

## RELIGIOSITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN OGUN STATE

By

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the relationship among religiosity, locus of control and academic achievement of students in Colleges of Education in Ogun State. The subjects comprised 125 students randomly selected from two colleges of education in Ogun State. A Religiosity Scale fashioned in line with Strayhorn Religiosity Scale (1990) was used to assess the religiosity level of the students; an adapted version of Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (1966) was utilized to measure students' locus of control score and an Academic Achievement Scale was used to measure students' academic achievement. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic. The result showed that religiosity and locus of control were in moderate positive correlation with achievement in Measurement and Evaluation. In addition, a significant positive correlation was also established between religiosity and students' locus of control. The study recommended among others that advisors should go beyond the academic field and help students to improve and understand how their perception of self and their environment may shape their academic performance.*

**Keywords:** religiosity; locus of control; religiosity scale; locus of control scale; academic achievement scale.

### **Introduction**

Over the years, there has been a considerable amount of debate on the effects of religion on education. The larger portion of this debate has focused on the effects of private religious schools on the academic achievement of children (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). That is, most

of this debate has focused on the school level of investigation rather than the student level. One can argue that the individual religious beliefs of students are just as important as, and perhaps more important than, the beliefs of the educational institution attended. To the extent that this is true, it may be that the historic academic advantage that students of religious schools have had over students from public schools may have as much to do with the individual levels of religious commitment of the students than whether they attend a public or religious school. As some social scientists have pointed out, there have been only a small number of studies that address this issue directly (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996; Oh, 1984; Zern, 1987).

A number of social scientists believe the influence of religion, whether through personal devotion or schooling, may play a special role in urban settings (Jeynes, 1999, 2001; Sander, 1996). Educational psychologists and sociologists have been quick to point out that there are unique challenges that adolescents face in urban settings, particularly in the inner city (Jeynes, 2000; Jeynes & Littell, 2000; Sander, 1996). Several researchers have presented analyses and hypotheses that suggest that religion, whether expressed in religious schools or in religiosity, apparently helps children overcome many of these challenges so that they excel both academically and socially (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993; Coleman et al., 1982; Jeynes, 1999). For example, some social scientists argue that religious schools do a better job of helping disadvantaged students (Coleman, 1988; Coleman et al., 1982; Gaziel, 1997; Marsch, 1991; Morris, 1994). Lee (1986), for example, found that religious schools tend to reduce the achievement gap that frequently exists between Whites and African Americans. Other research indicates that religious commitment also reduces that gap (Jeynes, 2003).

For quite sometime, some researchers have been addressing the issue of the effects of individual religious commitment on academic achievement. Research has examined the relationship between the formal religious commitments of the parents and the academic achievement of children (Brody et al., 1996). Zern (1989) examined the effects of student religious commitment on college academic achievement. He found that religious commitment was related to a student's chances of living up to his or her ability level (as measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT and Graduate Record Examination, GRE), although it was found that students who were more religious did not show any tendency to perform better academically than their less religious counterparts. Koubek (1984) found that among Christian high school

students, there was a positive correlation between the degree of religious commitment and academic achievement. Similarly, a study by Oh (1999) found that high school students who had a high level of religiosity were more likely to have a higher GPA than non-religious students. Nevertheless, the number of studies attempting to understand the relationship between individual religious commitment and academic achievement is still quite small. Instead, researchers have tended to prefer to study the educational achievements of religious schools versus non-religious schools.

The fact that a high level of religious commitment has other positive effects may lead one to suspect that a high level of religious commitment by students would benefit them academically. For example, research has shown that religious commitment can help people deal with social situations and stress (Pargament, 1990; Seligman, 1991; Thomas & Carver, 1990), deal with traumatic loss such as the loss of a loved one (Balk, 1983; Palmer & Noble, 1986), have family stability (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Shrum, 1980), and have good physical health (McIntosh & Spilka, 1990).

On the basis of research that has been done on the effects of religious faith on various individuals, there are some reasons to think that the religious faith of students may influence their academic achievement in a positive way. The first of these reasons, and probably the most acknowledged, deals with a religious work ethic. Although, this work ethic is commonly referred to as the "Protestant work ethic," recent research indicates that this work ethic may extend beyond the Protestant sphere to other religious groups as well. Mentzer (1988), for example, has found that Catholics in America possess a strong work ethic. Research in the social sciences has consistently indicated the existence of a religious work ethic (Furnham, 1987; Gerhards, 1996; Giorgi & Marsh, 1990; Mudrack, 1992). Busto (1996) and Ter Voert (1993) found that this religious work ethic transcends differences in race and nationality. Giorgi and Marsh (1990) produced evidence suggesting that a religious work ethic can become strong enough to pervade an entire culture. A religious work ethic in the life of a student may also have a particular effect, given that some studies suggest that an ethic of "leisure" is becoming more prominent in Western society (Reeves & Petty, 1982). Although there are some studies such as that undertaken by Chusmir and Koberg (1988) that suggest the relationship between religious commitment and a work ethic is overstated, most studies have found a consistent

