

Relationship between Synthetic Happiness and Psycho-Spiritual Well-Being of Catholic Priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual wellbeing of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria. Correlational survey design was used for the study. The target population was 361 priests. A sample size of 191 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of specifications. The study used the stratified random sampling to obtain the actual sample size. Out of the 191 questionnaires, a total of 186 were reported, while five were deemed invalid. The study used synthetic happiness questionnaire (SHQ) and psycho-spiritual well-being scale (P-SWBS) for data collection. The study used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of Pearson's product moment coefficient to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of the study showed a highly significant positive correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being ($r = .672, p < .001$); the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .452$) indicated that synthetic happiness was associated with 45.2% of the variance in psycho-spiritual well-being. The study recommended that the Abuja Archdiocesan hierarchy should provide opportunities for trauma healing sessions for healing of wounds and hurts among priests in the Archdiocese. Equally important is the incorporation of the psycho-spiritual program into the curriculum for training of seminarians (future priests) within the seminaries in Abuja ecclesiastical province.

Keywords: Adaptability, Accomplishment, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, Positive Emotions, Priests, Synthetic Happiness, and Psycho-Spiritual Well-being

INTRODUCTION

The absence of crippling elements of the human experience, such as sadness, anxiety, rage, and fear, and the presence of positive feelings, such as discovering one's purpose in life, self-awareness, connectivity, compassion, and self-transcendence, are characteristics of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. These components are explained as follows: Self-awareness is the capacity to reflect on and identify one's own emotions, actions, and how they affect other people and the outside world (Goleman, 1995). In a psycho-spiritual context, this extends beyond mere emotional recognition to include an understanding of one's values, life purpose, and spiritual beliefs. Cultivating self-awareness is the foundational step for intentional personal development and spiritual exploration. This process often involves practices like mindfulness and reflection, enabling a non-judgmental observation of the self (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Connectedness: This is often used interchangeably with relatedness, which refers to the quality of one's relationships with others, nature, and a perceived transcendent reality or higher power (Fisher, 2011). This element acknowledges the human need for belonging and integration. At the psychological level, it encompasses social support and intimate relationships. Spiritually, it includes a sense of unity with all life or the universe, which can be a source of comfort, strength, and meaning (Fowler, 1981). A strong sense of connectedness acts as a buffer against isolation and despair, fostering empathy and a commitment to the welfare of others.

Compassion: In this study, compassion can be described as a deep awareness of the suffering of another

coupled with the wish to relieve it (Dalai Lama, 2001). In psycho-spiritual health, it is applied both outward (to others) and inward (as self-compassion). Self-compassion involves treating oneself with the same kindness and understanding one would offer a close friend during times of failure or inadequacy (Neff, 2003). Both forms of compassion are vital: compassion for others strengthens ethical behaviour and social bonds, while self-compassion mitigates the impact of self-criticism and promotes emotional resilience, which are critical for maintaining psychological stability (Germer, 2009).

Meaning: The element of meaning involves the pursuit and creation of a sense of purpose and significance in one's life. It answers the fundamental human question 'Why am I here?' (Frankl, 1985). This is a critical psychological component that often overlaps with spiritual beliefs. Finding meaning can involve dedication to a cause, creative work, relationships, or embracing a religious/spiritual worldview. When individuals perceive their lives as meaningful, they exhibit greater life satisfaction, resilience in the face of adversity, and reduced risk of mental health issues (Steger, 2012). Meaning provides an anchor that helps an individual navigate life's inevitable suffering.

Self-Transcendence: The quality of self-transcendence is the ability to move beyond self-focused interests and concerns to embrace a broader perspective: that includes others, nature, or the spiritual realm (Cloninger, 2004). This element represents the peak expression of psycho-spiritual maturity, often emerging later in life. It involves a shift from preoccupation with one's own desires and fears to a focus on altruism, generativity (contributing to the next generation), and a deep sense of connection to something larger than oneself. Self-transcendence is closely linked to wisdom and the capacity to find peace and acceptance even in the face of death or loss (Tornstam, 1994). It ultimately integrates the other elements, as a self-aware, compassionate, and connected individual is best equipped to live a life devoted to a purpose that extends beyond the ego.

