

**ANALYZING THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
DECLINE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE OF STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY.**

A CASE STUDY MAKERERE UNIVERSITY.

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RM23M05/022

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO BISHOP TUCKER
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UNIVERSITY.**

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I, Samuel Kisakye, registration number RM23M05/022, declare that this research is my original work, drawn from my personal understanding of the subject matter under research: "The spiritual decline of students at the university: A case study of Makerere University", as well as the readings of other scholars writing on the subject, and my own views and articles. I also confirm that it has never been submitted for examination at any institution of learning or university.

Samuel

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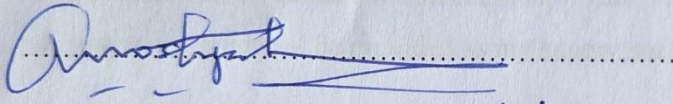
DATE: 9/07/2026

APPROVAL

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research, conducted by Kisakye Samuel, was conducted under my supervision and guidance and was submitted to Uganda Christian University with my approval.

Signature.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amos Turyahabwe', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

REV. CAN. AMOS TURYAHABWE

SUPERVISOR

DATE: 11th July, 2026

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My gratitude goes to God who has given me the strength to undertake this research. Sincere thanks goes to my family members: My beloved wife Daphine for the support and encouragement to this study.

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All glory be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Abstract

This study investigates the spiritual decline among undergraduate students at Makerere University, Kampala Uganda which is one of Africa's oldest and most prestigious Universities. Against the backdrop that Uganda is a deeply religious society, where 85% of youth identify with faith traditions, this research addresses a growing concern over diminishing spiritual engagement among university students, with chaplaincy reports indicating a 40% drop in spiritual participation by students' third year. These were previously spiritually active students. Employing a mixed methods research design, the study engaged 83 participants comprising undergraduate students (n=70), lecturers (n=5), and Christian/spiritual leaders (n=8) through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Thematic analysis of the data revealed seven principal factors contributing to spiritual decline: academic pressure (53% of students), technological distraction (49% of students; 88% of spiritual leaders), social influence and peer pressure, exposure to secular worldviews (100% of spiritual leaders), university freedom and self-discipline challenges (75% of spiritual leaders), perceived institutional support limitations, and reduced spiritual commitment. Notably, while 86% of students affirmed spirituality's emotional and moral value, only 29% integrated it into their academic decisions, suggesting a compartmentalization of faith.

Lecturers and spiritual leaders looked at spirituality holistically as a formative force influencing character, academic performance, mental health, and leadership capacity. The study identified structured mentorship and discipleship programs as the most strongly endorsed intervention (84% of students; 100% of lecturers and spiritual leaders), including offering more flexible spiritual activities, encouraging the university and faith organizations to work together, incorporating ethics and values into academic courses, and making smart use of digital platforms to reach students where they already are.

These findings contribute to the emerging conversation about spirituality in African universities, while challenging the view that spiritual formation is outside the university's responsibility. The study offers practical recommendations: structured mentorship opportunities, flexible programming of spiritual activities, stronger university and faith groups partnerships, and thoughtful use of digital tools. Future research should follow students over time to understand how their spiritual engagement changes, and should extend this work to other universities to see whether these findings hold beyond the Makerere context.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

At universities, students are expected to become better intellectually, socially and spiritually. However, in recent years, there has been a growing concern over the apparent decline in spiritual engagement among university students which differs from Uganda's deeply religious societal fabric, where 85% of youth identify with faith traditions (UBOS, 2023). This study, therefore, seeks to understand the why while focusing on Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Africa. While the academic environment has continued to grow, there is clear evidence that suggests a weakening of spiritual life among many students.

1.2 Background to the Study.

Makerere University was founded in 1922, and like many other global academic institutions, has historically played a key role in shaping the intellectual lives of students. As the students stay at the University, they also have an opportunity to grow their spiritual lives through the various spiritual engagements hosted by the catholic and Anglican chapels, the university mosque and the Christian student fellowships. These spaces have historically anchored students offering avenues for worship, prayer, and moral support. Despite all this, many students at this level of academia struggle to maintain consistent spiritual discipline once they enter the university. According to the University chaplaincy report of 2022 spiritual participation drops by 40% by students' third year.

There are several factors that may lead to this. These may include the newfound freedom of university life which often leads to experimentation and a shift in personal values, or it could be the academic pressures, social and peer distractions, financial hardships, peer, and exposure to secular worldviews to mention but a few. While it is also true that some students experience spiritual growth at university, a significant number face a decline, which is often marked by reduced participation in religious activities, weakened personal devotion, and moral ambiguity. This research, therefore, seeks to investigate the factors contributing to this spiritual decline, assess its impact, and suggest ways through which spiritual life can be revitalized among students putting focus on Makerere University.

1.3 Problem Statement

Even with the availability of very many opportunities for spiritual engagement and support at Makerere University such as fellowships and prayer groups, a growing number of students show signs

of spiritual decline. Many of these joined the university in the 1st years with very strong spiritual foundations either from home or secondary schools having belong to Christian groups such as Scripture union and yet now report a decline in prayer life, church attendance, moral standards, and participation in fellowship activities. Thus, this spiritual decline of students, if left unaddressed, may lead to many other issues which include depression, loss of moral compass, and social disintegration. This study therefore, seeks to understand the reasons behind this disturbing trend and propose sustainable solutions to address it within the context of Makerere University.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the causes and consequences of the spiritual decline among students at Makerere University and to propose practical strategies for revitalizing spiritual engagement among them.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. The study intended to identify specific factors that contributed to the decline in spiritual life among Makerere University students.
2. To also assess the perceptions of students, University staff, and religious leaders regarding the role and importance of spirituality in university life.
3. And lastly, to evaluate potential strategies that could be implemented to enhance spiritual engagement among students at Makerere University.

1.6 Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided the study;

1. What primary factors did the study identify to be contributing to the decline in spiritual life among Makerere University students?
2. What are the students, University staff, and religious leaders' perceptions regarding the role and importance of spirituality in the Student's University life?
3. What practical initiatives did the study come up with that can be implemented by the University to enhance spiritual engagement of students at Makerere University?

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was carried out at Makerere University which is one of the oldest and largest Public University in Uganda and it attracts students across the country from a wide range of cultural, social and religious backgrounds and the main focus was on undergraduate students. Due to its diversity,

the university provides an appropriate environment for examining the spiritual experiences and challenges faced by young adults in a modern academic setting in institutions of higher education.

The also among the respondents the study included selected lecturers and Christian leaders who were assumed to be very close with students playing important roles such as guiding students, offering mentorship, and shaping the spiritual atmosphere on campus. Their insights were presumed valuable in understanding how the university environment influenced students' spiritual life, either positively or negatively.

Therefore, the study focused on the decline in spiritual engagement among students while it sought to identify the factors contributing to this decline and explore possible strategies that could help strengthen and restore spiritual life in higher institutions.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This research was very timely and relevant especially in light of the increasing secularization of university life. Its findings sought to be of benefit to students, university administrators, religious leaders, and policymakers by offering insights into the spiritual challenges faced by students. The findings also contributed to the development of informed programs and policies that could promote holistic student development of students in Uganda and Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the existing literature related to the spiritual life of university students. The chapter explored the impact of the university environment on the spirituality of students and identified some of the factors that contributed to spiritual decline of the student's life. In this chapter I explored strategies that have been proposed or implemented to promote spiritual development of students while at the university and special emphasis was given to studies and examples relevant to African university contexts.

