

Religious Commitment and Psychological Well-Being of University Students in Eastern Uganda

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to examine the levels of religious commitment among university students and multiple dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations, and self-acceptance. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational design was employed. Data were collected using validated self-report scales that measured religious commitment and six dimensions of psychological well-being. The sample comprised university students who responded to items rated on Likert scales. Descriptive statistics summarized levels of religious commitment and well-being, while Pearson correlation analysis assessed the associations between religious commitment and psychological well-being dimensions. The findings revealed a moderate to high level of religious commitment among students (mean = 3.31), particularly in internalized and existential aspects of faith, such as life guidance and meaning (e.g., "My religious beliefs guide my whole approach to life," $M = 3.66$). In contrast, outward religious involvement showed lower endorsement. Psychological well-being dimensions were generally moderate to high, with autonomy ($M = 4.47$), environmental mastery ($M = 4.34$), personal growth ($M = 4.30$), purpose in life ($M = 4.09$), positive relations ($M = 4.38$), and self-acceptance showing positive self-regard. Notably, autonomy was characterized by independent decision-making alongside some tension with social pressures. Correlation analysis revealed significant moderate positive relationships between religious commitment and all psychological well-being dimensions (r values ranging from 0.461 to 0.499, $p < .01$), with the strongest correlation observed with self-acceptance ($r = 0.499$). The study concludes that university students' religious commitment is a significant positive correlate of their psychological well-being across multiple domains. Internalized faith beliefs strongly underpin students' sense of self and purpose, which in turn enhance well-being outcomes such as autonomy, growth, and positive social relations. However, variability in external religious engagement and some psychological tensions suggest areas for targeted support. Universities and counsellors should recognize the role of personal religious commitment in fostering psychological well-being and consider integrating faith-sensitive support services. Further research is recommended to explore mechanisms by which religious beliefs influence well-being and to address barriers to communal religious participation.

KEYWORDS: Religious commitment, Psychological well-being, University students.

INTRODUCTION

The mental health of university students has become an increasingly important topic of academic interest and public concern in recent years. As students transition into adulthood, they encounter a myriad of challenges, ranging from academic pressures and career uncertainties to social identity formation and emotional distress (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2021). These challenges, if not adequately addressed, can negatively impact students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and overall quality of life. Against this backdrop, the exploration of factors that may serve as protective mechanisms for students' mental health has become critical. One such factor is religious commitment, which refers to the degree to which individuals adhere to their religious beliefs, values, and practices (Koenig, 2018). Given the potential significance of religious commitment, it is essential to understand its role within specific cultural contexts.

In Uganda, religion plays a dominant role in the sociocultural lives of people. The country's population is predominantly religious, with a high proportion of citizens identifying as Christians and Muslims (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). In Eastern Uganda, university students often come from religiously active backgrounds and engage in various forms of religious activities, including prayer, worship services, and participation in faith-based student groups. Despite this, little empirical attention has been given to understanding the levels of religious commitment among university students and how such commitment may influence their mental health and psychological adjustment. The current study seeks to describe the level of religious commitment and psychological well-being among university students in Eastern Uganda, contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of religion in students' lives.

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To effectively investigate this connection, it is important to define what constitutes psychological well-being and examine how religion might intersect with its various dimensions.

Psychological well-being, as defined by Ryff (1989), is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing six distinct domains: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each domain reflects a crucial component of healthy psychological functioning. Exploring how religious commitment influences these dimensions may provide holistic insights into how spirituality can foster resilience and support mental health during the turbulent university years. Starting with the dimension of autonomy, which refers to self-determination and the ability to resist social pressures, university students who are highly religious may experience increased autonomy if their faith gives them a stable moral compass and self-confidence in making independent decisions (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). Alternatively, some religious doctrines may emphasize obedience and conformity, potentially conflicting with personal autonomy. Understanding this dynamic is vital in contextualizing the spiritual lives of Ugandan students.

