

Relationship between Positive Living and Social Support among Perpetually Professed Consecrated Women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

Dorothy Kweyu, Henry Tucholski, Ph.D. and Catherine Mwarari, Ph.D.

Institute of Youth Studies, Tangaza University College, A Constituent College of The Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70911>

Received: 04 August 2023; Revised: 05 September 2023; Accepted: 31 August 2023; Published: 26 September 2023

ABSTRACT

Positive living and social support are crucial factors that possibly enhance the wellbeing of perpetually professed consecrated women as they endeavor to serve God and humanity. This research attempted to investigate the relationship between positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The study addressed four objectives; to examine the levels of positive living, to investigate the levels of social support, to examine the relationship between demographic characteristics and positive living, and to establish the relationship between positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The participants were 320 perpetually professed consecrated women. The study used the correlational research design. It used proportionate stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. Positive Living Scale and Berlin Social Support Scale were used. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25. Findings revealed that 54.8% (n = 176) of the respondents scored a high level of positive living, 34.6% (n = 110) of the respondents scored a moderate level of positive living, while 10.6% (n = 34) had a low level of positive living. On social support, findings showed 48.4% (n = 151) of the participants had a high level of social support, 44.6% (n = 144) scored a moderate level of social support, while 7% (n = 25) of the participants were at a low level of social support. The study established that there was a weak positive relationship between positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya ($r = .104$; $P = .042$).

The study recommended that superiors of religious communities may try to be physically available, and also be ready to listen to their members and be able to understand them in order to enhance good emotional wellbeing that may enhance positive living. The study further recommended that the perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya, who were at low and moderate levels of positive living and social support, may be helped in counseling and psychological assessments so as to identify issues that could be responsible for low and moderate levels.

Keywords: Positive living, social support, perpetually professed consecrated women.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of religious life demands certain sacrifices which also encourage members to spend most of their time on duties related to the service of God and service to the body of Christ, as opposed to personal commitments (Isingi, 2019). Positive living is one of the strong factors that keeps the consecrated religious women attached to their services to God and humanity, as they strive on being witnesses to the gospel of Christ (Vitorino et al., 2018). According to Kubi and Korah (2020), positive living is the practice of living a lifestyle based on optimistic attitude, having an open mind towards life experiences and taking positive

actions for the ultimate outcome of an individual's wellbeing. Positive living calls for individuals to be aware of one's condition, to refrain from negating the conditions, to learn through past mistakes and failures in order to lead a more meaningful life that can impact on oneself and on others in a positive way. Some indications of positive living may include; satisfaction with life, having an optimistic life prospect, experience of support from others, meaningful engagements, having faith in the future, meeting one's needs at reasonable degrees and the realization of goals (Sulkowski & Ignatowski, 2020). Shaw et al. (2021) postulated that there were indications that lack of encouragement from fellow religious sisters, interpersonal conflicts, jealousy, then inadequate support as well as favoritism by house superiors are some of the factors that block the perpetually professed consecrated women from fully experiencing positive living. They further pointed out that lack of positive living is manifested in several behavioral issues among some perpetually professed consecrated women such as bitterness, jealousy, regret, aggressiveness, unforgiveness, quarrelling, fighting, bullying, and constant gossiping among themselves.

Globally, a study was conducted by Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018) on the intersection of religion and subjective well-being in the USA. It was established that religion provided people with the opportunity to closely interact and share their problems with those around them. This enhanced the level of happiness and hence enabled them to live positively. Among the fundamental contributors to positive living among religious and consecrated women included meaning in life, coping, social support, and emotional regulation. More than 62% of the study participants in the research by Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018) declared that religiosity significantly contributed to individuals' level of happiness and positive living by reducing the amount of distress they would otherwise encounter. It was further reported that the strength of positive living was higher and stronger for the participants who were experiencing distress due to recent inevitable life events, such that those studies that considered severe life stress found weighted mean ($r = -.152$), compared to minimal life stress ($r = -.071$).

