RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Exploring the influence of spirituality on students well-being

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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By

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at exploring the impact of spirituality on the well-being of students at Rhodes University in South Africa. The study was conducted within a qualitative research paradigm deploying an interpretive phenomenological analysis strategy for data analysis. The study involved a sample of four female Honours students who were all active Christians. The selected students were interviewed to elicit their experiences of spirituality and how this related to their everyday lives. The study used semi-structured interviews in order to get as much information as possible from the small sample of research participants. Data generated in this study was processed, presented and interpreted inductively and hermeneutically in order to identify emerging superordinate themes.

This study found that spirituality was experienced as having a positive impact on well-being by all the four students. The study revealed that belief and faith in God amongst the students resulted in enhanced and positive experiences of hope, optimism and compassion which provided the students with a deeper sense of meaning of life and a source of direction in difficult times. The study further showed that participants experienced spirituality as a regulatory mechanism shaping their lifestyles and behaviours. Participants viewed their spirituality and religiosity as a source of social support helping them to cope with distressful situations. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies done in the field of psychology and spirituality. The fact that this study has shown that spirituality and religion has a positive impact on student's well-being may mean that University administrators and psychologists may find the study interesting and valuable.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this study aimed at exploring the influence of spirituality on students' well-being is my own work. It has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or examination in this or any other University and all the sources I have used are quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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SIGNATURE   DATE

MS N.P. MAGULA

DEDICATION

Embarking on this academic endeavour as a whole was a very challenging experience to me as it meant being away from my two precious girls (Anathi & Likhanye) for two years. I hope that this work will be an inspiration to the two and make them feel proud of their mother. A special thank you to my life partner and husband (Mandla) who took care of my kids while I was away during this time. I'm so grateful to have you in my life. Thank you for allowing me to live my dreams through your continuous encouragements, motivation, love, support and faith.

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<center>**CHAPTER ONE**</center>

Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with the background against which this study was conducted and, the chapter provides an overview of the rationale and motivation for conducting this study. In line with this, chapter one starts by providing the reader with the different theoretical perspectives which I have considered relevant for the carrying out of this study. The theoretical perspectives help the reader to get a sense of what is already known about spirituality and well-being, and what this study sought to achieve. Since the central aim of the study is to study subjective spiritual experiences amongst University students, this chapter will also explore the theoretical positions which justify this focus. The chapter therefore also gives an overview of the Humanistic or Existential theoretical perspective upon which the study is premised. In chapter one, the significance of the study is also highlighted, followed by an outline of the specific goals of the study and research questions to be answered. The chapter will conclude by outlining the structure of this thesis, explaining what each of the chapters focuses on.

1.1 Background of the study

Despite its role in shaping or determining people's lives, it is still widely acknowledged that spirituality has remained neglected as an area of research in psychology (Le Roux, 1998; Smith et al., 2003; Van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). This may be associated with the construction of religion as pathological emerging from the Freudian psychoanalytic theory which was well known for openly discrediting religion on account that it was unscientific (Freud, 1961). Freud (1961) believed that religion was merely an illusion to keep humans from distorting reality and Ellis (1980) described religious beliefs as irrational. Freud's time is usually referred to as the period of modernism which adopted an objective stance to human problems (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). This period was characterised by a quest to construct psychology as a science, based on empirical evidence rather than on subjective human experiences (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). According to this view, the reality is out there, objective, measurable and knowable, and it exists as a truth, eternal, and unchanging, and can therefore be understood objectively (Bonadonna, 2003; Corey, 1996, 2005; Freedman & Combs, 1996; West, 2000). Anything that could not be measured objectively, such as spirituality or religion, could therefore

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not be accepted as a credible entity. Viewed against this background, Freud's position to religion can therefore be understood. This way of thinking had major implications in the field of psychology (Maslow, 1964). The other major school of thought commonly known as the second force in determining the way psychology was done (Maslow, 1964), is behaviourist psychology. The proponents of this school of thought and their subscribers were well-known for dismissing, ignoring or even explicitly scorning the integration of spirituality into psychotherapy (Grof, 1985; Miller, 1999). This is unfortunate considering the fact that numerous studies have shown that the overwhelming majority of the world population is religious (Hathaway et al., 2004). Research findings also show spirituality as a high priority in helping patients in distress to cope during hospitalization (Cole & Pargament, 1999).

Freud's "opiate theory" of religion informed and was transformed by subsequent object relations and attachment theorists. With respect to object relations theory, Rizzuto (1979) claimed that representations of God are an inevitable universal outcome of children's relationships with their parents or other caretakers, along with the child's growing interest in causal events. According to object relations theory, individuals internalize affectively charged representations of their relationships with significant others, such as parents as psychic object (Rizzuto, 1979). Internalized images of parents become templates for comprehending and understanding the development of God images and relationships in individuals. For Rizzuto and other object relations theorists, God's images are representative of security of life and protection (Dickie et al., 1997). Other psychoanalysts have proposed meaningful and productive ways in which spirituality or in most cases religion can function in the developmental processes. Although Carl Jung (1939) saw religion as a very subjective, he appreciated its value in providing assurance and strength, allowing humankind to transcend distressing and stressful times in their everyday lives (Wulff, 1997). Consistent with above claims, Jung (1939) argued that religion was incontestably not only a sociological and historical phenomenon, but also of considerable value to many people. Therefore Jung's view point is one that supports the notion that some expression of the transcendent derive within the person is healthy and is basically natural in the human condition. Jung was also supported by Victor Fankl when reflecting on his experience in Auschwitz during the second world war. Frankl recognized that some prisoners were better able to surivive than others. He discovered that those who had some sense of a higher meaning than just human

experience could surivive greater hardship whearas those that saw no ultimate meaning to life experience, lost the will to live and died. Arguing from a psychoanalytic view Erikson (1968) pointed out that religion play a vital role in personality development. Erikson suggested that the successful resolution of the early stages of personality development entails having faith in religion. Taking his argument further Erikson (1968) acknowledges that religion serve as a source of hope allowing individuals to cope with life threatening situations. On the other hand Maslow's (1971) hierarchy of needs explained that an individual's growth reaches a point at which they self-actualize and this process of self-actualisation is influenced by one's spirituality. Maslow claimed that spirituality was core to personality development and is what gives a person a full sense of being humane.

Martin (2003) pointed out that clinicians have a tendency to scorn or under-value the role of spirituality in shaping personality development and well-being. This has often led to a general neglect of spirituality within psychology practices which, as Kaut (2002) argues, may in turn make the practices inadequate. Tart (1992) seems to agree with Kaut (2002) in his hypothesis that the spiritual aspect of man has been relatively overlooked and considered as pathological by mainstream Western psychology. Other researchers however have argued for a multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional research into spiritual well-being suggesting that such research would not only contribute to the knowledge, but could also improve quality of psychological services as it will attend to the needs of individuals holistically (Moberg, 1984). In this regard Jurkovic and Walker (2006) suggested that psychology needs to take a multi-dimensional approach focusing on all factors that determine an individual's well-being, including spirituality and religion. These two scholars also warned that a "psychology that fails to recognize that religion and spirituality are very important aspects of human existence risks losing its relevance becoming a somewhat emotionally bankrupt discipline" (Jurkovic & Walker, 2006, p. 40). This lack of interest in considering or acknowledging the importance of spirituality in psychology as discussed above is what added significance to the need to conduct this study.

It is already recognised that spirituality and religion as an organised and traditional set of beliefs and practices involving a higher power have great influence on individual life styles and experiences (Cole, 2005; Martin, 2003; Miller, 1999). Spirituality provides insights into what

life is and how to live it (Helminiak, 2001). Ellison and George (1994) proposed that behavioural indicators of religiosity, for example, church attendance and prayer meetings, can affect a person's well-being by providing social support. Ellison and George (1994) further pointed out that personal spiritual and religious experiences provide meaning and a sense of greater or ultimate purpose to life. Similarly Mackey and Sparling (2000) viewed spirituality as associated with personal values used for guidance in day to day living.

In South African schools the education curriculum historically promoted Christian values and did not provoke discussion about other aspects of spirituality or religion. Even after attaining democracy in 1994, the concepts of spirituality and religion continued to be excluded from the formal education curriculum save for a few areas in Life Orientation for Grade Elevens (Roux, 2006). According to Dillard, Abdur-Rashid and Tyson (2000) and Laibile (2000), spirituality has been marginalised and relegated to the periphery of formal education and as such people can practice it outside the walls of the academy. These authors further argued that spirituality has no place within the academy and may be ridiculed because it is an embodied practice or discourse. On the other hand most of the literature on spirituality and schooling focused on matters relating to incorporation of spirituality into primary and secondary education, as well as teacher training. Not much has been done regarding spirituality and religion within the contexts of higher education (Kates, 2002; Miller, 1996). Only recently did literature focusing on spirituality in the context of higher education started to emerge. This study therefore seeks to contribute to this emerging body of knowledge.

Adding significance to the need to study spirituality within higher education contexts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) described spirituality as an important aspect of "human development and health" (Scott, 2003, pp. 117-118). It maybe because of this that colleges in England and Wales are legally mandated to promote and support their students' spiritual growth (Pridemore, 2002). However in South Africa this is not yet the case.

There seems to be an agreement that spirituality, religion and spirituality development may be associated with positive outcomes, and that neglect thereof may be detrimental (Huit & Robbins, 2003; Regnerus & Elder, 2003). The main goal of this study is therefore to explore students'

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experiences of spirituality and well-being within the academic context of Rhodes University in Grahamstown. As already pointed out, this study seeks to contribute to the emerging body of knowledge on spirituality and well-being within the South African higher education context. Findings of this study will therefore be of interest and value to both universities and psychology practitioners in the country.

1.2 Theoretical framework: The Humanistic/Existential theory

The theory in which the study is framed is called Humanistic and Existential Theory. Humanistic models of personality give emphasis to the individual's subjective perception (Ellis, 1973; Frankl, 1959, 1969; Rogers, 1951, 1961). By subjectivity these scholars refer to inwardness where an individual is able to enter into his or her personality in an effort to determine the source of her or his values or actions (Ellis, 1973; Frankl, 1959, 1969; Rogers, 1951, 1961). The existential perspective therefore involves a phenomelogical procedure by which the individual comes hermeutically to understand the world and his or her relations to it (Kierkegaard, 1992). It argues that an individual is able to question the meaning of one's being and to acknowledge and exercise one's freedom inorder to choose and make decision (Kierkegaard, 1992). Therefore being spiritual involves being able to establish an identity of one's self that is not tatally depended upon how others may dictate what this shall be. Rogers (1961) emphasises the role of personal spiritual experiences in shaping the way that individuals perceive and define themselves (Nelson-Jones, 1982; Rogers, 1961). Spirituality in this sense is therefore part of the phenomenological notion of self-concept. In the same line of thinking, Ellis (1962) emphasised the impact of how individual's interpretation of life experiences relate to well-being (Dryden, 1990; Ellis, 1962, 1973). Roger's (1961) focuses on its primary value while Ellis (1962) focuses on how the individual's cognitions and beliefs mediate their experience to create meaning. In both of these arguments the need to accept the subjective nature of spiritual experiences is underscored.

Existential psychologists such as Frankl (1969), also view subjective experiences as constituting reality, or as primary. Frankl (1959) emphasized the essential need of humans to find sentient meaning in their lives in order to live a healthy well adapted life. The existentialists argue that human beings are free and responsible for their choices (Frankl, 2006). Hence, even inaction is a

decision. Existential theory further argues that people suffer from existential despair such as feelings of meaninglessness and a spiritual distress rather than an emotional disease or a mental illness (Frankl, 2006). Therefore important to note is that in this study participants' accounts of spirituality and well-being are regarded or perceived as real because there is no single objective reality, but rather 'multiple realities' unique for each individual (Angen, 2000; Mouton, 1996). Since the subjective experience is primary and real the researcher requires a method such as vicarious introspection that allows for a richer understanding of these multiple realities (Bacal, 1995; Ornstein & Ornstein, 1995). Vicarious introspection enables a researcher to understand another person's experience from his or her perspective and or context. Empathy is an essential element to vicarious introspection (Bacal, 1995; Ornstein & Ornstein, 1995). Thus in practice and of importance in this study was the need to listen carefully to the life stories of the students, and locate myself within their shoes. The Humanistic and Existential theory used in this study was therefore very relevant as it acknowledges that reality is subjective and can be understood through empathy (Ellis, 1973; Frankl, 1969; Rogers, 1961).

1.3 Justification of the study

Despite increased interest in understanding the impact of spirituality on the well-being of university students over the past decade, little research has been done in South Africa to fully understand this phenomenon. This lack of research is also prevalent within Rhodes University in Grahamstown where the only three studies so far done focused on spirituality in everyday life, the relationship between spirituality and sexuality, signs of well-being amongst students but none of the studies investigated the impact of spirituality on students' well-being per se (Cunningham, 1994; Ebden, 2000; Young, 2009).

Against this background it is therefore justifiable for me to conduct this study which focuses on spirituality and well-being within the context of Rhodes University. The study sought to fill the existing knowledge gap and may generate interest amongst future researchers.

1.4 Study purpose and questions

This study seeks to explore the influence of spirituality on students' well-being. In order to do that the study will attempt to answer the following questions;

i.   What are students' experiences of spirituality?

ii. How have students' experiences of spirituality impacted on their well-being?

Insights gained from answering these two research questions will enable the researcher to also make recommendations to guide future studies.

1.5 Thesis outline

The study report will be structured into six chapters and below is a brief description of each of the chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces and discusses the background of the study. This chapter also looks at the rationale and justification of the study. This chapter also discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter one further provides an overview of the purpose of the study and the questions which the study seeks to answer. Chapter one is therefore an orientation to the entire study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relevant to the study. It discusses the challenges associated with development of a clear conceptual understanding of key terms to be used in this study, namely "spirituality and religion". The chapter also reviews previous research, identifying theoretical arguments made regarding the relationship between spirituality and religion as well as their impact on well-being. In this chapter a review of studies done globally and locally ensues. The chapter therefore outlines the body of literature that was used in this study.

Chapter 3 discusses key features of the qualitative research design used to conduct this study. The chapter talks about how the study was actually done, i.e. how participants were selected, data gathered and then analysed. In this chapter an overview of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) which was used as a framework for data analysis is given. Chapter three therefore helps the reader to understand the research processes from data collection to meaning making.

Chapter 4 of this study report is a presentation and interpretation of the data. The chapter provides detail on participants' accounts of spirituality and religion. Emerging from the data the chapter discusses the five super-ordinate themes namely optimism and faith, self-management,

supportive relationship with God and other Christians, spiritual practices as resource activities, and managing relationship and attitude to others. Chapter five therefore other than presenting the results also provide thick descriptions of the emerging themes, upon which a discussion of results in the next chapter is done.

Chapter 5 following from the five themes identified in chapter four, chapter five discusses the findings of this study. Drawing on literature and data the chapter makes knowledge claims or concluding statements about how spirituality impacts on students' well-being. Thus in chapter five the two research questions are answered based on the data gathered in relation to the available literature. Chapter five is therefore the discussion of results section of this thesis. It presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by reflecting back onto the entire study, identifying limitations and contributions of the study. The chapter also highlights what may be some of the implications of its findings for future studies and the practice of psychology. The chapter ends by making a few recommendations to guide engagement with research around spirituality within University contexts. Chapter six concludes the thesis.

Conclusion

Chapter one provided an orienting overview of the study. The chapter discussed the rationale behind the process of counducting this study. It argued for the significance of doing more research focusing on spirituality within South Africa's higher education contexts. The chapter justified the need to carry out this study by pointing out what the findings of the study might be used for. The chapter also spells out the main goals and purpose of the study as well as the questions to be answered. In chapter one an outline of the thesis, spelling out what each of the chapters focuses on is given. Chapter one has therefore provided the background information to the study that readers would need to understand the entire study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual framework used in this study. The chapter draws on a number of definitions offered by different scholars to develop a conceptual framework for working with the notion of spirituality and religion. The chapter discusses and problematizes the relationship between spirituality and religion. Further to that the chapter also interrogates, through an intensive review of available literature, what the impact of spirituality on individual well-being has been reported to be. Acknowledging that spirituality is complex and experienced differently this chapter also highlights both the positive and negative impacts of spirituality on well-being. Chapter two also looks at the current status of research pertaining to spirituality and well-being, both global and locally. In so doing, this chapter further makes an argument for my decision to embark on this study. Chapter two therefore basically presents both the theoretical context upon which I motivated for the need to conduct this study and the literature that I used to make sense of data.

2.1 Spirituality and religion: How do the two relate?

I open this section by acknowledging that there has, as Kellehear (2000) argued, not been any single universally agreed-upon definition of the terms spirituality and religion. Spirituality has been defined differently by different scholars (Kellehear, 2000). On the other hand and not surprisingly, scholars of religion have also not agreed upon the most befitting definition of religion with some concluding that no precise definition is possible (Clouser, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Regardless of the difficulties associated with defining these terms it was important to note that the terms religion and spirituality have often been used interchangeably (Hill et al., 2000). Contrary to this other scholars have however argued that religion and spirituality are related but are not synonymous (Hay & Socha, 2005). In addition there are some scholars who also suggest that religion and spirituality are not interchangeable terms and emphasises the distinctiveness between these two constructs (Kamya, 2000; Piedmont & Leach, 2002). Despite these conceptual disagreements, there seems to be a general consensus that spirituality involves a belief in a higher power (Bartoli, 2007; Breitbart et al., 2004; Cole, 2005; Cole & Pargament, 1999). Scholars such as Delaney (2005), Elkins (1998), Frick, Riedner, Fegg, Hauf and Borasio

(2006) and Kaut (2002), argue that spirituality exists on a continuum and incorporates existential philosophy and practice (the search for meaning and purpose in life) as its important element. Other scholars have simply defined spirituality as one's search for meaning in life (Kaut, 2002; Martin, 2003; McClain, Rosenfeld, & Breitbart, 2003). What makes it even more challenging to define spirituality is its embeddedness within personal or individual life experiences (Bartoli, 2007; Grof, 1998; Helminiak, 2001). Tart (1992, p.4) defined spirituality as: "that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, and with purpose". Spirituality is therefore broad, complex and multidimensional. For instance Kellehear (2000) advocates a multi-dimensional view allowing one to appreciate the diversity of people's experiences of spirituality. Kellehear (2000) argues that the idea of spirituality as an existential higher purpose has many dimensions some of which are hope, meaning, affirmation, mutuality and connectedness.

Kellehear (2000) further argues that spirituality includes sub-dimensions like peace and reconciliation, reunion with others, prayer, forgiveness and moral and social analysis. On the other hand Kellehear (2000) discusses religious transcendence as entailing sub-dimensions such as religious reconciliation, divine forgiveness, religious rites or sacraments and eternal life and hope. Even though these dimensions are discussed separately, Kellehear (2000) pointed out that in real life all of them are experienced concurrently.

Although spirituality is arguably rooted in formal religion many scholars argue that it must be regarded as a stand-alone, separate and subjective affair (Bartoli, 2007; Elkins, 1998; Grof, 1998; Helminiak, 2001; Hodge, 2006). In comparison religion refers to prescribed and organised beliefs, doctrines and rituals, all of which involve relatedness to a higher power for example God (Cunninghamm, 1994; & Hodge, 2006). Elkins (1998) arguing for the need to conceive religion as separate from spirituality pointed out that there are many people who are highly spiritual, yet not religious and also many who are religious but not necessarily spiritual. Therefore being religious does not make one automatically spiritual. Elkins (1998) further called for respect for genuine spirituality, regardless of whether it is found inside or outside of religious settings.
 Idler (2003) has stressed the importance of differentiating between religiousness and spirituality. He acknowledged that although many people may regard spirituality and religion as synonymous

there is evidence of existence of spiritual experiences that are not necessarily religious. The distinction that Elkins makes is interesting if one considers Hodge's definition of religion. While Hodge (2006) agrees with those authors who define religion as an institutionalised set of rules, beliefs and practices, he further defines religion as the expression of spirituality. This definition seems to be at variance with Elkins (1998) argument that not all religious people are necessarily spiritual. And what comes out in this review of literature is that the debate of whether spirituality and religion are the same or that one implies the other has largely remained open. It is against this background that working with the provided definitions I needed to develop a more inclusive and broader conceptual framework of spirituality and religion for use within this study.

In this study religion and spirituality are therefore not used interchangeably. In this study spirituality is understood as experienced differently for each individual through the guidance of the higher power whereas religion is constructed as encompassing beliefs, laws, rituals and practices associated with an institution that one is obliged to follow or conform to (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Furthermore spirituality is in this study regarded as a broader concept that encompasses religion.

