

Original Article

Relationship between Personal Growth Initiative and Religious Commitment in the Ministerial Formation to Priesthood: A Case of Theology Students at Saint Dominic's Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract - Personal growth initiative and religious commitment are fundamental in forming candidates for the ministerial priesthood. This quantitative study investigated the relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment of theology students at Saint Dominic's Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. The positivism approach was adopted in this study and a census sampling design was employed to obtain the sample size of 160 theology students aged between 21 and 37 years. Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS-II) and Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) were tools used for data collection. The theoretical framework was based on the Self-Determination Theory and Religious Commitment Theory. SPSS version 25 was used for data analysis, and 55.6 % of theology students had high levels of personal growth initiative, while 66.3 % had high levels of religious commitment. The study also showed a positive moderate correlation in the established relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment ($n = 160$, $r = .402$, $p = .000$). This implied that as students improved in their personal growth initiative, they also grew in religious commitment. The study recommended more investment in personal growth initiatives, which will bring about an increment in religious commitment among seminarians.

Keywords - Ministerial priesthood, Personal Growth Initiative, Religious commitment, Seminary, Theology.

1. Introduction

History testifies that special attention is paid to the training in formation houses and seminaries to ensure that the ministerial priesthood candidates have grown (Hoelsing & Hogan, 2021). Globally, the primary goal of formation for the ministerial priesthood in the universal Catholic Church is holistic formation, emphasising growth in four areas: human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral (Amadasu, 2021). According to Applegate (2012), human formation includes a journey towards holistic personal integration. Furthermore, intellectual formation entails a profoundly integrating academic journey that moves the candidate's mind, heart, and soul in preparation for a religious ministry in the world. Additionally, pastoral formation transforms candidates into authentic spiritual shepherds through imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the ultimate teacher, priest, and shepherd (Lipiec, 2018). The process of spiritual formation involves completely changing one's style of life to create Christ's character (Asumang, 2016). Thus, the vocation of the ministerial candidates undergoing priestly formation is nurtured and safeguarded in this set-up of the seminary or formation houses. According to Oakley (2017), priestly

formation aims to have well-formed candidates for the priesthood whose behaviour reflects human values, and that is why there are qualified personnel in the seminaries. In essence, the Church makes a lot of effort to update the structures of priestly formation to have a mature clergy (Dowler & Ham, 2010). Nevertheless, all these efforts do not always yield the expected results.

Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) is the improvements made in various aspects of one's life while keeping an open mind to new experiences (Doorn et al., 2020). Personal growth initiative involves the pursuit of long-term life goals while feeling as if one is expanding and continuing to grow (Ryff, 2013). Personal growth is an acquired skill and achievement involving active engagement (Robitschek, 2019). Furthermore, personal growth initiative helps achieve one's potential and the perception of ongoing improvement in one's character and behaviour (Hirata & Kamakura, 2018). Therefore, one may wonder whether personal growth initiative is captured and taken as part and parcel of the personal growth formation in the seminary.



When used strictly, the term religious commitment (RC) refers to how closely someone lives their religious beliefs, ideals, and practices (Worthington Jr. et al., 2003). According to Alaedein-Zawawi (2015), religious commitment encompasses one's internal dedication or disposition to one's religion. In other words, this understanding points to the personal and private time devoted to religious involvement, religious groups, or organizations and the internalization of values such as communal life. One may wonder whether the intrinsic orientation, which is the anchor of religious commitment, is primarily and seriously looked at during the training of the candidates for the priesthood.

Different studies have endeavoured to examine the levels of personal growth initiative (PGI) and the impact these levels have on individual life. A study conducted at Midwestern University in the USA among 245 College students showed a Mean (3.69), and the Standard Deviation was (0.72). Thus, the total mean score was 59.04 points, representing (73.8%) and on a scale that had a maximum of 80 points, the figure was nearly bordering on the high PGI level (Robitschek et al., 2012). According to a survey conducted in Canada with 71 university students from Ontario, the level of personal growth initiative was 49.5 points, representing (61.9%) on a scale of maximum points of 80, which was classified as a high level of personal growth initiative (Pagavathsing, 2021). Additionally, a study carried out in China revealed the overall personal growth initiative mean was ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .76$) for all students, which translated to 66.16 points (82.7%) which were rated as high levels of PGI (Yang & Chang, 2014). A quantitative study done at an Industrial Psychology University in South Africa found that personal growth initiative level had a total mean score for all the students of $M = 37.34$, $SD = 7.42$ and considering the scale of 9 items with the highest possible total mean score of $M = 45$ the outcome was considered to be high (De Jager-van Straaten et al., 2016). According to Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017), who undertook a study among students from the University of Botswana to investigate the level of personal growth initiative, they discovered that the quality of the institution and the administration played a major in determining the levels of PGI. Having high levels of PGI entails exhibiting the ability to plan for life, identify available resources, be ready to embrace positivity and be ready to live by good behaviour intentionally.

