

**THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

BY

EJEH IFEOLUWA IFEOMA

ART2101150

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIONS

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

SEPTEMBER, 2025

**THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

BY

EJEH IFEOLUWA IFEOMA

ART2101150

**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIONS,
FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.)
HONOURS DEGREE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

SEPTEMBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned hereby certify that this project work was carried out by **EJEH IFEOLUWA IFEOMA** in the department of Religion, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City and that it is the sufficient in both scope and content in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Art(B.A.) Degree in Religion.

EJEH IFEOLUWA IFEOMA
(Students)

Date

DR. C. O. ADAMU
(Project Supervisor)

Date

PROF L. K. ADEYEMO
(Head of Department)

Date

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first and foremost to the Almighty God, the giver of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.

I also dedicate it to my beloved parents, whose love, prayers, and sacrifices have been the foundation of my academic journey. To my siblings, who have been my constant cheerleaders, and to my extended family members, for their encouragement and unwavering support.

Finally, I dedicate this project to every student who strives daily to balance faith and academics, believing that with God, all things are possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I give thanks to the Almighty God for His unfailing love, wisdom, and strength, without which this project would not have been possible.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr Cyril Adamu, for his patient guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the process of this work. My profound appreciation also goes to my lecturers in the Department of Religion, University of Benin, Dr Valentine Inagbor, Dr Bismarck Nosa Efe, Dr Taiwo Olulade, Dr Belinda Bienose-Osagiede, Prof L.K Adeyemo, for their scholarly contributions to my academic growth.

With a heart full of gratitude, I acknowledge my beloved parents, Mr Richardson Dafe and Mrs Yetunde Ejeh, whose love, prayers, sacrifices, and unwavering support have been the foundation of my success. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my siblings, Ayomide Uwaoma Ejeh, Eniola Isioma Ejeh and Iretomiwa Ogheneovie Ejeh for their encouragement and understanding throughout this journey.

Furthermore, I wish to thank my extended family members, Mr and Mrs Omorigho, Franca Omorigho, Destiny Omorigho, Success Omorigho, Emmanuel Josephine Irushu, who, in diverse ways, contributed to my education and wellbeing. Your words of encouragement, financial support, and constant motivation will forever be remembered.

I am also sincerely grateful to Christian Fellowship International (CFI), University of Benin, for being a spiritual family and source of encouragement to me. The fellowship not only strengthened my walk with God but also provided me with a community of friends, mentors, and brethren who supported me morally, spiritually, and academically.

Finally, to my friends and colleagues who assisted me in various ways, Adu Emmanuel, Sunday Excellent, Ochem Gift, Omuemu Aimuanmwosa, Olofu Gift, Olofu Tosin, Mbet Shalom Faith, Breakthrough, Aigbe Destiny, Dickson Abigail, Okene Edward, Momod Baghira, Otugo Emmanuel, Taohid, Destiny, Ileleji Merit, Iselu Abigail, Mr Isaac, Omoniyi, Everblessed, Jennifer, Cherish Ekuase, Nwanne Alex, whether through advice, encouragement, or simply standing by me during difficult times, I say a heartfelt thank you. To all who contributed in one way or another, I remain eternally grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.5 Scopes and Limitation

1.6 Research Methodology

1.7 Clarification of Terms

CHAPTER TWO:LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Religion

2.2 Academic Performance: An Overview

2.3 The Relationship between Religion and Academic Life

2.3.1 Factors Influencing the Relationship between Religion and Academic Life

2.4 Religious Influence on Students' Behaviour and Study Habits

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AND ACADEMIC LIFE IN UNIBEN

3.1 Overview of Religious Practices in University of Benin

3.2 Students' Participation in Religious Activities

3.3 Effects of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time

3.3.1 Positive Effects of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time-

3.3.2 Negative Effects of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time

3.4 Impact of Religion on Academic Focus and Discipline

3.5 Role of Prayer, Fasting, and Faith during Exams

3.6 Excessive Religious Commitment and Academic Struggles

3.7 Balancing Spiritual Life and Academic Success

3.8 Method of Data Collection

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATION OF RELIGION ON EDUCATION.

4.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Responses

4.2 Theological and Ethical Implications

4.3 Spiritual Implications

4.4 Economic Implications

4.5 Social Implications

4.6 Political Implications

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Evaluation

5.2 Conclusion

5.3 Recommendations

APPENDIX

REFERENCE LIST

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of religion in shaping academic performance among students of the University of Benin. Religion is a powerful social institution that influences values, behaviours, and discipline, all of which may have implications for learning outcomes. The research examines how students' participation in religious activities, such as prayer, fasting, worship, and fellowship, contributes positively or negatively to their academic focus, study habits, and overall performance. It further explores how excessive religious commitments may sometimes compete with academic responsibilities, leading to struggles in time management and concentration.

A mixed-method approach was employed, utilizing questionnaires and interviews to gather data from students across different faculties of the University. The findings reveal that while religion plays a vital role in promoting discipline, moral conduct, and motivation, excessive involvement in religious programmes can reduce lecture attendance and limit study time. The study concludes that a balance between spiritual commitments and academic responsibilities is essential for academic success.

The research contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection between religion and education in Nigeria, highlighting the need for both students and religious organizations to encourage a balanced approach that fosters not only spiritual growth but also academic excellence.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Many people consider university to be one of the most life-changing experiences for young people. It is a location where professions are formed and planned, personalities are formed, and dreams are fostered. A university education is more than just acquiring knowledge for many students, particularly in a nation like Nigeria, it serves as a springboard for opportunities, social mobility, and financial independence. Although academics may appear to be the main emphasis of student life, a deeper examination shows that many students are also navigating religion, which is equally a potent drive.

Religious life abounds on the campus of UNIBEN. Many churches, Muslim prayer groups, and fellowships gather once a week or occasionally every day. Particularly during exam season, night vigils, prayer walks, evangelism drives, and fasting initiatives are typical occurrences. Students frequently get together for spiritual therapy, worship, or lectures. In the face of the stresses of school life, these religious pursuits offer many people a sense of strength, serenity, and community.

However, here lies the tension : how can students manage to reconcile their academic obligations with their spiritual commitments? Religion can, on one hand, give students discipline, hope, and focus, which helps them avoid negative habits and remain motivated. However, some pupils get so enmeshed in their religious activities that they start to do not so well academically. Students have occasionally skipped classes to attend vigils or rehearsals for fellowships. Some people might even adopt the mentality that studying and hard effort are not enough to succeed, that prayer is the only thing that matters.

Furthermore, a diverse range of doctrines and beliefs are presented to students in a multicultural and multireligious environment such as UNIBEN. While some teachings promote academic success and human growth, others quietly minimise the significance of worldly accomplishments like university degrees. As a result, there may be a split focus among students who start to doubt the significance of academic achievement in the grand scheme of things. Religion serves as a support system in many situations. When they are feeling stressed, unsuccessful, lonely, or confused, students turn to their faith. Common practices include faith statements, scripture motivation, and pre-exam prayers. However, the issue still stands: does religion genuinely improve academic achievement, or does it occasionally get in the way?

The curiosity behind this study stems from a sincere wish to investigate the extent to which students' lives are influenced by their religious beliefs and academic pursuits. Understanding how students in a true academic institution are juggling these two worlds; the world of books, exams, and deadlines, and the world of faith, worship, and devotion, is possible by using the university of Benin as a case study. It is crucial to consider whether or not students' religious beliefs are improving their academic performance at a time when more of them are turning to their faith for identity and significance or does it subtly impede their ability to succeed academically?

Instead of criticising or endorsing any particular belief system, this study seeks to clarify the ways in which religion actually affects students' academic lives in the current Nigerian university system.

1.2 Statement of problem

Academic performance has grown to be a major worry for parents, educational institutions, and students in recent years. Religion is one silent but significant effect that is frequently disregarded,

even if consideration is frequently given to elements like personal drive, socioeconomic standing, and the calibre of instruction.

Religion has a significant impact on students' life on campuses such as the University of Benin. Many students take part in regular fasting and spiritual exercises, attend mosque prayers, go on vigils, and actively participate in fellowships. Some people find that this encourages discipline and lessens stress. Others find it to be a diversion that takes up study time or promotes an excessive dependence on faith without any personal effort.