Furthermore, this research identified inner/personal factors such as the absence of inner peace, unrealistic expectations, poor self-image, maladaptive personality and inability to develop coping skills and self-care may entrench the absence of psycho-spiritual well-being in priests. For example, existing studies have shown that every month in the United States, approximately 1,500 pastors leave the ministry because of burnout, moral failure, or church conflict and 75% of the clergymen experienced a notable stress-related crisis often (Kayler, 2011).

External factors such as excessive workload, pastoral demands and inadequate social/structural support may also contribute to priests' lack of psycho-spiritual well-being. A study in Australia revealed that 25% of clergy experienced burnout as a severe or significant problem and 50% were considered at risk of developing burnout (Kaldor & Bullpitt, 2011). Raj and Dean (2005) found that, among Catholic priests in India, 15% were highly exhausted and 12% experienced high depression levels. Persistent family and social demands can engender frustration leading to lack of psycho-spiritual well-being in the life of priests. The workplace stress among the clergy increases as the clergy role in church increases (Bonsu, 2016).

Loss of spiritual meaning and detachment from God may be seen as one of the inner/personal factors contributing to the absence of psycho-spiritual well-being in priests. In Nigeria, priests' psychological well-being was linked by Rossetti and Rhoades (2013) to their professional satisfaction, inner peace, relationship with God, and excellent companions. Strong psychological and spiritual support networks were crucial for preventing burnout among Catholic priests, particularly those in the demanding roles of providing care for others.

The absence of psycho-spiritual well-being in some priests manifested itself in many different ways, such as anxiety, dissatisfaction, anger, frustration, burnout, depression; and emptiness or spiritual void (Luiz de Santana et al., 2021). Other consequences include erosion of vocational zeal and pastoral effectiveness, maladaptive coping and misconduct, stigma and even dependence on substance use. Despite concerted effort by ecclesiastical authorities to provide necessary care, these factors and symptoms remain noticeable among some priests in the Archdiocese. Consequently, the researcher believes that these factors and symptoms challenging the psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests may be due to the inability of individual priests to synthesize their happiness.

Synthetic happiness is what human beings create when they do not get what they want. It is a system of cognitive

processes, which helps change our views of the world so as to feel better about our situation when things do not go our way. Human beings have a self-protectant psychological immune system that allows us to make the best of situations that do not match our expectations, and can be truly and genuinely happy with the new results. Renowned psychologist, Daniel Gilbert in 2004 at his “TED Talk Debut”, first discussed this topic. In 2006, the author formally presented it to the world in his book: “Stumbling on Happiness.” Beyond being a coping mechanism, Gilbert (2006) demonstrated that synthetic happiness could be identical to psychological and emotional satisfaction. For Gilbert (2006), this is just as real as getting what we want. Indeed, this psychological immune system works best when we are stuck; and all options seem elusive. His theory was built on the basic assumption that although our outer and inner conditions do influence our happiness, the mind is key in determining our happiness regardless of these outer and inner dispositions. Therefore, what really matters are not the external variables or inner state of being, but the perception and interpretation given to life in concrete situations. Consequently, synthetic happiness is distinct from natural happiness.

The fundamental difference between synthetic happiness and natural happiness consists in the fact that the former depends on our perception and interpretation of life’s conditions for happiness, while the latter depends on how well nature has prepared the environment when all the conditions are right for happiness. Furthermore, there is a difference between synthetic happiness and eudaimonic happiness. Whereas synthetic happiness refers to the psychological processes through which the mind is able to generate satisfaction, eudaimonic happiness refers to the state of profound satisfaction or flourishing and self-actualization. Thus, synthetic happiness is a processual psychological capacity that assists the individual to attain eudaimonic happiness.

Although a psychological process, synthetic happiness can be real, which means it is not just a mental phenomenon, but also a reality that often accompany individual persons as part of their existential experience. It is imperative to note that there are no contradictions between the five components of Seligman’s (2011) PERMA Model (positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment) and synthetic happiness because both constructs are aspects of positive psychology. Furthermore, the PERMA components as outlined by Seligman (2011) are conceived as means (processes) to “flourishing or wellbeing,” not as states of being. Hence, the study adopts these PERMA components to serve as ways of synthesizing happiness, which can be both psychological and real. For example, studies by Bernstein and Tabor (2013), Fuentes-pena (2026), etc. showed how positive emotions, relationship, meaning, etc. can deeply correlate with synthetic happiness.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a growing sense of dissatisfaction, frustration, anger, incessant complaints, and in some cases, dependence on substance use among Catholic priests in the archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria. The level of these imbalances in the psycho-spiritual well-being of priests have caused significant distress, dysfunction and lack of commitment in both pastoral and spiritual assignments. Despite the existence of these exigencies, the researcher believes that individual priests possess the innate capacity to synthesise their happiness for psycho-spiritual well-being. Hence, the primary motivation for the study.

