

Family Experiences among Male Formees of Different Religious Congregations at Tangaza University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the family experiences among the male formees of different religious congregations studying at Tangaza University. This study adopted the Bowen family theory and was conducted using convergent parallel design. A total of 307 participants were selected, with 285 for the quantitative strand and 22 for the qualitative strand, based on statistical analysis. The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews while the quantitative data was collected using questionnaires. The study used family problems questionnaire for quantitative data collection. Data analysis was done through content and thematic analysis for qualitative data while descriptive and inferential statistics were performed using SPSS version 25. The main findings of the study revealed four major family experiences namely: loss and death ($M=3.70$, $std=1.129$), sickness ($M=4.12$, $std=1.119$), financial stability ($M=2.79$, $.522$) and parents' marital status ($M=3.69$, $std=1.054$). The study recommends psycho-spiritual counseling and counseling psychology to the male formees, as effective and efficient mechanisms to be explored in handling family experiences.

Keywords: Congregation, Death and loss, Family experiences, Financial stability, Formees, Parents' marital status, Religious, Sickness

Background of the Study

Kentish-Barnes et al., (2021) asserted that in France some family members may experience powerlessness, abandonment when another member is sick or dead. Sick and death are therefore experiences which family members are faced with globally, regionally and locally. The study done by Ngabeni and Davids (2024), which discussed the experiences of family members caring for schizophrenic family members agreed with the fact that sickness is a key family experience. This was supported by the study of Taib et al., (2021) that explored the challenges faced by parents with children who have complex neurological conditions.

Bangura (2021) mentioned family experiences such as death, divorce, impotence, children's problems/behavior, adolescent mood, single family, violent marriage/physical, drinking or tempering, domestic violence and differing standards and rules. Pangilinan (2022) said that any kind of conflict in a family has an impact on children and by extension on the adult since the child of today is the adult of tomorrow. Ngige, Njue, and Rombo (2007) conducted a study on the challenges faced by Kenyan families, identifying issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, unemployment, gender inequality, maternal, infant, and childhood mortality, and outdated traditional marriage and family laws. All these experiences may greatly affect several family members in different ways. Nevertheless, the family is the primary source of safety, care, and nurturing for everyone, particularly for young individuals. It is a unit that nothing else can play the role that it does. It is an entity where all the members are interrelated depending on the level and degree of their interaction. Hence, it is fundamental in the life, wellness and wellbeing of every individual.

According to Ellison et al., (2001), religious men and women including formees are expected to have healthy behaviors and relationships. They are expected to be men and women who are spiritually and emotionally stable; being able to handle any situation in life positively and adequately. It is also expected from them to have higher levels and a sense of psycho-spiritual wellbeing due to the nature of their vocation, ministry, and life. Kwiatek (2014) argued that these assumptions tend to ignore that religious men and women including formees join religious life with their different backgrounds, family experiences and challenges such as traumatic experiences, issues of dysfunctionality in their family of origin, unidentified personality disorders, financial stability, death, sickness, and marital status of parents among others.

A family could also be an essential place and initial environment of self-awareness, meaningfulness, connectedness, compassion, and self-transcendence of members, which according to Egunjobi et al.; (2023) are components of psycho-spiritual wellbeing. However, a family can also be a set-up of embarrassment, anguish, and difficulties for the youth. If these experiences are unattended, they may lead to several consequences in the individual's personal life and his/her relationship with others and God. In addition, sometimes in the real-life situations of religious men and women and in the training of those under formation, one may observe issues such as distraction, lack of meaning and/or deep sense of prayer, difficulties in living community life, isolation, solitude, poor academic performance, stress, anxiety, anger among others. All of these could have different causes and family experiences may be factored in. Therefore, family experiences may have the capacity to affect the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of male formees at Tangaza University.

This study holds substantial significance in both academic and pastoral contexts, particularly within the formation and development of male religious candidates at Tangaza University. The findings offer critical insights into how formative family experiences shape the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of male formees, an area often overlooked in formal religious formation programs. Understanding the role of family background in the psycho-spiritual development of male formees can help formation directors, spiritual mentors, and psychologists tailor more holistic and individualized formation approaches. This ensures that candidates are not only intellectually prepared but also emotionally and spiritually mature.

