



DCPsych thesis

**A study of convent life and the impact of communal living on  
Sisters, who disaffiliate from the convent  
Nwachukwu, M.U.**

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**Research Title:**

**A Study of Convent life and the Impact of Communal Living on Sisters, who disaffiliate  
from the Convent**

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on this programme of study, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work and in the list of references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu", written in a cursive style.

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## ABSTRACT

The declining Christian population in the UK has become a significant concern, with projections indicating a decrease to 45% by 2050, in contrast to an 11% rise in the Muslim population.

Previous studies in this area have predominantly focused on the number of young women entering religious Orders and those successfully making their final vows. However, none have delved into the factors triggering disaffiliation from these religious Orders. This study aims to identify the factors influencing early exits from religious Orders and provide recommendations to minimise further exits in the future.

Employing Logistic Regression Analysis and a T-test, this study analysed questionnaires completed by 259 participants in the UK. The sample comprised Sisters who were still part of various Orders and were asked about their likelihood of leaving on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating those who had left the Order. Both validated and self-developed scales were utilised for measurement purposes.

The findings from the analyses reveal that *Authoritative Influence*, *Neglect*, *General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)*, and *Quality of life* all contribute to disaffiliation. This implies that the more Sisters experience these, the more likely they are to disaffiliate from the Order. Surprisingly, *Negative Affectivity (AffN)* encourages Sisters to remain in the Order. In other words, the more Sisters experience negative emotions, the more likely they are to stay with the Order, which is unexpected. Additionally, the T-test indicates that Sisters who remained with the Order exhibited better *relationships* with their superiors and peers compared to those who left, who may have faced difficulties in relating to others within the Order.

It is recommended to repeat the survey longitudinal across different times, space and places or employ different approaches, such as focus group as mixed-methods, to validate these findings for future research.

**“Keywords”-** Disaffiliation, Choice, faith, Meaning, Sisters, emotions.

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## **1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research is to scrutinise the underlying motivations behind Sisters' decisions to disaffiliate from their religious Orders. The disaffiliation of religious sisters from Catholic convents presents a multifaceted phenomenon within contemporary religious life (Smith, 2021). This trend, characterised by voluntary departure from religious orders, challenges traditional notions of commitment and identity within religious communities, prompting a need for deeper understanding (McGuire, 2008). Scholars have explored various aspects of religious disaffiliation, identifying factors such as changes in personal beliefs and dissatisfaction with institutional structures (Smith, 2009). However, there remains a gap in understanding the specific motivations and experiences of Sisters within Catholic convents (Lövheim, 2014).

Previous research on religious disaffiliation has predominantly relied on qualitative methodologies, offering rich descriptive accounts but lacking statistical rigor (Smith, 2021). Additionally, studies have often focused on broader populations of religious individuals (McGuire, 2008; Wilcox, 2016), neglecting the unique experiences of Sisters. To address these gaps, this study adopts a quantitative approach, with binary logistic regression analysis, to investigate disaffiliation among Sisters.

By delving into the existing literature in Chapter 2, and juxtaposing it with personal experiential insights, the study aims to unravel the multifaceted determinants contributing to Sisters' disaffiliation and propose strategies to enhance the allure of the religious vocation, consequently mitigating the exodus from convent life. It is widely acknowledged that the challenges encountered by Sisters who opt to disaffiliate are profound. While extant research

predominantly adopts qualitative methodologies to explore these challenges, this study seeks to complement such qualitative insights with a quantitative approach.

The quantitative methodology employed in this study is tailored to address the lacunae identified in the seminal works of Gervais and Watson (2014) and Eze et al. (2016), which focus on predictors impacting Sisters residing in communal settings. Furthermore, it endeavours to bridge the gaps identified in the studies conducted by Bazerman (1998) and Swami (2013) on decision-making processes and choices, while also elucidating the limitations inherent in Brinkerhoff and Mackie's (1993) research on defection (as expounded in Chapters 2). Chapter 6 will culminate with actionable recommendations aimed at fostering the enduring commitment to the religious calling within a structured community framework endorsed by the Catholic Church.

To uphold the integrity of the research and adhere to the principles of rigorous scholarly inquiry, the researcher will adopt a participatory observer stance. This entails maintaining a stance of detached engagement, approaching the subject matter with epistemic humility, maintaining a meticulous reflective log throughout the research trajectory, and incorporating reflexive insights into the scholarly discourse presented in the thesis. The rest of this chapter describes the research background and rationale of the research, leading to the final research question.

## **Background of the Research**

Undertaking the journey toward religious life represents a profound decision, driven by a myriad of motivations and aspirations. Many young women are drawn to the convent doors by the allure of selflessness, spiritual growth, and the opportunity to effect meaningful

change (Raftery, 2013). The promises of religious life, from assuming authority roles to embarking on missionary endeavours to distant lands, seem boundless. Yet, beneath this surface allure lies a complex tapestry of challenges and uncertainties that can compel Sisters to reassess their chosen path.

This research endeavours to delve into the essence of convent life, aiming to unravel the enigmatic forces that shape the experiences of Sisters who opt to depart, whether by choice or circumstance. By drawing upon personal anecdotes and conducting an exhaustive review of existing literature, the objective is to shed light on the intricacies of community living, the catalysts for disaffiliation, and the ramifications of socio-political climates within convent walls.

However, this endeavour transcends mere academic pursuit: it represents a personal odyssey rooted in a quest for understanding and empowerment. As I recount the twists and turns of my own spiritual journey and the pivotal moments that led me to this research, I invite you to accompany me on an exploration of the complexities of religious life.

In crafting this narrative, the researcher delves into the psychological landscape of decision-making, where the interplay of desires and obligations creates a crucible of tension. Through the lens of esteemed scholars such as Bazerman (1998) and Swami (2013), the study unveils the intricate dance of choice and consequence that shapes the trajectory of Sisters' lives. But the narrative does not conclude there. The researcher ventures beyond the confines of convent walls to confront the seismic shifts reshaping the landscape of religious vocation. In a world where secular pressures erode traditional paths, existential questions loom over the future of religious Orders.



Yet, amidst this tumult, there are glimmers of hope: beacons of resilience and renewal that illuminate the path forward. Through the wisdom of seasoned Sisters and the tenacity of aspirants, the researcher glimpses a future where the calling to religious life remains vibrant and indispensable.

This research transcends mere academic inquiry; it represents a call to action; a rallying cry for understanding, empathy, and empowerment. By shedding light on the challenges and triumphs of Sisters past and present, it charts a course toward a future where the sacred flame of religious devotion burns bright.

Join me on this journey: a voyage of discovery, introspection, observation, searching, researching, reflection and transformation—as we navigate the winding roads of religious life, guided by the beacon of faith and the promise of a brighter tomorrow.

### ***Narrative of the Researcher***

It is crucial to disclose that I, the researcher, am a member of a religious Order. The purpose of this narrative is to provide the reader with insight into the context and background of my experience. Understanding life in the Convent is essential to discern if any bias exists in my perspective. Given that this is a personal account, I prefer to use 'I' to depict my religious journey.

I was born in Nigeria and embarked on my spiritual path with the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ (IHM), Nigeria, after completing my secondary school program in 1995. Leaving my family and friends behind to embrace my religious calling for the first time was daunting due to the uncertainty it entailed. I grappled with fear

of the unknown, questioning whether pursuing further studies before joining the Order would be more prudent, or if continuing with my GCSE certificate would suffice. The prospect of potential failure loomed over me — if things did not proceed as planned, would I be sent back to my family, and what would become of my aspirations? These thoughts evoked anxiety, yet with the support and encouragement from experienced Sisters within the system, I ultimately decided to join the Order and submit to whatever tasks I would be assigned. Along this path, I lost a few friends who advocated for me to pursue further studies before joining the Order, as well as those who suggested I consider a different Order apart from the IHM congregation. However, I harbour no resentment towards anyone, as I am content with the decision I made. Fortunately, my Order has undertaken the responsibility of training me. I am cognizant that some Sisters encountered challenges that led them to make alternative choices.

It is also important to acknowledge that the alternative was a viable decision for those who failed in becoming Sisters, as being single or married becomes an option if religious life is not possible. However, the fact that I am still a member of my congregation does not necessarily mean that the same path would work for others, as everyone is unique and has a different mission to accomplish in life. Through prayer and the support of other members of the Order, family, and friends, I was able to overcome these dilemmas. Finally, I made my first religious vow in 2000 and was sent on a mission to England from 2002 until the present day.

The decision to become a Sister in the Catholic Church was driven by the passion to serve God and His people, especially the less privileged in society, with undivided attention rather than for any social or economic security. It was a decision not necessarily rational or

based on self-interest or calculation but inspired by faith. In pursuit of this vision, I embarked on my religious life journey in the religious Order.

According to the educational curriculum of this religious order, the first stage of training is known as "Postulant Formation." The postulant formation marks the initial stage of a Sister's religious life. I commenced the postulant formation with 46 other postulants. During this stage, which lasted for two and a half years, we were equipped with the basic education and formation for Catholic religious life, learning what it meant to detach from the world. We were gradually introduced to the institution's customs and traditions and encouraged to embrace a culture of self-sufficiency. For example, we engaged in various farming activities, baking, sewing, arts and crafts, and more.

At the end of the two years, the 46 postulants were divided into pairs for the field pastoral experience known as "apostolic work." This pastoral experience typically runs for a period of six months. During this time, we taught catechism to those preparing for the sacraments, conducted marriage courses for prospective couples, visited the sick in hospitals, evangelized in schools, and managed the canteen to develop skills and accountability. The program demanded determination and steadfastness to the vision to complete this first stage, as some individuals dropped out along the way. Out of the initial 46 postulants, five pursued further studies in their chosen areas, four were expelled, two got married, and three others did not meet the minimum grades required to proceed to the next stage of the program, leaving the institute with 32 postulants.

Undoubtedly, the skills acquired during the Postulant program laid the foundation for the Novitiate formation. It should be noted that promotion to the Novitiate formation was not

automatic even for those who achieved good grades. Promotion was typically influenced by other factors such as psychological fitness, attitude, and spiritual disposition of the postulant. To achieve this, a thorough screening exercise was carried out by the Postulant mistress and members of the Formation Team to determine those eligible to proceed to the Novitiate which was the second stage of formation stage."

Having met all the requirements of the institute, we eagerly stepped into the 2-year Novitiate program, a pivotal chapter in our journey. It was not just a path we walked; it was a gauntlet, challenging our very beliefs and convictions. For some, doubts lingered like shadows, questioning if this was truly their calling. As for me, it was a leap of faith, an act of surrender to a higher purpose (Keenan, 2005).

The Novitiate phase was a crucible, forging us for the rigors of religious life. Central to this stage was the notion of relinquishing personal possessions, a concept that shook me to the core. Raised in a world where possessions defined worth, the idea of communal sharing felt alien. Yet, amidst the struggle, camaraderie blossomed. We supported each other through the upheaval, finding solace in shared experiences (Brown, 2017).

The journey was not just about letting go; it was about diving deep into spiritual introspection. Days were filled with prayer and meditation, fostering a profound connection with the divine. Alongside, we delved into the rich tapestry of religious doctrine, immersing ourselves in the teachings of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the intricate nuances of Canon Law (Westby, 2021).

As we emerged from the Novitiate, 31 of us stood ready to profess our vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. It was a moment of profound significance, a culmination of

years of preparation and soul-searching. Yet, it was just the beginning of a lifelong commitment, a journey marked by renewal and steadfast dedication.

In the grand tapestry of our sisterhood, each thread tells a story of resilience and faith. While some faltered along the way, the majority persevered, bound by a shared vision and unwavering determination.

During the first year, known as the 'Canonical Year' of the novitiate program, novices were confined within the walls of the Novitiate premises, barred from engaging in public activities. This period served as a time of introspection and preparation for the challenges ahead (Carlisle, 2005). At its conclusion, novices were paired and dispatched to various communities for apostolic work, gaining invaluable hands-on experience in serving others.

Individual autonomy took a backseat as we embraced the collective decisions dictated by the religious Order. In line with the existential notion of 'becoming,' I relinquished personal preferences to align with the Order's values (Carlisle, 2005). Tasks such as early morning prayers, communal dining without choice, daily Mass attendance, manual labour, cooking for fellow novices, teaching catechism, and maintaining a structured routine posed formidable challenges, pushing me beyond my comfort zone. Yet, through perseverance and faith, I underwent a transformative journey, emerging stronger and more resilient.

Life within the convent brimmed with uncertainties, from the uncertainty of future assignments to the dynamics of communal living. Despite the anxiety, the unwavering support of fellow sisters and the solace found in prayer sustained me through the trials.

Upon completing the two-year Novitiate program, 31 of us were deemed ready to take our first profession, publicly pronouncing vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience (Keenan, (2005). This solemn occasion marked the formal acceptance into the Order, granting us the esteemed title of 'Sister.' Subsequently, annual vow renewals became a ritual, each renewal reaffirming our commitment to the Order's principles. However, the fifth renewal served as an assessment stage, where sisters faced the choice of continuing their journey or departing from the Order. Concerns raised by fellow Sisters or the public could delay or hinder this process, as evidenced by the case of two sisters who did not advance to the assessment stage due to raised concerns.

To qualify for the assessment stage, sisters had to reach the age of 30 or older. For those below the age threshold, the review was postponed until they attained the requisite age. The outcome of the assessment determined whether a sister proceeded to make her Perpetual (Final) Vow, marking a lifelong commitment to the religious life.

The Postulate and Novitiate programs are like journeys filled with twists and turns, offering aspiring Sisters both triumphs and trials. Among those who embarked on this path, five brave souls were dispatched to Ghana. There, they encountered their own unique tests, but ultimately emerged victorious, making their first profession and renewing their vows. Yet not everyone reached the final assessment stage; unfortunately, three were unable to continue. Despite these challenges, the majority persevered, with 27 Sisters from my group still proudly part of the Congregation.

Overall, out of 31 that made their first profession, 27 Sisters from my set are still in the Order.

## **Rationale for the Study**

### ***Justification, Aims and Relevance***

The literature review on disaffiliation within religious contexts reveals a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by historical, sociological, psychological, and theological factors. Scholars such as Swami (2013), Bazerman (1998), Holland (1997), Schneider (1987), and Van Iddekinge et al. (2011) have contributed valuable insights into decision-making processes, highlighting the complexities and consequences inherent in such choices. Additionally, researchers like Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1980) categorize religious defection, advocating for methodological approaches that delve into predictors of disaffiliation.

Recent research by Ballard (2023), Fenelon and Danielsen (2016), Hamm and Eagle (2021), and Reigel et al. (2022) further elucidates the impacts of disaffiliation within religious contexts. Findings suggest links between disaffiliation and poorer health, loneliness among clergy members, and internal conflicts. Despite valuable insights, studies face limitations such as small sample sizes, highlighting the need for further research to understand Sisters' disaffiliation and its long-term effects within religious orders.

In a nutshell, the research review in chapter 2 paints a vivid picture of two critical issues:

- i) The decline in the number of Christians in the UK, signalling a potential crisis if left unchecked (Lipka, 2015; Funk & Smith, 2012).
- ii) The inner turmoil experienced by Sisters within religious Orders, highlighting a struggle that goes beyond the convent walls (Brock, 2007).

This study's relevance to my own lies in its exploration of why young women are abandoning their religious vocations and what can be done to reverse this trend. By investigating the factors contributing to Sisters' departure and comparing the well-being of

those within the convent to those who have left, this research promises actionable insights to bolster the resilience of religious communities.

Moreover, it offers a beacon of hope by suggesting practical measures to support Sisters in their journey and reignite their passion for their calling.

### **Problems with current situation**

Existing qualitative research into apostasy has predominantly employed discourse analysis (DA), focusing on the social construction of reality through language. However, diversifying the methodological approach may yield additional insights. Kreis (2010) conducted a quantitative study on life satisfaction among elderly retired Sisters yet failed to explore the life satisfaction of the younger cohort currently engaged in active service. Furthermore, Kreis's study did not assess the level of contentment or satisfaction experienced by the Sisters. Given the gradual decline in Sisterhood membership, Kreis contends that examining predictors that deter disaffiliation is imperative.

Prior research on disaffiliation has predominantly eschewed quantitative methodologies for exploring the impact of communal living on Sisters who choose to leave the convent, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. This underscores the necessity of adopting a quantitative approach to investigate both remote and immediate causes of disaffiliation. Kreis (2010) underscores the significance of the younger generation's willingness to embrace Sisterhood, highlighting the need for motivation and encouragement in fostering vocations. An in-depth analysis of potential predictors facilitating disaffiliation could potentially mitigate the burgeoning disaffiliation rates within religious orders.

This research holds relevance beyond the Sisterhood and ex-Sisters, extending to the wider community. Counselling psychologists must possess adequate skills, knowledge, and



experience to provide tailored interventions in diverse contexts. Insufficient understanding of Sisters and convent life may hinder counsellors from delivering effective interventions. Consequently, equipping counselling practitioners with insights into convent life can facilitate early interventions for Sisters grappling with their religious calling.

Exit from the convent, whether planned or unplanned, often precipitates feelings of isolation, rejection, and depression, posing significant challenges for individuals. This research is invaluable for counselling psychologists collaborating with ex-Sisters as they navigate the transition to a new life post-convent. It offers insights into the impact of convent life and post-convent experiences on mental well-being, aiding counsellors in providing targeted support to individuals struggling with the aftermath of leaving the religious life.

### **Research Aim and Question**

Considering these insights, the study aims to understand predictors and impacts of Sisters' disaffiliation, emphasise the role of religious communities in providing support, resources, and fostering understanding. Additionally, it calls for further research to deepen comprehension and effectively address the complexities of religious disaffiliation within caring contexts. By acknowledging emotional hurdles and facilitating healing among individuals experiencing disaffiliation, religious communities can better navigate transitions and uphold the well-being of their members.

In response to the challenges associated with the declining number of Sisters in various communities, this study aims to investigate the factors that contribute to Sisters' departure from their communities, leading to the relinquishment of their commitments, and to propose interventions or solutions to mitigate this situation.

To address the overarching research aim, the study will seek answers to the following main research question:

- What are the causes that prompt Sisters to leave their Order?

To delve into this central research question, the study will explore the following sub-questions:

- What specific factors act as triggers for Sisters' intentions to leave?
- To what extent does each predictor influence Sisters' decisions to leave the Order?
- How do these predictors impact the well-being of both current Sisters within the Order and those who have left (i.e., the Ex-Sisters)?
- Are there discernible differences in well-being between current Sisters within the Order and Ex-Sisters?

This research distinguishes itself by adopting a quantitative approach, which is deemed appropriate for comprehensively understanding sensitive information regarding how individuals construct meaning in various situations and the barriers that impede their progress.

### **Rationale for Choosing Active Sisters and Excluding the Nuns**

According to Suarez and Lecaros (2021), the terms "Active Sisters" and "Nuns" are often used interchangeably but can carry subtle differences in meaning. "Nuns" typically refer to religious women who have taken vows and lead a contemplative or monastic life, focusing on prayer, meditation, and community within a monastery. Conversely, "Active Sisters" are

usually engaged in external activities such as education, healthcare, social work, or outreach, actively interacting with the community beyond the convent's confines.

The decision to focus on active sisters rather than nuns for this research was driven by the research aims and objectives. Active sisters, being more involved with the public and participating in various social activities, are more accessible for research purposes compared to contemplative nuns. This accessibility facilitates conducting interviews and obtaining responses to questionnaires. Furthermore, active sisters, including ex-sisters, who have lived an active convent life can provide valid responses to questionnaires, unlike contemplative nuns residing in cloistered or monastic settings. Additionally, active sisters generally possess a familiarity with research, with some having experience in research studies, making them cooperative research participants compared to nuns who typically do not engage in academic research.

Seven Orders participated in this study, including the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Presentation Sisters, Maria Missionary Sisters, Daughters of Divine Love, and Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy. These congregations are all based in the UK.

The selection of these orders was guided by their active engagement in congregational activities, facilitating frequent communication and collaboration. Additionally, their prior research experience, reliability in providing responses to questionnaires, and willingness to participate in the research contributed to their selection. Therefore, participants in the study are homogeneous, as they are members of active Orders and share a similar faith and

communal life. They are not contemplative. However, the excluded participants are nuns, married women, girls without Catholic convent formation and men.

## **2.0 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review provides a comprehensive examination of previous studies on disaffiliation within religious contexts, encompassing historical, sociological, psychological, and theological dimensions. It explores experiences, motivations, and challenges associated with disaffiliation, particularly focusing on decision-making, meaning-making, and identity construction within religious orders. This chapter covers the narrative literature review with definitions of key terms where appropriate. The first part provides a broad historical background of the research topic. The second part focuses on identifying research trends, knowledge gaps, and potential areas for future investigation.

### **Part 1. Initial literature review on the historical background**

In our modern liberal secular societies, a pervasive belief persists that every decision can be neatly dissected through a 'cost/benefit' analysis, with the marketplace hailed as the paragon for successful decision-making. It is often asserted that competitive self-interest fosters fairness. However, scholars such as Bernoulli & Sheynin (2005), Stigler (1986), and Wootton (2015) challenge this notion, arguing that the future cannot be definitively foretold but instead operates on chance or probability. Bernoulli and colleagues contend that events can only be classified as either true or false, yes or no, certain or uncertain, leaving no room for absolutes. They further emphasise that 'certainty' and 'uncertainty' are mutually exclusive, implying that the occurrence of one precludes the other. In simpler terms, the future is inherently unpredictable and attempts to forecast it may falter. In the absence of certainty, faith becomes a necessary component of decision-making. Hence, the choices made by Sisters are often guided by chance or probability, with no guarantee of lifelong commitment.

to the religious Order in the face of challenges. Nevertheless, those who opt to remain are buoyed by their faith in God.

### **Who are Catholic Sisters?**

The religious are individuals who live, minister, and pray within the world. Eze et al. (2016) found that Sisters compromise their self-identity by either pleasing their superiors or remaining resistant. This compromise involves subjugating their own voice, allowing it to remain silent or presenting themselves as resistant, opposing voices that position them into subordinate or subservient roles. The study further reveals that the Sisters' lives can be classified into two categories: "active" and "apostolic." While the 'active' Sisters participate in charitable works, visit the sick, and interact with people in the world, in addition to praying, the 'apostolic' Sisters work within the four walls of the Monastery, primarily focusing on prayers for the entire world. However, both the active and apostolic Sisters are required to live in accordance with the evangelical vows (chastity, poverty, and obedience) they professed. The drawback of the study is limited sample size (N = 18) with participants' narratives from only two religious Orders in Nigeria, making generalisation challenging.

Sisterhood is a highly cherished identity in African culture (Eze et al., 2016) because it represents a fulfilled life purpose. Through their vows, Sisters provide humanitarian services in schools, hospitals, and parishes. Additionally, they lead lives of prayer and contemplation, preaching to others through their actions. In the convent, Sisters who work often support those who do not, ensuring that all have their daily bread. The significance of the habit worn by Sisters cannot be overstated. It serves as an outward symbol of their consecration to God and membership in a religious Order, attracting others to join. This

outward display garners respect and unique favours for the Sisters, who are often given special treatment and accorded respect in various situations. For example, some individuals willingly give up their seats on buses or trains for Sisters.

When a Sister decides to leave the convent, she undergoes a significant transition in her identity and lifestyle (Ezeani, 2016). No longer bound by the vows and communal living of religious life, she enters a new phase of her personal journey. Psychologically, this transition can be profound and complex, as it involves grappling with questions of purpose, meaning, and identity.

Firstly, leaving the convent means relinquishing the structured routine and communal support system that defined her daily life (Ezeani, 2016). The Sister must adapt to a new way of living, which may entail finding employment, securing housing, and building new social connections outside of the convent community.

Furthermore, giving up the convent lifestyle may also entail a loss of identity and sense of purpose associated with religious life (Eze et al., 2016). For many Sisters, their religious vocation was deeply intertwined with their sense of self and their mission to serve others within the community. Leaving the convent can create a void in their lives, as they may struggle to reconcile their past identity as a religious Sister with their new secular identity.

The psychological implications of leaving the convent can include feelings of anxiety, loss and uncertainty about the future (Van Deusen, 2009). Sisters may grapple with questions of self-worth and existential meaning as they navigate this period of transition. Additionally,

the loss of communal support and belonging may exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Eze et al. (2016) highlight the communal relationships within convent life, which can sometimes be characterized by hierarchical dynamics and a sense of submission to authority figures. This dynamic may have contributed to the formation of the Sister's identity within the convent community. Upon leaving, Sisters may struggle to assert their autonomy and establish their individual identity outside of the hierarchical structures of religious life.

Leaving the convent represents a significant life transition fraught with psychological challenges. Sisters must navigate questions of identity, purpose, and meaning as they transition from religious life to secular society. The loss of communal support, coupled with the relinquishment of a religious identity, can create psychological distress and existential uncertainty for those who choose to leave the convent.

Mangion (2007) distils the process into two distinct phases: Postulancy and Novitiate. These stages serve to prepare potential postulants and novices for the spiritual, vocational, and communal aspects of religious life. Mangion highlights the central role of 'ritual performance' in convent life, encompassing symbolic ceremonies, processions, and devotions that underscore the sacredness of the Sisters' spiritual journey. Rituals serve as crucial rites of passage, particularly as women transition from lay to religious life, imbued with symbolism to underscore the sanctity of their chosen path. A religious Sister is called to emulate Christ-like qualities in her interactions with others. However, community life presents a myriad of experiences for Sisters to navigate.



Stuber (2000) suggests that community life in religious orders significantly influences Sister Identity Construction through fostering interpersonal relationships. While these relationships offer support, scholars like Armstrong (2005) and Eze et al. (2016) note it can also pose challenges to Sisters' development. Mangion (2007, 2019) illustrates a shift in community dynamics towards participatory governance and relational approaches. This shift indicates a departure from strict adherence to hierarchy towards inclusivity and responsiveness to individual and societal needs, impacting the experiences of Sisters within religious Orders.

### **Definition: Disaffiliation, Defection and Apostasy**

#### ***Disaffiliation -***

Disaffiliation is a deliberate choice, often spurred by a longing for autonomy or a shift in beliefs from the group's core values, prompting a soul-searching re-evaluation (Riegel et al., 2022).

Religious disaffiliation is a departure from religious values, faith, or community, sometimes sudden, sometimes gradual, shaped by cultural shifts, educational experiences, or the currents of globalisation Fisher (2017). This departure causes social isolation, identity shifts, strained relationships, and a shrinking community (Riegel et al., 2022).

Losing Our Religion' disaffiliation is a complex journey. It involves untangling oneself from the fabric of a group, organization, or affiliation (Manning 2015). Motivations behind disaffiliation range from discontent with leadership to a desire for individual autonomy or shifts in personal beliefs While disaffiliation may promise liberation, it often ushers in a landscape of isolation, identity crises, and profound loneliness (Currie, 2016)

## | *Defection*

Defection is a conscious act of severing ties with a particular entity: a group, institution, or cause. This intentional departure often leads individuals to seek refuge in alternative groups that promise different benefits or align better with their beliefs. The reasons behind defection are spanning political, economic, social, and psychological realms (Navon et al., 2023).

The repercussions of defection have significant impacts on not just the disaffiliate but also, the organization or group left behind, and even the broader society. Indeed (Bernhard et al., 2020). Barbalet (2019) warns of the detrimental effects that follow in the wake of defection. The departure of a skilled or influential member can create a void, resulting in a loss of expertise, knowledge, and manpower that directly affects the group's functioning and productivity.