2.2 Relationship between spirituality and well-being

Spirituality has been considered by various authors to be an important aspect of well-being, namely physical, psychological, social and behavioural well-being (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999; Keyes, Shmotikin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryan & Dec, 2001). Hodge (2001) sees spirituality as also pursued to enhance individual well-being rather than pursued for its own sake. According to Abdel-Khalek (2010) well-being is conceived of as a satisfactory condition of existence that entails individual happiness, joy, fulfilment, pleasure and other features of a life that is full and complete. Two types of well-being can be distinguished namely hedonistic and eudemonistic well-being (Van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). According to Kahneman, Dierner and Schwarz (1999) hedonistic well-being derives from experiencing as much joy as possible and avoiding pain and discomfort whilst eudemonic well-being is actually more than just striving for as many pleasurable experiences as possible. Van Dierendonck and Mohan (2006) further argue that eudemonistic well-being is about meaning, self-realization and achieving the best one can be. Well-being in this sense therefore refers to optimal psychological functioning. Hedonistic well-

being is therefore more related to feeling relaxed, happy and without problems, whereas eudemonistic well-being is related to feeling challenged and to activities that offer the opportunity for personal growth and development. Important for this study is that Temane and Wissing (2006) found a link between eudemonistic well-being and spirituality. Temane and Wissing (2006) hypothesized that this link is associated with the existential component of spiritual well-being and with the expression of spirituality in activities that gives pleasure such as music and song. Spiritual engagement, for example as in praying and meditating is concerned with the process of receiving strength, support, and guidance (Gibson & Parker, 2003).

Durkeim's (1951) classical theory on the importance of social integration highlights how religion may impact on the well-being of an individual. First, Durkeim (1951) argues that social institutions like religion can protect individuals from egoism by helping them to mediate challenges associated with limited sense of belonging or integration. According to Durkeim (1951) social institutions such as religion promote individual well-being by enhancing one's sense of purpose and life meaning. Durkeim (1951, p. 248) pointed out that "without societal institutions like religion to control individual desires for more than they can attain many individuals would condemn themselves to a state of perpetual unhappiness". Therefore being spiritual or religious moderate individual's desires and thereby allowing them to achieve better well-being. In support of this view Ellison and George (1994) and Greenfield, Vaillant and Marks (2007) argued that religion has a positive impact on individual well-being. According to these scholars engagement with religious practices provides individuals with access to social support from which to cultivate social identity and avoid negative health behaviours. Greenfield, Vaillant and Marks (2007) further claimed that spiritual experiences, regardless of the degree to which they derived from more culturally based forms of religion have potential to enhance individual well-being.

There seem to be general agreement that spirituality is important among young and old people with research suggesting that spirituality contributes to positive well-being and positive methods of coping (Miller, 2003; West, 2000). In support to these research findings Oman and Thoresen (2006) cite research with 15000 American college students suggesting that spirituality was associated with fewer suicide attempts, less suicide ideation, lower traits of anxiety in at risk

students and with fewer symptoms of depression and faster recovery from depressive episode (Smith, McCullough & Poll, 2003). This is further supported by Koenig et al. (1994) who conducted a similar study on 2,969 persons of all ages. Koenig et al. (1994) found a lower rate of depression among the more religious persons. Van Dierendonck and Mohan (2006) also cite research investigating the relationship between spirituality and psychological mood states in response to life change, suggesting that findings persistently indictate that spiritual well-being, existential well-being and spiritual outlook showed a strong inverse relationship with negative mood. Other inverstigators have reported similar results (lower levels of anxiety, lower rates of suicide and depression and more positive attitude toward life) among those who are more religious involved (O'Conner et al., 1990; Temane & Wissing, 2006). Along the same lines, Pargarment, Smith, Koenig and Perez (1998) supports the view that religion may help people deal better with negative life events and their attendants to stress. It follows from this argument that spirituality is likely to be important for students well-being. And it is this kind of assumption that further sharpens my quest to conduct this study to explore how students' spiritual experiences relate to their well-being.

2.3 How does spirituality impact on well-being?

Following from the above discussion around what spirituality and religion entail, as well as how the two relate to well-being I now want to look at what has already been said about some of the positive and negative impacts of spirituality and religion on individual well-being. Doing this review further helped me to broaden my understanding of spirituality and religion as key concepts in this study.

2.3.1 Impacts of spirituality on well-being

The following are some of the widely accepted and commonly debated positive and negative impacts of spirituality and religion on individual well-being.

2.3.1.1 Spirituality and substance abuse

Spirituality and religion has been associated with helping individuals to regulate substance abuse. This is because of, the internalization of religious norms and fear of God's punishment, makes individuals think carefully about substance abuse (Cotton et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2001; Pargarment et al., 1998). For example, some religions discourage the use of alcohol and other

activities which are viewed as immoral and not good for one's well-being, including sexual activity outside of marriage (Ironson et al., 2002; Melanie et al., 2010; Park, 2007; Strawbridge et al., 2001). Park (2007) also claimed that many religious traditions promote the treatment of the body as sacred (e.g. body as a temple). Consistent with this line of argument, studies have linked religion and spirituality with specific patterns of life involving avoidance of unhealthy behaviors e.g. alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, risky sexual activity practices (Ellison et al., 2001; Koenig et al., 1994; Melanie et al., 2010; Park, 2007). Studies done by Miller and Gur (2002) and Regnerus and Elder (2003), showed that spiritual students are considered less likely to display delinquent behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and are more likely to abstain from illegitimate sexual activities. This finding corroborates the results of two further studies which correlated spiritual and religious participation with increased probability of abstinence from alcohol among a multicultural sample of rural youths in the Southwest United States (Hodge et al., 2001) as well as being consistent with the effect of such participation on tobacco use among adolescents (Weaver et al., 2005). Similarly, in another study that examined the relationship of spirituality and alcohol use among college students, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) was utilized (Ellison & Paloutzian, n.d.). The SWBS measures perception of personal spiritual quality of life. University students with a higher level of spirituality were found to be less likely to report using drugs and alcohol and to have a lower rate of risky behaviour (Hammermeister & Peterson, 2001).

Further studies as reported by Leigh, Bowen and Marlate (2005) on the impact of spirituality on health behaviours have also confirmed the positive impact of spirituality on reducing substance abuse. In a study by Leigh, Bowen and Marlate (2005) students who had higher levels of spirituality showed lower rates of risky health behaviours, fewer mental health problems and utilized spiritual coping to manage physical health and develop a sense of peace in times of hardship (Leigh, Bowen, & Marlate, 2005). These observations are consistent with the findings of similar studies focusing on the impact of spirituality on university students' experiences and alcohol consumption. For example in her study Freitas (2008) claimed that if universities increased their openness to religion and spirituality, the discussion of sexual excess and sexual restraints would help students to develop an overall healthier view of sexuality. Freitas (2008) argued that binge drinking which is associated with being non-spiritual greatly contributes to

risky sexual behaviour and undesired sexual activity. As such, promoting access to spirituality within university campuses may help redress such problems.

Melanie et al. (2010) who conducted a study to examine the role of religiousness as a protective or risk factor for sexual initiation and contraceptive behaviour among a sample of predominantly African-American female adolescents, found that those with higher religiosity were less likely to have ever had sex. Important for this study, respondents in Melanie et al.'s study (2010) also reported that their religious beliefs affected their decisions regarding preventing pregnancy, engaging in risky sexual activities and substance abuse. It can therefore be argued that as confirmed by previous studies spirituality and religion is somehow associated with reduced substance abuse, delay of sexual practice and lower number of sexual partners all of which may contribute to improved students' well-being.

On the other hand Barnes, Plotnikoff, Fox and Pendleton (2000) have found that a belief that God is in control of one's life and health may influence individuals to engage in risky health behaviours. Secondly it is important to note that some religions prohibit the use of alcohol or other intoxicants and forbid sexual activity outside marriage (Barnes et al., 2000). However if these behaviours and beliefs are not adhered to or are rejected, it could as earlier on mentioned result in feelings of guilt, doubt, shame, stigmatization and at times withdrawal of support or explicit condemnation by religious leader. Krause and Wulff (2004) also argue that people who have doubt about their faith or commitment to existing religious beliefs and norms tend to be less satisfied with their lives, and experience more depressive symptoms than individuals who feel more certain about their religious convictions.

Consistent with above claims Exline (2002) reported that religious individuals are expected to be exemplary by adhering to religious teachings but when they fail to do so they may resort to substance abuse as a coping mechanism. Exline (2002) further pointed out that internal conflict experienced because of failure to adhere to religious life styles may result in negative emotions including feeling guilt, hypocrisy and self-criticism. However little is known about such negative impacts of spirituality and religion, perhaps because research has tended focus almost exclusively on the positive aspects. Thus it is difficult to fully determine from previous studies

the extent to which spirituality may lead to the development of addictive behaviors amongst students. Therefore whilst a lot of research and literature confirms the positive impact that spirituality and religion has on moderating substance abuse it must also be borne in mind that being spiritual has its own dark side.

2.3.1.2 Spirituality and stress management

The application of spiritual practices for the purpose of stress reduction has gained considerable justification from research studies. According to Pargament et al. (1998) spiritual activities have been found to be effective stress reduction techniques, used by diverse populations including university students, cancer patients and employees in high-stress professional settings. These scholars noted that religious individuals are more inclined to use religion as a coping mechanism. This type of coping has been labeled positive religious coping and involves activities such as trusting in God's love, making benevolent religious reappraisals, using a collaborative approach with God when faced with problems, seeking spiritual support, and seeking support from members of one's religious group. In general, positive religious coping styles are favorably related to psychological adjustment indices, such as stress-related growth, spiritual growth, and greater life satisfaction (Pargament et al., 1998). Pargament et al. (1998) among others further asserted that the cognitive aspects of religion and spirituality offer a stable and meaningful view of the world, thus having a huge effect on how individuals appraise their own life experiences. Studies have also shown that spirituality and religion provide means for individuals to cope with stressful life situations. According to Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) religious individuals are better equipped to cope with negative life events and as such are able to reduce the perceived stressfulness of those events. Congruent with this Park (2007) and Ironson et al. (2002) acknowledged that religious people believe that their lives are controlled by a Higher power and that negative life events happen for a reason or that life events are opportunities for spiritual growth and as such they experience life events as less threatening and less stressful. Spirituality and religion have been therefore widely reported to help individuals manage and cope with negative and potentially stressful life events.

Further to the above argument it was observed that religiously committed individuals have relatively hopeful and positive outcome expectancies and that hopefulness provides them with

strength and comfort in the face of life difficulties (Greef & Loubser, 2008; Ironson et al., 2002, Sacco, 1996). Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) and Pargarment et al. (1998) expanded this argument by claiming that approaching negative life events through religion provides the comfort and strength needed to cope with difficult times. Consistent with this argument, Walsh (2003) is of the opinion that spiritual beliefs have an influence on the way in which adversity is thought of and managed.

West (2000) reported that forgiveness, which is an aspect of spirituality, allows people to move forward without being influenced by the past. West (2000) further argues that in forgiveness, the person recognizes that they have the right to revenge but they downplay that feeling and instead choose to respond with compassion and love towards the perpetrator, nurturing the possibilities of improved relations. On a different but closely related note Mathew (1994) has found that spiritual practices such as prayer improves the levels of forgiveness, relaxation and a positive state of mind, through what is called healing resentment. In practice it means that forgiveness frees one from continued resentment or hatred of the offending other.

Consistent with the above perspectives, other studies (Koenig et al., 1994, 1998) examining coping strategies amongst different populations including persons facing serious health problems or in the midst of severe life stress, concluded that religion (faith in God, prayer, scripture reading, or attending church, mosque or synagogue) was the most important factor that enabled them to cope with distressing and stressful life circumstances. For example one of the behavioral spiritual practices, namely prayer, has been associated with individual well-being (Ellison et al., 2001; McConnell et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2003). In line with above claims, Koenig, George, Meador, Blazer and Ford (1994) found that those experiencing distress and suffering turn to prayer as a coping mechanism. These scholars further speculated that daily prayer may reduce perceptions of pain, suggesting that prayer may serve as a distraction from pain and as such generate positive emotions and a sense of relaxation, reducing distress. This view is also supported by Walsh (2003), who stated that frequency of prayer is usually higher during time of crises and that people pray for guidance, strength and wisdom for the most effective way to handle their problems. Hence when faced with distressing and stressful situations spiritual people often use their spirituality to cope.

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Some scholars suggest that increased thought control, resulting from spiritual practices such as prayer or meditation facilitate healing, reconciliation and forgiveness (Miller, 1999; West, 2000). These scholars further argue that clinging to hatred can have negative psychological consequences to people making forgiveness, as already pointed out, an important aspect of spirituality. Stress reduction or management of stress is important for well-being because unmanaged chronic stress may exacerbate or lead to disorders and diseases such as heart failure, anxiety, depression, hypertension (Ellison et al., 2001; Matthew, 1994; West, 2000).

Conversely research has also shown that some individuals may use religious activities to avoid their problems (Ellison & Taylor, 1996). A small but growing body of theory and research raises the possibility that religiosity may exacerbate the negative effects of at least some types of stressors (Ellison et al., 2001; Pargament et al., 1998; Strawbridge et al., 1998). Many people turn to prayer or other religious activities when facing various types of stressful events or conditions, and these activities may serve as nothing more than just being means of avoiding facing reality or dealing with issues at hand. This phenomenon is what Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) referred to as negative religious coping. Whilst spirituality can be used as a way of coping with life challenges it must be borne in mind that it does not in the final analysis really fix the problems. For instance Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) in their study also found that participants who utilised negative religious coping such as avoiding difficulties through religious activities were, associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms.

In addition Pearce, Little and Perez (2003) found negative interpersonal religious experiences to be associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms among adolescents. In their study individuals experiencing compromised integration within spiritual and religious settings were reported to suffer from depression and reduced self-esteem. This was because failure to fully adhere to laid down norms and values of a particular religion makes one feel uncomfortable and detached from the others. Research has also linked spiritual struggles to various negative psychological and physical outcomes. In a meta-analysis of 49 studies, Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) concluded that spiritual struggles are related to negative well-being. These findings illustrate, as already argued above, the observation that spirituality may also lead to anxiety, depression, and distress. Similarly, in a recent cross-sectional study, spiritual struggle was

associated with higher levels of psychological distress, including depression and suicidal tendencies, in both clinical and non-clinical samples (Exline, Yali & Sanderson, 2000). In this regard it is therefore important in this study to note that whilst spirituality has potential to help individuals cope with and manage distressing and stressful situations, it can also have its own pitfalls. Spirituality is therefore arguably not a substitute for taking responsibility over challenging life situations.

2.3.1.3 Spirituality and social support

Several studies have shown that spirituality provides a source of social support (Cotton et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2001; Fukuyama & Seig, 1999; McConnell et al., 2006; Park, 2007). Engagement in spiritual practices such as attending church services, prayer meetings and meditation has widely been reported as providing social support and improved well-being. Consistent with this observation, scholars such as Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) and Strazdins and Broom (2007) argue that spiritual groups such as church congregations, within which members interact regularly, provide emotional and material support. For instance many religious groups have formal social welfare programs benefiting their membership, particularly the poor and the elderly (Ellison et al., 2001). As Sherman (1996) argues spirituality involves a relationship with others and this relationship manifests in the form of sharing with and helping others. Studies have also shown that regular church-goers tend to have larger social networks e.g. more friends and associates to interact with (Bradely, 1995; Park, 2007; Smith, McCullough & Poll, 2003). Within these spiritual settings, individuals rely on one another for continued spiritual support and growth.

Previous studies have also shown that the sense of belonging and social integration that comes from regular interaction with others within one's congregation also provide valuable support and, as such, positively influence individual well-being. According to Wulff (1997) social interactions such as attending church services, provide strength and support in life, and enriched individuals' sense of meaning of life. Wulff (1997) further argues that social support emerging from spiritual engagement helps individuals to handle stress and increases their feelings of happiness, love, pride and belonging. According to Wulff (1997) when people receive emotional and material support, they are more likely to recover from distressing and stressful situations and thus gain

improved well-being. Wulff (1997)'s observation is supported by Durkeim (1951) and Greef and Loubser (2008) who reported that spiritual support can help one to cope with challenging life times by buffering the impact of negative life events such as stress, and chronic problems. Some scholars further propose that providing social support to others is also associated with the improved well-being of the support giver. In agreement with this Strazdins and Broom (2007) said that being with a person during stressful times, comforting them, listening, or showing interest and concern could be beneficial to the mental health and well-being of the support giver. These scholars suggested that providing support could enhance the support giver's sense of self-fulfillment.

Other scholars have however pointed out that there is a cost to giving social support. According to Antonucci and Jackson (1990) giving support occurs within the context of social relationships subjected to the rules of exchange and as such it is not always equally beneficial to both parties. In support of this argument these two scholars argue that reciprocity, indebtedness, and mutual obligations are part of the relationship. They pointed out that giving more than one receives violates the norms of this supportive relationship leading to frustration, burden and poor mental health for the support giver. This theory is further supported by Strazdins and Broom (2007) who stated that giving support is an emotional effort and that the support givers also feel the need to be supported just as the individuals they are helping. Strazdins and Broom (2007) also pointed out that giving support can in some instances increase the likelihood of exposure to distress. In agreement with this argument Park (2007) also highlighted the negative effects of giving social support that have been linked to experiences such as constraints, criticism and pressure on the part of the support giver. Therefore it is critical that whilst, as discussed in this section, spirituality may have a positive impact on well-being by providing social support, the act of giving support is also linked to a number of negative impacts on the support giver's well-being. This problematic and dialectical relationship between the support giver and receiver has been substantially documented and will help me understand and make meaning of data to be generated in this study.

2.4 Global and local perspectives on spirituality and students well-being

Scholars such as Bates, Cooper and Wachs (2001) as well as Wood and Ironson (1999) claimed that spirituality has a powerful effect on life and has been associated with numerous positive outcomes in student well-being. Research done by Lippman and Keith (2006) shows that 95% of Americans between 14 and 21 years old believe in a God or Universal spirit. Almost three-quarters say they pray, and about one-half indicating that they had attended religious services within the preceding week. For these students spirituality or religion is an important factor determining the value and meaning of their lives. In the United States nationwide surveys have repeatedly illustrated how Americans strongly hold onto religious belief systems. For instance Cotton, Zebracki, Rosenthal, Tsevat and Drotar's (2006) survey showed that 95% of Americans' believe in God, 90% pray, 85%-95% say religion is very or fairly important to them, and 41% attend church or synagogue weekly or more often. Thus, for most Americans, spirituality and religion appears to form a central part of everyday life activities. In a highly regarded international study by Lindholm (2007) from Higher Education Research Institution (HERI) on the spirituality of university students, spirituality in higher education was observed as the student's search for meaning and purpose. Beginning 2003, HERI explored how University students conceive spirituality as well as how it influences their lives. Lindholm (2007) found that students and educators identified spirituality as an agent influencing their academic achievements. The same study also revealed that students, who were self-labelled as spiritual, could cope more easily with hardships.

Consistent with the above argument, studies reported by Good and Willoughby (2006), Regnerus and Elder (2003) have supported the observation that spirituality enhances students' academic performance. Walker and Dixon (2002) of East Carolina University conducted a similar study to Lindholm (2007) on African American and European American university students. Their findings also revealed that spiritual beliefs and participation in religious activities were positively related to academic performance and positive health outcomes for both groups. Similar to Lindholm (2007)'s study, Good and Willoughby (2006) also investigated the interaction between religiosity, as defined by church attendance, and spirituality as defined by personal beliefs in God or a Higher power on psychosocial adjustment. Their study showed that spirituality does not act as a promoter of academic success solely among high risk students but also decreases

vulnerability associated with academic failure in very low risk adolescents. These findings are further corroborated by other studies which showed that students' participation in church activities had an independent and positive impact on educational expectations and as such determined behaviours such as missing classes or late submission of assignments (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

In a South African context, various studies have also confirmed the positive link between spirituality and well-being (Cunningham, 1994; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Ebden, 2000; Greef & Loubser, 2008). Sacco (1996) conducted an exploratory investigation with thirty-five social work students in their first year of study at the University of the Witwatersrand to investigate the significance of spirituality. The majority of the students saw spirituality as providing guidance, clarity, hope, optimism, strength, compassion, and confidence, as well as the opportunity to be thankful for life. These findings somehow suggest that the role of hope in individuals' lives is also critical. Hope, trust and faith that God cares whatever situation an individual is in, is therefore a key aspect of spirituality (Sacco, 1996). In line with Sacco's research findings, Miller (1999) described hope as something that comes from reliance on High power or God rather than one's own control. He further suggest that one of the ways of gaining hope is to surrender what is beyond one's control to the Higher power. Findings of these studies may imply that a strong faith allows students to hold onto happiness even when facing challenges within their academic contexts.

Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger and Gorsuch (2003) further argues that qualities such as gratification, hope, optimism and compassion may provide individuals with a deeper sense of meaning in life and a source of direction and comfort in difficult times. According to these scholars, the attainment of compassion and wisdom is one of the primary tenets of spirituality. Compassion refers not to feelings of pity or sympathy for another, as it is often conceptualised, but to a favourable attitude of kindness, tenderness and understanding towards another, grounded in the ability to perceive and experience equality with all sentient beings (Hopkins, 2001). Compassion also relates to the recognition of the suffering of others and a desire to work towards its alleviation (Bailey, 2004). It is believed that through the practice of spiritual activities individuals can develop the awareness of the impact they have on others. The practice of spiritual

activities amongst individuals possesses a moral dimension which positively influences their relationships with the other resulting in improved well-being.

In a study on significance of spirituality, Sacco (1996) further discovered that participants described their relationship with Divinity in the following ways; intimate and assertive, asking and receiving all that is good, a close relationship, ideal father, respectful and formal, parent-child relationship, is everywhere and involved in everything, does not inflict evil and is readily available to individual who are in need. These findings revealed that the participants experienced a powerful sense of God's presence and see the bond with God as a source of intimate communication and hope. The findings of this study are also similar to findings from other studies which correlated the core experience of spirituality as a central focus on a God for the provision of all the individual's physical, emotional and spiritual needs (Rogers, 1989). A study by Cunningham (1994) on Christian experiences involving university students showed basic similarities in relation to the themes identified by Rogers (1989). The themes explicated were: God is experienced as a personal friend, the experience of God as an awesome divinity, God is experienced as physically present, God is experienced as participating actively in communication using scriptures, and the experience of having someone to talk to. However it is also important to note that findings of other studies have revealed a negative correlation between spirituality and academic performance. Gartner, Larson and Allen (1991) conducted a study amongst social work master's degree students from Walla Walla College to examine the effect of religion and spirituality on mental health. Their study showed that spirituality and religion was not always positively associated with improved mental health and high intellect but in some cases led to conservatism. Such findings alert us to the danger of uncritically perceiving spirituality and religion as always having a positive impact on individual well-being.

In this study it was therefore important for me to be always alert to the complexity of working with the elusive concepts like spirituality and religion. Thus my attempt in this chapter is to unpack the two terms (spirituality and religion) and review what available literature and previous research say is a significant part of this study. For the purpose of emphasis, I remind the reader that in this study I decided to work with a broader concept of spirituality- one in which religion is embedded. I also remind the reader that the impact of spirituality on well-being, as discussed in

this chapter has already been widely researched and my interest here is to explore the territory from the perspective of Rhodes University students.

Conclusion

Chapter two presents the literature review informing this study. In essence the chapter reviewed the numerous ways in which spirituality and religion have been defined over time, conceptualised or described. In the chapter different views of what spirituality and religion are have been presented and discussed. Closely related to the focus of my study I further looked at the relationship between spirituality and well-being. From this the chapter moved onto to reflect on the numerous studies done around spirituality and religion within the global and local contexts. Attention was given to the need to look at both studies claiming that spirituality impacts positively on well-being and those that claimed the opposite. Chapter two therefore provides literature informing the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used in this study. The chapter describes the qualitative orientation of the study as well as the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) used to analyse data. In this chapter my decision to conduct this study within a qualitative research paradigm is explained and justified. The same argument is also presented for my use of IPA as an approach to data analysis and meaning making. This chapter further provides information on the techniques used to collect data. How the data collection tools relate to the qualitative nature and focus of the study is also discussed. Chapter three also covers issues regarding how I selected the four research participants. The use of purposive sampling is thus discussed and justified. Chapter three is therefore a summary of all research methodology considerations.

3.1 Qualitative research design

This study was conceptualised and conducted within a qualitative research paradigm. Given that this study was aimed at understanding students' experiences of spirituality and well-being it was important that I work with a research paradigm that allows participants to provide detailed amount of information regarding their spiritual experiences and everyday campus life (Creswell, 1998; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Qualitative research is descriptive and open-ended in nature and, as such, had the potential to give participants the freedom to speak generously about how spirituality impacts on their well-being (Creswell, 1998). As Smith and Osborn (2003) further pointed out qualitative research is directly concerned with the interpretation of experience as it is lived, felt and constructed by the participants.

Bowling (1997) contends that qualitative methods are concerned with understanding the meaning and impact of issues in a complex way. In the same vein Sifunda (2001) argued that in-depth understanding of how people make sense of their lives is of great significance to qualitative researchers. Sifunda (2001) further pointed out that qualitative researchers need to ascertain how, as was the case in this study, participants make sense of their spiritual experiences. A qualitative

approach is usually preferred when the aim is to convey the complexity of the situation in order to provide the readers with sufficient detail to judge for themselves whether the researcher's interpretations of the phenomenon are justifiable (Denscombe, 1998). Such research stems from the epistemological assumption that there is no one universal reality for a social phenomenon, but rather multiple realities that are contingent upon each individual's situation and context (Angen, 2000; Mouton, 1996). The underlying philosophy of qualitative research stems from the interpretive paradigm (Willig, 2001). Interpretive philosophy claims that the nature of knowledge is subjective (Neuman, 1997). Thus, the qualitative researcher needs to immerse him or herself in the data in order to interpret participants' experiences and actions within context (Neuman, 1997). Therefore, subjective students' spiritual experiences, as observed in this study, are considered real, given their context. It is this 'subjective reality' that this study explores and describes. Therefore the decision to conduct this study using a qualitative research methodology was influenced by the nature and focus of my study.

3.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Data generated in this study, which ultimately consist of the narratives or stories told by the four students regarding their spiritual experiences and well-being, was presented and interpreted within an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA). Interpretive phenomenological analysis entails an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in people's accounts through a process of interpretive engagement with text and transcripts (Smith, Jarman, & Osbourne, 1999). This approach (IPA) was used because it related well with the qualitative nature of the aim of this study which attempts to gain understanding of students' subjective experiences of spirituality and well-being. An IPA approach to data analysis, with its phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation, allows for themes to be identified and inductively interpreted (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The phenomenological aspect of IPA further allowed me to enter into the participants' immediate experiences of spirituality and make sense of how these experiences impacted on their well-being (Giorgie & Giorgie, 2003).

On the other hand the hermeneutic nature of IPA helped me to understand how discursive and subjective knowledge is and the claim that meaning is not always immediately available but requires in-depth interpretation of data against context (Gadamer, 1976). In-depth interpretation

of participants' experiences of spirituality needed to be understood within their personal and historical contexts (Unger, 2005). Context functions to influence the meanings that individuals attach to their spiritual experiences (Unger, 2005). The use of IPA as an approach to data analysis was therefore necessitated by the qualitative orientation and focus of the study. IPA also resonated well with the existential theoretical framework that guides the study which argue that meaning is made by one's relation to the experience. It is therefore in this respect that an experience is able to be revisited through reflection, allowing alternative meanings to be explored. Therefore spirituality allows individuals to make sense of their selves by making meaning out of personal experience.

3.3 Selection of research participants

The use of an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) had implications for how I selected the four students that I interviewed within this study. In line with Smith and Osborn's (2003) argument that IPA entails that a researcher work with small homogenous sample in order to gain depth of understanding, I purposively selected four female Christian students to be respondents in this study. These students were selected on the basis of two assumptions, one that they were all female and honours students with similar academic and personal life styles, secondly because they all were active Christians, making them potentially data-rich respondents regarding spirituality (Yin, 2009). The four students were selected because they were the kind of participants with potential to provide the required information regarding spirituality and well-being (Terre Blanche & Painter, 2006). Purposive sampling thus helped me to select rich cases (students) that could give me the information needed to satisfactorily answer my research questions (Creswell, 2003).

3.4 Data collection

Because of the qualitative nature of my study I used semi-structured interviews as a method of collecting data. I designed the semi-structured interviews in such a way that they became qualitative in orientation. According to Willig (2001) semi-structured interviews are a popular method used for collecting qualitative data. A semi-structured interview is a conversation whereby the researcher attempts to cover a loosely defined topic while encouraging the participant to freely express him or herself within the parameters of the specified topic (Smith,

1995). Willig (2001) further pointed out that semi structured interviews provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experiences. This feature of semi-structured interviews was very important in this study and enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of the student's subjective experiences. Using semi-structured interviews also helped me to cross-check participants' understanding of the questions asked, and this was important for the validity of data generated (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994). In addition, semi-structured interviews also allowed for the active participation of interviewees, which enhances the richness and trustworthiness of the data generated (Taylor & Bodgan, 1984).

Following Kvale (1996)'s guidance I therefore planned for and conducted face-face to interviews with all the four students. I provided the four students with adequate information regarding the purpose and nature of this study prior to the interviews, and as Kvale (1996) argued this was important as it prepared the students for the actual interviews. Each of the four interviews was also conducted at a time and place convenient to the student, which in this case turned out to be the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic within campus. Each interview was conducted based on an interview schedule comprising open-ended questions. Use of an interview schedule ensured that the interview remained on focus even though space for students to speak about not just one issue was provided. The interviews lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. And because the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) used for data analysis in this study usually works with textual data all the four interviews had to be audio recorded and transcribed.

3.5 Research ethics

The researcher gained permission to conduct this study by meeting and consulting with the University authorities (see Appendix E-1 & E-2). In addition the ability to contain, deal with crises and address the needs of vulnerable populations such as students was a component of this study requiring careful ethical considerations. In this regard I had to give honest and adequate information to participants regarding the benefits and possible harm associated with the study (Freedman, 1987). To safeguard against the possibility of secondary traumatisation, which could emerge by students telling their personal spiritual stories I arranged to refer participants to the University student counselling centre in the event that this was necessary (Appendix D). Also important is that students' confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed throughout this study. All participants were asked to complete informed consent forms confirming their voluntary

participation. Based on the ethical considerations undertaken as described above this study was approved by the faculty research ethics committee.

3.6 Data analysis

Data generated in this study was, as already alluded to, analysed using the interpretative phenomenological approach. Sogoni (1997) sees data analysis as aimed at reducing data and synthesizing it into interpretable form so as to systematically search and discover what is significant and worth reporting. According to Valle (1998) data analysis is the breaking down of the phenomenon into its constituent parts. The phenomenological approach to data analysis used in this study demanded that the researcher be true to the experiences of the participants and stay close to the phenomenon being researched, in my case participants' subjective experiences of spirituality and well-being (Diers, 1999). According to Diers (1999) phenomenological data analysis demands 'bracketing' of the researcher's preconceived assumptions. In this study, this phenomenological tenet was adhered to by transcribing the interviews verbatim and having the transcripts available so that the researcher could constantly refer back to them. In practice this entailed that I had to repeatedly and carefully listen to the audio tapes to ensure that everything was captured correctly. Moreover, participants' words were frequently quoted in the report writing as a way of ensuring such loyalty to phenomenological description (see chapter 4).

Data analysis in this study therefore comprised a series of systematic steps whereby I initially identified themes and integrated them into meaningful clusters first within and across cases (Willig, 2008). This was because interpretive phenomenological approach takes an idiographic approach in that transcripts must be analysed one by one and then integrated into each other later (Smith, Jarman, & Osbourne, 1999). Each individual transcript was analysed in this way and then the master themes were integrated to describe the essential shared meaning of students' experiences of spirituality and well-being. The fact that the researcher did the transcriptions herself also helped to firmly instil the interview experiences in her mind. This in a way became a pre-analysis phase for the researcher making the actual analysis process go much quicker than it would have had someone else done the transcribing.

The first step in the analysis, according to interpretative phenomenological analysis is the researcher's initial encounter with the text which necessitated reading and re-reading the

individual transcript to gain a sense of the general meaning of the data (Willig, 2008). To support this, Dickson (cited in Chemane, 1998, p.108) talks about "immersion" as being fundamental to the imaginative leaps researchers make in developing their explanations. The re-reading of the transcripts helped reconstruct the interview scene in the researcher's mind and provided her with the context for the emergence of meanings and themes to use later on. This involves writing themes, ideas and descriptions that emerged as part of the initial engagement with the transcript.

The second step of the analytic process involves identification of themes that would describe each section of the text by constantly comparing the similarities and differences transcripts (Willig, 2008). The researcher looked for relationships and connections amongst participants' stories and experiences. At this stage themes containing the essential meanings of the students' spiritual experiences and well-being emerged. These themes were cross checked with transcripts in order to ground the interpretive inquiry and enhance validity. Based on the principle of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2003), the third stage involves an attempt by the researcher to cluster the themes into higher order (super-ordinate) themes (Willig, 2008). The researcher listed the themes that emerged in stage two and examined how they related to one another. Themes that were closely related were then organised into clusters. Other themes became sub-themes at this stage as they described a particular aspect of a theme. The main aim of this stage was to introduce structure into the analysis and organising the themes into meaningful clusters (Willig, 2008). The construction of these higher order themes was also cross-checked against the transcripts. The fourth stage in the process involves production of a summary table of the organised themes based on the participant's experience of spirituality (Willig, 2008). At this stage the researcher began either integrating themes into one another, or excluding themes that do not reflect the essential meaning of student's accounts of spirituality and well-being (Smith, Jarman, & Osbourne, 1999).

The final stage involves the integration of cases. At this stage, the structured themes produced from each transcript need to be integrated into each other (Willig, 2008). Therefore the researcher examined all of the transcripts to gain a generalised understanding of shared or common themes between all of the students' experiences. Smith, Jarman and Osbourne (1999) points out that this process needs to be cyclical in that emerging integrated themes need to be

continually cross checked with the transcripts to ensure they accurately convey participant's essential meanings (Smith, Jarman, & Osbourne, 1999; Willig, 2008). As the integration process continued common themes began to emerge between and across the four transcripts leading to emergence of master themes. It is these master themes that are presented and discussed in chapter four.

3.7 Validity and credibility

Validity or credibility in qualitative research is not easy to achieve and requires that the researcher think carefully about the entire study as it progresses (Creswell, 2003). In view of this I had to come up with strategies for ensuring that the findings of this study were going to be valid and credible. One of the strategies I used is reflexivity. Reflexivity requires an awareness of the impact of the researcher's biases on the construction of meaning throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the difficulties of remaining outside of one's subjectivity while conducting research (Watt, 2007). Because of the interpretive phenomenological approach used in this study it was important that much care was taken in interpreting the data taking cognisance of the researcher's own views, judgements, preconceptions of spirituality and well-being. The researcher was continuously alert to possibilities of projecting her own subjective views onto the research and has tried her level best not to change or be judgemental of participants' narratives of spirituality.

Kader (2006) emphasize the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, as it is believed that all researchers enter the field of research with preconceptions of what they are studying. It is therefore important that the researcher is aware of his or her personal background and relation to the phenomena. For instance the fact that I am also a spiritual person needed to be treated with care when it comes to making sense of what students were presenting to me as their spiritual experiences. Avoidance of prejudice or judgment of students' stories based on my own subjective experiences of spirituality was not an easy thing.

Sensitivity to context as Smith (2003), suggests was also another strategy used to ensure validity and credibility in this study. In practice this entailed provision of extracts from participants' narratives for interpretation. (Appendix A, Participants Scripts). Similarly scholars such as

Maxwell (1996), Spradley (1979) and Watt (2007) recommend the writing of short notes, or memos, to one's self during the entire research project. In this study I therefore had to continuously write and rewrite notes on what was coming up as important observations regarding participants' experiences of spirituality and well-being. Doing this helped me to reflect on emerging ideas.

Reliability is often difficult to assess in qualitative research because of its subjectivity. In qualitative research, reliability refers to the quality of craftsmanship, namely the processes by which the data were collected, processed and transformed into findings (Patton, 2002). To ensure reliability I had to think carefully about all the processes making up this study. This meant having clear research focus, clear research questions and theoretically sound and suitable research design. All these were done as already highlighted earlier in this chapter. To further enhance the trustworthiness of this study I also had to be very ethical. Being ethical enhances the trustworthy of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology utilised to carry out this study. The chapter has provided information relating to the qualitative research paradigm within which this study was conducted. A discussion on why this study was framed within a qualitative research paradigm, entailing use of IPA as an approach to data analysis is also presented in this chapter. The chapter further provided detailed information on how data was collected, including how the four research participants were selected and interviewed. A clear and detailed description of the interviewing and data analysis processes is also presented. Chapter three also provides information relating to how the research dealt with ethical, validity and credibility issues. In essence chapter three reported on the actual process of conducting the study; from research design to data analysis and meaning making.

CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation of data. In this chapter participants' accounts of spirituality and how it relates to their well-being are presented and described. Chapter four starts by orienting the reader to the context of the four research participants. This is done in order to help the reader have a solid background against which to understand and judge students' accounts of spirituality and well-being. The chapter then goes on to develop and present thick descriptions of participants' experiences of spirituality. Out of these thick descriptions five inter-related themes emerged. These themes derive from the participants realities about how spirituality manifests in their day to day lives and impacts on their well-being. Chapter four is therefore an overview of data interpretation and analysis.

4.1 Participants' context

It is important to note that all the four research participants were female and of Christian religion. The participant group was also racially mixed with two of the participants being black students (Xhosa and Sotho), while the other two were white. All four research participants were studying towards an Honours degree. All four students were within age range of 18-24. As already alluded to in chapter, participants' accounts of spirituality are better understood against their being active Christians. The same point also relates to the ultimate findings of this study. Also significant to point out is that participants made distinctions between spirituality and religion, whereby they all described spirituality as encompassing a personal relationship and the belief in God, while religion was described as more ritualistic which involves prescribed and organised beliefs, rules and all of which involve relatedness to a higher power for example God. These rituals and organised beliefs are also described by the participants as involving some aspects of spirituality such as praying. Therefore, in this study participants constructed spirituality as a broader phenomenon having significant effects on many areas of their lives.

4.2 Themes

Five inter-related themes as already pointed out, emerged from the interpretation and analysis of data. These themes are;

1. Optimism and Faith

2. Self-Management

3. Support from God and other Christians

4. Spiritual practices as resource activities

5. Managing relationships and attitude to others

Participants' experiences of spirituality and how it impacts on their well-being are therefore presented and described within the structure of the above emerging themes.

4.2.1 Optimism and faith

Asked about how spirituality impacted on their well-being participants talked about how their belief and faith in God acted as a source of optimism and faith. They explained that they used their faith in God to cope with distressing and stressful life situations. A number of sub-themes pertaining to optimism and faith were reported by the participants. These are;

- Hope and trust in God

- Belief in God and His protection

- God as a source of motivation

All participants reported private spiritual feelings which through faith and optimism aided them in coping with stressful life situations thereby providing them with a more positive psychological state. The role of hope, faith and optimism in participants' lives emerged as important as also reflected by Ellison and George (1994) and Sacco (1996). Furthermore optimism and faith created positive feelings which helped participants to achieve and maintain their well-being. In this regard participants described how spiritual emotions helped them to endure suffering and to cope better when faced with life challenges. Spirituality was therefore seen as giving hope for the future and motivating even when things are not going well.

Apiwe reported positive and hopeful thinking in coping with stress. According to Apiwe spiritual beliefs give her assurance that her life is in good hands and trust that whatever happens she will be fine because there is a God who is taking care of her. Asked to explain she said;

> **Apiwe**: *The most important thing that I love about my being spiritual is having faith. For example, when I am in need of something and it does not happen I will know the cause and the reason because I believe in God. I know that God knows that I would not be able to handle this at that point in time and/or maybe if I am given, it might be messed up along the way. Experience of these sorts has taught me why God does not give me certain things when I ask. (Line 188-193)*

Apiwe further reported that her spiritual beliefs give her a certain perspective that helps her deal with life issues. She believes that everything happens for a reason. Her claim was similar to the findings of previous studies done by Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003). Similarly Ellie described how having absolute faith in God and belief in a Higher Power has given meaning to her life and provided comfort in challenging times. According to Ellie having hope during difficult times encourages her to stand strong. This finding fits with previous research suggesting that spirituality contributes to positive psychological attitudes and more adaptive functioning (Miller, 1999; Pargarment et al., 1998; Spilka et al., 2003).

> **Ellie**: *It's a continual thing for me just to realise that Jesus Christ will come to set me free so I don't have to hold onto anything. To be honest, sometimes things happens and we don't understand and we don't have the answers; but the general thing is that it brings sense and meaning into one's life and it helps during difficult times that it's something to hold on to (Line 476-480).*

Yolisa explained that she put God as her foundation hoping that at the end there would be a reward for it. She stated that when she did not practice spiritual activities such as prayer she experiences a decreased presence of God and less connectedness to the other.

