Level of Psycho-Spiritual Wellbeing among Male formees of Different Religious Congregations at Tangaza University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this study was to assess the level of the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the male formees of different religious congregations studying at Tancaza University. This study used convergent parallel design. The target population was 740 male formees from different religious congregations studying at the school of theology at Tangaza University. Multistage sampling was used to select the congregations and male formees. A sample size of 307 was statistically selected comprising 285 for quantitative strand, and 22 which were purposively selected for the qualitative strand.The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews while the quantitative data was collected using questionnaires. The study used the family problems questionnaire. Data analysis was done through criterion, content and thematic analysis. The study showed that the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the male formees was high (M=3.9768, std=.54009). The study recommends further exploration which could help determining the elements that enhance the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the male formees at Tangaza University

Keywords: *Congregation, Formees, Psycho-spiritual, Religious, Tangaza, University, wellbeing*

I.   Background of the Study

Wellbeing is a concept that has been widely and strongly analysed, examined, interpreted and elucidated in positive and social psychology with several arguments concerning its definition and measurements (Tint & Weiss, 2016). Layard (2010) stated that wellbeing embraces an individual's positive and healthy functioning and operation due to the ability, capacity, and strength to obtain resilience and boldness in times of distress, pain, suffering, sorrow, loss, and attain health (understood holistically). Dorge et al.; (2012) asserted that the notion of wellbeing is unquestionably composite in a way that it is somehow described rather than defined because it is an ongoing discussion, deliberation, and debate. However, a person's wellbeing could encompass connectedness, awareness, meaningfulness, compassion, self-transcendence, self-acceptance, personal growth and development, autonomy, and reflection the meaning of events in life.

Shinde (2017) viewed wellbeing as a person's role in life, work engagement, sense of identity and belonging. For Rabanipour et al.; (2018), health is an aspect related to wellbeing and not merely the absence of illness but a state of wholeness. According to Maher et al.; (2017), psychological wellbeing is a mental paradigm connected to personal interpretation of self and life. Such interpretations of life are done focusing on six facets of psychological wellbeing namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

Furthermore, Pong (2017) stated that spiritual wellbeing is characterized by comfort, life satisfaction, and peace, which implies the status of congruence in a person. It also implies purpose, meaning in religious life, and a relationship between humankind and supernatural beings. The spiritual wellbeing could also be considered as a person's inner connection with self, others, and the Supreme Being. It can also be the innate connections regarding valuable, meaningful, and interpersonal rapport at a community level. In other words, spiritual wellbeing is Ad-intra and Ad-extra connections (Smith, 2020). Chirico (2017) emphasized that spiritual wellbeing focuses on the fundamentals of a person whereas psychological wellbeing centres on thoughts. To this end, psycho-spiritual wellbeing could be said to be a healthy, holistic, and wholesome connection and relationship with self, others, nature, the ancestral realm, and the divine with a sound mind, and appropriate thoughts and emotions. Lin and Bauer (2003) asserted that psycho-spiritual health concerns a person's positive regard for his/her prognosis, social and familial support, self-reliance, hope, and purpose in life.

Indeed, religious men and women, including formees are expected to have healthy behaviours and relationships. They are expected to be men and women who are spiritually and emotionally stable, being able to handle any situation in life positively and adequately (Ellison, Boardman, Williams, & Jackson, 2001). It is also expected from them to have higher levels and a sense of psycho-spiritual wellbeing due to the nature of their vocation, ministry, and life. This idea is born because of the belief and the fact that they live in fraternities and communities, go through several trainings and programs which focus on human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, moral, communitarian, and psychological dimensions, though sometimes little attention is paid to the latter. Onyekwelu et al., (2024) in their study confirmed that majority of the female religious exhibit a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Habimana (2024) confirmed that though the level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing among priests from selected dioceses of Rwanda may vary. However, majority of them experience high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The male formees of different religious congregation at Tangaza University despite the diversity of their background and different life experiences may portray certain level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

II.   Objective

To assess the level of the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the male formees of different religious congregations studying at Tangaza University, Kenya

III.   Methodology

The study used a mixed methods research approach adopting the convergent parallel design. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), convergent parallel design is the most well-known approach among all the mixed method designs and probably the most used across different disciplines. Using this design helped the researcher consider quantitative and qualitative data with equal interest without giving priority to any methods but strive to have in-depth and generalizable results. During the data collection, the qualitative phase called for purposeful sampling and the quantitative phase ideally called for random sampling.This study was done among the male formees of religious congregations studying at Tangaza University especially those at the school of theology with a total number of 740 (Institute of Theology = 486, Institute of Philosophy = 170 and Institute of Spirituality = 84.

Simple random sampling was used to select the formees from congregations who took part in this research in the quantitative study. In order to get the sampling size this study used the Slovin's formula for sample size.

n = N / (1 + Ne2)

n = Sample size required, N = number of people in the population, e= allowable (%)

$n = 740/ (1+639 \times 0.05^2)$

n = 740/2.5975

n = 285 formees approximately

The researcher did in-depth interviews with 13 formees for qualitative data collection. These was be done through recording, video tape, document analysis, and observations, and adopted the psycho-spiritual scale of Egunjobi et al.; (2024) P-SWBS for the questionnaire.