2.2 Factors Contributing to Spiritual Decline among Students

The decline in spirituality among students cannot be attributed to a single issue but by a web of interrelated pressures that converge in the university setting.

2.2.1 Academic Pressures

Due to the demanding academic programs in fields such as Medicine, Engineering and Law, these leave students with little or no time for prayer, fellowship, or religious study. Kasozi (2019, p. 77) noted that the intensity of course works and examinations often forced students to prioritize grades over their spiritual routines. For many, the trade-off felt necessary, but over time, it weakened their spiritual discipline.

2.2.2 Exposure to Secular Worldviews

Institutions of higher education like Makerere university naturally exposes students to new ideas that often distracts students. However, courses such as Philosophy and Sociology, encourage critical thinking about religion and culture. Katongole (2020, pp. 18-19) argued that while the exposure was intellectually valuable, it in most times left students' conservative backgrounds unsettled and created confusion about their faith. Therefore, the process can be constructive for some but destabilizing for others who may lack mentorship.

2.2.3 Social Pressures and the Urban Allure

At the university, there are all sorts of social pressures that have influenced the students through peer influence. Many of the students in their first-year, it presents such new freedoms and attractions as nightlife, relationships, and material pursuits. Nabatte (2021, p. 55) observed that students often felt

pressured to fit in,” even at the expense of their religious values and without strong accountability structures, the spiritual commitment of the students easily diminished.

2.2.4 Technological Distractions

Platforms such as Tiktok and Instagram, have in recent times become such as distraction in the student’s daily routines offering simple and quick entertainment presenting a complete layer of challenge that has fostered a culture of comparison and distraction. Nabatte (2021) highlighted that the students media habits competed directly with practices such as prayer and fellowship with these building blocks around the spiritual life of these students.

2.3 The Role and effect of Spirituality in Student Lives.

Spirituality plays a role in shaping the values, identities, and emotional well- being of students. In higher education institutions, it influences moral reasoning, compassion, and how students relate to others (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 6). In the African context, and specifically Uganda its influence is even more pronounced because faith and communal values are tightly woven into daily life (Mugambi, 2010, p. 42).

Uganda has over 85% of young people identifying with a religious tradition (UBOS, 2023), and this therefore means that faith remains a defining element of society. At Makerere University, religious heritage is visible in the vibrant fellowships that gather students across denominations and these include such as the Makerere University Main Christian Union, the Kigezi Anglican Youth Misioners (KAYM), and the Catholic Students Association to mention but a few and these fellowships provide a sense of continuity for students transitioning from rural, faith-saturated communities.

However, the shift to an urban university environment that comes with these students joining the higher institutions, is not as seamless as students often transition into a whole new way of life leaving behind their family networks, previous high school fellowships and local church communities that had previously guided their spiritual growth. The students in such environments, often encounter a diversity of worldviews, secular ideologies, and peer groups that do not always share their Christian values and as a result, while many begin university life actively involved in faith groups or with strong Christian foundations, their faith and participation often decline over time.

2.4 Practical Initiatives to Enhance Spiritual Engagement of Students at Makerere University

Majority of scholars agree that spiritual engagement tends to decline among students when join the University unless there are deliberate and supportive spiritual efforts to engage them (Balzer & Reed, 2012; Forster-Smith, 2017). Balzer & Reed’s Building a Culture of Faith (2012) clearly investigated

how Christian higher education institutions could intentionally shape environments in which student spirituality flourishes, particularly through curriculum, and culture. Similarly, *College & University Chaplaincy in the 21st Century* edited by Lucy A. Forster-Smith (2017) offered insights into how chaplaincy practices in secular or multi-faith higher education settings adapt to students' spiritual needs and changing rhythms of life.

2.4.1. University Engagement and the Institutional Culture

Balzer & Reed (2012) argued that university cultures are often undervalued in their influence on spiritual formation of the students and thus, they propose that when universities integrate faith and learning (for example, by discussing ethical implications in lectures, modeling personal spiritual practices, or inviting reflective questions in coursework), they would significantly contribute to sustained spiritual engagement.

They further argued that universities that succeed in forming faith among students often did so by embedding spiritual formation into every aspect of university life including chapel services, quiet days, service learning, faculty training, and interdisciplinary dialogue (Balzer & Reed, 2012).

2.4.2. Mentorship, Peer Groups, and Small Communities

In their book, *Cultivating Mentors & Sharing Wisdom in Christian Higher Education* (Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale & Christopher Devers, 2022) emphasized structured mentoring relationships where pairing of senior students or staff with juniors for spiritual and personal guidance is done to help them adjust to university life, facilitating accountability, and personal growth.

Additionally, Lange & Wittek, 2023 in their book, *Faculty Peer Group Mentoring in Higher Education*, highlighted that organized small groups fostered belonging and shared reflection, which are powerful in countering isolation or decline in religious practice.

2.4.3. Chaplaincy, Counseling, and Spiritual Care

Swift, Cobb & Todd, 2016 provide a robust treatment of chaplaincy in public institutions including universities, emphasizing that chaplains (or spiritual caregivers) serve not just as crisis responders but as ongoing presence, offering care, listening, rites, worship, and cultural mediation. Additionally, Cadge, Stroud, Palmer, Fitchett, Haythorn, Clevenger, (2020) highlight how chaplaincy education programs build capacity for spiritual caregivers, especially in pluralist settings.

2.4.4. Integrating Spiritual Formation into Curriculum and Co-Curricular Activities

Floding & Davis (2022) in their book *Experience: Spiritual Formation in Theological Field Education*

they provide 25 practices used by theological schools to promote spiritual growth and although they focused on theological education, many practices were adaptable to secular faculties (reflection, journaling, field placements, service learning, etc.).

In addition, ethics or character education courses that require reflection, case studies, or service work can help students see the relevance of faith to professional life. Literature suggests that curricula that remain silent on values make students more likely to compartmentalize faith rather than integrate it (Balzer & Reed, 2012).

2.4.5. Digital and Contextual Ministry

While fewer books focus directly on digital discipleship, a handbook of Chaplaincy Studies (Swift et al., 2016) and *College & University Chaplaincy in the 21st Century* (Forster-Smith, 2017) discuss how chaplains and campus ministries adapt to changing culture through the use of digital platforms, online groups, social media for spiritual content. Thus, emphasizing the importance of creating online devotional resources, video testimonies, podcast series, and virtual fellowships which meet students where they are (given busy schedules and inconsistent presence on campus).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in the study. The chapter was organized in different sections including the research design, study population, Sampling Procedures and ways Sample size was determined, the research instruments that were used to collect data, data analysis techniques that were employed as well as ethical considerations and limitations of the methodology.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a mixed method research approach. This was intended to explore the actual experiences, perceptions, and spiritual practices of students within the context of Makerere University.

The mixed-methods approach provided the advantage of both quantitative and qualitative methods and employing structured questionnaires, quantitative methods were used to determine the number and/or percentage of students', Christian leaders and/or lecturers' actual experiences, perceptions, and spiritual practices of students and qualitative methods were used to get a deeper understanding within the context of Makerere University. Thus, the study employed closed and opened questions to clearly get an understanding of the factors responsible for the Decline of Spiritual Life of Students at Makerere University.

This method also enabled statistical analysis and the generalization of results. Thus, questions probing the students', Christian leaders and lecturers' perceptions in regard to the spiritual life of the students were also derived into and their views were noted done.