Students encounter difficulties striking a healthy balance between their academic obligations and their spiritual commitments. While some people succeed with the support of their faith, others lag behind because of severe religious practices or values that are out of alignment.

Examining this conflict, this study aims to determine if religion benefits or hinders students' academic performance at the University of Benin as well as the extent to which it influences their study habits, concentration, and academic results.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study was to examine the role of religion in the academic performance of students, using the University of Benin as a case study.

To this end, the research will concentrate on the following particular objectives such as;

1. Investigate the kinds and extent of religious activities enrolled in by students on campus.
2. Evaluate the impact that students' religious practices and beliefs have on their academic performance and behaviour.

3. Investigate the methods by which students manage their academic obligations and religious lives.
4. Determine the effects of religion on students' study habits and performance, both positive and negative.
5. Offer strategies for helping students keep a positive balance between their academic aspirations and their faith.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is significant because it illuminates the sometimes ignored aspect of student life: the impact of religion on academic achievement. Students at the University of Benin come from a variety of religious backgrounds, and for many of them, their faith is a way of life rather than just something they do on Sundays or Fridays. Some people attend vigils, fast for days, begin their days with prayer groups, or even turn to God for support during tests. However, how does this impact their academic performance?

Not only is it beneficial for academic researchers to comprehend this connection, but also for students, instructors, religious leaders, and even school administrators. Religion should be promoted if it aids students in maintaining their emotional stability, discipline, and focus. However, it's necessary to reconsider how students practise their faith in school if it's leading to exhaustion, distraction, or irrational expectations (such as expecting miracles without studying).

This study can assist students in considering their spiritual practices and determining whether or not their religious life is beneficial to their academic performance. Furthermore, it can help

campus religious organisations, such as Muslim student unions and fellowships, create spiritual programs that complement rather than undermine academic brilliance.

Additionally, the results of this study can assist school counsellors and other education stakeholders in comprehending the unnoticed impact of religion on academic performance. In this approach, lecturers may better help and counsel students who are attempting to balance their schoolwork and their faith.

In summary, the significance of this study lies in its attention to a real issue: the everyday struggles of numerous students who are attempting to serve God (or Allah), pass exams, and avoid burnout. Balance is the aim, and it puts faith and academia to the same table by starting a long-overdue discussion.

1.5 Scopes and Limitation

The University of Benin (UNIBEN) students in Edo State, Nigeria, are the particular focus of this study. It investigates how their academic achievement is impacted by their religious involvement, practices, and beliefs. Along with pupils from various faiths or denominations, Christian and Muslim students will also be taken into consideration. Numerous facets of campus religious life will be examined by the study, such as engagement in spiritual practices (such as prayer, fasting, and vigils), attendance at religious events, and the ways in which students apply their faith to their academic work.

To ensure a well-rounded perspective, the research will span many faculties and academic levels. It will include both male and female students and use questionnaires, interviews, or surveys to collect frank and varied viewpoints. The goal is to comprehend how faith influences students'

academic decisions, behaviours, and results in a university setting rather than to support or condemn any particular religion.

There are some limitations on this research, though. The results might not accurately represent the experiences of students at other Nigerian universities, where the religious climate or school culture may be different, because they are limited to UNIBEN. Furthermore, as with many human-centered studies, there is always a chance that individuals will give answers that are socially acceptable or circumspect. The study also depends largely on respondents' honesty.

Limited resources and time constraints may also have an impact on the volume of data collected. Not all departments, faculties, or student groups may be sufficiently covered, which could affect the findings' overall scope.

1.6 Research methodology

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the relationship between religion and academic achievement among University of Benin students. Questionnaires were given to students in various faculties and levels in order to gather data. The questioning were centred on their academic routines, religious practices, and the ways in which one influences the other.

Simple statistical methods were used to analyse the collected responses, which were later categorised into themes that highlight the students' common experiences, trends, and patterns. Respondents' information were all kept private, and the study were carried out with consideration for their academic backgrounds and religious convictions.

1.7 Clarification of terms

1. Religion

Religion can be defined as a system of beliefs, practices, and moral codes centered on the relationship between human beings and the sacred or divine.

Durkheim, É. (1912/2008). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford University Press.

2. Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the measurable outcomes of a student's educational process, often assessed through grades, test scores, and overall achievement in schoolwork.

Steinmayr, R., Meißner, A., Weidinger, A. F., & Wirthwein, L. (2016). *Academic achievement*. Oxford Bibliographies Online: Education. Oxford University Press.

3. Students

A student is an individual formally enrolled in an educational institution for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Collins English Dictionary. (2024). Student. Collins Online Dictionary.

4. Religious Activities

Religious activities are the organized practices and expressions of faith, such as worship, prayer, fasting, fellowship, and participation in religious events or gatherings.

Glock, C. Y., & Stark, R. (1965). *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

5. Faith

Faith is the strong belief, trust, or confidence in religious doctrines, spiritual convictions, or a higher power, often without empirical evidence.

Hebblethwaite, B. (1994). *The Essence of Christianity*. Cambridge University Press.

6. Case Study

A case study is a research strategy involving the in-depth investigation of a single individual, group, institution, or event in its real-life context.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Religion

One of the most persistent and significant facets of human civilisation is religion. It has been called a universal phenomenon that has been present in all known cultures over time. Religion has influenced institutions, beliefs, values, and individual behaviours from prehistoric times to contemporary society. It gives followers a framework for making sense of life, comprehending pain, encountering the sacred, and pursuing moral principles. It is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (Emile Durkheim, 1915). This definition emphasises how religion unites people through common rituals, moral principles, and worldviews. According to eminent theologian Paul Tillich (1957), Religion is the state of being ultimately concerned, meaning that it touches on everything that a person values most, whether it be God, truth, success, or even oneself. From an anthropological standpoint, religion is defined as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations... by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence..." (Geertz, 1973, p.90). According to this interpretation, religion influences interior feelings and the creation of meaning in addition to regulating outward behaviours.

The three main religions in Nigeria; Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions, all maintain distinctive beliefs and customs, but they all have certain things in common, like prayer, worship, sacrifice, obedience, moral instruction, and the quest for transcendence. In addition to governing spiritual life, these customs frequently have an impact on other fields including politics, education, family, and community development.

Religion is frequently used by college students as a coping strategy as well as a moral compass. When faced with stress, moral dilemmas, exams, or uncertainty, students resort to their faith. Religion-instilled qualities like discipline, tenacity, humility, and community support may have an impact on their academic choices and aspirations in life. However religion may also be a very personal experience. While some students find strength and discipline in their faith, others may find it difficult to avoid becoming overly involved in religious activities, particularly if they start to interfere with their academic obligations or take up too much time. Therefore, a multifaceted approach is necessary to comprehend the idea of religion, one that acknowledges its theological, historical, sociological, and psychological impacts.

2.2 Academic Performance: An Overview

Academic performance is the degree to which a student has met their immediate or long-term educational goals. Exams, cumulative grade point averages (CGPA), class attendance, participation, and overall learning outcomes are frequently used to quantify it. Academic achievement at universities such as the University of Benin (UNIBEN) is frequently viewed as a direct reflection of a student's commitment, intelligence, and discipline; nevertheless, it is also impacted by a variety of social, psychological, and environmental factors. A multifaceted construct influenced by a variety of academic, motivational, and contextual variable (Robbins et al., 2004). This covers a student's time management skills, family background, emotional health, learning preferences, and even religious beliefs. Essentially, a student's ability to manage the various demands of academic life is just as important as their innate brilliance.

According to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational aims, achieving real academic achievement necessitates striking a balance between psychomotor skills, emotional dimensions

(such as interest and attitude), and cognitive skills (such as analysis and comprehension). A student who has grown holistically in all of these areas is thus one who excels academically.

Students in Nigeria encounter a variety of academic difficulties, such as overcrowded classes, scarce resources, dynamics between lecturers and students, and unstable economic conditions. These problems frequently have an impact on focus and motivation, which in turn affects performance. In other cases, religious involvement can act as a buffer, assisting students in finding purpose in their lives, managing stress, or creating support systems within their religious communities. However, some research has indicated that an excessive amount of religious involvement, particularly when it becomes excessively time-consuming, can limit the amount of time and energy available for academic obligations.