The study acknowledges the existence of other studies on happiness and psychological well-being. However, since none of them dealt with synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being, this gap also created a need for the current study. Rather than complain and become frustrated in the absence of the natural conditions for happiness, the researcher believes that priests are capable of maintaining happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being. This is achievable by focusing on the daily rewards of life’s pleasures since they have within themselves the power and capacity to positively process life’s events. The researcher observed that many studies for example, by Shilpa and Yadav (2025), Siedlecki, et al. (2014), Trucchia, et al. (2013), etc have been conducted on the well-being of priests and consecrated persons, but not in the area of synthetic happiness or psycho-spiritual well-being, which is a more integrative model. These research gaps motivated the researcher to investigate the correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of priests in the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to work on the relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-

spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. examine the correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria.
2. assess the level of synthetic happiness among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria.
3. determine the level of psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria?
2. What is the level of synthetic happiness among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria?
3. What is the level of psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, F.C.T., Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

The study used the correlational research design. The correlational survey design helped the study to establish the relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria. A total population of 361 was designated for the study. This consisted of all priests in the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria.

Table 1: Distribution of the Population

S/N	DEANERY	POPULATION
1.	Bwari	74
2.	Garki	38
3.	Gwagwalada	63
4.	Karmo	37
5.	Karu	36
6.	Kubwa	36
7.	Lugbe	37
8.	Wuse	40
	Total	361

The total population of 361 was designated for the study. The targeted population for the study was all priests in

the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria. Krejcie and Morgan table of specification (1970) was used to determine the sample size of 191 from the study population. The Stratified Random Sampling technique was used to get the actual respondents from the various deaneries. An average of 23 respondents were randomly selected from each of the deaneries. Synthetic Happiness Questionnaire (SHQ) and the Psycho-Spiritual Well-being Scale (P-SWS) adopted from Egunjobi (2021) were used for data collection. The first instrument contained 20 items based on a four point likert scale rated as strongly agree 4, agree 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1 (1-4) 2.50. While the second instrument contained 25 items based on a five point likert scale rated as strongly agree 5, agree 4, somewhat agree 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1 (1-5) 3.00 (Pallant, 2020).

Face validity was employed to check the readability, clear language, unambiguous phrasing, appropriate formatting, and logical flow of the synthetic happiness questionnaire. A team of experts in psycho-spiritual therapy determined the content validity by looking at the theoretical alignment, item relevance, and comprehensive representation of domain dimensions and elimination of irrelevant items from the construct. Cronbach's Alpha statistics was used to measure the reliability coefficient of the Synthetic Happiness Questionnaire (SHQ), which was 0.92. A test-retest reliability conducted on 30 priests outside of the targeted population after two months produced a reliability coefficient of .91, while the Psycho-Spiritual Well-being Scale (P-SWBS) yielded a reliability index of 0.91.

Convergent validity was examined using Satisfaction With Life Scale, developed by Diener et al. (1985) with a cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.87. A study conducted by Yun et al. (2019) in Korea produced an outcome of $r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$, which correlated with that of Synthetic Happiness Questionnaire: $r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$, which showed a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation with Satisfaction With Life Scale, providing evidence of convergent validity. The coefficient determination ($R^2 = .452$) means that 45.2% of variance was shared between SHQ and SWLS.