> **Yolisa**: *I just experience the spiritual life as having faith in everything. I mean just to believe that there is a God who loves you, who cares for you, and who will answer your prayers. If I have not talked to God for a while, I feel uncomfortable and it would be difficult for me to be of help to other people when they come in to ask for advice, since I would be limited in what to say or share with them (Line 51-55)*

Pat described how spiritual belief impacts her cognition in terms of how she appraises a stressful event or condition. She reframes a situation as less serious than it appears and this gives her greater hope and confidence to cope successfully with the situation.

> **Pat**: *I am trusting in God that whenever there is sorrow, there must be a reason why I am going through that and the trust gives me the hope in all situations and opens up all possibilities (Line 330-331).*

It is evident in the interview excerpts above that participants felt that faith in God results in them accepting the situation that they find themselves in, regardless of how unfavourable the situation

is. Participants therefore see spirituality as providing a sense of optimism in times of struggles. Similarly Koenig, George and Peterson (1998) and Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) repeatedly found that spirituality brings a sense of peace, hope and the ability to find meaning in times of hardship. According to Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) faith brings hope, wisdom, and comfort. This is coming out strongly as narrated by the participants. To elaborate one can see that it is clear that holding on to faith and the trusting in God made the participants feel that everything is taken care of. In a similar study Park (2007) and Ironson et al. (2002) reported that God is believed to have unique predetermined plan for the life of each individual, and that this plan is often perceived by spiritual individuals as always positive. It also came out that for participants perseverance in times of crises is strengthened by the meaning one attaches to the will of God, as well as the hope that God will protect them. It would appear that for the participants in this study, being resigned to God's will and the hope of an eventual eternal reward serve as an encouragement to stand strong and bounce back from the extensive impact of hardships.

When asked to narrate how spirituality has manifested in their lives three of the four participants said God's intervention was highly strengthening and effective in unfavourable conditions. Participants said that they are protected by a God who is in control of their life (*see interview excerpts below)*. Their responses indicate that God is the only one who can be trusted to be constantly present in tempestuous times, a claim also made by Cunningham (1994) and Walsh's (2003) research study. As illustrated in Apiwe and Pat's responses the intense experience of God as reliable provides emotional security and safety for them:

> **Apiwe**: *I remember in 2008 I visited my aunt in Umtata during the night people knocked at the door and I was with my cousin. They were three guys with guns and knives. They ransacked the whole house looking for money, took our phones and wanted to rape us. I don't understand how it did not happen because they had all the time, power to rape us but funny enough it did not happen. In such cases people would be raped and stabbed but with us they just took phones and wallets and they left us. It is so amazing you know because that's when I saw the power of God because it really showed that He was there intervening for us in the most turbulent of time and if it was not for him those guys could have raped and killed us (Line 203-210).*

> **Pat**: *There was a person I worked with who used to do trafficking with inmates. I was against that, but I learned later that he had planned to kill me as well as the other officers who were under the section I was in charge of. I believe it was through God that*

he was unable to do anything to me because I am protected. Apparently he also consulted an inmate who was a sangoma about how much he would require in order to kill me and other officers, so I believe it was God who intervened and the inmate who brought out the information died mysteriously (Line 348-354).

Ellie narrated a situation when she was psychologically distressed. She reported using spirituality to cope with her depressive symptoms. Ellie explained that she decided to make a choice in life to serve God and to believe in him. She stated that she became strongly committed to her spiritual faith which aided her speed recovery from the depressive episode. She goes on to explain how social support from her Christian friends buffered her against the negative effect of her stressful circumstances. Ellie reported that she was able to draw on spirituality for assistance during the period when she was faced with hardships. She further explains how Christian friends helped and supported her to gain strength by telling her the truth about her situation and this 'uplifted her'. This observation correlates with the research findings made by Cotton et al. (2006) and Koenig, George and Peterson's (1998). In their study they found that religious commitment as associated with quicker recovery from depression, and that relationship with other spiritual friends provide hope and faith, helping recipients to manage their distress. Asked to elaborate she said:

> **Ellie:** *I suffered from depression for 10 months and it was very hard and I did not feel I could connect to God at that time at all. I did not feel anything and I did not have an appetite and I could not sleep sometimes. During that time my Christian friends were very supportive and although at times I almost felt I wanted to give up because I did not have hope. Nothing changed, nothing helped but at the end God saved me because I was very suicidal at times. I really wanted to end my life because it was getting too much for me and people speaking the truth over my life and me deciding that I am going to believe that beyond it all. It helped me to get up at the end and hope that the light will come through. I started praising God and through worship it started to lift me up. (Line 491-499).*

According to the participants spirituality was also seen as giving optimism in academic studies. Participants felt that spirituality helps them to become more determined towards their studies. Participants describe how their faith influences their academic studies:

> **Yolisa***: The wisdom to continue with the course programme and finish the degree was stressful, and during this period my mother, lecturers and friends cannot give me that wisdom that I need or the marks to guarantee my success, but I have to work harder with the wisdom and my spirituality. This has helped me to calm down in stressful period (Line 67-71)*

Apiwe experienced that God meets her needs in loving and protective ways. She explained that He does not deprive her of the opportunity to faithfully meet her responsibilities. She explains that God gives her the motivation to work hard when she is about to lose hope. Her spiritual beliefs and practices are necessary for coping during difficult times of her academic studies.

> **Apiwe***: It is not easy academically and sometimes I feared that I would fail but through God's help and my positivity I was able to pull through. I know that God is on my side, and He is going to pull me up and He always comes when I have lost hope and keeps me motivated to do my work. During difficult times in my studies when I did not do well God revealed Himself and gave me strength and wisdom not to give up. My spirituality helps me to overcome any feelings of discouragement and hopelessness. It brings me back to the kind of space where I feel strong and find order to do well in my studies I need to take the space to engage in my spiritual activities otherwise I feel quite depleted. (Line 223-230)*

Pat believes in God. She described periods of crises in her academic studies, where she felt that God helped her to recover from the powerlessness caused by the difficult circumstances in her studies. She also experienced God as the carrier of burdens who brought her relief when she was about to be sent home from school. She explained that when she is faced with a crisis she hands her problems over to God through prayer and this brought about relief to cope better.

> **Pat:** *I was about to be sent home for failing my statistics course but a miracle happened. The honours coordinator and the lecturers' in-charge decided that the paper should be re-written and this gave me the chance to scale through the examination though, it was reliably gathered that such an exercise has never taken place in the department in the previous years. I thought about it and I think God intervened. The love of God and Jesus Christ is my saviour and provider. I pray whenever I have a crisis or problem or do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's very hard academically and it's easy to fail (Line 373-378).*

Ellie explains that her spiritual belief helps her to deal with the academic pressure. She described how her spiritual belief gives her meaning during crisis situations, which helps her to gain a positive and hopeful outlook. Ellie described how she positively appraises a negative event to reduce the perceived stressfulness of her academic studies. She believes that through her faith and trust in a God, things will work out for the good and this also gives her reassurance and a sense of meaningfulness which helps her to pursue her studies.

> **Ellie:** *Once again it really helps in my studies because it gives me hope. Hope to hold on when I find it difficult to cope with the academic pressure. The bible says all things will come good to those who love Him. For example I know that when I am going through difficult times in my studies, where I struggle to cope, or do well, God can use that particular situation in my life and turn it out for the good because He has a plan for me*

and He is my guide and believing in that Hope and the meaning behind it all really makes life worthwhile living. I think my faith is the reason why I am still here at Rhodes (Line 545-552).

God is seen by participants as a provider of the necessary intervention and guidance in terms of the most appropriate courses of action to take. Participants mentioned that being spiritual helps them to respond to the challenges of academic lives meaningfully. The feeling of believing in God as also claimed by Good and Willoughby (2006) and Walker and Dixon (2002) motivated and encouraged participants to work hard towards their studies. Participants saw God as working through their academic problems and providing solutions. This guidance then plays a facilitative role in helping participants manage stressful academic challenges. The guidance that is provided by God appears to be a source of strength in times of crisis. Therefore the results of the study indicate that participants redefine their stressors through religion as benevolent and potentially beneficial, and are therefore well supported by extant literature (Ellison et al., 2001; Greenfield, Vaillant, & Marks, 2007). In sum, participants said that spirituality assists them to remain in University.

4.2.2 Self-management

Participants also reported using their spirituality to improve their well-being. They described their lifestyles as being guided by the principles of Bible and its teachings. Within this theme the following sub-themes emerged;

- Treating the body as a temple;
- Making the right choices
- Spiritual practices and stress management

Participants said that being spiritual yields many health benefits some of which are physical, mental, emotional and behavioural. Furthermore participants reported that they used spirituality to avoid certain temptations that were present in the University campus. Participants perceived these temptations as ranging from the use of illicit drugs, to alcohol abuse, and engaging in pre-marital sexual activities.

Asked to explain how spirituality manifested itself as a tool for self-management, participants highlighted that spirituality influenced the behaviour and life choices that they make every day. Participants further argued that potentially negative behaviours such as drinking, partying and sexual activity do not only pose a threat to their academic performance while enrolled in University, but also hinder their spiritual growth and faith in God. With regard to spirituality and self-management Yolisa and Ellie explained how the bible teachings and the internalization of religious norms and moral messages as also noted by Cotton et al.'s (2001) findings that spirituality helped to avoid dangerous and unhealthy behaviours.

> **Yolisa**: *It means to protect my body, and to take care of it. According to the Bible, I must regard my body as a temple and that I should guard against things that can harm it. It is not by smoking or drinking and it is by not having lifestyles that could harm or break me down, or leading me to having disease. It is a lifestyle that should respect myself and also respect other people in order for them to be able look up and trust me (Line 15-19).*

> **Ellie**: *My body is a temple of God, so those behaviours I do normally like drinking and hanging out with friends will be influenced by the biblical words in my mind. The bible teaches that we should not be transformed by the world but by renewal of our minds and to have the mind of Christ which He has given to me. Spirituality has inspired me in a number of ways. For example the way I think and behave because I have submitted my life, spirit and soul to God. I want to be guided by him throughout my life (Line 462-467).*

Apiwe and Pat explained that spirituality underlies any decision that they make and every action, word and thought. For them spirituality is about doing the right things and making right choices This perception of spirituality as doing the right thing is also alluded to by Koenig et al. (1994), and Melanie et al. (2010). They reported that spiritual beliefs are important in guiding their behaviour and lifestyle choices. They put Jesus Christ in control of their lives and they strive to live according to the Bible's teachings and religious norms. They described what God expects from them as Christians which is a "different lifestyle" and this conviction moderates all the things they do. In trying to elaborate Apiwe said:

> **Apiwe:** *Spirituality has helped me in a way that I don't do things in my own way. For example, being a born again Christian that's the lifestyle I chose, which means I cannot go to parties and/or drink alcohol. My lifestyle does not revolve round doing such things and it is being guided by what God says in His word. I should live life in such a way that glorifies him. My life won't be glorified by God if I go clubbing or involved myself in worldly affairs. God requires a different lifestyle from me other than those offered by the world or that which the people offer as better lifestyle. I am expected to do the right things and make right choices. Spirituality has made me to allow God to take control and*

to be led by him. I don't focus on my weaknesses again, and I don't put pressure on myself. For me I just need to live according to His way (Line 250-256).

Pat also explained that her spiritual beliefs help her avoid risky sexual practices. Spiritual beliefs and religious activities act as source of protection for young people (Leigh et al., 2005; Melanie et al., 2010). Pat described that her belief in a God is intensified via an active prayer which in turn influences her lifestyle choices.

> **Pat:** *I believe in God and I always try to follow his teaching and principles, so spirituality has influenced my behaviour because I don't get involved in sexual relationships, so I don't have to worry about things that people worry about like missing my periods because I had unprotected sex. I think the more I pray the more it influences my behaviour. There are certain things I cannot do such as drinking and smoking (Line 383-388).*

It is therefore clear that handing over one's life to God can entail a kind of self-management as also reflected by Melanie et al. (2010) and Van Dierendonick and Mohan's (2006) study. Participants further saw spirituality as influencing the decisions they make on how to live their lives. The participants stated that through their interactions with Him, God strengthened them, gave them the right guidance and provided ways to manage themselves.

Participants went on to describe how God plays a part in the lifestyle they follow and how following God's way helps them have a better life. Similarly Gibson and Parker (2003) and Freitas (2008) also pointed out that spirituality may lead to better lifestyle and mental health. The following extracts from the interview illustrates this:

Yolisa described how the relaxation and stress release brought about by praying impacted on her behaviour throughout the day.

> **Yolisa:** *When I'm upset, sad, feeling lonely I can pray and ask God for calmness and resorting into prayer just keeps my mind at peace. I don't get rattled by things. You go out into the world everything is heightened (Line 4-7).*

Apiwe felt that her spirituality allows her to tolerate her negative emotional state more easily. She felt that spirituality helped her to deal with emotions. Leigh, Bowen and Marlatt, (2005) also claimed that spirituality is a valuable tool for dealing with emotional feelings such as anger and sadness which would otherwise have a negative impact on individual well-being. Because of her strong belief in God, Apiwe said that she does not really need support from friends and family.

> **Apiwe:** *Sometimes I would have so much hurt inside me and so many problems that I don't have somebody to share in with. However, as a spiritual person, I am able to go into my room and just cry and tell God what has happened and what I need. With His help, I feel I don't really need support from friends and family. It calms things down and control certain aspects that can get out of hand from time to time (Line 181-185).*

Apiwe communicates with God whenever she feels overwhelmed and as such spirituality is great tool for her.

> **Apiwe***: Talking to God in my times of struggle usually has serious effects on my psyche and after this I experience peace in my life. I often feel calm after this even though people around may not understand these feelings in me. It keeps me physically and mentally balanced (Line 154-156.)*

Like Apiwe, Pat talked about how spirituality gives her a different perspective to look at things. This finding is also similar to the findings of numerous studies showing that spirituality enhances positive coping skills (Koenig et al., 1994; Matthew, 1994; Pargament et al., 1998; Park, 2007; West, 2000). Asked to explain she said;

> **Pat***: The influence of spirituality in my life has some influence on how I handle things at work. I mean it has helped me to be calm in difficult situation, and not to react back in anger. To think first about the challenges I am faced with and pray over it, and surely after this period, I'll be able to manage this positively and get over it and not get stuck with anger, revenge or hatred. Spirituality has really helped me to let go of things rather than being stuck by them (Line 355-360).*

Pat therefore reported using spirituality to manage and cope with negative emotions. Similarly Ellie described how spiritual practices helped her cope with her difficult emotions. She experienced an increased change which brought about a feeling of relief after engaging in a prayer. Koenig et al. (1994) also correlated the experienced of spiritual practices with reduced symptoms of stress such as aggression. Ellie goes on to describe that being spiritual also allows her to engage with the content of her cognitions and to reflect up on them. The process of reflection involves avoiding negative thoughts as they may not bring solutions to her problems. A study by West (2000) further confirms that spiritual beliefs enable individuals to control their reactions and respond mindfully to situations.

> **Ellie***: Emotionally, when I am down or tired and exhausted then I sing worship songs or I pray to God. After this I do see the difference and change. Spirituality has taught me ways to take care of my body even physically so that I do not adhere to certain bad habits. I have also realised that I have to keep my thoughts in check; I don't have to feed*

myself with the negative thoughts because it's not going to solve anything but worsen the situation. For example I have learnt that if I'm angry this is not from God, hence, I take to God in prayer or I prepare to put up worship songs (Line 537-543).

The participants in this study had a clear idea of God, despite His invisibility. For all the participants, God was a provider whom they could talk to in times of crisis. Participants stated that prayer has a profound impact on their life by helping them make correct decisions and cope with personal emotions. As argued by Walsh (2003) change occurring within individuals because their spirituality often results in internal stress getting replaced by a sense of peace. Along with inner peace participants also felt that they became more aware of how to manage their intolerable emotional states. For instance when participants felt overwhelmed by stress they would retreat to somewhere private and engage in spiritual activities such as praying, worship songs and reading the bible to regain their composure. Participants were open to receive guidance on issues that may need resolution in their lives through personal communication with God. In sum, spirituality was seen as having an impact in the manner in which participants manage themselves.

4.2.3 Support from God and other Christians

Participants talked about how having close relationships with God and with other Christians were important in their lives. Participants said that their relationships with God and with fellow Christians provided a sense of comfort and protection. Regarding this the following sub-themes emerged;

- God as a rock
- God as a source of support
- Fellow Christians and social support

Participants stated that God is experienced in the context of everyday life and that believing in God kept them going and also acts as their support during difficult times. Participants said that they practice spirituality by putting God in control of their lives and by being prepared to follow his plans. All four of the participants also reported that they have close relationships with other Christians. Participants further said that through spiritual connectedness they derived social support from fellow Christians. This observation resonates with previous studies done by Ellison et al. (2001) and Fukuyama and Seig (1999). In their study they found that relationships with

other Christians are very important as they serve as a source of social support, this was seen as being an important factor in participants' lives and their academic endeavours.

Participants talked about the importance of support from God. Through on-going spiritual practices participants reported that they gain support and reassurance from God. Ellison and George (1994) and Greenfield, Vaillant and Marks (2007) also found that on-going spirituality provided a sense of reassurance which may in turn manifest as a form of support. As seen in the excerpts below participants also highlighted how support from God gives them strength in distressing situations.

> **Yolisa:** *Having a close relationship with God is not about knowing Him from a distance. It also means praying for support and having faith in Him. It means sharing my life and testimonies with other people, both the young and the old in the church or in the gathering of children of God (Line 11-14).*

> **Ellie** *I have given my life, spirit, heart and soul to Jesus Christ, and my life reflects on the Bible teachings and principles. On how my body and mind function, this is a thing I have submitted to God to guide and be influenced by it. Jesus Christ is my rock I know that if I stand on his promises He will never forsake me (Line 424-428).*

> **Apiwe***: God is like my friend, father and everything. If I have got a problem, I am able to speak with Him although I cannot really see Him. He is close to my heart and its' like I'm talking to a best friend that sits next to me. Even though, I do not see Him physically, my relationship with Him is very intense and He provides support I asked from Him in prayer. He guides my life and I always feel His presence. I imagine Him holding my hands. Although He is not seen, I have peace in my heart and a wonderful experience (Line 101-106).*

> **Pat***: For me it means being able to be attached and communicate with a superior power that I cannot see. I mean consulting God for guidance, support, and assistance and for any other things one may wish. Having a close relationship with Him I survive all odds and this is really amazing (Line 284-286).*

A significant theme emerging here is that participants' experiences point to the notion that spirituality is a supportive relationship with God. God is seen by participants as a rock, as an ideal father figure, as being omnipresent and a guardian who gives direction in life. Participants further emphasised, as claimed by Pargament et al. (1998), Rogers (1989) and Sacco (1996) that God has absolute power. The preceding metaphors are indicative of the participants' experiences of steadfastness, safety and security they derive from having a relationship with God. They described God's presence as being a physical presence indicating how real and intense the

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experience of His presence is. Participants' went on to explain that religious conviction is shown by the fact that they put their lives under the control of God.

Participants further talked about how they get support from fellow Christians. Being around other Christians was seen by participants as providing a sense of belonging which helps them to cope with life challenges. Dass-Brailsford (2005) and Fukuyama and Seig (1999), as well as Ellison et al. (2001) also highlighted how a sense of belonging acts as a source of support within spiritual contexts such as churches and prayer meetings. Participants reported that fellow Christians gave them words of encouragement when they are faced with difficulties. This type of interaction was viewed by the participants as being supportive when it came to making progress at university. All participants see support from other Christians as being very important:

> **Yolisa:** *I always engage myself with other people from the church by socialising with them. This usually brings spiritual inputs into my life. When I receive support from friends at any particular difficult situation, it always gives me courage to go ahead in the face of intense or severe difficulties. Sometimes, my friend's advice helps me a lot to have a constructive mind and to be able to cope in respect to any problems I may face. We also talk about each other's academic performance (Line 26-30).*

> **Apiwe:** *Sharing my struggles with other Christians is sort of divine. Sometimes, it is like being there for one another in prayers and support. This help in holding together a viable relationship. Sometimes when I think of isolating myself because of difficulties I am facing I could say: It is easy to drop out in your academics. So, with the support from my friends I also get that motivation to continue because that's where I got that spiritual connectedness. My relationship with other Christians is important too in my life because it serves as a coping mechanism for general life concerns (Line 157-163).*

Ellie explained how support from other Christians made her feel accepted in a new environment. She also reported being in a trusting atmosphere which provides her with moral support.