Moreover, defection can erode trust and cohesion among the remaining members, leading to a decline in morale and potential breakdowns in collaboration. This erosion of trust can tarnish the organization's reputation and credibility, leading to negative perceptions from external parties. Thus, it becomes imperative for organizations to navigate and mitigate the effects of defection to maintain stability and effectiveness in the face of such challenges.

## | *Apostasy*

The term 'apostasy' (in the Greek word 'apostasia') is defined as the act of desertion or renunciation of a religious or political belief, involving the rejection or turning away from previously held ideologies or principles (Grenier, 2023).

Similarly, Andrews (2022) posits that apostasy entails a departure from one's religious beliefs. Rabbia (2022) further elaborates on the causes of apostasy, which may include disillusionment, changes in beliefs, loss of faith, or conversion to another religion. Mazik (2023) highlights that various religions impose different consequences for apostasy, ranging from social ostracism and legal ramifications to familial and community repercussions, persecution, and psychological effects.

Mullett (2023) asserts that the Roman Catholic Reformation of 1517 serves as a notable example of apostasy within the Catholic Church, emphasising that the consequences of apostasy are shaped by religious, cultural, and legal norms prevalent in society or community contexts.

After establishing the foundational understanding of these terms, the present study shifts its focus to the disaffiliation of sisters from religious orders. This inquiry aims to delve into the multifaceted dynamics surrounding sisters' decisions to disaffiliate, exploring the underlying motivations, societal implications, and broader contextual factors influencing this phenomenon within religious communities.

In summary, Disaffiliation refers to a withdrawal from a religious institution or community without necessarily abandoning the faith itself. Defection, however, involves a more intentional and formal separation, often indicating disagreement or a renunciation of roles within the group. Apostasy represents the complete rejection or abandonment of the religious faith and is typically considered the most significant form of religious departure.

## **Historical Context of Convent Life and Communal Living**

### ***Definition of Convent life***

Arvanitidis (2023) defines Convent Life as a way of life adopted by religious Sisters living in religious communities. According to Fontes et al. (2020), convent life is underpinned by religious values, communal living, and structured order. Convents are established by religious orders to provide an opportunity for Sisters to dedicate their lives to God. Convents have assumed evolving roles over time. Initially, convents were used by religious women for prayer and contemplation, but now they serve other functions such as a place for devotion, education of young women, and social activities within and outside the community.

### ***Origins of Disaffiliation in Catholic Convent Life – Historical Development***

The origins of convent life date back to ancient times, with early examples found in Christian and other religious traditions across various cultures (Fontes et al., 2020). Below is an overview of the historical development of convent life.

#### ***Early Christian Monastic Movement (3rd – 6th Centuries):***

The genesis of convent life can be traced back to ancient times, spanning across various religious traditions and cultures. Below, we delve into the historical journey of convent life, shedding light on its evolution over the centuries:

### ***Early Christian Monastic Movement (3rd – 6th Centuries):***

The inception of convent life finds its roots in the early Christian monastic movement, as noted by Verini (2022). During this era, from the 3rd to the 6th centuries, monastic communities emerged in secluded areas, where monks and nuns devoted their lives to prayer, contemplation, and spiritual devotion.

### ***Benedictine Monasticism 6th Century:***

Verini (2022) highlights the emergence of Benedictine Monasticism in the 6th century, which emphasized a harmonious balance between work, prayer, and study. Convents following the Benedictine Rule became beacons of learning and spiritual growth, attracting seekers from far and wide.

Medieval Era: 11th – 15th Centuries: The medieval period witnessed the flourishing of convents, as Luquet and McAllister (2020) elucidate. During this epoch, from the 11th to the 15th centuries, convents evolved into centres of education, healthcare, and charitable endeavours, shaping the decisions of many young women who sought opportunities for personal and intellectual growth.

### ***Reformation of the 16th Century:***

Hobson (2022) underscores the significant changes brought about by the Counter-Reformation in the 16th century, leading to the establishment of new religious orders such as the Ursuline and Visitation Sisters. However, the Reformation also posed challenges as some members opted to depart from convent life in favour of emerging Protestant denominations.

### ***Between the 17th and 19th Centuries:***

Convents flourished as cultural hubs during the 17th to 19th centuries, as noted by Hobson (2022). These institutions played pivotal roles in missionary endeavours, education, healthcare, and social activities, contributing significantly to the growth and development of communities worldwide.

Enlightenment and Secularisation (17th-18th Centuries): Holzem (2023) highlights the Enlightenment period of the 17th and 18th centuries, which championed reason, individualism, and scepticism, challenging traditional religious authority. The era saw a questioning of rigid convent structures as secularization trends prompted the closure of some convents, reflecting societal shifts towards a more secular state.

### ***French Revolution (Late 18th Century):***

Perreau-Saussine (2023) narrates the profound impact of the French Revolution on religious institutions, leading to the dechristianisation of France and the dissolution of convents. The revolutionaries sought to establish a secular state, resulting in the persecution and suppression of religious orders, compelling many to disaffiliate from convent life.

### ***Anti-Clericalism in the 19th and 20th Centuries:***

Dougal (2015) discusses the rise of anti-clerical movements in response to the growing influence of the clergy. These movements, influenced by various ideologies, aimed to challenge the power and privileges of religious institutions, contributing to the closure and disaffiliation of convents and monasteries.

### ***Vatican II and Changes in the 20th Century:***

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) introduced significant reforms in the Catholic Church, reshaping the structures and core values of religious life, as highlighted by García-Martín (2023). This period witnessed internal strife as some Sisters grappled with their evolving roles, leading to disaffiliation from convents.

### ***Modern Era:***

In the present age, convent life continues to evolve, engaging in ministerial work, interfaith dialogue, and social justice activism, as noted by García-Martín (2023). While some religious orders thrive, others face challenges amidst shifting societal paradigms, reflecting the dynamic nature of convent life.

In summary, a comprehensive understanding of the historical evolution of convent life unveils its multifaceted journey, shaped by cultural, religious, and societal forces. This historical perspective sheds light on the motivations, practices, and challenges encountered by Sisters throughout the ages, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of religious orders amidst changing times.

### **History of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Nigeria**

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Nigeria was established in 1937 by Bishop Charles Heerey, an Irish Catholic Bishop (Ezeh, 2005). This marked a significant milestone as it became the first indigenous religious congregation in Nigeria. We are active Order

Initially, the congregation faced challenges as young girls were hesitant to join. To address this, Bishop Heerey brought the first group of sisters to Nigeria in 1933, led by Mother Mary Martin, and established the first convent in Onitsha, Anambra State. Over time, the congregation expanded its presence, establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages across Nigeria, and eventually extending its reach to different parts of the world (Ezeh, 2005).

The primary objective of the congregation was to uplift women in education and healthcare, as these areas were overlooked in Nigerian culture at the time. Through the establishment of numerous schools, hospitals, and orphanages in both urban and rural areas, the congregation aimed to address these needs (Ezeh, 2005).

The ethos of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters Institute (IHM) – Spirit is grounded in ‘humility, guiding their commitment to serving humanity and making a lasting impact on the lives of those we assist.

The IHM's 'Charism- Compassion' is characterised by love, compassion, and service to others, exemplified through their dedication to educating young girls and women, providing healthcare services to the less privileged, fostering spiritual growth centred on the love of God and neighbour, promoting social justice to address societal inequalities and injustices, and living in community to offer support to fellow members, all inspired by the example of Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Ezeh, 2005).

We work in government settings, parishes, and within our congregational projects, such as schools, hospitals, and many others. We also live in community, share prayer together, and support one another in our mission.



The Immaculate Hearts Institute is situated in Nigeria, the UK, the USA, Germany, Canada, Italy, Kenya, and Ghana.

Koopmans (2015) conducted a study on Catholic Education vocations in the UK. Out of the 15 candidates admitted into the Convent, four were able to make their first profession, while only one succeeded in making her final vow. In other words, only 7% (one in 15) were successful. Following the dropout, Koopmans suggests that the percentage of Christians in the UK will continue to decrease, while that of the developing world will increase. This implies that as the number of Christians decreases, the number of young girls joining the religious Order will also decrease. The author argues that if current trends continue, the Christian population will decrease from 64% in 2010 to 45% by 2050, with a concurrent rise in the population of Muslims from 5% to 11%. Consequently, there will be a significant increase in the unaffiliated population in the UK, with those claiming no religion rising from 28% to 39%. Considering the upward trend of Muslims, Koopmans's research suggests that the number of Muslims in the world will surpass the number of Christians by the year 2050, given the estimated 30% increase in the Muslim population by 2050. However, this author reports that global growth will be experienced in Christianity, with a significant rise in the sub-Saharan African sub-region. Adding credence to the above statement is the research by Wyatt (2015), which reports a rise in the Christian population in Nigeria from 21.4% in 1953 to 49.3% in 2010.

Wyatt's (2015) research on The Department for Catholic Education and Formation in the UK paints a concerning picture: the declining percentage of Christians is expected to impact the number of women aspiring to become Sisters in the UK (Koopmans, 2015). This decline suggests a shift in societal values and religious affiliations. However, amidst this

trend, there's a surprising glimmer of hope: Lipka (2015) reveals that the number of women entering the convent saw a significant rise from seven in 2004 to 45 in 2014 in the UK, according to data from the Pew Research Centre.

What is driving this unexpected surge? Lipka (2015) attributes it to the Catholic Church's efforts to demystify religious life, especially after facing decades of negative publicity surrounding issues like attitudes towards homosexuality, lesbianism, and abortion. Additionally, there's been a notable cultural shift within the Church, fostering a newfound appreciation for religious vocations.

Despite these positive developments, challenges persist. Koopmans (2015) warns that despite efforts to reverse the decline, the number of young women entering religious life is still expected to dwindle. This decline is further exacerbated by the growing dissatisfaction among those already within the system. As Brock (2007) highlights, some Sisters are disillusioned and ready to leave the convent in pursuit of a different path in life.

Brock (2007) also notes that some Sisters leave the community due to factors such as lack of support, neglect, loneliness, and conflicts with the church leadership, which may drive them to seek intimate or long-term sexual relationships with both men and women. He adds that while some Sisters are tolerant and able to bear the stress, they may become less productive over time. These factors are assessed in Appendix 2, section N (questions 21, 12, 13, 15, 17) using a Likert Scale to determine their impact on disaffiliation.

In essence, while the allure of becoming a Sister may be on the rise, it is clear that the journey towards religious life is not without its hurdles. As societal norms evolve and

individual aspirations shift, the future of convent life remains uncertain, with both challenges and opportunities lying ahead.

In contrast, the situation in the United States paints a different picture. Lipka's (2015) findings at the Centre for Applied Research reveal a striking trend: the number of Sisters departing from their communities dwindled significantly from a staggering 180,000 in 1955 to a modest 47,000 by 2016. What could explain this remarkable shift? Well, one plausible reason might be the robust Catholic presence in the United States compared to the UK. Unlike in the UK, where various denominations like the Church of England, Muslims, and Pentecostal Churches often overlook the religious calling, the United States boasts a more dominant Catholic community.

While opting to become a Sister presents itself as a rational career choice with numerous positive benefits, the driving force behind my decision lies in a selfless act of faith, calling from God and devotion. It is this profound sense of faith and dedication that propelled me to embrace a subservient role and confront any challenges or discomforts inherent in the spiritual journey. Consequently, both my fellow Sisters and I are obligated to adhere to the rules and regulations of the Order without hesitation or evasion. However, this relinquishment of personal control can potentially lead to disharmony and disaffiliation.

### **Challenges in Communal Life and Predictors that Facilitate the Disaffiliation of the**

This section delves into the challenges of religious life for Sisters, examining both positive and negative effects and exploring the predictors of disaffiliation. It also assesses how existential dimensions shape their religious experiences.

Gervais and Watson (2014) argue that Sisters are typically subjected to three types of discipline: corporal regulation (e.g., structure, rules, ritual, and penance), punishment (e.g., public apology), and directive (e.g., vows, vocations). They note that these forms of discipline are not without resistance. Corporal regulation, described as regulatory or organisational discipline, is sometimes related to penance and aims to control the habits of the body in convent life, while punitive discipline is simply about punishment. The explicit directive entails authoritative instruction mandating obedience. The role of punishment as a factor that could lead to disaffiliation was measured in Question 14 in Section N.

Gervais and Watson (2014) found that former Sisters were dissatisfied with practices such as the 'custody of the eye' (a fixed focus without distraction), 'rule of silence' (not talking after a certain period, and limited interaction even when allowed), and 'consequential discipline' (actions such as dissociation from the group or removal from leadership roles). They argue that punitive discipline overlaps with regulatory discipline as it can be corporal or more private and mental. Furthermore, the consequences of directive discipline, to which Sisters were expected to comply without negotiation, had physical and mental impacts. For example, some Sisters were assigned careers they did not like without negotiation and were bound to obey.

Despite verbal critiques by Sisters against strict discipline within the convent, control and conformity to the rules continue to prevail. Many Sisters still find ways to resist strict discipline, including intentionally breaking or non-complying with rules, refusing to obey certain instructions, and making decisions without seeking permission.

Gervais and Watson (2014) outline some forms of resistance typically displayed by Sisters in convent life. Overt resistance involves outright rejection, while covert resistance entails deception. They argue that agreeing with other Sisters not to comply with rules is a form of overt resistance, while covert resistance includes giving the impression of compliance without following the rules. Open defiance involves challenging superiors in the presence of the community and others.

In support of Gervais and Watson (2014), Armstrong (2005) suggests that strategic silence and segregation in the convent require restraint. The restrictions on when and where Sisters could speak and to whom do not sit well with some of them. Exploring how silence and segregation affect Sisters' interactions daily would provide valuable insights into their experiences.

Armstrong (2005) notes that Sisters often resist the segregation from the outside world inherent in convent life. Life in the convent places Sisters in a situation where they are part of the world but not fully engaged in it. The expectation is that Sisters refrain from participating in certain societal activities, such as building a house or financing family projects. Additionally, their *Vow of Chastity* challenges them to avoid exclusive relationships, emphasising inclusivity.

Gervais and Watson (2014) suggest that humour serves as both a coping mechanism and a tactic for resistance among Sisters. For example, some Sisters use humour when they find certain rules challenging to obey. One common situation where humour is employed is when Sisters receive gifts that are supposed to be shared with the collective group. In the context of the habitual life and rigidity of convents, some individual Sisters may no longer find meaning in their actions and may begin to deviate from the established structure and rules. This deviation can create room for disaffiliation from

the system. Further research could aim to explain what sustains Sisters who remain and what triggers those who choose to leave.

### **Sexuality - Vows of Chastity and Celibacy**

The term *celibacy* refers to a Sister's choice to remain unmarried and abstain from sexual activity as part of a vow. Conversely, chastity entails purity and abstinence from sexual activity before and outside of marriage. Chastity implies refraining from illicit sexual behaviour. In examining the role of vows of chastity and celibacy, participants were asked to describe these vows in relation to disaffiliation. The questions on vows aim to ascertain if the absence of sexual activity, lack of intimate relationships, or submission to superiors can trigger disaffiliation see Appendix 2 Question M numbers C, D, E.

Esteves (2016) defines priests as ministers of religion ordained by the Catholic Church. Pontificio (2016) distinguishes between diocesan priests and priests in religious orders, noting a global count of 415,792 Catholic priests in 2014. Within the Catholic Church, there are both ordained and non-ordained priests (Westby, 2021). Consecrated life, according to Westby, includes deacons, priests, bishops, and non-ordained members of religious orders, such as Sisters and Nuns. These non-ordained members take certain vows and are prohibited from marrying after their final profession. Westby further categorises the religious or regular clergy as including male members of religious orders, monks in communities or isolation, and those ordained as priests or deacons.

Busse (2017) reflects on the multifaceted experiences of newly ordained priests in his article published on December 13, 2017. He delves into the mix of emotions that accompany this significant transition, ranging from urgency and loneliness to relevance and humility.

Despite the challenges, Busse highlights the profound joy that comes with embracing the vocation of priesthood.

On the other hand, Westby (2021) notes that Diocesan Catholic priests are those ordained by bishops through the sacrament of holy orders. This ordination grants them the authority to celebrate Mass, as instituted by Jesus Christ during the Last Supper, commanding them to "do this in memory of me" (Luke Gospel).

Celibates often experience embarrassment or shame when asked, "What made you become a priest?" (James, 2008). According to James, this question implies incredulity about why someone would choose such a path. In an article on Vocation and Crisis, *Entering Religious Life during a time of scandal*, James argues that having a Priest or Sister in the family was a source of pride for the average Catholic family in the United States.

According to and Murphy (1992) people naturally understand that sexuality shapes every stage of development in a person's life. Murphy suggests that everyone, including priests, is inherently sexual, supporting the idea that priests were once allowed to marry.

Winroth and Wei (2022) trace the history of the earliest prohibition of marriage by clergy which was introduced at the Spain council of Elvira in CE 306. In Section M Question D, the relationship between the vow of chastity and disaffiliation is explored using relationship questionnaire.

Sisters, through their *vows of chastity and celibacy*, are often seen as individuals with restricted sexualities. Cullum (2014) argue that grasping the concepts of chastity and celibacy is crucial for Sisters, as a life without sexual intimacy may seem meaningless without clarity

on these principles. Chastity involves abstaining from sex, while celibacy means voluntarily remaining unmarried and refraining from sex for religious reasons, a requirement for Catholic Priests and Sisters. However, celibates and those dedicated to chastity often encounter temptations in their pursuit of spiritual devotion.

Cullum (2014) boldly asserts that celibacy and chastity, once seen as pillars of virtue, have become sources of harm within the church amidst ongoing sexual abuse scandals. This challenges conventional beliefs and prompts a critical examination of celibacy's role in contemporary religious life. Meanwhile, Murphy (1992) offers a thought-provoking perspective, suggesting that suppressing natural sexual desires, as required by celibacy vows, may present both a solution and a daily struggle for religious individuals. This insight sheds light on the complex interplay between spirituality and human nature, sparking contemplation on the challenges faced by Sisters in their commitment to celibate life.

Cullum's (2014) assertion and Murphy's (1992) perspective on celibacy and chastity have profound implications for Sisters. Firstly, they challenge the traditional perception of celibacy as an unquestionable virtue within religious life. Instead, they prompt a critical examination of the impact celibacy may have on individuals and communities, particularly in light of ongoing sexual abuse scandals within the Church. Sisters may find themselves engaged in deeper introspection about the challenges and struggles they face in maintaining celibate lifestyles, fostering a more compassionate and supportive environment within religious communities where doubts and difficulties can be addressed.

Additionally, Mwaura's (2019) study, conducted at Tangaza University College, explores how the Assumption Sisters in Nairobi live the vow of chastity guided by the



teachings of St. Marie Eugenie. Chastity is viewed as a profound spiritual commitment central to the Sisters' spiritual life and mission. The study underscores the importance of community life, mutual support, shared spiritual practices, and communal living in maintaining chastity despite facing challenges such as societal attitudes towards celibacy and personal struggles.

The cultural context of Nairobi adds complexity to the practice of chastity, highlighting the Sisters' adaptability and resilience. The vow of chastity also enhances their ministry, empowering their educational, social, and pastoral work, and offering a counter-cultural example of dedication.

However, the qualitative nature and specific focus of the study may limit its generalisability. Despite this, the findings underscore the importance of community support, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability. Mwaura (2019) concludes that living the vow of chastity according to St. Marie Eugenie's teachings is vital to the Assumption Sisters' spiritual life and mission, sustained by theological foundations, community support, and personal spiritual practices.

Overall, this work calls for ongoing dialogue and reflection among Sisters on the complexities of celibacy and chastity in contemporary religious life. It encourages them to embrace a nuanced understanding of these concepts and seek pathways toward greater authenticity, integrity, and compassion in their spiritual journey.

As Janetius (2008) points out, it is common for the celibate religious in the hierarchy to abuse those under them. As human beings, their need to satisfy their sexual gratification is another challenge and this has caused a lot of scandals in the church. The urge for some

Sisters to feel like a 'woman' makes them go out to satisfy their sexual desire by any available means. According to Mast (1986), this is the reason lesbianism; same-sex attraction, philandering, and paedophilia are common phenomenon today. According to Sipe (1995) sexual exploitation and harassment primarily by priests and Sisters are a common phenomenon. This author also reveals that child sexual abuse by Sisters is statistically more prevalent when compared with the general population. The author believes living a worldly life also contributes to sexual arousal such as watching indecent movies where bodies are exposed, reading pornographic magazines, and engaging in intimate relationships.

How can celibates cope with the above challenges? To cope with the challenges associated with celibacy, Manuel (1989) proposes five strategies for managing sexuality and intimacy in celibate life: repression, suppression, sublimation, gratification, and integration. According to Kraft (2012), repression involves negative reinforcement, while suppression entails acknowledging one's sexuality and abstaining from gratification. Sublimation, on the other hand, involves redirecting sexual energy into other activities. Kraft emphasises that gratification, if pursued solely for pleasure and through coercion or rape, is detrimental and inhibits personal growth.

Kraft (2012) suggests that renewal programs focused on *self-development, social awareness, and family life* orientation can significantly address the sexual challenges faced by Sisters. Additionally, training in preaching the gospel, administering sacraments, and providing pastoral care can also help cope with these challenges. By focusing on self-development, social awareness, and family life orientation, renewal programs empower Sisters to understand human sexuality sensitively and engage with these topics effectively. Additionally, training in spiritual leadership and pastoral care equips Sisters to support

individuals and families navigating diverse needs, fostering a supportive environment within religious communities.

### **Vows of Poverty**

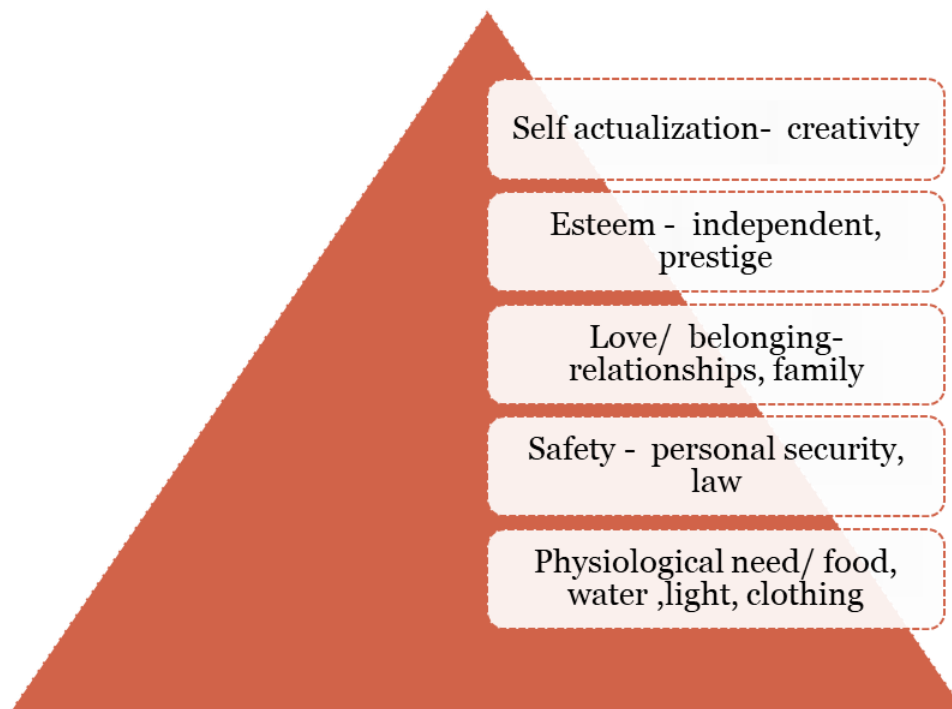
The article explores how Catholic nuns and sisters in Britain adapted to societal changes from 1945 to 1990, influenced by the Second Vatican Council. It highlights shifts towards participative decision-making in convents and changes in liturgy, ministry, and relationships (Mangion, 2019). Based on archival materials and interviews, the author depicts varied reactions, from liberation to confusion, offering insight into the complexity of religious life amidst secular shifts

Religious poverty is a deliberate choice to reject worldly pleasures, rooted in a deep commitment to spiritual values and asceticism (Beyers, 2014; Mangion, 2019; Premasiri, 1999). These authors note a close connection between poverty and suffering, defining poverty as the lack of essential materials for comfortable living. However, Premasiri, asserts that for Sisters in the Convent, poverty goes beyond material deprivation, involving a deliberate embrace of simplicity, including forgoing material possessions like houses, and refraining from claiming salaries. Maslow's (1943) theory emphasises that falling below the threshold of basic needs constitutes poverty, a view supported by D'Souza & Gurin's (2017) research.

Mangion (2019) underscores the resilience of Sisters in adhering to their faith traditions amidst changing societal norms. This research provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of religious communities in contemporary times.

Mangion (2019) encourages Sisters to critically reflect on their ministry, promoting adaptation while preserving spiritual integrity. Overall, Mangion's work contributes to scholarly discourse and provides practical guidance for religious communities navigating modern complexities.

Maslow (1943) proposes that human needs follow a hierarchical pattern, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualisation (see Figure 2.1). He categorises these needs into "physiological," "safety," "belonging and love," "esteem," and "self-actualisation," suggesting that individuals move through these levels as their motivations evolve. Maslow argues that higher-order needs only come into play once lower-level needs are satisfied. This theory serves as a foundational framework for understanding the correlation between drive and motivation in human behaviour. The behaviour can fulfil multiple needs simultaneously; for example, going to a bar may satisfy both the need for self-esteem and social interaction. Each level in Maslow's hierarchy contains specific internal sensations that must be fulfilled for individuals to progress through the hierarchy. The goal, according to Maslow's theory, is to achieve self-actualisation.



**Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Arguably, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy classification has evolved over time. Initially, the hierarchy suggested that lower-level needs must be completely fulfilled before progressing to higher levels. However, contemporary scholars now view these levels as continuously overlapping (Lambert, 2018), meaning higher-level needs may take precedence over lower ones at any given time.

Physiological needs, as outlined by D'Souza and Gurin (2017), encompass essentials like air, food, water, and sleep, crucial for maintaining homeostasis (Maslow, 1943). Maslow emphasises that satisfying physiological needs is fundamental, as their deprivation can impair focus and concentration. This study aims to explore the impact of unmet physiological needs on the participants.

Safety needs, according to D'Souza and Gurin (2017), entail security in various aspects like employment and health. Maslow (1943) asserts that safety needs follow physiological needs, manifesting as a desire for a secure environment. This study will investigate how the Sisters perceive security, given their inability to save individually for the future.

Belonging needs, as highlighted by D'Souza and Gurin (2017) and Maslow (1943), involve love, friendship, and family connections. Maslow suggests that individuals seek acceptance and love from social groups, crucial for well-being. This research will delve into how the Sisters experience belongingness in the convent, despite occasional feelings of isolation.

Esteem needs, according to D'Souza and Gurin (2017), Maslow (1943) encompass confidence, self-esteem, and respect. Maslow posits that meeting esteem needs fosters self-confidence and recognition from others. This study will explore how self-esteem influences the Sisters' overall well-being.

Self-actualisation, as described by D'Souza and Gurin (2017) involves fulfilling one's potential and achieving personal goals. Maslow (1943) emphasises that self-actualisation varies among individuals, ranging from moral pursuits to creative endeavours. This research will examine how the Sisters perceive their journey towards self-actualisation.

Each of these aspects contributes to understanding the complex interplay of human needs and motivations, as elucidated by Maslow's theory (D'Souza & Gurin, 2017).