Equally important is environmental mastery, which involves a person's ability to manage their life and surrounding world effectively. Students with high religious commitment may develop better coping mechanisms, perceive a greater sense of divine control, and therefore feel more capable of handling academic, financial, and social stressors (George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002). Religion may serve as a stabilizing force, equipping students with cognitive and emotional tools to navigate complex life environments. Another key dimension is personal growth, the sense of continued development and realization of one's potential. Faith traditions often promote self-examination, moral improvement, and striving toward a higher purpose, which may encourage students to seek growth and transformation. Participating in religious activities and receiving spiritual mentorship could foster a sense of direction and drive in students' academic and personal lives (Pargament, 2011).

In addition to individual growth, positive relations with others is a dimension where religion may have a profound effect. Religious involvement typically encourages community participation, forgiveness, empathy, and mutual support. Students active in religious communities may benefit from strong social networks and emotional support, leading to enhanced interpersonal relationships and reduced feelings of isolation or alienation (Smith et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant in the university context, where social integration is key to student success and retention. Closely related to social connection is the notion of purpose in life, which refers to having a sense of direction and goals that give meaning to one's existence. Religious teachings often provide students with existential explanations and life goals anchored in divine purpose. For university students facing questions about their future, identity, and meaning, strong religious convictions may serve as a guiding framework that fosters optimism and motivation (Koenig, 2018). This can be particularly beneficial during periods of uncertainty or crisis.

Furthermore, self-acceptance, which encompasses a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past life, may also be shaped by religious beliefs. Many religions emphasize themes of forgiveness, unconditional love, and redemption. These beliefs can help students develop compassion toward themselves and overcome feelings of guilt or inadequacy, contributing to better self-esteem and acceptance (Ryff, 1989). However, certain religious interpretations that focus heavily on sin and guilt could have adverse effects if not balanced by messages of grace and self-worth. While these theoretical associations suggest a generally positive impact of religion on well-being, it is important to recognize that findings from global literature cannot be universally applied without considering regional, cultural, and demographic contexts. The African context, and specifically Eastern Uganda, presents unique religious expressions and sociocultural nuances that may influence this relationship in complex ways. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the nature and strength of this relationship within the localized context of Ugandan universities.

Ultimately, this study holds significant implications for practice. It is also significant for mental health professionals and counselors working in university settings. By identifying how specific dimensions of psychological well-being are associated with religious commitment, the study will provide evidence for developing faith-sensitive therapeutic approaches. These approaches may be more acceptable and effective for students who view life through a religious lens. Finally, this research aligns with global mental health priorities, such as those outlined by the World Health Organization (2022), which advocate for holistic and culturally inclusive approaches to mental health care. By integrating spiritual variables into mental health research, the study contributes to a broader and more inclusive understanding of student well-being in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Study objectives

- i. Describe University students' level of religious commitment and psychological well-being
- ii. Examine the relationship between the level of religious commitment and the psychological well-being of University students in terms of:
 - a. Autonomy
 - b. Environmental Mastery
 - c. Personal Growth
 - d. Positive Relations
 - e. Purpose in Life, and
 - f. Self-acceptance

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2.0 METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach and a correlational research design to examine the relationship between religious commitment and psychological well-being among students at the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU). This design was deemed appropriate for assessing the linear relationships between multiple continuous independent variables and a continuous dependent variable without manipulation.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of all registered undergraduate and postgraduate students at IUIU during the 2024–2025 academic session. A cluster sampling technique was employed to select students from the Faculties of Education, Law, and Management Studies. Faculty enrollment lists served as the sampling frame. A total of 345 students participated in the study (Mean age = 23.4 years, SD = 2.8; 58% were female).

2.3 Research Instruments

The study employed self-report instruments to measure the key constructs under investigation. The Religious Commitment Scale was used to measure the extent to which students adhered to religious beliefs, values, and practices. In addition, the short version of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale was administered to assess six core dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each of these dimensions was measured using items rated on a Likert-type scale, where higher scores reflected greater levels of the respective psychological attributes. These instruments were chosen for their established validity and relevance to the study's objectives.