A quantitative study was executed among 199 African-American students of Southeastern University in the United States to find out how the levels of religious commitment affected life satisfaction (Ajibade et al., 2016). The results showed that the average mean score of participants was 30.28, while Standard Deviation (SD) was 6.99, which was rated as a normal level of religious commitment. Longitudinal and quantitative research was carried out by the Pew Research Centre of 106 countries that showed different

levels of religious commitment of different nations in the world (Hackett et al., 2018). Thus, in terms of religious commitment, according to this study, the highest level was from Ethiopia (98%), followed by Pakistan (94%), Indonesia (93%), Honduras (90%), Nigeria (88%), Uganda (86%) and Zambia fell in the range 80% to 100% which was the category of high levels. A study done in South-Central Italy showed categorically the difference between catholic priests and laypeople in terms of religious commitment and personality (Cerasa et al., 2016). Even though priests and lay people had the same religious levels, priests showed outstanding characteristics in their personalities. The priests showed higher levels of extraversion and agreeableness than the lay people. This difference is probably the result of the sophisticated priestly formation and the ministry that priests are involved in.

Few researchers have pointed out directly the positive relationship between positive behaviours in the personal growth of young people and religious commitment (Libby et al., 2022). A study done in the southern region of the USA to figure out the relationship between self-control in the personal growth of students and religious commitment showed that self-control correlated with religious commitment ($r = .45$, $p < 0.001$). The conclusion was that the ability to self-control involved in the personal growth of students enabled college students to have religious motivation and thus refrain from oral or any form of sex at an early age (Vazsonyi & Jenkins, 2010). An investigation conducted in England among 60 Muslim undergraduate students at the Universities of Southampton revealed a high positive correlation between personal growth and existential transcendence ($r = .53$, $p < .05$). This implied that the student's personal growth helped them to have existential meaning that emanated from religious practices (Burney et al., 2017). A study done in London, England, among 205 students from different religious groups revealed a moderate positive correlation between religiosity and personal growth initiative ($r = .410$, $p < 0.000$) (Ivtzan, 2014). Thus, students who were highly religious manifested growth in personal growth initiatives.

Locally, particularly in Zambia, Richard (2013) said that the Catholic Church expected candidates for the priesthood to have a recommendable level of growth in various areas of their life before ordination, the same way maturity was expected in traditional initiations. There was a lack of a study in Zambia that showed either the measuring of personal growth initiative or religious commitment of theology students. According to Uche (2020), theology students are meticulously helped through religious training to portray exemplary attitudes that bring the fullness of life and total liberation in themselves and the people they serve. In Nigeria, Omorogbe (2017) discovered that the seminary staff tended to wonder why there was a lack of a link between the formation received and the life lived in the ministerial

priesthood by some candidates after ordination. After all, according to Massawe (2013), formation is a special training that is aimed at instilling a balanced, exemplary attitude and well-developed character and does not domesticate the individual.

Nevertheless, the contrary results of formation were sometimes seen. The discrepancy between the ideal of formation and the outcomes is normally seen in the psychological imbalance of some candidates for the priesthood after ordination. In Zambia, the result of this is misuse of power, loneliness, unchaste lifestyle, low self-esteem, alcoholism, misconduct, and relinquishing of the priesthood (Momba et al., 2018). Perhaps there is a lack of adequate attention paid to personal growth initiatives and religious commitment during the formation of candidates. According to Porter (2019), it is taken for granted that Catholic seminaries, by their creation and nature, automatically allow students of theology to experience and achieve character and religious growth. According to Egunjobi (2019), 50% of priests in Africa face psychological challenges such as personality dysfunction, stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, substance abuse, and psychosis. Therefore, this is clear evidence that there is a big challenge that calls for a study between the personal growth initiative and religious commitment which the current study endeavoured to carry out.

