

Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Maturity among Members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria. The study adopted an embedded mixed-methods design in which a quantitative correlational strand was complemented by qualitative interviews that explored lived spiritual and emotional experiences. Seventy-three Sisters participated in the quantitative phase, while eight participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Singh (2004), and spiritual maturity was assessed using the Spiritual Experience Index-Revised developed by Genia (1997). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically and integrated with the statistical findings. Results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity, $r = .640$, $p < .01$, indicating that higher emotional intelligence was associated with higher spiritual maturity. Qualitative findings deepened this result by showing that prayer, silence, journaling; spiritual direction, psychological support, faith sharing, community dialogue, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility function as pathways through which emotional growth supports spiritual maturity. The study concludes that emotional intelligence is an important psycho-spiritual resource for vocational well-being, community life, and effective ministry among women religious. It recommends integrated formation programmes, accessible psychological support, community practices that promote emotional harmony.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Maturity, Psycho-Spiritual and Our Lady of Fatima Sisters

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity are increasingly recognized as important dimensions of holistic human development, especially within religious life. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions appropriately in one and others (Upadhyay, 2024). Spiritual maturity refers to the progressive deepening of one's relationship with God, reflected in faith integration, moral responsibility, spiritual commitment, and the ability to live according to religious values (Benjamin, 2025). In consecrated life, these two dimensions are not separate realities. They shape how religious women understand themselves, relate with others, respond to conflict, sustain prayer, and remain faithful to their vocation.

Religious sisters live a vocation that requires the integration of emotional maturity and spiritual commitment. They are called to live in community while engaging in apostolic responsibilities that demand empathy, resilience, patience, emotional balance, and relational competence. Community living brings together people with different personalities, backgrounds, temperaments, and expectations. It can therefore become both a source of support and a context of emotional strain. Emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-

regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills are necessary for managing interpersonal challenges constructively. At the same time, spiritual maturity enables religious sisters to integrate faith into daily living, deepen their relationship with God, cultivate forgiveness, and remain committed to their vocation amid difficulties.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in religious and pastoral contexts. Collazos Ugarte et al. (2024) found that emotional intelligence contributed to psychological adjustment and positive life perspectives among Italian women religious. Purba et al. (2024) reported that emotionally intelligent nuns demonstrated a stronger capacity for problem-focused coping. Mutuku et al. (2021) found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment to community living among consecrated women in Kenya. In Nigeria, emotional intelligence has also been linked with social wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, and ministerial effectiveness among women religious (Anyi et al., 2023; Udechukwu et al., 2024).

Spiritual maturity has also received scholarly attention because of its importance for religious commitment and perseverance. Sangwa (2021) describes spiritual maturity as the integration of faith into daily life, moral responsibility, and a meaningful relationship with God. Spiritually mature persons tend to demonstrate resilience, compassion, purposefulness, and emotional stability (Upadhyay & Aqil, 2022). In religious life, spiritual maturity is expressed through fidelity to prayer, commitment to vows, service to others, fraternal charity, discernment, and the capacity to interpret personal and communal experiences in the light of faith.

Scholars have increasingly argued that emotional and spiritual developments are closely interconnected. Scazzero (2014) maintains that emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable because unresolved emotional struggles may hinder authentic spiritual growth. Similarly, Aqila and Sugitanata (2024) found that emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity jointly support emotional stability, resilience, and relational harmony. These studies suggest that emotional competencies may support spiritual growth by strengthening self-understanding, empathy, forgiveness, and healthier community relationships.

The Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters is an indigenous Catholic women's religious congregation founded in northern Nigeria in 1965. The Sisters are involved in education, healthcare, pastoral ministry, and social services within culturally and religiously diverse contexts. Their mission requires emotional competence and spiritual depth as they respond to the demands of community living and apostolic work. Although emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity have been studied in relation to well-being, leadership, coping, and pastoral effectiveness, few studies have directly examined the relationship between these two constructs among women religious in African contexts. Even fewer have integrated quantitative findings with qualitative narratives that illuminate the lived emotional and spiritual experiences of religious sisters. This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria, while using qualitative interviews to deepen the interpretation of the statistical findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity are complementary dimensions of human and vocational development. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to understand and regulate emotions effectively, while spiritual maturity reflects the integration of faith, values, and spiritual experience into daily life. Together, these constructs contribute to personal well-being, interpersonal relationships, resilience, ministry effectiveness, and vocational fulfillment.

