

# Religious Orientation and Religious Commitment among University Students from Christian Homes

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## **Abstract**

*With a cross-sectional survey design, this research investigated the religious orientation and religious commitment of a sample of 200 University students from Christian homes. The researcher used the 15-item revised version of the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) and the 10-item Religious Commitment Inventory–10 (RCI–10) for data collection. Descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlations and student t-test were used for analyzing the data at 0.05 significance level. Results showed that there was no significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes. Findings also showed that there was no significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes. Results further indicate that there was no significant difference in the religious commitment score of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes. The study showed a non-significant negative correlation between religious orientation and religious commitment scores of the students. It is suggested that universities increase religious activities and continually instil awareness regarding the significance of positive religious orientation and religious commitment among students.*

**Keywords:** Christian Homes, Religious Orientation, Students

## **I. Introduction**

Religious orientation refers to how an individual is religious or the way an individual approaches (or avoids) religion; and/or the form of a person’s faith<sup>1</sup>. Allport and Ross differentiated between two orientations that individuals may endorse toward their religion: intrinsic and extrinsic orientations<sup>2</sup>. Intrinsic religious orientation refers to a personal, non-instrumental motivation toward religion characterized by strictly adhering to religious doctrine, integrating religion into daily life, and seeking personal meaning through religious activities<sup>2</sup>. Allport’s general conceptualization of the intrinsically oriented person is a genuinely devout person whose religion permeates his entire life and

influences all his experiences and activities<sup>3,4</sup>. Extrinsic religious orientation describes a motivation to fulfil needs that may not appear central to one’s religion<sup>2</sup>. In other words, individuals endorsing an extrinsic

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religious orientation may seek from their religion a sense of security and safety from life's troubles or may view their religion as a context in which to make friends, attain support, or even enhance social status<sup>5</sup>. Such extrinsic motivations are utilitarian in nature, using religion to fulfil unmet needs. Allport and colleagues summarized these orientations by stating that the intrinsically motivated person lives his religion while the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion<sup>2</sup>. Individuals may endorse either intrinsic or extrinsic motives, both intrinsic and extrinsic motives, or neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motives toward their religion<sup>5</sup>. A study suggests that individuals who endorse an extrinsic and social orientation toward religion tend to have poor well-being because they perceive less supportive relationships in their lives<sup>6</sup>.

Religious commitment refers to how much an individual is involved in his or her religion<sup>7</sup>. Religious commitment has been defined as the degree to which a person adheres to

their religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living<sup>8</sup>. Religious commitment is defined as the interaction between people's religious consciousness and religious participation<sup>9</sup>. Religious commitment is also considered a term loosely used to reflect the degree or level of religiosity. It attempts to capture how internally committed the

person is to his religion<sup>10</sup>. Worthington et al. differentiated two types of religious commitment: intrapersonal religious commitment and interpersonal religious commitment<sup>8</sup>. The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) is a valid instrument that aims to capture the interpersonal and intrapersonal commitment levels of the individual<sup>8</sup>. Religious commitment has also been considered from an extrinsic-intrinsic perspective<sup>11</sup>. According to Alaedein-Zawawi, one of the best indicators of religious commitment is the estimation of intrinsic religious motivation or intrinsic religiosity<sup>10</sup>. Individuals described as having an intrinsic orientation to religion have been described as living their religious beliefs, the influence of which religion is evident in every aspect of their life<sup>12</sup>. Miller defined commitment as continual decision making to save the face of the person (him/herself) or others, which assists in maintaining the social or ritual equilibrium. This mainly focuses on the extrinsic aspect of commitment<sup>13</sup>. Asa concentrated on the intrinsic part of commitment and defined it as giving intellectual, emotional, and spiritual assent to a set of beliefs and behaviors<sup>14</sup>.

Studies show that religious orientation plays a pivotal role in how individuals receive experiential meanings from their religion<sup>2</sup>, and that religious commitment also plays a significant role in increasing students' levels of happiness<sup>15</sup>. However, there is a lack of empirical studies on Christian students' religious orientation and religious commitment from developing regions like Nigeria. This has created substantial research gaps for cross-cultural data curation and the designing of faith-based interventions for student populations in such regions. Also, the results of studies that have paid attention to these religious constructs are limited when the sample size and participant group are being considered<sup>5,16-18</sup>. A study showed that significant barriers exist in the school-to-work transition for active students in a religious community than those who are not<sup>17</sup>. Thus, researchers have attempted to construct theoretical models of religious commitment based on the precedent theories, in which the commitment of Christians in unique settings can be better understood<sup>11,19-21</sup>. The studies on the religious orientation and religious commitment of Christian students in University settings might influence theoretical development, religious outcomes and future studies in religious education. Therefore, the general purpose of this study was to investigate the religious orientation and religious commitment of university students from Christian homes.