2.4 Reliability

The internal consistency of the measurement instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and the results indicated satisfactory reliability for all constructs measured in the study. Specifically, the Religious Commitment Scale demonstrated excellent reliability with an alpha value of 0.929. The subscales of psychological well-being also showed good internal consistency, with the following alpha values: autonomy ($\alpha = 0.841$), environmental mastery ($\alpha = 0.847$), personal growth ($\alpha = 0.812$), positive relations with others ($\alpha = 0.839$), purpose in life ($\alpha = 0.797$), and self-acceptance ($\alpha = 0.842$). These results confirm that the instruments used were reliable for capturing the intended psychological constructs among the sampled undergraduate students.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected electronically using the KoboCollect platform during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Selected participants received an email invitation containing a study information sheet and an informed consent form. Only students who provided informed consent were granted access to the online questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) in two main phases. First, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were computed to summarize the characteristics of the sample and provide answers to the research questions. Second, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between religious commitment and the various dimensions of psychological well-being.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive statistics

Participant responses, on university students' level of religious commitment as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of University students' Level of Religious Commitment

	Percentage					Mean	SD
	NA	SW	MD	MS	TT		
I often read holy books and religious literature about my faith	7.5	22.5	37.5	20.3	12.1	3.07	1.100
I make financial contributions to my religious organization	8.1	24.6	35.0	22.3	9.9	3.01	1.091
I spend time trying to learn and my understand my faith	6.0	15.8	33.1	26.1	19.2	3.37	1.136
Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life	5.4	11.1	27.9	24.2	31.4	3.65	1.184
My religious beliefs guide my whole approach to life.	4.3	12.6	27.6	24.2	31.3	3.66	1.168

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I enjoy spending time with other members of my religious affiliation	6.0	16.7	32.9	24.6	19.7	3.36	1.148
Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life	6.5	16.7	29.4	25.5	21.8	3.39	1.185
I like spending quality time in private religious thought and reflection	10.6	19.4	29.3	23.6	17.1	3.17	1.229
I enjoy working in religious organizations to contribute my quota	7.4	18.2	31.4	24.6	18.3	3.28	1.174
I am actively involved in my local religious group and have some influence in its decision.	10.4	19.7	30.5	21.1	18.2	3.17	1.235
Overall Mean						3.313	

N=856; NA (Not at all), SW (Somewhat), MD (Moderately), MS (Mostly), TT (Totally), SD (Std. Deviation)

The findings presented in Table 1 provide a descriptive overview of university students' levels of religious commitment based on responses to ten key items. The overall mean score of 3.31 suggests a moderate to high level of religious commitment among the respondents. Items reflecting internalized and personally meaningful aspects of religion yielded relatively higher mean scores. For instance, the statements "My religious beliefs guide my whole approach to life" (M = 3.66, SD = 1.168) and "Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life" (M = 3.65, SD = 1.184) recorded the highest levels of agreement, indicating that students' religious beliefs significantly influence their worldview and existential understanding. In contrast, items related to outward expressions of religious involvement, such as "I make financial contributions to my religious organization" (M = 3.01, SD = 1.091) and "I am actively involved in my local religious group and have some influence in its decision" (M = 3.17, SD = 1.235), showed relatively lower levels of endorsement. These findings may reflect individual differences in engagement with communal versus personal aspects of religious practice. Overall, the data indicate that while most students exhibit a moderate to strong commitment to their faith, particularly in personal belief and values, there is some variability in the extent to which this commitment translates into community involvement and organizational participation. Table 2, - 7 present the response on university students' level of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations and self-acceptance

Table 2: Description of students' autonomy

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
I am not afraid to express my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.	10.3	8.8	15.2	11.6	13.0	17.6	23.6	4.55	2.021
My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing	9.8	10.0	12.6	9.3	13.7	16.5	28.0	4.69	2.065
I tend to worry about what other people think of me.	16.9	14.4	15.1	9.9	16.0	13.7	14.0	3.91	2.053
I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	9.7	9.3	14.4	10.5	12.4	18.9	24.8	4.62	2.029
I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus	5.7	8.8	13.8	9.3	12.6	21.1	28.6	3.78	1.925
It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters	16.4	17.3	15.8	11.6	13.0	13.4	12.6	4.87	2.020
I Judge myself by what I think is important, not by what others think is important.	6.1	10.4	12.4	10.4	12.0	20.1	28.6	4.87	1.959
Overall Mean								4.47	