Based on the individual's ability to maintain equilibrium, this leads to a complex interaction between faith and studies that can have either a favourable or bad impact. This discussion centres on the individual student's dedication to academic success. External assistance, such as religious support, can be beneficial or detrimental, but ultimately, it is up to the student and how they decide to prioritise their needs.

2.3 The Relationship Between Religion and Academic Life

The connection between religion and education has long been a topic of discussion, particularly in communities where religion is fundamental to identity and day-to-day existence. Religion frequently turns up as a coping strategy and a decision-making compass in academic settings where students have more independence and are under more pressure to perform.

Religion offers a foundation of discipline, ethics, and values that are essential for academic success. Religiously devoted students frequently acquire traits that are conducive to academic

success, such as consistency, concentration, and a strong moral compass. A student who practices daily prayer or meditation, for instance, might also apply the same regularity to their study habits (Smith & Denton, 2005). Similar to this, most religions encourage virtues like honesty and hard work, which may lessen inclinations towards academic dishonesty and indolence.

Furthermore, faith can be a source of inspiration. For a lot of students, their academic journey is a divine assignment or a calling. They are motivated to work harder, endure hardships, and pursue greatness not only for their own benefit but also to honour God or further a greater good by this belief. Regnerus's (2003) research revealed that religious students frequently perform better than their nonreligious peers, not because they are smarter but rather because of a disciplined and purpose-driven mindset.

But this relationship is not always a straightforward or pleasant connection. While religion can be beneficial to certain students, others may grow unduly reliant on spiritual activities in place of academic work, such as depending only on prayer during exams without sufficient study. Attending vigils, weekly fellowships, or evangelical outreach are examples of significant religious commitment that can sometimes interfere with study time, causing weariness or poor academic planning (Uecker, 2011).

Furthermore, religious identity may at times disagree with academic substance, particularly in disciplines like gender studies, philosophy, and evolutionary biology. When trying to reconcile faith-based teachings with secular viewpoints or scientific theories that are taught in the classroom, students may encounter internal conflict in these situations (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011).

In general, there are multiple aspects to the relationship between religion and academic life. By encouraging self-control, concentration, and optimism, it improves performance for certain

students. For others, it presents difficulties, particularly when academic balance is compromised by spiritual fervour. Therefore, it is difficult to categorise the impact of religion on academics as either positive or negative because it primarily depends on how the student balances the two facets of their lives.

2.3.1 Factors Influencing the Relationship between Religion and Academic Life.

Numerous elements influence the relationship between religion and academic life, which can either help or hurt the harmony between religious beliefs and intellectual endeavours. These elements might be institutional, cultural, sociological, or personal in character, and their impact frequently fluctuates based on the student's operating environment.

1. Personal Principles and Views

The degree to which a student incorporates religion into their academic life is greatly influenced by their own religious devotion. Strong convictions frequently influence moral behaviour, learning strategies, and decision-making. Students that have strong moral discipline beliefs, for example, might approach their studies more intently and diligently (Smith, 2018). On the other hand, a strict adherence to specific religious doctrines without being receptive to scholarly criticism can occasionally cause conflict between faith and academic research (Anderson, 2016).

2. Prioritisation and Time Management

Time and attention are needed for religious commitments like prayer sessions, fasting regimens, or faith-based service projects. It can be difficult for some students to balance their academic work and religious commitments. Research has demonstrated that efficient time management is essential

to preventing the neglect of one's spiritual or academic lives (Johnson & Taylor, 2017). Students who are good at planning frequently have an easier time juggling these two aspects of life.

3. The environment and institutional policies

An academic institution's religious stance may be an important consideration. The incorporation of spirituality into the curriculum is frequently promoted by faith-based universities, creating an atmosphere in which academics and religion are complementary (Hill & Williams, 2019). Secular universities, on the other hand, might strictly separate religious activities from academic pursuits, which could have an impact on how students practise their faith on campus.

4. Social Networks and Peer Influence

Peers have a big impact on how students balance their academics and religion. Joining a religious study group or student fellowship might inspire students to achieve academic success and offer moral support (Benson, 2020). Peer pressure from groups that have opposing views, however, can stifle academic seriousness or religious expression.

5. Expectations from Culture and Society

In certain societies, religion and education are closely related, and families expect their children to maintain their religious beliefs while achieving academic success. For instance, in Nigeria, religious practice is still frequently a noticeable aspect of student life. Juggling these demands can be both motivating and taxing (Adeyemi, 2015).

6. Mentorship and Resource Access

Students who have access to academically experienced religious mentors are more likely to successfully navigate the nexus between their academic and religious beliefs. Such mentorship

offers direction on professional behaviour, spiritual resilience, and ethical scholarship (Thomas, 2021).

In conclusion, a complex web of interconnected factors shapes the relationship between religion and academic life. By being aware of these impacts, students, teachers, and legislators may create an atmosphere in which scholarship and faith can support one another rather than conflict.

2.4 Religious Influence on Students' Behavior and Study Habits

Students' values, character, and method of learning are greatly influenced by their religion. Religious teachings frequently highlight virtues like diligence, empathy, discipline, honesty, and respect for authority (Ekeopara & Ekpenyong, 2016). Students who actively follow their faith might be more likely to live by these moral principles, which could have a positive impact on their conduct both inside and outside of the lecture hall. For example, religious beliefs that forbid dishonesty can lessen propensities for academic misconduct like plagiarism and cheating (Okon, 2014).

Interpersonal interactions on campus are additionally influenced by religion. In order to foster a positive learning environment, many religious groups encourage students to develop positive social relationships by promoting kindness, tolerance, and community support (Ononogbu, 2019). Strict religious observance, however, can occasionally result in exclusion or prejudice towards people of other religions, which can spark conflict and social division in academic communities (Adegbite, 2015).

Religion can help students develop good study habits by teaching them time management and discipline. Frequent engagement in religious practices like prayer, fasting, and studying sacred texts necessitates dedication and routine, which can be carried over into academic life by

encouraging concentration and consistency (Idowu, 2018). However, excessively rigorous religious obligations could conflict with schoolwork, leaving less time for study and relaxation (Mabawonku, 2017).

Additionally, students' motivation for learning might be influenced by their religious views. According to Omoregbe (2013), certain religious traditions, for instance, portray education as a divine mandate, inspiring pupils to strive for academic success as a way to honour or serve God. However, in rare instances, some interpretations of religious theology may minimise the significance of secular education, which could result in a lack of dedication or even a decision to stop pursuing academic endeavours (Agha, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE: RELIGION AND ACADEMIC LIFE IN UNIBEN

3.1 Overview of Religious Practices in University of Benin

A microcosm of Nigeria's rich and varied religious landscape, the University of Benin (UNIBEN) is more than just a centre for academic excellence. As soon as a student enters the main gate and observes the busy campus life, it is evident that religious expression is an essential part of the university's daily routine. Religious practices at UNIBEN are woven into the very fabric of campus life, impacting relationships, decision-making, leisure activities, and even how students approach their studies.

In the vast setting of UNIBEN, religion is expressed through a variety of societies, prayer groups, fellowships, and religious gatherings. Students publicly practise their faiths, including those of Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion (though in fewer numbers), and even newly forming religious groupings. There is barely a week on campus that goes by without running into an outreach program, prayer walk, worship night, or special religious lecture since these groups are so prevalent.

The diversity of fellowships is remarkable for Christian students. In addition to denominational fellowships like the Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF), Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), Deeper Life Campus Fellowship, Christian Fellowship International (CFI), and Winners Campus Fellowship, there are interdenominational organisations like the Scripture Union Campus Fellowship (SUCF), Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES), and Campus Crusade for Christ. Every group has its own culture, doctrinal focus, and worship style. Testimonies, Bible study sessions, modern gospel music, and periods of fervent prayer are all common features of

lively services. Christian students can be observed congregating in lecture halls for prayer sessions early in the morning or attending midweek services in the evenings.