### ***Research Questions***

1. Is there a significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes?
2. Is there a significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes?
3. Is there a significant difference in the religious commitment of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes?
4. Does religious orientation correlate with religious commitment among university students from Christian homes?

## **II. Method**

### **Participants**

The study participants were 200 University students who identified as Christians and were enrolled in undergraduate programs at a federal University in Nigeria. The students ranged from 18 to 24 years with a mean age of 20.52 (SD=1.95), 40% (n=80) of the participants were males, and 60% (n=120) of the participants were females.

### **Instruments**

*The Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (ROS-R)*: The revised version of ROS is a 15-item scale by Genia<sup>22</sup> to measure the extent to which a person is extrinsically or intrinsically religiously oriented. The intrinsic scale (IRO) consists of nine items (Likert scale 1 to 9), and scores range from 9 – 45. The extrinsic scale (ERO) consists of six items (Likert scale 1 to 6), and scores range from 6 – 36. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the IRO and the ERO subscales were .85 and .78, respectively<sup>22</sup>. In the present research, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the IRO and the ERO subscales were .80 and .75, respectively.

*The Religious Commitment Inventory–10 (RCI–10)*: The RCI–10 developed by Worthington et al.<sup>8</sup> is a brief 10-item screening assessment of the level of one's religious commitment using a 5-point Likert rating scale from 1 ('Not at all true of me') to 5 ('Totally true of me'). The RCI–10 examines intrapersonal religious commitment (6 items) and interpersonal religious commitment (4 items). Items 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 make up the Intrapersonal Religious Commitment subscale; items 2, 6, 9, and 10 make up the Interpersonal Religious Commitment subscale. Examples of scale items include, "I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization" from the Intrapersonal religious commitment and "I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation" from the Interpersonal religious commitment subscale. A full-scale RCI-10 score of 38 or higher would justify considering a person to be highly religious<sup>8</sup>. Exploratory factor analysis of the items of the RCI-10 indicated Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.59 to 0.83<sup>8</sup>. In the present research, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the intrapersonal religious commitment and interpersonal religious commitment subscales were .80 and .82, respectively. Because the scales are very highly inter-correlated, Worthington et al.<sup>8</sup> do not advocate using subscale scores for interpreting research results.

## Procedure

This research utilized a cross-sectional survey design. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Nigeria. Students were approached in their lectures and were asked to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire. Students were briefed orally about the objective of the study. The researcher emphasized anonymity and confidentiality to the students who were also informed that participation in the research was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were returned on the spot.

## Data analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Version 22). Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlations, and student t-test statistic were used to analyze the data at 0.05 significance level.

## III. Results

**Research Question 1:** Is there a significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes?

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics and t-test analysis of the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes

	Gender	N	Mean±SD	<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
IRO	Male	80	49.99±1.20	-1.934	198	.06
	Female	120	49.67±1.11			
ERO	Male	80	26.09±1.94	-.015	198	.99
	Female	120	26.08±1.85			
ROS <sub>total</sub>	Male	80	76.08±2.61	-.899	198	.37
	Female	120	75.75±2.43			

IRO=Intrinsic Religious Orientation; ERO=Extrinsic Religious Orientation; ROS=Religious Orientation Scale.

Results of data analysis in Table 1 show that the male students' intrinsic religious orientation score was 49.99±1.20, extrinsic religious orientation score was 26.09±1.94, and total score on the Religious Orientation Scale was 76.08±2.61. Also, female students' intrinsic religious orientation score was 49.67±1.11, extrinsic religious orientation score was 26.08±1.85, and total score on the Religious Orientation Scale was 75.75±2.43. Thus, there was no significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes,  $t(198) = -1.934$ ,  $p = .06$ .

**Research Question 2:** Is there a significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes?

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics and t-test analysis of the religious commitment scores of male and female university students from Christian homes

	Gender	N	Mean±SD	t	Df	Sig.
RCI-10	Male	80	36.08±2.88	.482	198	.63
	Female	120	36.28±2.88			

RCI-10=10-item Religious Commitment Inventory

Results of data analysis in Table 2 show that the male students' religious commitment score was 36.08±2.88, and the female students' religious commitment score was 36.28±2.88. Thus, there was no significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes,  $t(198) = .482, p = .63$ .

