

Spiritual Expectations and Experiences of Students in the College of Arts, Sciences, Education and Information Technology, S.Y. 2024-2025

Geraldine B. Jasareno¹; Ericka G. Leaño²; Henry P. Litawan³;
Jomar D. Tangonan⁴; Reinabelle E. Castro⁵

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5079-4987>⁵

Aldersgate College Inc ^{1,2,3,4,5}

reinabelle.castro@aldersgate.edu.ph ^{1,2,3,4,5}

ABSTRACT

Spirituality plays a significant role in students' academic, personal, and social lives, influencing their well-being, resilience, and moral development. This study examines students' spiritual expectations and experiences in the College of Arts, Sciences, Education, and Information Technology (CASE-IT). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data from 93 respondents through surveys and qualitative responses. The study explores students' engagement in spiritual practices, their expectations for institutional support, and spirituality's impact on their academic and personal lives. Findings indicate that students highly value personal prayer, religious guidance, and acts of kindness, with many expecting their institution to provide structured spiritual support such as organized religious activities, counseling, and community service opportunities. The study also reveals that students frequently experience a sense of purpose, inner peace, and spiritual connection, which positively influence their emotional resilience and academic engagement. However, the study identified challenges such as difficulty practicing faith and limited institutional support as barriers to spiritual growth. The results align with Pargament's Theory of Religious Coping, Astin's Theory of Student Involvement, and Koenig's Model of Religion and Health, which highlight the significance of spirituality in personal and academic development. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhancing institutional spiritual programs, creating spaces for worship and reflection, and integrating spiritual discussions into academic settings. By addressing students' spiritual needs, institutions can contribute to their holistic development and well-being.

Keywords: Spirituality, student well-being, religious support, academic development, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality has long been recognized as a fundamental aspect of human development, influencing personal, academic, and social well-being. In higher education, spirituality guides students, providing resilience, moral direction, and a sense of belonging. As students navigate the complexities of college life, their spiritual experiences shape their personal growth, ethical decision-making, and ability to cope with stress.

The College of Arts, Sciences, Education, and Information Technology (CASE-IT) acknowledges the importance of spiritual development among students. Many students engage in spiritual practices such as prayer, religious services, and acts of kindness, reflecting their intrinsic need for spiritual fulfillment. Studies suggest that spiritual engagement enhances students' emotional stability, academic motivation, and social connectedness. However, despite the growing recognition of spirituality in education, research remains limited on how institutions address students' spiritual expectations and experiences, particularly in the Philippine higher education context.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the spiritual expectations and experiences of CASE-IT students by addressing the following key questions:

1. What spiritual practices and values do CASE-IT students prioritize in their personal lives?
2. What specific forms of spiritual support do students expect from their college?
3. What are the common spiritual experiences and challenges encountered by students during their academic journey?
4. How does spirituality impact students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and personal growth?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses specifically on assessing the spiritual expectations and lived experiences of students enrolled in CASE-IT at Aldersgate College Inc. The study examines key areas including personal spiritual practices, expectations for college-provided religious support, frequency of spiritual experiences, and perceived impacts on academic/personal growth. The scope is delimited to 93 CASE-IT student respondents and does not encompass external institutional populations or non-spiritual socio-demographic factors beyond the designated domain.