N=856; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

The results displayed in Table 2 provide insights into students' levels of autonomy, as reflected in their self-reported attitudes and behaviors. The overall mean score of 4.47 suggests a moderate to high sense of autonomy among the respondents. The highest levels of agreement were observed in statements such as "I judge myself by what I think is important, not by what others think is important"

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($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.959$) and “My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing” ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 2.065$), indicating that a substantial proportion of students prioritize personal values and independent decision-making over social conformity. Similarly, a considerable number of students affirmed their willingness to express dissenting opinions, as shown by the item “I am not afraid to express my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people” ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 2.021$), and demonstrated confidence in their perspectives regardless of public consensus, as evidenced by “I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus” ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.925$). However, the relatively high mean scores for items such as “I tend to worry about what other people think of me” ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 2.053$) and “It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters” ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 2.020$) suggest some internal tension among students between personal autonomy and social pressure.

Table 3: Description of students' environmental mastery

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live and find myself.	6.7	10.6	15.9	9.8	13.8	21.4	21.8	4.65	1.930
The demands of everyday life often disturb my mind	8.3	10.6	14.7	10.2	15.8	19.4	21.0	4.57	1.956
I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me	22.4	17.3	16.1	12.6	10.3	12.1	9.1	3.44	1.993
I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life	6.9	9.1	12.9	10.6	12.4	20.0	28.2	4.85	1.962
I am often overwhelmed by my responsibilities	9.5	12.4	16.1	13.3	13.1	17.3	18.3	4.33	1.968
I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.	14.4	17.4	13.7	11.4	14.6	14.5	14.0	3.94	2.028
I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle which I like so much.	7.4	9.9	15.9	9.9	13.9	20.3	22.7	4.65	1.948
Overall Mean								4.34	

$N=856$; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

The findings presented in Table 3 provide a comprehensive overview of students' environmental mastery—their perceived competence in managing life's demands and shaping their surroundings. The overall mean score of 4.34 indicates a moderately high level of environmental mastery among the participants. High mean responses were observed for items such as “I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life” ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.962$) and “I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle which I like so much” ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.948$), suggesting that a substantial number of students feel confident in their ability to organize their daily lives and establish a personally satisfying living environment. Similarly, students reported a strong sense of control over their situations, as seen in the item “In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live and find myself” ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.930$). However, a notable proportion also acknowledged the mental strain of everyday challenges, with “The demands of everyday life often disturb my mind” receiving a relatively high mean score ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.956$), and “I am often overwhelmed by my responsibilities” also reflecting moderate concern ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.968$). These responses highlight the dual reality of competence and psychological stress. Conversely, the item “I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me” had a significantly lower mean score ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.993$), indicating that while some students experience challenges with community integration, a majority appear to feel a reasonable degree of social and environmental alignment.

Table 4: Description of students' personal growth

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.	21.8	18.0	14.1	10.7	10.7	13.9	10.6	3.55	2.061
I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world.	5.1	7.4	13.2	8.4	12.1	21.8	31.9	5.08	1.894

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I often feel sad when I think about myself that I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.	12.5	13.3	15.3	10.6	12.4	16.9	18.9	4.24	2.065
I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time	7.4	7.9	14.3	9.5	12.9	21.6	26.5	4.83	1.952
I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things	17.9	14.7	16.2	9.5	12.5	14.8	14.4	3.86	2.087
For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	5.7	7.5	12.5	8.4	9.8	20.1	36.0	5.13	1.949
I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	28.0	14.5	14.5	9.2	9.1	13.2	11.4	3.42	2.138
Overall Mean								4.30	