IV. Findings

A/ Demographics

Demographic of the Questionnaire Participants

The researcher suitably scrutinized the demographic features of the respondents. The background information which were sought are age, level of studies and stage of formation. These demographic information about the formees were of paramount importance in the sense that their helped the researcher have a deeper understanding about their growth so as to give a more accurate, adequate and appropriate interpretation of the information their gave which constitute the findings of the study.

The study considered age of one of the main factors which could show differences in terms of the participants response to family experiences and their psycho-spiritual well. The age of the participants was analyzed and present in terms of percentage.

Distribution of Age
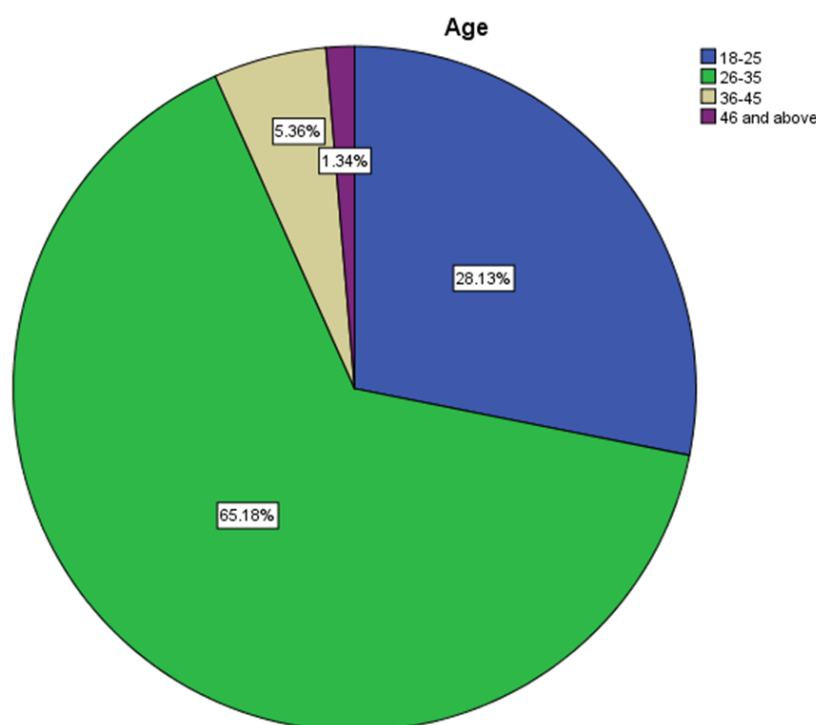
The significant minority are the participants from 46 years and above. Whereas the significant majority are the participants between 26 to 35 years old. The young adults among the participants represent the second largest but is still less than a third of the total. This demographic appears to be skewed towards older age groups among the participants. This representation shows that majority of the participants in the study are in their early adulthood, a time when individuals are at the peak of their physical development and are focused on their future

physical, psychological, social and spiritual development. The age bracket was important in this study to identify if which age bracket could have lower or higher psycho-spiritual wellbeing or find out what could be some key elements which emerged at every age bracket.

Distribution of Participants by Level of Studies

The study was interested in examining the percentage of participants per level of studies or percentage of participants by institutes. This was done to identify what are the recurrent family experiences of these different groups, how they affect them and how they respond to such experiences.

Level of Studies
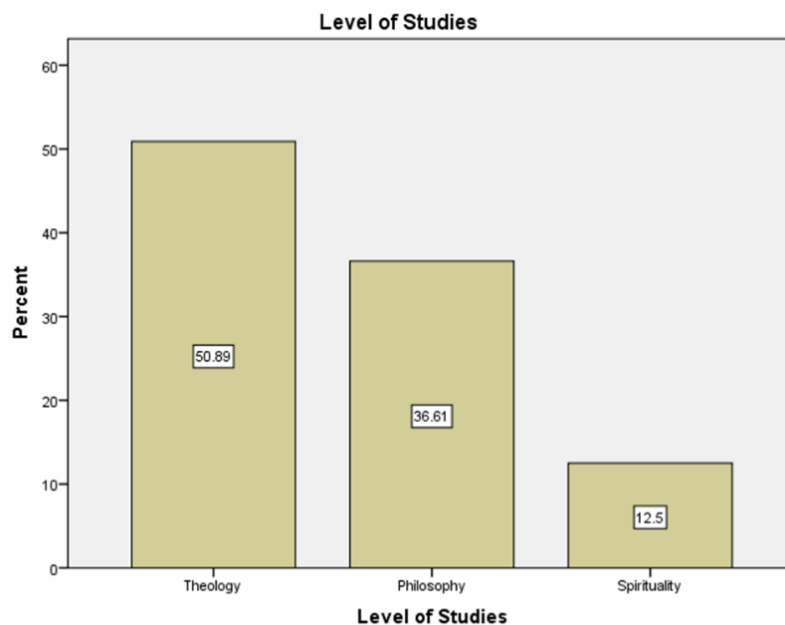
The findings elucidate that majority of the respondents were students of theology who represent more than half of the participants (50.89%), followed by those of philosophy (36.61%) and lastly the formees in spirituality (12.5%). These different percentage are in accordance with the number of students represented in the different institutes. Since the formees in theology have higher number than the institutes of philosophy and spirituality, so their participation was also higher than the one of the other two institutes.