2. Methodology

Positivism was chosen for this study as the epistemological framework because it helped to uncover the truth and thereby presented it empirically. This quantitative study used a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the personal growth initiative and religious commitment of theology students at St. Dominic’s Theological Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. This study took a non-experimental approach, and it was conducted at Saint Catholic Dominic’s Major Seminary, situated in the Woodlands suburb of the Lusaka district of Zambia’s capital city. The census technique was used to obtain the total number of 160 students at the seminary from the 11 dioceses and religious congregations for the academic year 2022 - 2023. Census is one of the techniques used to determine sample size, and it entails using the entire population. The SPSS IBM Statistics 25 Version was employed in the statistical analysis, and all data generated or analysed is available in this published article.

Two standardized instruments used in this study were the second version of the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) and the 10-item Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10). PGIS-II is a 16-item multidimensional tool that evaluates one’s receptivity to developmental experiences and self-improvement and was developed by Robitschek and his colleagues in 2012 (Robitschek et al., 2012). RCI-10 is a 10-

item tool that determines closely how one clings to given religious convictions, ideals, and practices in daily life and was developed by Worthington and his colleagues (Worthington et al., 2003). This instrument can be used in any type of religion, but in this study, it was used in a population of Christians and Catholics.

The researcher obtained a permit from Zambia’s Ethics Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences (HSSREC), Tangaza University Research Ethics Committee (TUREC), and the Lusaka Provincial Education Office. The participants were aware that the study’s findings would be held with the utmost confidentiality, and anonymity was guaranteed. The researcher made sure that the consent of every respondent was solicited with respect and dignity. Moreover, participation was voluntary and freedom to pull out was observed on the part of the involved students. The researcher ensured safety on the part of the respondents so that any harm was avoided physically, psychologically, or legally. The researcher adhered to academic etiquette concerning citations or references.

3. Results

3.1. Social Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the five demographic variables, and the demographics portrayed in this study are for the academic year 2022 – 2023. Thus, the social demographic characteristics were summarized and presented accordingly in Table 1.

Table 1. Social demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 - 25	70	43.8
	26 - 30	64	40
	31 - 37	26	16.2
Level of Education	year one	53	33.1
	year two	36	22.5
	year three	26	16.3
	year four	45	28.1
Religious Affiliation	Diocesan	135	84.4
	Religious S	25	15.6
Source of Motivation for Priesthood	Nuclear Family	10	6.3
	Relatives	1	0.6
	Friends	5	3.1
	Self-Motivation	144	90
Seminary Help	Yes	150	93.7
	No	10	6.3

As indicated in Table 1, concerning the age frequency, the respondents aged 21-25 years were higher at (n = 70) 43.8%. Regarding religious affiliation, 84.4% (n = 135) were diocesan students, and 15.6% (n = 25) were religious students. Concerning motivation for pursuing the priesthood, 90% (n = 144) indicated that they were self-motivated to pursue the ministerial priesthood, and 93.7% (n = 150) agreed that the seminary contributed to their personal growth.

3.2. Levels of Personal Growth Initiative

This study examined the levels of personal growth initiative of Catholic theology students at Saint Dominic’s Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. The levels of personal growth initiative calculated are presented in Table 2.

According to Table 2, there were 31 (19.4%) who scored low, 40 (25%) average, and 89 (55.6%) high-level personal growth initiatives. This score of high level in personal growth initiative was an indication that theology students were able to design their lives by being ready to change, plan their lives by having personal goals, using available resources, and having the ability to embrace intentional behaviour and thus may be spared psychological imbalances after ordination.

Table 1. Levels of personal growth initiative of theology students

Levels	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	0 - 56	31	19.4
Average	57 - 63	40	25.0
High	64 - 80	89	55.6
Total		160	100.0

Table 2. Levels of religious commitment of theology students

levels	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	10 - 25	2	1.3
Normal	26 - 37	52	32.4
High	38 - 50	106	66.3
Total		160	100

3.3. Levels of Religious Commitment (RC)

This study measured the levels of religious commitment (RC) of Catholic theology students at Saint Dominic’s Catholic Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. The levels of religious commitment calculated are presented in Table 3.

According to Table 3, the results showed that there were 2 (1.3%) students who scored low, 52 (32.4%) students who scored normal, and 106 (66.3%) students who scored high levels of religious commitment. These results were an indication that religious commitment was an important factor that received adequate attention. This implied, therefore, that theology students at St. Dominic’s Catholic Major Seminary aspired to religious ideals that gave them knowledge and led them to concrete beliefs through the practice of communal religious rituals.