In Nigeria, Eze, Lindegger and Rakoczy (2016) conducted a study on power relations influencing catholic religious sisters' identity construction. It was established that a number of religious sisters placed themselves as accepting the community status quo of being subordinates to others, even though they were unhappy. Due to these, they viewed themselves as obedient. The religious sisters' stances were presented in three sub-units representing the sisters' major individual experiences as follows: religious life as a space for status and power relations, construction of self as angry and disappointed, and the use of submission and resistance as strategies to deal with interpersonal relationships, particularly with leaders of religious life/institutes or congregations. Their experiences in the religious community was a strong hindrance to positive living as consecrated religious women. Similarly in Uganda, a study was carried out by Kersteins and Muasa (2023) focusing on pastoral burnout and meaning in life among catholic religious men and women in Mbarara Archdiocese, Uganda. It was shown that the majority of the participants ($n=109$; 77%) had higher presence of meaning in life. Empirical findings revealed no relationship between the three dimensions of burnout and presence of meaning in life. Thus, correlation analysis showed that presence of meaning in life has no correlation with personal accomplishment ($r= 0.19$; $p > 0.05$) and emotional exhaustion ($r=0.15$; $p > 0.05$). In addition, there was no correlation between depersonalization and meaning in life ($r=0.117$; $p > 0.05$). Based on the levels of meaning in life, it was found that 77% of the religious men and women had a high level of meaning in life, 14.1% had an average level of meaning in life, and 8.9% of the religious men and women had a low level of meaning in life. Some other findings of the study revealed that lack of meaning in life was a contributing factor to low levels of positive living among religious men and women.

In Kenya, Kiplagat et al. (2019) conducted a research among the consecrated religious women in Nairobi County. Findings indicated that the consecrated religious women struggled with several challenges. They experienced rejection from other community members who did not uphold their values. They were thought to be holier than others, and many times they were branded names and mocked (ACWECA, 2014), and this led to bitterness and hurtful feelings. The consecrated religious women were observed to be experiencing an unhappy life; others were reported losing their vocation and seen by society as failures in life. This revealed

a low level of positive living in the community. Similarly, Mwikali et al. (2021) in Kenya did a study involving 138 participants from various pastoral programs in Karen and guided by cognitive behavior and emotional intelligence theories, the study established that 69% of newly perpetually professed consecrated women were not able to easily adjust to community living. It was noted that failure to effectively adjust to community living negatively affected perpetually professed consecrated women in Karen, Nairobi. Furthermore, it was also revealed that some consecrated women abandoned religious life immediately after consecration due to emotional crisis.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the quantitative method of research, utilizing correlational survey design. The study made use of proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The Berlin Social Support Scales (BSSSSs) developed by Schwarzer and Schulz (2003), and the Positive Living Scale, developed by Caprara et al. (2009) were used for data collection. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 and results are presented in summary tables. Levels of positive living were scored and measured using the descriptive statistical score so as to gauge their levels. Pearson Coefficient Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between age and positive living. ANOVA Test was used to analyze the relationship between level of education and positive living among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study was to examine the levels of positive living among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted, where data was computed and scored to measure the levels of positive living. In this regard, 28 statements were used to measure the levels of positive living. Each of the statements was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and was scored; 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. The lowest possible score a participant could get was 1 and the highest possible score a participant could get was 140. The levels of positive living were then scored; 1-49 (low level of positive living), 50-95 (Moderate level of positive living), 96-140 (High level of positive living). The outcomes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of positive living

Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Low	34	10.6%
Moderate	110	34.6%
High	176	54.8%
Total	320	100%

As seen in Table 1, findings indicated that 54.8% (n = 176) of the respondents scored a high level of positive living, 34.6% (n = 110) of the respondents scored a moderate level of positive living, while 10.6% (n = 34) had a low level of positive living. These findings possibly demonstrated that the perpetually professed consecrated women were experiencing a high level of positive living while very few of them had a low level of positive living. The low level of positive living may possibly be revealing that some of the perpetually professed consecrated women are not happy in the life they have professed to live. It could be that they are finding the life very challenging and difficult to live. Mutuku et al. (2021) affirmed that the experience of a low level of positive living among some religious women may be as a result of emotional

crisis from remote disappointments instigated by an inauthentic community living. Low positive living has made some of the perpetually professed consecrated women to experience unfulfilled life. Some are faced with the issue of regret and unforgiveness. Mwikali et al. (2022) also held that in some cases, some of the disappointments and frustrations arise when issues to do with equality and provision of equal opportunities arise among consecrated religious women. These challenges tend to lower their levels of positive living in the community. Also, the perpetually professed consecrated women who had a moderate level of positive living may work to improve and so possibly move towards a high level of positive living.