Objective

To investigate the family experiences among the male formees of different religious congregations studying at Tangaza University.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods research approach adopting the convergent parallel mixed methods research design. Using this design helped the researcher consider quantitative and qualitative data with equal interest without giving priority to any methods but strive to have in-depth and generalizable results. During the data collection, the qualitative phase called for purposeful sampling and the quantitative phase ideally called for random sampling. This study was done among the male formees of religious congregations studying at Tangaza University especially those at the school of theology with a total number of 740 (Institute of Theology = 486, Institute of Philosophy = 170 and Institute of Spirituality = 84).

Simple random sampling was used to select the formees from congregations who took part in this research in the quantitative study. In order to get the sampling size this study used the Slovin's formula for sample size.

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

n = Sample size required, N = number of people in the population, e = allowable (%)

$$n = 740 / (1 + 639 \times 0.05^2)$$

$$n = 740 / 2.5975$$

$n = 285$ formees approximately

The researcher did in-depth interviews with 13 formees for qualitative data collection. This was be done through recording, video tape, document analysis, and observations and adopted the Family Problems Questionnaire by Morosini et al. (1991) for the questionnaire. Qualitative data were analyze through content and thematic analysis. Data were collected, organized, coded; themes and sub-themes were generated and thereafter interpreted.

FINDINGS

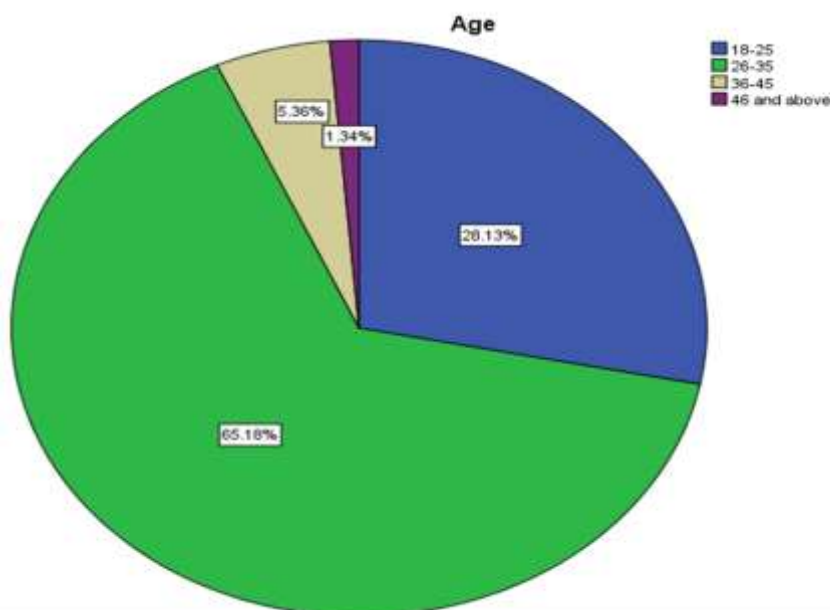
A. Demographics

Demographic of the Questionnaire Participants

The researcher suitably scrutinized the demographic features of the respondents. The background information which was sought are age, level of studies and stage of formation. These demographic information about the formees were of paramount importance in the sense that their helped the researcher have a deeper understanding about their growth so as to give a more accurate, adequate and appropriate interpretation of the information their gave which constitute the findings of the study.

The study considered age of one of the main factors which could show differences in terms of the participants response to family experiences and their psycho-spiritual well. The age of the participants was analyzed and present in terms of percentage.