Researchers like Creswell and Creswell argue that, through mixed-methods research, triangulation of data sources is an important step in increasing validity and richness in insights. Therefore, mixed methods are then a useful method to cover both measurable outcomes and contextual realities of the causes and consequences of the spiritual decline among students at Makerere University.

3.3 Study Population

The study involved individuals who have a direct connection to student spiritual life at Makerere University. These included undergraduate students from different years of study and programs, lecturers who regularly interacted with students, and Christian leaders who support students in spiritual matters. These groups were considered because they either experience the changes in spiritual life first-hand or play a role in guiding students spiritually.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study used purposive sampling and the participants were selected based on their relevance to the topic and their ability to provide meaningful insight. The researcher intended to engage about 90 participants in total. The estimated distribution was;

- 70 undergraduate students
- 12 lecturers
- 8 Christian leaders involved in ministry to students

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews and the participants were the freedom to express themselves while still keeping the conversation aligned to the research questions. Each interview took about 20 to 30 minutes. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet and convenient location. However, there cases were face-to-face interactions where not possible for example with some spiritual/ Christian leaders thus, the interviews were held on telephone.

3.6 Research Instruments

The main tool for data collection was an interview guide. The guide consisted of closed and open-ended questions that sought to understand; the factors influencing the spiritual decline in lives of students, perceptions on the role and importance of Spirituality on the life of a Makerere university student and the possible ways to strengthen spiritual life among students.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data was thematically analyzed. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher read through the responses several times to identify key ideas and repeated issues. The ideas from the findings were then organized into themes to identify patterns and under the students,

lecturers and religious/Christian leaders' perceptions, unique perspectives and recommendations.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study followed standard ethical guidelines ensured that participation was voluntary and all respondents consented before they were interviewed. Participants were also informed of their free will to withdraw at any point if they wished and also personal identifying information like names were not noted anywhere; instead the study employed codes. And lastly, all the information that was collected was kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

3.9 Limitations of the Methodology

The study encountered a number of limitations that affected the outcomes and these included; Scheduling of interviews with lecturers and Christian leaders was such a hurdle due to their different professional commitments. Therefore, the researcher employed flexible scheduling options such as making appointments, virtual interviews (phone calls), as well as allowed the participants to suggest convenient times and locations.

Secondly, due to the sensitivity of the one spiritual life, getting information from the students about their lives was hard, which potentially affected the depth and honesty of their responses. However, to overcome this, the students were comforted and guaranteed confidentiality also neutral and respectful questions were asked and lastly, the researcher ensured participants understood that there are no right or wrong answers.

Lastly, the sample size, though adequate for thematic analysis, it may not fully represent the experience of the entire student population at Makerere University. Therefore, to address this limitation, the study intentionally included participants from diverse academic programs, study years to capture a broad range of perspectives data saturation principles guided the final sample size to improve the credibility of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

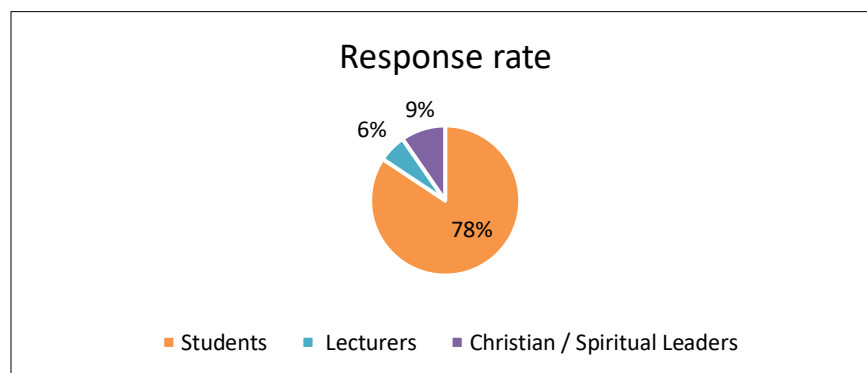
4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings highlighting the various factors which are responsible for the decline of Spiritual Life of Students at the University. This chapter is organized into 5 main sections; the response rate and the demographic statistics, followed by the study findings in line with each objective. Each thematic section integrates both the quantitative frequency data derived from the structured questionnaire items and the qualitative insights generated through open-ended interview questions. And where the participants' responses are cited verbatim, these were presented as direct quotations to preserve the authenticity of the data. And lastly, the tables were used to facilitate comparison of responses across the 3 participant groups of the students, lecturers and Christian/spiritual leaders.

4.1. Response Rate

Of the 90 participants targeted, a total of 83 completed the questionnaires, bringing the response rate to 92.2%. All the targeted undergraduate students (70) and Christian/Spiritual Leaders (8) each yielded a 100% response rate within their respective groups. However, among the lecturers, only 5 of the 12 targeted were available for interview, producing a response rate of 41.7% for the sub-group.

While this represents a limitation with respect to the lecturer stratum, which is further discussed in section 5.4, the principle of data saturation was applied and the depth of insights were gathered from the 5 participating lecturers was sufficient to generate meaningful thematic patterns.



Note: Lecturers' low response rate is attributed to scheduling constraints during the academic calendar. Data saturation was confirmed for the lecturer stratum upon completion of the fifth interview.

4.2. Demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the students, Lecturers and Christian/Religious Leaders are presented in Table 1. The Student respondents comprised of 11 faculties and schools across Makerere University and this breadth the disciplinary perspectives. Students from the College of Education and External Studies (CEES) contributed the highest proportion (19%), followed by those from the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT, 17%) and the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES, 13%). And when it came to year of study, second and third-year students were the majority (39% and 37% respectively), while first-year students accounted for only 10% and fourth-year students for were at 14%. This distribution across the academic years was significant, as the highest number of the participants (students in second and third year) had experienced at least one full academic year at the university, a period which was sufficient for patterns of spiritual engagement and disengagement to become observable.

Of the 5 lecturer respondents, the majority (60%) were affiliated with the College of Humanities and social Sciences (CHUSS). Professional experience of the lecturers, was found that 60% of the lecturers had worked with students for 6 to 10 years, with the remaining 40% having over a decade of engagement.

The 8 Christian/spiritual leaders were from 7 active campus ministries and fellowships, including St. Francis Chapel at Makerere University, Worship Harvest Fellowship, Garage Fellowship, Manifest Fellowship, CEDAT Christian Fellowship, COBAMs Fellowship Family and the Makerere University Christian Union. Majority (88%) had served students for 1 to 5 years. And in terms of religious affiliation, Anglican (38%) and Born-again Christians (38%) leaders were equally represented.

For student religious affiliation, Anglicans comprised of the largest group (39%), followed by Catholics (30%), Born-again Christians (17%), Seventh-day Adventists (10%) and Orthodox Christians (4%).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Respondents by Group

Variable	Category	Students (n=70)	Lecturers (n=5)	Christian / Spiritual Leaders (n=8)
Faculty/School	CAES	9(13%)		
	CEDAT	12(17%)	1(20%)	
	CEES	13(19%)	1(20%)	
	CHS	5(7%)		
	CHUSS	3(4%)	3(60%)	
	CoBAM	8(11%)		
	CoCIS	5(9%)		
	CoNAS	6(9%)		
	CoVAB	3(4%)		
	Law	5(7%)		
	SSP	1(1%)		
Year of study	1	7(10%)		
	2	27 (39%)		
	3	26 37%)		
	4	10 (14%)		
Years working with students	1-5			7(88%)
	6-10		3 (60%)	1(13%)
	11-15		1 (20%)	
	15+		1 (20%)	
Religious/Denominational Affiliation	Anglican	27(39%)		3(38%)
	Born again			3(38%)
	Christian	12(17%)		
	Catholic	21(30%)		
	Orthodox	3(4%)		
	Seventh Day Advent	7(10%)		

4.3 Factors Contributing to Decline in Spiritual Life

The first objective of the study sought to identify the specific factors contributing to the decline in spiritual life among students at Makerere University. Responses to structured questionnaire items and open-ended interview questions were analyzed thematically and 7 principal factors emerged from the data and Table 2 presents the frequency of affirmative responses ('Yes') across the 3 participant groups.