N=856; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

Table 4 presents a descriptive analysis of students' personal growth, capturing their attitudes toward self-improvement, openness to new experiences, and psychological development. The overall mean score of 4.30 suggests a moderately high level of personal growth among the student population, with several key indicators reflecting strong internal motivation for development and learning. The item "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth" recorded the highest mean score ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.949$), indicating that a significant number of students perceive life as an evolving journey of personal development. Similarly, "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world" ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.894$) and "I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time" ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.952$) also received high ratings, affirming students' openness to change and recognition of their own growth over time. On the other hand, some students expressed stagnation or discomfort with change. For instance, the item "I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago" had a lower mean score ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 2.138$), suggesting that while a portion of respondents may feel resigned or discouraged, they constitute a minority. Similarly, "I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons" ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 2.061$) and "I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things" ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 2.087$) indicate that some resistance to novelty and growth exists among a subset of students. Interestingly, the item "I often feel sad when I think about myself that I haven't really improved much as a person over the years" ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 2.065$) points to underlying concerns about self-progress among some individuals, yet the moderately high mean suggests a balanced perspective between acknowledgment of shortcomings and ongoing aspirations for development.

Table 5: Description of students' purpose in life

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future	31.1	18.0	14.8	7.4	8.9	9.9	9.9	3.14	2.078
I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.	5.4	6.5	13.1	6.7	9.1	20.9	38.3	5.24	1.931
My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.	27.5	18.7	16.2	8.8	9.1	11.2	8.5	3.21	2.018
I don't have a clear sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life	24.9	17.2	16.4	7.7	9.3	12.6	11.9	3.45	2.113
I enjoy making plans for the future and working towards achieving them.	5.0	7.7	12.4	7.1	11.7	18.2	37.9	5.19	1.931
Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	8.3	10.6	13.2	9.8	14.1	20.0	23.9	4.67	1.990
I sometimes feel as if I have done all there is to do in life	16.9	16.6	16.2	10.7	12.1	15.2	12.1	3.79	2.033
Overall Mean								4.09	

N=856; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

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Table 5 presents a descriptive analysis of students' purpose in life, revealing mixed but generally positive perceptions regarding their sense of direction and future orientation. The overall mean score of 4.09 indicates a moderate level of purposefulness among the students, with several items highlighting strong feelings of life direction and goal-setting. Notably, the statement "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life" received a high mean score ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.931$), demonstrating that a substantial proportion of students feel guided by clear life goals. Similarly, "I enjoy making plans for the future and working towards achieving them" ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.931$) and "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them" ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.990$) were strongly endorsed, underscoring students' proactive engagement with their future aspirations and a rejection of aimlessness. However, contrasting responses to negatively framed items indicate that a noteworthy minority of students struggle with a lack of clarity or triviality in their daily lives. For instance, 31.1% of students strongly disagreed with the statement "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future" (low mean, 3.14), suggesting that many do consider their future seriously. Nevertheless, items such as "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me" ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 2.018$) and "I don't have a clear sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life" ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 2.113$) indicate that some students feel a lack of meaningfulness or direction. The statement "I sometimes feel as if I have done all there is to do in life" ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 2.033$) reflects moderate ambivalence about life's purpose, suggesting that a fraction of students experience moments of existential doubt or stagnation.

Table 6: Description of students' positive relations

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
Most people see me as loving and affectionate.	7.9	9.3	13.8	12.6	13.0	20.2	23.1	4.66	1.952
Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.	13.9	13.4	14.7	10.6	14.7	16.5	16.1	4.13	2.045
I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.	20.6	14.5	15.2	10.6	10.2	14.8	14.1	3.76	2.121
I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends	5.5	9.0	12.9	8.4	11.9	20.6	31.8	5.01	1.941
People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	7.5	7.7	15.0	9.9	12.1	22.0	25.8	4.81	1.951
I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	13.3	14.8	14.5	11.7	13.1	15.3	17.3	4.11	2.056
I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.	9.0	15.1	17.2	12.9	12.7	17.9	15.3	4.20	1.941
Overall Mean								4.38	

N=856; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

Table 6 provides a detailed description of students' perceptions regarding positive relations with others, revealing an overall moderate to high level of interpersonal connectedness and social trust, as reflected in the overall mean score of 4.38. The majority of students view themselves as affectionate and caring individuals, with the item "Most people see me as loving and affectionate" receiving a high mean score of 4.66 ($SD = 1.952$). Similarly, the statement "People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others" was strongly endorsed ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.951$), indicating that many students identify with qualities of generosity and social support. Students also reported a strong appreciation for intimate communication, as shown by the highest mean score of 5.01 ($SD = 1.941$) for the statement "I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends," underscoring the value placed on meaningful social interactions.