Distribution of Age



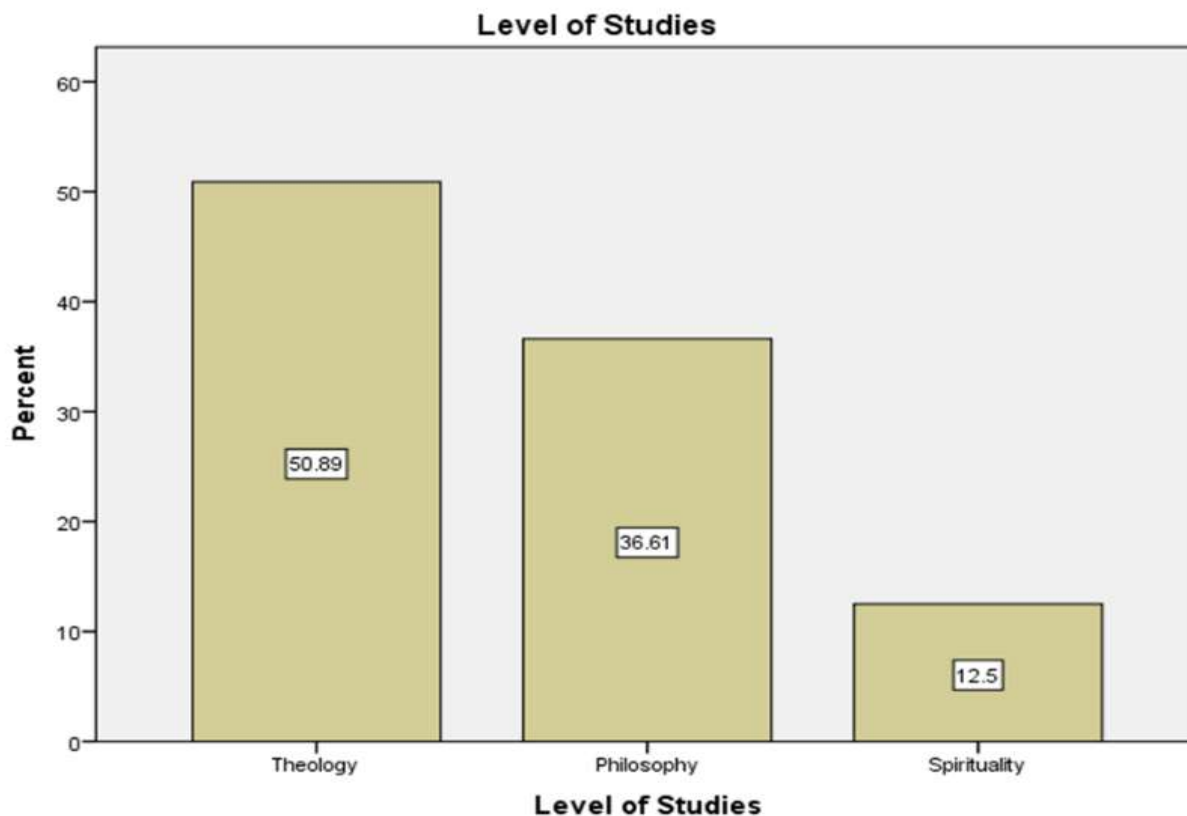
The significant minority are the participants from 46 years and above. Whereas the significant majority are the participants between 26 to 35 years old. The young adults among the participants represent the second largest but is still less than a third of the total. This demographic appears to be skewed towards older age groups among

the participants. This representation shows that majority of the participants in the study are in their early adulthood, a time when individuals are at the peak of their physical development and are focused on their future physical, psychological, social and spiritual development. The age bracket was important in this study to identify if which age bracket could have lower or higher psycho-spiritual wellbeing or find out what could be some key elements which emerged at every age bracket.

Distribution of Participants by Level of Studies

The study was interested in examining the percentage of participants per level of studies or percentage of participants by institutes. This was done to identify what are the recurrent family experiences of these different groups, how they affect them and how they respond to such experiences.