Table 2: Thematic factors Contributing to Spiritual decline by respondent group

Thematic Factor	Indicator	Students (Yes) (%)	Lecturers (Yes) (%)	Spiritual Leaders (Yes) (%)
Reduced Spiritual Commitment	Self-reported decline in participation and commitment	23(33%)	2(40%)	3(38%)
Academic Pressure	Difficulty balancing academic workload and spiritual activities	37(53%)	1(20%)	-
Social Influence	Peer pressure and social prioritisation over spiritual life	19(27%)	2(40%)	-
Technological Distraction	Digital media as a distraction from prayer and fellowship	34(49%)	-	7(88%)
Perceived Institutional Support	Awareness of campus spiritual support systems	41(59%)	-	-
Exposure to Secular Worldviews	Encounter with new ideas and belief systems	-	2(40%)	8(100%)
Freedom and Self-Discipline	University independence undermining spiritual discipline	-	-	6(75%)

Note. ‘___’ denotes that the item was not administered to the participant group. Percentages are calculated against the total number of respondents within each group.

4.3.1 Academic Pressure

53% (n=37) of students justified that due to academic pressure, it was difficult to find a balance between schoolwork and spiritual activities. One student articulated this conflict as follows:

"If church programs are made in line with the school programs, otherwise the workload is too much. It's only when you are committed that you can balance." **Student respondent**

The rather low proportion of lecturers attributing student spiritual decline to academic pressure (20%) may reflect underestimated tendencies of the burden of academic calendar from the students' perspective. There was no spiritual leader who pointed academic pressure as a primary factor affecting students spiritual lives.

4.3.2 Technological Distraction

49% (n=34) of the students reported that technology distracts them from prayer and fellowship and by an overwhelming majority of the spiritual leaders (88%, n=7) as students described media, particularly platforms such Tiktok and Instagram, actively competing with time for devotion to prayer and fellowship. One student noted:

"Technology distracts from prayer and fellowship and weakens consistency in spiritual life." **Student respondent**

It should be that the high level of concern expressed by spiritual leaders regarding Technological distractions are based on their pastoral observations which is verified by the student self-reports.

4.3.3 Social Influence and Peer Pressure

27% (n=19) of the students and 40% (n=2) of the lecturers highlighted social Influence as a factor contributing to reduced spiritual engagement. Students described the social life at the University such as the nightlife, social media engagement and romantic relationships compete with one's participation in spiritual activities. One participant observed;

"Missions and fellowships are affected by flexibility in the way they are organized, and students are easily distracted by the other activities." **Student respondent**

Lecturers correspondingly noted that students tend to prioritize social activities, especially those associated with their peers and urban campus life.

4.3.4 Exposure to Secular Worldviews

All the 8 (100%, n=8) spiritual leaders and 40% (n=2) of the lecturers identified exposure to secular worldviews and new intellectual frameworks as factors that challenge students established faith. One spiritual leader observed;

“Exposure to different ideas and lifestyles challenges students’ faith and weakens spiritual discipline” **Spiritual leader respondent**

4.3.5 University Freedom and Self-Discipline

75% (n=6) of the spiritual leaders attributed spiritual decline to the freedom associated with university life and the corresponding challenges of self-regulation in the absence of parents or and community oversight.

4.3.6 Perceived Institutional Support

59% (n=41) of the students reported feeling supported by campus Christian organizations. This high level of perceived support justifies the 33% of the students who reported a decline in their own spiritual commitment which brings about a disconnect between the presence of the institutional support structures and their effective utilization by the students.

4.4 Perceptions on Role and Importance of Spirituality

The second objective of the study sought to assess the perceptions of students, lecturers and Christian/ religious leaders regarding the decline in spiritual life among students at Makerere University. Table 3 presents the frequency of the respondents across the 3 participant groups organized thematically.

Table 3. Perceptions on the role and importance of spirituality

Thematic Factor	Indicator	Students (Yes) (%)	Lecturers (Yes) (%)	Spiritual Leaders (Yes) (%)
Emotional & Moral Well-being	Spirituality supports emotional and moral well- being	60(86%)	-	-

Academic Influence	Spirituality influences academic decisions/performance	20(29%)	3(60%)	-
Character Development	Spirituality shapes character and moral behavior	-	5(100%)	-
Mental & Emotional Health	Spirituality supports mental and emotional well-being	-	4(80%)	-
Risk Behavior	Weak spirituality increases risky behavior	-	-	8(100%)
Coping Mechanism	Spirituality helps cope with academic/emotional pressure	-	-	8(100%)
Leadership & Responsibility	Strong spirituality enhances leadership and responsibility	-	-	8(100%)

Note. ‘—’ denotes that the item was not administered to the participant group. Percentages are calculated against the total number of respondents within each group.

4.4.1 Students' Perceptions

86% (n=60) of the students affirm that spirituality is good for their emotional and moral well-being. One student expressed this perception as follows;

“Spirituality helps me stay focused, gives me peace of mind, and guides my decisions.” **Student respondent**

However, only 29% of students (n=20) indicated that their spiritual beliefs have a direct impact on their academic decisions/ performance. This however, indicates that the students tend to compartmentalize their spiritual lives other than integrating faith into all aspects of their University experience.

4.4.2 Lecturers' Perceptions

100% of the lecturers (n=5), agreed that spirituality plays a significant role in shaping students' characters and moral conduct, 80% (n=4) asserted it maintains students' mental and emotional welfare and majority 60% (n=3) greatly associated students' academic performance to spirituality. One lecturer articulated that;

“Spirituality plays a key role in shaping students' character and moral behavior in both academic and social life.” **Lecturer respondent**

4.4.3 Spiritual Leaders' Perceptions

100% (n=8) of the spiritual leaders agreed on the three interconnected propositions that weak spirituality increased engagement in risky behavior, spirituality is an effective mechanism for academic and emotional stressors and that it also enhanced leadership capacity and a sense of responsibility. One spiritual leader noted that;

“Strong spirituality helps students cope with academic pressure and builds leadership and responsibility.” **Spiritual leader respondent**

4.5 Strategies to Enhance Spiritual Engagement

The third objective of the study sought to evaluate potential strategies for enhancing spiritual engagement among the students at Makerere University. Table 4 presents the frequency of the respondents across the 3 participant groups organized thematically.

Table 4. Strategies to Enhance Spiritual Engagement

Thematic Factor	Indicator	Students Yes (%)	Lecturers Yes (%)	Spiritual Leaders Yes (%)
Mentorship & Discipleship	Mentorship programs improve spiritual growth	59(84%)	5(100%)	8(100%)
Institutional Support	University-supported spiritual programs strengthen student faith	50(71%)	-	-
Flexibility of Programs	Flexible spiritual activities increase student participation	42(60%)	-	-
University–Faith Collaboration	Collaboration between university and spiritual organizations	-	5(100%)	6(75%)
Curriculum Integration	Integration of value-based discussions in academic settings	-	5(100%)	-

Digital Engagement	Use of digital tools to enhance spiritual engagement	-	-	5(63%)
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Note. ‘__’ denotes that the item was not administered to the participant group. Percentages are calculated against the total number of respondents within each group.