## **Spiritual and Religious Reasons for Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience**

The purpose of religious poverty, chastity, and obedience is to eliminate the ego, according to Grant (1999). Grant asserts that individuals must embrace the death of the ego to eradicate desires for self-importance and superiority. Ego encompasses evil spirits or self-importance, leading individuals away from God. This author further argues that to overcome the ego, one must love God and their neighbour as themselves. This perspective highlights the spiritual significance of religious vows in transcending personal ego and fostering a deeper connection with the divine.

Grant (1999) also highlights that egocentric superiority often leads to various issues such as tribal wars, racism, and xenophobia. Grant argues that humans transcend their egocentric tendencies when they recognise themselves as siblings who value each other. Moving beyond the confines of ego enables individuals to foster better relationships with God and others. According to this author, this entails being willing to offer kind words, practicing patience, and dedicating time to care for others. This perspective underscores the importance of humility and compassion in interpersonal relationships and spiritual growth.

This implies that fostering interconnectedness, enhancing spiritual fulfilment, creating supportive environments, and addressing root causes can strengthen bonds among Sisters, reduce feelings of isolation, and mitigate the risk of disaffiliation. Embracing humility, compassion, and recognising the value of each member within the religious community enhances spiritual growth and fosters a supportive atmosphere, ultimately nurturing a positive and fulfilling religious experience for all.

## **Vow of Poverty in the Religious Orders / Society**

In simple terms, the vow of poverty in a religious Order means that all possessions are held in common, and Sisters are not permitted to own anything individually. Everything they possess belongs to the Order collectively, promoting simplicity, detachment from material goods, and moderation in all aspects of life.

O'Brien (2020) discusses how the vow of poverty, once a practice in monastic orders for spiritual discipline, has evolved to tackle wider social and economic issues. This author emphasises its reflection of principles like solidarity and justice, stressing our duty to support the marginalized. Additionally, O'Brien explores its relevance in addressing modern challenges like economic inequality and environmental degradation, advocating for systemic change. Overall, the article presents the vow of poverty as an evolving ethical framework promoting social justice and global solidarity.

But why are Sisters required to adhere to the vow of poverty? According to Eze et al. (2016), this vow serves multiple purposes in Sisters' lives. It aligns them with the poverty of Jesus, allowing them to focus on spiritual richness rather than material possessions. By renouncing worldly goods, Sisters can lead a simple and unencumbered life, enabling them to serve others more effectively. The vow of poverty places restrictions on individual ownership of material goods, as dictated by the Institute's constitutions, aiming to reduce attachment to worldly possessions and facilitate service to others.

According to Schneiders (2014) religious poverty has two dimensions or foci: societal and personal. In the societal focus, the religious person is required to contribute to the growth of the economy. Schneiders emphasises that the religious vocation demands active



engagement, particularly from apostolic religious, in restructuring the global economic situation. Sisters can contribute to this endeavour in various ways, such as casting votes, addressing injustices, and promoting nonviolent protests. These actions can foster a fair society where justice prevails. Additionally, Sisters can contribute to the welfare of their community through proper planning and by working with materially disadvantaged people.

The personal focus is believed to complement the societal practice of poverty, as argued by Schneiders (2014). Sisters are required, by their calling, to adopt a voluntary simplicity of lifestyle. Voluntary simplicity entails acquiring only what is necessary for survival, rather than competing with neighbours. Attitude or contentment also plays a significant role in the personal practice of poverty (Appiah-Kubi & Korsah, 2020). According to Beyers (2014), the greatest wealth is contentment, and Sisters should not expect to receive everything they deserve all the time.

Mangion (2019) highlights how Sisters actively participated in social welfare and justice initiatives, collaborating with state funders and engaging in the voluntary sector to address unmet needs in the social welfare state. This involvement indicates a commitment to serving the most vulnerable members of society and challenges perceptions of religious life as disconnected from broader social issues. Overall, the implications suggest that women religious played a proactive role in advocating for social justice and alleviating poverty within post-war Britain.

Other aspects of the personal practice of poverty include hospitality and a limited range of options. Schneiders (2014) emphasises that the real difference between the vow of religious poverty and worldly poverty lies in the individual's awareness and consent. In

religious poverty, individuals are fully aware of and have consented to their choice, whereas worldly poverty is often dictated by circumstances. For example, if a religious Sister finds the vow of poverty challenging beyond her control, she could choose to leave the Order. The Appendix 2, Question C in Session M of the questionnaire examines the Vow of poverty in relation to disaffiliation.

## **Vows of Obedience**

### ***Definition of Obedience***

The vow of obedience, embraced within religious orders, signifies a solemn commitment to submit one's will to the authority of superiors and adhere to their directives. Rooted in religious traditions, especially within Christianity, this vow denotes the surrender of personal autonomy in favour of communal and divine guidance (Aquino, 2021; Okure, 2021; Vazhappilly, 2021).

Aquino (2021) qualitatively explores the vow of obedience, focusing on contemporary perspectives and challenges within religious communities. Through interviews, surveys, and literature reviews, the study reveals the intricacies of obedience in modern religious life. However, reliance on self-reported data and a narrow focus on specific religious sisters limit the generalizability of findings.

Vazhappilly (2021) investigates the evolving understanding and application of obedience within religious life. Using qualitative methods, the study uncovers challenges faced by religious sisters in renewing their commitment to obedience amidst societal shifts. Limitations include a focus on specific individuals and potential self-selection bias among participants.

Okure (2021) examines challenges and opportunities associated with the vow of obedience. Employing mixed-methods, the study identifies gaps in understanding specific challenges faced by religious Sisters. Limitations include a focus on a particular religious tradition and potential response bias.

Paredes (1995) emphasises that obedience involves attentively listening to the call of the moment, which may be prompted by events or life experiences that demand a response. This highlights the importance of responsiveness to constituted authority and the need for spiritual alertness in practicing obedience

Implications for religious Sisters include a deeper understanding of obedience, enhanced spiritual calling, and improved discernment processes, and strengthened commitment to God's will. Engaging with these concepts can foster cultural sensitivity and purposeful alignment of vocation with God's presence.

Obedience, as discussed by Ó Murchú (1991) involves attentive listening and responsiveness to constituted authority. Merkle (1998) emphasises the importance of being spiritually alert and practicing attentive listening by remaining open and faithful to God, others, nature, and life experiences.

### ***Religious Obedience***

Religious obedience entails following the example of Jesus Christ's obedience to the Father, with the aim of achieving intimate union with Him (Appiah-Kubi & Korsah, 2020; Merkle, 1998). Merkle asserts that the religious profession of the vow of obedience heightens Sisters' religious commitments, requiring them to maintain a deep relationship with Jesus

continuously (Ridick, 1984). According to Merkle, Jesus' love primarily extended to the poor and downtrodden, and His mission was characterised by forgiveness and compassion. Jesus learned obedience through suffering, and His obedience was rooted in prayer, which fosters constant communion with God. The leadership of the church or convent demands obedience.

In line with Eze et al. (2016), Sisters perceive the Superior as someone with the authority to decide, command, and interpret the will of God to them in their religious Order. This perception hampers the growth and development of the Sisters because it limits their thinking and discernment, relegating them to mere implementers. Consequently, there is a perception that obeying the Superiors equates to obeying the Will of God. Superiors are seen as occupying the place of God, and obedience to them is considered obedience to the will of God (Raftery, 2013).

### ***A New Vision of Religious Obedience in the Light of Vatican II***

The Second Vatican Council initiated changes in religious obedience, leading to a shift from hierarchical structures to collaborative decision-making within religious communities (Appiah-Kubi & Korsah, 2020; Merkle, 1998; Hersey & Blanchard, 1980). This emphasis on active participation enhanced problem-solving skills and satisfaction levels among individuals involved. Mangion's (2019) work also delves into this evolution of obedience among religious sisters, highlighting their increased engagement in decision-making processes. This nuanced perspective reflects broader societal trends towards agency and inclusivity, offering valuable insights into the intersection of faith, identity, and social change in post-war Britain and prompting further exploration of women religious' lives and contributions.

According to Raftery (2013) in his work on the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, notes that all Sisters, by virtue of their religious profession, are required to obey the leaders and all other members of the Order. Raftery argues that all Sisters are subject to unconditional submission to the divine will by their calling. This author points out that obedience is linked to service, as seen in the life and teaching of Jesus. He further asserts that the vow of obedience does not imply the imposition of an individual's will on another; rather, it is viewed within the context of freedom and love. Obedience must be voluntary (will), active (intelligence), and responsible (decision).

Sukumaran and Balakrishna (2021) in the International Journal of Contemporary Pediatrics examines how different parenting styles impact preschoolers' social and emotional development. They find that authoritative parenting, balancing responsiveness and demands, best supports children's well-being. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles correlate with various challenges, emphasising the importance of balanced parenting for children's social and emotional growth.

### ***Dimensions of Obedience***

The social dimension of obedience is founded on the common good or charity (Paredes, 1995). As social beings, individuals are destined to be in communion and solidarity with others through mutual self-giving and service for the common well-being. According to Paredes, individuals do not only respond to their personal needs but also to the needs of others, which is a fundamental human reality.

Ridick (1984) identifies three levels of Psychic elements in obedience:

1. **Psycho-Physiological Level:** At this level, obedience is viewed as a reactive condition in the mind, where the body gains satisfaction by obeying psychic requests, consciously or unconsciously responding to the laws of nature.
2. **Psycho-Social Level:** This level involves an individual's deep need for others and their dependency on social interaction. In the convent, Sisters rely on their Superior's directives for community management, fostering growth and development. Disobedience to leaders can lead to disagreement or disputes, potentially triggering disaffiliation. This aspect of obedience and its relation to disaffiliation was explored in Question E of Section M.
3. **Spiritual-Rational Level:** Individuals possess the capacity to make rational decisions, discerning between good and bad or moral and immoral choices. When satisfied with their judgment, individuals make choices, typically aligned with what is right.

The vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty cannot exist in isolation; they are experienced within the community where Sisters interact. Therefore, it is essential to examine how Sisters interact within the community.

### **Spiritual Development of the Sisters in Religious Community**

Some Sisters undergo challenging experiences in certain religious communities, exposing them to unexpected shock, bitterness, moral deformity, and disillusionment, yet they remain committed to their calling (Durà-Vilà et al., 2010). Drawing from Frankl's (1964) observations in concentration camps, inmates initially experienced shock upon admission, followed by apathy as they adapted to camp life, focusing solely on survival. Eventually, they faced a lack of meaning, leading to depersonalisation, bitterness, and disillusionment. Frankl

contends that individuals find meaning even in suffering and death, like how Sisters derive meaning from their difficult circumstances. The exploration of meaning-making in relation to disaffiliation was conducted using a questionnaire in section K.

Yalon (1980) in existential psychology identifies four "givens" of the human condition: isolation, meaninglessness, mortality, and freedom of choice. Brown et al. (2023) suggest that individuals respond to these givens either functionally or dysfunctionally, emphasising the freedom to choose how we interpret our circumstances. This implies that individuals are responsible for their choices and actions, not merely victims of circumstances. Leaving the convent may provide Sisters with the opportunity to find meaning by interacting freely with people outside the convent, enabling them to move beyond their convent life and discover meaning in wider experiences. Whether they choose to live a meaningful life outside the convent rests on their individual decisions.

Kierkegaard (1847) argues that every individual has a natural tendency to formulate a life view, engage in meaning-making, and contemplate the purpose of existence. This author also delineates three primary modes of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious, each representing different stages of individual development. The aesthetic stage is characterised by impulsivity and seeking satisfaction from external sources beyond one's control. In contrast, the ethical stage focuses on self as the goal, disregarding external moral considerations. The religious stage, which Kierkegaard views as the highest, involves a leap of faith into the unknown, choosing to trust in God despite uncertainties. This stage requires individuals to transcend socially acceptable behaviour and human reasoning to achieve constant communion with God.

To attain the religious sphere, individuals must strip themselves of worldly enjoyments and transcend their ego, embracing the values of their religious order. According to Roberts (2016), this transformation involves letting go of certain values and beliefs, replacing them with trust and belief in God. Ultimately, the individual seeks to align their actions with the Absolute, consciously choosing to engage in a life of faith and devotion.

Kierkegaard (1847) criticises individuals who choose to adopt Christianity for rational and self-interested motives. He highlights the problematic nature of rational calculation, encapsulated in his quote that "life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." This emphasises the challenge of making rational decisions about future events when the outcomes are uncertain. Kierkegaard also underscores the importance of doubt in faith, suggesting that faith involves a leap from a position of uncertainty. According to his critique, without doubt in God's existence, we cannot make the leap of faith necessary for belief. This author further, argues that certainty undermines faith, as certainties are accepted without critical thinking or questioning. Therefore, if we were certain about our beliefs, there would be no need to mention them.

### **Interaction in Religious Community**

Buber (1970) argues in "Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy" that understanding God requires relational engagement rather than abstract contemplation. He emphasises the significance of interpersonal connections, suggesting that one's construction of self is deeply intertwined with relationships with others, oneself, and the world. Buber's philosophy, epitomised in the concept of the, I-Thou dialogical relationship, highlights the centrality of relationality to the essence of the self. Hermans (2002) views the self as a mental society, highlighting dialogical interactions with others. This reflects broader



societal dynamics, including agreement, criticism, and consultation. These insights emphasise the interconnectedness between individuals, underscoring the importance of relational engagement within one's community and the world.

Rakoczy (2004) highlights the distinct interaction structures in religious communities compared to individual biological families. Despite this difference, religious communities often adopt a metaphorical child-parent relationship, addressing fellow members as Sister, mother, and brother. This reflects the equality among all members as children of God within the religious context (McCoy & Russell, 2018).

These authors highlight the complex dynamics of inter-subjective exchanges within religious communities, power relations and the role of authority (Bahati, 2003; Mangion, 2019; Kupalo, 1997). Hermans and Hermans-Konokpa (2010) argue that identity formation is dialogical, shaped by social interactions within the community. These authors emphasise the importance of managing conflicts and contradictions. Wang et al. (2018) observes that Sisters derive their sense of identity and belonging from the religious community, but negative experiences can lead some members to disengage from community activities. Schneiders (2011) urges Women Religious in America to embody integrity, freedom, and courage while acknowledging past mistreatment and expressing concern for potential future mistreatment.

### **The Impact of Social Political Climate on the Religious Lives of the Sisters**

Religious life necessitates embracing challenging or developmental situations, which can include discrimination, expulsion, and conflict within certain religious Orders (Eze et al., 2016). This section delves into both deliberate and inadvertent discrimination prevalent in many Orders, exploring how expulsion can trigger a grief process. Additionally, it examines

the grief process through the lens of Yalon's (1980) Four Givens and how individuals respond to it. The section also discusses the impact of role conflict and the resulting alienation experienced by Sisters.

### **Discrimination in the Society**

According to Syal (2009) many nuns are ineligible to claim pension credits because they belong to a Religious Order. Despite existing policies and legislation aimed at preventing discriminatory practices, research by Syal and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) indicates that individuals of Asian or African descent still face discrimination when attempting to secure social benefits. The Chair of the Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (EMAG) notes that racial discrimination persists in society, resulting in adverse effects such as barriers to obtaining top jobs. However, affected individuals maintain hope that faith will eventually bring about positive change.

### **| The Impact of Faith and Love of God on Sisters' Spiritual Journey**

According to Morgan and Munroe (2022), Sisters' religious journey is underpinned by faith and love of God. They argue that faith guides Sisters' actions and decisions and provides them with unwavering strength. Corroborating the above statement, Coburn (2021) asserts that faith enables Sisters to find hope, solace, and perseverance to overcome challenges. Similarly, Morgan and Munroe agree with Coburn that love of God enables the Sisters to serve humanity with commitment and dedication, adding it drives them to make sacrifices and treat people in the community with compassion, kindness, and dignity. Arguing further, these authors posit that the bedrock upon which Sisters build their spiritual journey is faith and love.

Faith serves as a source of strength for the Sisters, equipping them with steadfast hope to confront any form of hardships or challenges with endurance (Gerundt et al., 2022). Their deep-rooted belief in God consolidates their commitment to their religious vows. Faith and love propel them in their quest to serve God and humanity.

The challenges and obstacles encountered by Sisters in their spiritual journey are significant. Hughes (2022) argues that prayer sustains Sisters in maintaining an ardent relationship with God, enabling them to overcome adversity. According to Morgan and Munroe (2022), faith and love for God provide Sisters with the determination and perseverance to overcome the difficult experiences they encounter daily.

Faith and love can foster resilience and perseverance in a Sister's spiritual journey (Staniloae, 2023). A Sister's faith and love can fuel her commitment to achieving her religious purpose as enshrined in her constitution. According to Staniloae, a Sister's understanding of her fervent love and faith in God can help her to persevere and see each obstacle as an opportunity for growth and development in her spiritual journey.

Gerundt et al. (2022) assert that faith and love act as catalysts for spiritual growth. Through prayer, meditation, and other religious practices, Sisters can deepen their relationship with God, leading to a sense of life fulfilment. The love of God spurs Sisters to make daily sacrifices and have a positive impact on the lives of others. Gerundt argues that Sisters can influence the lives of the people they serve, thereby serving as mentors and spiritual guides.

Heinlein (2020) points out that the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience made by Sisters reflect their faith and love for God, enabling them to live a simple life and obey all rules and regulations of the religious Order.

## **| Life after Death**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Hell, 1994), death is not the end because there is life after death. Catholics believe that when someone dies, the soul may go to Heaven or Purgatory. Purgatory is a place where souls with unforgiven sins are purified before they can be accepted into Heaven. However, souls that have not achieved salvation go straight to Hell. All Christians and good followers of other religions believe that their final goal is to go to Heaven. While Catholics believe that Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell are physical places, others hold the view that they are like 'states.' Christians believe that a soul in Heaven has gained eternal life, while a soul in Hell is suffering eternal condemnation. This belief informs the Sister to strive to live a good life.

Ehrman (2020) provides an insightful exploration into the historical evolution of beliefs surrounding the concepts of heaven and hell. Ehrman traces the development of these ideas across various cultures and religions, shedding light on how they have shaped human thought and societies throughout history. Through meticulous research and engaging narrative, this author offers readers a comprehensive understanding of the complex and enduring notions of the afterlife. However, Ehrman's position on life after death exhibits certain limitations. One such drawback is its potential lack of thorough examination of

individual cultural or religious viewpoints due to its broad scope. Secondly, this author's approach might oversimplify or disregard certain theological intricacies inherent in diverse religious traditions. Thirdly, the work lacks depth in specific areas or fails to adequately encompass all pertinent perspectives.

### **Confessions and Forgiveness of Sins**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Hell, 1994), Christ established the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that sinners can obtain forgiveness for their sins and reconcile with God and the Church (Strabbing, 2017). The Catholics believe that the sacrament of Confession cleanses and renews them. It is also believed that if they confess their sins, and are faithful and just, their sins will be forgiven (1 John 1:9). Venial or minor sins can be confessed directly to God, whereas the forgiveness of grave or mortal sins can be obtained through the sacrament of confession, penance, or reconciliation.

Sisters, as human beings, can err. When they commit sins, they seek forgiveness or pardon by going for confessions. Erring is quite different from the challenges Sisters face in their religious Order. The ability to cope with challenges depends on the consciousness and meaning-making of the individual. For example, I feel there are no challenges that could make any Sisters waver; however, it has been observed that little things could influence some Sisters' decision to feel unworthy to remain in a religious Order.

I believe that when a Sister errs and confesses, it renews her faith in the Absolute and gives her more energy to move on. However, some insurmountable challenges could pave the way for a life-changing decision in the form of disaffiliation.

By the nature of their calling, all Sisters resolve to follow the rules of the religious Order without any exemption. No Sister can choose not to comply; otherwise, there would be consequences from the constituted authority. If counselling and pastoral care have failed to put the erring Sister in the right stead, expulsion becomes the ultimate consequence for the temporarily professed, and in extreme cases for the finally professed.

### **The Origin of Free Will**

Free will, according to Augustine (2008), originates from the creation of God. Augustine suggests that God's creation can be categorised into two aspects: the existence of God and the provision of every good thing, including behaviours stemming from free will. Long and Feng (2015) further argue that God endowed individuals with free will, granting them the natural freedom to exist, reason, and make choices, as illustrated in the story of Adam and Eve. This capacity for free will is contingent upon the will of one's heart. Augustine posits that individuals possess the power or ability to determine their own will (Meister & Copan, 2013).

Furthermore, Mele (2014) defines 'free will' as the faculty possessed by individuals to make decisions that are not wholly determined by antecedent causes or external influences. He posits that free will encompasses the capacity for individuals to engage in deliberation, introspection, and selection from among alternative courses of action, with the ultimate accountability resting upon the individual for their choices. Mele contends that free will can coexist with a deterministic universe and undertakes an exploration of scientific, philosophical, and theological perspectives to uphold the validity and importance of free will.

Individuals can determine to do good and evil because of their free will. Wilson (2018) highlights that free will is a useful tool individual can use to achieve good as well as to commit crimes. According to Cross and Livingstone (2005) an individual was free before the fall of Adam and Eve. This is the freedom referred to in the sense of creation because the body confines to the soul, the soul obeys God, and then individuals live peacefully and are satisfied (Hell, 1994).

According to Long and Feng (2015) God gives us the freedom to choose; however, to give is good, and if there is a mistake, people have chosen to make the wrong decisions. God has given us the freedom either to choose the right thing or to commit crimes, but when individuals choose to commit a crime, the choice of doing good or evil cannot be linked together.

### **The Misuse of Free Will—the Origin of Evil**

According to these authors, when evils exist in the world, it does not mean that they originate from God, because God is omniscient, all-good, and all-powerful (Augustine, 2008; Junker-Kenny, 2023; McDonough, 2022). Augustine argues that Adam misused free will by making the wrong choice, which led to evil. However, if God did not give people free will, individuals would not be able to enjoy life. If God created the world without freedom, there would not have been evil, but God is aware that people cannot live without freedom (Geivett, 1995; John, 2010). To allow freedom to exist in a world with evil, God permits both freedom and the existence of evil to enable individuals to make choices. Stichter (2022) observes that the source of evil is from an individual's misuse of free will and not from God, which aligns with Augustine's view.



Junker-Kenny (2023) emphasises the function of free will, while Cross and Livingstone (2005) argue that although Adam abused the free will of God's gift and made the wrong choice, this should not be used as a typical example. People have their own free will to make choices and should not attribute their crimes to Adam's original sin. According to Augustine (2008), the fact that crime is always a result of free will does not mean that crimes, such as shoplifting, rely solely on free will. When this happens, it means the Human Will has been influenced by evil, which is not a true sense of free will. It is only through the grace of God that someone can overcome evil choices.

When a Sister is expelled from the convent due to misconduct, a grief process is expected. Arguably, this expulsion-induced grief has implications for the Sister as life may feel meaningless. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007) identify five stages of grief experienced by people who have lost a loved one: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.

Denial serves as a defense mechanism when individuals face unpleasant situations. Often, phrases like "I reject it" or "It cannot be true" are heard, reflecting the refusal to accept reality. According to Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007), denial manifests in various ways, such as rejecting unpleasant news or feeling numb after bereavement. When a Sister is asked to leave, she may deny the situation by insisting it is not real or expressing disbelief after dedicating years to the convent. She might bolster herself by planning to discuss the matter with superiors or seeking legal counsel within the order to assess the situation's validity. Occasionally, legal assistance can aid in resolving the issue.

This implies that denial can have significant implications for Sisters' disaffiliation from their religious orders. It may lead to delayed decision-making, increased emotional

distress, barriers to seeking support, and strained relationships within the religious community. These challenges can prolong the disaffiliation process and exacerbate emotional turmoil for nuns as they navigate their transition out of religious life.

Anger is often displayed when people are informed of bad news, e.g. the diagnosis of a terminal illness or the death of a loved one. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007) note that 'anger' manifests in the form of blaming others, feeling guilty for not being supportive enough and showing regret. Some people even query God for allowing the calamity to befall them, and some even feel angry towards the person who has died. When Sisters who are expelled, they are not able to fight the issue, such Sisters become very aggressive towards those they feel are the cause of their problem. This anger may stem from feelings of injustice or betrayal, as they may feel powerless to fight the issue or defend themselves. This aggressive behaviour can further complicate the disaffiliation process and strain relationships within the religious community.

Bargaining is indeed considered a defense mechanism against feelings of helplessness or hopelessness that people experience after a loss or during bereavement, as described by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007). In the context of Sisters' disaffiliation from their religious orders, bargaining may involve making deals with themselves or with a higher power, such as God, in the hope of finding solace or a resolution to their situation. This bargaining behaviour reflects their struggle to accept the reality of their disaffiliation and their attempts to regain a sense of control or comfort.

Depression, as explained by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007), is indeed a response to the sense of emptiness that arises when individuals face challenging circumstances or realities

beyond their control. For nuns experiencing disaffiliation from their religious orders, depression can manifest with symptoms like withdrawal, numbness, sadness, and disruptions in appetite and sleep patterns, akin to those seen in other contexts. This emotional challenge can significantly impact nuns' disaffiliation process by prolonging their transition, hindering decision-making, and creating barriers to seeking support. Addressing depression is crucial to supporting nuns through the disaffiliation process and facilitating their emotional well-being as they navigate this significant life change.

Acceptance, as described by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007), is the final stage of grief where individuals come to terms with the reality of their situation and find ways to move forward. Leaving the convent can indeed trigger a sense of grief for Sisters, like losing a loved one. During this stage, Sisters may accept the reality of their disaffiliation and begin planning for their future life outside of the religious order. This may involve considering options such as marriage, pursuing a new profession, furthering their education, or reintegrating into society. However, some individuals may still hold onto aspects of their former identity, such as wearing the convent uniform, even though they are no longer living their authentic life within the religious community.

~~subsequently divorce after a few years. This finding suggests a significant impact of disaffiliation on the personal lives and relationships of former Sisters~~ —

According to Ezeani (2016) Sisters who disaffiliate from a religious order may struggle to adapt to life outside the convent due to their initial orientation, which makes it challenging for them to tolerate certain behaviours exhibited by people outside the convent. Ezeani emphasises the importance of comprehensive preparation and support for individuals undergoing the daunting process of readapting to the secular world after leaving the religious life. Additionally, this author suggests that awareness of what to expect can help individuals cope better with the trauma of leaving a religious order. Exiting the convent can have a profound impact on individuals, leading to feelings of emptiness, sadness, loss, and a perceived absence of God in their lives. For some, the experience is so traumatic that they may choose to disengage from the Church or even reject belief in God altogether.

The rules in the convent are restrictive and do not offer any amount of freedom to the Sisters to do what they want. However, life outside the convent is not bound by such rules. The implication of this is that whilst in the convent (Armstrong, 2005), one might lose one's identity in pursuit of communal life. Sartre (1957) argues that human beings tend to embrace false values when under pressure and abandon their inborn freedom, thereby deceiving themselves. Corroborating Sartre's view is Heidegger's alienation from the authentic self. Heidegger et al. (1962) point out that Dasein is a situation in which one is thrown into the state, condition, or world one finds oneself without choice or control, and this usually depends on time, place, or culture (Adel, 2017). The general notion is that no one is given the right to choose the family he/she belongs to, their sexuality, the colour, and nothing can be changed. Congregations already in existence are bound by rules and constitutions which

cannot be influenced or changed by any person. Membership of that body automatically makes one submissive to the rules of the body which sometimes infringe on an individual's right or identity. Given that one cannot live according to one's personal values and beliefs while in the convent, it could be argued that the individual is still living an authentic life, bearing in mind that it was a conscious decision to serve (Bazerman, 1998; Sartre, 1957; Swami, 2013).