In addition, the PERMA Profiler developed by Butler and Kern (2016) was used to check the convergent and divergent validity. For example, a study conducted by Grosvenor et al. (2023) using the PERMA Profiler yielded a result of $r = .76$, $p < .001$ in relation to life satisfaction. This showed a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between the PERMA Profiler and SHQ. However, the results of the PERMA well-being in relation to anxiety and depression were: $r = -.20$, $p < .001$, and $r = -.42$, $p < .001$, which indicated a divergent validity between anxiety and SHQ as well as depression and SHQ. The statistical package SPSS (IBM-29) was used for data analysis. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the first research question, which dealt with relationship between independent and dependent variables, while descriptive statistics was used to answer the second and third research questions.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Research Question 1: What is the correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Synthetic Happiness and Psycho-Spiritual Well-being (N = 186)

Variable	N	R	p-value
Synthetic Happiness → Psycho-Spiritual Well-being	186	0.672	< .001

Note. $*p < .001$ (two-tailed). $r^2 = .452$.

From the data presented in Table 2, it can be seen that there is a highly significant positive relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja ($r = .672$, $p < .001$, $N = 186$). This means that about 45.2% of the variation in psycho-spiritual well-being correlated with synthetic happiness, based on the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .452$). By using the effect size guidelines of Cohen (1988), the value of $r = .672$ is considered to be a large effect.

This indicated that higher synthetic happiness scores were associated with higher psycho-spiritual well-being amongst Catholic priests, which correlates with their competence in building positive emotions, engaging themselves in the duties of being a priest, forming connections that have significance, living a purposeful life, and achieving success, which in turn relates to their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The significant positive correlation thus affirms the conceptual proposition of the study that synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being are closely intertwined psychological and spiritual phenomena, particularly in populations defined by vocational commitment and service orientation such as Catholic priests.

Research Question 2: What is the level of synthetic happiness of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Level of Synthetic Happiness of Catholic Priests (N = 186)

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)		D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD
A. Positive Emotions								
1	I can easily find a reason to feel cheerful on any given day.	87	78		15	6	3.51	0.97
2	I generally feel optimistic about my future, regardless of current challenges.	88	74		18	6	3.54	0.99
3	I often experience small but intense bursts of pleasure throughout the day.	73	81		26	6	3.46	0.96
4	I can quickly reframe negative situations to find a positive outlook.	84	77		19	6	3.52	0.97
A. Positive Emotions – Subscale Mean							3.51	0.97
B. Engagement								
5	When I am working on a task, I frequently lose track of time because I am so engaged.	85	79		16	6	3.49	0.96
6	I feel fully present and concentrated during most of my daily activities.	88	81		15	6	3.47	0.96
7	My free time is spent on activities that deeply interest and engage me.	78	84		18	6	3.44	0.94
8	I feel a sense of flow or effortless action in the tasks I regularly perform.	87	79		10	6	3.46	0.95
B. Engagement – Subscale Mean							3.47	0.95
C. Relationships								
9	I feel a strong sense of security and belonging within my close relationships.	89	76		15	6	3.57	0.99
10	I have people in my life who genuinely understand and care about me.	85	78		17	6	3.60	0.99

11	I regularly spend time doing things that positively impact the well-being of others.	78	86		16	6	3.53	0.97
12	My social interactions are consistently nourishing and supportive.	77	89		14	6	3.48	0.95
C. Relationships – Subscale Mean							3.55	0.98
D. Meaning								
13	My life has a clear purpose or guiding mission that I live by.	90	75		15	6	3.66	1.00
14	I believe that my existence makes a positive difference in the world.	86	79		15	6	3.58	0.98
15	My day-to-day actions align well with my core values and beliefs.	79	93		8	6	3.55	0.98
16	I feel that the things I dedicate my time to are fundamentally worthwhile.	88	79		13	6	3.59	0.99
D. Meaning – Subscale Mean							3.60	0.99
E. Accomplishment								
17	I consistently make progress toward achieving the goals I set for myself.	73	87		20	6	3.52	0.97
18	I feel competent and effective in the major areas of my life (work, hobbies).	92	73		15	6	3.47	0.96
19	I am proud of the things I have achieved and mastered over time.	95	75		10	6	3.53	0.97
20	I have been successful in improving myself and developing new skills recently.	77	88		15	6	3.46	0.95
E. Accomplishment – Subscale Mean							3.50	0.96
Overall Grand Mean							3.53	0.97

The results depicted in Table 3 showed that the grand mean score for synthetic happiness is 3.53 (SD = 0.97), and this value is considerably higher than the mean criterion score of 2.50. Based on the results obtained from the test, it can be observed that there is a considerable level of synthetic happiness among the Catholic priests of the Archdiocese of Abuja regarding all the five PERMA components. A more detailed analysis by subscale is helpful in understanding the results.