4.5.1 Mentorship and Discipleship Programmes

Mentorship and discipleship emerged as the most strongly endorsed strategy across 3 participant groups. 84% (n=59) of the students, 100% (n=5) of the lecturers and 100% (n=8) of the Christian/spiritual leaders acknowledged that structured mentorship Programmes contributed positively to students’ spiritual development. Some students who quoted that;

“Intimate Bible study communities give students freedom to share complex inquiries and encourage one another in their spiritual formation.” **Student respondent I**

“Mentorship at all levels, spiritual and academic, helps synergize student development.”
Student respondent II

4.5.2 Institutional Support and Programme Flexibility

71% (n=50) of the students agreed that supportive programs of the university improved their faith. One student stated;

“The university can recognize spirituality’s contribution to academic achievement and create organized support mechanisms.” **Student respondent**

60% (n=42) of the students agreed that flexible spiritual activities increased ones’ participation. One student observed;

“Flexibility with how fellowships are conducted is crucial because rigid schedules discourage students from attending spiritual activities.” **Student respondent**

4.5.3 University–Faith Collaboration and Curriculum Integration

100% (n=5) of the lecturers and 75% (n=6) of the Christian/spiritual leaders endorsed formal collaboration between universities and faith organizations as an effective strategy for sustaining the spiritual lives of the students. One lecturer articulated that;

“The co-operation between University and spiritually oriented organizations boosts the

faith of a student and the spiritual growth of its progress.” Lecturer respondent

A spiritual leader also added that;

“For students, organizing crusades, missions, and retreats makes them feel a part of something.” Christian/spiritual leader respondent

100% (n=5) lecturers agreed that integrating of value-based discussions into the academic curriculum will bridge the perceived separation between faith and intellectual lives of the students.

One lecturer stated;

“Integrating spiritual disciplines with curriculum in an academic setting will allow students to relate faith in college and life decisions.” Lecturer respondent

4.5.4 Digital Engagement

63%(n=5) of the spiritual leaders supported the importance of digital tools as a platform for spiritual engagement. A Christian leader noted;

“Online resources, podcasts and social media groups geared to spiritual growth can reach students effectively” Christian/spiritual leader respondent

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the study findings reported in chapter four, while integrating the mixed-methods data with existing theoretical frameworks to come up with an interpretive insight. The discussion is organized in alignment to the 3 research objectives guiding the study which include; the factors contributing to the decline in spiritual life among students, students', lecturers', and spiritual leaders' perceptions of the role and importance of spirituality and the strategies most likely to enhance spiritual engagement. The chapter will also address the methodological limitations, implications, recommendations and conclusion.

5.1 Factors Contributing to Decline in Spiritual Life

Addressing the first research objective, which was to identify the specific factors contributing to the decline in spiritual life among students of Makerere University and findings reveal that a group of interrelated factors were responsible. Consistent with recent studies on student spirituality in higher education (Mayhew et al., 2014), when combined, the different perspectives provide more holistic insight that spiritual decline is multidimensional and is driven by structural, behavioral and environmental factors and no single factor accounts for observed decline and spirituality of the students reflects an interaction between personal, institutional, and social characteristics.

5.1.1 Academic Pressure as a structural Barrier

The most frequent factor cited by the students was the difficulty of balancing academic pressures with spiritual activities at 53%. These findings are consistent a body of evidence suggesting that in competitive academic environments, spiritual practices tend to be displaced by activities that are perceived as more directly instrumental to career (Astin and Lindholm, 2011). Thus, as academic workloads intensify, say in professionally oriented Programmes such as Medicine, Engineering and Law, the time and intellectual energy available for prayer, fellowship and personal devotion tend to diminish.

It is however, significant that academic pressure was not observed as such a pressing factor as cited by a relatively smaller proportion of lecturers (20%). This therefore suggests that those who do not directly experience the student academic workload may underestimate its role as barrier to spiritual engagement.

5.1.2 Technological Distraction

The identification of technology as a major distraction by nearly half of the students (49%) and an overwhelming majority of spiritual leaders (88%) constitutes it as one of the most convergent finding. The findings suggest that the issue is not merely a one-time kind of displacement, but the hours spent on digital platforms that might otherwise be devoted to spiritual activities and the often-unconscious interruption of concentration that digital media produce, undermines the sustained reflective engagement that are required by spiritual practices such as prayer and scripture reading (Ninan, 2021).

This however, contradicts findings from section 4.5.4, where 63% of the Christian/spiritual leaders endorsed digital tools as a platform for spiritual formation. This is resolved when technology is understood not as inherently harmful or beneficial, but as a medium whose spiritual impact is determined by intentionality and design.

5.1.3 Social Influence and Exposure to Secular Worldviews

Social influence and peer influence were identified by (27%) of students, 40% lecturers as factors affecting spiritual decline. While (100%) of the spiritual leaders identified exposure to secular worldviews as a challenge to students' spiritual lives.

The university is by nature, a site of intellectual pluralism and identity exploration where course in philosophy, social theory and natural sciences routinely introduce to aspects that challenge epistemological foundations of religious belief. Therefore for students who come from Christian foundation and secondary schools as well rural communities, this exposure can be destabilizing, especially in absence of mentors equipped to facilitate constructive engagement with intellectual challenges to faith (Covarrubias, 2024).

5.1.4 University Freedom, Self-Discipline, and the Limits of Institutional Support

The observation by 75% of spiritual leaders that University freedom negatively affects students' spiritual discipline is consistent with developmental theories that characterize emerging adulthood a period of delicate autonomy and experimentation stage in structures that previously governed behavior like family oversight, school rules and community expectations are withdrawn (Arnett, 2008). And in the absence of those external structures, students are expected to exercise self-regulation to sustain spiritual practices, a capacity that is unevenly distributed and develops over time.

Additionally, a particularly instructive finding in the same regard is the co-existence of high perceived institutional support at 59% by the students with a self-reported decline in spiritual commitment (33%). This contradiction simply means that a mere existence of campus spiritual Programmes is insufficient to sustain engagement. As noted by Small & Bowman, 2012 and Galenka et al., 2024, institutional religious programming tends to fail when it is not tailored to students' schedules, interests and lived realities. Therefore, availability without rational depths does not directly translate into meaningful engagement, thus, the solution is not provision of ore religious Programmes but designing them in a way that responds to actual conditions of students' lives.

5.2 Perceptions on Role and Importance of Spirituality

Addressing the second research objective, which was to assess the perceptions of students, lecturers and Christian/ spiritual leaders in regard to role and importance of spirituality, the findings reveal significant agreement that spirituality is valuable despite the divergencies on how it perceived and experienced across the three participant groups.

5.2.1 Students: Spirituality as personal Resource

The findings that 86% of the students agreed with the emotional and moral value of spirituality, while 29% believed it directly influenced their academic decisions and relationships, suggests that students tend to operate with what Cherry, Denton and Flory describe as a 'back-pocket' conception of faith, in which many students tend to treat spirituality as a personal and flexible resources- something they draw on for meaning and comfort, but which is not always consistently integrated int their daily decisions and practices (Denton et al., 2020).

This isolated relationship with spirituality does not necessarily indicate shallow faith but rather reflects a developmental process in which students are navigating the transition from a socially embedded and community-sustained faith to internally-owned and self-governed spiritual identity. Therefore, the critical question to the Christian leaders is whether the students are supported through this transition or left to navigate it on their own without proper guidance.