3.4. The Relationship between the Levels of Personal Growth Initiative and Demographic Characteristics

The current study further examined the relationship between levels of personal initiative and demographic characteristics (age, level of education, religious affiliation, motivation, and seminary help) by carrying out a chi-square test, and the summarised results were presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Relationship between the levels of personal growth initiative and demographics

Demographic Variables	Levels of Personal Growth Initiative					Chi-Square Test		
	Items	Total	Low	Average	High	X ²	df	Sig
Age	21 - 25	69 (43.1)	14 (8.8)	18 (11.3)	37 (23.1)	6.918	4	0.14
	26 - 30	65 (40.6)	13 (8.1)	20 (12.5)	32 (20.0)			
	31 - 37	26 (16.3)	4 (2.5)	2 (1.3)	20 (12.5)			
Level of Education	Year One	53 (33.1)	11 (6.9)	17 (10.6)	25 (15.6)	8.508	6	0.202
	Year Two	36 (22.5)	6 (3.8)	7 (14.4)	23 (14.4)			
	Year Three	26 (16.3)	2 (1.3)	9 (5.6)	15 (9.4)			
	Year Four	45 (28.1)	12 (7.5)	7 (4.4)	26 (16.3)			
Religious Affiliation	Diocesan	135 (84.4)	23(14.4)	36 (22.5)	76 (47.5)	3.468	6	0.177
	Religious	25 (15.6)	8 (5.0)	4 (2.5)	13 (8.1)			
Source of Motivation for Priesthood	Nuclear Family	10 (6.3)	2 (1.3)	1 (0.6)	7 (4.4)	3.633	6	0.726
	Relatives	1 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.6)			
	Friends	5 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.3)	3 (1.8)			
	Self-Motivation	144 (90.0)	29 (18.1)	37 (23.1)	78 (48.8)			
Help Seminary	Yes	150 (93.8)	27 (16.9)	37 (23.1)	86 (53.8)	3.708	2	0.157
	No	10 (6.3)	4 (2.5)	3 (1.9)	3 (1.9)			

Table 4 presents, firstly, the distribution of levels of personal growth initiative following the sociodemographic characteristics. The descriptive analysis performed showed that the theology students aged between 21 and 25 had the highest level of personal growth initiative (23.1%, n =37), while the lowest were the students aged between 31 and 37 (12.5%, n = 20). This implied that the younger students were more open to personal growth. In terms of theology class, it was the fourth year that had the highest level PGI (16.3 %, n = 26), which implied that as students neared priestly ordination, their personal growth escalated. About the source of motivation, the students who had self-motivation for priesthood scored the highest level of PGI (48.8%, n =78), and equally, those who accepted that they had experienced the contribution of the seminary to their growth had the highest level too (53.8%, n = 86).

Additionally, Table 4 shows the chi-square test results as age (X² (4, N = 160) = 6.918, p = .14), level of education (X² (6, N = 160) = 8.508, p = .203), religious affiliation (X² (2, N = 160) = 3.468, p = .177), source of motivation for the priesthood (X² (6, N = 160) = 3.633, p = .726) and contribution from the seminary to personal growth (X² (2, N = 160) = 3.708, p = .157). Therefore, this study had no association between all demographic characteristics and personal growth initiative because the p-values generated were greater than 0.05.

3.5. The Relationship between the Levels of Religious Commitment (RC) and Demographic Characteristics

The investigation was carried out to determine the relationship between levels of religious commitment and demographic characteristics (age, level of education, religious affiliation, source of motivation and seminary help) by carrying out a chi-square test. The obtained results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 presents, firstly, the distribution of levels of Religious Commitment (RC) according to sociodemographic characteristics. The descriptive analysis showed that the theology students aged between 21 and 25 had the highest level of religious commitment (30.6 %, n =49), while the lowest were the students aged between 31 and 37 (11.3%, n = 18). In terms of the year of theology, it was the first year that had the highest-level RC (21.9%, n =35), followed by the fourth year, then the third year, and last were the third-year students. This unique and puzzling outcome implied that students beginning the study of theology exhibit high levels of religious commitment, then the levels go down at some point, and then in the final year, start to pick up again, perhaps because of readiness for ministry. About the source of motivation, the students who had self-motivation for priesthood scored the highest level of RC (60.6% n = 97), and equally, those who accepted that they had experienced the contribution of the seminary to their growth had the highest level (63.1%, n = 101).