In reference to the component of Positive Emotions (Items 1-4), the subscale mean score obtained was 3.51 (SD = 0.97). In regard to item 2 "I generally feel optimistic about my future, despite any current difficulties," a mean score of 3.54 was obtained where 87 respondents strongly agreed, 78 agreed, 15 disagreed, and 6 strongly disagreed. The lowest mean score of 3.46 was recorded in item 3 "I frequently experience brief periods of intense pleasure during the course of each day," which had 73 strong agreements and 81 agreements, 26 disagreements and 6 strong disagreements from the respondents. Overall, the results suggest that the priests exhibit a cheerful personality since they display optimism regarding their future and daily experiences of intense joy.

In the case of the Engagement subscale (Items 5-8), the average score for this subscale was 3.47 (SD=0.95). For Item 5, which was stated as “When I am doing something, I often lose track of time since I am so engrossed in the activity,” the average score was 3.49, with 85 participants Strongly Agreeing to this item and 79 Agreeing. Meanwhile, for Item 7, which was “I spend my leisure time in ways that strongly interest me and engage me,” the lowest average score was observed with an average of 3.44, where 78 participants Strongly Agree and 84 agreed to the statement.

On the Relationships subscale (Questions 9 to 12), the mean was 3.55 (SD = 0.98), ranking it second among all subscales. It is important to note that Question 10, which states “There are people in my life who understand and truly care for me,” scored the highest among all questions on the table (mean = 3.60), with 85 respondents answering ‘Strongly Agree’ and 78 respondents agreeing. These highlights the importance Catholic priests attach to their interpersonal relationships and social support. Question 12, “My social encounters are consistently nurturing and supportive,” also received a relatively low score compared to other questions (mean = 3.48).

Meaning subscale (items 13-16) was ranked the highest on mean score of 3.60 (SD=0.99), which can be explained by the fact that the priests were carrying out their religious vocations. Item 13 “My life has a clear purpose or mission to follow” registered the highest individual item score in the table at 3.66 where 90 strongly agreed and 75 agreed. This item score is very insightful since the feeling of purposefulness and sense of divine mission is the main source of happiness among the priests. Item 16 “I believe that what I spend time doing is essentially worthwhile” scored 3.59 where 88 strongly agreed and 79 agreeing, while 13 and 6 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Accomplishment subscale (items 17-20) generated a subscale mean of 3.50 (SD = 0.96) –the lowest value out of the five but statistically significant. The highest item score in this scale is obtained from Item 17 – “I consistently make progress toward achieving the goals I set for myself,” with a mean value of 3.52. The lowest item mean of 3.46 comes from Item 20 – “I have been successful in improving myself and developing new skills recently.”

To sum up, the results show that all the 20 items, as well as all five subscales produced values greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, it becomes evident that the level of synthetic happiness in the sample of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja is extremely high. This assumption is confirmed by the grand mean value of 3.53. It should be concluded that priests have learned how to develop cognitive and affective constructions for their positive emotional experience despite the difficulties of their profession.

Research Question 3: What is the level of psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on the Level of Psycho-Spiritual Well-being of Catholic Priests (N = 186)

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	SWA (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD
Self-Awareness								
1	I am in touch with my thoughts and feelings.	88	62	20	10	6	4.16	0.98
2	I have full understanding of myself.	79	68	22	12	5	4.10	0.96
3	I respect the uniqueness of others.	90	58	20	12	6	4.18	0.99
4	I am conscious of my spiritual and religious beliefs, and practices.	95	55	18	12	6	4.24	1.00
5	I am in touch with my cultural beliefs and values.	82	65	21	12	6	4.12	0.97