5.2.2 Lecturers: Spirituality as Formative Influence

Among the lecturers, 80% recognized spirituality as a contributing factor to mental health and 60% associated it with stronger academic performance and their perspective aligns perfectly with Gamage et al., (2021) research findings who found that educators such as lecturers operate from a holistic conception of student development that embodies their moral, spiritual and relational dimensions alongside academic success and tend to be more attentive to a full range of student needs and more effective in sporting students success. Therefore, this makes Institutes such Makerere University not only fit for academic learning but also about the formation of responsible, grounded young men and women.

5.2.3 Spiritual Leaders: Spirituality as Behavioral and Developmental foundation

All the Spiritual/Christian leaders (100%) agreed with spirituality's role as a coping mechanism and that its contribution to leadership and responsibility of the students, strongly reflects a conceptualization of spirituality as deeply behavioral and developmental. Therefore, to spiritual/Christian leaders, spirituality is more than a theory but its perceived as an observable force that shapes students' behavior, decision making even in difficult situations.

This observation is consistent with a study by Shek (2012) in spirituality who describes it as a positive youth development construct, demonstrating spiritual engagement being associated with measurable outcomes in self-regulation, prosocial behavior and resilience.

Thus, this divergence between students' emotionally-oriented understanding of spirituality and the conceptions held by lecturers and Christian/spiritual leaders has a direct implication on communication and programme design. As Siddiqi et al., (2017) puts it, the misalignment between how students and lecturers and Christian leaders understand spirituality could ultimately result into program failure to resonate with the students' self-identified needs. Therefore, to bridge this gap there is need for dialogue and co-design processes that involves students as well as honor their perspectives.

5.3 Strategies to Enhance Spiritual Engagement

Addressing the third research objective, which aimed at assessing potential strategies for enhancing spiritual engagement among students and the findings revealed a strong and consistent consensus across the three participant groups with several key interventions suggested as discussed below.

5.3.1 Mentorship and Discipleship as the cornerstone strategy

84% of the students, all the Lecturers and religious/Christian leaders (100%) endorsed structured mentorship and discipleship as the most important practical insight of the study and suggested that mentorship is not merely one useful intervention among many, but the rational infrastructure within which other strategies are most likely to be effective.

The study findings were consistent with Reed's (2021) study on spiritual mentoring during emerging adulthood, who highlighted that purposeful, sustained mentoring relationships are by far very effective in supporting spiritual formation during the students university years by combining accountability, belonging and practical wisdom in ways that institutional Programmes cannot replicate. The findings of this study reinforce this and that students did not simply affirm mentorship in the abstract but went ahead and articulated what makes it really work.

5.3.2 Programme flexibility and Institutional Responsiveness

60% of students identified programme flexibility as a critical enabler of spiritual engagement, and 71% endorsed university-supported spiritual Programmes, suggesting the students expectations and desire for institutional engagement in their spiritual development, but on such terms that accommodate their realities which could be achieved through flexible programme design.

Ashton and Elliott (2007) in their study demonstrate that student engagement, either spiritual or not, is substantially enhanced when Programmes are designed around students' lives rather than the institution's convenience. Thus, this implies offering multiple sessions, shorter Programme formats that do not require sustained blocks of uninterrupted time and also integration of spiritual activities with existing academic and social structures such as study groups and student associations.

5.3.3 University-Faith Collaboration and Curriculum Integration

100% of lecturers and 75% of the spiritual leaders endorsed formal collaboration between universities and faith organizations and this thus, means that neither institution can adequately address students' spiritual needs in isolation. Basing on the university's structural authority, physical space, financial resources and academic credibility and faith organizations' pastoral expertise, relational depth and spiritual formation competence forming a partnership between the two institutions would leverage the complementary strengths of each.

As per Chan & Chen, (2022) study, holistic education literature and models of faith learning integration in Christian higher education, spirituality should inform and be informed by academic inquiry rather than being quarantined in extracurricular religious activities. Therefore, when ethical reflections, learnings and attention to meaning and purpose are embodied into the courses offered, students are more likely to experience their faith as relevant to their intellectual formation rather than an isolated practice.

5.3.4 Strategic Use of Digital platforms

63% of the spiritual leaders endorsed digital tools as a platform for spiritual formation and also identified technology as a major distraction to the students by consuming their attention in spiritually unproductive ways, underscoring the importance of intentionality on digital engagement.

Hussain and Wang (2024) in their study found that digital platforms such as WhatsApp are increasingly effective modes for spiritual engagement when they are characterized by interactivity, relational authenticity and content that speaks to the lived experiences of young adults. Therefore, platforms such as podcasts, WhatsApp fellowship communities and social media content designed around spiritual formation represent low-barrier entry points that may reach students who are not accessing on-campus spiritual Programmes.

5.4 Limitations of the Study.

However much, the study succeeded in discovering substantive and contextually grounded findings about the spirituality of students at Makerere University, it also encountered a number of limitations that were acknowledged by the researcher in interest of intellectual honesty and as well as to guide the interpretation of the study findings.

The low response rate among lecturers (41.7%) represented the most significant constraint faced by the study. Although these five lecturers who participated provided rich and insightful data, their views cannot be grounded as a representative of the broader Makerere University academic staff population. Generalizations from the lecturer sub-group need therefore to be treated with caution. Future studies should therefore, employ more proactive recruitment strategies, including formal institutional endorsement to secure more adequate lecturer representation.

Secondly, the sensitive and personal nature of the subject matter, spiritual life and faith

commitment, may have introduced social desirability bias into participants' responses, particularly in relation to self-reported spiritual decline in the students. In this regard, the participants may have been inclined to present themselves in ways that are socially or institutionally acceptable, potentially understating the extent of their spiritual disengagement. Therefore, the use of additional data collection methods, such as anonymous written reflections or longitudinal diary studies, could mitigate this limitation in future research.

Thirdly, the study's single-institution design limits the transferability of its findings in other settings. Although Makerere University is Uganda's oldest and largest public university and has a distinctive institutional culture, demographic profile, and religious ecology it may not be a representative of other Ugandan or East African universities. Therefore, the study needed to widen the scope by looking at other universities in the country or East African region to establish the broader applicability of the study findings.

Lastly, the cross-sectional research design that the study employed only captures participants' perceptions and experiences at a single point in time and yet Spiritual life is by its nature dynamic with numerous factors that could contribute to its decline throughout the student's university time. As a result, a longitudinal research designs could have been better by using cohort tracking from year One to final year as this would have provided substantially richer and more causally informative data.

However, even with these limitations, this study institutes a practical contribution to the empirical literature on student spirituality in African higher education institutions. The diversity of the participant groups as used, breadth of thematic coverage, and the integration of quantitative and qualitative data sources collectively enhanced the study's credibility and provided a robust foundation for the recommendations.

5.5 Implications and Recommendations of the Study.

5.5.1 Theoretical and Policy Implications

Theoretically, the study findings held such implications at numerous levels contributing to an emerging body of literature on the student spiritual decline as this demonstrates that the phenomenon is shaped not merely by universal developmental dynamics of emerging adulthood but by various institutional, social, and technological conditions of the African university context and this also has implications for how existing Western-derived models of campus ministry and spiritual formation are adapted and applied in the Ugandan and broader East African setting.

Additionally, at the policy level, the study findings challenge the assumption that spiritual development is a purely private matter that falls outside the university's institutional mandate. Therefore, as the findings suggest, spiritual health is associated with mental well-being, academic resilience, moral conduct, and leadership capacity, thus student spiritual development constitutes a legitimate domain of concern for university administrations that are committed to holistic student development.