With the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) serving as the main organisation, Muslim students are also well-represented at UNIBEN. With regular prayers, Qur'anic recitation sessions, Islamic lectures, and special events during Ramadan, the campus mosque acts as a spiritual haven for Muslim students. There are sizable crowds for Friday Jum'ah prayers, and many students are dressed traditionally. There is also a noticeable sense of camaraderie during the Eid celebrations.

In UNIBEN, religious activities extend beyond official assemblies. They also show up in interpersonal interactions and habits. Before an exam, students frequently pause to pray in silence, post inspirational religious sayings on social media, or have cordial religious discussions in dorms. In what may occasionally be a demanding academic setting, these traditions frequently offer moral guidance, emotional support, and a sense of belonging.

Interestingly, Nigeria's wider cultural and spiritual variety is reflected in the university's religious life as well. The diverse religious manifestations that students from various regions bring with them, such as Yoruba Pentecostal-style prayers, Hausa Islamic recitations, and Igbo Anglican choruses, create a vibrant spiritual mosaic. Students who attend each other's activities out of friendship or interest can occasionally promote interfaith understanding by learning about beliefs that differ from their own.

Nevertheless there are also unique dynamics that come with the existence of active religious activities. Although many students attest to the benefits of religion, including improved self-discipline, moral awareness, and emotional support, discussions concerning balance are also

present. Due to the conflict between their academic obligations and their religious obligations, some students find it difficult to manage their time. Others are subtly influenced by their peers to adopt the behaviours of a specific group.

The administration of the University of Benin has established places of worship, including chapels, mosques, and authorised fellowship halls, in recognition of the importance of religion in the lives of its students. However, there are also regulations designed to make sure that religious practices don't interfere with school scheduling. This fosters an atmosphere that values religious liberty while tempering it with accountability.

Fundamentally, UNIBEN's religious practices are more than just rituals; they also create communities, mould identities, and have a noticeable and subtle impact on campus culture. A student's faith is put to the test, reinforced, and redefined in the furnace of academic life at the university, which is more than just a place where they go to earn degrees. For many, UNIBEN serves as the platform for discovering their deeper spiritual beliefs in addition to their career path.

3.2 Students' Participation in Religious Activities.

At the University of Benin (UNIBEN), religious involvement is a deeply ingrained part of campus life and frequently shapes students' feeling of discipline, personal identity, and belonging in addition to their spiritual well-being. As soon as they are admitted into the school, students are exposed to a diverse range of religious expressions, from lively worship sessions that fill big auditoriums to tiny fellowship groups that meet under trees. Involvement in these activities extends beyond simply going to services; it is a reflection of a larger religious culture that shapes relationships, values, and even academic habits.

One of the first things many students do when they resume back to school is to join a campus religious group. While Muslim students may actively participate in the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Christian students may be drawn to campus fellowships such as the Catholic Students' Fellowship, Christian Fellowship International (CFI), Scripture Union Campus Fellowship (SUCF), or Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF). These groups plan frequent prayer gatherings, study sessions for the Bible or the Qur'an, outreach initiatives, and charity endeavours. Generally speaking, attendance is high, particularly in the first few weeks of the semester when freshmen are looking for a sense of belonging and purpose.

Frequently, participation extends beyond the weekly meetings. Within their religious organisations, a lot of students actively participate in leadership roles, choirs, staged ministries, ushering units, or academic assistance teams. They develop traits like time management, teamwork, and public speaking abilities as a result of this increased level of involvement, which also provides them a sense of accountability and purpose. A student working as a fellowship coordinator, for example, would dedicate their weekdays to planning events, coaching new members, and juggling these responsibilities with coursework and lectures.

Additionally, it's crucial to remember that during specific semester periods, involvement in religious activities can occasionally increase. More people, including non-members, tend to attend events like Christian crusades, Islamic Ramadan lectures, revival services, and prayer and fasting weeks. As the call to prayer, worship music, and sermon announcements become a regular part of the university's daily soundtrack, these occasions frequently infuse the entire campus with a spiritual mood.

Participation is not without its complications, though. While some students find moral direction, strength, and guidance in religious activities, others may find it difficult to juggle them with their academic obligations. It may be difficult for a student to get up for early morning lectures after participating in late-night vigils or Qur'anic recitation sessions. Some students, on the other hand, attest that their participation in religious activities actually helps them stay grounded and focused, which lessens the possibility that they will be sidetracked by unfavourable peer pressure.

3.3 Effect of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time

A normal day at the University of Benin is filled with a variety of events, including departmental meetings, academic lectures, and religious gatherings that attract students from all across the campus. Here, religious activities are not limited to Sundays or Fridays; they take place throughout the week, frequently in the early mornings, late evenings, or occasionally throughout the day. These events provide a sense of community and spiritual sustenance, but they can also interact with the academic schedule in ways that affect study habits and lecture attendance.

A lot of students' daily routines are intricately linked to their involvement in religious activities. A dedicated fellowship member may attend morning prayer meetings from 6:00 to 7:00 am, which may provide them with spiritual energy but occasionally leave them physically exhausted for the day's first lecture. Similar to this, extra tutorial sessions or study group meetings may coincide with midweek Bible studies or Qur'anic classes, which are often planned for the late afternoon or early evening. For students attempting to juggle both worlds, the dilemma of whether to attend a religious program or remain behind to revise lecture notes can lead to a never-ending tug-of-war.

It's interesting to note that the effect is not always bad. Being religious helps some students develop better time management and disciplinary skills. Some religious groups' disciplined

structure helps members to efficiently organise their days so that their spiritual commitments don't unduly interfere with their academic requirements. For instance, a student who is aware that they have a fellowship choir practice at 5:00 pm might be more deliberate about using their free time during the day for assignment and reading.

On the other hand, the opposite is also true. Some students overcommit to religious activities, particularly if they are in charge of these groups. Serving as a chorister, usher, or prayer coordinator may involve a lot of time commitment due to the numerous rehearsals, meetings, and additional spiritual retreats that are required. As these obligations mount, attendance at lectures may decline and individual study time may significantly decrease. This can eventually affect academic achievement, not because of a lack of knowledge but rather because there aren't enough hours to prepare consistently.

Another factor is peer pressure. Even during lectures, members in a close-knit religious community frequently encourage one another to attend events. Although spiritual development is typically the goal, the habit might normalise skipping lectures, particularly if group leaders are observed doing the same. On the other hand, it is strongly encouraged for members of religious organisations that publicly support academic commitment to place equal importance on their studies and their religious obligations.

3.3.1. Positive Effects of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time

For many students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), religious activities are not merely side events in their weekly schedule; they are life-shaping engagements that influence how they approach both their faith and academics. When viewed through a positive lens, these religious

commitments can actually serve as a powerful motivator for discipline, punctuality, and time management qualities essential for academic success.

For example, there is frequently a significant focus on punctuality and orderliness in various college fellowships. It is recommended that students consistently attend services on time, adhere to prayer meeting schedules, and arrive early for services. These behaviours may eventually affect their academic lives, improving their readiness for courses and causing them to be more on time for lectures. If a student learns to get up early for devotions in the morning, they are more inclined to do the same for early lectures.

Additionally, pupils frequently receive weekly routines that are arranged around religious activities. Members must prepare in advance for the set timetables of many fellowships and religious organisations, which include midweek services, choir practices, and evangelism outreach events. In order to ensure that neither academics nor faith are overlooked, this deliberate planning encourages students to structure their reading hours around both activities. This balance increases productivity for certain people. Making the most of little pauses between classes and fellowship sessions, they learn to appreciate every study session that is available.

Religious activities can, on a deeper level, encourage a sense of accountability and purpose that inspires academic success. Bible studies, sermons, Qur'anic teachings, and inspirational speeches during fellowship frequently emphasise virtues like diligence, honesty, and fortitude—qualities that directly promote improved study habits. It is more probable that a student who internalises these principles will avoid procrastination, concentrate on assignments, and adequately prepare for examinations and tests.

Furthermore, religious events offer moral and emotional support, which can tangentially increase study effectiveness. Students who confide in a caring religious community about their academic challenges receive support, guidance, and occasionally useful help—such as study sessions or tutorial groups led by fellowship members. Their ability to work together improves their time management skills and strengthens their dedication to their studies and faith.