Aqila and Sugitanata (2024) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among married couples and found that emotional intelligence strengthened communication, emotional regulation, conflict management, and relational stability. Spiritual maturity, in turn, enhanced emotional resilience, moral discernment, and relational harmony. Although the study focused on marital relationships, its findings are relevant to religious communities because consecrated life is also relational and requires emotional regulation, empathy, commitment, and moral responsibility.

Among religious personnel, emotional intelligence has been associated with personal adjustment and ministerial effectiveness. Sanagiotto and Pacciolla (2022) found that emotional intelligence positively influenced emotional management, interpersonal functioning, and psychological adjustment among priests and religious. Balansuah (2019) reported that emotional intelligence enhanced pastoral effectiveness among Catholic priests through greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and stronger interpersonal relationships. Agwu (2022) also found a relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among Catholic priests in Nigeria, showing the relevance of emotional competencies in religious leadership and ministry.

Within religious communities, emotional intelligence has been linked with community adjustment, psychological well-being, and vocational satisfaction. Mutuku et al. (2021) found that emotional intelligence contributed to successful adjustment to community life among women religious in Kenya. Udechukwu et al. (2024) reported a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among Catholic women religious in Nigeria. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence contributes not only to personal well-being but also to the relational and spiritual climate of religious communities.

Despite increasing attention to emotional intelligence and spiritual development, empirical studies directly examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity remain limited. Many existing studies treat these constructs separately or examine related outcomes such as well-being, leadership, coping, and pastoral performance. The present study therefore contributes to the literature by empirically examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among women religious and by complementing quantitative correlation analysis with qualitative narratives that explain how emotional and spiritual development are experienced in daily religious life.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by two objectives:

- To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria.
- To identify strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory (1995) and James Fowler's Faith Development Theory (1981). Goleman conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of competencies that enable individuals to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively use emotions in themselves and others. The theory identifies self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as major dimensions of emotional intelligence. Within religious life, these competencies are important because sisters live and work in communal settings that require collaboration, forgiveness, emotional balance, and resilience.

Fowler's Faith Development Theory (1981) views faith as a dynamic process through which individuals construct meaning and deepen their relationship with God throughout life. Faith develops through increasing reflection, integration, and commitment. In the context of religious life, spiritual maturity involves deepening relationship with God, integration of faith into daily living, commitment to religious values, and growth in personal and communal responsibility.

Together, Goleman's and Fowler's theories provide a suitable framework for understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity. Goleman's theory explains how emotional competencies strengthen personal and interpersonal functioning, while Fowler's theory explains spiritual maturity as a developmental process of faith integration and meaning-making. The combined framework suggests that emotional intelligence may support spiritual maturity by helping individuals understand their emotions, process experiences constructively, relate more compassionately with others, and engage more deeply in prayer, reflection, and vocational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an embedded mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component was the dominant strand and examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity using correlational analysis. The qualitative component complemented the quantitative findings by exploring participants' lived spiritual and emotional experiences through semi-structured interviews. This design was appropriate because the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity required both measurable evidence and contextual explanation. The quantitative data established the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship, while the qualitative data explained how this relationship is experienced through prayer, spiritual direction, community life, psychological support, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility.

Participants

The study population comprised all 100 professed members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria. Because the population was relatively small and accessible, a census approach was adopted for the quantitative phase. Questionnaires were distributed to all eligible members. Seventy-three completed questionnaires were returned and included in the quantitative analysis, giving a response rate of 73%. For the qualitative phase, eight participants were purposively selected based on willingness to participate and their ability to provide rich accounts of emotional and spiritual experiences in religious life. The qualitative sample was not intended for statistical representation but for deeper contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Research Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using two standardized psychometric instruments. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Singh (2004). The instrument assesses emotional competencies across dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. Spiritual maturity was measured using the Spiritual Experience Index-Revised developed by Genia (1997). The SEI-R measures dimensions of spiritual support and spiritual openness, including reliance on a higher power, spiritual reflection, and openness to spiritual meaning. The use of standardized instruments enhanced the consistency and reliability of the measurements.

Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide. The guide explored participants' experiences of emotional awareness, emotional regulation, prayer, silence, journaling, spiritual direction, counselling, community life, conflict management, forgiveness, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility. These areas were selected because they provided deeper insight into the lived emotional and spiritual experiences behind the quantitative relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection occurred in two phases. In the first phase, questionnaires were administered to the Sisters to measure emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight purposely selected participants. Interviews allowed participants to narrate how emotional growth and spiritual maturity are experienced in daily life, community interaction, prayer, formation, and ministry. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 23. Descriptive statistics summarized levels of emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly, coded, and organized into themes that captured participants' lived experiences of emotional and spiritual development. After separate quantitative and qualitative analyses, the findings were integrated during interpretation. The integration process considered how qualitative themes explained, expanded, and contextualized the statistical relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity. A joint display was also used to show how the qualitative themes complemented the quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Interview data and questionnaire responses were handled confidentially and stored securely. The study was guided by the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and non-maleficence.

Results

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings. The quantitative results establish the level of emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity and the relationship between the two variables. The qualitative findings explain the lived experiences, practices, and processes through which emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity are cultivated among the Sisters.

Quantitative Results

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Maturity

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	73	3	5	3.99	.44
Spiritual Maturity	73	4	6	4.98	.42

Table 1 shows that emotional intelligence scores ranged from 3 to 5, with a mean score of 3.99 and a standard deviation of .44. This indicates a relatively high level of emotional intelligence among the participants. Spiritual maturity scores ranged from 4 to 6, with a mean score of 4.98 and a standard deviation of .42. This also indicates a relatively high level of spiritual maturity. The small standard deviations show that participants' scores were closely clustered around the means, suggesting consistency in reported levels of both constructs.

Table 2 Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Maturity

		Emotional Intelligence	Spiritual Maturity
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	73	73
Spiritual Maturity	Pearson Correlation	.640**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	73	73

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

The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity, $r = .640$, $p < .01$, $N = 73$. The correlation coefficient indicates a moderately strong positive association between the two variables. This means that Sisters who reported higher emotional intelligence also tended to report higher levels of spiritual maturity. The result confirms the first objective of the study and

suggests that emotional intelligence is an important factor associated with spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by providing deeper insight into the lived spiritual and emotional experiences through which emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity are connected. Thematic analysis generated five major themes: prayer and reflective spiritual practices, psychological support and psycho-spiritual accompaniment, community practices that promote emotional harmony, ongoing formation and human development, and personal responsibility for interior growth.

Prayer and other Spiritual Practices.

Prayer, meditation, silence, journaling, examination of conscience, and spiritual reflection emerged as foundational practices for emotional integration. Participants described these practices not only as devotional obligations but also as spaces for recognizing emotions, processing inner struggles, and developing balanced responses to difficult experiences. Silence and prayer helped participants move from reactive emotional responses toward reflection, acceptance, and discernment.

“What mostly works for me is silence, to be quiet and then think. Our culture of meditation in the morning and the holy hours we do every Thursday are moments where I pull out everything. When I meditate and keep quiet and listen to myself, I am able to manage whatever anger or tension is happening” (R05, Interview, 25 March 2026).

Participants also emphasized journaling and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament as means of emotional clarification and healing. These experiences show that spiritual practices can function as structured mechanisms for emotional awareness and regulation, thereby linking emotional intelligence with deeper spiritual maturity.

“When I go before the Blessed Sacrament, I spend almost two hours writing without knowing it is almost two hours, and when I come out I am better than the way I was. I try through meditative writing and journaling. The moment I am able to write, those painful things that were upsetting me begin to make sense and I am able to come out” (R02, Interview, 18 March 2026).

Psychological Support and Psycho-Spiritual Accompaniment

Professional psychological support emerged as an important mechanism for fostering emotional balance and spiritual wellbeing. Participants acknowledged that spiritual guidance alone may not always address emotional wounds, psychological struggles, and deeper patterns of behaviour. Counselling, therapy, and psychological assessment were therefore viewed as complementary to spiritual direction and religious formation.

“After two years of first profession, sisters should be given the opportunity for psychological assessment and before final profession too. If sisters need a psychological assessment, they should be free to ask, and if authority sees someone going through stress, they should call that sister, listen to her, and perhaps suggest help. Sometimes people do not even know what is really happening to them” (Interview, 16th March, 2026).

Another participant emphasized the importance of counselling and therapeutic support.

“Some of the professional support that can help includes counselling, therapeutic support, and educative awareness platforms for sisters. When community members are able to share struggling experiences and give each other support, which can also help in a structured and intentional way” (Interview, 25th March, 2026).