**Research Question 3:** Is there a significant difference in the religious commitment of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics and t-test analysis of the religious commitment of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes

Religious Orientation Type	N	Mean±SD	t	df	Sig.
Extrinsically religiously oriented students	113	36.17±2.82	-.150	198	.88
Intrinsically religiously oriented students	87	36.23±2.95			

Results of data analysis in Table 3 show that the religious commitment score of extrinsically religiously oriented students was 36.17±2.82, and the religious commitment score of intrinsically religiously oriented students was 36.23±2.95. Therefore, the results indicate that there was no significant difference in the religious commitment score of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes,  $t(198) = -.150, p = .88$ .

**Research Question 4:** Does religious orientation correlate with religious commitment among university students from Christian homes?

**Table 4:** Pearson correlation of religious orientation score with religious commitment score of university students from Christian homes

		ROS	RCI10
ROS	Pearson r	1	-.03
	Sig.		.62
	N		200

ROS=Religious Orientation Scale; RCI-10=10-item Religious Commitment Inventory-10

The results in Table 4 showed a non-significant negative correlation between the religious orientation score and religious commitment score of university students from Christian homes,  $r(200) = -.03, p = .63$ .

#### **IV. Discussion**

The study investigated the religious orientation and religious commitment of university students from Christian homes. The present study found that there was no significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes. The present study also showed that there was no significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes. The study further indicated that there was no significant difference in the religious commitment score of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes. The study found a non-significant negative correlation between religious orientation score and religious commitment score of university students from Christian homes.

These results agree with some previous studies. For instance, Worthington's validation research suggests similar mean scores on religious orientation among male and female respondents<sup>8</sup>. In another previous study, a significant positive relationship was found between sex and religious commitment<sup>23</sup>. Research has also shown that religious commitment is positively and significantly related to positive attitudes<sup>15</sup>. However, significant differences were found between religious commitment and church attendance and between religious commitment and activity in church organizations<sup>23</sup>. In further contrast, a past study found differences in religious commitment among religious students of Christian faith<sup>16</sup>.

A past study found significant differences among religiously affiliated students and students with no religious affiliation in terms of religious orientation<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, when researchers want to study the effects of students' religious orientation on their degree of religious commitment, the students' religious nature should be considered. Finney emphasized that it is crucial to consider collective, ritualistic church setting for the generation of personal religious experience, patterns of orthodox religious belief, and private religious activity<sup>21</sup>.

Past research indicates that low levels of religious commitment are most often associated with disorders related to undercontrol of impulses, while high levels of religious commitment are most often associated with disorders of overcontrol.<sup>24</sup> Also, past research suggests that religious orientation is an essential factor in cognitive distortions and individuals with intrinsic religious orientation have less cognitive distortion<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, future studies should investigate the levels of religious commitment and the relationship of religious orientation with other mental health constructs among university students from Christian homes in Nigeria. Future studies are also required to investigate the mediators and moderators of the relationship between religious orientation and religious commitment of university students from Christian homes. Possible mediating and/or moderating variables might include forgiveness<sup>10</sup> and level of educational attainment<sup>15</sup>. Also, faith-based interventions could be initiated to see how effective they can be in improving the religious commitment of university students from Christian homes. Church-based universities such as those established by the Catholic mission should support comparative research on the religious orientation and religious commitment of university students of Catholic faith and students of other Christian beliefs.

This research paper contains some limitations. Firstly, it focuses on a sample of students from Christian homes in a federal university which is a secular university. Future research examining the relationship between religious orientation and religious commitment should seek to acquire more extensive data since the results will probably reflect in larger populations, including from students in Christian private universities and

state universities. Secondly, the current study only used a quantitative method to examine the relationship between university students' religious orientation and religious commitment. Future research should use a qualitative design to give more details about this relation. Thirdly, the scope of the study was limited to Nigeria. The same survey can be applied in other countries since this issue is not limited to culture. It is suggested that universities increase religious activities and continually instil awareness regarding the significance of positive religious orientation and religious commitment among students.

## V. Conclusions

The present study found that there was no significant mean difference in the religious orientation scores of male and female university students from Christian homes. The present study also showed that there was no significant mean difference in the religious commitment scores of the male and female university students from Christian homes. The study further indicated that there was no significant difference in the religious commitment score of intrinsically and extrinsically religiously oriented university students from Christian homes. The study found a non-significant negative correlation between religious orientation and religious commitment scores of university students from Christian homes. The present research is essential as it provides data on the relationship between religious orientation score and religious commitment score of university students from Christian homes. It is suggested that universities increase religious activities and continually instil awareness regarding the significance of positive religious orientation and religious commitment among students.

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