3.3.2 Negative Effects of Religious Activities on Lecture Attendance and Study Time

Even though religion can help students with their personal discipline and moral guidance, it's vital to recognise that too much or inappropriate religious participation can have a detrimental effect on study time and lecture attendance. On a university as active as the University of Benin (UNIBEN), where numerous outreach initiatives, prayer groups, retreats, and religious fellowships are organised every week, some students are torn between the pull of their religious commitments and the responsibilities of their studies.

Conflicting schedules are among the most obvious adverse consequences. In addition to tutorials, group projects, or longer lecture hours, many fellowships provide weekly events on weekday evenings. For instance, a student may decide to skip class in order to go to an intercessory prayer gathering or a fellowship choir rehearsal. Missed explanations, a diminished comprehension of the course material, and subpar academic achievement can eventually arise from frequent absences from lectures.

Overcommitment to religious obligations is another issue. There are often more demands on the time of students who assume leadership positions, such as ushers, Bible study coordinators, fellowship presidents, or leaders of prayer teams. Managing the logistics of a fellowship, planning activities, and writing sermons or Bible studies might take up time that could be spent studying or

doing assignments. Academic strain might result from an imbalance, even though leadership develops talents.

Additionally, late-night religious activities can interfere with productive study habits. Even though vigils and lengthy prayer meetings are spiritually energising, they may leave students too exhausted to concentrate the next day. The weariness from these kinds of activities might make it difficult to focus in class, make you drowsy, and decrease your productivity when you're studying.

Furthermore, academic neglect can occasionally be inadvertently caused by peer pressure within religious communities. Statements such as "God will see you through, even if you didn't read much" subtly elevate spiritual pursuits above scholastic dedication in some communities. Although having faith is crucial, these kinds of attitudes can cause students to rely more on divine intervention than on their own academic efforts, which can result in them underpreparing for exams.

Last but not least, religious activities may inadvertently foster a sense of conflicted allegiance. Reduced involvement in religious programs may be interpreted by students as an indication of spiritual degeneration, and they may feel conflicted between their academic responsibilities and their loyalty to God. Anxiety and guilt brought on by this internal conflict can further impair focus and concentration in the classroom.

3.4 Impact of Religion on Academic Focus and Discipline

Religion, when genuinely practiced with balance, can significantly shape the academic experiences of students. At the University of Benin, many students find direction, resilience, and self-control through their faith. For them, religion is more than an identity; it functions as a compass that influences how they manage time, set priorities, and commit to their studies.

One major way religion affects academic focus is by giving students a sense of purpose. Those with strong religious convictions often view education not just as a requirement for earning a degree, but as part of a greater mission. This perspective motivates them to stay committed even amid campus distractions. For example, a Christian student may regard academic commitment as a responsibility before God, while a Muslim student might see learning as an act of worship, following the Prophet's teachings. Such beliefs often sustain their perseverance in the face of academic difficulties.

Religion also promotes discipline by instilling values such as honesty, diligence, and responsibility. Students who are guided by religious principles are less likely to engage in misconduct such as cheating in exams, plagiarism, or skipping lectures without cause. Their moral training serves as a personal guide, leading them to uphold integrity in academics and daily life. Some even aim for higher standards than the university demands, striving to excel both in knowledge and in character.

Still, the impact of religion on academics is not always without challenges. While many students draw energy and focus from their faith, some may experience conflicts when religious commitments overlap with schoolwork. Activities like long prayer sessions, fasting, or frequent services can sometimes cause fatigue or distraction if poorly managed. Yet, when balanced properly, these practices often enhance discipline and time management, helping students remain organized and focused.

Furthermore, religious grounding contributes to emotional stability and self-control. Faith-driven students are generally less inclined toward risky behaviors such as substance abuse, reckless

living, or negative peer pressure, all of which could harm their studies. Instead, they often channel their time into productive activities like personal reading, group discussions, and research.

3.5 Role of Prayer, Fasting, and Faith during Exams

At the University of Benin (UNIBEN), as in many other tertiary institutions across Nigeria, examination periods are often seen by students as times of both academic challenge and spiritual devotion. It is common to witness lecture halls transformed into prayer spaces on the eve of exams, or to find students praying earnestly under trees, in hostels, or in quiet corners of the campus. For many, preparing for an exam is considered incomplete without seeking divine assistance, reflecting how strongly religion is woven into academic life.

Prayer remains the most widely practiced spiritual exercise during examinations. Christian students frequently combine their prayers with scriptural affirmations such as “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13), while Muslim students may recite Qur’anic passages like Surah Al-Fatiha or Ayat al-Kursi (Qur’an 2:255) to ask for Allah’s guidance. Some prefer solitary prayers, while others join collective prayer sessions organized by campus fellowships or Islamic student associations. These practices generally serve two purposes: to invite divine wisdom and to manage the anxiety that often undermines performance (Okon, 2021).

Another spiritual discipline that becomes prominent during exams is fasting. Some Christian students choose to fast on the day of their papers, believing it heightens spiritual sensitivity and concentration. Muslim students, outside of the Ramadan season, also sometimes observe voluntary fasts as an expression of humility and reliance on Allah for success. Studies suggest that moderate fasting can improve alertness and encourage self-discipline (Eze & Bello, 2020). Still, extreme

fasting without proper nourishment can have negative consequences, including weakness, poor focus, or even fainting — experiences a few students have reported.

Faith itself, as a conviction that success ultimately comes from God, serves as a powerful motivator. For many students, it replaces fear of failure with confidence in divine support. Deeply religious students often sit for exams with a calm spirit, trusting that God or Allah will bless their hard work (Nwachukwu, 2019). At the same time, there is an ongoing tension between faith and effort, while some balance belief with diligent study, others may depend solely on prayer without sufficient academic preparation, which can lead to disappointing results (James, 2017).

Religious practices during exams also encourage a sense of unity and mutual support. For instance, Christian fellowships sometimes hold “Nights of Academic Breakthrough” prayer meetings before exam weeks, while Muslim student groups organize special Du’a sessions. These gatherings provide not only spiritual encouragement but also a community of peers facing similar academic challenges and hopes.

Beyond academics, prayer, fasting, and faith contribute significantly to students’ emotional and psychological well-being. With the pressure of multiple exams in a short timeframe, stress and exhaustion are common. Religious practices help students manage anxiety, build confidence, and sustain hope, all of which are crucial for academic success. In this way, the spiritual aspect of exam preparation at UNIBEN is not merely ritualistic; it serves as a coping strategy for navigating the intense demands of university life.

3.6 Excessive Religious Commitment and Academic Struggles.

While religion often provides students with moral direction, ethical values, and a sense of community, excessive devotion can sometimes interfere with academic progress. At the University

of Benin, a small number of students struggle at this point of tension, where religious involvement begins to overshadow their educational responsibilities. This challenge is rarely due to laziness or lack of ambition; rather, it occurs when unbalanced religious enthusiasm consumes time, energy, and focus that could otherwise be directed toward academics.

Some students immerse themselves so heavily in religious activities such as; frequent services, early morning prayers, all-night vigils, fasting programs, evangelism, committee meetings, rehearsals, and event planning, that their study hours and lecture attendance decline. For instance, a student who participates in a midweek overnight vigil may find it hard to stay alert during Thursday morning lectures due to exhaustion. If repeated, such habits can result in weak academic performance, incomplete assignments, or rushed last-minute study sessions (Adetunji & Olusola, 2019).

Another issue linked to excessive religious involvement is procrastination. Some students postpone coursework or group projects because a spiritual program seems more pressing or more important than academic obligations. While religious activities are valuable, neglecting schoolwork can negatively affect grades, particularly in a system where continuous assessment is vital.

There is also the risk of mental and emotional strain. Some students approach academics with an over-spiritualized mindset, assuming that prayer alone guarantees success and, in the process, neglecting adequate preparation. Instead of balancing prayer with disciplined study, they may rely too heavily on religious practices, unintentionally undermining their academic consistency. The concern here is not the practice of faith itself, but the imbalance that arises when faith is substituted for effort.