> **Ellie:** *Being in the company of other believers is essential because it builds up my spirit. By sharing with other Christians, it solves some of my problems because it gives the conviction that I am not alone. Hanging out with other believers is very important to me most especially when I arrived at Rhodes University. The idea of being a new student brought about sad feelings and gives room to the realization of how important it is to associate with other Christians. I know no one, but when we deliberate on similar issues, then I immediately feel at home since we are serving the same God. To me, this is like a connecting factor (Line 517-524).*

Pat further talked about how support from other Christians provides her with a set of values that guides her behaviour. Wulff (1997) also found social connections derived from spiritual friends

as providing strength and validation for one's lifestyle as well as deepening one's sense of meaning in life.

> **Pat:** *As a Christian, for me it means that I need to walk along the path of Jesus Christ. Being a preacher of the word, I spend most of my time with other Christians and this gives me much joy and support. This relationship has taught me to be explicitly restricting myself on a number of various and unkempt behaviours (Line 325-328).*

Participants felt that a supportive relationship with other Christians provides a safe environment to share life difficulties openly. They talked of having a culture of open and honest relationship with God and with others, and how this helps them to share problems freely. This support from other Christians was also described as helping them to stay in University and helping them to adjust when they arrived at Rhodes University. Participants saw being with other believers as helping them in their spiritual growth. According to Park (2007) religious congregations provide supportive interaction which builds the recipient's sense of belonging, spiritual development and closeness with other spiritual friends. The participants also felt that through this supportive relationship they became connected with other Christians and that this has helped them realise that they are not alone in the struggles of life and that God is there with them. Similarly Greef and Loubser (2007) and Durkeim (1951) found out that individuals see congregation members as a source of support, love and comfort during difficult times. Thus, judging from participants experiences, support from God and fellow Christians was a very important part of participants' lives.

4.2.4 Spiritual practices as resource activities

Participants talked about how their participation and engagement with spiritual practices enhanced their well-being. They reported that participation in activities such as prayer, bible reading, attending cell and church meetings, worshiping, listening to gospel music, and watching gospel movies enhanced their spirituality. Participants reported that engaging in private spiritual practices and public religious activities was very important in their lives. Private spiritual practices as noted by Greenfield, Vailant and Marks, (2007) and Hodge (2006) include behaviours such as active engagement in praying outside church, meditation, watching or listening to spiritual songs and reading Bible. In this study participants pointed out that engaging in private spiritual practices on a daily basis serves as a means of reducing stress. According to Hodge (2006) and Kellehear (2000) public religious activities include attending church services

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frequently and taking part in other activities at one's place of worship. Again participants argued that their engagement in public religious activities improved their well-being, lowered levels of negative affect, and increased positive relations with others. Previous research done by Gibson and Parker (2003) found out that spiritual activities are correlated to positive well-being. It also came out that commitment to spirituality through, public and private practices generated a close relationship between participants and God. When asked about how spirituality manifests in her life Yolisa stated;

> **Yolisa**: *Spirituality involves attending the church services regularly, for example, immediately after this interview I will be going to choir practice. It is also one of the parts in worship. For me, I am a member of that department in my church. I sing and play bands. With all these activities, I also create devotion and prayer times for God through my faith in Him, and this is how it manifests (Line 46-50).*

Other participants also narrated similar spiritual practices which were both private and public.

> **Apiwe**: *I read the bible in the morning and sometimes play worship songs; this is referred to as 'quiet time'. By this, I would say it really manifests because I have the feelings that these things are so real in life. Take for example; when I go to church, I worship and sing spiritual songs and things began to happen miraculously. I do have visions that I cannot explain or imagine how it happens and this somehow manifests in diverse ways (Line 149-154).*

> **Pat**: *I don't know if there is any scale, that needs to be seen I don't know if I can judge myself that I'm spiritual, but I try to be generous as I can and to help other people. Spirituality to me also connotes attending the church regularly, prayer meetings and spending time with other Christians who always support me spiritually. I attend cell group meetings; learn about the Bible and we pray for each other. I often give my time to church activities, read the Bible and listen to Gospel songs (Line 320-325).*

> **Ellie**: *To me it act as a foundation or a basis of my life and lifestyle it something that structure my lifestyle guides at times and support it's a fundamental underlying element of my life because it inspires the way I think about things and it influence the way I do things because I submitted my life, spirit, heart and soul to God I want to be guided by him through that. So how the body and mind function it's something I submitted to God so that's influenced by it. Offering prayers and communing with God is probably the most important aspect of spirituality. Thus, preaching the words, meditation, spending time in the reading of the Bible, praising God, fellowshipping with other Christian members and fully participating in the church activities all these are necessary in the development of spirituality in individuals (Line 449-457).*

According to studies done by Durkeim (1951), Hodge (2006), Kellehear (2000) and Matthew (1994) engaging in public and private spiritual practices such as those reported by participants

are an important aspect of spirituality. This is further shown by participants' experiences when they described their spiritual activities as necessary for being compassionate and nurturing effective relationships with God and other Christians. Participants saw spiritual activities as an opportunity to interact with peers and other members of their congregation. In this regard participants describe how church attendance helps them grow spiritually.

4.2.5 Managing relationships and attitude to others

Participants also talked about how spirituality influenced the way they relate to others. The following sub themes pertaining to spirituality and managing relationships emerged;

- Spirituality and attitude towards others
- Respect of the other
- Spirituality and reciprocity

According to Sherman (1996) an important aspect of spirituality is the relationship with the other. Furthermore Bailey (2004) and Hopkins (2001) and Spilka et al. (2003) argued that relationship with the other is based on biblical principles. Insights gained from participants' experiences suggest that spirituality has an influence on how they relate with fellow Christians and also even with non-Christians. Participants pointed out that being spiritual has enabled them to interact with other people in a more positive way. Spirituality as claimed by Sherman (1996) helps one to accept people for whom they are. Participants felt that God expected them to behave positively towards others, regardless of who they are. In this regard participants talked about how spirituality helped them to relate to others with love, compassion, respect, helpfulness, honesty and forgiveness. Participants viewed the role of spirituality in managing relationships and attitudes to others as very important. Sensitivity towards others enabled participants to better understands their peers and relate positively with them. Sensitivity, as shown in the excerpt, below entails listening to, and respecting the other.

> **Yolisa:** *Managing relationships and attitudes with others is a lifestyle that brings about respect to other people; this also influences people to look up to me. With this in mind, I always try to do to others what I would like them to do to me and also treat people as equal. Doing good and helping other people who are in need is something that is very important to me. Sometimes you need to become critical of your spiritual development as well and see that. You know what my spirituality puts blinkers on my experience. And my*

spiritual belief and religious beliefs may retard me but you need to say that to yourself,
do you think that it could retard you. And if it is you need to be reflective (Line 101-108).

Yolisa further explained that her spiritual beliefs and teachings have made her develop a positive attitude towards others, and this influences the way she views other people. She sees that there are more dimensions to a person's self than their negative aspects. Thus, in terms of impact that this insight has had on her relationship with others, Yolisa describe that her concept of people helps her see the person as a whole person. She stated, as Sacco (1996) also noted, that spirituality helps one to become more compassionate, and less judgemental of the other. Spirituality is therefore seen as about having a "meta-perspective of the person" as, Yolisa pointed out:

> **Yolisa:** *My spiritual life teaches me to be humble and to forgive others when I am offended because I realised that in this world no one is perfect. I always try not to focus my attention on the negative part of other people but hinge much on their good side. And that for me true compassion is to acknowledge the essence of that person and by acknowledging the essence of them it means you don't judge them but seeing them as whole person. This also entails helping them when faced with challenges and at the same time not being judgemental but have a metaperspective about the person. This allows me to be compassionate about all the issues that the person has. It's just more than just caring (Line 72-78).*

Apiwe spoke about how spiritual practices and beliefs bring "unconscious" material into conscious awareness indicating how her awareness of others is expanded through spiritual practices. On the same note Spilka et al. (2003) found out that spiritual practice enhances awareness on how to relate with others. Apiwe also pointed out the importance of not judging other people. She said spirituality allows her to see the good in people and to forgive people who hurt her so that she can move past it.

> **Apiwe:** *Spirituality has taught me on how to relate with other people and not to undermine or look down on others or look for faults even when they hurt me I forgive them, hence, the way I socialize with people has to be different. In the first instance, showing kindness towards other people is a command from the Bible and by it we are taught that we should always do to others what we really want them to do to us. This has helped me to become a better person. It has also made me to see the good part out of every motive, thing and everyone. I always try to look out for all the positive behaviour of someone. The result is that it has sharpened my own understanding of people and environment (Line 264-272).*

Ellie talked about how her spiritual beliefs impacted her in terms of valuing other people. According to Bailey (2004), Hopkins (2001) and Sacco (1996) spirituality is often associated with a sense of humanity, tenderness and compassion towards other people. Asked to comment about this Ellie said:

> **Ellie:** *The Bible is very clear about lot of stuff. I will quote some words from the Bible. For example, the Bible says: "love your neighbours as you love yourself". If we follow that simple instruction, it sums up everything about our behaviours towards others. This is to say that we may continue to appraise God on a daily basis to know the actions towards others whether it is out of love, or being loved, hatred, jealousy or selfishness just to mention but a few. Sometimes, we know that as human beings, we are trying to be perfect on a daily basis and forming relationship with other people, yet we are not God. I know in my heart that if I ask God concerning my troubles, and ask God to give me patience in my trying moments. Therefore, when the situations are like this, we need to submit to the will of God (Line 554-562).*

Pat presented a similar experience to that of other participants. Pat talked about the importance of establishing good relationships with others.

> **Pat:** *Spiritually as a Christian, I have to maintain a healthy relationship with God and at the same time, socially I have to maintain good relationship with other people. I practice generosity and try to be helpful to the needy. I also try to be truthful and be honest with the people so that they can always see the good side of me (Line 299-302).*

Pat went further to talk about how prayer removes a feeling of "emptiness" within herself. Asked to explain Pat said:

> **Pat:** *Just being aware of my own critical thoughts and getting in touch with my own sort of emptiness inside me I found it helpful; when I think of it I know the feeling. But I think it's that sort of existential black hole that we all have. I sometimes think I'm so alone in this although you are not alone. We all seeking for something and we all want that peace. It's just touching to feel and sense other people's struggles and their humanity it makes me feel tenderness towards other people and more compassion. (Line 338-344).*

In summary spirituality entails managing and maintaining positive relationships with God and others. It requires, as indicated in the participants experiences, compassion, respect, sensitivity and tenderness. The participants in Sacco's (1996) study mentioned earlier also related their experience of interconnectedness resulting from spiritual belief and practices to enhance empathy and compassion in their daily activities. Spirituality came out as an important tool that people use to relate to God and others. In practice spirituality entails being able to see the good in the other and to also help when necessary (see Bailey, 2004; Hopkins, 2001; Spilka et al., 2003).

Conclusion

In line with its objective this chapter has presented and interpreted data. Drawing on literature the chapter attempted to inductively make sense of how participants were experiencing spirituality as a tool for coping with distressing and stressful situations, relating to God and the other as well as management of self. First the chapter described participant's experiences of spirituality before attempting to make sense of these experiences. So what this chapter has done is to basically share the data with the reader, and then make more claims about the meanings embedded within the data in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Drawing on insights gained from the interpretation of data in chapter four this chapter discusses the main findings of this study. The chapter makes concluding statements about spirituality and how it manifests in the participants' lives. The aim here is to address the question relating to the influence of spirituality on students' well-being. In line with this objective the chapter start by reflecting on the five emergent themes, processing them into analytical statements (knowledge claims) based on data, literature and insights from previous studies. In chapter six, based on the discussion ensuing in this chapter I therefore highlighted what I consider to be some of the implications of the findings of this study for the field of psychology.

5.1 Spirituality is a source of optimism and hope

In this study spirituality emerged as a very important source of optimism and hope. It became clear that all participants felt that spirituality had a positive influence on their well-being. This positive influence manifested in the form of spirituality providing optimism and hope upon which students were drawing when faced with stressful situations. Reflecting back to participants' experiences of spirituality it becomes clear, as illustrated in Apiwe's mention of how her belief in God consoles her when she does not get what she wants immediately; Ellie's conviction that regardless of challenges that may be facing her Jesus Christ will come and set her free; and Yolisa's faith that God loves and cares for her: that spirituality can have a positive impact on people's well-being. Therefore, having faith in God enabled participants to understand their situations better and also, to cope with problems. To elaborate, participants talked about instances such as experiences of possible rape, ensuing armed robbery, academic difficulties and depression and how they relied on their spirituality to cope with these challenging experiences. Participants experience seemed to gradually put their existential concerns and attach meaning and purpose to life. They are able to find meaning in suffering and this resonate well with the existential theoretical framework that guides the study (Frankle, 1969). The findings of this study have shown that spirituality and religion allows participants to transform the tradegic events of life through the direction of hope. Having optimism and faith seemed to have brought emotional

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comfort and reassurance, not only in everyday life but also in the most difficult moments experienced among these participants.

The argument that spirituality is a source of optimism and hope has also been put forward by scholars such as Ironson et al. (2002), Miller (1999) and Sacco (1996). For instance Sacco's (1996) study showed that the majority of students see spirituality as providing a perspective on life, hope, optimism, strength, compassion and the opportunity to be thankful for life even in times of hardship. Similarly research by Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) found that religious people have the means (spirituality) for evaluating negative life events that lessen the perceived stressfulness of those events.

However Krause and Wulff (2004) argued that whilst spirituality can provide hope and optimism the difficulty associated with it is not often highlighted. These researchers argued that conformity to established religious belief systems is not without its challenges and requires continuous approval by fellow religious members, which if absent can result in lowered well-being. Similarly the two scholars acknowledged that it is impossible to prove that God exists hence the character, and the will of God cannot be easily confirmed. This observation came out clearly in participant's experiences as none of them talked about the actual challenge of being spiritual especially when faced with tempting times. This study has however shown that regardless of lack of validation of God's presence, participants remained strong and committed to their spiritual beliefs and faith. The fact that participants appeared to be very certain about their spiritual and religious convictions confirm that whilst the findings of this study are contestable (because of their being positive) they still provide useful insights into the relationship between spirituality and well-being.

Consistent with this line of argument the perspective of religious doubt for example feelings of uncertainty toward and or questioning of religious teachings and beliefs as pointed by Exline, Yali and Sanderson (2000) have been associated with greater psychological distress. This study did not find any form of doubt amongst participants towards spiritual beliefs and teachings. As such I argue that participants' relatively hopeful and positive expectancies from their spirituality afforded them additional strength and comfort in the face of life difficulties.

5.2 Deployment of spirituality for self-management

This study has also revealed that participants were using spirituality as a tool for managing self. Two of the participants reported that they regard their bodies as a *Temple* and as such they should not indulge in risky behaviour e.g. alcohol and drug abuse, and early sexual activities (See Yolisa Line 15-19 and Ellie Line 462-467). In addition all four participants talked about following the teachings of the Bible, and the importance of having respect for one's body, abstaining from risky activities such as, already mentioned, alcohol abuse and early sexual activities. Participants also pointed out that they put Jesus Christ in control of their lives in order to live their lives according to teachings of the Bible and religious norms. One of the participants Pat highlighted how spirituality influenced her behaviour when she talked about her not having been involved in sexual relationships and what she saw as other negative activities such as drinking and smoking (see Line 383-388). Therefore this observation suggests that spirituality provided absolute values that are connected with the need for purity and the respect of God. In tandem with this observation Van Dierendonick and Mohan (2006) described religion and spirituality as prescribing positive social norms and beliefs for a healthy lifestyle. Their research findings also confirmed the conceptualisation of religion and spirituality as involving behavioural patterns, practices, activities, and rituals (Cotton et al., 2006; Ironson et al., 2002; Ryan & Dec, 2001). The behavioural benefit reported by participants also corroborates the findings of Freitas (2008), Miller and Gur (2002) who found that spiritual students were less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as use of drugs and alcohol and were more likely to delay sexual activity. Other studies have reported similar results on avoidance of sexual behaviour among the more religious adolescents as their religious beliefs influence their decision regarding sex (Cotton et al., 2006; Regnerus & Elder, 2003; Weaver et al., 2005; Melanie et al., 2010; Miller & Gur, 2002). Their findings provide richer insight into how religious beliefs influence behaviours.

In contrast to the above research findings which show how people's behaviour and lifestyle might be influenced by their beliefs in God's principles and teachings, the ability to maintain and adhere to religious belief can at times, as already pointed out, be a difficult task. Thus it is possible that following these teachings may also be limiting or restricting participants from exploring other aspects of life as it appears that they live the life that is prescribed by the bible

instead of choosing how to live their own lives. However some studies have shown that rejecting beliefs that have been endorsed previously may lead to feelings of guilt and shame (Barnes et al., 2000; Exline, 2002). This observation is important because feelings of guilt and shame are likely to erode a person's sense of self-worth and diminish self-esteem which is in turn associated with greater mental health problems.

Furthermore it also came out clearly that participants felt that spirituality was influential in dealing with their emotions. One participant pointed out that when she is down or tired she resorts to singing gospel songs or praying to God and that she sees the difference and the change (Line 537-543). This observation is consistent with Greef and Loubser (2008) and West (2000)'s contention that spiritual practices are effective in reducing emotional interference on cognitive tasks. In addition previous research has also suggested that increased thinking capacity resulting from spiritual practices such as prayer and church meetings helps to moderate how individuals deals with emotions. In sync with this line of argument Koenig, George and Peterson (1998) and Matthew (1994) argue that by realizing the impermanent nature of things, individuals realise that nothing exists inherently and they are able to detach themselves from them. Again West (2000) supports this observation by claiming that even though a sense of hope and assurance occurs within one's spiritual practice, the goal is not to remove one's self from the situation, but to develop a more realistic perception of the problem at hand. Based on this argument one can conclude that participants' ability to control their reactions and respond mindfully helped to moderate negative experiences. This observation was also made by previous researchers who found that spirituality has implications for people's abilities to adjust to critical life events (Ellison et al., 2001; Koenig et al., 1994, 1998; McConnell et al., 2006; Pargament et al., 1998; Walsh, 2003). It therefore can be argued that spirituality can be a vital tool for improving the way people manage their everyday lives.

5.3 Spirituality as a "spring" of support

Another interesting trend to have emerged in this study is the way that participants perceived their spirituality as a source of support. Apiwe talked about how God is like her friend, father and everything and how if she got a problem she is able to speak with him even though she cannot really see him. She further pointed out how her close relationship with God acts as a

source of support (Line 101-106). Commenting about how spirituality has acted as a source of support in her life Ellie described Jesus Christ as her rock upon which to lean when needing support (Line 424-428). Closely related to the notion of God (spirituality) as providing the necessary support to cope with the distressing and stressful situations Pat alluded to how her communication with God has provided guidance and assistance in her life (Line 284-286). Therefore significant to note is that participant's experiences of spirituality seem to undoubtedly point to the conclusion that often when people are in need of support they invoke their relationship, through private and public religious activities with God. This observation relates closely to monotheistic belief systems, as it is apparent that people relate to God as a personal being and see themselves as being in a relationship with God (Cunningham, 1994; Rogers; 1989; Sacco, 1996). Feeling connected to a transcendent reality seemed to be helpful for these participants in a way that this realtiosnhip with the high power help participants to search for meaning and purpose in life and is reported to play a role in people's lives and their psychological well-being as also suggested by existentialist (Ellis, 1973; Frankl, 1959, 1969; Rogers, 1951, 1961). Previous research has also found that God is often perceived by spiritual people as a personal friend, ever present, involved in everything, a provider of strength, supportive and comforting, someone to talk to, and a creator (Ellison et al., 2001; Ironson et al., 2002; Koenig et al., 1994, 1998; Sacco, 1996).

Religion and spirituality have also been widely reported as entailing a relationship with God which provides a sense of comfort and security (McConnell et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2003; Pargament et al., 1998). Participants in this study seemed to look to God for meaning and comfort thus as Bailey (2004), Hopkins (2001) and Spilka et al. (2003) have argued, a belief in God can serve a critical role in personal coping and in how people view the world. Previous research has shown that, when this supportive relationship with God is strained or challenged, people may also have difficulties in finding their own psychological resources to cope and find meaning, comfort and assurance of God's existence (Walsh, 2003). Research has shown that individuals who are detached or experiencing tension with God may be more likely to engage in addictive behaviors that relieve, comfort and lift them up from stress.

