction Test (PAAT)

The information provided here will remain confidential. Honest responses are highly encouraged. In event that these results need to be shared as part of your psycho-spiritual therapy, this will be discussed with you why sharing is necessary and your consent obtained. You will be required to sign a Release of Information Form. You may refuse at any time to participate or have these results shared.

For each question in the chart below, please X in one box that best describes your answers.

#### Demographic Information

1. Age: .....
2. Gender: Male  Female
3. Marital Status: Celibate , Single , Married , Separated , Divorced , Widowed
4. Religious Affiliation: Christianity , Islam , Ifa , Atheist , Others:.....

#### Prayer/Religious Attitudes

5	I Consider myself	Not Religious and Not Spiritual	Religious and Spiritual but not Affiliated	Religious	Spiritual	Religious and Spiritual
6	I pray	Never	Only when those around me are praying	Only when in need	Only during weekly religious service	On daily basis
7	My prayer life is	Unstructured and Irregular	Unstructured but Regular	Structured	Regular	Structured and Regular
8	If my phone rings when praying	I will pick the call	I will ignore the call	I will put the phone in silence	I will switch off the phone	I am not with my phone when praying
9	If someone interrupts me while I am praying	I will be angry	I will ignore the person	I will attend to the person	I will tell the person to wait	I will attend to the person and return to prayer

#### Prayer Addiction

		0	1	2	3	4
10	How often do you Pray?	Never	Once a month or less often	2 to 5 times a month	2 to 4 times a week	5 or more a week
11	Do you engage in more than one type of prayers (e.g. breviary, praying the scriptures, mental prayer, meditation, praise and worship, Novena, prayer beads) on the same occasion?	Never	Once a month or less often	2 to 5 times a month	2 to 4 times a week	5 or more a week

12	How many times do you pray on a typical day when you do?	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7 and above
13	Over the past six months, have you experienced a strong desire to pray that you could not resist it?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
14	Has it happened, over the past six months, that you have not been able to stop praying once you started?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
15	How often over the past six months because you were praying you have not done something you should have done?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
16	How often over the past six months have you had guilt feelings or a bad conscience because you did not pray?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
17	Have you or anyone else been physically/Emotionally/Spiritually hurt or neglected because of your praying?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
18	Has a relative or a friend, or anyone else, been worried or complained about your prayer habit?	Never	Less often than once a month	Every month	Every week	Daily or almost daily
19	Will you consider your prayer habit as affecting someone or some things (work, meeting, duty)?	Never		Sometimes	Often	Very much
20	Have you tried to change your praying habit because of the concerns for others or other things, but you are unable to do so?	Never		Sometimes	Often	Very much

**PAAT Scoring Guidance**

Questions 1 to 4 -Demographic Information

Questions 5 to 9 – Prayer/Religious attitude

Question 10 to 20 – Prayer/Praying Addiction

Questions 1 to 18 are scored 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Questions 19 and 20 are scored 0, 2,3 or 4.

*Level Religious/Prayer Attitude*

The maximum score is 20.

0 – 5 Low religious/prayer attitude

6 to 12 – Moderate Prayer attitude

13 to 20 – High Prayer attitude

*Levels of Prayer/Praying Addiction*

The maximum score is 44.

A person who scores 25 points or more is probably heavily addicted to prayer/praying.