Peer influence within religious circles can further complicate matters. Students in close-knit fellowships often feel pressured to attend every program, fearing they might be judged as “less committed” if they choose to study instead. This sense of guilt or social expectation can make it difficult for them to prioritize academics.

Ultimately, balance is essential. Spiritual life and academic life do not need to be in conflict; with proper time management, students can excel in both. Those who learn to organize their schedules, prioritize their studies, and still take part in religious activities in moderation tend to succeed holistically. Therefore, it is important for both students and campus religious leaders to promote awareness about balance, time management, and the need for spiritual growth to complement, rather than compete with academic success.

3.7 Balancing Spiritual Life and Academic Success.

At the University of Benin (UNIBEN), where vibrant religious communities coexist with demanding academic schedules, students often face the challenge of balancing spiritual devotion with academic excellence. For many, faith is not simply a belief system but a guiding lifestyle that shapes behavior, instills discipline, and informs decision-making. Achieving a healthy balance between these two spheres, however, calls for intentional planning, self-discipline, and awareness.

Time management is one of the major hurdles in this process. Religious commitments such as prayer meetings, choir practice, evangelism, or fasting programs usually follow fixed schedules that sometimes overlap with lectures, study sessions, or assignment deadlines. Students who succeed in both areas often learn to carefully plan their days, creating space for academics as well as spiritual growth. Without such planning, one area is likely to suffer.

Some UNIBEN students have devised practical methods to sustain this balance. For instance, those who attend morning fellowship may use the quiet hours afterward for study or note revision. Likewise, students active in weekend religious programs often reserve Sunday evenings or Monday mornings to catch up academically. These examples show that balance is not about abandoning one pursuit for the other, but about learning how to prioritize effectively.

Emotional and mental discipline also plays a key role. During exam periods, academic pressure may tempt students to neglect prayer or scripture study, while intensive spiritual programs can sometimes drain the energy needed for learning. Those who succeed in balancing both recognize the importance of moderation, scaling back on certain religious activities during exams without completely neglecting their spiritual life, and ensuring that academics are not sacrificed to exhaustion from endless religious engagements.

Establishing boundaries is another essential step. Religious leaders and fellowship peers often encourage commitment, but students must sometimes decline certain activities when academic responsibilities are urgent. This is not a sign of weak faith, but rather a mature acknowledgment that academic success is part of their stewardship. Many students report that open communication with religious leaders about academic obligations helps reduce guilt and fosters greater understanding within their faith communities.

More importantly, sustainable balance often comes through integration rather than separation. Students who apply faith-based values directly to their studies tend to excel. By embracing principles such as diligence (Proverbs 22:29), excellence (Colossians 3:23), and integrity (Philippians 4:8), they view academics as an act of service to God. This perspective discourages procrastination, dishonesty, or half-hearted effort, transforming learning into a form of worship.

Scholars support this integration. Astin and Astin (2010) found that students who see education as a spiritual calling demonstrate greater motivation, resilience, and optimism about their future. Similarly, Gyampo et al. (2019) observed that balanced religious involvement fosters emotional stability and a strong sense of purpose, both of which enhance academic achievement.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

During the process of carrying out the research, the questionnaires will be distributed by the researcher to the students (respondents). The questionnaire will be collected immediately after they are filled. This is to ensure high level of response and return.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques (frequency distribution and simple percentage) were employed to analyze field data from questionnaires to assist in the interpretation of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 THE IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION OF EDUCATION

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table: Religion and Academic Performance (N = 30)

S/N	ITEMS	Yes	%	No	%
1	Do you believe that your religious beliefs positively influence your academic performance?	24	80%	6	20%
2	Has your participation in religious activities helped improve your academic focus?	21	70%	9	30%
3	Do you think that religious values contribute to your discipline and time management?	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
4	Have you ever experienced conflicts between your religious practices and academic responsibilities?	11	36.7%	19	63.3%
5	Do you feel that religious support from peers or community enhances your motivation to succeed academically?	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
6	Has your religious faith ever caused distractions from your academic studies?	10	33.3%	20	66.7%
7	Do religious teachings encourage you to strive for academic excellence?	26	86.7%	4	13.3%
8	Have religious events or commitments ever interfered with your class schedules or exams?	12	40%	18	60%
9	Do you believe that religion plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards education at the University of Benin?	23	76.7%	7	23.3%
10	Would you say that religious counseling or mentorship has helped you academically?	20	66.7%	10	33.3%
11	Do you use prayer or meditation to manage examination stress or anxiety?	24	80%	6	20%
12	Have religious leaders or mentors provided guidance that improved your study habits?	21	70%	9	30%
13	Do religious teachings discourage behaviours that hinder academic success, such as procrastination or cheating?	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
14	Has participation in religious groups increased your sense of belonging on campus, which in turn supports your studies?	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
15	Do you adjust your study schedule during major religious seasons to maintain academic performance?	19	63.3%	11	36.7%
16	Have religious obligations ever reduced the time you devote to group assignments or projects?	13	43.3%	17	56.7%
17	Do you believe religious values promote respect for lecturers and institutional rules that aid learning?	23	76.7%	7	23.3%
18	Have you missed classes or tutorials because of religious activities?	12	40%	18	60%
19	Do you think interfaith tolerance on campus contributes to a better learning environment?	26	86.7%	4	13.3%
20	Has exposure to religious ethical principles encouraged academic integrity in your coursework and examinations?	25	83.3%	5	16.7%

The survey results reveal that religion has a notable impact on students' academic experiences at the University of Benin. Majority of respondents affirmed that their religious beliefs positively influence academic performance (80%) and that participation in religious activities improves academic focus (70%). Similarly, most students agreed that religious values contribute to discipline and time management (83.3%), and that support from religious peers or community enhances academic motivation (73.3%). The findings also show that religious teachings strongly encourage academic excellence, with 86.7% of respondents affirming this. Furthermore, 76.7% believe religion plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward education, while 66.7% acknowledged that religious counselling or mentorship has supported their academic journey. On the other hand, religion was not generally viewed as a source of conflict or distraction. Only 36.7% reported conflicts between religious practices and academic responsibilities, and just 33.3% admitted that faith sometimes distracted them from studies. Likewise, 40% agreed that religious events interfered with class schedules or exams, suggesting that such challenges are not widespread, the study highlights that religion is largely seen as a positive influence, promoting focus, discipline, motivation, and academic success, while potential conflicts or distractions remain relatively minimal.

4.2 Theological and Ethical Implications

Religion shapes educational aims by grounding them in theological understandings of the human person, moral agency, and the common good. In many traditions, education is seen as formation of character and conscience, not only transmission of knowledge. This teleological view frames the classroom as a space for cultivating virtues such as honesty, temperance, compassion, and justice, and it positions teachers as moral exemplars who accompany learners toward ethical discernment. Contemporary religious education scholarship argues that engaging pupils with

theologies of neighbour-love and human dignity can deepen moral reasoning and respectful dialogue across difference.

Empirical work in higher education suggests that structured theological study can strengthen ethical sensitivity and professional integrity when it is taught with explicit links to practice. Courses that integrate normative frameworks, case-based reasoning, and reflective exercises are associated with improved ethical decision-making among undergraduates, particularly when instructors facilitate perspective-taking across religious and secular worldviews (Brock, 2022). At the same time, emerging debates around technology and ministry training demonstrate that ethical formation must continuously address new dilemmas, including privacy, bias, and authorship in the use of artificial intelligence in theological schools. A human-centred, virtue-oriented ethic is recommended to ensure that digital tools serve, rather than supplant, moral formation (Opene, 2024).

A second theological ethical implication concerns the curriculum. Where religion is present in publicly funded education, questions arise about neutrality, inclusion, and rights. Recent analyses propose that religious education can legitimately contribute to students' critical thinking and spiritual literacy when delivered in ways that neither privilege a single tradition nor exclude non-religious worldviews. This requires clear curricular goals, accurate representation of beliefs, and assessment of learning that values understanding and dialogue over assent (Jarmer, 2025). In contexts like Nigeria, where religious diversity is pronounced, scholars warn that fragmented religious curricula and uneven teacher preparation risk undermining aims of ethical formation and mutual respect. They recommend coherent standards and teacher development that equip educators

to navigate pluralism responsibly (Ezegwu & Okoye, 2024, as discussed in *Global Challenge and Challenges of Curriculum of Religious Education in Nigeria*, 2025).