Level of Studies

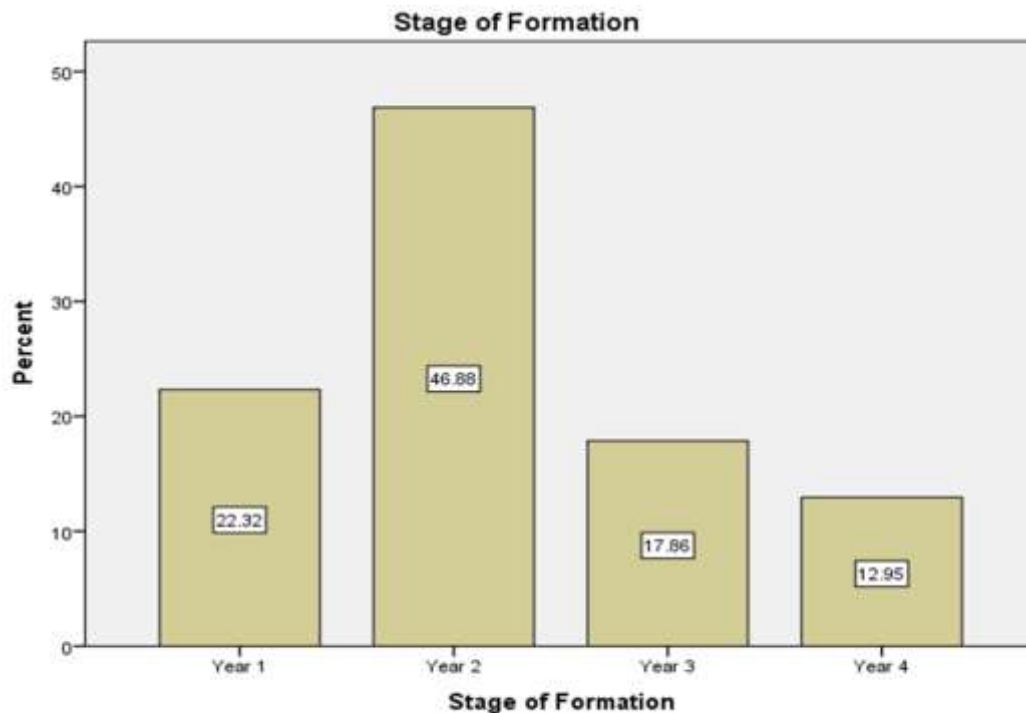


The findings elucidate that majority of the respondents were students of theology who represent more than half of the participants (50.89%), followed by those of philosophy (36.61%) and lastly the formees in spirituality (12.5%). These different percentage are in accordance with the number of students represented in the different institutes. Since the formees in theology have higher number than the institutes of philosophy and spirituality, so their participation was also higher than the one of the other two institutes.

Distribution of Participants by Stage of Formation

The stage of formation of the respondents to the questionnaire was important in this research so as to determine which stage of formation highly responded to the questionnaire and how their family experiences influence their psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

Stage of formation



The formees in second year scored the highest percentage (46.88%). This percentage is a combination of the percentage of all the second years from the three institutes (theology, philosophy and spirituality). This could be an indication that the second year formees were more available or are in bigger number than the other formees. They were followed by the first year formees (22.32%), then the third years (17.86) and finally the fourth years (12.95%).

Demographic of Interview Participants

The researcher did an in-depth interview with 13 participants who were purposively selected in order to find out the family experiences of the formees. These participants were selected focusing on the seniority in the formation process. The researcher appropriately scrutinized the demographic features of the participants by focusing on gender, age, stage of formation and level of studies as well as their birth order. These demographic and background information of the formees were important in helping the researcher have a profound understanding of the participants and hence do adequate interpretation of the results. The demographic details were talked over in subsequent sub-themes.

Age

The participants range in age from 27 to 34 years, with the majority clustered between 28 and 30 years old. This was attributed to the age when many of the formees are ending their formation process and studies at Tangaza University. This could be due to the fact that the religious formation takes longer years in the process of formation. Moreover, the formees who are at the last stage of their formation are supposed to have gone through other university studies such as philosophy and other formative processes such as noviciate and/or postulancy and aspirant stage. All these processes could take at least nine years (1-year propaedeutic, 3 years philosophy, 1 spiritual year, 1 pastoral year, and 3- or 4-years theology; the case of the Yarumal missionaries). Hence, if a formee joined the formation process while he is 18 years old (the official year of admission), he would be 27

years old. However, some join the formation process at a later age than 18 years. In other words, most of these formees joined the formation process between 18 to 21 years old. This demographic detail is crucial for understanding their psycho-spiritual wellbeing since individuals at this age are navigating more complex emotional, spiritual, and familial transitions.

Birth Position

Among the respondents, the first, second and last born represent the majority and are of equal representation. The birth position of participants varies, ranging from 1st to last in the family order, with some participants being the only child or the lastborn. Firstborns (In2, In5, In 12) may have experienced more responsibility in their families and could be dealing with expectations tied to their role as the eldest. This can influence their spiritual formation, especially if they are seen as role models or family leaders. Last borns (In7, In8, In 10) might have had different family dynamics, possibly growing up in a more relaxed environment with less responsibility. Their formation could involve learning to balance independence with responsibility. Those in the middle (e.g., In3, In6) may have felt the pressure to compete for attention or find their niche within the family structure. The birth order can shape personality, coping strategies, and expectations, all of which influence psycho-spiritual wellbeing and family relationships.

The family structure (birth position and family dynamics) likely plays a role in the participants' spiritual formation and psycho-spiritual wellbeing. For example, those from larger families (e.g., later-born children) may experience different support systems compared to those from smaller families (e.g., firstborns or only children). As these individuals navigate religious formation, they might experience tension or support from their families, particularly regarding their decision to enter religious life. This dynamic can affect their emotional and spiritual health.