Also emerging quite strongly is that participant's relationships with fellow Christians also provided a source of hope and support. This relationship also serves as a coping mechanism for general life concerns for the participants. Most of the participants talked about how their relationship with other Christians provided a safe environment in which to share life problems. They expressed that these relationships give them courage to forge ahead in the face of intense or severe life difficulties. Alternatively participants also perceived their relationship with other Christians as helping them to grow spiritually. This view is also supported by many scholars who have suggested that religious involvement promotes well-being by providing access to social support, and a source from which to promote positive social identity (Cotton et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2001; Fukuyama & Seig, 1999; Park, 2007; Pargament et al., 1998; Smith, McCullough & Poll, 2003). Participants' accounts correlate with Smith, McCullough and Poll's (2003) findings that religious congregations provide settings in which individuals who share core beliefs, values, interests and activities meet on regular basis to provide emotional support (e.g. companionship, prayer support) as well as tangible aid.

In contrast to above observation other studies have highlighted problems associated with spiritual conflicts, and feelings of a lack of spiritual support from others (Strazdins & Broom, 2007). Some studies have found that interpersonal religious conflicts result in psychological distress, such as greater anxiety, negative mood, and lower self-esteem (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Park, 2007) as well as increased depression (Pearce et al., 2003). Nevertheless in this study I have observed that spirituality provides support and hope which people can use to manage and cope with challenging, distressing and stressful situations.

5.4 Engaging in spiritual practices

This study has also illustrated how participants described using their engagement in spiritual practices to manage and cope with distressing and stressful situations. Participants reported their engagement with both private and public spiritual practices. Private spiritual practices were conceived as praying outside church, meditation, watching or listening to spiritual songs and reading Bible. Public spiritual activities, as experienced by participants included attending church services and taking part in other activities at one's place of worship. In all cases participants such as Yolisa reported how her attendance of the church services, and particularly,

participation in the church choir, has helped her to remain a devoted Christian in the face of a tempting world (Line 46-50). Other participants talked about how their engagement with religious activities such as bible reading, listening to worship songs, attending prayer meetings, and spending time with other Christians has helped them to continuously relate to God. In the case of Ellie, offering prayers and communing with God is probably the most important aspect of spirituality. Ellie further asserted that preaching the word of God, meditation and reading of the bible are necessary in the development of her spirituality (Line 454-457). A close analysis of participant's experiences of spirituality reflect that engaging in religious activities such as attending church services, praying and reading the bible are all important aspects of being a Christian. Results from this study did not reveal the diffierence between spirituality and well being in terms of the having more impact on well-being.

In resonance with this observation Kellehear (2000) and Pargament et al. (1998), argued that many people value both religion and spirituality as a form of support for their personal and social needs. The same argument is further supported by studies done by Gibson and Parker (2003) and Koening, George and Peterson (1998) which showed that activities such as prayer, scripture reading or attending church were important factors that enabled people to grow spiritually. Although participants reported higher levels of spiritiuality than religiousity, but differences in the effects of spirituality and religion on well-bieng have not been reported. Participants described spirituality as more broad and individualisitic while religion was described by participants as institutional involving rituals, beliefs, behaviours and obligations that enhances relationship with God. According to the participants being spiritual meant being free and not being devoted or bound to adhere to any rules or laws. This may suggest that spirituality may have positive influence on well-being than religion.

In sync with participants' experiences of spiritual practices Koenig et al. (1994) further pointed out that a daily prayer may reduce perception of pain, and generate positive emotions and a sense of relaxation, reducing distress and stress. These scholars further argued that people pray for guidance, strength and wisdom to be able to handle life problems. Other scholars have also suggested that involvement in religious practices promote well-being by providing people with

access to social support (Ellison & George, 1994; Greenfield, Valiant, & Marks, 2007; Strawbridge et al., 2001).

However, other studies have suggested that there is also the potential for other complex relationships between spiritual practices, stress and mental health. For instance, as Ellison and Taylor (1996), Smith, McCullough and Poll (2003) have claimed, some individuals may use religious activities to avoid their problems. In their study, Ellison and Taylor (1996) found that many people turn to prayer or other religious activities when facing various types of stressful events or conditions, and that these activities serve as a strategy for avoiding facing these challenging realities, but not necessarily for solving them. In this regard spirituality does not become a very valuable tool for managing and coping with distressing situations but rather, an illusion resulting in false comfort. Participation in spiritual practices, as emerging in this study seems to be a valuable source of spiritual growth. Also coming out clearly is that spirituality manifests in people's lives through their participation in a number of spiritual practices and the net effect being a sense of peace, freedom from pain and hope to move on in life.

5.5 Using spirituality to manage relationships with others

Also emerging in this study is how participant's spirituality was harnessed to enhance the way they relate to and interact with other people. Spirituality came out as a factor influencing participant's attitudes towards other people. In many cases participants reported how their spirituality helped them to accept other people for whom they are as well as to be compassionate, respectful and helpful when relating to other people. Interesting to note is that participants felt that God wants them to show consideration and positive attitude towards others. A case in point is Yolisa's argument that from a spiritual perspective all people are equal (Kellehear, 2000; Sacco, 1996; Sherman, 1996). Yolisa further talked about how this perspective has encouraged her to love people unconditionally and accept them for who they are (Line 101-108). Still on the same matter Yolisa spoke about how her spiritual life taught her to be humble and to forgive others (Line 72-78). Like Yolisa, Apiwe and Ellie also reported about how their spirituality has taught them not to undermine or to look down upon others. Ellie elaborated by saying that the Bible clearly stipulates that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves (Line 554-562). In a different, but similar argument, Pat talked about how spirituality has helped her to maintain

a healthy relationship with God, and at the same time a good relationship with other people. Looking at participant's experiences it is clear that spirituality has helped them in so many ways to manage the way they relate to both God and others. Similar studies have shown that religion promotes a healthy balance between acceptance of the self, the other and the world. Research reported by Bailey (2004) found that spirituality is correlated to positive relationships with others. Similarly Sherman (1996) as discussed earlier in chapter two defined spirituality as involving a relationship with others, a sense of compassion, and giving the gift of self. Sherman (1996) further argued that spirituality manifests in sharing with and helping others.

Participants' experiences of spirituality as a way of relating to the other are also captured in Kellehear's (2000) point that spirituality can be described as altruistic and relational, involving a direction to do good work, help others than the self and participation in activities of self-interest. Findings from the study at hand suggest that spiritual practices and beliefs may contribute to the development of such an attitude. In addition evidence from this study points out that the perception and equality of others facilitates understanding, among the participants from which feelings of kindness and tenderness emerged. The participants in Sacco's (1996) study mentioned earlier also related their experience of interconnectedness resulting from spiritual belief and practices to enhance empathy and compassion in their daily activities. We may thus conclude that an emphasis on mutuality encourages compassionate interpersonal affect and attitudes that are optimal for a relational space (Bailey, 2004; Hopkins, 2001; Spilka et al., 2003; Miller, 1999; West, 2000).

In contrast, other scholars argued that having a genuine, caring and compassionate relationship with the other as well as an attitude of respect for or valuing of other people though positive is not often described as being difficult to achieve. For instance, listening to other people's worries and soothing them, and intervening, or protecting people who are sad, angry or in conflict has also been associated with depressive symptoms (Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000). Consistent with this line of argument Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) and Antonucci and Jackson (1990) reported that mutuality and appreciation are reciprocal, and that giving more than one receives may result in frustration. Arguably interaction with others is not always pleasant. Antonucci and Jackson (1990) point out that there is a negative side to social interaction and that in addition to

providing assistance, others may at times become demanding and burdensome. Thus whilst spirituality as experienced by participants in this study emerged as all good, one must be aware of the fact that spirituality, if not managed accordingly, can result in compromised relationships, and more so, with negative consequences to not only the other but to the self. Overall spiritual experiences were consistently and beneficially associated with all the dimensions of well-being.

Conclusion

Chapter five has discussed the findings of the study. The chapter does this by firstly synthesising evidence, as represented by participant's experiences before drawing on literature to make a knowledge claim and concluding statements. Hence chapter five has done what it claimed to do as shown in the introduction. Having discussed the findings of the study and acknowledging the possible contestation around the emerging positive influence of spirituality on people's well-being it was important to also acknowledge that some studies have come up with different results. In doing so I am aware of the fact that the findings of this study are to an acceptable extent trustworthy and reliable if considered against the context of the participants involved. Therefore I feel very confident to use insights gained in this study in the next chapter to highlight the possible implications of the findings of this study for the field of psychology.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Drawing on the discussion of results, chapter six synthesises the entire study. The chapter starts by highlighting the contributions that the study has made to the field of psychology, and then moves on to outline some of the limitations associated with the way the study was conducted. The chapter also highlights and discusses the implications of the study findings for Universities and the practice of psychology. The chapter ends by making a few recommendations for future research.

6.1 Contribution of the study

Although this study can be considered small in terms of scope and sample size it has made quite some modest contributions to the field of psychology. The following are some of the contributions worth noting;

6.1.1 Knowledge gap

Within the context of Rhodes University previous research on spirituality has focused on three distinctive issues. First was a study by Cunningham focusing on spiritual experience in everyday life, second is a study by Ebden focusing on understanding the relationship between virginity, spirituality and sexuality and finally is Young's study on examining the signs of well-being amongst students (Cunningham, 1994; Ebden, 2000; Young, 2009). Apparently none of the three studies investigated the impact of spirituality on students well-being. This study has therefore attempted to bridge this knowledge gap. The study has in some way generated new insights and added value to the existing body knowledge pertaining students' experiences of spirituality and well-being. The study whilst building onto previous research looked at spirituality from a new dimension-that of the impact of spirituality on students' well-being.

6.1.2 Generation of knowledge for University intervention

This study has also generated valuable knowledge which the Rhodes University can use to think about and implement spiritual interventions promoting students well-being. The fact that this

study has shown that spirituality has a positive impact on student well-being adds value to the University's advocacy for increased support and promotion of spiritual practices and services such as worship events, cell groups and prayer meetings for the benefit of students. Knowledge generated within this study is therefore useful for decision making and planning processes.

6.1.3 Methodological contribution

In addition this study has, from a methodological point of view, made an attempt to provide valuable insights regarding sampling. The study has highlighted the need to think carefully about sampling and the implications that it has on the credibility of research. It emerged that the decision to work with a small and homogenous sample (four participants who happened to be all female and Christians) had a significant impact on the findings of this study (see section 6.2.1 below). Upon reflection this study may have re-emphasised the need for future researchers to think carefully about the size and composition of their sample of participants. Size of sample and composition of participants if not constituted properly has huge implications on the range, validity and trustworthiness of data collected, and ultimately this affects the overall credibility of a study.

6.1.4 Literature review and spirituality

This study may also, in a small way, have added different perspectives to the existing body of literature that can be used by future researchers. As highlighted in Chapter two one of the challenges of researching spirituality has been and probably continues to be a lack of clarity as to what spirituality or religion means or how spirituality relates to religion. This study attempted to bring the two concepts together.

6.2 Limitations of the study

As I reflect on the study I realised that the study had a number of limitations. Reflecting on these limitations and outlining how I mediated them added credibility to the findings of my study. The following are some of the limitations:

6.2.1 Sampling

The fact that I, as pointed out in chapter three, used purposive sampling to identify potential participants without due thoughts about its implications on the findings of the study emerged as a limitation. Firstly I realised that, as I presented and interpreted the data the orientation of the findings had been somehow influenced by the nature of the participants that I worked with. The composition of my sample of participants which was unfortunately all females and Christians and Honours students had a bearing on the findings of the study. I therefore had to justify why my findings were all positive by emphasising that these findings are only valid if perceived from the contexts of the four students that I worked with. In addition I had to draw on previous research reports and available literature in order to validate the findings of this study.

6.2.2 Size of sample

Closely related to the above matter, was the realisation that in addition to the homogeneity of the sample of participants that I worked with, the size also had negative implications on the overall trustworthy and generalisation of the findings of this study. Because of the small sample that I used the results of the study cannot be easily generalised to all students at Rhodes University. The four participants in this study may not have been representative enough of the student population of the university. Ultimately it therefore means that because I did not think carefully about what size of the sample to work with the findings of this study are therefore not generalizable to wider context. However I mediated the influence of the size of the sample by juxtaposing the findings of this study to findings of similar studies and by so doing still showed that though the sample was small the actual findings are still valid and relevant. The findings of this study should therefore be used with caution and may not as already mentioned be generalised to the broader populations of university students. Further research using a larger sample may therefore be of great value.

6.3 Implications of the study

The findings of this study have varied implications for the university and the practice of psychology. In this section I will highlight some of these implications. For clarity purpose I will present these implications into two categories namely implications for universities and implications for the practice of psychology.

6.3.1 Implications for universities

Given that this study has shown that spirituality can have a positive impact on students well-being, universities may consider scaling up their efforts to promote spiritual practices within campuses. Based on the findings of this study universities may consider increasing support for the establishment of spiritual structures and processes such as religious societies, prayer meetings, worship events and cell groups. By doing this universities may provide spaces and opportunities for students to engage with both public and private practices which will ultimately help them to cope with distressing situations such as academic pressure, peer pressure and indulging in risky behaviours such as alcohol abuse and drug abuse. However, because it came out in this study that spirituality may also be experienced differently by students, access to and provision of opportunities for spiritual practices need to take into consideration the diversity of students' backgrounds. In other words there is a need to have different spaces for different kinds of spirituality and religions and move beyond perceiving spirituality as limited to Christianity.

Orientation programs in universities could be developed to make students and their parents aware of that spiritual searching and struggling regardless of cultural background may be beneficial for well-being. By structuring the orientation programmes towards being sensitive to and supportive of spirituality universities can mediate students' spiritual struggles and religious tensions. Letting students know that they are not alone in this process may buffer the feelings of abandonment and isolation common to those struggling. Such university-based spiritual support services may help students to settle down and identify with other spiritual fellows.

In addition, the findings of the study have also highlighted that, given the few studies that have been done on spirituality and student well-being in South Africa, there is a need for more research to explore the different aspects of spirituality and how it can be used in university settings as an administrative tool and strategy for promoting student well-being. The findings of this study are therefore useful for thinking about the wellness policies and programmes that universities are expected to develop to enhance student well-being.

6.3.2 Implications for future research

Insights developed in this study have implications for future research within the field of Psychology. The way this study has worked with the concept of spirituality and religion need to be reviewed (see section 6.4 below). In this study spirituality was confined to Christianity, yet it is broader than that making it important that future research needs to examine and consider the other dimensions of spirituality including frequency of prayer, traditional and ancestral religion and its impact on well-being. The implication of this realisation for future research is that researchers must seek to work with a broader and inclusive concept of spirituality. In addition the need to think carefully about sampling, in terms of who to involve within a particular study implies that future studies have to take into consideration sampling techniques which enable them to have representative sample sizes, including samples that are non -homogeneous. If this is done, the emerging results will be far more trustworthy and easy to generalise to other contexts.

Another implication of the findings of this study for the field of psychology relates to the practice itself. For instance the fact that this study showed how spirituality manifests positively in the student's experiences and well-being, may be used as a resource by university psychologists in their everyday work. This insight may also be valuable to counsellors and educators whose passion is to enrich the developmental path of young people, and to help them to avoid engaging in high risk behaviours.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations to guide future research are made. It is important to note that the recommendations made are not a one size fit all type because as already pointed out this study is very context-specific and confined to experiences of the four participants.

- There is a need for future research to continue to develop conceptual clarity around the terms spirituality and religion. Although there seems to be an increased interest in spirituality, valid research in this area will remain problematic as long as the literature lacks an established conceptual or operational definition. This has already been acknowledged by a number of scholars.

- As already pointed out there is a need for the broadening of scope of this study so that it can become applicable or generalizable to wider contexts. This can be done by extending this study to include more research participants, or by broadening the research questions to cover the diverse dimensions of spirituality. For instance, future researchers should go beyond confining themselves to asking questions about spirituality as limited to Christianity.

- There is need for future research to have mixed composition of research participants. For instance, involving students from various departments and faculties, or spiritual affiliations including African traditional, and Muslims would have produced far richer perspectives. Thinking about the composition of the research sample is very important for future research.

- Another recommendation for future research is about the need to use diverse age groups, different sex and different races. Doing this has potential to improve the credibility of future research findings. It also has positive implication for the application of the findings to wider contexts.

- It might also be important for future research studies to be designed in such a way that they span over a longer- period. In practice this may mean researching students from when they join university up until they finish their studies. This is because in this study I only worked with students who were in their final year, whereas a lot might have happened since their first year which might have influence their spiritual experiences and well-being.

Conclusion

Chapter six has concluded the study. Firstly the chapter has highlighted the contributions that this study has made to the field of psychology. These contributions have been discussed in detail. Secondly chapter six moved to discuss what came out as some of the limitations of the study. Two key limitations of the study, namely sampling and sample size were discussed. In this chapter measures taken to counteract these limitations were also discussed. Thirdly the chapter went on to discuss the implications of the findings of the study. These implications were identified and presented in two categories notably; implications for the university and implications for the practice of psychology. Finally chapter six, because it is the last chapter in

this study, it has ended by making five recommendations for taking forward future research in psychology. It is noted that these recommendation are meant to respond to some of the limitations experienced within this study, for example, the problem of a lack of generalisation of the findings to a wider context.

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2 <u>**PARTICIPANT 1: YOLISA:**</u>

3 **What is the influence of spirituality on your well-being?**

4 *Due to me being raised in a spiritual house hold by my mother I have regarded that when I'm*

5 *upset, sad, feeling lonely I can pray and ask God for calmness and resorting into prayer just*

6 *keeps my mind at peace. I don't get rattled by things. You go out into the world everything is*

7 *heightened. When I am sick I can also pray, and ask God for his healing and that influence*

8 *comes from my mother and also from lot of people in my life like grown ladies we regard*

9 *ourselves as also a   spiritual family*

10 **For you what does it mean to be a spiritual person?**

11 *It means having a close relationship with God is not about knowing him from a distance. It*

12 *also means praying for support, having faith in Him. It means sharing my life and testimonies*

13 *with other people, both the young, old in the church or in the gathering of children of God.*

14 **What do you mean by a spiritual lifestyle?**

15 *It means to protect my body, and to take care of my body. According to the Bible, it says that*

16 *I must regard my body as a temple and that I should guide against things that can harm it. It*

17 *is not by smoking or drinking and it is by not having lifestyles that could harm or break me*

18 *down, or leading me to having disease. It is a lifestyle that I should respect myself and also*

19 *respect other people in order for them to be able look up and trust me.*

20 **You've mentioned earlier on that spiritual life is about sharing your life with other**

21 **people can you tell me more about that**

22 *It means witnessing to other people about my relationship with God and about what He can*

23 *do when they are down or sad. I tell them what the Lord God has done in my life. For*

24 *example, being a role model to young people and I do motivate them with my life that they*

25 *too can achieve better life through their spiritual lifestyle. This usually brings spiritual inputs*

26 *into my life. I always engage myself with other people from the church by socialising with*

27 *them. This usually brings spiritual input into my life. When I receive support from friends at*

28 *any particular difficult situation, it always gives me courage to go ahead in the face of*

29 *intense or severe difficulties. Sometimes, my friend's advice helps me a lot to have a*

30 *constructive mind and to be able to cope in respect to any problems I may face. We also talk*

31 *about each other's academic performance.*

32 **In your opinion how does religion and spirituality compare to each other?**

33   *I believe that a lot of people are religious, almost everybody is religion for most people they*

34   *belong to some sort of religion such as Islamic, Bundis, Hindus so those are religion and*

35   *there are certain things that you need to do in order to belong to that religion that you*

36   *believe. However I think that spirituality and religion are different. Because religion it's just*

37   *the beliefs you must have, going to church and certain things you must do.*

38   *Spirituality is a lifestyles, it is the close relationship with God it having a close encounter*

39   *with the creator of heaven and earth for me that is the difference.*

40   **What is your understanding of well-being?**

41   *Well-being: is a state or frame of mind that you find your self in being calm being relaxed*

42   *being content with your self not being sick or not being stressed out, it is the opposite of*

43   *being sick, being stressed and anxious. It is really the calm part. It is looking after your*

44   *self's and taking care of your life and being healthy*

45   **How does spirituality manifest in your life?**

46   *Spirituality shows by me attending church services regularly for example immediately after*

47   *interview I will be going to choir practice. It is also parts in worship. For me I am a member*

48   *of that department in my church. I sing and play the bands. With all these activities I also*

49   *create devotion and prayer times for God through my faith in Him. Its shows by me always*

50   *engaging with other people from my church, socialising with them that is how it manifests.*

51   *There's always that spiritual input from my friends. I just experience the spiritual life as*

52   *having faith in everything. I mean just to believe that there is a God who loves you, who*

53   *cares for you, and who will answer your prayers. If I have not talk to God for a while, I*

54   *would feel uncomfortable and it would be difficult for me to be of help to other people when*

55   *they come in to ask for advice, since I would be limited in what to say or shared with them*