4.3 Spiritual Implications

Education intersects with spirituality in at least two ways. First, learning environments can nurture meaning-making, purpose, and hope, which are central to students' flourishing. A large meta-analysis associates religion and spirituality, on average, with higher life satisfaction, partly through social support, coherent identity, and practices like gratitude and service that correlate with well-being (Yaden et al., 2022). This suggests that thoughtfully designed school climates, chaplaincy services, or values-based programmes may bolster student resilience and belonging, particularly during periods of stress.

Second, spiritual coping requires nuance. During crises, religious coping can comfort students, yet over-reliance on exclusively religious strategies without complementary skills may not reduce psychological symptoms. A recent meta-analysis during the early pandemic wave found that outcomes varied with the type of coping used, highlighting the need for balanced approaches that combine spiritual resources with evidence-based supports such as counselling and peer networks (Cheng et al., 2023). Qualitative and conceptual work on children's spirituality in schools adds that space for silence, wonder, and big questions can enrich pupils' inner life and empathy when framed inclusively and developmentally (Eaude, 2025).

Importantly, not all associations are uniformly positive. Some studies report small negative correlations between measures of religiosity and certain cognitive or intellectual test outcomes, though effects are modest and context-dependent. This line of work cautions educators to avoid

simplistic claims and to focus instead on pedagogies that preserve intellectual openness while supporting students' spiritual identities (Dürlinger et al., 2022).

4.4 Economic Implications

Religion influences education systems economically through school provision, human capital formation, and household decisions. Faith-based organisations operate extensive networks of schools and teacher-training institutes in many countries, often in underserved areas, thereby expanding access where state capacity is constrained. In northern Nigeria, analysts have long noted attempts to integrate secular subjects into religious schools to improve labour-market outcomes without eroding community trust, with mixed results depending on regulation, quality assurance, and teacher preparation (Antoninis, 2014). More recent policy studies continue to examine how regulatory frameworks and curriculum modernisation in Quranic and Islamic schools shape learning outcomes, with calls for stronger alignment to national standards and targeted support for teacher development (Dogar, 2025).

At the micro level, parents' religiosity and values can affect schooling choices, including preferences for faith-based schools, willingness to invest in girls' education, and expectations regarding discipline and moral education. When faith-integrated environments are well-resourced and academically ambitious, they may improve attendance, engagement, and in some cases achievement, though the magnitude of effects varies by context and selection dynamics. Recent African evidence reviews suggest that faith-integrated approaches can raise student engagement and pro-social behaviours that support learning, provided they adhere to national quality benchmarks and inclusive practices (IREJ, 2025). Conversely, fragmented curricula or under-qualified staff can depress outcomes and widen disparities, underscoring the importance of public

oversight and partnerships that balance autonomy with accountability (Global Challenge and Challenges of Curriculum of Religious Education in Nigeria, 2025).

Finally, there are economy-wide considerations. By shaping social norms such as trust and reciprocity, religious communities can influence social capital that supports schooling, fundraising, and volunteer tutoring. Studies link participation in congregational life to higher stocks of local social capital, which can mobilise resources for schools, though benefits depend on inclusivity and cross-group ties rather than in-group bonding alone (Ide, 2025). These dynamics carry fiscal implications where governments rely on faith-based providers as partners in delivering education at scale.

4.5 Social Implications

Religion is a powerful generator of social capital and norms that spill over into educational settings. Congregations often provide mentorship, after-school programmes, and networks that buffer students against isolation and risky behaviours. Evidence from public-health and social-science literatures links religious social capital to collective efficacy and support systems, although the quality of these ties matters for equitable benefits (Conley, 2022). When religious networks foster bridging rather than only bonding ties, they can enhance peer support across socio-economic divides and improve school–community relations.

At the same time, scholars caution that religion’s social influences are double-edged. Exclusivist norms or gendered expectations may limit participation for some learners, and clashes between religious calendars and school schedules can disrupt attendance if not carefully coordinated. Multilevel cross-national research indicates that civic and religious social capital can reduce antisocial attitudes among youth, but effects depend on institutional trust and inclusive

participation opportunities that avoid stigmatising out-groups (Impact of Civic and Religious Social Capital, 2025). Policy initiatives in Nigeria that centre peace education and dialogue seek to harness the positive, bridging aspects of religious identity to reduce school-related violence and foster reconciliation skills among learners (UNESCO, 2023).

The social implications also extend to mental health and belonging. Journalistic syntheses of recent studies, while not substitutes for peer-reviewed evidence, report associations between regular religious participation and lower loneliness, with potential benefits for adolescent well-being and persistence in school. These reports emphasise that inclusive youth engagement and service activities are key mediators of positive outcomes (Wall Street Journal, 2024, summarising multiple studies). Educators should therefore collaborate with community partners to design voluntary, non-coercive programmes that leverage social support while respecting pluralism.

4.6 Political Implications

Education policy sits at the intersection of religion, constitutional principles, and nation-building. Debates over curriculum content, school ownership, funding, and teachers' rights reflect broader political settlements about secularism, pluralism, and cultural identity. In diverse societies, political compromises often involve recognising faith-based providers while establishing public standards on curriculum, assessment, and child protection. Nigerian policy discussions around integrating religious schools illustrate both opportunities and tensions, including negotiations over language, civic education, gender equity, and accountability to national learning goals (Antoninis, 2014; Dogar, 2025).

Politically, religious education can either mitigate or exacerbate social fragmentation. Curriculum reforms that promote peace education, historical understanding, and dialogue across

traditions can strengthen democratic culture by equipping young people with skills for disagreement and cooperation. Nigeria's recent steps toward a national peace education curriculum signal an intent to embed such capacities system-wide, with support from international partners. Implementation quality, teacher training, and community buy-in will determine whether these reforms translate into classrooms that model deliberation and respect for rights (UNESCO, 2023).

Finally, political debates increasingly encompass the digital sphere. The adoption of educational technologies, including AI tools, raises ethical and regulatory questions for faith-based and public institutions alike, from data stewardship to content moderation. Scholars of theological education call for governance frameworks that align technological innovation with religious institutions' commitments to human dignity, transparency, and accountability, thereby situating digital transformation within democratic oversight rather than institutional exceptionalism (Opene, 2024).

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Evaluation

The evidence from the University of Benin indicates that religion operates as a multidimensional force in students' academic lives, shaping motivation, discipline, time use, and social integration. International and African studies align with this pattern. Large-scale analyses show that higher religiosity during adolescence predicts better grades and longer educational attainment, partly via structured routines and pro-social norms that translate into academic persistence at university level. In African contexts specifically, cross-country evidence documents substantial educational mobility across faith groups, suggesting that religious belonging intersects with broader institutional and social factors to influence schooling outcomes over time. Nature

Mechanisms identified in the literature help explain the UNIBEN pattern. First, religiosity is consistently associated with self-control and goal-directed behaviours, which are predictive of sustained study habits and reduced counterproductive behaviours; these self-regulatory advantages can culminate in higher academic performance. Second, spiritual well-being and meaning in life correlate with positive affect and psychological resources that buffer stress, indirectly supporting engagement and achievement. Recent reviews and mediation studies reinforce this pathway between spiritual well-being, psychological capital, and academic functioning. Third, religion often provides dense social networks that deliver encouragement, mentorship, and practical aid. Broader research on social support shows robust links with academic engagement, suggesting that faith communities can act as informal support systems that reinforce persistence and focus. At the same time, the evaluation must recognise boundaries and possible trade-offs. For a minority of students, intensive religious commitments can generate time conflicts with classes, group work, or

examinations, particularly when religious calendars overlap with assessment periods. While many studies emphasise net benefits, evidence also cautions that benefits depend on balance and institutional accommodation, the positive academic effects of religion are not automatic; they appear strongest when religious participation is accompanied by healthy routines, inclusive peer interactions, and constructive engagement with campus life, rather than insular or time-consuming practices. Finally, religious literacy and respectful dialogue across traditions matter in a religiously diverse campus like Uniben; recent work shows that higher religious literacy can shape how students' beliefs translate into daily behaviours without undermining academic goals, the Uniben case reflects a balanced picture found in contemporary scholarship: religion can enhance academic performance through self-regulation, meaning, and social support, provided students and institutions manage schedule pressures and ensure inclusive, academically oriented religious engagement.