Distribution of Participants by Stage of Formation

The stage of formation of the respondents to the questionnaire was important in this research so as to determine which stage of formation highly responded to the questionnaire and how their family experiences influence their psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Stage of formation
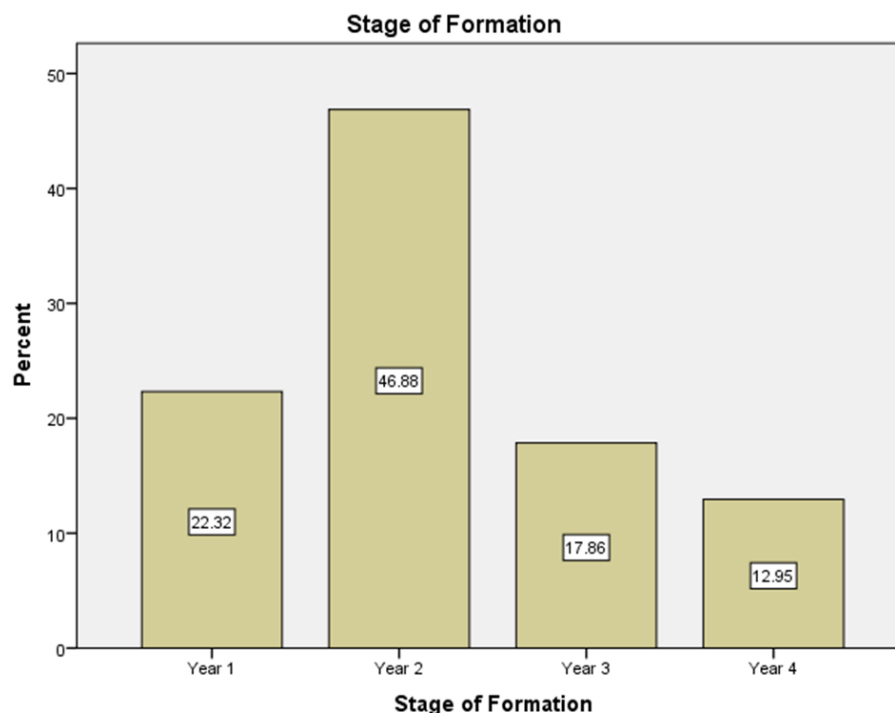
The formees in second year scored the highest percentage (46.88%). This percentage is a combination of the percentage of all the second years from the three institutes (theology, philosophy and spirituality). This could be an indication that the second year formees were more available or are in bigger number than the other formees. They were followed by the first year formees (22.32%), then the third years (17.86) and finally the fourth years (12.95%).

Demographic of Interview Participants

The researcher did an in-depth interview with 13 participants who were purposively selected in order to find out the family experiences of the formees. These participants were selected focusing on the seniority in the formation process. The researcher appropriately scrutinized the demographic features of the participants by focusing on gender, age, stage of formation and level of studies as well as their birth order. These demographic and background information of the formees were important in helping the researcher have a profound understanding of the participants and hence do adequate interpretation of the results. The demographic details were talked over in subsequent sub-themes.

Age

The participants range in age from 27 to 34 years, with the majority clustered between 28 and 30 years old. This was attributed to the age when many of the formees are ending their formation process and studies at Tangaza University. This could be due to the fact that the religious formation takes longer years in the process of formation. Moreover, the formees who are at the last stage of their formation are supposed to have gone through other university studies such as philosophy and other formative processes such as noviciate and/or postulancy and aspirant stage. All these processes could take at least nine years (1 year propaedeuctic, 3 years philosophy, 1 spiritual year, 1 pastoral year, and 3 or 4 years theology; the case of the Yarumal missionaries). Hence, if a formee joined the formation process while he is 18 years old (the official year of admission), he would be 27 years old. However, some join the formation process at a later age than 18 years. In other words,

most of these formees joined the formation process between 18 to 21 years old. This demographic detail is crucial for understanding their psycho-spiritual wellbeing since individuals at this age are navigating more complex emotional, spiritual, and familial transitions.

Birth Position

Among the respondents, the first, second and last born represent the majority and are of equal representation. The birth position of participants varies, ranging from 1st to last in the family order, with some participants being the only child or the lastborn. Firstborns (In2, In5, In 12) may have experienced more responsibility in their families and could be dealing with expectations tied to their role as the eldest. This can influence their spiritual formation, especially if they are seen as role models or family leaders. Last borns (In7, In8, In 10) might have had different family dynamics, possibly growing up in a more relaxed environment with less responsibility. Their formation could involve learning to balance independence with responsibility. Those in the middle (e.g., In3, In6) may have felt the pressure to compete for attention or find their niche within the family structure. The birth order can shape personality, coping strategies, and expectations, all of which influence psycho-spiritual wellbeing and family relationships.

The family structure (birth position and family dynamics) likely plays a role in the participants' spiritual formation and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. For example, those from larger families (e.g., later-born children) may experience different support systems compared to those from smaller families (e.g., firstborns or only children). As these individuals navigate religious formation, they might experience tension or support from their families, particularly regarding their decision to enter religious life. This dynamic can affect their emotional and spiritual health.

The 4th-year students are in a transitional phase where their spiritual and emotional experiences may be shaped by both their academic journey in theology and their familial relationships. Many individuals in religious life face challenges in reconciling their spiritual calling with family expectations, which can impact their psycho-spiritual health. Given the range of family experiences (birth order and family size), the students likely have diverse coping mechanisms and emotional resilience, which affect their overall wellbeing. Some may find great strength in family support, while others might struggle with feelings of isolation or tension regarding their vocational choices.