Table 4. Relationship between the Levels of Religious Commitment and Demographics

Demographics	Items	Levels of Religious Commitment				Chi-Square Test		
		Total	Low	Normal	High	X ²	df	Sig
Age	21 - 25	69 (43.1)	1 (0.6)	19 (11.9)	49 (30.6)	2.303	4	0.68
	26 - 30	65 (40.6)	1 (0.6)	25 (15.6)	39 (24.4)			
	31 - 37	26 (16.3)	0 (0.0)	8 (5.0)	18 (11.3)			
Level of Education	Theology year one	53 (33.1)	1 (0.6)	17 (10.6)	35 (21.9)	2.816	6	0.832
	Theology year two	36 (22.5)	0 (0.0)	10 (6.3)	26 (16.3)			
	Theology year three	26 (16.3)	0 (0.0)	11 (6.9)	15 (9.4)			
	Theology year four	45 (28.1)	1 (0.6)	14 (8.8)	30 (18.8)			
Religious Affiliation	Diocesan	135 (84.4)	2 (1.3)	41 (25.6)	92 (57.5)	2.046	2	0.36
	Religious	25 (15.6)	0 (0.0)	11 (6.9)	14 (8.8)			
Source of Motivation for Priesthood	Nuclear Family	10 (6.2)	0 (0.0)	5 (3.1)	5 (3.1)	2.272	6	0.892
	Relatives	1 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.6)			
	Friends	5 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.3)	3 (1.8)			
	Self-Motivation	144 (90.0)	2 (1.3)	45 (28.1)	97 (60.6)			
Seminary Help	Yes	150 (93.8)	2 (1.3)	47 (29.4)	101 (63.1)	1.584	2	0.458
	No	10 (6.2)	0 (0.0)	5 (3.1)	5 (3.1)			

Table 5 also shows the chi-square test results as age (X2 (4, N = 160) = 2.303, p = .68), level of education (X2 (6, N = 160) = 2.816, p = .832), religious affiliation (X2 (2, N = 160) = 2.046, p = .36), source of motivation for the priesthood (X2 (6, N = 160) = 2.272, p = .892) and contribution from the seminary to personal growth (X2 (2, N = 160) = 1.564, p = .458). Therefore, in this study, there was no association between all demographic characteristics with religious commitment because the p-values generated were greater than 0.05.

3.6. Relationship between Personal Growth Initiative and Religious Commitment

Pearson’s correlation was employed to investigate the relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment among theology students of St. Dominic’s Catholic Major Seminary, Lusaka, Zambia. The outcome of Pearson’s correlation coefficients was summarized and presented in a Scatterplot in Figure 1 and Table 6, respectively.

Figure 1 showed that the data was scattered and posed a low degree of relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment. The scatter plot alone could not establish whether the two variables were positively or negatively correlated, and it was not able to establish the significance of that relationship either. Therefore, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed, and statistical data generated by that test was presented in Table 6.

Table 6 showed that, in terms of strength, there existed a medium positive relationship (n = 160, r = .402, p = .000) between personal growth initiative and religious commitment of theology students of St. Dominic’s Catholic Major Seminary. These results showed that the intention to embrace personal growth among respondents correlated moderately with their commitment to religious life. Since p = .000 is smaller than p = .01, thus the medium positive correlation (r = .402) was significant because it was based only on a 0.0 % chance.

Table 5. Correlation between personal growth initiative and religious commitment

	Personal Growth Initiative	Religious Commitment	
Total Personal Growth Initiative	Pearson Correlation	1	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	160	160
Total Religious Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.402**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	160	160