Review of Related Literature

Spirituality in higher education serves as an important dimension of students' holistic development, particularly in promoting emotional resilience, meaning, purpose, and well-being. Grounded in Pargament's Theory of Religious Coping, students may use prayer, religious beliefs, reflection, and spiritual practices to manage academic and personal stress; this is supported by Del Castillo and Alino (2020), who found that Filipino Catholic college students commonly used positive religious coping strategies, and Pan et al. (2020), who reported a significant relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being among Filipino Muslim and Catholic college students. In line with Astin's Theory of Student Involvement, participation in religious services, retreats, outreach activities, and other community-based programs can strengthen students' social connections, sense of belonging, and engagement. Fuertes and Dugan (2021) emphasized that spirituality can provide students with meaning, direction, and moral guidance, while Gilbertson et al. (2022) found that closeness to God was associated with greater happiness, life satisfaction, meaning in life, and belonging among first-year college students. Similarly, Lima das Chagas and Muñoz-García (2023) identified relationships among meaning in life, religion/spirituality, student engagement, and learning satisfaction, while Graça and Brandão (2024) highlighted the relationship of religious/spiritual coping with psychological well-being, emotion regulation, and life satisfaction among university students. In the Philippine context, Calamba and Magallanes (2023) likewise found a relationship between spiritual well-being and resilience among emerging adults in a Catholic college. These findings suggest that spirituality may serve as a valuable personal and social resource for students; however, spiritual experiences may also involve struggles, indicating the importance of providing inclusive institutional opportunities for prayer, reflection, service, and spiritual support that respect students' diverse beliefs and practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical foundation is grounded in three integrated models of holistic human and student development. Pargament's (2007) Theory of Religious Coping posits that individuals utilize faith, prayer, and spiritual frameworks as primary cognitive and behavioral mechanisms to process stress, navigate academic pressures, and build psychological resilience. Astin's (1984, 2005) Theory of Student Involvement extends this to the institutional environment, asserting that a student's personal growth, moral development, and sense of belonging are directly proportional to the physical and psychological energy they invest in co-curricular activities, such as organized religious services, spiritual retreats, and

community outreach. Reinforcing these perspectives, Koenig's (2009) Model of Religion and Health delineates the specific psychological and behavioral pathways through which consistent spiritual practices foster mental well-being, inner peace, and emotional stability during critical developmental transitions.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual model illustrates the interaction between student spiritual expectations/practices and holistic outcomes:

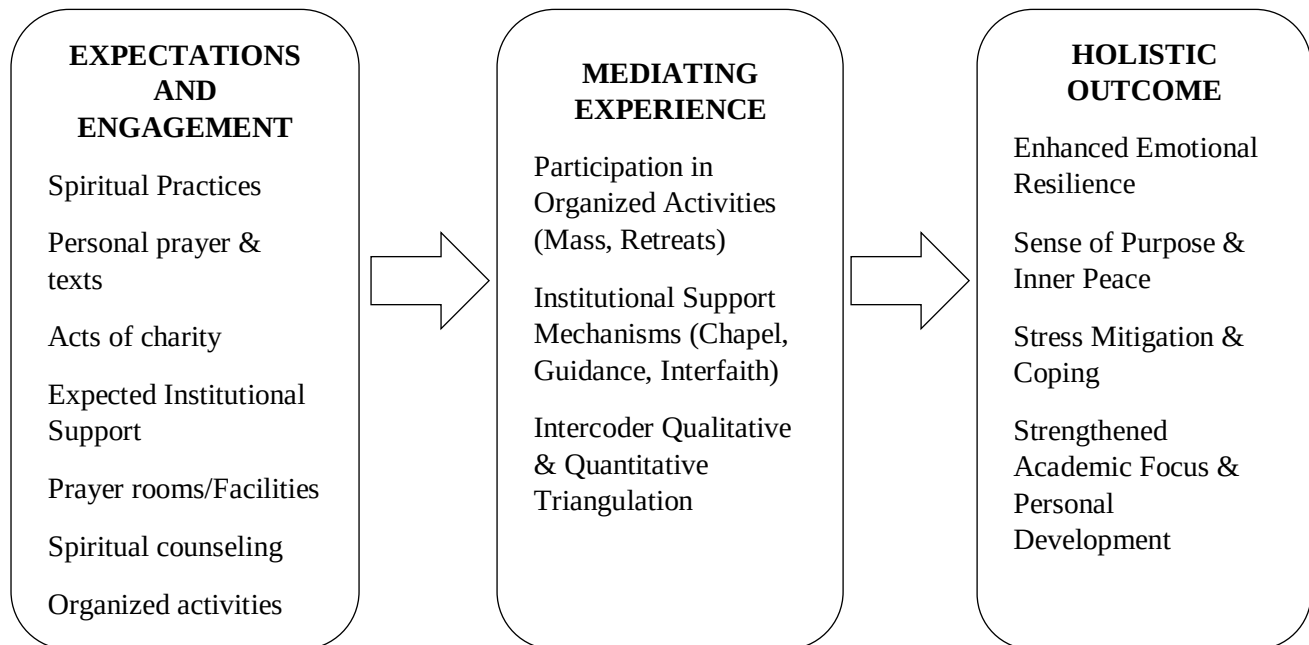


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a descriptive, mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative survey mechanisms with qualitative open-ended responses. This approach operationalized the three-stage conceptual framework by tracing how students' baseline expectations and engagement move through campus-mediated experiences to produce holistic personal and academic outcomes.

Research Steps

The data collection and processing procedures followed the framework's three core stages. In the initial phase, Stage 1 Assessment (Expectations & Engagement), the primary survey instrument was constructed and distributed to evaluate students' baseline spiritual practices—such as personal prayer, reading religious texts, and performing acts of charity—as well as their expected forms of institutional support, including prayer rooms or chapel facilities, spiritual counseling, and organized religious activities. Next, Stage 2 Evaluation (Mediating Experience) measured actual student participation in campus-organized activities like Masses, retreats, and outreach programs, along with their use of institutional support mechanisms such as chapel access, guidance counseling, and interfaith services. During this stage, the team processed and validated both qualitative and quantitative data through intercoder qualitative and quantitative triangulation to ensure methodological rigor and cross-verification.

Finally, Stage 3 Synthesis (Holistic Outcome) analyzed the resulting developmental impacts on students, specifically measuring key personal and academic indicators such as emotional resilience, a sense of purpose, inner peace, stress mitigation and coping mechanisms, and strengthened academic focus.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Data were gathered from a total sample of 93 enrolled students (n=93) across different academic year levels within the College of Arts, Sciences, Education and Information Technology (CASE-IT) at Aldersgate College Inc. Participants were selected using stratified purposive sampling to ensure proportional representation across various religious affiliations and year levels.

Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative data for Stages 1 and 2 (expectations, participation frequency, support utilization) were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages. Thematic analysis evaluated qualitative narrative responses detailing spiritual challenges and holistic outcomes (Stage 3). Intercooder qualitative and quantitative triangulation was conducted by independent coders to verify theme consistency, reduce researcher bias, and ensure robust alignment across all three conceptual stages

Research Hypothesis and Validation

Based on the three-stage conceptual framework, the study tested the operational null hypotheses that no significant relationship exists between students' baseline spiritual expectations/engagement and their active participation in campus-mediated spiritual experiences, and that these campus-mediated experiences and institutional support mechanisms do not significantly influence students' overall holistic outcomes, such as emotional resilience, inner peace, and academic focus. To validate these parameters and ensure data integrity, academic and research experts rigorously validated the research instrument, confirming that all survey items aligned directly with the underlying theoretical models and the three conceptual stages. Quantitative reliability was evaluated through pre-testing, while qualitative trustworthiness was established using intercooder reliability checks and cross-verification of narrative feedback against quantitative trend lines to minimize researcher bias and ensure triangulated consistency across all findings.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study is delimited to 93 CASE-IT students at Aldersgate College Inc., restricting direct generalizability to other institutions or non-academic populations. The researchers secured informed consent from all respondents; participation was strictly voluntary, and individual identifiers were fully anonymized to maintain ethical standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

SOP 1: What spiritual practices and values do CASE-IT students prioritize in their personal lives?