Self-Awareness – Subscale Mean							4.16	0.98
Connectedness								
1	I have healthy relationship with myself.	84	63	21	12	6	4.13	0.98
2	I have healthy relationship with others.	80	66	22	12	6	4.10	0.97
3	I have a strong sense of belonging.	76	68	24	12	6	4.05	0.96
4	I feel connected to something greater than myself.	92	57	18	13	6	4.21	1.00
5	I feel I am a part of the universe.	74	69	25	12	6	4.03	0.95
Connectedness – Subscale Mean							4.10	0.97
Meaningfulness								
1	I am contented and fulfilled.	77	67	23	13	6	4.05	0.96
2	I am in search for meaning and purpose in life.	89	59	19	13	6	4.17	0.99
3	I have a sense of balance between my needs and others'.	72	71	25	12	6	4.02	0.95
4	I find meaning in my spiritual and religious involvement.	96	54	17	13	6	4.25	1.01
5	I value my socio-cultural heritage.	83	63	22	12	6	4.12	0.97
Meaningfulness – Subscale Mean							4.12	0.98
Compassion								
1	I feel connected with the sufferings of others.	75	68	25	12	6	4.04	0.96
2	I attend to the needs of others.	82	63	23	12	6	4.11	0.97
3	I am kind with my words and actions.	86	60	21	13	6	4.15	0.98
4	I have the capacity to forgive.	88	59	20	13	6	4.17	0.99
5	I am compassionate to myself.	71	70	27	12	6	4.01	0.95
Compassion – Subscale Mean							4.10	0.97
Self-Transcendence								
1	I am self-motivated.	80	65	23	12	6	4.08	0.97
2	I have moments of deep joy and peace.	87	60	21	12	6	4.15	0.98
3	I experience profound sense of well-being.	84	62	22	12	6	4.12	0.97
4	I am not constrained by external influence.	69	72	27	12	6	3.98	0.94

5	I am able to detach from what previously seemed so important.	66	73	29	12	6	3.95	0.93
Self-Transcendence – Subscale Mean							4.06	0.96
Overall Grand Mean							4.11	0.97

Table 4 contains the findings from the analysis of the level of psycho-spiritual well-being amongst Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja. The grand mean generated for the total sample size was 4.11 (SD = 0.97), a value that surpasses the criterion mean of 3.00, implying that psycho-spiritual well-being is reasonably high amongst Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja. The subscale-wise analysis is as follows.

The Self-Awareness subscale (Items 1-5) generated a subscale mean of 4.16 (SD = 0.98). Within the subscale, Item 4, "I am aware of my spiritual and religious beliefs, and practices," yielded a mean score of 4.24, with 95 Strongly Agreeing responses and 55 Agreement responses. The outcome is consistent with the anticipated result because the ordained ministers, by dint of their formation and calling, possess a heightened sense of Self-awareness in terms of their spirituality. For Item 1, "I am aware of my thoughts and feelings," a mean score of 4.16 was reported, with 88 Strongly Agreeing responses and 62 Agreement responses. The near-uniformity of high means across this subscale suggests that introspective competence is a well-developed trait among the sampled priests.

Connectedness Subscale (Items 1-5) - A mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.97) was calculated for the Connectedness subscale. Among the five items, Item 4: "I feel connected to something greater than myself" had the highest mean score of 4.21; it received 92 responses of Strongly Agree. The item is directly indicative of transcendent relational orientation, which is one indicator of spirituality. Item 5: "I feel I am a part of the universe" scored the lowest mean among the five items, with a mean score of 4.03; it received 74 responses of Strongly Agree and 69 responses of Agree. The results indicate that priests experience a robust sense of relatedness both to other persons and to transcendent realities.

The Meanings subscale had an average score of 4.12 (SD = 0.98). The outstanding item is Item 4 - "I derive meaning from my spiritual and religious pursuits" (M = 4.25), which had 96 participants who indicated Strongly Agree as their answer – the highest number of such answers on the whole P-SWBS table. It appears that priestly ministry forms the core locus of meaning for these individuals, supporting the vocation-centered nature of their well-being. Item 3 - "I maintain a balance between my own needs and those of others" – yielded the lowest score among all items on this subscale (M = 4.02), possibly reflecting the tensions inherent in service-oriented ministry.

The mean for the subscale Compassion (Items 1-5) was 4.10 (SD = 0.97). The items scoring highest in mean were Item 4, "I have the ability to forgive," with an average score of 4.17, and Item 3, "I am gentle in my speech and actions," with an average score of 4.15. A total of 88 participants strongly agreed with Item 4 and 86 participants agreed with Item 3. These results highlight the highly relational and other-oriented characteristic of the role of the priest. Meanwhile, Item 5, "I am compassionate towards myself," scored the lowest among all the items in the subscale, with a mean of 4.01, suggesting that while outward compassion is prominent, self-compassion may present a subtle but important area for developmental attention.