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

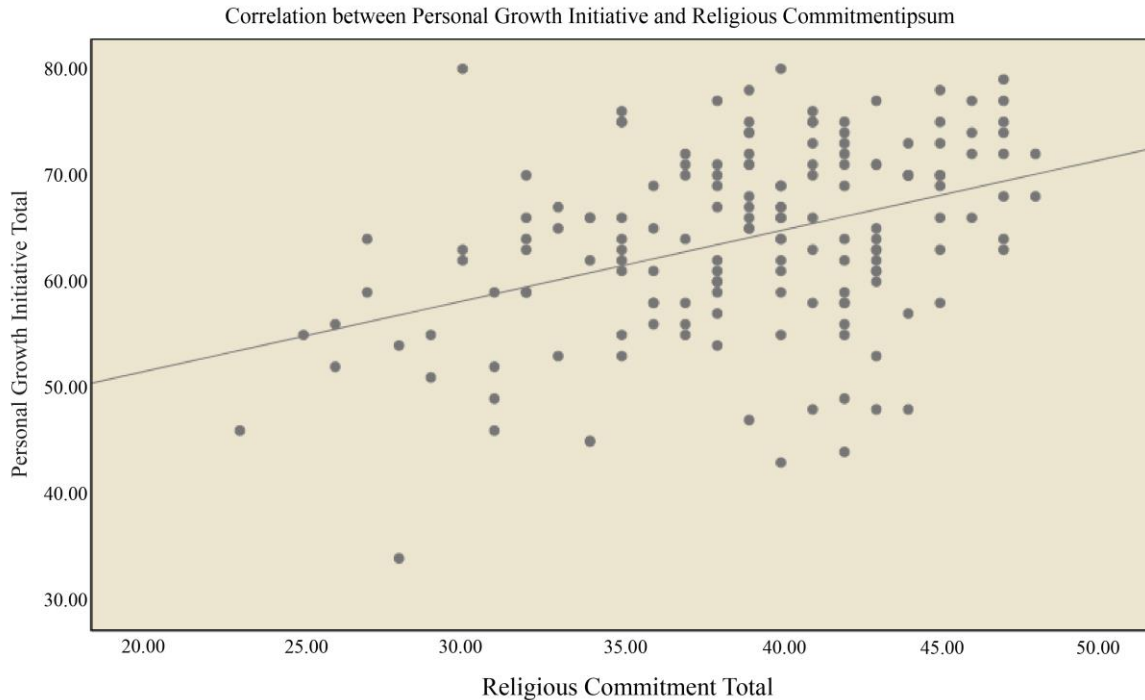


Fig. 1 Relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment

4. Discussion

This present study assessed the levels of personal growth initiative and religious commitment as it looked at the relationship between these two variables among theology students of St. Dominic's, Lusaka, Zambia. The investigation showed that 31 (19.4%) of the participants were low in terms of level of personal growth initiative, 40 (25%) were average in personal growth initiative, and 89 (55.6 %) had a high level of personal growth initiative. The results, in principle, indicated that more than half of the theology students showed a high level in the measured personal growth initiative. Incidentally, the findings about the high levels of personal growth of theology students of the present study were similar to the study in South Africa of students of Industrial Psychology, whose total score of 37.34 was on the first version of PGI (De Jager-van Straaten, 2016). Similarly, the study done in China among Chinese students showed the score of the mean (*M*) in the actual four dimensions of a personal growth initiative, which brought the total to 66.14 points, which was considered a high level of PGI (Yang & Chang, 2014). A study done in Canada among 71 students from Ontarian universities showed that 49.5 was the level of personal growth initiative which was high as well as in this current study (Pagavathsing, 2021). Thus, high levels in this study were an indication that theology students could set up steps to embrace positive change in their lives as they pursued priestly training.

The measure of the levels of religious commitment of Catholic theology students at St. Dominic's Catholic Major Seminary, Lusaka., Zambia, showed that 2 students, representing 1.3%, were low, 52, representing 32.4%, were normal and 106, representing 66.3% were high in level of religious commitment. In principle, students of theology manifested a considerable high level of religious commitment. These results were not consistent with the findings of the Pew Research Centre, which had the global range for Zambia at 80% - 100% (Hackett et al., 2018). The possible explanation was that this range by Pew Research Centre included the general population of Zambia and not just young adults or a particular age range as was the case of theology students. Likewise, the findings of the current study showed a higher score than that of the study among African-American students, whose results showed an average mean score of 30.28, SD = 6.99 (Ajibade et al., 2016). The possible explanation for the difference was that theology students who belonged just to one religion lived the same kind of life and had the same pattern of prayer, unlike the population of African-American students.

Concerning the analysis of the investigated relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment, results obtained indicated that there was a moderately significant positive correlation between personal growth initiative and religious commitment among theology students of St. Dominic's Major Seminary ($r = .402^{**}$; $p <$

.000), $n = 160$ at 0.01 level of significance. The positive correlation was an indication that the two variables, personal growth initiative and religious commitment, were changing constantly in a positive direction together. In other words, the gradual change in one variable automatically implied a change in the other variable.