The findings reveal that CASE-IT students highly prioritize individual and community-based spiritual practices within their daily lives. Personal prayer and reflection emerged as the most deeply valued practice, with 67.7% of respondents (n=63) rating it as "Very Important." Students deemed speaking guidance from religious leaders important or very important (79.6%; n=74), while 75.0% (n=70) highlighted active participation in religious practices. Additionally, 70.3% (n=65) prioritized studying religious texts, and 79.6% (n=74) emphasized performing acts of charity and kindness. Nearly half of the

students underscored charitable acts as an essential pillar of their faith, demonstrating that spiritual engagement among students extends beyond personal devotion to encompass pro-social behavior and community welfare.

SOP 2: What specific forms of spiritual support do students expect from their college?

Students expressed a clear expectation for their academic institution to provide structured environments and programs that foster spiritual growth. When identifying specific forms of expected college support, most respondents—69.9% (n=65)—indicated a desire for organized spiritual and religious activities. Furthermore, 58.1% (n=54) expected counseling services tailored to address spiritual concerns and faith-related challenges, 45.2% (n=42) requested organized community service and outreach opportunities, and 44.1% (n=41) prioritized physical access to a dedicated prayer room or campus chapel. These results indicate that students look to higher education institutions not only for academic instruction, but also for comprehensive institutional mechanisms that support holistic character development.

SOP 3: What are the common spiritual experiences and challenges encountered by students during their academic journey?

Regarding lived-spiritual experiences, a significant majority of students reported frequent moments of spiritual alignment and connection. A sense of purpose and inner peace was experienced "often" or "always" by 79.6% (n=73) of respondents, with nearly half reporting that they "always" felt a strong connection to a higher power. Additionally, 68.1% (n=62) frequently experienced spiritual support from their peers. Student involvement in campus-led spiritual activities was high overall at 89.2% (n=83), though participation was heavily concentrated in standard religious services (84.9%) compared to specialized retreats (20.4%) or community outreach programs (20.4%). Despite these positive experiences, 65.6% (n=61) of students reported facing spiritual challenges "often" or "always". The primary barriers identified included balancing faith practices with heavy academic workloads, time constraints, limited engagement with religious communities, and a lack of quiet, dedicated spaces on campus for reflection.

SOP 4: How does spirituality impact students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and personal growth?

Spirituality serves as a critical coping mechanism and driver of personal growth for students navigating higher education. Qualitatively and quantitatively, respondents identified faith as providing Strength and Guidance (38.0%, n=35), Resilience and Coping with Challenges (30.4%, n=28), Inner Peace and Emotional Well-being (23.9%, n=22), and a Connection to a Higher Purpose (19.6%, n=18). Students who engaged regularly in spiritual practices reported greater emotional stability, reduced stress levels, and enhanced confidence when facing academic demands. By offering psychological grounding during periods of distress, spirituality directly strengthens students' focus, resilience, and overall academic performance.

SUMMARY

This study investigated the spiritual expectations, campus-mediated experiences, and developmental outcomes of 93 students (n=93) enrolled in the College of Arts, Sciences, Education, and Information Technology (CASE-IT) at Aldersgate College Inc. Structured around a three-stage framework, the findings in Stage 1 revealed that students maintain strong baseline spiritual engagement, with personal prayer and reflection deemed "Very Important" by 67.7% (n=63) of respondents, seeking religious guidance valued by 79.6% (n=74), and performing acts of charity emphasized by 79.6% (n=74). Students also expressed a clear expectation for college-provided support, prioritizing organized religious

activities (69.9%, n=65), spiritual counseling (58.1%, n=54), community service opportunities (45.2%, n=42), and physical prayer rooms or chapel facilities (44.1%, n=41).

In Stage 2, campus-mediated spiritual participation was high overall at 89.2% (n=83), driven mainly by standard religious services (84.9%), while participation in retreats (20.4%) and outreach programs (20.4%) remained lower. Despite these engagements, 65.6% (n=61) of students reported encountering spiritual challenges "often" or "always," mainly due to academic stress, time constraints, and limited dedicated reflection spaces. In Stage 3, the resulting holistic outcomes demonstrated that spirituality serves as a vital developmental resource, with 79.6% (n=73) experiencing frequent inner peace and purpose. Furthermore, students reported that faith provided them with strength and guidance (38.0%, n=35), resilience and coping capacity (30.4%, n=28), emotional well-being (23.9%, n=22), and a higher purpose (19.6%, n=18), directly reinforcing their academic focus and personal growth.