5.5.2 Practical Recommendations

According to the study findings and the preceding discussions, seven recommendations are proposed for implementation by universities, faith organizations, and policymakers;

- 1. Establish Structured Mentorship and Discipleship Programmes.** I recommend that Universities and faith organizations should invest in formally structured mentorship schemes that pair students with trained mentors, who either be senior students, staff members, or faith leaders for a sustained relationship-based spiritual and personal guidance. And such Programmes should be co-designed with the students' input to ensure that the format, frequency, and content are responsive to students' actual needs and schedules.
- 2. Design Flexible and Accessible Spiritual Programmes.** Students' structural constraints need to be put in consideration by redesigning spiritual Programmes that are accommodative of the student academic life. This could include restructuring the sessions into multiple and shorter session times and programme formats respectively, integration with existing student gatherings such as orientation activities, study groups, and hostel-based communities, and in so doing participation does not require students to choose between academic and spiritual commitments.
- 3. Formalize University–Faith Organization Partnerships.** There is need for Makerere University and similar institutions to establish formal memoranda of understanding with campus faith organizations by providing a framework for collaborative planning, resource sharing, and coordinated student support such as joint retreats, missions, orientation-week spiritual activities, and outreach Programmes.
- 4. Integrate Value-Based Reflection into the Academic Curriculum.** Furthermore, I recommend that academic departments should to be encouraged, and where possible,

required, to incorporate ethical reflection, service learning, and consideration of questions of purpose and meaning into their disciplinary curricula. And this could take a form of case-study discussions with ethical dimensions, community engagement components, or reflective assessment tasks that invite students to consider the moral implications of their field of study.

5. Deploy Digital Platforms Intentionally for Spiritual Formation. I also recommend campus ministries and university chaplaincies to develop purpose-designed digital content (that is interactive, relationally grounded, and responsive to the lived concerns of students), such as podcasts, online devotional groups, WhatsApp communities, and social media channels, that could meet students in the digital spaces they already inhabit rather than a mere replication of offline programme content.

6. Strengthen Holistic Student Support Services. Makerere University and institutions of higher learning at its level need to expand the scope of their counselling and student wellness services to explicitly encompass spiritual well-being alongside mental and emotional health. Therefore, there is need for spiritual/Christian leaders to be recognized as integral members of the student support ecosystem while working in coordination with University counsellors and academic advisers to provide integrated pastoral care.

7. Develop Student Capacity for Time Management and Spiritual Self-Regulation. Lastly, during orientation and transition Programmes for first-year students' explicit content on aspects such as time management, self-regulation, and the intentional integration of spiritual practices into a demanding academic schedule should be included. Upon joining the University, students arrive with strong spiritual foundations but without the skills to sustain them in a new environment of freedom with the competing demands that make them vulnerable to the trajectory of spiritual decline as documented in this study, therefore, Programmes put in place upon induction into the University should be able to help them remain spiritually upright.

5.6 Conclusion.

The study intended to investigate the different factors responsible for the observed decline in spiritual engagement among the students at Makerere University as well as the perceptions held by students, lecturers, and spiritual leaders regarding the role and importance of spirituality and with an aim of developing strategies that could strengthen the students' spiritual participation

within the university context. As per this study, spiritual decline among students was found to a multidimensional phenomenon, driven by a convergence of academic pressure, technological distraction, social and peer influence, exposure to secular worldviews, and the autonomy afforded by university life.

Notable findings however, such as divergence in how spirituality is understood across the different stakeholder groups with a majority of students' (86%) affirmation to the personal and emotional value of spirituality, a few of them integrated it explicitly into their academic decisions or social lives, which suggested a compartmentalization of faith. Lecturers and spiritual leaders had a different perspective from that of students as they conceptualize spirituality as a formative force with observable consequences for character, academic performance, and resilience under pressure. This divergence has such grave implications on the design of spiritual support Programmes, which are meant to bridge the gap between students internalized, private faith and the more holistic vision of spiritual formation held by institutional stakeholders.

The study however, identified a strong consensus across all respondent groups regarding the strategies that when implemented could restore and sustain spiritual engagement, including strategies such as Mentorship and discipleship Programmes, flexible scheduling of spiritual activities, institutional-faith collaboration, curriculum integration of value-based reflection, and the strategic use of digital platforms each emerged as viable and complementary interventions.

And lastly this study, contributes to the growing body of research on spirituality in African higher education by providing empirical evidence from one of the continent's oldest universities and by demonstrating that spiritual decline, while real and measurable, is also addressable through deliberate, context-sensitive institutional action. Future researches could employ longitudinal designs instead of cross-section research designs as used by this study to track changes in students' spiritual engagement over the course of their university careers, and also extend the inquiry to other Ugandan and East African universities to test the generalizability of these findings.

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEWER GUIDE

Study Title: *Decline of Spiritual Life of Students at the University: A Case Study of Makerere University.*

Purpose of the Interview Guide.

This guide provides instructions for the interviewer to ensure consistency, evidence-based data collection, and ethical compliance throughout the interviews.

Principles to follow during the Data Collection.

The interviewer will ensure the following:

- To Protect participants' identity and personal information at every stage.
- That participants understand the study purpose, risks, and their rights before participating.
- To avoid leading or judgmental reactions in order to maintain objectivity and professionalism.
- Show empathy and allow participants to skip sensitive questions.
- Take clear notes and/or record with permission to ensure data reliability.
- That participants know that participation is optional; therefore allowing them to withdraw anytime.

Interview Preparation

Before interviews the interviewer will:

- ✓ Review research objectives and interview questions
- ✓ Prepare printed
- ✓ Schedule appointments early to accommodate busy participants

Opening Protocol

At the beginning, the interviewer will:

- Greet participant politely.

- Introduce themselves and the purpose of the study.
- Explain confidentiality and voluntary participation.
- Explain estimated the duration (20–30 minutes)
- Interviewer will not proceed unless consent is approved.

Handling Sensitive Content

If a participant becomes emotional or uncomfortable, the interviewer will:

- ✓ Pause the interview politely
- ✓ Offer time to compose themselves
- ✓ Emphasize their right to skip/withdraw
- ✓ Avoid further probing into distressing personal issues

Interview Closing Protocol

At the end the interviewer will:

- Thank the participant sincerely
- Ask if they would like to add anything not discussed
- Remind them how the data will be used
- Reassure confidentiality and anonymity
- Inform them they may request study findings later

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for students.

Introductory Script (*Interviewer reads before starting*)

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Samuel Kisakye a student of masters of Divinity at Uganda Christian University. I am conducting a study on spiritual life among students at Makerere University. I would like to talk with you about your experiences and perspectives. Your participation is voluntary and your identity will remain confidential. The information you provide will only be used for academic purposes. You may skip any question or stop the interview at any point without consequence.

This interview will take approximately 15–20 minutes.

Do I have your permission to continue?.....

Do I have permission to record the interview for accuracy?.....

Code for participant.....