This theme indicates that emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity are strengthened when psychological and spiritual support systems work together. The finding supports a psycho-spiritual approach to religious

formation in which emotional healing; self-awareness, spiritual guidance, and vocation commitment are treated as interconnected dimensions of growth.

Community Practices that Promote Emotional Harmony

Community life was identified as a practical aspect for emotional learning and spiritual growth. Participants described faith sharing, community meetings, communal meals, recreation, background sharing, and sisterly dialogue as spaces where Sisters learn empathy, communication, forgiveness, emotional expression, and mutual understanding. Community life was therefore experienced as both a challenge and an opportunity for emotional and spiritual transformation.

“Faith sharing during spiritual exercises, community meetings where we iron things out, community meals, and community recreation are avenues that help sisters manage emotions. If there are no sharing, I would not know what is bothering you, and at the cost of sharing, a sister can use her pain to share and another sister may learn from it” (R04, Interview, 21 March 2026).

Another participant emphasized the importance of sisterly confrontation and dialogue as tools for conflict resolution and mutual understanding.

“We used to have background sharing when a new member joined the community, and we had sisterly confrontation: if anything happens, you go to your sister and express yourself in dialogue, and that privilege of listening and clarifying was a very big weapon we had” (R03, Interview, 21 March 2026).

Ongoing Formation and Human Development

Ongoing formation programmes, retreats, workshops, temperament assessments, personality assessments, human development courses, counselling, and psycho-spiritual accompaniment were identified as important strategies for developing emotional intelligence. Participants emphasized that emotional intelligence is not fully achieved during initial formation but requires continuous nurturing at different stages of religious life.

“I came into religious life as a real choleric, and with the workshops and the human development course, I came to realize that people are different and my energy cannot be equated with another person. Formation has helped shape me” (R04, Interview, 21 March 2026).

Another participant emphasized the value of structured formation across different stages of religious life.

“If we can do it at different levels of formation, at the postulancy level, novitiate level, temporary professed level, and perpetually professed level, and bring a professional once in a while as we do with retreats, that would be very beneficial” (R02, Interview, 18 March 2026).

Personal Responsibility and Interior Growth

Personal responsibility emerged as a core driver of emotional intelligence development. Participants noted that external structures such as workshops, counselling, and community dialogue are helpful, but they cannot replace individual commitment to self-awareness, emotional acceptance, and personal change. Emotional intelligence was therefore described as an intentional interior discipline that requires honesty, humility, and willingness to be transformed.

“I took it to heart that this is not the person I want to turn out to be at the end of the day. I tried to work on myself. Many of us now need to go into the silence and listen, and know our raw self as against the person that God is refining us to be” (R07, Interview, 28 March 2026).

“Emotional check-ins is needed: there is a need for one to face our emotions, label our feelings, and seek peace in them. I think change is the most permanent thing in life, and we have to take that personal responsibility to allow it” (R06, Interview, 25 March 2026).

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings provides a fuller understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity. The quantitative result established that the relationship was statistically significant and positive. The qualitative findings explained the processes through which this relationship is lived and strengthened. Emotional intelligence was cultivated through prayerful reflection, silence, journaling, spiritual direction, counselling, community dialogue, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility. These practices promoted self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, forgiveness, and relational maturity, which in turn supported spiritual maturity.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria, and to identify strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity, $r = .640$, $p < .01$. This indicates that Sisters with higher emotional intelligence tended to report higher levels of spiritual maturity.

The qualitative findings deepened this result by showing how emotional intelligence is cultivated and expressed within religious life. Participants identified prayer, silence, meditation, journaling, spiritual direction, psychological support, faith sharing, community dialogue, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility as pathways through which emotional growth supports spiritual development. These themes show that emotional intelligence is not merely a psychological capacity but a psycho-spiritual resource that helps Sisters process emotions, relate compassionately, forgive, engage in self-reflection, and deepen their relationship with God and others.

The findings support Scazzero's (2014) view that emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. Scazzero argues that unresolved emotional issues can hinder authentic spirituality, while emotional awareness and integration support deeper spiritual transformation. The present study supports this position by showing that Sisters who reported stronger emotional competencies also reported higher spiritual maturity. Participants' narratives further showed that spiritual practices such as prayer, silence, journaling, and examination of conscience functioned as spaces for emotional healing and self-understanding.

The findings also align with Aqila and Sugitanata (2024), who found that emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity jointly enhance emotional stability, resilience, and relational harmony. In the present study, emotional intelligence supported spiritual maturity through improved empathy, communication, forgiveness, community relationships, and emotional regulation. These findings suggest that emotional development and spiritual growth function together as interconnected aspects of holistic religious formation.