Furthermore, Tillich (1952) conceptualises three types of anxiety: ontological, spiritual, and moral. According to Stefan (2015), ontological anxiety refers to fate and death, spiritual anxiety is about emptiness and the loss of meaning, whilst moral anxiety deals with guilt and self-condemnation. He argues that these three forms of anxiety are common in every individual. This author describes fate and death as universal and inescapable; during this time, an individual is subjected to weakness, disease, and accidents. For Sisters, leaving the convent is subject to changing conditions which might bring some level of anxiety. Tillich notes that the second type of anxiety, which he calls spiritual anxiety, puts the individual in a situation whereby life becomes meaningless, and people question their existence (Stefan, 2015). The individual begins to doubt or question the existence of God, asking, "Why does He allow certain things to happen?" Finally, Tillich reveals that in the third type, which is moral anxiety, anxiety is expressed in the form of guilt and self-condemnation, which often result in self-condemnation.

In summary, Vos' (2018) definition of meaning focuses on five dimensions: material possessions, success/achievement, hedonic activities, aesthetic enjoyment, and a healthy lifestyle. Wong (2011), on the other hand, argues that people find meaning in happiness and well-being, whilst Seligman (2011) sees meaning as accepting daily contradictions.

According to Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007), people make meaning in a five-stage grief process (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance), and Frankl (1964) acknowledges that meaning is the ability to survive harsh conditions. Brown et al. (2023) note that isolation; meaninglessness, mortality, and freedom of choice constitute the four "givens" of the human condition, whereas Kierkegaard (1847) focuses on the aesthetic, ethical, and religious aspects. Ezeani (2016) asserts that a thorough definition of meaning must include a feeling of sadness, loss, and the absence of God in one's life. Sartre (1957) argues that human beings tend to embrace false values when under pressure and abandon their inborn freedom. According to Heidegger et al. (1962), one experiences 'Daisen' when one is thrown into a state or condition without choice or control, and this usually depends on time, place, or culture. Finally, the definition of anxiety highlights the ontological, spiritual, and moral aspects of meaning (Stefan, 2015; Tillich, 1952).

### **Existential Dimensions vis-a-vis Religious Life**

Van Deurzen (1997) delineates four existential dimensions providing a framework for human interaction with the world, diverging from Hughes's (2017) biopsychosocial models. These dimensions encompass the physical, social, personal, and spiritual realms. Van Deurzen underscores life's myriad challenges, positing resilience as pivotal in navigating them. This study probes the dimensions and challenges experienced by Sisters in their communal lifestyle.

#### **Physical Dimension:**

Van Deurzen (1997) defines the physical dimension as encompassing spatial management, environmental security, material possession management, and health considerations. While personal wealth often shapes individuals' lives, Sisters' vocational

commitment precludes material accumulation due to their voluntary vows, which impose constraints. For instance, communal living necessitates shared resources, prohibiting individual property ownership. This study scrutinises how such environmental conditions and constraints contribute to Sisters' disaffiliation from their Convent.

### **Social Dimension:**

The social dimension, as expounded by Van Deurzen (1997), elucidates interpersonal dynamics, positing that communal relations can evoke both affection and antipathy. Notably, temporary dominance may be attained through fame or power acquisition. Within convent settings, Sisters engage with superiors, peers, and leaders, fostering either harmonious or strained relationships. The quality of interactions, especially with superiors and peers of diverse backgrounds, significantly influences Sisters' satisfaction with their Order. Employing a questionnaire (Appendix 1, Section N, question 4), this study explores how social discontent may precipitate Sisters' disaffiliation.

### **Psychological Dimension:**

Van Deurzen's (1997) psychological dimension delves into self-definition, self-worth, and the resultant emotional landscape. Identity formation, often nurtured by peer support and effective leadership, mitigates anxiety and fosters stability. Conversely, a lack thereof engenders instability and existential dissonance. This inquiry probes how psychological factors, such as temperament, catalyse disaffiliation (Appendix 2, Section N, question 16).

### **Spiritual Dimension:**

Furthermore, Kierkegaard (1847) contends that individuals construct a comprehensive philosophy of life, delineating their personal worldview and existential stance. While feelings of insignificance are profoundly unsettling, some individuals seek gratification through

material possessions and hedonistic pursuits as compensatory measures (Vos, 2018). The trials and tribulations experienced by the Sisters offer profound opportunities for introspection and spiritual maturation (Brown et al., 2023). Thus, the realisation of one's limitations serves as the inaugural step towards spiritual enlightenment; a lack thereof engenders pervasive feelings of insecurity (Durà-Vilà et al., 2010). The present study delves into the extent to which Sisters and Ex-Sisters derive meaning and purpose from their spiritual lives, employing the questionnaire provided in Appendix 2, Sections K and N, question 10.

### **Existential, Spiritual, Psychological and Social Crises**

Existential crisis, as defined by Lantz and Walsh (2007) involves questioning the purpose and meaning of one's existence. Gilliland and James (1993) assert that such crises often manifest as inner conflicts and anxieties, which they argue are essential for fostering responsibility, independence, and freedom.

Buténaité et al. (2016) categorise existential crises into three types: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Emotional crises encompass feelings of helplessness, pain, guilt, and loneliness. The cognitive aspect involves unrealised goals, a lack of meaning and values, and indecisiveness. Behavioural crises are characterised by health issues, substance addictions, and relationship breakdowns. The authors suggest therapy and rituals as viable solutions to these crises.

In addition, Buténaité et al. (2016) define 'burnout' as the desire to escape from heightened stress levels. They argue that burnout reflects a longing for liberation from societal pressures and the struggle to maintain meaningful relationships and work-life balance. Spiritual burnout, according to the authors, entails a loss of connection with higher



meanings and purposes. Furthermore, psychological crises may manifest as threats, self-harm, hallucinations, or challenging behaviours, arising from an inability to cope with reality. Social crises occur when incidents or disasters disrupt daily social activities. The current study examines the impact of stress on Sisters, delving into their experiences within the framework of existential crises.

## **Part 2. Focused literature review**

The second of the literature review aims to bridge this gap by critically analysing previous research and identifying areas needing further investigation. Questions were formulated from the reviewed literature to explore factors leading to Sisters leaving their Orders. These factors, outlined in section N of appendix 2, were examined to determine their role in disaffiliation.

## **Review Strategy**

Substantial research exists on various aspects of religious life, including decision-making, identity construction, disaffiliation (switching from one church to another), relationships, leadership challenges, and motivation. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding Sisters' disaffiliation from their religious Orders

This literature review aims to explore previous studies on choice, disaffiliation, and how Sisters find meaning in their communal living experiences. Through a critical analysis of existing works, the review seeks to identify gaps in the literature. These gaps will inform the conceptual framework for establishing research questions and selecting an appropriate methodology. Specific areas of focus include spirituality, vows taken by the Sisters,

challenges in communal living, the socio-political climate, existential dimensions in religious life, and the role of therapy in addressing disaffiliation.

The literature review process began by outlining its components and identifying relevant keywords. These keywords encompassed key concepts such as *defection, disaffiliation, apostasy, community, congregation, formation, final vow, habit, laity, novice, postulant, sisters, superior, temporary professed, and vocation*. Additional terms included *authoritative leadership, four worlds, meaning, motivation, loneliness, self-control, resilience, stress, neglect, submissive behaviour, intention to marry, employment, relationships, daily disputes, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, well-being, power struggle, and ambition*. (See Appendix 1 for a detailed list of keywords and concepts).

The research utilised keywords related to philosophy, psychology, sociology, and management to conduct a systematic literature review. Database such as PsychINFO, MEDLINE, PubMed, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Atla were employed (see Appendix 5.4). with a focus on university online resources and library acquisitions. Relevant articles, journals, and books were identified through abstract assessments, and relevant portions were extracted for analysis. Reference lists were also consulted to ensure comprehensive coverage.

The evaluation of sources prioritised relevance to the research questions due to the extensive scope of the topic. Each journal, article, or paper was assessed based on the addressed question or problem, methodology, study results, and recommendations for further research. Additionally, the researcher scrutinised the quantitative methods employed by

various authors, but found none, prompting consideration of a quantitative approach for the study.

### **How the Factors were Chosen**

A literature search was conducted to identify predictors influencing individuals' interaction within the community, self-construction, decision-making, and meaning-making. These factors were analysed to determine their potential impact on disaffiliation. Emphasis was placed on identifying the most influential predictors affecting individuals' relationships within the community, identity construction, responses to neglect and negative emotions, anxiety, submissive behaviour, loneliness, dissatisfaction, educational attainment, depression, leadership influence, etc.

Based on keywords, the literature review was structured into nine searches. The first, second, and third searches focused on "Nuns living in the convent," "Catholic nuns defecting/disaffiliating," and "Catholic nuns leaving the convent," respectively. The fourth search explored the "growth and decline of Catholic nuns." Predictors leading to nun's disaffiliation were examined in five searches, while meaning-making was investigated in six searches. The seventh and eighth searches focused on "Meaning-making in challenging situations by Catholic nuns" and "Meaning-making by nuns," respectively. Finally, the impact of prayer/faith on Catholic nuns' disaffiliation was explored in the ninth search.

### **The Interconnected Dynamics of Choice, Community and Meaning**

The choices people make often impact both themselves and others within the community. The relationships within a community often give rise to challenges, yet despite these obstacles, individuals strive to imbue their lives with meaning (Peterson, 2018). Within

religious communities, individuals frequently make choices that affect not only themselves but also others within their community, as they do not exist in isolation but in relation to one another (Buber, 1970). To find significance in their lives, people must derive meaning from their relationships and interactions.

|       Baggini (2015) asserts in his Existential philosophy that individuals possess the freedom to make choices and can reverse them once made. Baggini further emphasises that our identities are shaped by the choices we make. Arising from this principle, individuals may choose to avoid responsibility, attributing their decisions to fate or the will of God. However, Baggini argues that every choice involves the loss of alternative possibilities, underscoring the notion of responsibility in decision-making. Religious calling, being a free-will choice, entails letting go of alternative possibilities and accepting responsibility for one's decisions.

However, individuals may still grapple with feelings of meaninglessness or dissatisfaction in the Convent, prompting disaffiliation from the Order.

The question of why Sisters find life in the Convent dissatisfactory was explored in Appendix 2, Question 4 of Section N. This inquiry delves into the factors contributing to Sisters' disaffiliation, despite their initial free-will choice to join the religious community.

In terms of scope, the review adopted a comprehensive historical perspective. The researcher examined the journey of Novices from the Postulancy Stage to the Final Profession, followed by an in-depth analysis of the daily lives of Sisters in the Convent. Subsequently, predictors of Sisters' disaffiliation were critically analysed. To ensure uniqueness and innovation, a quantitative approach utilizing Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS, IBM Statistics Version 25) was employed for data analysis, as detailed in Chapter 4.

In all the above definitions, it is apparent that people make meaning when they are free to make choices. In religious Orders, Sisters make meaning when they have a good relationship with God despite the challenges, and those who cannot make meaning out of the challenges often opt to defect or disaffiliate. The current study examines the impact of meaning-making on the disaffiliation of the Sisters using a standardised questionnaire (see Appendix 2, section K).

### **Previous Works on Defection**

Several other authors have used disaffiliation to mean apostasy and defection. Specifically, Mauss (1969) describes defection as withdrawal from church fellowship. Mauss

(1969) conducted a study on a group of Mormon priest defectors in the USA using a longitudinal survey method. The findings reveal eight types of defectors, which he categorises under three dimensions of defection: the intellectual dimension of involvement, the social dimension, and the emotional dimension. The findings also reveal the percentages of the different defectors in the different dimensions as follows: Total defectors are high on the three dimensions; Psychological – high on intellectual and emotional; Alienated – high on social and emotional; Emotional – high on intellectual and social; Cultural – high on intellectual and social; Intellectual – purely intellectual, Social – purely social; whilst Residual – disinvolved in church.

The intellectual dimension refers to the disbelief about certain aspects of religion while believing in rival secular doctrines (Mauss, 1969). For example, there are some individuals who do not believe in the divinity of Jesus. Mauss also describes social involvement as a community association within the church community, and if this is lacking it leads to disengagement or disinvolvement. According to the author, other predictors that can lead to social disinvolvement include a lack of meaningful relationships in the church, the social status of the individual, and marriage to a different faith. On the other hand, the emotional or spiritual dimension refers to a situation of youthful rebellion against parental belief. For example, some people feel guilty or uncomfortable when a homily or sermon is preached against sex before marriage.

The major critique of this study is the use of Mormons in the research. It must be noted that the study does not reflect the Catholic faith as Mormons are not Catholics. The Anglican Communion allows their priest to marry whereas it is not allowed in the Catholic Faith. Besides, the study mainly focused on Priests and not Sisters but can lend credence to

the understanding of disaffiliation by Sisters. Moreover, the use of a qualitative methodology or cross-sectional survey could better validate the findings.

To mitigate ambiguity in the definition of religious defection, Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1980) conducted a comprehensive examination of existing literature and proposed a typological framework to elucidate the concept of disaffiliation from religious bodies. They identified four cells in their typology that could lead to religious disaffiliation. The first cell, *Fervent Followers*, consists of individuals who strongly identify with their religious community and maintain a robust belief system. The *Ritualists*, on the other hand, have lost their beliefs but still identify with their religious community, whereas *Outsiders* retain strong beliefs but have severed ties with their religious community. The final typology most relevant to this study is the Apostates, who are members of the religious community that have completely disaffiliated. Brinkerhoff and Mackie conclude that disaffiliation is a social process, expedited towards apostasy by labelling, which typically serves as the catalyst.

Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1993) argue that defection involves the "loss of religiosity" and the "abandonment of communal identity." Implicit in their definition are two elements: "religiosity" and "communality." Religiosity denotes the commitment to a set of beliefs, while communality refers to the sense of belonging to a religious group. However, Brinkerhoff and Mackie note that the precise impact of these two components on defection remains unclear. They argue that there is often confusion when defection is defined solely as the abandonment of communality or interpreted as a loss of religiosity, and vice versa. They recommend the use of qualitative or quantitative methodology to explore the predictors responsible for defection.

The study's drawbacks are twofold. Firstly, it was limited to a variety of churches with different structures rather than focusing solely on Catholics, who have universal structures. This non-universality hinders the generalisability of the results. Secondly, a quantitative methodology should be adopted to explore the predictors responsible for disaffiliation. For a better understanding of apostasy as a process of disengagement from belief and community, Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1993) conducted a cross-sectional study using self-administered questionnaires from Canadian and American undergraduates. They aimed to examine the consequences apostasy may pose on happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, socio-political attitudes, and gender traditionalism. Their findings revealed four career types: Apostates, Switchers, Converts, and Stalwarts. According to these authors, apostates are those who have enormous doubts but are yet to identify with a new faith, while Switchers are those who have moved from one denomination to another possibly due to doubt, with Stalwarts having fewer doubts. Converts, on the other hand, are those who move from one religion to another (e.g., a move from Christianity to Islam).

Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1993) argue that while religiosity typically correlates positively with feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and other indicators of well-being, individuals who depart from their childhood beliefs and denominations (Apostates) may adopt a more liberal worldview and consequently experience lower life satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem. For instance, apostates may reject the notion of homosexuality as a sin and instead view it as an identity.

It is worth noting that the researchers utilised undergraduates, who may not have achieved a significant level of stability in their faith to withstand challenges. Employing a



self-administered questionnaire may have limited participants' ability to fully elucidate their real-life circumstances. Using a mixed-method approach to examine participants' life experiences could provide a more comprehensive understanding of their sentiments. However, this approach was not feasible in the present study due to time constraints.

## | Previous Studies on Disaffiliation

### | Introduction

In this section, previous studies on disaffiliation were reviewed. The methodologies, findings, and limitations were examined to identify gaps in the research. The section also covers the experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by those who disaffiliate to understand the factors that influence their decision. Sources consulted on disaffiliation include historical, sociological, psychological, and theological dimensions.

Previous studies on disaffiliation have employed various research approaches, either quantitative or qualitative methods. Findings include the identification of both individual and institutional factors that influence the decision to disaffiliate from the Church. Wong (2023) asserts that individuals are driven by a desire for personal freedom and a lack of fulfilment within religious life. External factors such as societal changes and shifts in gender roles also play a role in disaffiliation. Other factors include the lack of adaptability of convent life to modern circumstances, personal motivations, changes in societal norms and values, and the shifting role of women in society.

Previous studies shed light on the consequences of disaffiliation on the disaffiliate and the Church. However, the majority of the studies did not focus on Sisters' disaffiliation from the Convent and the long-term effects of disaffiliation on the Sisters. This study

explores the predictors that trigger Sisters' disaffiliation from their religious Orders. The following studies were examined.

#### | Clergy who Leave Congregational Ministry: A Review of the Literature

Hamm and Eagle (2021) conducted a review of the factors leading to clergy attrition from congregational ministry. Their review indicates that the attrition rate among Roman Catholic priests and Protestant denominations is typically low, usually about 1 to 2 percent per year. They also highlight that clergy attrition from the ministry is not high in the first five years of priesthood. Loneliness and isolation are cited as the main reasons for clergy attrition among Catholic priests.

However, a limitation of this study is that it focused solely on the early years of priests' life experiences without investigating those who have spent more than 15 years in the ministry. Another drawback is that the study is a mere review, necessitating the use of either quantitative or qualitative methodology to validate the results. Additionally, the study solely focuses on priests' early years. The author aims to investigate if different results might be obtained for Sisters.

#### | Internal Conflict Associated with Disaffiliation from the Roman Catholic Church

Reigel et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study on the role of internal conflicts in disaffiliation, using Festinger's cognitive dissonance concept. These authors re-analysed 27 interviews of disaffiliates from the Catholic Church in the diocese of Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia. They found that four core issues or internal conflicts gave rise to their dissonant emotions: belonging, the social environment, belief, and identity (Reigel et al., 2022). The study also reveals that although disaffiliation from the Catholic Church could resolve their

internal conflicts, it gave rise to new ones. Reigel and colleagues recommend that more research should be conducted to fully understand people's inner struggles when disaffiliating from religious institutions.

## | The Crisis of the Modern Church: A Study on Disaffiliation Among Catholics

Ballard (2023) conducted a review of the Pew Research study of 2019 on 'Disaffiliation among Catholics'. In this review, the author outlines five reasons for disaffiliation, namely, disbelief in the Church, dislike of the Church's social and political positions (e.g., homosexuality and abortion), generational change that exerts social pressure on teachings, dislike of the institution of the Church and distrust in Church authorities, and indifference toward religion. However, Ballard argues that these five reasons are not the only factors that spur people to disaffiliate. Additionally, other reasons may include familial tensions, marriage to a person of a different faith, experiences of abuse within the Church, life transitions, and so on.

Further, Ballard (2023) states that different members of the Catholic Church experience disaffiliation differently, which could manifest in forms such as hurt, anger, or disappointment. This author recommends addressing disaffiliation by strengthening the domestic church of the family, building strong and dynamic Catholic communities, and listening to the needs and voices of the laity. However, these recommendations cannot completely erase disaffiliation.

## | The Impact of Disaffiliation on family Units

The study by Knight et al. (2019) delves into the emotional and relational challenges associated with religious disaffiliation. Through qualitative research involving twelve participants from various religious backgrounds, including both disaffiliated and affiliated members within families, the study explores the impact of disaffiliation on family units. The findings provide insights into the relational dynamics and challenges faced by families during and after religious disaffiliation. Clinical implications are discussed, aiming to aid family members in understanding their experiences, processing emotions, and fostering effective communication to prevent relational strain and protect family bonds.

One potential limitation of the study is its reliance on qualitative methods, which may limit the generalisability of findings beyond the specific context of the participants involved. Additionally, the sample size of twelve participants from only five families may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives related to religious disaffiliation within different family units and religious contexts.

Implications for Sisters include recognising the emotional and relational complexities associated with religious disaffiliation within families and communities. They may find value in fostering understanding, empathy, and supportive communication within their congregations to address the challenges faced by individuals and families undergoing religious transitions. Additionally, Sisters can play a role in providing resources and support to help navigate these transitions with compassion and resilience.

## Leaving my religion: The Relationship Between Religious Disaffiliation, Health, and Well-being

Fenelon and Danielsen (2016) conducted a study to understand the relationship between religious disaffiliation, health, and well-being. These authors compared the health and subjective well-being of religious disaffiliates with those who remained affiliated or consistently unaffiliated, using data from the General Social Survey spanning from 1973 to 2012. The study found that religious disaffiliates tend to experience poorer health and lower well-being compared to those who remained affiliated or consistently unaffiliated. Furthermore, the study revealed that the disadvantage faced by religious disaffiliates was primarily due to their reduced frequency of church attendance. These findings underscore the importance of social processes surrounding religious disaffiliation and highlight the role of dynamics in the relationship between religious affiliation and health.

The study's limitations may stem from unaddressed confounding variables in the analysis and the reliance on self-reported data, which could introduce biases. Moreover, the focus on aggregate data may overlook nuanced individual variations in the experiences of religious disaffiliates, potentially limiting the depth of understanding gained from the research. Thus, a mixed-method approach could be more useful in exploring the emotions of the participants, which were not captured by the survey.

According to Sellers (2019) a study examined the relationship between factors of religious background in individuals who disaffiliate from religion and the presence of anxiety symptoms. Given that religion can provide benefits such as coping mechanisms, meaning-

making, motivation, and social support, Sellers hypothesised that the removal of these benefits might lead to anxiety. The survey involved 40 participants.

However, Sellers (2019) found that disaffiliation did not result in high levels of anxiety. This suggests that leaving the church may offer better opportunities for those who disaffiliate. A limitation of this study is the small sample size, which implies that the findings cannot be generalised. Achieving generalisation would require the use of a larger sample size.

For Sisters, understanding the potential health and well-being implications of religious disaffiliation is essential. They may need to provide additional support and resources to individuals undergoing religious transitions to ensure their holistic well-being. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment within religious communities can help mitigate the negative effects associated with religious disaffiliation and promote overall health and well-being.

#### Understanding the Suffering Experienced by Individuals after Religious Disaffiliation

In this science study by Björkmark et al. (2021), the focus is on understanding the suffering experienced by individuals after religious disaffiliation. Through in-depth interviews with 18 participants who had left various religious communities in Finland, the researchers identified four main forms of suffering: pain and sorrow over rejection, feelings of guilt and shame, living in constant fear, and experiencing humiliation as a human being. The concept of "suffering of life," as conceptualised by Eriksson, is utilised to deepen the understanding of these experiences, emphasising the violation of human dignity.

The study's limitations may stem from inherent biases associated with qualitative research, including the subjective interpretation of data by researchers. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on participants from Finland may restrict the applicability of findings to broader cultural contexts or diverse religious traditions.

For Sisters, this study emphasises the significance of acknowledging and addressing the emotional and psychological hurdles encountered by individuals experiencing religious disaffiliation. It underscores the value of providing support, empathy, and resources to aid individuals navigating this transition, aiming to alleviate suffering and facilitate healing. Moreover, the study underscores the necessity for additional research in this domain to deepen comprehension and effectively tackle the intricacies of religious disaffiliation within caring contexts.

Implications for Sisters include recognising the emotional and relational complexities associated with religious disaffiliation within families and communities. They may find value in fostering understanding, empathy, and supportive communication within their congregations to address the challenges faced by individuals and families undergoing religious transitions. Additionally, Sisters can play a role in providing resources and support to help navigate these transitions with compassion and resilience.

#### | The Predictors that Influence Communal Living

*The Dark night of the Soul: Causes and resolution of emotional distress among contemplative Nuns.*

Durà-Vilà, et al. (2010) conducted qualitative interviews with 19 contemplative nuns from various Christian traditions to explore their experiences of emotional distress. They uncovered a spectrum of stressors contributing to emotional turmoil among these nuns,

including interpersonal conflicts, doubts about their religious calling, struggles with prayer, and existential crises. Many participants described their struggles using the metaphor of the "dark night of the soul," indicating the profound depth of their emotional challenges. Despite these difficulties, the study also highlighted several coping mechanisms employed by the nuns, such as prayer, seeking spiritual guidance, and finding solace within their religious community.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations. Its small sample size of 19 participants may hinder the broader applicability of its findings to other groups of Sisters. Additionally, focusing solely on contemplative nuns might not fully capture the diverse experiences of Sisters engaged in different forms of religious life. Moreover, the subjective nature of interpreting emotional distress and coping strategies introduces the potential for bias in the study's conclusions.

For Sisters, this study emphasises the significance of acknowledging and addressing emotional distress within religious communities. By recognising the unique challenges faced by Sisters in communal living environments, religious communities can better support their emotional well-being. Providing platforms for open communication, spiritual guidance, and mutual support can assist Sisters in navigating doubts, conflicts, and existential crises. Additionally, fostering an environment of inclusivity and empathy within religious communities can strengthen bonds among members and enhance collective resilience in times of emotional difficulty.

While Durà-Vilà et al.'s (2010) study offers valuable insights into the emotional experiences of contemplative nuns, its limitations and implications underscore the need for



Sisters and their communities to adopt a nuanced approach to addressing emotional well-being, tailored to their specific circumstances and requirements.

In summary, Durà-Vilà et al. (2010) identify three primary barriers to religious commitments:

- (i) Pathological symptoms, such as depression, indecision, poor eating habits, and tearfulness.
- (ii) Behavioural and emotional symptoms, including maintaining optimism amidst frustration, perseverance, and sustaining sociability.
- (iii) Attributing religious significance to all experiences, facilitating their behaviour and emotional responses.

#### Predictors of Communal Living Satisfaction among Catholic Sisters: Implications for Religious Communities

McCoy and Russell's (2018) study delves into the factors influencing communal living satisfaction among Catholic sisters, crucial for fostering positive experiences within religious communities. They identified age, positive community relationships, and specific personality traits as significant predictors of satisfaction. Older sisters tended to report higher satisfaction levels, suggesting a deepening appreciation over time. Positive community relationships emerged as pivotal, emphasising the importance of a supportive environment. Additionally, certain personality traits were linked to greater satisfaction, highlighting individual differences in communal living experiences.

However, limitations such as sample size issues and reliance on self-reported data need consideration. Further research is necessary to validate and expand upon these findings. Nonetheless, understanding these predictors can inform interventions aimed at enhancing communal living experiences. Initiatives promoting positive relationships and tailored support for different age groups and personality types could improve overall satisfaction. Moreover, insights from this study contribute to a broader understanding of communal living satisfaction, benefiting various communal living settings.

By integrating these findings, religious communities can better support their members, leading to a more fulfilling communal living experience for Catholic sisters. McCoy and Russell's (2018) study provide a foundation for future research and interventions aimed at promoting the well-being of Catholic sisters. Addressing these predictors and fostering a supportive community environment are essential steps towards creating a richer communal living experience within religious communities.

In contrast to Van Deusen's (2009) study, which investigated predictors of happiness, communal living, and ministry preferences among Sisters in the USA through randomized sampling and semi-structured interviews, this present study diverges by focusing on predictors facilitating Sisters' departure from their communities and subsequent renunciation of commitments. While Van Deusen's findings highlighted the correlation between happiness and engagement in diverse apostolates, the study lacked emphasis on relationship support within the community, which is crucial for enhancing individual identity among Sisters. Conversely, Wong (2023) argues that the inflexibility of convent life in adapting to modern circumstances, alongside personal motivations, societal shifts, and evolving gender roles, significantly influences religious disaffiliation. This study aims to further explore these

dynamics to gain insights into the complexities of Sisters' decisions to leave their religious communities.