Institute

All participants are studying Theology, which indicates their primary focus is on deepening their spiritual life, understanding religious doctrines, and preparing for future leadership roles within their religious communities. Their psycho-spiritual wellbeing is likely influenced by both their academic rigor in theology and the formation required for their roles in their religious congregations.

Stage of Formation

All the interviewees (13) were in their last stage of formation which was purposively chosen by the researcher. All the respondents were in the fourth year; is justified by the fact that the researcher focused more on the formees who are ending their studies and their formation process. This is the final stage of their theological studies, which often involves personal reflection, integration of faith and knowledge, and preparing for transition into ministry or religious life. By the 4th year, these formees may have experienced significant psycho-spiritual growth and challenges, balancing the demands of their studies, spiritual practices, and family relationships. The 4th year is also a time where their connection with their families could become more complex, as they might be confronting their personal calls to ministry and their relationships with family members who may have different expectations or struggles with their vocations.

B/ Components of Psycho-spiritual wellbeing

Findings of quantitative strand

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness	224	1.00	5.00	4.0018	.60074
Connectedness	224	1.00	5.00	4.0179	.64956
Meaningfulness	224	1.00	5.00	3.9571	.61136
Compassion	224	1.00	5.00	3.9723	.60383
Self-transcendence	224	1.00	5.00	3.9348	.78930
Overall mean score	224	1.56	5.72	3.9768	.54009

The high mean suggests that the participants generally experience a strong sense of awareness, which could be related to their spiritual or religious understanding, self-awareness, or mindfulness. The relatively low standard deviation (0.60074) indicates that most respondents have similar levels of awareness, with not much variability. The score in connectedness that the participants feel highly connected, likely in both spiritual and communal aspects. The high mean indicates strong feelings of belonging, whether through their religious community or a connection with a higher power. The standard deviation shows a slight variability, meaning some participants might feel slightly less connected than others. The meaningfulness score also reflects high levels of purpose or significance in the participants' experiences. The mean score close to 4.00 indicates that, on average, the participants find their religious or academic journey meaningful. The standard deviation suggests moderate agreement among the participants, with some feeling less meaning than others.

Participants report a strong sense of compassion, likely pointing to how the values of empathy, kindness, and understanding play a significant role in their lives. The high mean indicates that compassion is an important quality for most of the students. The standard deviation indicates consistency in the responses, though there are still slight differences in how compassion is felt. This dimension shows a slightly lower mean than the others, suggesting that while many participants experience a sense of self-transcendence (spiritual growth, transcendence beyond ego, a sense of higher purpose), it might not be as universally felt as the other factors. The higher standard deviation also implies more variability in how self-transcendence is experienced, with some students feeling more profound shifts than others.

The overall mean score of 3.98 indicated that, on the whole, the participants tend to experience high levels of psycho-spiritual well-being. This suggests that religious formation in these congregations is likely to promote positive mental, emotional, and spiritual health among the formees. The relatively low standard deviation suggests that most respondents have similar levels of well-being, but there is still some degree of individual variability.

However, self-transcendence could suggest a more individual experience of spiritual growth that may not always be rooted directly in family life but rather in personal or collective religious experiences. Some participants might feel a deep sense of purpose and connection with the divine that transcends familial experiences. Overall, the high means across all dimensions suggest that the students are experiencing strong psycho-spiritual well-being. This could be due to a combination of family, spiritual formation, and their academic environment at Tangaza University. The slight variability (indicated by the standard deviations)

suggests that while most formees feel spiritually and emotionally well, personal differences and family backgrounds might contribute to how each individual experiences their psycho-spiritual well-being.

The findings in the quantitative stand were supported by the interviews done among some male formees schooling at Tangaza University.

Findings of qualitative strand

a) *Self-Awareness*

The self-awareness of the formees was dealt with and several and different responses were given by the respondents in various ways.

During the interview one of the interviewees stated:

> I grew up in a family where we were free to express thoughts and feelings. In a way I can say that I always try to get in deeper connection with what is in my mind and how I feel in order to voice it out in due time… (Interviewee In 2, 17th October 2024).

Another interviewee shared his feelings

> I feel like I am not disconnected with my thoughts and feelings. I feel in touch with myself. I try to know what is going on within me and with, my emotions. I also try to control the way I behave with others especially people around me…(Interviewee In 5, 17th October 2024).

One of the interviewees also expressed the following:

> I don't doubt being in touch with myself especially my feelings and thoughts. I am capable of knowing and often understand what is going one in me. I believe that God created me very unique, I am different from any other person in this world,…(Interviewee In 12, 23rd October 2024).

Each interviewee expresses a deep connection with their inner self and an understanding of their uniqueness. For example:Interviewee In 2 speaks about the value of expressing thoughts and feelings freely, suggesting a sense of emotional openness and self-expression that may have been nurtured in their family environment. The mention of "getting in deeper connection with what is in my mind and how I feel" indicates a high level of emotional intelligence and awareness of one's internal world. Interviewee In 5 similarly emphasizes being in touch with their emotions, describing their ability to understand what is going on within themselves. This self-awareness reflects emotional maturity and a commitment to introspection.