The 4th-year students are in a transitional phase where their spiritual and emotional experiences may be shaped by both their academic journey in theology and their familial relationships. Many individuals in religious life face challenges in reconciling their spiritual calling with family expectations, which can impact their psycho-spiritual health. Given the range of family experiences (birth order and family size), the students likely have diverse coping mechanisms and emotional resilience, which affect their overall wellbeing. Some may find great strength in family support, while others might struggle with feelings of isolation or tension regarding their vocational choices.

Institute

All participants are studying Theology, which indicates their primary focus is on deepening their spiritual life, understanding religious doctrines, and preparing for future leadership roles within their religious communities. Their psycho-spiritual wellbeing is likely influenced by both their academic rigor in theology and the formation required for their roles in their religious congregations.

Stage of Formation

All the interviewees (13) were in their last stage of formation which was purposively chosen by the researcher. All the respondents were in the fourth year; is justified by the fact that the researcher focused more on the formees who are ending their studies and their formation process. This is the final stage of their theological studies, which often involves personal reflection, integration of faith and knowledge, and preparing for transition into ministry or religious life. By the 4th year, these formees may have experienced significant psycho-spiritual growth and challenges, balancing the demands of their studies, spiritual practices, and family relationships. The 4th year is

also a time where their connection with their families could become more complex, as they might be confronting their personal calls to ministry and their relationships with family members who may have different expectations or struggles with their vocations.

B/ Family Experiences

Findings of quantitative strand

The study revealed four major family experiences among the male formees of the different religious congregations at Tangaza namely loss and death, sickness, financial stability/instability and parents' marital status.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Loss and Death	224	1.00	7.00	3.7042	1.12944
Sickness	224	1.00	7.20	4.1268	1.11942
Financial Stability	224	1.00	5.00	2.7929	.52279
Parents' relationship	224	1.00	5.67	3.6935	1.05422

Mean of 3.70 indicates that, on average, participants reported a moderate level of experiences related to loss and death in their families. The standard deviation (1.13) suggests there is some variation in the intensity of these experiences across the sample, but it is not extremely high, indicating that the responses are somewhat concentrated around the mean. The range (1 to 7) indicates that while most participants might have experienced moderate levels of loss or death in their families, some have experienced a significantly higher intensity, possibly related to the death of close family members or other traumatic losses.

The mean of 4.13 is higher than that for loss and death, indicating that, on average, the family experiences related to sickness are somewhat more pronounced among the participants. With a standard deviation of 1.12, there is similar variation across the sample as with loss and death, suggesting a wide range of experiences but not extreme outliers. The range (1 to 7.2) shows that while some participants reported minimal family experiences of sickness, others may have experienced severe or chronic sicknesses within their families, contributing to a higher score.

The mean of 2.79 suggests that financial stability within the families of the participants is somewhat below average, pointing to the potential presence of financial struggles or instability. The standard deviation of 0.52 indicates relatively low variation in the financial experiences of the participants, meaning that most respondents seem to report similar levels of financial stability or instability. The range (1 to 5) suggests that the majority of participants likely face moderate to low levels of financial stability, with very few experiencing extreme levels of financial distress or stability.

The mean of 3.69 indicates that, on average, participants experience somewhat moderate family dynamics in terms of their parents' relationship. This suggests that family relationship might not be particularly poor or exceptionally strong among the sample. The standard deviation of 1.05 implies there is a reasonable spread in the data, with some participants experiencing more harmonious family relationships and others potentially experiencing more conflicts or struggles. The range (1 to 5.67) shows that while most participants report fairly stable family relationship, some may be experiencing more significant issues in terms of conflict or dysfunction in their parents' relationships.

The data reflects a range of family experiences among the students, with some participants facing more

challenges in areas like sickness, loss and death, financial instability, and strained family relationships. The variability in responses (as indicated by the standard deviations) suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all experience. Some students may come from families with more severe issues, while others might have more stable, positive family dynamics. The category of Sickness stands out as the most significant family experience for the sample, while Financial Stability seems to be the area with the least variation, indicating a somewhat consistent experience of financial challenges. These results could be useful for Tangaza University in offering support services that address these varied family experiences.

The quantitative findings were confirmed by the qualitative strands during the different interviews conducted.

Findings of qualitative stand

Loss and Death

During the interview, a formee mentioned: “One of the experiences that has really touched me and I am still wondering why that happened, was in 2017. My father died.” (Interviewee In 2, 17th October 2024)

Another participant revealed

“I lost my 2 parents. Dad passed away when I when I was 7 years old and last year I also lost my mum. It is not easy to be an orphan and more so a total orphan. Sometimes you ask God why me.” (Interviewee In 6, 19th October 2024)

Another one said

“There have been a series of loss and death in our extended family. We don’t know what is happening because some of my uncles and aunties have been passing away even without any signs of sickness.” (Interviewee In 10, 19th October 2024).