Dunn's (1994) doctoral thesis delved into the emotional dynamics of Catholic Sisters in Southern California, particularly examining the impact of the reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Through semi-structured interviews with 15 Sisters from two religious' congregations, Dunn explored the concept of "emptiness" within religious life and sought to uncover the underlying factors contributing to this sense of void.

The findings of Dunn's (1994) study revealed that a significant portion of the participants, approximately 93%, reported experiencing poor or strained intimate relationships within their religious communities. Additionally, stringent regulations within these communities were identified as exacerbating feelings of emptiness among the Sisters. Dunn highlighted the importance of considering Sisters' past experiences, particularly negative childhood experiences such as abuse, parental neglect, or bereavement, which could shape their emotional well-being and contribute to feelings of emptiness later in life.

This current study aims to build upon Dunn's (1994) findings by using a cross-sectional survey method to validate the predictors identified in his qualitative research. However, it is important to note that this study has its limitations, including a small sample size and a narrow focus on only two congregations in Southern California. Therefore, the generalisability of the results may be limited to similar contexts, and further research with larger and more diverse samples would be beneficial to confirm and expand upon these findings.

Leung and Wittberg (2004) conducted an in-depth exploration of the role of Catholic religious Orders in contemporary China, aiming to compare their functions with those in Europe and North America. Through a series of interviews, they engaged with a total of 40 participants distributed across three groups: 20, 7, and 13 individuals, respectively.

Their research brought to light significant challenges encountered by Sisters in China. These included prohibitions on teaching and limited access to further education, alongside constraints on their freedom of movement. Moreover, aspirants or novices often lacked formal educational opportunities. Leung and Wittberg (2004) argued that these constraints served to diminish the power and status of Sisters within the religious community, stemming from internal factors such as inadequate leadership and insufficient religious and professional education.

While offering valuable insights, the study's applicability beyond the Chinese context may be constrained by cultural differences. Furthermore, the small sample size raises questions about the generalisability of the findings. Additionally, the rationale behind the uneven distribution of participants among the groups was not explicitly clarified, warranting further exploration.

In a qualitative study conducted by Stuber (2000) with a Catholic religious community in the USA, participants were interviewed using a dialogic retrospection approach. This method involved interviewing participants and later providing them with the opportunity to review the data and offer feedback to the researcher. The aim was to explore how participation in the religious community shaped the lives of the Sisters.

The study revealed that participants felt strongly influenced by the three-year formation program, which prepared them for their religious journey. This finding contrasts with Hamm and Eagle's (2021) discovery that loneliness and isolation were primary factors contributing to clergy attrition among Catholic priests. Moreover, Stuber (2000) notes a profound identification with the values of the religious community. However, it is essential to acknowledge a potential limitation of the study, namely, the reliance on participants' review of the data, which might introduce subjectivity into their responses.

Armstrong (2005) suggests that religious communities may constrain Sisters' sense of worth and identity, contrasting with Dunn's (1994) indication that limited research has been conducted on how these communities either facilitate or impede personal growth. However, Reigel et al. (2022) assert that four core issues or internal conflicts: belonging, the social environment, belief, and identity give rise to dissonant emotions among members. This study aims to investigate how experiences within a religious community influence members to the extent that some seek to leave or lose interest in further commitment. Additionally, a quantitative approach will be employed to compare findings with Dunn's qualitative work.

### How Stress and Depression can lead to Disaffiliation

In examining the phenomenon of disaffiliation from religious groups, scholars such as Richardson et al. (1986) highlight that many individuals who initially join such groups eventually leave, either voluntarily or through expulsion. Ebaugh (1993) explores the challenges faced by those who depart, using terms like "apostate" and "defector" to describe this process of dissociation. Fenelon and Danielsen (2016) compared the health and wellbeing of disaffiliates to the affiliates while Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1993) further differentiate

between apostasy and switching, elucidating the complexities of belief and affiliation within religious contexts. Wong (2023) asserts that individuals are driven by a desire for personal freedom, societal changes, shifts in gender roles and lack of fulfilment within the religious life can trigger disaffiliation. Religious disengagement lacks a singular cause. Instead, it is influenced by a multitude of factors.

Weaver et al. (2002) studied vocational strain among religious clergy, finding that Sisters had the lowest risk of emotional distress, attributed to strong community support. This echoes Hamm and Eagle's (2021) low attrition rates among Catholic priests and Protestant denominations. However, Weaver et al. noted an elevated mental illness level among Sisters due to past traumas, urging therapy or counselling by a Catholic psychiatrist. Furthermore, Sellers (2019) argues that religion can provide benefits such as coping mechanisms, meaning-making, motivation, and social support. This study aims to expand on Weaver et al.'s work by investigating the effectiveness of therapy in reducing disaffiliation from the convent (Appendix 2 Section M) and depression related to disaffiliation (Appendix 2 Section E).

Meiring (1985) developed a questionnaire to understand Sisters' stress responses, finding that 73% cited rigidity within Orders, 75% unresolved issues, and 23% communal living as stress factors. The study suggests that strong interpersonal relationships are crucial for Sisters' well-being and adherence to vows. However, Buténaité et al. (2016) posit that stress could result from spiritual burnout or crisis, involving a loss of meaning, purpose, and connection with the Absolute or Higher Being. Conversely, a lack of such relationships can lead to stress and potential disaffiliation. This study builds on Durà-Vilà et al. (2010)'s insights to explore stress-related disaffiliation among Sisters, adapting findings to the cultural

context. The questionnaire will be utilised to investigate how stress is linked to disaffiliation (see Appendix 2, section F).

#### | Impact of loneliness on Sisters

Loneliness is a prevalent concern among Sisters in Catholic convents. In their study, Smith and Johnson (2023) investigated the predictors of loneliness and potential interventions. Through a survey of 300 Sisters, the study identified several significant predictors. This included age, years in religious life, and the quality of relationships with other sisters. Additionally, Sisters with higher levels of autonomy and independence tended to experience lower levels of loneliness.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of fostering supportive and meaningful relationships within the convent. Initiatives encouraging interactions and bonding among Sisters can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness. Recognising that age and years in religious life influence loneliness, interventions can be tailored to specific age groups or stages of religious life. Implementing programs that address the unique needs of Sisters at different life stages can be highly beneficial. Encouraging autonomy and independence among Sisters could be an effective strategy to combat loneliness. Providing opportunities for individual pursuits and decision-making within the convent can contribute to a sense of purpose and belonging.

However, the study has its limitations. It was conducted within a specific context and may not be fully applicable to Sisters in different cultural or religious settings. Moreover, the data collected relies on self-reporting, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. Although the study establishes correlations between predictors and loneliness, it doesn't

establish causality. Further research is needed to explore the causal relationships between the identified factors and loneliness among Sisters. A longitudinal study could provide deeper insights into the factors influencing loneliness among Sisters over time. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the predictors of loneliness among Sisters and offers potential interventions to mitigate this issue, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of Sisters within Catholic convents.

Brown and Davis (2022) conducted a qualitative inquiry to understand the lived experiences and factors contributing to loneliness among Sisters. Through in-depth interviews with 20 Sisters, the study identified several key predictors of loneliness, including the quality of relationships with other sisters, leadership roles, and the sense of belonging. The study concludes with recommendations for interventions to address loneliness in religious life.

The findings of this qualitative inquiry underscore the importance of fostering supportive and meaningful relationships within the convent. Initiatives encouraging interactions and bonding among Sisters can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness. When Sisters recognise that the quality of relationships with other sisters, leadership roles and the sense of belonging can influence loneliness. Interventions can be tailored to address these factors. Implementing programs that address the unique needs of Sisters can be highly beneficial.

However, the study has its limitations. The research was conducted with a small sample size of 20 Sisters, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, qualitative data can be subjective and may not fully represent the experiences of all Sisters. Although the study provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of loneliness among



Sisters, further research is needed to explore these factors on a larger scale and across different cultural or religious settings.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the predictors of loneliness among Sisters and provides recommendations for interventions to mitigate this issue, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of Sisters within Catholic convents.

Intimate Relationship Nuns, like any individuals, express interest in intimate relationships with both sexes (Brock, 2007). Furthermore, the author observes that instead of functioning exclusively as nuns, they devise ways to either avoid or engage in relationships they are not supposed to partake in. Ebaugh et al. (1996) argue that nuns often experience discrimination in some societies. According to Brock, sisters who live alone experience increased autonomy in their lives, relationships, and finances; however, they may also feel isolation and loneliness at times. Out of 51% of nuns who live communally, 7% reside with people who are not Catholics. The sisters' interactions regarding disaffiliation were explored in Section D and N, question 2.

## | The Authority of the Catholic Church in Relation to Religious Sisters

Duffy (2021) delves into the authority of the Catholic Church concerning religious sisters. The study explores the evolving relationship between religious Sisters and the Catholic Church's authority, focusing on historical, canonical, and theological aspects.

The research methodology employed in this study includes a comprehensive analysis of historical, canonical, and theological texts. Duffy (2021) conducts a thorough examination of canonical documents and theological writings to elucidate the power dynamics between religious Sisters and the Catholic Church. Understanding the historical, canonical, and

theological aspects of the relationship between religious sisters and the Catholic Church can empower Sisters to navigate their roles more effectively within the Church. This knowledge can lead to increased awareness of their role and relationship within the Church's hierarchical structure and may empower Sisters to advocate for their rights and position within the Church.

Nonetheless, (Duffy, 2021) study's findings may not fully represent the diverse experiences and contexts of religious Sisters globally, as it primarily focuses on the relationship between religious Sisters and the Catholic Church from a particular theological perspective. Moreover, it did not delve deeply into the day-to-day implications for Sisters or address specific issues they face in their communities. Additionally, the study does not extensively address the cultural and contextual factors that influence the relationship between Sisters and the authority of the Catholic Church, which could be crucial for a comprehensive understanding.

Duffy's (2021) study provides significant insights into the authority of the Catholic Church in relation to religious Sisters. While the study provides valuable insights, further research considering the limitations mentioned could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Sisters and the authority of the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, this study is an essential resource for Sisters seeking to understand and navigate their roles within the Church.

### **| Influence of Motivation on Religious Life**

In contradistinction to prevalent motivational paradigms, notably those propounded by Maslow (1943) and expanded upon by Maslow et al. (1970), Lawrence and Nohria (2002) posit a nuanced framework consisting of four intrinsic drives denoted as Drives A, B, C, and

D. They delineate Drive A as the impetus for "Acquire and Achieve," Drive B as fostering "Bond and Belong," Drive C as engendering "Challenge and Comprehend," and Drive D as encapsulating "Define and Defend." The compendium of these drives is explicated as follows:

Under the auspices of Acquire and Achieve, Lawrence and Nohria (2002) elucidate that individuals are driven by a pursuit of status and material gain, deriving motivation from commendations for exemplary performance or advancement within their professional sphere. Moreover, they note a proclivity among certain individuals, including some within religious orders, towards a quest for holistic growth encompassing spiritual and vocational dimensions.

In the realm of Bond and Belong, Lawrence and Nohria (2002) contend that individuals within organisational contexts seek to foster interpersonal connections and assimilate into communal frameworks. They underscore the necessity for organisational policies conducive to social cohesion, emphasising the role of communal living in nurturing harmonious relationships among members of religious communities.

Within the ambit of Challenge and Comprehend, Lawrence and Nohria (2002) postulate that individuals derive fulfilment from intellectual stimulation and the cultivation of new competencies, thereby fostering personal growth. They note the propensity for challenging responsibilities to galvanise individuals, particularly within the context of leadership roles, prompting the acquisition of requisite skills amidst the attendant stressors.

Lastly, the drive to Define and Defend is characterised by Lawrence and Nohria (2002) as an innate impulse to safeguard the integrity and security of one's organisational affiliations. This defensive instinct, while often latent, manifests in efforts to preserve

institutional reputation, culture, and ideological tenets, thus ensuring a conducive and secure work environment conducive to productivity.

Lawrence and Nohria (2002) further argue that maintaining a balance between the four drives is crucial for both team members and the organisation to prevent skewed personal and organizational outcomes. For instance, an imbalance in the drives within a Religious Order can cause Sisters to lose focus, potentially leading to disaffiliation. Lawrence and Nohria also observe that an excessive focus on the drive to 'acquire' can foster unhealthy competition, while an overemphasis on the drive to 'defend' can induce paranoia. The pursuit of leadership positions within a Religious Order may engender unhealthy competition, and consistent negative perceptions directed at a specific Sister can result in frustration and disaffiliation. This study elucidates how the four drives impact the lives of Sisters in relation to disaffiliation.

Arguably, some individuals are assigned responsibilities by their employers without adequate skills, support, and training, resulting in limited achievement due to a mismatch between their skills and the role (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Hersey & Blanchard, 1980). Employers often attribute poor performance to workers without providing necessary training. Similarly, Sisters may face blame for poor performance without adequate training to acquire relevant skills.

Hersey and Blanchard argue that employers can optimise employee performance by motivating them based on their maturity levels, defined in terms of their ability and willingness to undertake assigned tasks. Ability signifies competence, while willingness reflects confidence and commitment. The question arises: do Sisters possess the ability (skills

or competence) and willingness (confidence and commitment – accepting responsibility) to execute tasks?

Hersey and Blanchard (1980) propose four maturity levels: M1, M2, M3, and M4.

M1 represents the "unmotivated and inexperienced" individual (or novice) lacking specific skills and unwilling to take responsibility. These individuals require precise instructions, one step at a time, with deadlines and progress monitoring. This style is most effective in emergencies or for repetitive tasks.

M2 refers to the "motivated and inexperienced" individual willing to undertake tasks but lacking ability. To optimise results from this group, leaders must coach or sell ideas to them, explaining goals, tasks, methods, and reasons while providing support. This leadership style, also known as selling, involves convincing individuals they can accomplish tasks and may involve coaching.

M3 describes the "unmotivated and experienced" worker capable of tasks but unwilling to take responsibility. Leaders must motivate this group by empowering them, encouraging participation in decision-making, stimulating them, and offering support. Reminding them of past successes and allowing them to take risks can also be effective.

M4 comprises the "motivated and experienced" individuals willing to undertake tasks and take responsibility. Delegation is recommended as the optimal approach, with leaders delegating responsibility for goal setting, planning, and execution.

The Skill/Motivation matrix below illustrates the ability/willingness to accept responsibility and the suitable leadership style.

*Table 2.1 Skill /Motivation matrix (Hersey & Blanchard, 1980)*

Level	Motivation/Experience Level	Responsibility	Leadership Style
M1	Unmotivated and inexperienced	Unable and unwilling	Direct/Tell
M2	Motivated and inexperienced	Unable but willing	Coach/Sell
M3	Unmotivated and experienced	Able but unwilling	Participate (Empower)
M4	Motivated and Experienced	Able and willing	Delegate

Hersey and Blanchard (1980) leadership model is also applicable to the religious Order. Leaders in certain Religious Orders tend to get the best results from the Sisters by motivating them according to their maturity levels (i.e. ability and willingness to do the task). While the experienced leaders are at ease with applying the four levels, however, the inexperienced ones often struggle to make meaningful impacts or contributions in developing Sisters under their remit. This imbalance often leads to frustration, unhappiness and disaffiliation on the part of the Sisters.

### **Existential Dimensions vis-a-vis Religious Life**

Van Deurzen (1997) delineates four existential dimensions providing a framework for human interaction with the world, diverging from Hughes's (2017) biopsychosocial models. These dimensions encompass the physical, social, personal, and spiritual realms. Van Deurzen underscores life's myriad challenges, positing resilience as pivotal in navigating them. This study probes the dimensions and challenges experienced by Sisters in their communal lifestyle.

**Physical Dimension:**

Van Deurzen (1997) defines the physical dimension as encompassing spatial management, environmental security, material possession management, and health considerations. While personal wealth often shapes individuals' lives, Sisters' vocational commitment precludes material accumulation due to their voluntary vows, which impose constraints. For instance, communal living necessitates shared resources, prohibiting individual property ownership. This study scrutinises how such environmental conditions and constraints contribute to Sisters' disaffiliation from their Convent.

**Social Dimension:**

The social dimension, as expounded by Van Deurzen (1997), elucidates interpersonal dynamics, positing that communal relations can evoke both affection and antipathy. Notably, temporary dominance may be attained through fame or power acquisition. Within convent settings, Sisters engage with superiors, peers, and leaders, fostering either harmonious or strained relationships. The quality of interactions, especially with superiors and peers of diverse backgrounds, significantly influences Sisters' satisfaction with their Order. Employing a questionnaire (Appendix 1, Section N, question 4), this study explores how social discontent may precipitate Sisters' disaffiliation.

**Psychological Dimension:**

Van Deurzen's (1997) psychological dimension delves into self-definition, self-worth, and the resultant emotional landscape. Identity formation, often nurtured by peer support and effective leadership, mitigates anxiety and fosters stability. Conversely, a lack thereof engenders instability and existential dissonance. This inquiry probes how psychological factors, such as temperament, catalyse disaffiliation (Appendix 2, Section N, question 16).

## **Spiritual Dimension:**

Van Deurzen (1997) posits the spiritual dimension as intrinsic to meaning-making, highlighting the optional nature of connection with the Supreme Being. Individuals can find transcendence through philosophical constructs and existential insights. Furthermore, Kierkegaard (1847) contends that individuals construct a comprehensive philosophy of life, delineating their personal worldview and existential stance. While feelings of insignificance are profoundly unsettling, some individuals seek gratification through material possessions and hedonistic pursuits as compensatory measures (Vos, 2018). The trials and tribulations experienced by the Sisters offer profound opportunities for introspection and spiritual maturation (Brown et al., 2023). Thus, the realisation of one's limitations serves as the inaugural step towards spiritual enlightenment; a lack thereof engenders pervasive feelings of insecurity (Durà-Vilà et al., 2010). The present study delves into the extent to which Sisters and Ex-Sisters derive meaning and purpose from their spiritual lives, employing the questionnaire provided in Appendix 2, Sections K and N, question 10.

## **Existential, Spiritual, Psychological and Social Crises**

Existential crisis, as defined by Lantz and Walsh (2007) involves questioning the purpose and meaning of one's existence. Gilliland and James (1993) assert that such crises often manifest as inner conflicts and anxieties, which they argue are essential for fostering responsibility, independence, and freedom.

Buténaité et al. (2016) categorise existential crises into three types: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Emotional crises encompass feelings of helplessness, pain, guilt, and loneliness. The cognitive aspect involves unrealised goals, a lack of meaning and values, and indecisiveness. Behavioural crises are characterised by health issues, substance



addictions, and relationship breakdowns. The authors suggest therapy and rituals as viable solutions to these crises.

In addition, Buténaité et al. (2016) define 'burnout' as the desire to escape from heightened stress levels. They argue that burnout reflects a longing for liberation from societal pressures and the struggle to maintain meaningful relationships and work-life balance. Spiritual burnout, according to the authors, entails a loss of connection with higher meanings and purposes. Furthermore, psychological crises may manifest as threats, self-harm, hallucinations, or challenging behaviours, arising from an inability to cope with reality. Social crises occur when incidents or disasters disrupt daily social activities. The current study examines the impact of stress on Sisters, delving into their experiences within the framework of existential crises.

## **The Different Predictors that Facilitate the Disaffiliation of the Sisters**

### **Negative Affectivity**

Thompson (2007) developed the Positive and Negative Affect Questionnaires to measure mood, with "positive affect" reflecting a propensity for positive emotions and positive interactions, while "negative affect" denotes experiencing negative emotions in one's environment (Leeds et al., 2007). Wang et al. (2018) contend that positive emotions contribute to life satisfaction, whereas negative emotions may lead to dissatisfaction.

Laptook et al. (2008) suggest that individuals low in positive affect are less inclined to engage socially, while excessive positive emotion can have adverse effects. Aquino et al. (1999) argue that those high in negative affectivity may perceive themselves as targets of aggression from peers and leaders. For Sisters, experiencing both positive and negative

emotions is common, and elevated levels of negative affectivity, in conjunction with other factors, may prompt disaffiliation. This suggests that negative affectivity could negatively influence remaining in the Order during challenges, while positive affectivity might have a positive impact. This study aims to investigate the potential influence of negative affectivity on Sisters' decisions to remain in the Order amid difficulties (see Appendix 2 section L).

### **The Role of Positive and Negative Affectivity in Job Performance**

Kaplan et al. (2009) delve into the impact of dispositional affectivity on job performance. Their meta-analysis revealed that both positive and negative affectivity significantly influence task performance, particularly when assessed subjectively. Positive affectivity correlated with desirable workplace behaviours like organisational citizenship, while negative affectivity linked to negative behaviours such as withdrawal and counterproductive actions. The study emphasises the necessity of considering affectivity in understanding job performance, surpassing the influence of traits like extraversion and neuroticism. Despite its contributions, limitations include reliance on self-report measures and a focus on specific performance dimensions. For Sisters, this research offers insights into emotional influences on job performance, though cultural nuances warrant consideration.

### **Locus of Control**

Beech and Fisher (2006), Page and Scalora (2004), Rotter (1966) as well as define 'locus of control' as the capacity of an individual to exert control over any situation they encounter. These scholars categorise locus of control into 'internal' and 'external' loci of control. They equally argue that an internal locus of control is attained through diligent effort, signifying that individuals with an internal locus of control possess agency that influences

their successes. Conversely, an external locus of control is deemed to be achieved by sheer luck, often beyond one's influence. Put differently, success or failure is attributed to chance or luck rather than diligent effort. For instance, an individual with an external locus of control tends to deflect responsibility, attributing outcomes externally, such as "they did this to me" or "she is the cause of my failure."

In a study conducted by Dumitriu et al. (2014) to explore the relationship between locus of control and individuals' decision-making abilities regarding orientation, tasks, and interpersonal relations, it was observed that locus of control could influence participants' decision-making capacities, mediated by the leadership style adopted by the individual. Different individuals exhibit varying loci of control, which in turn affect their decision-making processes. However, the present study focuses on women (i.e., Sisters and Ex-Sisters) and utilises the questionnaire provided in Appendix 2, Section G, to assess Sisters' capacity to make decisions in challenging situations, which could potentially inform their decision to either remain with or disaffiliate from the Order.

### **Submissive Behaviour**

Submissive (or passive) behaviour entails acquiescing to everything without questioning, arguing, or engaging in dialogue. Essentially, it involves constantly seeking to please others without causing offense. Submissive behaviour can lead to individuals obtaining little of what they desire, experiencing low self-esteem, harbouring internal anger, and encountering psychosomatic problems.

In a study conducted by Şahin and Şahin (1992) employing an adapted version of Gilbert and Allan's (1994) Submissive Acts Scale (SAS), a significant relationship was

observed between participants' submissive behaviour and their psychological symptoms. Additionally, a correlation was found between submissive behaviour and participants' vocational training. However, no relationship was discerned between gender and academic achievement among the participants. The current study utilised the Gilbert and Allan Submissive Behaviour Scale questionnaire provided in Appendix 2, Section B, to evaluate Sisters' capacity to make informed decisions regarding whether to remain with or disaffiliate from the Order in challenging circumstances.

### **Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**

Despite its recognition, concerns about the validity of GAD persist, including difficulties in distinguishing it from personality traits, other anxiety disorders, and depression. The author discusses the Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) framework proposed by the National Institute of Mental Health, suggesting a shift towards studying generalised anxiety in a broader biological context. Within the RDoC framework, generalised anxiety could be seen as a dimension termed "anxious apprehension," offering potential insights into its underlying mechanisms. This reflects a growing recognition of anxiety as a complex phenomenon with biological roots, indicating new directions for research and understanding in the field.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterised by over six months of chronic or severe worries and tensions than the normal anxiety most individuals' experience which could interfere with their day-to-day activities (Crocq, 2017). This author argues that GAD is usually associated with symptoms such as muscle tension, fatigue, insomnia, lack of concentration and restlessness.

Kirsch and Windmann (2009) in their Iowa Gambling study observed that there is a positive relationship between enhanced anxiety and risk intolerance. In other words, the higher the anxiety level, the higher the risk. They argue that elevated levels of anxiety could activate the orbitofrontal cortex (part of brain) which invariably affects the decision-making process of an individual. These authors emphasise that no one wants to take risks in any uncertain situation because of the imminent consequences. In this current study, the GAD questionnaire developed by Spitzer et al. (2006) is used to evaluate Kirsch and Windmann's assumption. This questionnaire was implored in the present study to establish how GAD could affect the decision of the Sisters to leave the Order. See Appendix 2 Section F for the questionnaire.

## **Neglect**

Avdibegovic and Brkic (2020) meticulously delineate neglect as the systemic failure to meet a child's most essential requirements, encompassing not only their physical sustenance but also their emotional well-being, educational opportunities, and access to necessary medical care. Furthermore, neglect extends to situations where children are left in the care of abusive individuals or are simply left unattended, lacking the requisite supervision and guidance. Through a comprehensive meta-analysis, these scholars delve into the intricate web of causes and consequences surrounding neglect in children, identifying the overarching 'Deficit Model' as a pivotal framework encompassing various facets such as parental deficits, ecological factors, and transactional deficits within the child's environment.

Avdibegovic and Brkic (2020) eloquently argue that neglect begets a plethora of adverse outcomes, engendering a spectrum of deleterious behaviours and psychological sequelae. Among these are inclinations towards risk-taking, engagement in substance abuse,

involvement in criminal activities, and profound difficulties in establishing and sustaining meaningful interpersonal relationships. They draw upon a rich body of literature, including seminal works by Dash & Jena (2020), Grossman et al. (2017), and Schimmenti and Bifulco (2015) to underscore the enduring impact of early-life neglect on individuals' health trajectories, cognitive development, emotional resilience, and social integration.

Further nuances in the discourse on neglect are elucidated by Mennen et al. (2010), who discern various manifestations of neglect beyond mere material deprivation. These may include the denial of educational opportunities vital for a child's prospects, the imposition of punitive measures as seen in the works of Gervais & Watson (2014), exclusion from meaningful responsibilities within familial or communal contexts, and the profound failure to address the complex array of emotional needs that underpin healthy psychological development. The profound emotional and psychological toll wrought by neglect, as explicated by Van Deurzen (1997), manifests in a spectrum of maladaptive responses, ranging from pervasive anxiety and existential confusion to profound emotional instability, disintegration of the self-concept, and the adoption of a distorted, 'false' sense of identity.

In the present study, an innovative self-developed questionnaire serves as a tool to probe deeply into the intricate dynamics through which neglect influences the Sisters' deliberations regarding their continued affiliation with or departure from the Order. Referencing Appendix 2, Section N, Question 12 provides a concrete glimpse into the nuanced exploration undertaken within this research framework.

## **Lack of Self-Control**

Gillebaart (2018) explores the challenges of defining self-control, emphasising its interdisciplinary relevance and the need for consensus to advance understanding. The author addresses the distinction between self-control and self-regulation, proposing an operational definition based on the Test-Operate-Test-Exit (TOTE) -model. Self-regulation involves goal setting and monitoring, while self-control encompasses actions during goal pursuit. This framework integrates traditional and contemporary perspectives, offering a clear foundation for further research into self-control's mechanisms and implications.

Gillebaart (2018) conceptual definition of 'self-control' is perceived as the amalgamation of skills and behaviours necessary for individuals to function in a self-regulating manner. Operationally, as articulated by Gillebaart, self-control involves the utilisation of strategies such as inhibition or initiation to guide behaviour.

Becker (1963) underscores the detrimental consequences of a deficiency in self-control and the presence of unhealthy relationships with peers or leaders, which can serve as catalysts for mental health issues even under minimal provocation. Becker further emphasises that persistent exposure to elevated levels of depression, impacting one's self-esteem and rendering life devoid of meaning, may pave the way for disaffiliation.