Interviewee In 2 highlights the diversity within their family, acknowledging differences among siblings while emphasizing the complementary nature of these differences. This sense of familial unity amidst diversity reflects a healthy understanding of individuality and respect for others' uniqueness. The influence of cultural values and beliefs, such as respect for elders and belief in ancestral spirits, further informs their worldview, suggesting a deeply rooted connection to their cultural heritage.The responses suggest that family experiences can both support and challenge an individual's journey toward psycho-spiritual well-being. In cases where family practices emphasize respect for individuality, such as the interviewee in Interviewee In 2, the individual tends to develop a positive sense of self. However, when there is a gap between cultural and religious practices, as in Interviewee In 5, there can be feelings of disconnection or later attempts to bridge these gaps, seeking deeper understanding and integration.

Religious beliefs, especially when shaped by a supportive family environment, appear to foster a sense of connection to both a higher power and the community. However, as seen in Interviewee In 5, when religious practices are not fully integrated with cultural customs, there can be a spiritual gap that the individual may seek to fill later in life. Another consistent theme is the value placed on respecting diversity and uniqueness, both within the family and the religious community. Each interviewee emphasizes the importance of recognizing and

appreciating the uniqueness of others: Interviewee In 2 expresses respect for the uniqueness of each family member, acknowledging the diversity of traits within their family while highlighting how they complement each other.

In summary, the responses reveal a complex interplay between family experiences, cultural influences, and religious development, all of which contribute to the psycho-spiritual well-being of the interviewees. Family dynamics that promote self-expression, respect for individuality, and a connection to both cultural and religious practices appear to foster a strong sense of self and emotional maturity. Conversely, challenges arise when cultural and religious identities are not fully integrated, as seen in the experiences of Interviewee In 5. Ultimately, the ability to navigate and reconcile these various influences is key to achieving holistic psycho-spiritual well-being among the formees of different religious congregations at Tangaza University.

b) Connectedness

About connectedness some of the interviewees expressed how connected they are with themselves, others, the universe and God. Some of the themes related to the connectedness of the participants are Love, gentleness, and care for self, appreciation of self, non-judgmental, feeling of inclusion, feeling part of the universe and connection.

One of the interviewees asserted:

> First of all I can say that I love myself, I am gentle to myself and take care of my personal wellbeing. I also challenge myself to become a better person. I appreciate the gifts and talents God has placed in me…(Interviewee In 1, 17th October 2024).

Another respondent said

> I feel a great sense of connection with myself, others, the entire universe, the whole creation, and God; as in I try to know myself more and more, accept other people and try to create a good bound with my brothers and sisters, friends, my community members and people God put on my way…(Interviewee In 3, 17th October 2024).

Again another interviewee stated

> I feel I have good and healthy relationship with myself, others, the universe and God. I consider that I am a gift to the world and the whole universe has been given to me to explore and take care of. I respect and value myself. I don't undermine my presence in my family, in our congregation, in the Church and in the whole…(Interviewee In 7, 19th October 2024).

One of the respondents expressed

> I don't despise myself or others. I have a sane relationship with myself and people around me. I believe that I am also connected to God Almighty who is my creator and maker of everything in the universe…(Interview In 8, 19th October 2024).

Multiple interviewees emphasized the importance of self-love, self-care, and personal growth. For example, Interviewee In 1 talked about loving and being gentle with oneself, challenging oneself to improve, and appreciating the gifts and talents God has placed in them. This suggests that family experiences within the religious community, or the larger social environment, may foster a strong sense of personal identity, grounded in both self-care and spiritual growth. Such practices can lead to a more positive psycho-spiritual state, where individuals feel more at peace with themselves and with others.

A recurring theme across the responses is the importance of positive relationships with others, including family members, community members, and even strangers. For example, the interventions of Interviewee In 3 and Interviewee In 7 suggest that spiritual and religious teachings at Tangaza University,

perhaps within the context of their respective congregations, encourage an expansive, inclusive approach to relationships. This fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance both within the family and in broader societal contexts.

Several respondents expressed a deep sense of spiritual connection, especially with God, which seems central to their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Interviewee In 3 mentioned that they strengthen their relationship with God through prayer, seeing God as the one in control of their life and vocation. Interviewee In 8 echoed a similar sentiment about their connection to God and the universe. This spiritual foundation seems to offer not only emotional stability but also a sense of purpose and direction. Their connection to God may also shape how they view themselves and their role in their families, congregations, and the world at large.

The emphasis on self-love and acceptance, the interconnectedness with others and creation, and the role of spirituality in guiding relationships all point to a well-rounded approach to psycho-spiritual health. Religious congregations, through their teachings and community life, likely offer a space where individuals feel affirmed, not only within the family but in the broader context of society and the divine. Thus, these interviewees' experiences point to the significance of spirituality in fostering well-being, creating meaning in life, and nurturing positive relationships both within and outside of family units. If can therefore be said that the responses reflect a comprehensive view of psycho-spiritual wellbeing that integrates connectedness, spiritual growth, inclusive relationships, and deep spiritual connections. These elements appear to be nurtured within the religious congregations at Tangaza University, helping individuals experience a sense of belonging, purpose, and peace in their families and larger communities.

c) Meaningfulness

During the study the participants expressed some ideas about their search for meaning and sense purpose in life. The themes that emerged from their share regarding meaningfulness are discouragement, capacity of bouncing back, focus, purpose, happiness, contentedness, fulfilment, hope among others. One of the participants asserted:

Sometimes I get discouraged with life especially when I am faced with a lot of challenges. But there is not a day I have felt that life is meaningless. I keep focused on my goals and purpose in life… (Interviewee In 11, 23rd October 2024).