Positive living may be crucial for consecrated women as it possibly contributes to living their calling to evangelization, and being witnesses of the gospel. Individuals with high levels of positive living may have better mental health and good quality of life outcomes based on the reason that they could develop internal and external mechanisms that may help them cope with the adversities on life course as well as the challenges that emanate from community living. Also, as religious women who vowed to be heralds of the Word of Christ, it is possible that with the high level of positive living among the participants, it could imply that they derive meaning, motivation, courage, and satisfaction with life from the Christian spirituality.

This finding corroborated with the findings of Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018) in the USA, who established that more than 62% of the study participants in the research declared that religiosity significantly contributed to individuals' level of happiness and positive living by reducing the amount of distress they would otherwise encounter. The strength of positive living was high and stronger for the participants who were experiencing distress due to some inevitable life events. Thus, positive living enhanced productivity and fruitfulness among the consecrated religious women.

Table 2. Relationship between Age and Positive living

		Age	Positive living
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.165
	N	320	320
Positive living	Pearson Correlation	.078	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.165	
	N	320	320

As seen in Table 2, findings revealed that there was no relationship between age and positive living ($r = .078$; $P = .165$) since the P value (.165) was greater than 0.05. The assumption from the perspective of the researcher was that age and positive living are related. This is based on the reason that as humans grow with age, they have more chance to learn about their emotions and the advances of age and life experiences likely increase emotional stability, acceptance of life possibilities, and the accumulation of more feedback and integrate these into greater self-awareness. However, the findings of this study with regards to age and positive living is on the contrary. This result possibly suggested that age is not a determinant factor for positive living. Other factors such as spirituality could be some of the determining factors to positive living among different ages in the religious community. Also, it may be that positive living may be dependent on the individual's mental disposition. Kiplagat et al. (2019) affirmed that happiness and positive living are not influenced by age ($r = -.069$, $p = > .01$) but different factors such as a deep spiritual connection with the Divine, unconditional love and support. However, this finding is dissimilar with the findings of Jeannotte and Moore (2014), in the USA, who stated that age has possible impact on the mental health of humans, and this affect their positive life engagements. It was found that 95% of adults aged 50 or older were

“dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their lives, and as such, this affected their positive living.

Table 3. ANOVA Test					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	407.557	4	101.889	1.177	.321
Within Groups	27277.440	315	86.595		
Total	27684.997	319			

As seen in Table 3, the findings indicated that there was no significant relationship $F(1.177, 315), p = .321$ ($p > 0.05$) between level of education and positive living among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The importance of education on human life could hardly be refuted as it contributes to the holistic development of a human person. Education edifies the human knowledge (Afen et al., 2022). The results according to this population demonstrated that education levels are not necessarily the contributory factors to positive living. Insofar as education enhances the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the edification of the human mind, it does not possibly determine a person’s positive living as indicated in this study finding. Positive living may be the possibility of several factors such as spiritual consolation and prayer, encouragement, motivation and support in community of perpetually professed consecrated women, and constant presence and support of family members and friends.

The finding of this study with regards to the level of education and positive living corroborated with the findings of Kiplagat (2019) in Kenya, who found that there was a correlation between psychological wellbeing and level of education was not significant with a value ($r = .041, p = > .01, n = 238$). However, the findings of this study are dissimilar with the findings of Tangmunkungvorakul et al. (2019) in Thailand, who in their research revealed that happiness and positive living are significantly ($P < 0.001$) associated with the level of education. Kiplagat et al. (2019) in Kenya, also confirmed a significant relationship between happiness and level of education ($r = .184, p = < .01$) was established. Education may be crucial in the enlightenment of the perpetually professed consecrated women as they strive to acquire knowledge and skills so as to enlighten others. This research vividly showed that it is not always the case that education level and positive living are related.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was a weak positive relationship between positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya ($r = .104; P = .042$). The enablement of harmonious navigation of life both in the religious community and in the secular society may become effective in the experience of positive living and social support.