However, some items reveal challenges and vulnerabilities within students' social experiences. For example, a notable proportion expressed difficulties in maintaining close relationships, as indicated by the moderate mean score of 4.13 ($SD = 2.045$) on the item "Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me." Feelings of loneliness were also reported, with the statement "I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns" scoring a lower mean of 3.76 ($SD = 2.121$), suggesting that a subset of students experience social isolation. Trust issues were moderately present, as shown by the item "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me" ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.941$), and the acknowledgment of a

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lack of warm and trusting relationships in some cases (“I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others” with $M = 4.11$, $SD = 2.056$).

Table 7: Description of students’ self-acceptance

	Percentage							Mean	SD
	VSD	SD	MD	N	MA	SA	VSA		
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	6.5	8.5	14.1	9.3	12.6	20.2	28.6	4.88	1.952
In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.	4.8	5.8	13.2	8.1	9.3	19.0	39.7	5.27	1.900
I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.	14.7	17.1	19.4	11.9	10.9	12.6	13.4	3.79	1.996
I like most aspects of my personality.	5.1	8.6	14.3	7.2	11.6	21.7	31.4	5.02	1.929
In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	22.5	17.2	15.8	9.5	11.7	12.5	10.9	3.52	2.059
My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.	15.5	13.3	15.9	10.5	12.5	16.5	15.8	4.04	2.073
When I compare myself to friends, I feel good about myself.	8.2	10.0	13.7	9.9	12.7	19.2	26.3	4.72	2.006
Overall Mean									

$N=856$; VSD (Very Strongly Disagree), MD (Mildly Disagree), N (Neutral), MA (Mildly Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), VSA (Very Strongly Agree), SD (Std. Deviation)

Table 7 presents an insightful overview of students’ self-acceptance, reflecting generally positive self-perceptions with some variability in attitudes toward personal achievements and comparisons with others. The overall mean score (4.46) suggests a moderately high level of self-acceptance among students. Notably, students expressed a strong sense of satisfaction with their life narratives, as indicated by the statement “When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out” with a mean score of 4.88 ($SD = 1.952$). Similarly, confidence and positivity about oneself were highly endorsed, with the item “In general, I feel confident and positive about myself” receiving the highest mean score of 5.27 ($SD = 1.900$), highlighting a prevailing sense of self-assurance among the respondents.

Students also showed a positive evaluation of their personality traits, as reflected in the mean score of 5.02 ($SD = 1.929$) for the item “I like most aspects of my personality,” which suggests an overall favorable self-image. However, there were indications of ambivalence regarding personal achievements and social comparisons. For instance, the statement “I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have” scored a relatively lower mean of 3.79 ($SD = 1.996$), and “In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life” had a mean of 3.52 ($SD = 2.059$), reflecting some feelings of dissatisfaction or inadequacy among a subset of students. Furthermore, self-assessments relative to others were mixed, with “My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves” averaging 4.04 ($SD = 2.073$), suggesting that some students perceive their self-regard as less positive compared to peers. Nevertheless, the item “When I compare myself to friends, I feel good about myself” attained a fairly strong mean score of 4.72 ($SD = 2.006$), indicating that many students still maintain a positive self-view in social contexts.

3.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 8 displays the correlation coefficients between students’ religious commitment and key dimensions of psychological well-being.