One of the interviewees stressed

I consider that I have a healthy sense of meaning and purpose in life. My life has not been easy but I do believe that things do happen for a reason. Everything I go through is a learning experience that molds and prepares me for a better and brighter future. I was born and raised up country…(Interview In 12, 23rd October 2024).

One respondent said

As first born son of the family there certain things I needed to undergo when I was born and I also expected to behave as a really first born of the family. There are other things also that I am not supposed to do or show…(Interview In 13, 23rd October 2024).

Across all the responses, a strong sense of meaning and purpose emerged as a central theme. Interviewees expressed that despite facing challenges, they do not see life as meaningless. Instead, they find purpose through their Christian faith, cultural values, and religious vocation. For instance, the first interviewee explicitly stated that they believe they were sent into this world for a purpose, which is closely tied to fulfilling a mission. Similarly, the second interviewee also emphasized the importance of purpose, stating that the challenges they have faced are part of a learning experience that prepares them for the future. These perspectives highlight the crucial role that religious beliefs and personal faith play in shaping their

understanding of life's meaning, providing a foundation for psycho-spiritual wellbeing.Both interviewees expressed a deep connection between their religious vocation and their sense of fulfillment.

These responses suggest that the interviewees find a sense of meaning, fulfillment, and psycho-spiritual wellbeing through a complex interplay of faith, family expectations, cultural traditions, and religious practices. Their sense of self and purpose is shaped not only by their Christian beliefs but also by the cultural and familial contexts they grew up in. Although they experience challenges (such as reconciling cultural norms with religious life), they demonstrate a strong ability to adapt, finding peace and contentment in both their spiritual calling and their cultural heritage. The importance of community, service to others, and fulfilling personal and familial roles are significant elements contributing to their sense of purpose and overall psycho-spiritual health. All these responses experiences highlight the profound role that family experiences and religious vocation play in shaping their psycho-spiritual wellbeing, as they navigate the balance between personal growth, cultural expectations, and spiritual fulfillment.

d) Compassion

The study revealed that the participants know, understand and in a way show great sense of compassion. The questions about their sense of compassion brought out some of the following themes: care, concern, suffering, solidarity, brotherhood, sisterhood, helplessness, hope, empathy, sympathy and consolation. Regarding their sense of compassion, how they feel and react to the suffering of others and their owns' they gave diverse answers.

One of the interviewees voiced out

> Since my childhood my parents taught me to care for others especially people who are suffering. I grew up knowing that I need to sacrifice for the wellbeing of anyone who needs my help…(Interviewee In 6, 23rd October 2024).

Another one said

> I am usually careful with what comes out of my mouth. I watch over my words and action because whatever we say to people can either build them or destroy them. I want to build people and not destroy others this is why I said that I am very careful with whatever comes from my mouth…(Interview In 13, 23rd October 2024).

Another respondent asserted

> I can't see someone suffering without being moved to do something for him or her. Naturally I think I am very emotional and sentimental (…). Also anytime I wrong someone I regret it and apologize. (Interview In 10, 19th October 2024).

The first interviewee highlighted how parental teachings on caring for others shaped their worldview. This response suggests that early family influences play a crucial role in fostering values like empathy and solidarity. The deep sense of care and sacrifice can be seen as rooted in early familial guidance, where values of empathy and sacrifice were ingrained. This formative experience nurtured a sense of moral responsibility toward others, which influences their ongoing psycho-spiritual wellbeing, manifesting as a deep desire to assist those in need.The second interviewee emphasized a careful approach to speech and actions, acknowledging the power words have in either building or destroying people. This person has internalized Christian teachings about sharing in the suffering of others, not seeking anything in return for their help. The response suggests a profound sense of moral duty to live out these principles, even when it may be challenging or when personal boundaries are tested.The third interviewee demonstrated a strong emotional reaction to witnessing suffering, showing that they are deeply moved by the pain of others. This emotional sensitivity is connected to both their empathy and a strong sense of personal responsibility to act.

All three interviewees exhibited a deep sense of empathy and compassion for those in need, rooted in both familial teachings and religious beliefs. These qualities promote positive psycho-spiritual wellbeing, as they allow individuals to transcend personal concerns in favor of a greater collective good. The religious and moral teachings, particularly Christian values, serve as a key framework guiding their behavior. These beliefs create a foundation for emotional regulation (e.g., controlling speech, managing grudges) and a sense of duty to others' wellbeing.

These answers given by the interviewees illustrated the interplay between family upbringing, religious teachings, and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The individuals' experiences suggest that a life rooted in empathy, compassion, and service to others, supported by a strong religious foundation, enhances their overall sense of emotional and spiritual fulfillment. Their willingness to act in solidarity, care for others, and reflect on their emotional states highlights the ways in which family experiences and religious values shape their approach to suffering and personal growth.

e) Self-transcendence

Concerning their ability to go beyond, expand and dissolve personal boundaries some of the respondents showed that they have a good sense of self-transcendence in these terms. The themes which emerged from their responses are responsibility, self-motivation, listening, advice, joy, peace, flexibility, detachment, freedom, fulfilment, happiness, sense of wellbeing and serenity.