Joosten et al. (2015) delve into the role of power within the intricate interplay between moral identity and the depletion of self-control, employing both laboratory experimentation and field studies. Their findings elucidate that the interaction between self-control depletion and moral identity hinges upon individuals' ability to regulate their behaviours, thus suggesting that power dynamics may hinder individuals from extending assistance to others.

The current study endeavours to assess the Sisters' proficiency in managing their skills and behaviours in a self-regulating manner, as per Gillebaart's (2018) conceptualisation. This assessment is facilitated through the utilisation of a questionnaire provided in Appendix 2, Section N, Question 19.

**Search for meaning.** According to Frankl (1964), meaning transcends mere comprehension and encompasses profound aspects of existence such as life, death, and suffering. Frankl contends that meaning-making serves as a response to life's existential questions, emphasising that individuals are intrinsically driven to seek significance in their experiences. This conviction is deeply rooted in Frankl's personal ordeal in the Concentration Camp, where he witnessed first-hand the power of finding meaning amidst extreme adversity.

Kierkegaard (1847) posits that the quest for meaning emanates from an individual's relationship with the Ultimate Being. As a devout Christian, he locates meaning in the Word of God, asserting that it transcends mere intellectual knowledge and entails a profound understanding of one's purpose and obligations. Kierkegaard emphasises that meaning is a lived experience, characterized by the pursuit of values, beliefs, and purpose in a seemingly indifferent world. However, critics of this author argue that atheists find meaning in alternative sources, challenging the centrality of God in the quest for meaning.

Sartre (1960) advances the notion that existence precedes essence, suggesting that individuals must first exist before ascribing meaning to their lives. As an atheist, Sartre rejects the notion of a divine creator, asserting that human existence arises from the interplay between individuals and their environment. He contends that meaning is inherently subjective, unique to everyone, and underscores the importance of self-responsibility in shaping one's life. However, critics argue that Sartre's emphasis on interaction with the



environment as a prerequisite for meaning overlooks the experiences of individuals, such as monks leading solitary lives, who derive profound meaning despite minimal external interaction.

Yalom (1980) posits that life lacks inherent meaning unless individuals actively construct meaning for themselves. He contends that to imbue life with significance, individuals must adhere to a set of moral principles and engage with their community through activities and social interactions, thereby deriving natural meaning from these engagements. In existential therapy, engagement with others serves as a fundamental tool for therapists to uncover barriers to engagement and explore what prevents individuals from pursuing activities they once enjoyed, such as traveling or swimming.

Other scholars, such as Holstein and Gubrium (2007), Park (2016), Vos (2018) and Wong (2023), and offer nuanced perspectives on meaning. Wong defines meaning as a multifaceted construct encompassing motivation, values, understanding, situational commitment, self-worth, and self-regulation. Vos further delineates specific domains through which people derive meaning, including larger life purposes, personal growth, temporality, justice and ethics, and spirituality and religion.

Holstein and Gubrium (2007) assert that individuals are inherently driven to seek new sources of meaning in their lives. They argue that the pursuit of meaning correlates with increased happiness and reduced distress, often leading individuals towards religion. Park (2016) delves into how survivors cope with post-disaster, emphasising the importance of understanding adaptive responses. Park reviews literature to highlight the role of meaning-making processes, such as changes in beliefs and perceived growth, in fostering resilience.

Despite inconsistencies, these processes are deemed central to recovery, with implications for supporting survivors, including religious Sisters.

The current study aims to assess how Sisters and Ex-Sisters perceive and pursue meaning by comparing their scores on a standardised questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2, Section K). By exploring variations in the search for meaning between these groups, the study seeks to shed light on the role of religious affiliation in shaping individuals' perceptions of meaning and their subsequent pursuit of it.

### **Search for Purposeful Meaning**

Rainey (2014) delineates purposeful meaning as the pursuit of a unique life purpose, while purpose anxiety denotes the struggle to identify and fulfil this purpose. Through exploratory research, this author observes that the quest for purposeful meaning often leads to increased happiness, elevated life satisfaction, enhanced well-being, and improved physical health. However, she notes that individuals frequently experience purpose anxiety during their search for meaning, irrespective of their age. Importantly, Rainey's study highlights that purpose anxiety negatively impacts well-being. The current study seeks to compare the scores of Sisters and Ex-Sisters in their search for purposeful meaning using a standardized questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2, Section K).

### **Relationship**

Easterlin (2012) asserts that humans possess an innate propensity to seek physical and emotional connection with others. He argues that a lack of social ties and connections can evoke feelings of threat. This view is supported by Eisenberger and Cole (2012), who contend that social relationships exert a significant influence on physical health and overall body functioning.

According to the World Health Organisation (2002) an individual's health is intricately influenced by their circumstances, environment, and social networks, including families, friends, and communities. Mertika et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of recent literature to elucidate the unique characteristics of positive relationships, categorizing their findings into predictors of positive relationships and their impact on well-being. While their findings suggest a positive correlation between relationships and well-being, there is limited empirical evidence pinpointing the predictors of positive relationships. Mertika et al. recommend further exploration of unexplored predictors to enhance understanding of the relationship between positive relationships and well-being. The current study compares the scores of Sisters and Ex-Sisters regarding their relationships with leaders and peers to elucidate their decision to remain with or exit the Order, utilising a self-developed questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2, Section N, Question 2).

### **Wellbeing and Quality of Life**

Karrouri et al. (2021) characterise well-being as a state marked by the experience of positive emotions and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. However, they critique this definition as being narrow, focusing solely on moment-to-moment happiness. They argue that a comprehensive definition of well-being should encompass individuals' levels of satisfaction, their sense of purpose or meaning, and the degree of control they possess over their lives. In contrast, Seligman (2011) proposes a broader framework known as PERMA, which consists of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement to measure well-being.

For instance, Sisters may experience positive emotions when they feel fully supported and equipped to fulfil their assigned roles. Conversely, lack of cooperation from leadership

and peers can lead to dissatisfaction and hinder engagement and cordial relationships. The pursuit and attainment of spiritual growth can also contribute to the well-being of Sisters. However, when these predictors of well-being are unattainable, disaffiliation from the Order may become a viable option. The current study aims to assess the quality of life experienced by Sisters and Ex-Sisters using a self-developed questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2, Section 1, question 8 on quality of life).

Seligman (2011) further emphasises that quality of life is determined by the extent to which individuals experience positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (PERMA). He argues that individuals may experience a low quality of life when their living standards are poor and when they struggle to meet their basic needs.

Adikoeswanto et al. (2020) conducted a study measuring the quality of work life using predictors such as Employee Development, Participation, Compensation, Supervision, and Work Environment. Their analysis revealed significant effects of these predictors on Organisational Commitment, suggesting that when all these factors are present, individuals are likely to enjoy a decent quality of life. Conversely, a lack of any of these factors may result in lower organisational commitment. The current study employs a self-developed questionnaire to assess the quality of life of Sisters and Ex-Sisters, aiming to gauge their level of satisfaction and its potential impact on their well-being.

### **Counselling and Psychotherapy**

Several authors have sought to differentiate between counselling and psychotherapy. One such distinction, proposed by Sharf (2008), revolves around the severity of cases. Sharf argues that counselling is typically employed for mild to moderate issues, while

psychotherapy is reserved for individuals with more severe disturbances. Another delineation offered by Corsini (2005) pertains to the nature of the intervention. According to Corsini, counselling primarily involves providing information and education, whereas psychotherapy is more facilitative in nature. Additionally, Corsini suggests that counsellors predominantly work in schools or guidance clinics, whereas psychotherapists are typically found in hospital settings.

However, these differentiations are not without criticism. Firstly, practitioners often utilise similar interventions regardless of the severity of the case, suggesting that the classification based on severity may not always hold true. Furthermore, the distinction based on work setting is challenged by the reality that both counsellors and psychotherapists can be found working in a variety of settings, including hospitals and schools.

Corsini (2005) offers a comprehensive operational definition of counselling, describing it as a helping strategy involving active listening, paraphrasing, probing, and clarification to gather information and provide appropriate interventions. This process aims to facilitate integration and understanding of the individual and their environment, leading to behavioural change and decision-making skills development.

Recent study conducted by Jones (2023) provides an overview of counselling, focusing on key concepts and techniques. The article outlines the purpose of counselling as offering guidance, support, and practical solutions to individuals facing specific challenges. It emphasises the short-term and goal-oriented nature of counselling, typically lasting for a few weeks to several months. However, a limitation highlighted in the article is the potential lack of depth in addressing underlying psychological issues. This limitation may have implications

for Sisters seeking mental health support within the context of religious communities, as their unique challenges and psychological needs may require more extensive and nuanced therapeutic interventions beyond the scope of traditional counselling approaches

In contrast, Brent and Kolko (1998) define psychotherapy as a treatment aimed at alleviating the effects of psychopathological conditions and functional impairment through collaboration between therapist and client. This involves exploring the client's attitudes, thoughts, affect, and behaviour, as well as examining their social context and development. Adam and Agnieszka (2020) assert that psychotherapy enhances clients' sense of well-being, while Ofovwe (2011) highlights its role in improving psychological functioning and promoting adjustment to life.

Smith (2022) delves into the role of psychotherapy in mental health treatment, emphasising its focus on exploring deeper psychological issues. The article highlights psychotherapy's aim to uncover underlying patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaviour by delving into past experiences and emotional conflicts. It underscores the longer-term and more in-depth nature of psychotherapy compared to counselling. However, a potential limitation discussed is the extensive time and commitment required for psychotherapy, which may pose challenges for individuals with busy schedules or limited resources. This limitation could have implications for Sisters seeking mental health support within religious communities, as their commitments and lifestyle may make it challenging to engage in long-term psychotherapeutic interventions.

Counselling or psychotherapy provides valuable support for individuals experiencing distress, including Sisters in Religious Orders grappling with desolation and meaninglessness

in their spiritual journey. Sisters may seek counselling or psychotherapy for various reasons, such as anxiety, depression, feelings of disconnection from their social circles, or traumatic experiences. Additionally, negative thoughts and emotions, addiction issues, anger management problems, or bereavement can prompt Sisters to seek professional help (Feltham, 2002; Norcross & Lambert, 2018).

Numerous authors have investigated the positive effects of counselling and psychotherapy, emphasising the potential benefits of early intervention. For example, Hunsley et al. (2014) found that Sisters may feel more comfortable discussing their concerns with an external counsellor rather than an insider from their religious community, as this may alleviate fears of bias or victimisation. External professionals can provide a safe space for Sisters to express their feelings openly and without fear of repercussions.

However, various barriers prevent individuals, including Sisters, from accessing counselling and psychotherapy services. Coşan (2015) identifies several cultural and social factors prevalent in Turkish society that hinder help-seeking behaviour. For instance, there is a prevailing belief that family problems should remain within the family and not be discussed with outsiders, including counsellors or psychotherapists. This cultural norm perpetuates secrecy and prevents individuals from seeking the help they need to address familial issues effectively.

Furthermore, accessing counselling or psychotherapy may carry a social stigma in some communities, leading to labelling and discrimination against those who seek help for psychological issues. Coşan (2015) also highlights the concern about neighbours' perceptions, which can influence Sisters' decisions to avoid seeking help even when it is

urgently needed. The fear of being judged as abnormal or shameful for experiencing psychological problems may lead Sisters to hide their struggles and refrain from accessing support services.

### **Summary of the Predictors from the literature review (see Appendix 5.4)**

In summary, potential predictors contributing to Sisters' disaffiliation from religious Orders include *ambition (A)*, *parental approval (AP)*, *dissatisfaction (D)*, *discrimination (Dc)*, *daily disputes (Dd)*, *employment (E)*, *relationship experiences (R)*, *clashes of temperament (T)*, *leader superiority (Sl)*, *power struggles (Ps)*, *social class inequality (Sc)*, *submissive behavior (Sb)*, *education level (Le)*, *intention to marry (Mi)*, *corporal punishment (P)*, *neglect (N)*, *emotional tension (EiAP)*, *spiritual darkness (M)*, *loneliness (Ln)*, *stress (S)*, *self-control (Sc)*, and *resilience (R)*. *The Interconnected Dynamics of Choice, Community, and Meaning.*

Considering above insights, the review underscores the importance of understanding predictors and impacts of Sisters' disaffiliation, emphasising the role of religious communities in providing support, resources, and fostering understanding. Additionally, it calls for further research to deepen comprehension and effectively address the complexities of religious disaffiliation within caring contexts. By acknowledging emotional hurdles and facilitating healing among individuals experiencing disaffiliation, religious communities can better navigate transitions and uphold the well-being of their members.

The current study investigates the impact of and access to counselling among Sisters and Ex-Sisters regarding their decision to remain with or defect from the Order, utilising a self-developed questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2, Section M, Questions F & G). By



exploring these factors, the study aims to understand the role of counselling in the lives of Sisters and its potential implications for their affiliation with the Religious Order.

### 3.0 CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the research methods and methodology employed in the study. It begins by outlining the researcher's epistemological stance in relation to the debate on ontology and epistemology, rationale for the chosen research approach. Material selection, advantages and disadvantages of research designs, and discuss the validity of results. Additionally, it addresses sample size, sampling strategy, data analysis techniques, and concludes with ethical considerations and reflexivity.

#### **Epistemology and Ontology**

Aliyu, et al. (2015) argue that epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know; pointing out that the acquisition of knowledge is systematic with verifiable evidence, accurate and certain, and holds true for large groups of people. In support of the above, Ritchie et al. (2014) assert that knowledge can be best acquired through 'induction' and 'deduction'. They argue that 'induction' (*a posteriori* knowledge) is bottom-up knowledge acquisition and often leads to theories and laws' development. This type of knowledge is acquired through experience or empirical evidence.

In contrast, 'deduction' (*a priori* knowledge) is a top-down approach to knowledge. In this case, the starting point is a theory that leads to hypothesis generation which is either confirmed or rejected, thereby strengthening, or weakening the theory. This type of knowledge is not experienced-based. Researchers have advanced that a thorough study ought to adopt both inductive and deductive approaches. According to Blaikie (2007), there is no 'pure' induction or 'pure' deduction; arguing it is usually a mixture of both, whether the research is qualitative or quantitative in nature.

In attempting to address the ontological demarcation problem between science (representing what is true and false) and metaphysics (alternative view), Hansson (2017) highlights that scientific statements can be validated through experimentation, as outlined by the Vienna Circle's Logical Positivism, whereas metaphysical questions cannot be experimentally validated unless through induction. Conversely, Popper (1959) argues that human knowledge progresses through 'falsification', asserting that a theory should not be considered scientific unless it is capable of being proven false. Popper further contends that statements can only be utilised in scientific inquiry if they are susceptible to being disproven.

Throughout my spiritual journey, I encountered several obstacles, all of which I successfully overcame. Firstly, I faced the fear of the unknown, questioning my ability to navigate this spiritual journey and pondering what lay ahead. Secondly, I grappled with the challenges posed by the demands of religious life and contemplated how best to cope with them.

My faith in one God, spiritual life, and moral laws continues to guide me on my spiritual journey. Even in the face of failed ideas and experiments, my faith sustains me and drives my efforts to better myself. Peterson (2018) argues that denying God's existence and moral law leads to chaos and disasters. Relying on God for sustenance and finding meaning through daily reflection energizes me in responding to my religious calling.

However, I remain mindful of the diverse views and perspectives within the religious community. It is crucial for me to be respectful and avoid subjectivity, seeking to understand others' perspectives within the community.

According to Aliyu et al. (2015), ontology pertains to the form and nature of reality. Aliyu posits that an objective reality, with stable pre-existing patterns, is not bound by time or context and can be generalised. Additionally, Aliyu suggests that human beings are rational and influenced by internal and external factors. Furthermore, people engage in specific behaviours as conditions necessitate.

Considering the above, the author adopts a realist position and believes that individuals can make rational decisions, influenced by different circumstances or predictors that shape their behaviour. The author explores such predictors or circumstances capable of facilitating disaffiliation from a religious Order.

My epistemological stance can thus be described as realist. I believe that convent life reflects real experiences people encounter while interacting with others in the community.

### **Choice of Quantitative Method**

Following the above argument, the current research design adopts a quantitative, deductive approach. This entails the formulation of theories prior to data collection via questionnaires, enabling the author to verify or falsify hypotheses and draw conclusions.

The choice of a deductive approach is guided by the methodology literature review, which also explored alternative methodologies for verifying claims. Given my spiritual calling as a Sister and my strong belief in the existence of one God as the absolute truth, my selection of the quantitative method aligns with my faith with the onto-epistemological position as a realist. The choice of quantitative methods also help to reduce the potential bias of the subjective nature of the narrative literature review used in Chapter 2.

According to Field (2013), quantitative method employs numerical data to predict patterns and relationships between variables which could lead the researcher to generalise the findings of such study to a wider population. Corroborating the above statement, Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) argue that quantitative method is useful in generating cause-and-effect relationships, hypothesis testing, opinion and attitudes determination as well as predicting the practices of larger population. Arguing further these authors point out that quantitative method produces data that are factual and reliable which could be generalised to larger populations,

On the other hand, Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) posit that qualitative method is very useful for hypotheses and theories development and for process description. According to Verhoef and Casebeer (1997) qualitative method employs non-numerical data to predict patterns and relationships and could suffer from lack of generalisation (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The non-numerical data are usually in narrative form such as transcript and interview. The aim of qualitative research is to develop concepts that could clarify natural phenomena in their original setting. Although qualitative method produces valid, rich and detailed data, I argue that the results of such study are usually based on the views of the participants make the method subjective.

My choice of the quantitative research method is informed by many reasons which focus on some specific requirements particularly the research questions and objectives of my research. In the first place, quantitative method employs deductive principles and survey methods in its hypotheses testing (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019) and this will enable me to generalise my findings to other settings such as other parts of the world.

The ability of quantitative method to test hypotheses and explore the relationships between certain predictors makes the approach statistically elegant. This is quite appropriate for this research in the sense that it is capable of testing whether certain predictors are likely to influence disaffiliation.

Quantitative method allows objective measurement of predictors to be conducted. This would be achieved using a structured approach to collect and analyse survey responses from several participants. The issue of bias is eliminated when a large amount of data is analysed statistically. This implies that if several researchers run analysis on the data, they would all get the same results.

The use of questionnaire produces statistically elegant results which can be used to determine cause -and- effect relationships and make valid predictions. Apart from its cost benefits, the ability of quantitative method to deal with large samples cannot be overemphasised. The larger the sample size, the more statistically valid the results. Above all, quantitative method offers quick data collection process and the use of SPSS for data analysis is less time consuming.

According to Clark et al. (2021), while quantitative method is the use of specific technique to collect, analyse and interpret numerical data, quantitative methodology on the other hand is the framework that provides guidance for the study.

Field (2013) argues that quantitative methodology is concerned with how the research is designed, the theoretical frameworks behind the study, research questions, methods of sampling used, techniques for data collection, procedures for analysing the data, and the interpretation of the results.

In terms of research design, survey was used because it allowed me to generate large sample sizes which facilitated objective and generalisable results. A study of this nature requires robust theoretical framework. The theoretical framework allowed me to define and clarify key predictors and the relationships existing between them (Creswell, 2014). The theoretical frameworks also facilitated a critical review of the relevant literature, identifying gaps in knowledge, hypotheses formulation, logical approach to data collection and providing a lens for data analysis and interpretation.

Apart from defining my focus, the research questions determined my research design, hypothesis formulation, guided the data collection process, and provided the framework for data analysis and interpretation of the results.

The technique for my data collection was questionnaire. According to Creswell (2014), questionnaires allow researchers to gather information from many participants in a standardised and efficient manner. Apart from its standardised format and objectivity of the questionnaires, the participants were able to respond to the questions without revealing their identity and this enabled me to obtain honest and unbiased responses from the participants.

In terms of sampling, two methods of sampling were used. Census sampling was used to select the Sisters that were still in the Convent whilst snowball was used to recruit the ex-Sisters. Apart from the complete coverage of the population, the census system of sampling provides high level of precision and eliminates sampling error often observed in most sampling methods. On the other hand, the snowball sampling enabled me to select a small number of Sisters initially before additional sisters were recruited through referrals from the

initial participants. This sampling method offered me the opportunity to access hidden or hard-to-reach individuals, in addition to the cost effectiveness of the system.

SPSS was used for the data analysis. This software provided me with detailed statistical tools which allowed me to examine data from different angles (Hair, 2021). In addition, it offers the process for descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and regression analysis. Besides, this Statistical Package provides me with the features to import, organise, clean and transform the research data. The strength of the SPSS lies in its graphical and visualisation capabilities which allowed me to represent the data in a clear and concise manner, which aided me in interpreting and communicating my research findings. Understanding of the research question provides context for interpreting the results (Hair et al., 2019). The descriptive statistics allowed me to identify trends and distributions within the predictors, whilst the hypothesis testing determined if the results supported or refuted the expected outcomes. Apart from the sources of bias that may have affected the interpretation, the results of my findings were compared with existing literature.

## **Research Design**

This study employs a single-wave survey with a cross-sectional design, as described by Field (2010). The data were gathered from Sisters belonging to various religious orders residing in England and Ireland.

## **Sampling**

To explore the convent life experiences of Sisters and Ex-sisters, questionnaires were distributed to 300 participants residing in the UK, recruited for the study, of which 259 participated (consisting of 192 active Sisters and 67 Ex-sisters). The choice of



300 participants aimed to ensure a high response rate. Field (2010) notes that while no survey can produce a result that is precisely correct, each study aims to achieve an acceptable degree of accuracy. This degree of acceptable accuracy can be achieved through a high number of participants, which is likely to yield a high degree of acceptable accuracy. They explain that there is likely to be a margin of error around any figure produced, referred to as the "Confidence Interval" thus, the higher the confidence interval, the higher the degree of acceptable accuracy.

This study utilised a voluntary census survey, offering the unique opportunity to select participants from the entire population. This method fosters an increased confidence interval due to the substantial number of participants. Additionally, it allows the researcher to collect relevant demographic information.

The population size consists of 259 individuals, comprising Sisters and Ex-Sisters from various Catholic religious Orders in the UK. Questionnaires were distributed to Catholic Convents, and interested participants responded. Every individual had an equal opportunity to respond, with no limitations based on age group or year of profession within the religious Order.

The inclusion of both active Sisters and Ex-Sisters aims to predict factors that may influence Sisters to leave the Order.

### **How the Ex-Sisters were recruited for participation**

Snowball sampling was employed in the study to collect data from the Ex-Sisters due to the difficulty in finding participants. Initially, only about 30 participants were identified. Snowball sampling involves identifying potential participants in the population and asking

them to encourage others to participate. Through this method, the number of participants increased to 67.

Ethically, the researcher did not ask the initial participants to identify other potential participants but politely requested them to encourage others to come forward. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to identify more Ex-Sisters, who were subsequently introduced by participants already met.

The advantage of this technique lies in participants' ability to encourage others to participate by explaining the benefits and assuring confidentiality. However, a significant disadvantage is that the results from such a sample cannot be generalised due to the small sample size and the non-random selection process. Additionally, there may be a risk of bias as participants may refer others who share similar characteristics or experiences, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives. Nonetheless, the sample was drawn from a population of Sisters and ex-Sisters from different Orders in the UK.

Please see the Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet provided in Appendices 2 for further details on the study's ethical considerations and participant information.

### **Questionnaire Design**

Data were collected using a questionnaire to describe characteristics existing in a community. The development of the questionnaire considered the study's purpose, theoretical perspectives, and research questions. Grix (2018) argues that in much students research, the theoretical section does not align with the actual research conducted.

A survey was chosen as the approach for this study. This decision was informed by its ability to collect data and describe naturally occurring phenomena in the real world (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Surveys also offer researchers the opportunity to gather a significant amount of information quickly and easily administer it. Coolican (2009) notes that surveys focus on obtaining individuals' opinions to describe naturally occurring phenomena. Additionally, surveys are valuable for collecting demographic information and information on individual experiences (Coon & Mitterer, 2010).

Nicholas (2008) argues that the reliability of surveys enables the results to be generalised to a larger population. Moreover, participants may choose to remain anonymous, making surveys cost-effective compared to other primary data collection methods. However, potential drawbacks include the risk of untruthful responses from participants, issues with validity, differing interpretations of questions by participants, and difficulty in conveying feelings and emotions.

The importance of ethical considerations in quantitative research cannot be overstated, as informed consent is obtained from participants before distributing questionnaires. Additionally, collected information is kept confidential, and no harm is done to participants. For further details on ethical issues, please refer to the section on "Ethical Considerations."

The nature of the study aligns with the use of quantitative methodology. It aims to address the declining number of Sisters in religious Orders by establishing the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

## **The instrument for Data Collection**

### ***Procedure***

Questionnaires were utilised to collect data from participants. Due to COVID-19, the annual meetings in different dioceses occurred on various dates. I visited different dioceses during their meetings to inform them about my research and seek their consent for participation. During the meetings, it was agreed that the questionnaires would be sent to them using the diocesan directory, which contains the addresses of all the Sisters. Distributing questionnaires directly to participants at religious meetings does not pose ethical issues for the researcher.

Questionnaires were individually sent to 300 participants, including both active Sisters and Ex-Sisters, with a two-week timeline for completion. Along with the questionnaires, a cover letter, information sheet, consent form, and debriefing sheet were included in the envelope. Each participant also received a self-addressed envelope with the researcher's mailing address to return the completed questionnaires, ensuring confidentiality.

The views of the Ex-Sisters were explored through snowball sampling. Questionnaires were circulated to Ex-Sisters as part of this process. The collected questionnaires were analysed to investigate the reasons for disaffiliation. The gathered information shed light on convent life experiences, including how meanings are constructed by individuals within their social and personal worlds (Denzin, 1995). Including Sisters in active service in the study aimed to explore current life experiences in the convent.

| Standardised questions, already approved by statutory bodies, were utilised for the study. The questionnaire examined 22 different predictors (independent variables) that

have the potential to contribute to disaffiliation from the Order. Participants were required to respond, indicating their degree of agreement with various statements contained in the questionnaire.

The questions developed by the author in the "M" section of the questionnaire were used to explore the extent to which the identified predictors could trigger disaffiliation and the reasons some Sisters have left the Order. For example, one question asked if participants would have stayed if counselling were available.

## Scales

For ease of operationalisation, a table with three columns was created. The first column represents the factor symbols (i.e., variable symbols), while the second column contains the variable names. In the third column, the type of measurement scale that could be used to operationalize each factor or set of predictors was specified, as in table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1:**

*Description of variables*

Variable symbols	Variable name	Measurement Scale
S <sub>b</sub> , A <sub>i</sub> , S <sub>i</sub>	Submissive behaviour, authoritarian leadership, social inequality	Submissive Behaviour Scale
L <sub>n</sub> , S <sub>i</sub> , T, S, N, D <sub>c</sub>	Subjective feelings of loneliness, feelings of social isolation, inequality, temperament, stress, neglect, and discrimination	Loneliness Scale designed

N	Neglect	Relationship Scale questionnaire
D, S, M, S <sub>i</sub> , R, E <sub>p</sub> , D <sub>d</sub>	Dissatisfaction/Satisfaction, stress, meaning, social inequality, relationship, peer encouragement, dispute	The Patient Health Question-9 (PHQ-9)
S, R, S <sub>i</sub>	Stress, relationship, social inequality	The Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 –item (GAD-7)
S <sub>c</sub> , P	Self-control, punishment	Rotter's Locus of Control Scale
D,	Satisfaction (motivation) and dissatisfaction	The F-Scale
R <sub>s</sub>	Resilience	The Brief Resilience Scale

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*Note.* This table shows the variables and the measurement scales.