56   **What is your experience of spirituality?**

57   *My experience of spiritual for my self it an aspect that I cannot get from anybody else*

58   *including my mother she loves me and I love her but she cannot give me what I get from, my*

59   *spirituality aspect and from my relationship with God when I m nervous she can calm me*

60   *down but she cannot bring that peace that I get from the spiritual life that I live out. When I*

61   *am sick and cannot go to the doctor soon enough I can pray and ask God to heal me because*

62   *I believe that my spiritual life and My faith and my spiritual beings being can heal me. It's*

63   *being able to know that I have a source in my life nobody else can fulfil and that source can*

64   *do anything in everything.Another experience of spirituality is during stressful period in the*

65   *University, I mean those times when it is difficult to understand my lecturer, spirituality can*

66   *help me in that, I tried to look at the situation better and this has helped me to be more calm*

67   *and able to work out problems. Even the wisdom to continue with the course programme and*

68   *finish the degree was stressful, and during this period my mother, my lecturers and my*

69   *friends cannot give me that wisdom that I need or the marks to guarantee my success, but I*

70   *have to work harder with the wisdom and my spirituality. This has helped me to calm down in*

71   *stressful period. It is also in terms of my personality and character that spiritual aspects*

72   *comes out it. My spiritual life teaches me to be humble and to forgive others when I am*

73   *offended because I realised that in this world no one is perfect. I always try not to focus my*

74   *attention on the negative part of other people but hinge much on their good side. And that for*

75   *me true compassion is to acknowledge the essence of that person and by acknowledging the*

76   *essence of them it means you don't judge them .This also entails helping them when faced*

77   *with challenges and at the same time not being judgemental. This allows me to be*

78   *compassionate about all the issues that the person has. It's just more than just caring*

79   **How does spirituality feature in your well-being?**

80   *It has helped me to be calm in stressful period, when I am face with a difficult emotional*

81   *situation to realty think about it and to meditate about the situation, and pray about it, and I*

82   *would feel different though the situation will not be completely gone, I still have to deal with*

83   *it but spirituality helps to have a better perspective about the situation it helps me to get*

84   *better and overcome any problems and not be stuck on the problem. Spirituality has helped*

85   *me in many things for example when having argument with a, friends or misunderstanding*

86   *with my mother or breaking up with boyfriend. It helps me to go through that because those*

87   *things like breaking up with boyfriend, misunderstanding with my mother or friend can really*

88   *touch me and really my well-being can be affected by that. During stressful period in the*

89   *university, I mean those times when it is difficult to understand my lecturer, praying to God*

90   *can help me in that, I tried to look at the situation better and this has helped me to be more*

91   *calm and able to work out problems better and gives me more patient.*

92   **Has Spirituality influenced your academic life in any way?**

93   *Yah I would say in a certain extent it has helped me to chose an academic career, I believe*

94   *that if I was not spiritual person not saying acting is a bad thing I would probably be gone*

95   *through acting, and my lifestyle at the end of the day would be much different as it is now*

96   *because acting or modelling those kind of things that I thought I would pursue would have*

97   *lead me in a different road partying lifestyle parting, social lifestyle not going to church,*

98   *doing maybe drugs or alcohol, and not sleeping regularly or eating properly because of the*

99   *working hours. So I believe my spirituality also influenced my academic lifestyle.*

100 **How spirituality influenced your attitude, perceptions in self & others?**

101 *As for me, managing relationship and attitude with others is a lifestyle that brings about*

102 *respect to other people, this also influence people to look up to me. With this in mind, I*

103 *always try to do to others what I would like them to do to me and also treat people as equal.*

104 *Doing good and helping other people who are in need is something that is very important to*

105 *me. Sometimes you need to become critical of your spiritual development as well and see*

106 *that. You know what my spirituality puts blinkers on my experience. And my spiritual belief*

107 *and religious beliefs may retard me but you need to say that to yourself, do you think that it*

108 *could retard you .And if it is you need to be reflective*

109 **PARTICIPANT 2: APIWE**

110 **What does it mean to be a spiritual person?**

111 *I can say that its a relationship that I have with the God's that you are worshiping so for me I*

112 *am a Christian, so the relationship that I have with Jesus, God and the Holy spirit. So it*

113 *depends on you as a person so for me spirituality means the relationship with Jesus Christ*

114 *that is how I regard spirituality as a Christian.*

115 **Can you describe for me what kind of relationship you have with God?**

116 *My relationship with God is as serious as when compared to that of my friends. I mean God*

117 *is like my friend, my father and my everything. If I have got a problem, I am able to speak*

118 *with him although I cannot really see him. He is close to my heart and its' like I'm talking to*

119 *a best friend that sits next to me. Even though, I do not see him physically, my relationship*

120 *with Him is very intense and He provides everything I asked from Him in prayer. He guides*

121 *my life and I always feel His presence. I imagine Him holding my hands. Although He is not*

122 *seen, I have peace in my heart and a wonderful experience.*

123 **How does religion and spirituality compare to each other?**

124 *According to me religion is all about laws that are written and you have to follow those laws,*

125 *you are obliged to follow those laws, for example if they say you cant do this, even if you*

126 *don't understand the reason why you don't have to do this, just because its written there you*

127 *just have to comply to those laws. Religion put blinkers on your narrow minded this how*

128 *things are and you have to do things that way so I would say spirituality is different from*

129 *religion in a way that you are able to worship God differently in a way out of your free will,*

130 *you are not necessary confined to worship God in this manner or you have to do things like*

131 *this, whereas according to me religion just confines you this how things are done even if you*

132 *don't understand why they are done, you just have to do them whereas spirituality offers you*

133 *so much freedom, you don't really have to do or follow those rules and everything you can do*

134 *things accordingly to your own free will, worship God freely without following any*

135 *procedures or things like that.*

136 **What is your understanding of well-being?**

137 *Well-being in an organisation is taking care of staff providing them with sufficient salaries*

138 *and working in a friendly environment and the employees are not stressed. At the same time*

139 *healthy environment for the employees. In an spiritual sense it having a relationship with*

140 *God and being a Christian and you try to be pure and living life which is pleasant, doing*

141 *things that pleases God and not things that pleases you in a way you try to make this*

142 *relationship with God more pure and holly so you had to really take care of your well-being*

143 *as a person. For example when you call yourself a born again Christian you had to do*

144 *certain things, you cannot drink in a way that is not taking care of well-being as a*

145 *Christian.In general well-being is living a healthy lifestyle and trying to do things*

146 *accordingly and living life in a right way. Healthy lifestyle includes diet, exercising, taking*

147 *care of your overall well-being.*

148 **How does spirituality manifest in your life?**

149 *Spirituality for me manifest in different ways. For example I read the bible in the morning*

150 *and sometimes play worship songs; this is referred to as 'quiet time'. By this, I would say it*

151 *really manifests because I have the feelings that these things are so real in life. Take for*

152 *example; when I go to church, I worship and sing spiritual songs and things began to happen*

153 *miraculously. I do have visions that I cannot explain or imagine how it happens and this*

154 *somehow manifests in diverse ways. Talking to God in my times of struggle usually have*

155 *serious effects on my psyche and after this I experience peace in my life. I often feel calm*

156 *after this even though people around may not understand these feelings in me. It keeps me*

157 *physically balance and mentally. Sharing my struggles with other Christians is sort of divine.*

158 *Sometimes, it is like being there for one another in prayers and support. These help in*

159 *holding together a viable relationship. Sometimes when I isolate myself because of difficulties*

160 *and I could say: It is easy to drop out in your academics. So, with I also get that motivation to*

161 *continue from other Christian because that's where I got that spiritual connectedness. My*

162 *relationship with other Christians is important too in my life because it serves as a coping*

163 *mechanism for general life concerns.*

164 **What do you mean by saying things happens automatically?**

165 *Things really happen automatically, I will see myself when I am worshiping God crying. As a*
166 *human being you cry when you are hurt, or when somebody has done something to you. But*
167 *when I am in church no body has done anything on me but I will just crying it just show the*
168 *worth of the Holy Spirit in me.*

169 **What does crying means for you?**

170 *For example when sing the song about how good God is, He is a provider and I will have*
171 *reflection in my life when I did not have anything and God came and provided for me. And in*
172 *that moment I will just cry tears of sorrow and joy and I would say indeed God you are a*
173 *provider and if it was not for you I would not be here I am today. So much emotions will just*
174 *come and I will feel the presence of God, although God in visible at that moment you feel he*
175 *is just holding you and he is really close is just a wonderful experience.*

176 **I am more interested again to hear your experience of spirituality in your life; can you**
177 **talk more on that?**

178 *Being a spiritual person has really helped me a lot in my life as a result I don't understand*
179 *when the person does not believe in a Super natural Power or in God I just wonder how does*
180 *he/she survive for example as for me if I was not a spiritual person I really don't know how I*
181 *was going to survive because sometimes I would have so much hurt inside me and so much*
182 *problems that I don't have somebody to share in with the problems. However, as a spiritual*
183 *person, I am able to go into my room and just cry and tell God what has happened and what I*
184 *need. With His help, I feel I don't really need supports from friends and family. It clams*
185 *things down and control certain aspect that can get out of hand from time to time. I know that*
186 *there is somebody who is with me all the time who I can just say this is how I feel this is what*
187 *is happing in my life and I would ask him to provide for me. Things really happen in my life*
188 *when I ask God to do something for me. The most important thing that I love about my being*
189 *spiritual is having the faith. For example, when I am in need of something and it does not*
190 *happen I will know the cause and the reason behind this why it did not happen because I*
191 *believe in God. I know that God knew that I would not be able to handle this at that point in*
192 *time and/or maybe if I am given, it might be messed up along the way. Experience of these*
193 *sorts has taught me why God did not give me certain things when I ask. Being a spiritual*
194 *person has provided so much peace in my heart so much joy whether things are good or bad*
195 *I'm so at peace because I know there is that person who is looking after me somebody who*
196 *knows what's best for me even if things does not go according to my ways. I know he has*
197 *greater plans for me than the one I wanted before. With the experiences that I've gone*
198 *through in my life, I think if I have not been spiritual, I would have committed suicide by now.*

199 *However, just because I know God, I have peace within me and I often tell myself that the*
200 *battle is not mine but of God because He knows why I am going through the difficulties.*

201 **Can you tell me of the problems that you have experienced and how God has helped you**
202 **to overcome that?**

203 *I remember in 2008 I visited my aunt in Umtata during the night people knocked at the door*
204 *and I was with my cousin. They were three guys had guns and knifes they scratch the whole*
205 *house looking for money they took our phones and they wanted to rape us. I don't understand*
206 *how it did not happen because they had all the time, power to rape us but funny enough it did*
207 *not happen. In most such cases people would be raped killed and stabbed but with us they*
208 *just took phones and wallets and they left us. It is so amazing you know because that's when I*
209 *saw the power of God because it really showed that God was there intervening for us and if it*
210 *was not for him those guys could have raped us and killed us. I mean I have so many*
211 *experiences where God manifested in my life. When I think of such situation I get this*
212 *reassurance that God exists.*

213 **Earlier on you've mentioned so much joy you feel because of your spirituality can you**
214 **talk more on that**
215 *According to me joy is different from happiness, Happiness happens when maybe something*
216 *good happens and you start feeling happy but then when good don't happens you become*
217 *sad, with joy I 'm talking about is constant joy that happens whether things are good or bad*
218 *and this joy that I have its only happens because I have a relationship with God I believe if I*
219 *did not have a relationship with God I would not have the joy if things are bad I would just*
220 *become sad and would only have joy if things are good.He has helped not to think of suicide*
221 *because I read a lot of his words in the bible that's where I get so much encouragement even*
222 *if I can today be faced with a challenge I know what the word of God say about the situation I*
223 *am going through. It is not easy academically and sometimes I feared that I am going to fail*
224 *but through God's help and my positivity I do make some productivity. I know that God is on*
225 *my side, and he is going to pull me up and he always comes when I have lost hope and he*
226 *keeps me motivated to do my work. During difficult times in my academic when I did not do*
227 *well God revealed Himself and gave me strength and wisdom not to give up. My spirituality*
228 *helps me to overcome any feelings of discouragement and hopelessness. It brings me back to*
229 *the kind of space where I feel strong and I just find in order to do well in my studies I need to*
230 *take the space to engage in my spiritual activities otherwise I feel quite depleted.*

231 **What kind of promises does God have for you because you mentioned earlier on that he**

232 **has promise for you?**

233 *If you read his words it helps to know him more and by reading his words it helps me to see*

234 *the promises that he has for me. God has plans that will not harm us but plans that will give*

235 *us hope in future. In his words God say he has better plans for me he has plans for me to*

236 *make me prosper. He does not have plans that I should be depressed or I should go through*

237 *poverty or live less life. He has plans that I live an extra ordinary life, life with prosperity*

238 *those are the plans he has for me*

239 **Has spirituality influenced your academic life in any way?**

240 *It has 100% influenced my academic life things sometimes It is not easy academically and*

241 *sometimes I feared that I am going to fail but through God's help and my positivity I do make*

242 *some productivity. I know that God is on my side, and he is going to pull me up and he*

243 *always comes when I have lost hope and he keeps me motivated to do my work. During*

244 *difficult times in my academic when I did not do well God revealed Himself and gave me*

245 *strength and wisdom not to give up. My spirituality helps me to overcome any feelings of*

246 *discouragement and hopelessness. It brings me back to the kind of space where I feel strong*

247 *and I just find in order to do well in my studies I need to take the space to engage in my*

248 *spiritual activities otherwise I feel quite depleted.*

249 **How does spirituality feature in your well-being?**

250 *Spirituality has helped me in a way that I don't do things in my own way. For example, being*

251 *a born again Christian that's the lifestyle I chose, which means I cannot go to parties and/or*

252 *drink alcohol. My lifestyle does not revolve round doing such things and it is being guided by*

253 *what God say in His words. I should live life in such a way that glorifies him. My life won't*

254 *be glorified by God if I go clubbing or involved myself in worldly affairs. God requires a*

255 *different lifestyle from me other than those offered by the world or that which the people offer*

256 *as better lifestyle. I am expected to do the right things and make right choices. I'm so much*

257 *in love with my lifestyle and I don't see any better lifestyle than the one I am having now*

258 *which has taken a leading role in my life. Spirituality has made me to allow God to take*

259 *control and to be led by him. My life just revolve around God, everything is about God. I*

260 *sleep and eat, it is just God. I don't focus on my weaknesses again, and I don't put pressures*

261 *on my self. For me I just need to live according to His way.*

262 **In terms of your attitude, perception and outlook how has spirituality impacted on**

263 **that?**

264 *Spirituality has taught me on how to relate with other people and not to undermine or look*
265 *down on others or look for faults even when they hurt me I forgive them, hence, the way I*
266 *socialize with people has to be different. In the first instance, showing kindness towards other*
267 *people is a command from the bible and by it we are thought that we should always do to*
268 *others what we really want them to do to us. This has helped me to become a better person. It*
269 *has also made me to see the good part out of every motive, things and everyone. I always try*
270 *to look out for all the positive behaviour of someone. The result is that it has sharpen my own*
271 *understanding, the people and the environment. It has helped to be somebody who is caring*
272 *towards others. I always try to look all the positive things out of someone I'm so in love with*
273 *my lifestyle and I don't see any better lifestyle than the one I have it has just took a leading*
274 *role in my life. It has made me to allow God to take control and be lead by him. My life just*
275 *revolve around God everything is about God I sleep and eat it just God. I don't focus on my*
276 *weakness, and I don't put pressure on my self. For me I just need to live according to his*
277 *way.*

278 **What facet of well-being does spirituality not influence***?***
279 *As I said early on, spirituality is just my life in every area in my life it influences every aspect*
280 *of my life. It always features. Every little things I consult God I don't just do things on my*
281 *own.*
282 **Participant 3: PAT**
283 **What does it mean to be a spiritual person?**
284 *For me it means being able to be attached and communicate with a superior power that I*
285 *cannot see. I mean consulting God for guidance, assistance and for any other things one may*
286 *wish. Having a close relationship with Him I survive all odds and this is really amazing.*

287 **What do you mean when you say to be attached and communicate to a superior power?**
288 *For instance you find people who believe in ancestors like in African traditional division they*
289 *consult their ancestors for advice or for any other thing, and you find people who believe*
290 *solely in God, so they consult God for guidance and for anything for assistance.*
291 **In your case, where do you see yourself?**
292 *I am a born again Christian I believe in God, I believe in holy trinity.*
293 **What does it mean to you to be a Christian?**
294 *Being a Christian mean walking along the path of Christ, being a meditator of Christ.*
295 **Meditator of Christ, what do you mean by that?**

296   *For me I live according to the principles of the bible, which guide us Christians, which were*

297   *stipulated by Christ to love one another, being generous, like, honest, true trust, being able*

298   *to assist other people when they are in need and making right choices.Spiritually as a*

299   *Christian, I have to maintain a healthy relationship with God and at the same time, socially I*

300   *have to maintain good relationship with other people. I practice generosity and try to be*

301   *helpful to the needy. I also try to be truthful and be honest with the people so that they can*

302   *always see the good side of me. Just being aware of my own critical thoughts and getting in*

303   *touch with my own sort of emptiness inside I talking from the intellectual understanding.*

304   *When I think of it I know the feeling. But I think it's that sort of existential black hole that we*

305   *all have. I sometimes think I'm so alone in this. Although you are not alone. We all seeking*

306   *for something and we all want that peace. It's just touching to feel and sense's other people*

307   *struggles and their humanity it makes me feel tenderness towards other people and more*

308   *compassion.*

309   **In your opinion how does religion and spirituality compare to each other?**

310   *Religion I think is based on the laws and strictly on the rules that you have to this, like the*

311   *Ten Commandments, that is what I think religion is, when it comes to Spirituality I think it is*

312   *being more inclined in doing anything or everything through the guidance of the holy spirit.*

313   **What is your understanding of Well-being?**

314   *It depends what kind of well-being you are talking about because, there can be physical,*

315   *spiritual and mental well-being. It is being able to be well spiritually that means my life has*

316   *to be focused, spiritually as a Christian I have to be in good relations with god, and socially I*

317   *have to maintain good relations with other people, I also have to preserve nature because it*

318   *belongs to god and god put nature in my authority to maintain.*

319   **In your life how does spirituality manifest?**

320   *I don't know if there is any scale, that needs to be seen I don't know if I can judge myself that*

321   *I'm spiritual, but I try to be generous as I can and to help other people. Spirituality to me*

322   *also connotes attending the church regularly, prayer meetings and spending time with other*

323   *Christians who always support me spiritually. I attend cell group meetings; learn about the*

324   *Bible and we pray for each other. I often give my time to church activities, read the Bible and*

325   *listen to Gospel songs.As a Christian, for me it means that I need to walk along the path of*

326   *Jesus Christ. Being a preacher of the word, I spend most of my time with other Christians*

327   *and this gives me much joy and support. This relationship has thought me to be explicitly*

328   *restricting myself on a number of various and unkempt behaviours.*

329 **What is your Experience of being a spiritual person can you tell me more?**

330 *I am trusting in God that whenever there is sorrow, there must be a reason why I am going*
331 *through that and the trust gives me the hope in all situations and opens up all possibilities.,*
332 *Through the challenges that I have been life and the ones I am going through I believe I have*
333 *been helped by God to overcome them because, some of them are just too much I don't think*
334 *I would be able to handle if it was not because of god. And again just being aware of my own*
335 *critical thoughts and getting in touch with my own sort of emptiness inside I talking from the*
336 *intellectual understanding. When I think of it I know the feeling. But I think it's that sort of*
337 *existential black hole that we all have. I sometimes think I'm so alone in this. Although you*
338 *are not alone. We all seeking for something and we all want that peace. It's just touching to*
339 *feel and sense's other people struggles and their humanity it makes me feel tenderness*
340 *towards other people and more compassion.*

341 **Can you give example of your challenges and how spirituality helped you to overcome**
342 **those challenges?**

343 *I use to work in a very hostile orientated environment there were challenges which were*
344 *physical as well as spiritual challenges. One example is that at one time there was this*
345 *person that I was on the same rank with and our relationship got to an extent that I*
346 *confronted him, and after confrontation I was advised by our supervisor at the time that I*
347 *should go home, and that same night I was told by my neighbour that he was at my house and*
348 *he had gone there to shoot me. There was also this other person who used to do traffic with*
349 *inmate I was against that, but I learned later that he had to plan to kill me as well as the*
350 *other officers who were under the section I was in charge of. I believe it was through god*
351 *that he was unable to do anything to me because I am protected by god.Apparently he also*
352 *consulted one of the inmates who was a sangoma how much he would require in order to kill*
353 *me and other officers, so I believe it was god who intervened and the inmate who brought out*
354 *the information died mysteriously. When the post-mortem was done we could not find*
355 *anything that lead to the people involved but there was nothing. So the influence of*
356 *spirituality in my life has some influence on how I handle things at work place. I mean it has*
357 *helped me to be calm in difficult situation, and not to react back in anger. To think first about*
358 *the challenges I am faced with and pray over it, and surely after this period, I'll be able to*
359 *manage this positively and get over it and not stuck with anger, revenge or hatred.*
360 *Spirituality has really helped me to let go of things rather than being stuck by them.*