The outcome of the current study about the correlation was consistent with the obtained results of the study done in the southern region of the USA among 904 college students, $r = .45$, $p < 0.001$ (Vazsonyi & Jenkins, 2010). This correlation results were an indication that the ability of self-control involved in the personal growth of students enabled the college students to have religious motivation and thus refrain from inappropriate sex at an early age. The research revealed that exercising restraint among theology students at St. Dominics was a result of the steady increase in both personal growth and religious commitment. Thus, the study established that exercising restraint was a special component of personal growth initiative which was called intentional behaviour.

Another study that revealed consistent results was an investigation conducted in England among 60 Muslim undergraduate students at the Universities of Southampton and Birmingham (Burney et al., 2017). The investigation revealed a high correlation between personal growth and religious commitment (existential transcendence), which showed a correlation ($r = .53$), $p < .05$. This implied that the students' personal growth helped them to have existential meaning emanating from religious practices. There were high spiritual and behavioural demands in Islam as a religion (Zaman & Naqvi, 2020). The similarity in the correlation was certainly based on the fact that theology students adhered to prayer life and religious practices like Muslims.

A study done in London, England, among 205 students from different religious groups revealed a moderate and positive correlation ($r = .410$, $p < 0.000$), which was also consistent with the current study (Ivtzan, 2014). This consistency was clear evidence that students who were highly religious manifested growth in personal growth initiatives. Thus, the components making up religious commitment and personal growth were seen as worthy to be promoted in the life of the candidates for the ministerial priesthood.

Essentially, this study was able to achieve better results in comparison to state-of-the-art techniques already reported in the literature because many previous studies have not endeavoured to analyse and compute concrete scoring systems of the two research instruments used in this work. This research, with the permission and guidance of the developer of the second version of the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS-II), obtained the scoring ranges that helped in the determination and classification of levels of

personal growth initiative as high, average, and low. Likewise, the observation of the scoring range of the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI) was adjusted beginning with the lowest score in the range of 10 to 25 as opposed to 1-25 which is in the original scale inserted by the developer. If the lowest score is 10, it does not follow logically to have a range that begins from 1. Thus, the sensitivity to the use of the scales helped greatly in shaping the process of results that reflect coherence and systematic calculations.

5. Conclusion

Analysis of demographics showed that the students aged 21-25 years were higher at 43.8% (n = 70), meaning the seminary had a young and energetic generation. It was impressive also to observe that 90% (n = 144) were self-motivated for pursuing the priesthood and that 93.7% (n = 150) agreed that the seminary contributed to their personal growth. This study found that the levels of personal growth initiative were considerably high, 55.6% (n = 890 among theology students). This discovery indicated that theology students were able to handle areas of their lives that needed personal improvement and were ready to change for the better. Likewise, this study showed that many students manifested high levels of religious commitment 66.3% (n = 106). These results were an indication that the students of theology maximized the opportunities given at the seminary to foster their spirituality and devotion as they prepared for their future ministry as religious leaders. This research clearly illustrated the significant relationship that existed between personal growth and religious commitment among theology students at St. Dominic's Major Seminary, Lusaka,

Zambia ($r = .402$, $p = 0.000$). This entailed that the changes in the varying levels of personal growth initiative brought about the changes as well in religious commitment. Additionally, this finding attested to the fact that an increase of units in religious commitment brought about considerable change in personal growth, and thus, it was found worthwhile investing in personal growth initiatives. Therefore, empirically, there was evidence that the two constructs, personal growth initiative and religious commitment, influence each other positively, and attention should be paid to both in the process of forming theology students for the ministerial priesthood.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion in the preceding, this study recommended that the theology students preparing for the ministerial priesthood look keenly at the dimensions of both personal growth and religious commitment to devise new ways that nurture human and spiritual formation. The study results were to be seen as an effective guide to spur candidates for the priesthood to concentrate more on gaining continuous personality balance stemming from personal growth and religious commitment. The study recommended more psychological and spiritual accompaniment to boost low and moderate levels of personal growth initiative and religious commitment among St. Dominic's Major Seminary theology students in Lusaka, Zambia. This boost will, in turn, increase the strength of the established relationship between personal growth initiative and religious commitment among St. Dominic's Major Seminary theology students in Lusaka, Zambia.

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