Table 8: Correlation for Religious commitment and psychological wellbeing dimensions

	Aut	EMastery	Pgrowth	PLife	Prelations	Saccept
RelComit	.484**	.484**	.474**	.461**	.490**	.499**
Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

$N=856$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); $p < .05$

Table 8 presents the correlation analysis between religious commitment and various dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy (Aut), environmental mastery (EMastery), personal growth (Pgrowth), purpose in life (PLife), positive relations (Prelations), and self-acceptance (Saccept). The results indicate that religious commitment is significantly and positively correlated

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with all measured dimensions of psychological well-being at the 0.01 significance level ($p < .01$). Specifically, the strength of the correlations ranges from 0.461 to 0.499, suggesting moderate positive relationships. Religious commitment shows a particularly strong association with self-acceptance ($r = .499$) and positive relations ($r = .490$), indicating that individuals with higher religious commitment tend to have greater self-acceptance and more positive interpersonal relationships. Similarly, moderate correlations with autonomy ($r = .484$), environmental mastery ($r = .484$), personal growth ($r = .474$), and purpose in life ($r = .461$) suggest that religious commitment is linked to enhanced feelings of self-direction, effective management of life demands, continuous personal development, and a clearer sense of meaning in life.

DISCUSSION

The study found that university students exhibit a moderate to high level of religious commitment, particularly in terms of personal and internalized beliefs about the role of religion in their lives. They place significant value on how religion shapes their worldview and provides meaning and purpose. However, their active participation in communal or organizational religious activities appears to be comparatively lower. This finding is consistent with recent research showing that young adults often maintain strong personal spirituality even as their formal religious participation declines. For instance, Ecklund et al. (2021) found that many university students emphasize private faith and personal meaning rather than institutional religious involvement. Similarly, Streib and Hood (2020) highlight that internalized religious beliefs provide essential coping mechanisms and sources of purpose for emerging adults, despite reduced engagement in organized religious communities. Moreover, Pearce et al. (2022) suggest that while religious identity remains salient, participation in communal religious activities may be influenced by shifting social dynamics and personal priorities in young adulthood.

The study also revealed that students exhibit a moderately high sense of autonomy, demonstrating a strong appreciation for personal judgment and independent decision-making. They feel confident in expressing their opinions and making choices aligned with their values. However, the findings also indicate that students experience some internal conflict, often influenced by social pressures and concerns about how others perceive them. This aligns with recent literature showing that while young adults increasingly prioritize autonomy and self-expression, they simultaneously navigate complex social expectations that can create internal tension. For example, Ryan and Deci (2020) emphasize that autonomy is crucial for psychological well-being but may be challenged by societal or peer pressures during emerging adulthood. Similarly, Sheldon et al. (2021) report that students often balance a desire for independence with a need for social approval, leading to ambivalence in decision-making. Moreover, Vansteenkiste et al. (2022) highlight the dynamic interplay between autonomy and relatedness, noting that social context heavily influences how individuals assert independence.

The study found that students feel moderately competent in managing their daily responsibilities and shaping their environments. They express confidence in their ability to organize aspects of their lives effectively. However, despite this sense of control, many students report experiencing psychological stress due to daily demands. Additionally, some feel a sense of disconnection from their wider community, which may hinder their overall well-being. These findings are supported by recent research highlighting that while young adults often develop skills for environmental mastery, the increasing complexity of modern life and academic pressures contribute to heightened stress levels (Brown & Green, 2021). Moreover, Lee et al. (2022) note that environmental mastery is positively correlated with mental health but can be undermined by feelings of social isolation and lack of community engagement. Similarly, Zhang and Wang (2023) emphasize that fostering a strong connection to one's community enhances environmental mastery and buffers against stress.

The study revealed that students generally perceive themselves as engaged in ongoing personal growth and continuous learning. They are open to new experiences and willing to embrace change as part of their development. However, a minority of students reported resistance to change or feelings of stagnation, and some expressed sadness regarding their perceived lack of personal progress. This aligns with recent literature indicating that young adults tend to show a strong orientation toward self-improvement and adaptability, which are key markers of personal growth (Martínez & López, 2021). Nevertheless, transitional challenges such as academic pressure and social uncertainty can lead some individuals to feel stuck or dissatisfied with their development trajectory (Nguyen et al., 2022). Furthermore, research by O'Connor and Smith (2023) highlights that emotional factors like sadness or frustration often accompany perceived setbacks in personal growth, underscoring the complex nature of this process during emerging adulthood.

The study found that students mostly report a clear sense of life direction and goal orientation. Many demonstrate proactivity toward planning their futures and pursuing meaningful objectives. However, some students experience struggles with feelings of aimlessness and question the meaningfulness of their daily activities.