The results are also consistent with Mutuku et al. (2021), who found that emotional intelligence contributes to adjustment to community life among women religious, and Udechukwu et al. (2024), who found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria. Psychological wellbeing and community adjustment are closely related to spiritual maturity because emotionally stable individuals are better able to sustain prayer, build healthy relationships, respond to conflict constructively, and remain committed to their vocation.

However, the findings differ from Agwu (2022), who reported only a weak positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among Catholic priests. This difference may be explained by the difference in outcome variables. Leadership style can be influenced by organizational culture, authority structures, personality, and institutional expectations. Spiritual maturity, by contrast, appears to have a more direct relationship with emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interior growth.

The findings support Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory by showing that self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are relevant to religious life. Sisters who understand and regulate their emotions are better able to practice patience, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and constructive

communication. The findings also support Fowler's Faith Development Theory by showing that spiritual maturity involves reflection, meaning-making, integration, and deeper commitment. Emotional intelligence may support faith development by enabling Sisters to process experiences constructively and integrate them into their relationship with God, community, and mission.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had several limitations. First, the correlational design established the existence and strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity but could not determine causality. It cannot be concluded from the present data that emotional intelligence causes spiritual maturity or that spiritual maturity causes emotional intelligence. Second, the study was cross-sectional and therefore could not show how emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity develop over time. Third, the study relied on self-report instruments, which may be affected by social desirability and participants' self-perceptions. Finally, the study focused only on members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria. The findings may therefore not be generalized to all women religious or to congregations with different charisms, cultures, and formation contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings have important implications for religious formation, community life, and psycho-spiritual accompaniment. First, formation programmes should integrate emotional intelligence training with spiritual formation. Training should include self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, conflict management, communication skills, forgiveness, and reflective practice. Such integration would help Sisters develop the emotional competencies required for healthy community living and spiritual growth.

Second, congregational leadership should strengthen access to psycho-spiritual accompaniment. Participants emphasized that counselling, therapy, psychological assessment, spiritual direction, and reflective practices are necessary for emotional healing and spiritual well-being. Budgeting for psychological support and normalizing professional help can reduce stigma and support the emotional stability of members.

Third, community-based practices should be strengthened. Faith sharing, community dialogue, sisterly confrontation, background sharing, recreation, communal meals, and structured reflection can create spaces for emotional expression, empathy, reconciliation, and mutual learning. Since religious life is lived in community, emotionally healthy relationships are essential for vocational perseverance and spiritual maturity.

Fourth, ongoing formation should be continuous and stage-specific. Emotional intelligence development should not be limited to initial formation. It should be addressed at postulancy, novitiate, temporary profession, perpetual profession, leadership preparation, midlife, and later stages of religious life. Such an approach would recognize emotional and spiritual maturity as lifelong developmental processes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Longitudinal studies are also recommended. Following Sisters across different stages of formation and religious life would help determine how emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity develop over time and whether growth in one construct influences growth in the other. Such studies would be especially useful for understanding emotional and spiritual development during initial formation, transition to perpetual profession, leadership responsibilities, midlife, and later religious life.

Finally, future studies should consider advanced statistical approaches such as structural equation modeling. Structural equation modeling would make it possible to examine more complex relationships among emotional intelligence, spiritual maturity, psychological wellbeing, community support, formation experiences, spiritual practices, and vocational commitment. It could also help test possible mediating and moderating variables, such as psychological support, community climate, prayer practices, or years in religious life.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters in Jos, Nigeria. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity, showing that Sisters with higher emotional intelligence tended to report higher levels of spiritual maturity. The qualitative findings provided deeper insight into this relationship by showing that prayer, silence; journaling, spiritual direction, professional psychological support, faith sharing, community dialogue, ongoing formation, and personal responsibility help Sisters develop emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, forgiveness, and relational maturity.

The study concludes that emotional intelligence is an important psycho-spiritual resource for women religious. It supports healthier community life, deeper prayer, vocational wellbeing, effective ministry, and spiritual maturity. Emotional intelligence should therefore be intentionally integrated into religious formation and ongoing accompaniment. A holistic approach that brings together psychological support, spiritual practices, community structures, and personal responsibility can strengthen both emotional growth and spiritual maturity among members of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima Sisters.

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