The study recommended that superiors of religious communities may try to be physically available, and also be ready to listen to their members and be able to understand them in order to enhance good emotional wellbeing that may enhance positive living. The study further recommended that the perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi Kenya, who were at low and moderate levels of positive living and social support, be helped in counseling and psychological assessments so as to possibly identify issues that could be responsible for low and moderate levels.

A qualitative study may be conducted exploring factors contributing to positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

A corresponding study may be carried out in other Archdioceses in Kenya investigating the relationship

between positive living and social support among perpetually professed consecrated women.

REFERENCE

1. Afen, I.E., Hubert, P., & Ojore, A. (2022). Correlation between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, vi (vii), pp. 396-400.
2. Association of Consecrated Women of Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA, 2014). *improving fraternal life quality among consecrated women religious communities*. Nairobi, Kenya.
3. Caprara, G. V., Fagnani, C., Alessandri, G., Steca, P., Gigantesco, A., Cavalli-Sforza, L. L., & Stazi, M. A. (2009). Human optimal functioning: The genetics of positive orientation towards self, life, and the future. *Behaviour Genetics*, 39, 277–284. doi:10.1007/s10519-009-9267-
4. Eze, C, G, Lindegger, C. & Rakoczy, S. (2016). Power Relations Influencing Catholic Religious Sisters? Identity Construction: A Study of Inter-subjective Exchange in Religious Community Living. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 4(5), pp. 104– 119.
5. Isingi, E. (2019). *Marriage preparation guide for Pastoral agents*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications.
6. Kubi, F, & Korah, L. (2020). The vocation, ministry and mission of the catholic priests and religious men and women in church mission in Africa. *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*.
7. Kim-Prieto, C., & Miller, L. (2018). Intersection of religion and subjective well-being. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of well-being*. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. DOI: nobascholar.com.
8. Kersteins and Muasa (2023). Pastoral burnout and meaning in life among Catholic religious men and women in Mbarara Archdiocese, Uganda. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 7(1), pp 1-7.
9. Kiplagat, E., Tucholski, H. & Njiru, L. (2019). Correlation between Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing and Happiness among Consecrated Religious Women in Nairobi County, Kenya. *African Journal of Clinical Psychology*.
10. Mutuku, L.M.K., Asatsa,S. & Adibo, J.(2021). Emotional intelligence and adjustment to community living among consecrated women religious in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 5 (6), pp.611-618
11. Shaw, M., Lukman, R., Simmons, L. and Reynolds, R. (2021) Clergy Wholeness Study: How Occupational Distress, Depression, and Social Support Inform the Health of Clergy. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*. DOI: 10.1177/1542305020968046
12. Sulkowski L, Ignatowski G. (2020). *Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Organization of Religious Behaviour in Different Christian Denominations in Poland*. Religions. [https:// doi.org/ 10.3390 /rel11050254](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050254).
13. Schwarzer, R., & Schulz, U. (2003). Stressful life events. In A. M. Nezu, C. M. Nezu, & P. A. Geller (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: Health psychology*, 9, pp. 27–49. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
14. Tangmunkongvorakul, A., Musumari, P. M., Thongpibul, K., Srithanaviboonchai, K., Techasrivichien, T., (2019). Association of excessive smartphone use with psychological well-being among university students in Chiang Mai, Thailand. *PLoS ONE*, 14(01), 1–13
15. Vitorino LM, Lucchetti G, Leão FC, Vallada H, Peres, MFP (2018). The association between spirituality and religiousness and mental health. *Sci Rep*, 8(1), pp.17-23. doi: 10.1038/s41598-018-35380.