Death, whether expected or sudden, leaves a profound emotional impact, and for many, it remains a significant turning point in their lives. The death of a father, grandmother and other close family members are events that the participants vividly recall. These experiences not only alter the structure of the family unit but also challenge the personal identity and spiritual beliefs of those left behind. The emotional toll of loss is compounded by other elements like the inability to assist with funeral arrangements or dealing with the aftermath of conflict within families over inheritance or property. In religious settings, these losses can create a crisis of faith, where participants question why they have experienced such hardships.

Many of the interviewees also highlighted financial hardships and family struggles after the death of a key family member, such as a father or mother. The sense of responsibility placed on the surviving parent, especially the mother and the challenges of schooling children amid financial stress, suggest a deep connection between material and emotional wellbeing. This financial burden is not only a practical issue but also a psycho-spiritual challenge, as individuals may feel both the weight of their responsibility and the limitation of their capacity to provide. For some participants, faith plays a key role in processing their grief and maintaining hope. Though for other there might arise some sense of uncertainties in their faith after experiencing multiple losses. In such situations, the faith community (such as the one at Tangaza University) may serve as an important support network, offering a space for shared mourning and collective prayer.

In some families, there could be strong divisions after the loss of a significant member. These divisions cause long-lasting rifts, affecting the family's emotional wellbeing as mentioned by some participants. Despite the heavy losses and emotional burdens expressed in the interviews, many participants conclude by expressing hope

and gratitude for overcoming challenges. The responses reveal a complex interplay between grief, faith, family, and personal growth. The loss of family members, particularly parents and grandparents, shapes the emotional and spiritual development of these individuals, especially in the context of religious education at Tangaza University.

Sickness

Sickness of family members stood as one of the formees' family experiences. Some of the participants stated: "One of my siblings is suffering a lot from diabetes and my father is also struggling with glaucoma. These are challenges we are faced with in the family." (Interviewee In 9, 19th October 2024)

Another interviewee said: "My dad has been suffering from high blood pressure. So he was advised to check his pressure every day and avoid worked up and stressful activities." (Interviewee In 3, 17th October 2024)

Another one mentioned

"Our grandfather has been suffering from stroke over 5 years now. At the beginning we thought that he was not going to survive. But the doctors have really been trying. Now he is undergoing physiotherapy. He can walk and recognize people. But still, he cannot talk well." (Interviewee 13, 23rd October 2024).

Many of the participants described serious health challenges within their families, including chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, glaucoma, high blood pressure, epilepsy, anemia, stroke) and acute health crises (e.g., comas, TB, unexplained illnesses). These health issues significantly impact family life, contributing to stress and emotional strain. Health struggles often lead to a sense of helplessness and anxiety. For instance, when a participant's father went into a coma and the interviewee was unsure of what to do until help arrived, the emotional trauma of feeling powerless was clear. This experience may result in long-lasting psychological distress, particularly if the trauma is not addressed in healthy ways.

Several participants mentioned the financial burdens associated with medical treatments, such as the high costs of treating epilepsy or the ongoing treatment for stroke. This reflects a common psychological stressor for families managing chronic or expensive illnesses, potentially leading to feelings of guilt, frustration, or helplessness. The way families cope with these illnesses is varied. Some participants referred to spiritual or alternative treatments (e.g., spiritual warfare for health issues, local healers) when conventional medicine failed. One participant mentioned a family suspicion that their mother's illness might have a spiritual cause, leading them to seek advice from local practitioners. This demonstrates how spiritual beliefs can influence the way individuals perceive and cope with health crises.

In cultures where religion and spirituality are central to everyday life, health challenges can be interpreted through a spiritual lens. This highlights the potential for spiritual well-being to both alleviate and exacerbate psychological distress. Spiritual practices, prayers, and belief in divine healing can offer comfort and hope, but they can also create tension when modern medicine is viewed as insufficient or conflicting with religious views.

In families with a history of health problems, such as epilepsy or stroke, there is a possibility that the shared experience of suffering can bond family members together through a common spiritual journey. The feeling of enduring challenges together can promote solidarity and spiritual unity, but it can also contribute to collective grief and a sense of helplessness when the illness persists. Despite the health challenges, family connections seem to play a central role in how the participants cope with illness. Some responses highlighted the crucial role of caregiving, especially in the context of elderly family members suffering from debilitating conditions like stroke or vision loss.