The Submissive Behaviour Scale, consisting of 16 examples of submissive behaviour designed by Gilbert and Allan (1994), was employed to evaluate how the Sisters submit to their legitimate authority or their counterparts (Allan & Gilbert, 1997). The Loneliness Scale developed by Russell (2010) at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) was used to measure the subjective feelings of loneliness among the Sisters in the Convent. Additionally, the relationship between the Sisters and their Superiors was assessed using Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994) scale to establish the Sisters' level of freedom.

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), designed by Kroenke et al. (2001), was utilised to measure the level of depression experienced by the participants.

Furthermore, the stress level experienced by the participants was measured using the Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) Scale developed by Spitzer et al. (2006) to evaluate the impact of stress on their work, daily routine tasks, and interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, Rotter's Locus of Control Scale by Phares and Rotter (1956) was employed to measure the level of control participants have over the outcome of events in their lives, as opposed to the influence of external factors beyond their control. This tool was useful in establishing the personality of the Sisters, which could have influenced their judgment about their experiences in the Order.

The authoritarian leadership style of the Superiors was measured using the F-Scale designed by Ray (1972). This tool could also establish the personality of the Sisters.

Additionally, the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by Smith et al. (2008) was used to measure the resilience of the Sisters in terms of their perseverance in difficult situations.

Lastly, the PANAS scale by Watson et al. (1988) was employed to investigate how the Sisters feel now (see Appendix 2).

This study employs a quantitative method of data collection using a single-wave survey with a cross-sectional design panel (Field, 2013). Two groups of participants were included, both of which were given the same set of questionnaires. They were identified by

their different responses to the question in Session M ("How likely do you think you will leave the Order within the next 12 months?"). The predictors in the questionnaire are the variables that predict the outcome that Sisters might experience disaffiliation. Several predictors would be evaluated against disaffiliation using a logistic regression design.

Data were collected from 192 Sisters from different religious orders in the UK and at least 67 Ex-Sisters, establishing life outside of the Order, totalling 259 participants.

Disaffiliation was measured by asking the participants (Sisters and Ex-Sisters) about their likelihood of leaving on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating those who have already left the Order. Session N included questions meant to establish the reasons why they left the Order.

To determine the reasons active Sisters may wish to leave the convent, a set of questions would be added to the standardised questionnaire. This set would include a mixture of predictors capable of validating the factors identified in the literature review. Participants would be asked about their likelihood of leaving the Order on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5 (1= Very unlikely; ... 5= Very likely).

For simplicity, the followings assumptions were made regarding the dependent and independent variables:

The dependent variable is the likelihood of Sisters' retention in the Order ( $W_{SR}$ ). This implies that  $W_{SR}$  = represents the likelihood that Sisters would remain in the Order despite the challenges.



The independent variables are the predictors which trigger Sisters to disaffiliate from the Order or congregation.

Let the independent variables be represented by:

A = Ambition of Sisters

A<sub>1</sub> (F) = Authoritarian Leadership (measured by F scale)

A<sub>p</sub> = Approval by Sisters' parents

D = Dissatisfaction

D<sub>c</sub> = Discrimination

D<sub>d</sub> = Dispute (daily)

E = Employment

E<sub>d</sub> = Educational level

E<sub>p</sub> = Peer encouragement

M = Meaning

M<sub>i</sub> = Intention to Marry

N = Neglect

L<sub>n</sub> = Loneliness

P = Punishment

P<sub>s</sub> = Power Struggle

T = Temperament

S = Stress

S<sub>b</sub> = Submissive behaviour of the Sisters

S<sub>c</sub> = Self-control

S<sub>e</sub> = Social equality

R = Relationship

R<sub>s</sub> = Resilience

The intention is to establish the relationship that exists between varied predictors identified from the literature and the likelihood that Sisters would remain in the Order, represented as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} W_{SR} = & aA + bA_l + cAp + dD + eDc + fDd + gE + hE d + iEp + jM \\ & + kM_i + lN + mL_n + nP + oP_s + pT + qS + rS_b + sS_c + tSi + uR + vR_s \end{aligned}$$

Where a, b,... v are coefficients;  $\varepsilon$  is random error

## Hypothesis Testing

To validate the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, both the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and the Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) will be framed simultaneously. The Null Hypothesis assumes that the results are not significantly different from what would occur by chance alone (initially accepted as true), while any Alternative Hypothesis would be assumed to be false unless there is sufficient evidence from the results indicating otherwise. In psychology, the confidence level is typically set at 95%, above which the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

***First Hypothesis:*** Negative emotions experienced by Sisters are likely to lead to a significant increase in disaffiliation from the Order compared to remaining with the Order.

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There are no differences between the Sisters who remain and those who left in terms of the negative emotions they experienced.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** Negative emotions experienced by Sisters who left are higher than those who remain.

***Second Hypothesis:*** Poor quality of life experienced by the Sisters is likely to trigger disaffiliation.

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** Good quality of life experienced by the Sisters who left is not different from those who remain.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a difference between the Sisters who remain and those who left in terms of quality of life

## **Independent Sample T-test**

In addition, we hypothesize that Sisters who remain in their order will achieve higher scores on all survey responses in section N (refer to Appendix 2) compared to those who depart. Field (2010) suggests that an independent sample T-test would be useful for comparing the means of the two groups: the responses of the Sisters who remain in their Order and the scores of the Ex-Sisters concerning the likelihood of these predictors triggering disaffiliation.

## **Operationalisation**

Binary logistic regression served as a tool for predicting whether events would occur or not across various types of variables, including continuous, discrete, and dichotomous ones (Field, 2010; Hair et al., 2009). A comprehensive analysis of binary logistic regression and its merits had been previously presented.

## **Validation of the Questionnaire**

In quantitative research, it is recommended that the questionnaire undergoes both face and content validity assessments. McBurney (1994) argues that face validity refers to the test's ability to empirically evaluate what it intends to measure, while content validity assesses whether the range of behaviours in the questionnaire accurately represents the theoretical concept being studied.

Since some of the questionnaires have already been standardised, there may be no need to conduct additional validation on them. However, a test-retest was performed to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaires.

## **Randomisation and Reversed questions on questionnaires**

According to Field (2010) the wording and structure of survey questions can significantly influence responses. Additionally, the order in which questions are presented can also impact survey outcomes. The "order-effect" occurs when participants' responses are influenced by the sequence of questions in a survey.

To mitigate the order-effect, the questions will be randomised to minimise its influence. Randomizing the question order aims to address biases such as Primacy and Recency Effects. The Primacy Effect refers to the tendency for items presented first to be selected, while the Recency Effect occurs when items presented last are more likely to be chosen or rated higher.

Randomisation is effective in correcting Primacy and Recency Effects, especially in answer scales where participants may consistently respond in a certain pattern. By mixing up the order of questions, researchers can reduce the impact of such biases and obtain more accurate responses.

## **Reversed Questions**

To measure self-control (Sc), the standardised questionnaire in Section G (consisting of two columns – A & B) assigned binary numbers, 0 and 1, to negative and positive questions, respectively. Thus, negatives are represented by Column A (G1, G2, G3, G7, and G8) and Column B (G4, G5, G6, G9, and G10). Conversely, positives consist of Column A (G4, G5, G6, G9, and G10) and Column B (G1, G2, G3, G7, and G8). (See Appendix 2 Section G)

Section I's standardised questionnaire questions depict the level of resilience (R) of the participants. The normal range (1 to 5) of the questions in this Section was reversed. (See Appendix 2 Section I)

For Section J (with 'Yes' and 'No' options), binary numbers, 0 and 1, were assigned to negatives and positives, respectively. Thus, negatives are represented by Column 'Yes' (J2, J4, J7, J9, J10, J12, and J13) and Column 'No' (J1, J3, J5, J6, J8, and J11). Positives consist of Column 'Yes' (J1, J3, J5, J6, J8, and J11) and Column 'No' (J2, J4, J7, J9, J10, J12, and J13). The 'Yes' reveals an elevated level of existential anxiety (Ax) in the participants, while the 'No' indicates low-level existential anxiety.

The standardised questionnaire in Section K ranges from 1 to 7 (with 1- Absolutely untrue and 7 – Absolutely true). The questions fall into two categories – the scoring sheet on 'Presence of God' and the 'Search for meaning' (M). K1, K4, K5, K6, and K9 are reverse coded for 'Presence of God', whereas K2, K3, K7, K8, and K10 are not reversed for 'Search for meaning'. To determine if the Sisters have found meaning (Presence of God) in the life they have chosen or if they are still searching for meaning, all the scores for the Presence of God and the scores for the Search for meaning were added together separately.

Section L's standardised questionnaire describes the positive and negative emotions of the participants. All the positives (L1, L3, L5, L9, L10, L14, L16, L17, and L19) and all the negatives (L2, L4, L6, L7, L8, L11, L12, L13, L15, L18, and L20) were added separately to determine the direction of the mood (positive or negative) of the participants in relation to disaffiliation. In other words, positive affect is likely to encourage the individual to remain while the negative will trigger disaffiliation from the Order.

### **Pilot Testing of the Instrument**

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity of the questionnaires employed for the study. The 18 participants comprising Sisters and Ex-Sisters, took part in the pilot study.

### **Test-retest Reliability**

A pilot study was carried out to assess the reliability of the questionnaires by measuring all variables at two different time points, administering the same set of questionnaires to the sample participants two weeks apart. Correlation analyses were conducted to compare the results. As expected, the results were found to be significantly correlated, with correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) ranging from 0.60 to 1 (mean  $r = 0.821$ ), indicating high consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items. The only exception was the Item on Existential Anxiety (Ax), which was only significant with Kendall's tau<sub>b</sub> ( $\tau_b = 0.46$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This necessitates further investigation, as there could be various factors at play, such as coding errors or participants changing their responses (see Appendix 4.3).

### **How the Research Aims, and Questions were Analysed**

The survey data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25) predictive analytics software to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables through logistic regression. The analyses were tailored to address the five sub-questions.

Firstly, the analysis explored the intention to leave by examining how predictors influence this intention and the strength of their effects using logistic regression.

Secondly, logistic regression analysis was employed to answer the second research question, focusing on determining factors that influence the intention to remain within the religious order.

Next, logistic regression analysis was utilised to determine the predictors that influence the well-being of the Sisters. Data from various predictors in Appendix 2, such as quality of life, neglect, Positive and Negative affectivity, etc., collected using validated questionnaires, were used to ascertain the occurrence and non-occurrence of disaffiliation among the Sisters.

Finally, a T-test was conducted to establish differences in the well-being of Sisters within the Order and Ex-Sisters.

### **General Assumptions**

In this section, the author examines the assumptions related to the analysis. Two key assumptions were considered – the Binary Logistic Regression Assumption and the T-Test Assumption. According to Field (2010), logistic regression shares some of the assumptions of normal regression.

### **Assumption of the Logistic Regression**

According to Field (2010), logistic regression can be used to estimate the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables, but it is used to make predictions about discrete data types rather than continuous ones. Discrete data can be true or false, yes or no, 1 or 0, etc.

### ***The major assumptions are:***

That the outcome value must be discrete, otherwise explained as, it should be dichotomous in nature (e.g., presence vs. absent).



Field (2010) posits that there should be no significant outliers in the data because any significant outlier will reduce the predictive accuracy of the results and statistical significance. This can be assessed using Cook's Distance.

Additionally, there should be no high inter-correlations (multicollinearity) among the predictors. This can be assessed by a correlation matrix among the predictors. Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) suggest that if the correlation coefficients among the independent variables are less than 0.90, the assumption is met. The assumption of no multicollinearity in the data, meaning two or more exploratory variables should not correlate with each other, was also checked employing Tolerance and VIF statistics as well as Durbin-Watson statistics. According to this assumption, if the predictors are highly correlated, it will be difficult to determine the best predictor that explains any shared variance with the outcome. Thus, logistic regression allows the researcher to predict an outcome based on data from exploratory variables.

Furthermore, there should be a linear relationship between the odds ratio or  $EXP(B)$  and each independent variable. Linearity with an ordinal or interval independent variable and the odds ratio can be checked by creating a new variable that divides the existing independent variable into categories of equal intervals and running the same regression on these newly categorised versions as categorical variables. Linearity is demonstrated if the beta coefficients increase or decrease in linear steps (Garson, 2009).

Logistic regression requires an adequate sample to represent values across all response categories. Without a larger, representative sample, the model may not have sufficient statistical power to detect a significant effect. A larger sample is recommended in

fitting with the maximum likelihood method; using discrete variables requires that there are enough responses in each category.

### **Assumptions Related to a T-Test**

The following five assumptions are necessary for a T-Test to be met:

- 1) The data must be continuous or ordinal.
- 2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> assumption recommends that the data collected must be a good representation of the total population.
- 3) The data must be normally distributed.
- 4) The data must exhibit a normal bell-shaped curve when plotted.
- 5) The variance must be equal (i.e., homogeneity of variance), meaning the standard deviations of samples will be relatively equal.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted following the guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS), as outlined by Oates et al. (2021), and adhered to the ethics standards of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and Middlesex University Ethics. Approval from the school board was obtained on 10th March 2020 after undergoing the Ethics application process.

In accordance with the BPS guidance, participants were provided with comprehensive information about the research in a clear and understandable manner. This included details about the types of data being collected, the methods of data collection, and the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity associated with the data. Participants were informed about any

exceptions to confidentiality, such as potential disclosures, and were given the opportunity to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without facing adverse consequences. They were also informed about their right to request the destruction of their data up to a specified date.

Data collection and handling procedures complied with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act. Participants were informed about the time commitment expected from them and were assured that their identities would remain anonymous, with only allocated ID numbers used for data records.

Provisions were made for individuals who wished to raise concerns about the research process. Contact details for the author and supervisor were provided for inquiries, and the supervisor's role included addressing any unresolved issues. Information about insurance indemnity for the research was also included in the provided details.

The information sheet provided to participants explained how the collected data would be used, the expected outcomes of the research, and the potential benefits. Participants were informed about how the research results would be made available to them.

## **Questionnaires & Ethics**

Devlin (2020) argues that questionnaire ethics begin with design. In line with this argument, the author has clearly and objectively formulated the research questions. To avoid leading questions that may result in inadequate responses, a standardised set of questionnaires was used (see Appendix 2). Care was taken to ensure that the surveys did not include any hypothetical questions that could potentially embarrass participants. Other ethical

considerations regarding the use of questionnaires were also considered. For example, the author considered whether all potential participants would understand the questionnaire and how much time they would spend completing it. Addressing these issues improves response rates and data quality for the research.

Blair et al. (2013) suggest that participation in questionnaire-based research should be voluntary. To ensure voluntary participation, each participant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A) containing all necessary information about the study. Confidentiality issues were addressed, and all participants were fully informed before signing the consent form (see Appendix 2) and completing the survey. The researcher also ensured that individuals could opt out if they chose to do so.

In accordance with the recommendations of the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Research Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained, especially considering the sensitive nature of some questions in the survey (Israel, 2014). Information sharing with participants was limited, and procedures were implemented to protect the data and identities of participants. Additionally, the author refrained from discussing the data with friends or family members, regardless of how interesting the results may have been. Furthermore, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, access to the data and any identifying information was restricted to research personnel only, and access was limited to what was necessary for the project.

Aday and Cornelius (2011) assert that questionnaire-based research may increase anxiety levels and create unrealistic positive expectations for some participants. Therefore, ethical research necessitates a debriefing session to address participant questions prompted by

the questionnaire or to provide support for anyone negatively impacted by participation. To address this issue, the researcher included her mobile phone number on the information sheet to enable participants to contact her with any concerns.

The researcher also considered her own bias and the inherent bias of being part of the Sisters being researched by implementing the following measures: Stratified questionnaires were used to address researcher bias. The dependent and independent variables were not manipulated, and participant responses were recorded as they appeared on the questionnaires. Additionally, the results were not focused on any specific religious Order to make it difficult to differentiate between Orders and their results. The researcher documented the findings even if the results revealed structural problems. Resources were not shared with the Mother Superior or any members of the religious community until the study was completed to avoid breaching confidentiality rules.

Furthermore, the fact that the researcher's Order is sponsoring the research does not imply that it will influence the outcome in any form. The researcher remained an independent researcher and observed protocols regarding confidentiality. Despite having personal stories regarding difficulties experienced by some Sisters who remain with the Order and Ex-Sisters, the researcher reminded herself of her biases and ensured that her emotions did not influence the results, strictly following ethical guidelines.

### **Coding and Data Transformation**

The coding process involves inputting the data, deleting missing data from participants, reversing some scores (following the standardised questionnaire designed by the

author), averaging any missing data to obtain the total response of each participant, and calculating the total scores of each predictor for the participants.

Inputting the data entails assigning an Identification Number (ID) to each questionnaire. An Excel sheet corresponding to the IDs was created, and responses from individuals were coded accordingly. After coding, 41 out of 300 participants who did not return their questionnaires were removed. It's essential to emphasize that the coding was double-checked for accuracy before transforming the database. Finally, the totals of all predictors for the participants' responses were exported to SPSS for analysis. Details of the treatment of missing data, reversed scores, and averaging are provided in the analysis section.

The statistical software used was SPSS (IBM Statistics, Version 25), specifically for SPSS Binary Logistic regression.

### **Binary Logistic Regression**

Binary Logistic regression (an alternative to linear regression) is best suited for predicting the occurrence or non-occurrence of an event for continuous, discrete, and dichotomous variables (Field, 2010; Hair et al., 2009). A dichotomous variable takes on two possible values. For example, when considering sex or gender, it could be male or female. Applied to this study, the outcome of the likelihood of Sisters Remaining would be either remaining (1) or becoming Ex-Sisters (0). These are binary values of the dichotomous variables.

According to Ranganathan et al. (2017), logistic regression utilises SPSS to create a contingency table for the outcomes with observed and predicted values like chi-square.

George and Mallery (2010) argue that the probability of a case could be classified into one of the outcomes based on the regression equation by comparing the predicted with the observed values.

To determine the accuracy of the model, Long (1997) asserts that classification tables are created, indicating the extent to which the model predicts the possible values of the outcome variable by specifying the overall classification percentage.

Binary Logistic regression (BLR) is an algorithmic model that classifies the probability of success or failure of an event. It is called “Binary” because the dependent variable can take on two values (i.e., 0/1, True/False, Yes/No). The advantages of Binary Logistic Regression include categorising data into discrete classes and establishing relationships among a given data set. It establishes a linear relationship from a given set of data together with a non-linear sigmoid function. Besides the above advantage, the choice of the BLR was informed by the fact that it is easy to implement and interpret. The major use of this model is that it can easily be extended to multiple classes (multinomial regression).

The other advantage is that it provides the coefficient size and the direction of the association (whether positive or negative) of the dependent variable with the predictors. Put differently, if the coefficient size is positive, it indicates the likelihood of the event occurring; whereas, if the coefficient size is negative, it decreases the probability of occurrence. It sums up that the BLR is endowed with the ability to interpret the model coefficients to indicate the likelihood of events occurring or not occurring in the future, and the predicted parameters can infer the importance of each feature.

In terms of accuracy, BLR produces more accurate results than Multiple Linear Regression because BLR gives two outcomes whereas linear or multiple regression gives a range of values. BLR uses precision, whereas linear regression uses the root-mean-square error. BLR is more suitable for classification tasks than linear regression.

### **Researcher Reflexivity**

According to Malterud (2001), reflexivity pertains to how a researcher's background and position influence what they investigate, the methods most suitable for the investigation, the findings, and the conclusions. Malterud also suggests that the same study could be conducted differently by different researchers.

Yardley (2017) views reflexivity as how the researcher impacts the research process. Even though this research study is quantitative, my beliefs and assumptions might still influence what and how the data were collected and the interpretation of the analysed results. In my capacity as a Sister, I chose the research topic but made efforts not to influence the participants' responses or analyse and interpret the results as objectively as possible.

I have made the decision to stay with the religious Order based on my faith and commitment to the religious calling I have chosen. I also accept other people's choices to leave or stay in the Order. I strived to be objective in understanding other people's choices.

It was recognised that people grew up in diverse cultures where they were encouraged to be independent, whereas religious life teaches individuals to tolerate and forgive others. In my research methodology, efforts were made to address these dynamics. Scientists (Lanier, 1994; Mawson, 2012) argue that God does not exist but believe that existence started because of the process of causality. They propose that life started from the big bangs, which set in



motion the movement of other matter, so even one's body and mental health are determined by causality. I hold the view that everything is not just about causality; people could still find meaning in the events of their lives. Those who hold contrary views that events occur at random or by chance would not be criticised because they have the right to their opinions and belief systems. Such arguments enable me to see the world from different perspectives. I would not criticise those who believe that things happen coincidentally, even though I believe in God, or dismiss things as meaningless because they do not appeal to me.

Although I believe in God's Will as often expressed in the things that happen in the world, I chose to use a statistical model which attributes things to chance.

The model adopted in the study is underpinned by causality (i.e., the predictors responsible for disaffiliation), but I know that life is more complicated than the issue of causality as individuals have the right to make their choices to leave or stay despite the internal and external conflicts they experience. People might choose to live in the religious community despite the challenges because of the reward hereafter.

The choice of the quantitative methodology is also informed by the fact that most of the Sisters have used a qualitative approach in their work, which could not be generalised to other religious congregations. The sponsors of this research, The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, emphasized that they would not fund the thesis unless it is something unique and different from what other members of the Order have done.

Quantitative methodology recognises the amount of influence the researcher could have on the research process. Reflexivity in terms of methodology helped me to recognise my

biases and prior assumptions to be transparent and objective in my research process in order not to influence it with my subjective experiences.

To avoid any form of subjectivity or biases, a pilot study was conducted to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaires and never allowed my previous knowledge to impact the study design or the whole process. Further, to avoid biases in sampling, the questionnaires were distributed in different Orders, which helped me not to focus on the experience from my Order alone. Biases were also avoided by not sharing the findings of the study with anybody, particularly the members of my Order, so that they would not influence the result.

It was important for me to deal with my reflexivity sufficiently throughout the process to avoid all forms of biases and assumptions. From the onset, I started keeping a reflective journal of how the process influenced me, both as a researcher and as a Sister. The result of the pilot study was reliable and valid because the items in the questionnaires tested what they were meant to test (i.e., the predictors that are likely to trigger disaffiliation) and, they measured what they were meant to measure.

Initially, I proposed to use the Mixed Method which the school objected to because of the time factor, and I was then left with Quantitative Method as the only option. In terms of the analysis, I used Multiple Linear Regression but after a review of the work by the Middlesex University panel, they suggested that I should use Logistic regression. Employing all these changes has enabled me to avoid the biases that might have influenced the study.

## **4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSES AND RESULTS**

This chapter presents the data analysis results and the summary findings of the research. The descriptive statistics include the independent variables (i.e., the predictors) and dependent variables (i.e., the likelihood of Sisters remaining in the convent, "Lsr"). The analysis involves several processes. Firstly, binary Logistic regression was conducted on all the questionnaires to determine the significant predictors with a significance level less than 0.05. Secondly, an analysis of the results of the binary Logistic regression was conducted. Thirdly, a T-test was carried out to ascertain if there were any significant differences in mean between the Ex-Sisters and the Sisters in the predictors that trigger disaffiliation. The research findings are summarised in Chapter Four.

A total of 259 responses were received from the targeted 300 potential participants. This represents over an 86% response rate, which is considered good (i.e.,  $86\% = (259 / 300) \times 100\%$ ). The data gathered from the survey responses were analysed using Statistical software for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25 (IBM Corp, 2019). Before this, the data had to be prepared for analysis using a systematic way of data cleaning to deal with the missing data known as the 'Decision Tree' (Hair et al., 2009). The four steps involved in the decision tree method include determining the type of missing data, the extent of the missing data, assessing the randomness of the missing data process, and selecting the imputation method.

## **Steps for Cleaning Data**

### ***Determining the type of missing data***

To identify the type of missing data, we thoroughly examined the dataset and conducted data cleaning procedures. Upon inspection, we discovered missing data in the Excel Sheet (refer to Data 3 Reversed Score in Appendix 4.4). Specifically, Row 56 contained two missing numbers in Columns 18 and 19, Row 58 had three missing numbers in Columns 18, 19, and 20, Row 59 exhibited two missing numbers in Columns 18 and 19, and Row 60 displayed three missing numbers in Columns 18, 19, and 20. Altogether, there were 10 instances of missing data.

Despite the relatively small amount of missing data, we made the decision not to disregard it. This choice stemmed from our desire to maintain the integrity of the large sample size. Deleting the missing data would have resulted in the exclusion of responses from four participants (i.e., Rows 56, 58, 59, & 60). Importantly, the presence of a few missing responses in one section should not warrant the exclusion of all participant responses. Additionally, we refrained from deleting the missing data to ensure that no participant responses were overlooked during the analysis.

### ***Determining the extent of the missing data***

Missing data often affect the result of the analysis especially when it is of high percentage. An evaluation of the missing data in the data reveals that it is low enough to be ignored given it is about 0.015%. The formula to calculate the percentage of missing values in

a dataset is: Percentage of missing values = (Number of missing values / Total number of

values) \* 100. The number of missing values is the count of values that are null, blank, otherwise undefined in the dataset.

### ***Assessing the Randomness of the Missing Data Process***

Each participant faced the possibility (i.e., degree of randomness) of missing certain questions. This occurrence might arise if a question was perceived as intrusive or challenging to comprehend, leading participants to skip it unintentionally. It could be argued that the missing data in this study were non-random but occurred inadvertently. Upon examination, it was observed that the questions were neither intrusive nor overly complex. Indeed, the few missed questions would likely have minimal impact on the analysis and can therefore be disregarded.

### ***The imputation Method***

To compute the replacement or substitution values for the missing data, the mean, mode, or median of the row is calculated and imputed as the value for a specific data item where the response is missing or unusable. In this study, the mean or average of the row was used to replace the missing data. The advantage of the mean substitution method lies in its simplicity of implementation, as well as its ability to maintain strong relationships among variables while providing complete information for all cases. However, the mean substitution method does come with its drawbacks. These include variance reduction in the distribution, distortion of the data distribution, and depression of the observed correlations (Field, 2010). Given the low number of missing data in the study, these disadvantages were not evident in the analysis.

### ***Checking Obvious Mistakes***

The data was checked for obvious errors, and none were found across all the variables.

### ***Detecting and Handling Outliers***

The outliers were checked, and many were found. Outliers could occur because of mistakes in coding, extraordinary events, or unique observations across the variables. In these instances, outliers could alter the patterns of the results if they are retained (Hair et al., 2009).

The "multivariate detection technique" was considered for eliminating the outliers, given that many variables participate in the analysis (Field, 2010). Unlike missing data, the outliers were not removed because their presence would not significantly affect the generalisability of the sample. The problem with outliers is that they skew the data and violate the assumptions of binary logistic regression. Outliers may be retained but will be adjusted if they lead to violations of the assumptions of binary logistic regression.

### ***Statistical Methods Used***

According to Hair et al. (2009) the beauty of Binary Logistic regression (BLR) is that it allows the researcher to include all potentially important predictors in a model.

### **Descriptive Statistics Frequency Distribution**

In this section, a complete set of statistical tables, plots, and variable definitions is included in Appendix 4.1. According to Hair et al. (2009) and Field (2010), the purpose of descriptive statistics is to offer an opportunity to understand what the data looks like and to

understand the predictors involved in the study before conducting any further analysis (Lakshmi, 2021). In line with these arguments, the data was examined to check whether it meets the assumptions of the statistical tools required for the analysis. The statistics used include mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ), skewness ( $\gamma$ ), and kurtosis ( $\kappa$ ). These tools helped facilitate a better understanding of the data (Hair, 2021).