Section A: Background Information

1. Faculty/School: _____
2. Year of Study: _____
3. Religious Affiliation (Optional): _____

Section B: Spiritual Life Experience

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

4. Has your spiritual commitment reduced since joining university? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
5. Do you find it difficult to balance academics and spiritual activities? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
6. Does social peer influence affect your spiritual behavior? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
7. Does technology distract you from prayer and fellowship? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
8. Do you feel supported spiritually by campus Christian organizations? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

Section C: Spiritual Role & Importance

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

9. Is spirituality important for your emotional and moral well-being? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

10. Do your spiritual beliefs influence your academic decisions and relationships? ☐Y ☐N
☐L

Section D: Strategies for Enhancing Engagement

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

11. Can mentorship improve spiritual growth among students? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
12. Would more university-supported spiritual programs help strengthen student faith? ☐Y
☐N ☐L
13. Would you participate more in spiritual activities if they were more flexible? ☐Y ☐N
☐L

Open-Ended Question

14. What would help you personally grow spiritually at Makerere University?

Questionnaire for Lecturers.

Section A: Background Information.

1. Faculty/School: _____
2. Years working with students: _____

Section B: Observations on Student Spiritual Life.

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

3. Have you observed a decline in students' spiritual participation? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
4. Does academic workload contribute to reduced spiritual engagement? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
5. Do students seem to prioritize social activities over spiritual growth? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
6. Does exposure to new ideas sometimes cause students to question their beliefs? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

Section C: Importance of Spirituality

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

7. Does spirituality play a vital role in shaping students' character and moral behavior? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
8. Do spiritually grounded students tend to perform better academically? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
9. Does spiritual decline negatively affect students' mental and emotional well-being? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

Section D: Possible Interventions

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

10. Should the university collaborate more with spiritual organizations on campus? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
11. Would mentorship programs strengthen student spirituality? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
12. Should value-based discussions be integrated into classroom environments? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

Open-Ended Question

13. In your view, what are the best ways to improve spiritual engagement among students?

Questionnaire for Christian / Spiritual Leaders

Section A: Background Information

1. Ministry/Organization: _____
2. Years serving university students: _____
3. Denominational affiliation (Optional): _____

Section B: Perceived Spiritual Trends

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

4. Are students less committed to fellowship than before? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
5. Does university freedom make it hard for students to maintain spiritual discipline? ☐Y
☐N ☐L
6. Do technology and social media reduce students' devotion and prayer life? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
7. Does the university environment expose students to beliefs that challenge their faith? ☐Y
☐N ☐L

Section C: Importance & Impact of Spirituality

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

8. Does weak spiritual life increase risky behavior among students? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
9. Does spiritual support help students cope with academic and emotional pressure? ☐Y
☐N ☐L
10. Does a strong spiritual foundation enhance student leadership and responsibility? ☐Y
☐N ☐L

Section D: Recommendations for Spiritual Growth

(Use: Yes = Y, No = N, Neutral = L)

11. Are more mentorship and discipleship programs needed? ☐Y ☐N ☐L
12. Should campus ministries use more digital tools for spiritual engagement? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

13. Should churches collaborate more with the university? ☐Y ☐N ☐L

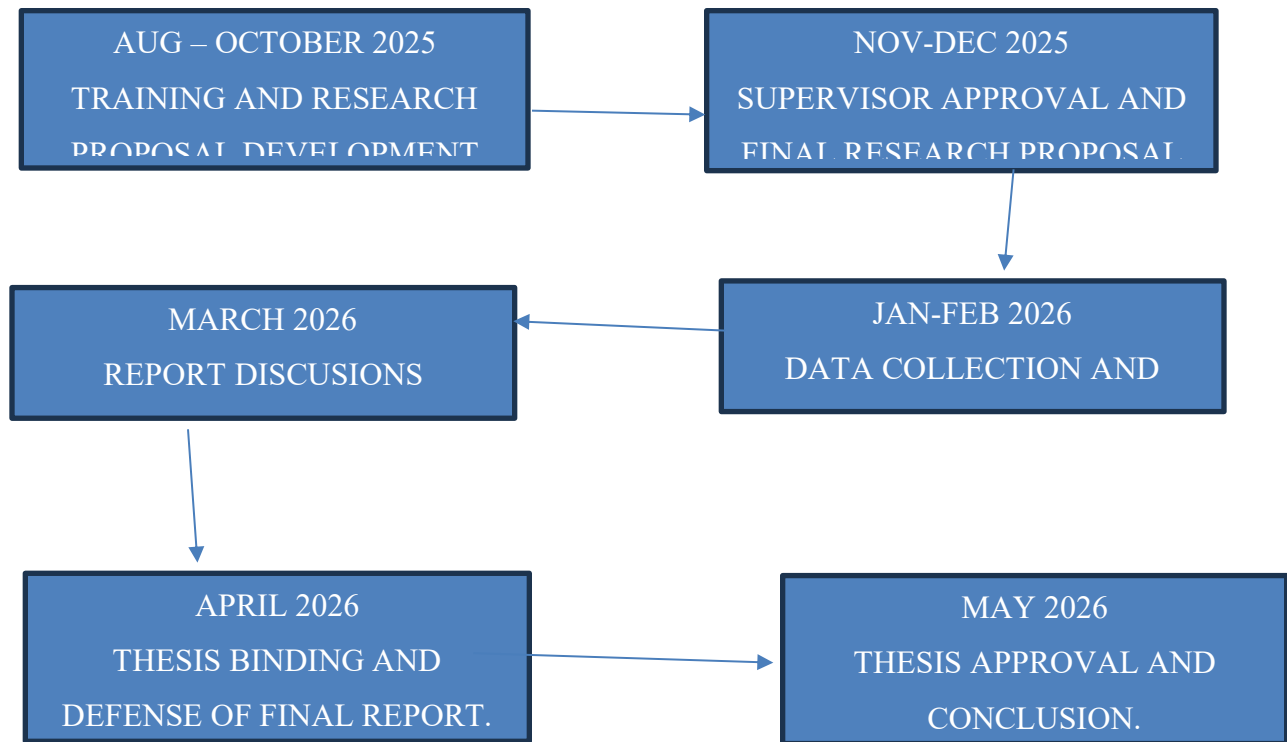
Open-Ended Question

14. What initiatives would most effectively restore spiritual growth among students?

Appendix 3: Budget

No	ITEM	Quantity	COST PER UNIT	TOTAL COST
1	Stationary			
	Pens and pencils	10pts	5000	50,000
	Papers	2 reams	25000	50,000
2	Field Work			
	Transport	x4	100,000	400,000
	Meals and accomodation	10	5,000	50,000
3	Secretarial service			
	Printing and photocopying			50,000
	Binding	2		20,000
4	Miscellaneous			100,000
	Total			720,000

Appendix 4: Scheduling of research activities and timelines.



Samuel Kisakye

SK630

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 Quick Submit

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15th March 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

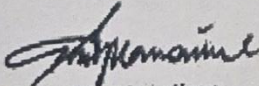
INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter serves to introduce to you KISAKYE SAMUEL a student of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity pursuing a Master of Divinity/ Master of Arts in Theology/ Master of Arts in Theology and Development/Master of Arts in Theology and Health care Management/ Bachelors of Divinity.

His/her is carrying out a research as a partial requirement for him/her to be awarded the degree he/she is pursuing. So kindly avail him or the required information for building his/her research work.

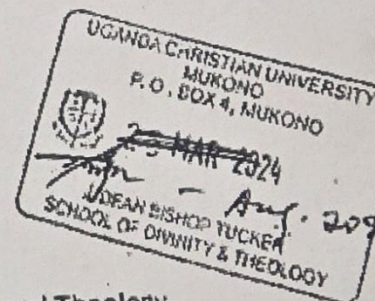
Counting on your cooperation and thank you in advance

Yours faithfully


Rev. Prof. Elly Kansime

Research coordinator, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.

ekansime@ucu.ac.ug, 0772621182



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