5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes that religion at the University of Benin is neither a simple enhancer nor a simple inhibitor of academic performance. Rather, it functions as a contextual resource whose academic value depends on how students and the institution align religious commitments with scholarly routines. Contemporary evidence shows that religiosity is associated with higher grades and longer schooling partly via self-control, meaning-making, and supportive networks. At the same time, unmanaged scheduling conflicts and insular practices can erode these gains.

For Uniben, the practical implication is clear. When the university provides inclusive accommodations, fosters religious literacy, and partners with faith organisations to promote disciplined study habits, the positive channels of religion are amplified and the risks are contained.

In that environment, students can draw on their faith traditions to cultivate purpose, resilience, and community, translating those assets into sustained academic engagement and improved performance across faculties.

5.3 Recommendations

Institutional accommodation and academic timetabling: The University of Benin should continue to publish assessment timetables early and, where feasible, avoid avoidable clashes with major religious observances. A transparent, formal process for managing unavoidable conflicts can minimise stress and absenteeism without compromising academic standards. This aligns with evidence that structured environments amplify religiosity's benefits for persistence.

Integrate faith-sensitive student wellness: Counselling and wellness services can incorporate optional, pluralistic spiritual support or referrals for students who desire it. Studies suggest that spiritual well-being and faith-based supports can mitigate stress and anxiety, thereby protecting academic engagement.

Promote self-regulation skills within religious clubs: Chaplaincies and recognised faith associations should collaborate with academic skills units to embed workshops on time management, distributed practice, and exam preparation into their weekly activities, leveraging religiosity's association with self-control to produce tangible study routines.

Encourage inclusive, academically oriented religious life: The Student Affairs Division can require all registered faith-based organisations to adopt codes that emphasise respect, interfaith dialogue, and academic priority during peak assessment weeks. Evidence on social support shows that inclusive networks best translate into higher engagement and achievement.

Develop religious literacy seminars for all students: Short seminars or general-studies modules on religious literacy and respectful dialogue can reduce misunderstanding on a plural campus and help students harness their beliefs in ways that complement, rather than compete with, academic goals.

Data-informed monitoring: Faculties should periodically review correlations between participation in recognised faith associations and academic indicators such as class attendance and course completion, with due ethical safeguards. Comparative African research highlights that faith effects are context-sensitive; local data will enable tailored interventions.

Targeted support during high-pressure periods: Before and during examinations, provide extended library hours, quiet rooms, and optional, inclusive mindfulness or prayer spaces. Evidence links spiritual and social resources with better coping and engagement under stress.

References

- Adegbite, F. (2015). *Religious tolerance and social integration in Nigerian universities*. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 7(2), 45–55.
- Adeyemi, K. (2015). *The influence of religion and culture on students' academic behaviour in Nigerian higher education*. *African Educational Review*, 12(1), 88–102.
- Adetunji, A., & Olusola, O. (2019). Excessive religiosity and students' academic performance: Evidence from Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9(3), 101–115.
- Agha, A. (2010). *The impact of religious teachings on educational aspirations among African students*. *Journal of Comparative Religion*, 15(2), 133–150.
- Anderson, P. (2016). *Religion and intellectual inquiry: A conflict or complement?* *Journal of Educational Philosophy*, 8(4), 211–223.
- Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (2010). *Spirituality in higher education: Students' search for meaning and purpose*. Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. Jossey-Bass.
- Benson, M. (2020). Peer networks and academic motivation among faith-based student communities. *International Journal of Student Development*, 14(2), 67–79.
- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*. Longmans, Green.
- Durkheim, E. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Ekeopara, C., & Ekpenyong, O. (2016). *Religion and moral behaviour among students in tertiary institutions*. *African Journal of Philosophy and Ethics*, 6(2), 45–59.
- Eze, J., & Bello, K. (2020). Spiritual disciplines and cognitive outcomes: A study of fasting practices among university students. *Journal of Educational Psychology in Africa*, 5(1), 50–64.
- Gyampo, R., Owusu, E., & Tetteh, K. (2019). Religious balance and academic achievement in sub-Saharan African universities. *Higher Education Studies*, 9(4), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v9n4p15>
- Hill, R., & Williams, S. (2019). Faith-based universities and the integration of religious values in academic curricula. *Journal of Educational Management*, 11(3), 121–140.

- Idowu, A. (2018). The role of religious discipline in shaping students' study habits. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 13(2), 88–100.
- James, P. (2017). Prayer and preparation: Balancing faith and effort in higher education. *International Journal of Education and Religion*, 10(1), 44–59.
- Johnson, L., & Taylor, M. (2017). Time management strategies among religiously active students. *Journal of Student Success*, 8(1), 23–36.
- Mabawonku, F. (2017). *Religious commitments and academic engagement among undergraduates*. *African Journal of Education*, 14(2), 76–90.
- Nwachukwu, G. (2019). The psychology of faith and academic resilience. *Journal of Religious Studies and Education*, 7(2), 92–109.
- Okon, C. (2014). Religious ethics and academic misconduct: A sociological analysis. *Nigerian Journal of Social Research*, 12(3), 115–130.
- Okon, C. (2021). Prayer as a coping mechanism for exam stress among university students. *Journal of Psychology and Religion*, 9(1), 56–70.
- Omeregbe, J. (2013). *Religion and the pursuit of knowledge in African contexts*. Spectrum Books.
- Ononogbu, M. (2019). *The role of religious associations in promoting social cohesion in universities*. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 17(3), 45–60.
- Regnerus, M. (2003). Religion and positive adolescent outcomes: A review of research and theory. *Review of Religious Research*, 44(4), 394–413.
- Robbins, S. B., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., & Carlstrom, A. (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130(2), 261–288. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.130.2.261>
- Smith, C. (2018). *Religious commitment and student behaviour in academic settings*. *Sociology of Education*, 91(1), 34–49.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, E. (2021). Mentorship and faith-based support for academic success. *International Review of Education*, 67(4), 455–472.
- Uecker, J. (2011). Religion and academic engagement: The paradox of devout students. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 50(2), 368–386.

APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION FACULTY OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.

Dear Respondents,

The questionnaire was designed to find out The Role of Religion in Academic Performance: A Case Study of the University of Benin. Your co-operation in filling the questionnaire is highly solicited. Your response will be treated as strictly confidential

SECTION A

PERSONAL DATA

Gender: Male () Female ()

SECTION B

Please tick [V] in the appropriate box provided

Key: Yes or No

S/N	ITEMS	Yes	No
1	Do you believe that your religious beliefs positively influence your academic performance?		
2	Has your participation in religious activities helped improve your academic focus?		
3	Do you think that religious values contribute to your discipline and time management?		
4	Have you ever experienced conflicts between your religious practices and academic responsibilities?		
5	Do you feel that religious support from peers or community enhances your motivation to succeed academically?		
6	Has your religious faith ever caused distractions from your academic studies?		
7	Do religious teachings encourage you to strive for academic excellence?		
8	Have religious events or commitments ever interfered with your class schedules or exams?		
9	Do you believe that religion plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards education at the University of Benin?		

10	Would you say that religious counselling or mentorship has helped you academically?		
11	Do you use prayer or meditation to manage examination stress or anxiety?		
12	Have religious leaders or mentors provided guidance that improved your study habits?		
13	Do religious teachings discourage behaviours that hinder academic success, such as procrastination or cheating?		
14	Has participation in religious groups increased your sense of belonging on campus, which in turn supports your studies?		
15	Do you adjust your study schedule during major religious seasons to maintain academic performance?		
16	Have religious obligations ever reduced the time you devote to group assignments or projects?		
17	Do you believe religious values promote respect for lecturers and institutional rules that aid learning?		
18	Have you missed classes or tutorials because of religious activities?		
19	Do you think interfaith tolerance on campus contributes to a better learning environment?		
20	Has exposure to religious ethical principles encouraged academic integrity in your coursework and examinations?		