One of the respondents said

> I can say that I am able fly alone, make my personal decision without anybody imposing things on me. But I should mention that, that does not exclude the fact that I seek and listen to advice from others… (Interviewee In 6, 19th October 2024).

Another respondent expressed

> I find my source of joy, peace and happiness within myself, from others, my parents, siblings, friends and with God. I experience a great sense of wellbeing. I feel I am ok, I am alright. Nothing is troubling me… (Interviewee In 9, 19th October 2024).

Another interviewee voiced out

> Me I want to be owner of myself, and take my life in my hands, be responsible of my life and my decisions. Every decision I make involve my personal responsibility… (Interviewee In 12, 23rd October 2024).

All three respondents expressed a strong sense of personal agency in their decision-making. They emphasized the importance of being able to make their own decisions and take ownership of their lives, even within the context of their religious vocation. These answers suggest that personal autonomy plays a crucial role in the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of individuals in religious life. The respondents seem to find strength and balance in owning their decisions while remaining flexible and open to guidance. Their autonomy is not about rejecting religious values or authority but about consciously embracing responsibility for their lives within a spiritual framework. A consistent theme across the interviews is the emphasis on peace, joy, and resilience. Respondents mentioned that they are able to maintain inner peace and serenity despite challenges. The second respondent, in particular, spoke of actively choosing to remain serene, believing that this will help them navigate life's difficulties. The third respondent added that although life can be unpredictable and challenging, they maintain their joy and peace, accepting the ups and downs as part of God's plan. The sense of inner peace and joy is deeply rooted in their spiritual lives. This suggests that the respondents find spiritual resilience through detachment, surrender, and trust in God's will. They see spiritual peace as a cornerstone of their wellbeing, which helps them navigate the complexities of life, including personal, relational, and vocational challenges.

Their ability to detach from external stressors reflects a strong sense of spiritual grounding and an understanding of the importance of surrender in religious life.

The respondents' connection to their families and communities, even as they embrace their religious vocations, seems to provide a foundational source of emotional and spiritual support. Family experiences, particularly those tied to personal relationships and emotional well-being, likely contribute to the development of a stable and resilient sense of self, which is crucial in managing the challenges of religious life. From the analysis, it is evident that the respondents' psycho-spiritual wellbeing is deeply influenced by their experiences of family, personal decision-making, and their capacity for resilience in their spiritual lives. The ability to navigate personal decisions, maintain inner peace, and adapt to challenges reflects a mature sense of psychological and spiritual autonomy, balanced with humility and detachment. Their experiences suggest that family support, religious community, and personal reflection are key in maintaining a sense of balance and peace, which ultimately enhances their ability to thrive in their vocations. The interviewees seem to embody a holistic integration of psycho-spiritual wellbeing, wherein family experiences and personal spiritual practices intertwine to foster resilience, peace, and personal growth.

V.   Discussion

Sekharam et al.; (2023) mentioned that self-awareness is the ability and habit to pay attention to the way one feels, thinks and behaves. This involves considering patterns in the way we tend to think about things, how we consider events and how to elucidate things to ourselves and make sense of the world around us. Following all this ideas about self-awareness described by these different study mentioned above, it appears that the responses given by the participants in the study are in line with the concept of self-awareness and the formees seem to be aware of its importance their life, their process of formation, the relationship with self, others, the whole universe and God.

Egunjobi (2024) mentioned 5 types of connectedness, intraconnectedness (connection to self), interconnectedness (connection to others), geneconnectedness (connection to the ancestors), cosmoconnectedness (connection to the universe), and supraconnectedness (connection to the transcendence/God). These notions entail one's experience of having and feeling a sense of belonging and attraction to something and/or someone with whom one can have a deeper intimacy. Human beings are naturally and intrinsically connected, which is why Donne (1624) asserted that no man is an Island.

According to Choudhary and Naz (2021), spirituality and social networking have a positive influence on the individuals' quality of life tends to reduce hopelessness, anxiety, stress, depression, and helplessness in older people. Their study's main result revealed that many attempts are being made to improve and enhance elderly people's quality of life through promoting and growing social connectedness and spirituality. Plackett et al.; (2024) also added the importance of connectedness by stating that poor social networking has been identified as one of the major risk factors for poor mental health. Hence, it can be assumed that the more one strengthens, enhances, and improves his/her sense of connectedness, the more mental health he/she could gain. This means that if the formees have a good sense of connectedness, they may also have better mental health and positive psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

According to Egunjobi et al.; (2024), meaningfulness is the capacity of having and feeling a sense of importance, significance, value, recognition and purpose in life. It is making and finding sense in one's life so as to show interest of worthiness. Having great sense of meaningfulness can keep an individual move on or face life experiences no matter how challenging and unbearable they may be. Steger defined meaning in life as the capacity and ability to make sense of and comprehend one's life, and having purpose. This means that purpose is a part of meaningfulness. Purpose in life could be defined as the identification, longing, and search of one or more greatly significant, essential, fundamental, ultimate and overarching aims or very long-term objectives that help organize, shape and establish life choices and actions.

For Mulahalilovic et al.; (2021), the presence of high levels and sense of meaning in life predicts lower symptoms of stress and depression and therefore a higher level of mental physical and mental health including longevity. "A sense of purpose in life is associated with a reduction in the mortality of older adults and young adults across cultures." (p. 1027). This signifies that the formees high sense of meaning and purpose in life could contribute to a peaceful, joyful, fulfilled life, and life satisfaction.