361 **Can you tell me when you say that spirituality helped you to handle things differently?**

362   *I pray during difficult times and I get closer to my Lord. During these times, I communicate*

363   *to God and tell Him my situations and problems. I believe through my prayers that God will*

364   *help me and this normally come to pass.*

365   **How does god help you overcome difficulties?**

366   *I do not know if I will be able to explain because, he intervenes spiritually. The intervention*

367   *just comes I never thought I would be here today because I was working everyday under a*

368   *hostile supervisor, but now I am here at Rhodes, I do not even have a scholarship, but I can*

369   *survive because of the power of God and a close relationship I have with him. He is really*

370   *amazing*

371   **Do you think Spirituality has some influence on your academic life?**

372   *Yes it does because it was very difficult at the beginning of the year since I have not been*

373   *academically for the past eight (8) years; andI was about to be sent home for failing my*

374   *statistic course but a miracle happened. The honours coordinator and the lecturers' in-*

375   *charge just decided that the paper should be re-written and this gave me the chance to scale*

376   *through the examination though, it was reliably gathered that such an exercise has never*

377   *taken place in the department in the previous past. I thought about it and I think God*

378   *intervened. The loving of God and Jesus Christ is my saviour and provider. I pray whenever I*

379   *have a crises or problem or do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's very hard*

380   *academically and it's easy to fail.*

381   **How does spirituality features on well-being**

382   *When I am spiritually well everything becomes smooth academically and all the aspects of*

383   *my life. Due to the fact that I have mentioned that I believe in God and I always try to follow*

384   *his teaching and principles, so spirituality has influenced my behaviour because I don't get*

385   *involved in sexual relationships, so I don't have to worry about things that people worry*

386   *about like missing my periods because I had unprotected sex. I think the more I pray the more*

387   *it influences my behaviour. There are certain things I cannot do such as drinking and*

388   *smoking*

389   **Can you tell me of a situation where you were not physically well and spiritual uplifted**

390   **you?**

391   *Due to the stress that I had at one of the stations that I worked at that time I was suffering*

392   *from a severe headache, there was a guy, I now regard him as my spiritual brother. He said*

393 *somebody here is suffering from a headache and then I became surprised, like how does he*

394 *know and then he prayed and it went away and that strike me as well*

395 **In your opinion which facets of well-being does spirituality not affect?**

396 *I don't think there is anything as such in as far as Christianity is concerned I think it*

397 *influences every aspect of my life because spirituality modifies one's behaviour but, I'm not*

398 *trying to say that I'm perfect because sometimes I will talk about things that are not proper*

399 *like, petty gossip but I try to be perfect.*

400 **PARTICIPANT 4: ELLIE**

401 **What does it mean to be a spiritual person?**

402 *For me it's more about making spirituality part of my life and being on journey with*

403 *spirituality. It's basically if you take the body, the mind and spirit it's basically engaging in*

404 *and not only looking after your body and mind but also spiritual well-being so picking the*

405 *right spiritual influences and structuring your life so spirituality actually become a*

406 *foundation way for living your life. Another thing I grew up in a religious home my father*

407 *and mother are new born Christian but I think my relationship with God was very religious*

408 *because you grow up in a home where your mother and father teaches you like a bible or so*

409 *going to church kind of thing so it was kind of ritual thing so I also started giving part of*

410 *myself to God the break through came as I grow and became more personal. It started alive*

411 *in High School when I decided to attend another church when my parents used to go to. I*

412 *really wanted to have a personal relationship with God sort of started giving part of me to*

413 *god rather than believing there is a God. And the break through came during my University*

414 *years where I realise God is busy with me and with the things in my life it not just a general*

415 *belief so it became more of a personal I would say that I am Christian because my parents*

416 *had a influence that's why I think my relationship with God was first very religious. However*

417 *looking back I am glad for it because I started experiencing God and questions every little*

418 *beliefs for example we were told that we can not work on Sunday it's a sin. So ask God to*

419 *release us from all those laws rules. No one can condemn you for the things you hold or not*

420 *hold. For example Christmas days for me I don't find any relevance for me because it's just*

421 *dates. I experience truth in my life*

422 **You've mentioned being on journey with spirituality can you talk more on that"**

423 *Being a Christian it's all started when I gave my life to Jesus and it's a process about getting*

424 *certain ways of life like doing things that the bible guides us. I have given my life, spirit,*

425 *heart and soul to Jesus Christ, and my life reflects on the Bible teachings and principles. On*

426 *how my body and mind function, this is a thing I have submitted to God to guide and be*

427 *influenced by it. Jesus Christ is my rock I know that If I stand on his promises he will never*

428 *forsake me. Its not immediately like yha I give my life to God and everything its gone, you are*

429 *knew person by nature and yha it changes us. It's a journey with him for him to kind of*

430 *loosen things that keeps or hold you back and to make you free as a person and also have*

431 *your will in your life to sort of implement that as you go along you grow spiritually*

432 **In your opinion what is the difference between spirituality and religion**

433 *Religion is something man made in a way, itsrituals it's more traditional in a way it's a belief*

434 *of doing things the way it is done good to a certain set...it's mostly rules and Spirituality to*

435 *me is accepting spirit as part of your being and its something you direct in a certain way. It*

436 *has input and output and has an effect on you. If I'm not religious I am not going to take*

437 *those rules and traditions and bind myself to act or trying to gain or please God as many*

438 *religion does or try to be the better person but rather a journey that I spoke of engaging in a*

439 *lifestyle that makes certain values part of my life and grown my relationship with God or*

440 *Jesus or Holy Spirit*

441 **In your understanding what is well-being**

442 *Well-being it's basically taking care of your being so it can be well to give attention to the*

443 *three level and to keeping it healthy.*

444 **What are the three levels?**

445 *It's body, spirit and mind in terms of body it's like doing things like exercise, getting enough*

446 *sleep and eating well and also about things you chose to base your life on supposedly is to*

447 *connect yourself with your soul*

448 **How does spirituality manifest in your life?**

449 *To me it act as a foundation or a basis of my life and lifestyle it something that structure my*

450 *lifestyle guides at times and support it's a fundamental underlying element of my life because*

451 *it inspires the way I think about things and it influence the way I do things because I*

452 *submitted my life, spirit, heart and soul to God I want to be guided by him through that. So*

453 *how the body and mind function it's something I submitted to God so that's influenced by it.*

454 *Offering prayers and communing with God is probably the most important aspect of*

455 *spirituality. Thus, preaching the words, meditation, spending time in the reading of the Bible,*

456 *praising God, fellowshipping with other Christian members and fully participating in the*

457 *church activities all these are necessary in the development of spirituality in individuals*

458 **Can you give me examples of what you have mentioned now?**

459 *For instance if I had to make a decision about something important and I'm not sure which*
460 *way to go then I will pray and ask God to guide me sometimes he will send powerful people*
461 *to give me information that will give me peace.Another example social situations we would*
462 *go out with friends because I know that the bible teaches us to live morally his words for*
463 *example says in kingdom of heaven no adultery, drinkers' etc I will come to the Kingdom and*
464 *I don't want to displease him he also says my body is a temple of God, so those behaviours I*
465 *do normally like drinking and hanging out with friends will be influenced by the biblical*
466 *words in my mind. The bible teaches that we should not be transformed by the world but by*
467 *renewal of our minds and to have the mind of Christ which He has given to me. Spirituality*
468 *has inspired me in a number of ways. For example the way I think, behave because I have*
469 *submitted my life, spirit and soul to God. I want to be guided by him through out my life*
470 **Can you share more about your experience of being a spiritual person?**
471 *In my life generally it has been life giving, a blessing mostly to me that what makes life worth*
472 *living and it makes sense to life. It's not about being perfect but spirituality is actuality*
473 *knowing that there is a creator behind all and it's not about thinking things and doing things*
474 *it's about believing in things.It has also been difficult at times as well especially when you*
475 *get other people try to convince you otherwise or other religion or Christianity itself which*
476 *becomes religion in a form so it can be a binding thing as well that's I say sometimesit's a*
477 *continual thing for me just to realise that Jesus Christ will come to set me free so I don't*
478 *have to hold onto anything. To be honest, sometimes things happens and we don't understand*
479 *and we don't have the answers to; but the general thing is that it brings sense and meaning*
480 *into one's life and it helps during difficult times that it's something to hold on to.*
481 **When you said it helps you in difficult times can you tell me more how does it help you**
482 **in difficult times**
483 *Once again it helps me to have hope beyond all, Hope to hold on to the bible say all things*
484 *will come to good to those who love him for example even if I know that I did something*
485 *wrong or go through difficult times God will use that in my life for good, Jesus for me is my*
486 *rock I know when I stand on his promises he will never leave me so I know I don't have to*
487 *drive myself to get out of mess or think suicide is better because I will never get over*
488 *something that happened because I know that there will be hope and there will be a day that*
489 *he will help me to break free from it*
490 **Is there any example that you can give me of a situation where you had hope?**
491 *Yha what I think that stand out the most is in the two years ago I suffered from depression*
492 *for 10 months and it was very hard and I did not feel I could connect to God at that time at*

493   *all I did not feel anything and I did not have an appetite and I could not sleep sometimes .*

494   *During that time my Christian friends have been very supportive and although at times I*

495   *almost felt I wanted to give up because I did not have hope nothing changed nothing helped*

496   *but at the end that saved me because I was very suicidal at times and I really wanted to end*

497   *my life because it was getting too much for me and people speaking the truth over my life and*

498   *me deciding that I am going to believe that beyond it all it helps me to get up at the end and*

499   *hope that the light will come through. I started praising God and through praising worship it*

500   *started to lift. I can't think of anyway to explain the spiritual life.*

501   **Can you tell me more about praising worship?**

502   *Prayer and conversations with God is probably the most, spreading his words and spend*

503   *time reading, praising his words and also fellowship with other Christians. Acting out*

504   *spirituality as a person towards others and in your life using faith to making decisions and*

505   *communication with God.I just experience the spiritual life as having faith in everything. I*

506   *mean just to believe that there is a God who loves you, who cares for you, and who will*

507   *answer your prayers. If I have not talk to God for a while, I would feel uncomfortable and it*

508   *would be difficult for me to be of help to other people when they come in to ask for advice,*

509   *since I would be limited in what to say or shared with them.Same as with if you don't*

510   *socialise with other Christian a lot and you will realise after a while that your focus is*

511   *shifting yha praising worship is great.*

512   **Can you tell me how do you keep on holding that faith especially when faced with**

513   **difficulties?**

514   *The main thing for me is to keep contact with God and be honest to God and tell him how I*

515   *feel about things I mean expressing myself freely to God and be true to myself because by*

516   *thinking that he is too small for your problems obviously it brings my faith down so deciding*

517   *that I will believe and have hope on things. Being in the company of other believers is*

518   *essential because it builds up my spirit. By sharing with other Christians, it solves some of*

519   *my problems because it gives the conviction that I am not alone. Hanging out with other*

520   *believers is very important to me most especially when I arrived at Rhodes University. The*

521   *idea of being a new student brought about sad feelings and gives room to the realization of*

522   *how important it is to associate with other Christians. I know no one, but when we deliberate*

523   *on similar issues, then I immediately feel at home since we are serving the same God. To me,*

524   *this is like a connecting factor when you isolate yourself its easy to drop out.*

525   **How does spirituality feature in relation to your well-being?**

526   *I think it's an essential part of it as I explained earlier that it's a foundation of other thing*

527   *sort of the function of other things rely on it a lot sometimes especially in believing what is*

528   *the most the best or meaningful way in life that's how sometimes spirituality makes so much*

529   *sense to me because don't have to be religious about it you can just be honest and be free in*

530   *his grace and look at the guidelines that God has set out in the bible all those things just*

531   *because he loves you nothing will spoil your fun and if you live according his rules you will*

532   *have a good life and the fruit of the spirit is glorious its not something that will harm you or*

533   *break you down or exhaust you because grace is message of the gospel its not about what*

534   *you can do its about what you believe he did for you*

535   **In summary how would you describe how spirituality has contributed in your health,**

536   **well-being overall?**

537   *Emotionally, when I am down or tired and exhausted then I sing worship songs or I pray to*

538   *God, after this I do see the difference and change. Spirituality has thought me on the way to*

539   *take care of my body even physically so that I do not adhere to certain bad habits. I have also*

540   *realised that I have to keep my thoughts in check, I don't have to feed myself with the*

541   *negative thoughts because its not going to solve anything but worsen the situation. For*

542   *example I have learnt that if I'm angry this is not from God, hence, I take it God in prayer or*

543   *I prepare to put up worship songs. I have given my heart my soul and body to god I put the*

544   *spirit in charge of that in a way he is a reminder in me to keep on track.it's something like a*

545   *responsibility to look after myself and setting a good example to others.Once again it really*

546   *helps in my studies it give me hope. Hope to hold on to, when I find it difficult to cope with*

547   *the academic pressure. The bible says all things will come to good to those who love him.*

548   *For example I know that when I am going through difficult times in my studies, where I*

549   *struggle to cope, or do well, God can use that particular situation in my life and turn it out*

550   *for the good because God has a plan for me and he is my guide and believing in that Hope*

551   *and the meaning behind it all really makes life worthwhile living. I think my faith is the*

552   *reason why I am still here at Rhodes.*

553   **How spirituality influenced your attitude, perceptions in self & others?**

554   *The Bible is very clear about lot of stuff. I will quote some words from the Bible. For*

555   *example, the Bible says: "love your neighbours as you love yourself". If we follow that*

556   *simple instruction, it sums up everything about our behaviours towards others. This is to say*

557   *that we may continue to appraise God on a daily basis to know the actions towards others*

558   *whether it is out of love, or being loved, hatred, jealousy or selfishness just to mention but a*

559 *few. Sometimes, we know that as human beings, we are trying to be perfect on our daily basis*
560 *and forming relationship with other people, yet we are not but God. I know in my heart that if*
561 *I ask God concerning my troubles, and ask God to give me patients in my trying moments.*
562 *Therefore, when the situations are like this, we need to submit to the will of God.*

563 **How life has has been for you as a spiritual person?**
564 *For me I am still in a journey of discovering life at times it difficult to function in a daily*
565 *society sometimes I think my faith is the reason I still have hope for living because if you can*
566 *just look at the world the way its going something like that its easy to fall back into thinking*
567 *or going with the flow is so much easier So that's is my biggest of hope and my experience of*
568 *life I can't think of it without spirituality for example the time of my depression I lost all my*
569 *appetite and all the things are enjoyed that made me realised those things are temporary they*
570 *are just something that fades away they are not something that give meaning in life . The*
571 *true meaning of life for me is situated in my faith and I think if you submit your life to God is*
572 *a real adventure however people think if you believe in God your life is boring because you*
573 *don't do this or you don't go there, however its awesome because you don't have all these*
574 *issues and when you have issues he helps you to sort them out so life is such an adventure*
575 *because you are connected with the designer of it who can guide your ways.*

576 **What does faith mean for you because you've mentioned it quite a lot in our**
577 **conversation?**
578 *The bible says we don't see what we hope for and then Christ is a hope of Glory but then*
579 *faith to me is believing there is a Creator his name is God and his son is Jesus and that he*
580 *has a plan for me and he is my guide and believing in that Hope and the meaning behind it*
581 *all.*

582 **What facet of well-being doe's spirituality does not influence?**
583 *At the moment I don't really think so because I have become more depended on God and I*
584 *have realised more and more how much I need him in living my life however there have been*
585 *times where I feel I have excluded my soul because I realised I am a very emotional person I*
586 *tend to act more on my emotions than relying on God. Physically I know it's very easy to slip*
587 *back and go on with the human nature but because I submitted everything to God I believe*
588 *everything is under spiritual control. But I believe it's possible to have areas in your life*
589 *which you don't allow spirituality on but I don't think it's the way to go because you struggle*
590 *because you make it difficult for yourself.*

591 **You've mentioned that you used to act more on your emotions can you tell me more**

592 **about that?**

593 *Well I am very like sentimental person say with a friend I know I should not really get close*

594 *to that person but because the person is clearly not interested in God and it will remove me*

595 *further away from that which I inspire which is like become more close to God in my life but*

596 *I would be like this person is so nice okay I 'll be like but this person needs a friend I think in*

597 *a way like I feel when I am in that person or about how I can help that person so its more like*

598 *me wanting to feel that void, Even when I was a teenage you know when I am angry I would*

599 *listen to angry music and I did not care what the message was I just wanted to feel that*

600 *reflection and the resembles I felt in the music obviously now I have realised that I have to*

601 *keep my thoughts in check. I don't have to feed the negative thoughts because it's not going*

602 *to solve anything but worsen the situation. For example I have learned if I feel that if I'm*

603 *angry this is not from God, hence I take it to God in prayer or I prepare to put up worship*

604 *songs.*

APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule of Semi-Structured Questions (A set of open-ended questions for the interview)

Exploratory conceptualisations

1. What does it mean to be a spiritual person?
2. In your opinion, how does religion and spirituality compare with each other?
3. What is your understanding of well-being?
4. How does spirituality manifest in your life?

Exploring spirituality and well-being

5. Tell me about your experience of spirituality?
6. Can you provide examples?
7. How does spirituality features in relation to your well-being? (Discussion)
8. Which ways of your life has spirituality impacted/influenced? (Discussion)
9. How has spirituality impacted on your experience, outlook, attitude and perception?
10. Has spirituality influenced your academic life in any way? If so, how does it impact?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANT

I (participant's name)_____agree to participate in the research project of (researcher's name)   Nokuzola Magula on spirituality and student's well-being.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University.

2. The researcher is interested in participants' experiences of spirituality and well-being

3. My participation will involve my responding to a maximum of four interviews which will take about 60 minutes.

4. I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader (i.e. anonymous will be guaranteed).

8. I understand that all information that I provide will be treated as confidential and anonymous.

9. If required the result of the study could be disseminated to the research participant.

Signed on (Date):

Participant:

Researcher: Witness:

M1 Clinical Psychology   Supervisor

APPENDIX D: Containment Protocol

In the event the participants become distress during the process of the research the following steps will be followed:

1. As a Master's Clinical Psychology student, I will be able to provide emotional support as professionally required if distress service is needed during the research interview. If the distress goes beyond the ability of the researcher to provide during the research process and more support is needed the following steps will be followed:

2. Participant will be referred to the Rhodes Counselling Centre

3. In the event whereby the student need supportive environment in a brief period of time they could be taken to the Rhodes Health Care Centre for a brief period of relief.

4. In addition proactive steps will be taken to ensure containment outside research interview i.e. emergency telephone number of the counselling centre will be provided to the student.

APPENDIX: E-1

<div align="right">19 May 2011</div>

Dean of Students

Rhodes University

Grahamstown

6139

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to conduct the research project

I am presently a Masters Clinical Psychology Student at Rhodes University. I would like to request permission to conduct a research study involving the Honours Psychology Students, exploring the influence of spirituality on their well-being. I envisage the data collection to include semi-structured interview and audio-tape record. A more detailed exposition of the methodology is available upon request.

I feel that this research will be of great benefit to the University as well as my academic development. This study could point to spiritual wellness as a possible arena from which programming should increase because of the possible positive impact upon university student life and personal development.

The research will be carried with a strict ethical code of conduct. The research proposal will be submitted for ethical clearance with the psychology department ethics committee which provides oversight on issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and academic integrity. My supervisor, Professor Michael Guilfoyle is a lecturer and a Research Psychologist at Rhodes University.

The data collection will be conducted in a sensitive and empathic way with the focus of study being positive in nature. Data collected will enjoy strict data security at the University. I will present my findings in the form of a thesis to the University for reference.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding the research.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Nokuzola Magula M1 Clinical Psychology (nomagula@gmail.com)

APPENDIX: E-2

Student Registrar

Rhodes University

Grahamstown

6139

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to conduct the research project

I am presently a Masters Clinical Psychology Student at Rhodes University. I would like to request permission to conduct a research study involving the Honours Psychology Students, exploring the influence of spirituality on their well-being. I envisage the data collection to include semi-structured interview and audio-tape record. A more detailed exposition of the methodology is available upon request.

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Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding the research.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Nokuzola Magula M1 Clinical Psychology (nomagula@gmail.com)