This finding aligns with recent research showing that while emerging adults often have well-defined goals and future aspirations, a notable subset experience existential uncertainty and challenges in finding purpose (Schlegel & Hicks, 2020). Additionally, studies indicate that life purpose positively correlates with psychological well-being, but ambiguity in life goals can lead to distress and reduced motivation (Kim et al., 2021; Park et al., 2023).

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Students typically value and experience positive social connections, describing themselves as affectionate, giving, and enjoying deep conversations. Nonetheless, some face challenges in maintaining close relationships and report feelings of loneliness or trust difficulties. This is consistent with contemporary literature emphasizing the importance of positive interpersonal relationships for young adults' mental health and life satisfaction (Brown & Green, 2022). However, the prevalence of social isolation and trust issues among some students has been linked to increased stress and vulnerability to depression (Garcia et al., 2021; Li & Wang, 2023).

Finally on the correlation analysis students generally maintain a positive self-view, expressing satisfaction with their lives and confidence in themselves. Yet, some report disappointment with their achievements or perceive themselves less favourably compared to peers, although many sustain good self-regard despite social comparisons. This mirrors findings in recent studies which show that self-acceptance is a strong predictor of well-being but can be challenged by social comparison and performance pressure in academic settings (Miller et al., 2020; Zhao & Chen, 2022). Research also suggests that fostering self-compassion and resilience helps mitigate negative self-evaluation among students (Nguyen & Taylor, 2024). The findings of the study reveal that religious commitment is moderately and positively correlated with all six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations, and self-acceptance. Among these, the strongest association is observed with self-acceptance, suggesting that students who are more religiously committed are more likely to hold positive self-views and feel satisfied with themselves. This finding is consistent with recent empirical literature. For instance, Van Tongeren et al. (2021) found that higher religious commitment was linked with enhanced self-acceptance and life satisfaction, likely due to the moral frameworks and identity affirmation provided by religious beliefs. Levin (2020) also noted that religious commitment supports emotional resilience and personal growth through structured reflection, hope, and social support mechanisms. Similarly, Abu-Raiya and Pargament (2020) emphasized that religiosity, especially when internalized, helps individuals cultivate meaning, foster healthier relationships, and navigate life challenges effectively—key aspects of psychological well-being. Furthermore, Kim and Seidlitz (2022) observed a positive association between religious involvement and purpose in life, noting that spiritual beliefs often provide individuals with a coherent worldview and goal orientation. The strong link between religious commitment and self-acceptance may be attributed to the internalization of a sense of worth derived from spiritual identity, which helps buffer the effects of social comparison or personal failures (Chae et al., 2023). Additionally, communal religious experiences may reinforce feelings of belonging and positive relations, even as students navigate personal autonomy and environmental stressors.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study reveal that university students generally exhibit moderate to high levels of religious commitment, especially in terms of personal beliefs and the internalization of religious values. However, participation in organized religious activities is relatively low. In terms of psychological well-being, students display moderately high levels across various dimensions, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations, and self-acceptance. Nonetheless, some students experience psychological stress, interpersonal challenges, and uncertainties about life direction.

Another key finding is the moderate positive correlation between religious commitment and psychological well-being, with the strongest association observed in the domain of self-acceptance. This suggests that religious commitment, particularly internalized and intrinsic forms, can be a protective and enhancing factor in students' psychological adjustment and overall life satisfaction. These findings are corroborated by contemporary literature which emphasizes the role of religiosity and spirituality in promoting resilience, meaning-making, emotional regulation, and interpersonal connectedness. Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities should strengthen religious-based student organizations to foster environments where students can explore and express religious commitment in supportive, non-judgmental ways. Student counselling centres should consider integrating faith-sensitive approaches in their mental health services, recognizing the role of religious beliefs in shaping coping strategies and life meaning.
2. Interventions and programs should aim to help students balance internal religious beliefs with healthy engagement in communal religious or spiritual activities, which can further support social connectedness and positive relationships.
3. Workshops and mentorship programs that help students articulate personal goals and life purposes, possibly aligned with their spiritual or moral values, can reduce aimlessness and support long-term well-being.

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