Egunjobi (2024) gave 2 types of compassion, namely self-compassion (which entails treating oneself with kindness, accepting one's imperfections and understanding one's limitations) and compassion for others (that is an action towards others in order to ease their pains and sufferings). Indeed, compassion surpasses physical connection to the level of emotional and spiritual connection to the feelings of another person. This signifies that a compassionate person can sympathize, empathize, and respond to the needs of others.

Sasmito and Lopez (2020) discussed compassionate love of priests in Indonesia and found out that spirituality, reception of support from different and diverse sources were important factors that contributed majorly to the compassionate love of religious men. They also said that priestly commitment moved the priests to love others compassionately. They asserted that although wellbeing did not considerably affect compassionate love, it played a significant role. This compassionate love highly influenced the priests to be determined, enthusiastic, and eager to fulfil their pastoral duties. Harris and Balaam (2021) expressed that compassion can be defined as attentiveness to the suffering of oneself and others, with the wisdom and steps made to get rid of it. This signifies that compassion calls for action, but action done and led with the wisdom and prudence to know and understand when, how, and what is required. Compassion is then an action done with wisdom and loving-kindness, which does not require any claim of payback.

Compassion in some African cultures like among the Akan in West Africa is spiritual, communitarian, cultural and unconditional. Louw (2020) connected compassion to Ubuntu which to him is the ability in the African culture to show and express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building, maintaining and sustaining a community. Following the responses of the participants some of these major attributes and fundamental elements of compassion appeared which show that the formees understand and practice and have some sense of compassion.

Egunjobi(2024) asserted that self-transcendence is an individual's ability to go beyond, expand and dissolve personal boundaries. It is the capacity of elevating oneself and having a more spiritual experience that leads a person to see and feel himself/herself part and parcel of the entire universe. Its achievement goes hand in hand with one's ability to achieve self-motivation, deep joy, peace, happiness, and experiences of a profound sense of wellbeing that does not suffer from any external conditioning and influence. Self-transcendence is a state of free journey towards a higher being and a higher state of living. "Self-transcendence involves moving beyond one's ego and selfish concerns to develop a sense of interconnectedness with the world, a deeper understanding of the human experience, and a pursuit of higher or more meaningful goals." (Egunjobi, 2024, 164).

Douglas (2024) asserted that periods of self-transcendence can have great emotional impacts on individuals. Self-transcendence improves and enhances the general quality of life. She also mentioned that different studies have highlighted that individuals who have high scores on tests measuring self-transcendence are likely to acquire a great and deep sense of meaning and purpose in life, feel good about themselves, have a good sense of hope for the future, experience positive emotions, report and exhibit sense of wellbeing. Douglas added that people who have a high score in self-transcendence consider life to be an exciting and self-revealing journey. This shows that highly self-transcendent individuals are prompted to narrate their lived experiences as spiritual journeys of humanistic growth. They are fascinated by their inner life and their connection to people.

Some of the ideas expressed are in line with what the interviews mentioned during the different interviews concerning self-transcendence. The formees express high sense of self-transcendence. According to Reed's figure of High Self-transcendence, the individual with high self-transcendence has developed a great

sense of relationship with their environment. He/she has well embraced and made meaning of his/her past; living a meaningful present; experiencing a great sense of purpose in life, and has expanded, widened and broadened his/her boundaries. This is also a sign that the individual has embraced all the inner and outer environment.

Self-motivated decision and conviction are required and fundamental. It is in this view that Wong (2016) asserted that self-transcendence could be attained when a person is self-motivated. Koller et al., (2017) also added that self-transcendence consists of self-knowledge, self-integration, peace of mind, differentiation, presence at the present moment and growth. The high score in all this dimensions could be due to the formees' training system which are grounded in the values of the Gospel that promotes compassion, self-awareness, fundamental meaning of life, deep relationship with self, others, the whole creation and with the creator as well as a great sense of seeking the Kingdom of God and not only the passing things of this world.

The findings of this study showed that the formees in accordance to Reed's theory of self-transcendence, are open systems though they have been able to set healthy boundaries. They are open systems because they able to feel with their family members. They go through emotional, psychological and spiritual challenges related to their family experiences. However, they are capable of dealing with them in order to prevent those family experiences from affecting their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. The idea of open system by Reed (1991) stipulates that the self-transcendence theory emphasized that human beings can be considered as open systems contrary to closed systems which do not take in new information and closed to any sort of change and transformation. But every individual needs to set boundaries and develop great sense of connectedness to be more inclusive in anyway so as to enhance his/her sense of wholeness.

The general score of the respondents concerning their psycho-spiritual wellbeing is high. The mean is 3.9768 while the standard deviation is .54009. This signifies that the formees of Tangaza University who took part in this study are not majorly and negatively influenced by experiences lived by their different families.

VI.   Conclusion

Male formees from different religious congregations at Tangaza University experience a high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. Their scores in all the components of the psycho-spiritual wellbeing describe that they are having good and adequate level of wellbeing. This signifies that despite their life situations male formees schooling at Tangaza University are keeping healthy spiritually and psychologically. They have a good sense of self-awareness, connectedness, and meaningfulness. They also portray an appropriate sense of compassion and self-transcendence.

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