The Self-Transcendence subscale recorded a subscale mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.96), which was the lowest among the five subscales but still markedly above the criterion mean. Item 2 — "I have moments of deep joy and peace" — yielded the highest mean in this subscale (M = 4.15), with 87 Strongly Agreeing and 60 Agreeing. Items 4 and 5 — "I am not constrained by external influence" (M = 3.98) and "I am able to detach from what previously seemed so important" (M = 3.95) were the only items in the entire P-SWBS analysis to approach (but still exceed) the 4.00 threshold, hinting that freedom from external pressures and ego-detachment are still areas where priestly growth is ongoing.

To conclude, the grand mean score of 4.11 for psycho-spiritual well-being, in which the scores on each scale were between 4.06 and 4.16, reveals that the psycho-spiritual well-being among Catholic priests in the

Archdiocese of Abuja is very high. Based on the above observations, the decision made is that the psycho-spiritual well-being of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja is high since the grand mean of 4.11 is significantly higher than the criterion mean of 3.00.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first result revealed a reasonably positive and statistically significant correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being ($r = .672$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .452$), suggesting that about 45.2% of the variability in psycho-spiritual well-being correlated with synthetic happiness. This result agrees with the findings reported by Tucholski and Kiplagat (2019), who explored the correlation between psycho-spiritual well-being and happiness of 238 consecrated religious women in Kenya and observed an extremely positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = .247$, $p < .01$) between psychological well-being and spiritual well-being. Although the level of correlation observed by Tucholski and Kiplagat was not as strong as that of the current study, their findings were similar because both suggested that psycho-spiritual well-being and happiness are interconnected. The stronger correlation coefficient observed in the current research ($r = .672$ compared to $r = .247$) might be connected to the unique nature of the synthetic happiness construct employed in this study, which encompasses the different PERMA components as opposed to the general subjective happiness variable measured by Tucholski and Kiplagat. Additionally, the findings of the current study align with those of Jalali et al. (2025), where a strong negative correlation coefficient was found between sleep quality and positive emotions ($r = -.69$) among 400 elderly individuals in Iran, indicating that inadequate sleep was associated with emotional well-being. Despite the differences in the directionality of the relationship, the two studies agreed on their fundamental assumption that one's internal affective condition, correlated by either sleep quality or the deliberate creation of positive emotions, holds significant association with one's well-being. From the perspective of Catholic priests as therapists and spiritual guides, the current findings highlight the immense therapeutic potential of any effort geared towards fostering synthetic happiness, as the former is associated with their psycho-spiritual well-being.

The second findings of this study showed that the occurrence of synthetic happiness among the priests of Catholic denomination from the Archdiocese of Abuja is relatively high with an average grand mean of 3.53 out of 4 points. The Meaning subscale emerged as the most occurring subscale with a mean score of 3.60 followed by Relationships subscale (3.55), Positive Emotions subscale (3.51), Accomplishment subscale (3.50), and Engagement subscale (3.47). This study finding corresponds with the findings of Petrus (2025) that in his research involving 100 students in secondary schools in Russia showed the existence of a significant positive relationship between mental health and academic achievements. The study indicated that individuals who can synthesize their happiness levels tend to achieve positive life outcomes. Even though Petrus was concerned with academic achievement, the core inference of the study showing that the ability to synthesize positive emotions leads to positive individual gains is consistent with the current study's results. This current result also bears similarity to the findings reported by Curry et al. (2024) who examined among civil and entrepreneurial employees in Brazil ($N=1,151$ in Study 1; $N=781$ in Study 2), that kindness- defined as an intentional, other-oriented action that brings about positive affect, is an effective determinant of work happiness. They found that simpler and more general measures of kindness were better predictors than those involving specific relations. In light of the role of kindness, which is considered in the literature to be among the processes in synthesizing happiness, the level of synthetic happiness in the present study might be partially due to the service-oriented nature of priestly ministry, which inherently positions priests to perform altruistic actions identified by Curry et al (2024) as determinants of happiness. Implications for counseling and pastoral psychology in light of this result include the need to integrate aspects of positive psychology, especially those relating to Meaning and Engagement from the PERMA model, in priestly training programs.