Health issues within families lead to emotional strain, financial stress, and potential trauma, but they also provide opportunities for spiritual growth and familial bonding. The ways in which these families approach illness whether through modern medicine, spiritual remedies, or a blend of both reflect a complex interplay between cultural, religious, and psychological factors. For those in religious congregations studying at Tangaza University, these experiences may shape their views on pastoral care, emphasizing the importance of addressing both the physical and spiritual aspects of health. They may also inform how future religious leaders approach the care and support of families experiencing health crises, acknowledging the emotional, spiritual, and financial dimensions of illness.

Financial Stability

From the participants, financial stability emerged as one of the major family experiences of the formees. One of the participants mentioned: “My parents are farmers and they do not really have very sustainable financial income. Their income is very seasonal” (Interviewee In 10, 19th October 2024)

Another one said: “When my dad lost his job we have been struggling at home with finances.” (Interviewee In 7, 19th October 2024).

This idea was confirmed by another interviewee who stated: “In our family only my brother is working. So the financial situation has not been so good.” (Interviewee In 12, 23rd October 2024)

The recurring theme of strained relationships due to financial hardship is evident in the responses. In these cases, families are dealing with challenges like seasonal income (as noted in the second response) or a loss of employment (third response). These stressors can create a sense of insecurity, leading to feelings of helplessness or resentment within the family unit. These financial struggles, coupled with the lack of sustainable income or job loss, create a broader sense of instability in the home environment. Such conditions can have negative psychological effects, as the family members may feel burdened by the constant uncertainty surrounding finances, which could affect their emotional and spiritual health.

Given that these interviewees are studying at Tangaza University, a place linked to religious congregations, there may be an implicit connection between religious or spiritual beliefs and the coping mechanisms adopted by these individuals. While the interviews do not explicitly mention spiritual practices, one could infer that their involvement in religious congregations might offer avenues for finding solace or guidance in dealing with these difficult family situations. However, the level of spiritual wellbeing may be compromised if the financial struggles and familial conflicts prevent the individuals from fully engaging in their religious practices or drawing strength from their faith communities.

Despite the challenges, it's worth noting that the interviewees appear to be seeking solutions (e.g., involving uncles to help resolve the conflict). This suggests an underlying sense of resilience and hope that family issues can be resolved, even if the path is not yet clear. This hope and the desire for resolution might point to the influence of faith, family values, and communal ties, which could be supportive factors in restoring psycho-spiritual wellbeing, even in the face of adversity.

The psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the interviewees is likely to be shaped by the combination of family dynamics, financial pressures, and their personal coping strategies, which may include faith and spirituality. Financial difficulties often lead to emotional distress, impacting both mental health and spiritual peace. The conflicts within families caused by these financial stresses could reduce individuals' sense of emotional and spiritual safety, potentially affecting their self-worth and sense of security. The narratives also suggest that when family members struggle with financial problems, their ability to support one another emotionally and spiritually may

become compromised. In the context of religious congregations, this could present a challenge to the individuals' spiritual growth and communal involvement.

Parents' marital status

Some formess mentioned cases of divorce and separation in the family which could aligned with parents' relationship.

A participant asserted: "My parents separated due to frequent misunderstanding and conflict between them. My father was being suspected by my mother of cheating on her" (Interviewee In 8, 19th October 2024)

Another one expressed: "My dad just left home and never came back and founded another family elsewhere with another woman without any of us knowing anything about that." (Interviewee In 7, 19th October 2024)

Another participant mentioned: "My parents separated when I was still young. It is when I grew up that I discovered who my real father was." (Interviewee In 9, 19th October 2024)

Many of the participants recount experiences of parental separation or abandonment, which seem to have deeply impacted their lives. For example, some participants recall the painful experience of their father leaving the family without explanation, only to later learn that he had married another woman and had other children. This type of abandonment, coupled with the emotional shock and confusion, appears to have led to feelings of betrayal and loss.