CONCLUSIONS

Spirituality serves as an essential pillar of holistic development, emotional well-being, and academic resilience for CASE-IT students. The findings confirm that student engagement in personal faith practices translates into stronger coping mechanisms and a clearer sense of purpose when supported by campus-mediated experiences. While students actively participate in traditional religious services and look to the institution for comprehensive spiritual support, notable structural gaps persist in dedicated reflection spaces, accessible spiritual counseling, and diverse retreat programs. Furthermore, academic workload pressures present a major barrier to sustained faith practice. To bridge the gap between student expectations and institutional provisions, the college must transition toward a more integrated, proactive spiritual support framework—expanding physical prayer spaces, embedding values-based reflection into academic life, and offering varied service and retreat opportunities. Addressing these needs will foster a supportive campus environment that nurtures both students' academic success and moral-spiritual growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and the three-stage conceptual framework, several institutional recommendations are proposed to strengthen spiritual support mechanisms and support the holistic development of CASE-IT students.

First, the institution should establish dedicated campus reflection spaces by allocating and maintaining a quiet, accessible campus chapel or prayer room to address students' need for spaces suited for personal prayer, quiet reflection, and stress mitigation between academic classes.

Second, campus ministry offerings should expand and diversify beyond routine religious services to include structured retreats, recollections, peer reflection groups, and interfaith activities that accommodate varied student schedules and preferences.

Third, guidance and counseling services must integrate specialized spiritual counseling tailored to address faith struggles, moral dilemmas, and spiritual concerns, thereby providing students with holistic psychological and spiritual care.

Fourth, the college should actively promote community outreach and service opportunities by creating structured, institutionalized programs that enable students to put their spiritual values and social commitment into active practice.

Fifth, academic departments should incorporate values and faith dimensions into learning settings by encouraging faculty to integrate discussions on ethics, character formation, and holistic well-being

into academic curricula, ultimately helping students balance academic demands with personal and spiritual growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors express sincere gratitude to the administration, faculty, and students at Aldersgate College, Inc. for their active participation and cooperation in completing the study Factors that Affect Students' Academic Achievements in the College of Arts, Sciences and Information Technology.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

Artificial intelligence tools were used to process this document, assist with formatting and structural organization, and create illustrative visualizations of survey metrics. Institutional personnel verified and authored all underlying survey data, analysis, and strategic recommendations.

REFERENCES

- Calamba, M. J., & Magallanes, A. (2023). Spiritual well-being and resilience among emerging adults in a Catholic higher education institution. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 41, 169–183. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v41i1.8541>
- Del Castillo, F. A., & Aliño, M. A. (2020). Religious coping of selected Filipino Catholic youth. *Religions*, 11(9), Article 462. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11090462>
- Fuertes, J. N., & Dugan, J. P. (2021). The influence of spirituality on college student leadership Development and moral growth. *Journal of College Student Development*, 62(3), 312–327. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2021.0028>
- Gilbertson, M. K., Hansen, M. J., & Park, C. L. (2022). Closeness to God, spiritual struggles, and wellbeing in the first year of college. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 742265. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.742265>
- Graça, M., & Brandão, T. (2024). Religious and spiritual coping, emotion regulation, and psychological well-being in university students. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 27(1), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2024.2312345>
- Lima das Chagas, R., & Muñoz-García, A. (2023). Meaning in life, spirituality, and student engagement as predictors of learning satisfaction in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(5), 1180–1195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2138289>
- Pan, W. H., Perez, R. E., & Santos, M. C. (2020). Religiosity, subjective well-being, and social support among Filipino Muslim and Catholic college students. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 53(1), 89–112. <https://doi.org/10.35560/pjp.2020.53.1.4>