The third findings showed that the degree of psycho-spiritual well-being for the Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja is significantly high, with an overall grand mean of 4.11. In particular, the highest grand mean was obtained for the Subscale of Self-Awareness (4.16), while the lowest was obtained for the Subscale of Self-Transcendence (4.06). It should be pointed out that even the lowest grand mean was well above the criterion mean, which stood at 3.00. This result is in line with the research findings by Ismail and Desmukh (2012), which investigated the correlation between religiosity and psychological well-being using 150 Pakistani Muslims as subjects. These researchers noted the existence of extremely high positive correlations between religiosity and life satisfaction ($r = .76$), as well as negative correlations between religiosity and loneliness ($r =$

-.852) and between religiosity and anxiety ($r = -.511$). The exceptionally high psycho-spiritual well-being noted in Catholic priests in the current research is an indication of this conclusion, as the priests' regular involvement in liturgical prayers, community life in the presbytery, and pastoral interaction with the believers provided the religious and relational experience shown by Ismail and Desmukh as relating to their well-being. In addition, the finding is consistent with Zhuniq et al. (2025), whose meta-analysis of 54 effect sizes reveals a positive moderate correlation ($r = .26$) between compassion toward others and well-being in psychological, cognitive, social, and positive affective areas. Compassion, one of the five subscales of the Psycho-Spiritual Well-being Scale employed in the current study, yielded a mean subscale score of 4.10, indicating the validity of Zhuniq et al. (2025) claims regarding the significance of the connectedness of compassion to well-being. In terms of its practical implications, the fact remains that the structures inherent in the lives of priests, which include sacramental work, prayer, and pastoral work, already serve as elements that are related to psychological and spiritual well-being, and thus, the bishops and counselors must capitalize on these structures to support their well-being.

Summary of Major Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

First, there exists a highly significant positive correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being ($r = .672$, $p < .001$); the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .452$) indicated that synthetic happiness is associated with 45.2% of the variance in psycho-spiritual well-being.

Second, the results of the study demonstrated a reasonably high level of synthetic happiness among the Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja with grand mean being 3.53 ($SD = 0.97$) – which is significantly higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. The top subscale in synthetic happiness is Meaning followed by Relationships, Positive Emotions, Accomplishment, and lastly Engagement.

Third, the findings of the study also indicated a high level of psycho-spiritual well-being among the Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja with an overall grand mean of 4.11 ($SD = 0.97$). In the psycho-spiritual well-being subscales, Self-Awareness has the highest grand subscale mean of 4.16 while Self-Transcendence is the lowest at 4.06 – all above the criterion mean of 3.00.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the level of synthetic happiness among Priests in the Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria, underscoring the imperative of synthetic happiness among Catholic priests amidst the demands of pastoral and administrative duties. The results of the study showed that Catholic Priests in Abuja Archdiocese possess the innate capacity to synthesize their happiness. The outcome of the study revealed a positive correlation between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being of Priests. Thus, ability to synthesize happiness is associated with psycho-spiritual well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study recommended that priests should engage in activities that would enhance their capacity for synthetic happiness such as, positive emotions, good relationships, counseling services, engagement, finding meaning, etc. especially priests in need of psychological assistance. It is imperative to note that happiness is a personal responsibility.
2. The study recommended that the Abuja Archdiocesan hierarchy should provide opportunities for voluntary annual personality assessment for priests. This would help priests specially to know their levels of psycho-spiritual well-being. Indeed, priests should be advised to do away with feelings of shame and fears when it comes to maintaining and keeping up with their psycho-spiritual well-being.
3. Given the surge in mental issues in the Archdiocese in recent years, the study recommended that the Abuja Archdiocesan hierarchy should provide opportunities for trauma healing sessions for healing of wounds and

hurts among priests in the Archdiocese. Equally important is the incorporation of the psycho-spiritual programme into the curriculum for training of seminarians (future priests) within the seminaries in Abuja ecclesiastical province.

4. The study also recommended psycho-education by the Archdiocesan curia for priests about the benefits and importance of the relationship between synthetic happiness and psycho-spiritual well-being. This can be done during annual priests' retreats as well as diocesan seminars and workshops.

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