This recurring theme suggests that family structure and dynamics play a significant role in the emotional development of these individuals. It can impact not only their sense of belonging but also their identity formation. The absence or dysfunction of the nuclear family, as seen here, could create psychological challenges, especially for individuals in their formative years. Several participants reflect a process of coming to terms with their family situations. Despite the pain and confusion, some of them express acceptance over time. For instance, Participant 1 states, "I have learnt to accept that," showing that they have gradually accepted the reality of their father's actions. This acceptance can be seen as an important step toward emotional healing and coping with loss. The statement that "there is nothing we can do" reflects a sense of resignation, which might be linked to the realization that certain situations are beyond their control. This resignation can influence how they navigate their spiritual life, possibly leading to a more passive form of coping.

Given that these participants are studying at Tangaza University, an institution that may place importance on spiritual growth and reflection, it's clear that many of these challenging family experiences have shaped their spiritual lives. Religious or spiritual coping mechanisms might help individuals interpret and deal with their pain. For example, religious teachings about forgiveness, acceptance, and faith in divine purpose might have provided comfort to some participants. However, experiences of abandonment, neglect, or violence could also create spiritual doubts, leading to feelings of distance from faith and spirituality. The ability to overcome such challenges and find meaning in these experiences might also contribute to spiritual growth, resilience, and a deeper understanding of personal identity. For some, these experiences could foster greater empathy and compassion for others who are going through similar struggles, potentially enhancing their sense of communal spirituality and solidarity within their religious congregation.

Many participants show a form of emotional resilience by continuing with their studies and learning to move on despite their difficult family situations. The resilience shown in their ability to "move on" or "accept" their situations may also point to their capacity to engage in adaptive coping strategies that could foster long-term well-being. Such strategies might include seeking support from peers or mentors at Tangaza University, using

their religious faith as a source of strength, or developing personal spiritual practices to process their trauma.

DISCUSSION

Oladeji et al.; (2010) discovered similar family experiences in their research. Their study highlighted that some of the adverse childhood experiences were death/loss of parent, parent divorce, parent mental health or substance use disorders, parental criminal behavior or family violence, neglect or abuse, economic adversity, sickness or chronic medical illness. In the study done by Bangura in 2021 discovered family experiences such as death, divorce, impotence, children problems/behavior, adolescent mood, single family, violent marriage/physical, drinking or tempered, domestic violence and differing standards and rules.

These family experiences are in accordance with the study done by Kentish-Barnes et al., (2021) emphasized on loss and death and sickness in France and their impacts on the family members of the sick person and the dying ones. Muya and Muasa (2023) in their study about Outcome of Loss and Grieving in Self-Esteem among the Secondary Students in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya also discussed loss and death as a family experience. Wangui (2021) raised family dynamics as a concern for the youth and Badamas et al., (2013) found family dysfunction as a lived experience by different people especially pupils in Lagos State. Gabriel et al., (2016) and Gobena (2018) confirmed parental socio-economic status as a family experience that could generate different and various effects on family members. The study done by Ngige, Njue, and Rombo (2007) complements these family experiences in the sense that they found out that poverty, HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, unemployment, gender inequality, maternal, infant, and childhood mortality, and outdated traditional marriage and family laws constitute major challenges faced by Kenyan families.

According to Bowen (1960), families so profoundly affect their members' thoughts, feelings, and actions because family members are interdependent. However, they may differ in their degree of interdependence but it is always present to some degree. Bowen emphasized that the more differentiated people can be able to withstand more stress and, when they do become symptomatic, recover more quickly. This signifies that the formees who participated in this study have high level of differentiation. Though they feel with their family members they do not give room to their family experiences to affect their psycho-spiritual wellbeing. They are able to set a balance between the need for attachment and the need for autonomy.

Despite their high level of psycho-spiritual wellbeing, the male formees mentioned a number of effects of their family experiences; loss and death (devastation, sense of responsibility, division among family members, denial), sickness (sadness, restlessness, financial challenges, loss of appetite, hopelessness), financial stability (lack of food, trust in divine providence, relocation, dependency, drop off from school), parents' marital status (conflict, disagreement, lack of peace, new life ties, hatred). Other effects such as stress, anxiety, depression, anger, guilt, isolation, sadness, fear, shame, loneliness, laziness, lack of concentration, doubt in God and loss of sleep, were generally expressed by the formees. These called for some strategies (accompaniment, talking with family members and friends, spiritual direction, avoidance, prayer, journaling, engaging in hobbies, psycho-spiritual counseling etc.) which could help the male formees enhance their psycho-spiritual wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that loss and death, sickness, financial stability and parents' marital status are significant family experiences among male formees of different religious congregations at Tangaza University. All these family experiences by the male formees are as well lived experiences by many and different individuals and families in the world.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declare no conflict of interest exists.

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