First, the variables are explored with descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis, minimum, and maximum).

The study consists of a sample of 259 participants (n). The histograms were automatically generated using IBM Corp (2019) SPSS (IBM Statistics Version 25) predictive analytics software.

As seen from the frequency distribution of those variables in Appendix 4.1, not all variables are normally distributed. We focused on those that are normally distributed, as shown below:

The age of participants shows the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{X} = 46$ ,  $\sigma = 1.50$ ).

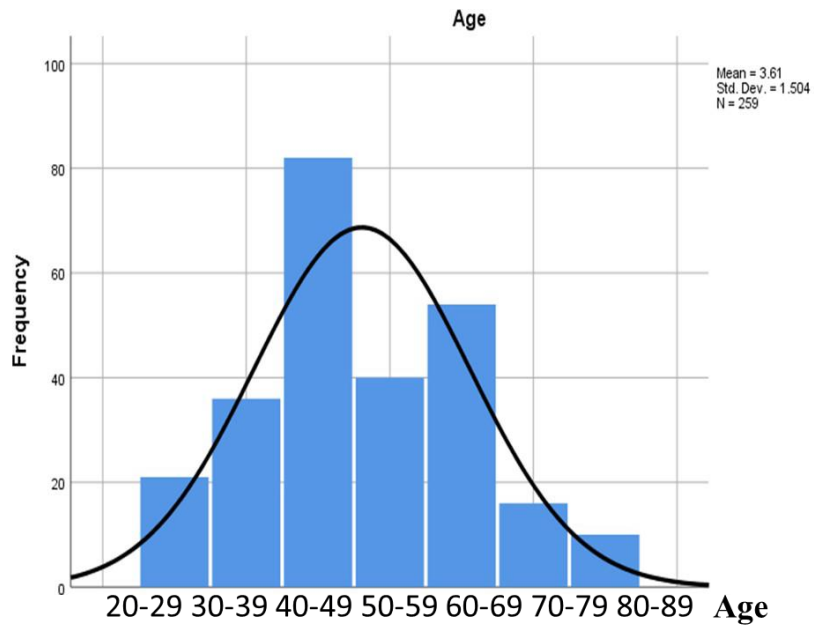
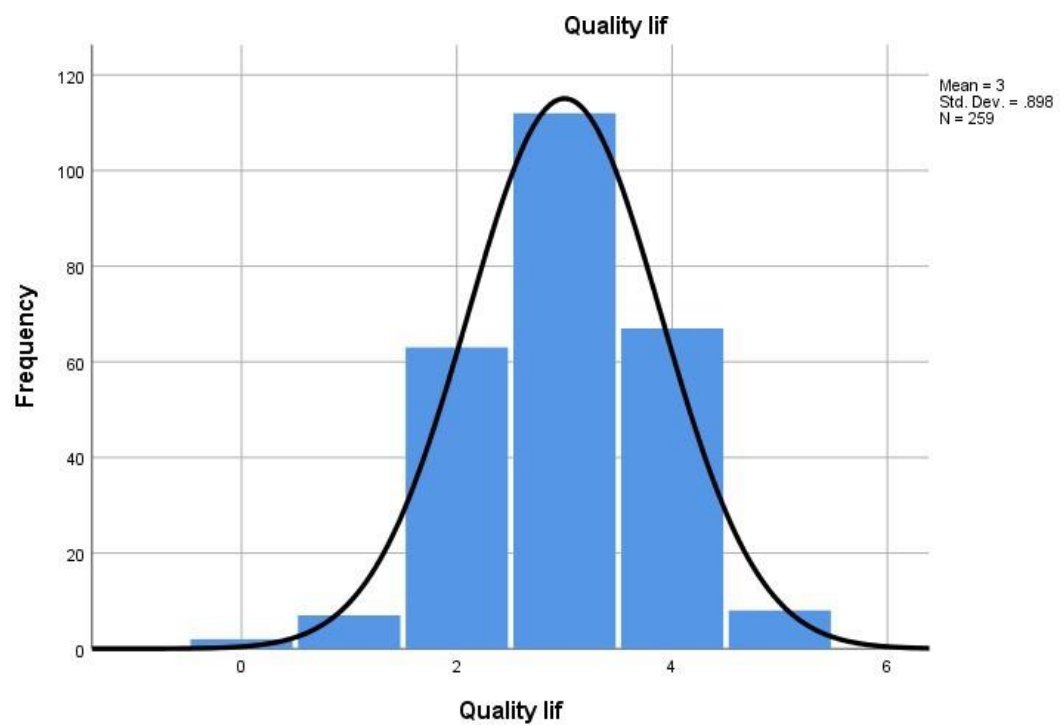


Figure 5.1: frequency distribution of Age

Quality of life show ( $\bar{X} = 3$ ,  $\sigma = .90$ ).





**Figure 5.2:** frequency distribution of *quality of life*

The existential anxiety has ( $\bar{X} = .56, \sigma = .12$ )

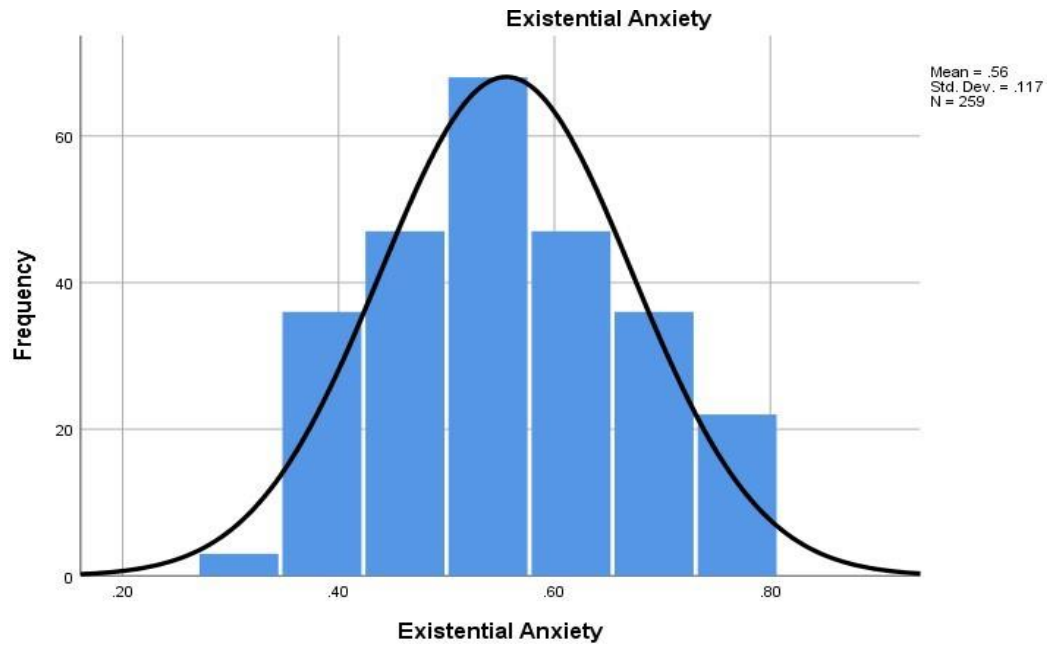


Figure 5.3: frequency distribution of *existential anxiety*

The intention to marry has these value ( $\bar{X} = 2.68, \sigma = 1.32$ )

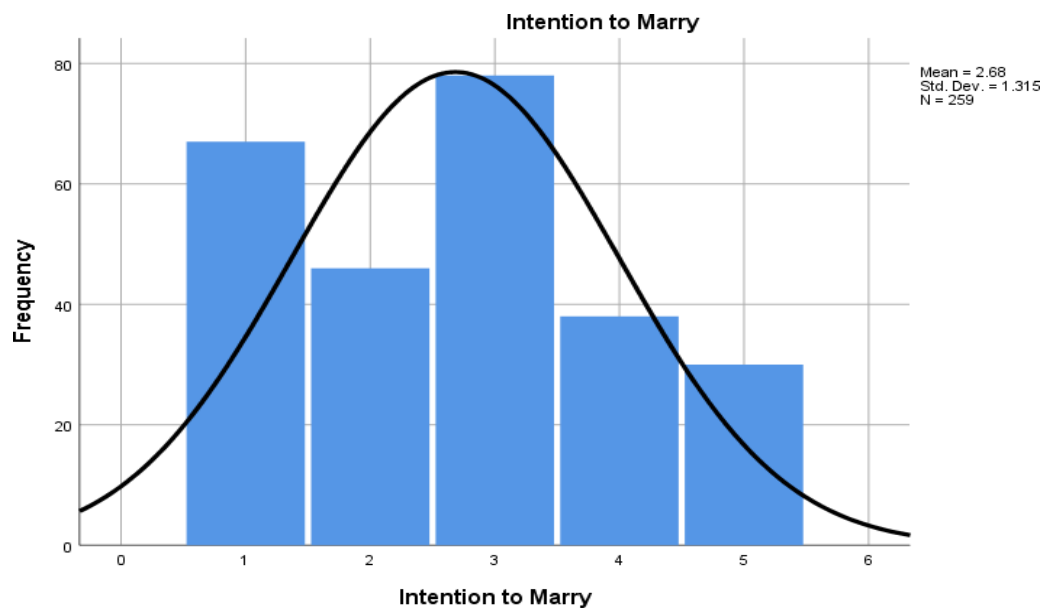


Figure 5.4: frequency distribution of *intention to marry*

Peer encouragement has the value ( $\bar{x} = 2.71, \sigma = 1.18$ )

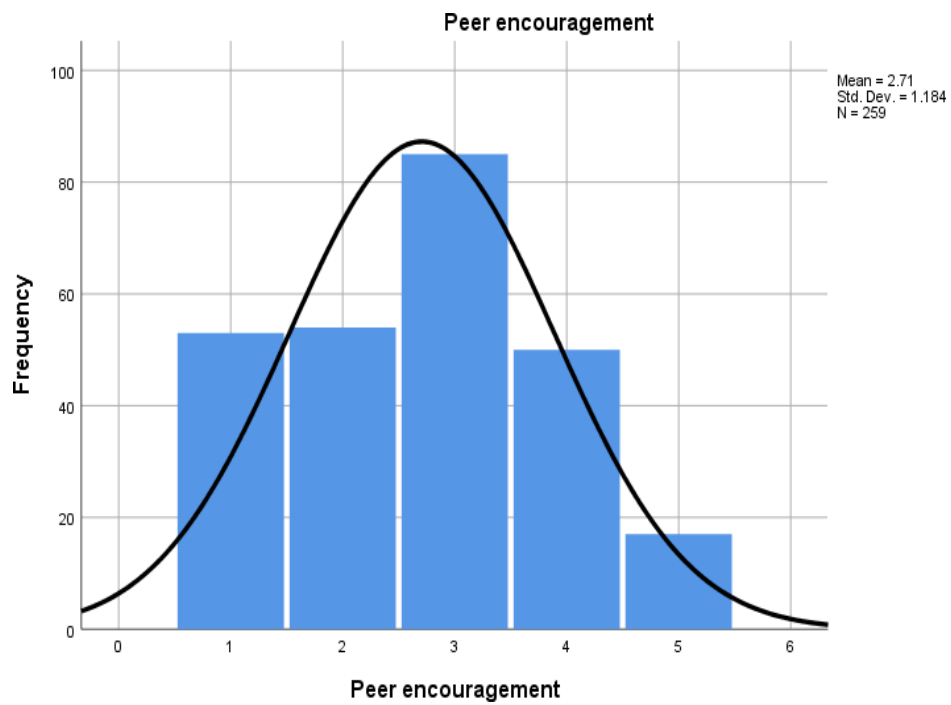


Figure 5.6: frequency distribution of peer encouragement

Self-control has the value ( $\bar{X} = 2.79, \sigma = 1.19$ )

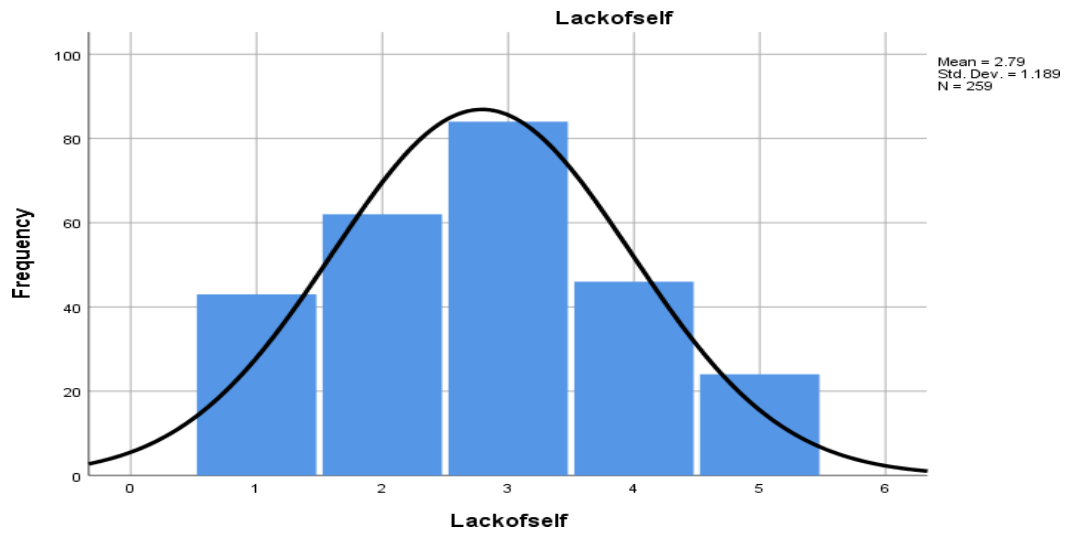


Figure 5.7: frequency distribution of self-control

The Stress has the ( $\bar{X} = 2.83, \sigma = 1.31$ )

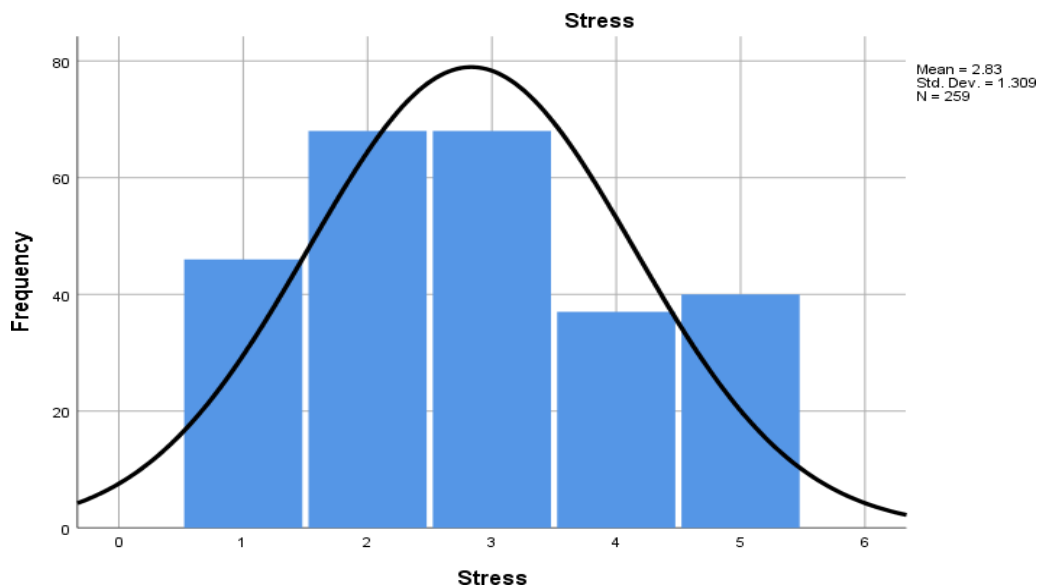
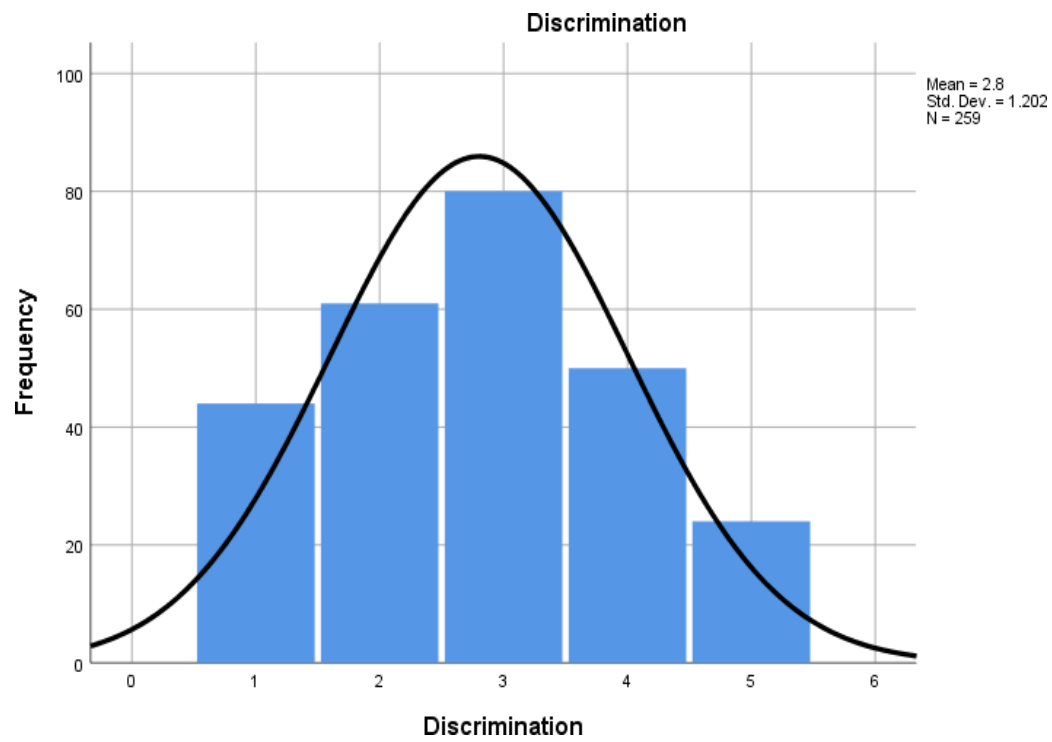


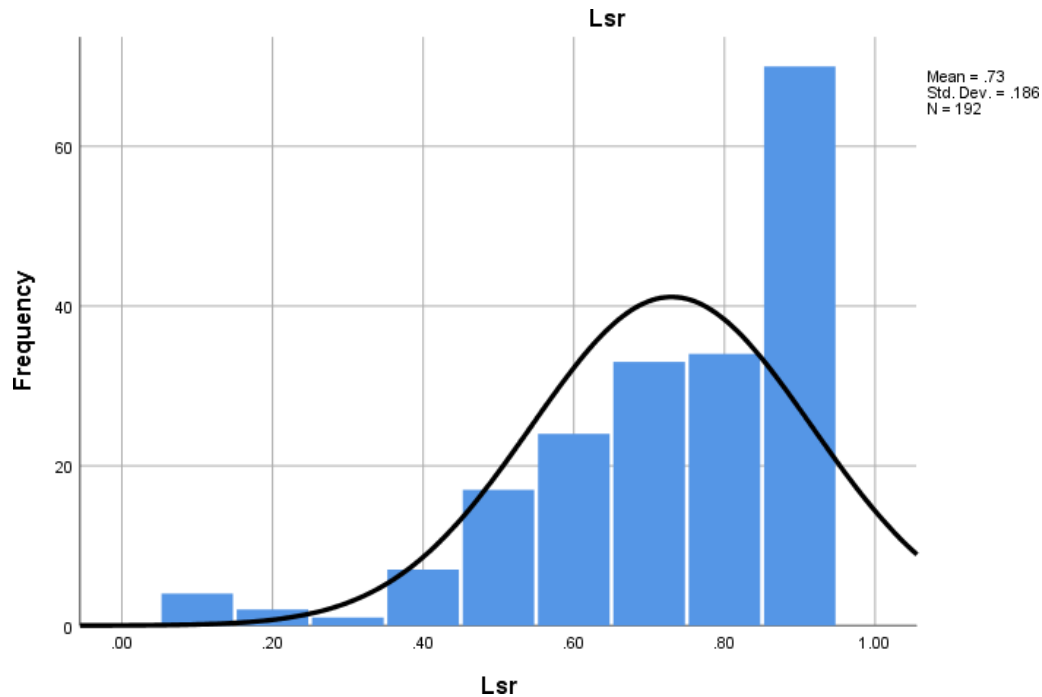
Figure 5. 8: frequency distribution of stress

The discrimination has  $\bar{x} = 2.8$ ,  $\sigma = 1.20$



**Figure 5. 9:** frequency distribution of *discrimination*

The likelihood of Sisters remaining has  $\bar{X} = .73$ ,  $\sigma = .186$



**Figure 5. 10: frequency distribution of *Likelihood of Sisters remaining***

### ***Skewness and Kurtosis***

The parameters outlined by Bulmer (1979) were utilised to measure the skewness of the distribution. According to Bulmer, for a distribution to be highly skewed, its skewness would be less than -1 or greater than +1 (i.e.,  $\leq -1$  or  $> +1$ ); whereas moderate skewness in a distribution fall between -1 and -1/2 or between +1/2 and +1. Bulmer also posited that skewness between -1/2 and +1/2 is symmetric. However, George and Mallery (2010) contend that for an asymmetrical univariate distribution, the kurtosis should fall between -2 and +2, while Hair et al. (2009) and Byrne (2011) suggest that for a normal data distribution, skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis lies between -7 to +7.

In the study, all the data fall within the range of -1 to +1, except for resilience, which exhibits a skewness of 2.500 and kurtosis of 6.158; this variable was removed during the analysis due to its violation of this assumption.

### *Descriptive Statistics distribution of the variables*

**Table 2**

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimu m	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statisti c	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Age	259	1	7	3.61	1.504	.245	.151	-.498	.302
Education	259	1	8	5.35	1.396	-1.197	.151	1.209	.302
Yrs of profession	259	1	7	3.13	1.608	.519	.151	-.654	.302
Quality life	259	0	5	3.00	.898	-.227	.151	.212	.302
Submissive behavior	259	1.00	3.30	1.6943	.35297	.733	.151	1.616	.302
Loneliness	259	1.90	3.00	2.4415	.22092	-.036	.151	-.224	.302
Relationship	259	1.15	4.08	2.2801	.49583	.233	.151	.349	.302
Depression	259	.00	1.56	.6834	.27279	.540	.151	.497	.302
Anxiety	259	.00	1.57	.5328	.35387	.443	.151	-.351	.302
Self-control	259	.00	.90	.4520	.15294	-.184	.151	.449	.302
Authoritarian inf	259	2.30	4.90	3.5861	.52237	-.205	.151	-.097	.302
Resilience	259	1.33	3.33	2.1837	.45280	.170	.151	-.806	.302
Existential Anxiety	259	.31	.77	.5554	.11676	.132	.151	-.798	.302
Searching Meaning	259	1.60	6.60	4.6185	.85488	-.036	.151	-.244	.302

Purposefulness	259	1.20	6.00	3.3274	.98247	.512	.151	-.308	.302
Positive Affect	259	2.50	4.60	3.4004	.35888	.324	.151	-.233	.302
Negative Affect	259	1.00	3.80	2.4839	.34961	-.542	.151	2.779	.302
Ex- Sisters	259	0	1	.26	.439	1.109	.151	-.777	.302
Sisters with Ord	259	0	1	.74	.439	-1.109	.151	-.777	.302
belief of counsel	259	1	10	5.24	2.651	.218	.151	-.669	.302
Seeking support	259	1	10	6.05	2.201	-.110	.151	.019	.302
Ambition	259	1	5	3.20	1.259	-.224	.151	-.847	.302
Authoritarian in	259	1	5	3.49	1.243	-.500	.151	-.568	.302
Approval (parents)	259	1	5	2.68	1.198	.168	.151	-.860	.302
Dissatisfaction	259	1	5	3.22	1.178	-.341	.151	-.742	.302
Discrimination	259	1	5	2.80	1.202	.115	.151	-.848	.302
Dispute (daily)	259	1	6	2.54	1.387	.426	.151	-.969	.302
Employment	259	1	5	2.29	1.290	.713	.151	-.600	.302
Educational level	259	1	5	2.17	1.145	.645	.151	-.633	.302
Peer encourage	259	1	5	2.71	1.184	.078	.151	-.868	.302
Meaning	259	1	5	2.45	1.460	.454	.151	-1.216	.302
Intention to Mar	259	1	5	2.68	1.315	.220	.151	-1.008	.302
Neglect	259	1	5	3.50	1.437	-.549	.151	-1.041	.302
Loneliness	259	1	5	2.44	1.355	.557	.151	-.882	.302
Punishment	259	1	5	2.29	1.194	.684	.151	-.378	.302
Power Struggle	259	1	5	2.94	1.206	-.135	.151	-.819	.302
Temperament	259	1	5	2.52	1.274	.375	.151	-.976	.302
Stress	259	1	5	2.83	1.309	.248	.151	-1.003	.302
Submissive behavio	259	1	5	2.63	1.359	.314	.151	-1.123	.302
Self-control	259	1	5	2.79	1.189	.145	.151	-.779	.302



Social equality	259	1	5	2.41	1.121	.413	.151	-.531	.302
Relationship	259	0	5	2.71	1.263	.187	.151	-.937	.302
Resilience	259	0	5	1.41	.900	2.500	.151	6.158	.302

*Note.* The table above is the descriptive statistics distribution of the variables.

### Testing of the Assumptions

***Assumption #1: The data has independence of observations.***

**Table 3**

*Independent Errors*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.313 <sup>a</sup>	.098	.046	.34960	1.747

a. Predictors: (Constant), Negative Affect, Quality life, Authoritarian Leadership, Submissive behaviour, Existential Anxiety, Resilience, Depression, Self-control, Loneliness, Searching Meaning, Positive Affect, Relationship, Purposefulness, Anxiety, Neglect,

b. Dependent Variable: likelihood of Remaining

***Note.*** The table 3 above demonstrates that independent errors are not violated.

For the data to meet this assumption of independent errors, the *Durbin-Watson* value must be between 0 and 4 and must be close to 2 (Field, 2010) revealing independent errors.

The results in table 3 above show that the data met this assumption (*Durbin-Watson value* = 1.75) because the score is close to 2 indicating that the residuals do not correlate.

***Assumption #2: Residuals*** (errors) are normally distributed. Table 4a below indicates that the data met the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

**Table 4a***Residuals Statistics<sup>a</sup>*

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	0.15	0.93	0.54	0.13	259
Std. Predicted Value	-2.10	2.10	0.00	1.00	259
Standard Error of Predicted	0.03	0.10	0.05	0.01	259
Adjusted Predicted Value	0.11	0.95	0.54	0.13	259
Residual	-0.73	0.62	0.00	0.33	259
Std. Residual	-2.16	1.85	0.00	0.99	259
Stud. Residual	-2.23	1.88	0.00	1.00	259
Deleted Residual	-0.77	0.64	0.00	0.34	259
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.24	1.89	-0.00	1.01	259
Mahal. Distance	0.40	21.94	4.98	3.37	259
Cook's Distance	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.01	259
Centered Leverage Value	0.00	0.09	0.02	0.01	259

a. Predictors: (Constant), Negative Affect, Neglect, Submissive behaviour, Authoritarian Influence, Power Struggle

b. Dependent Variable: likelihood of Remaining

*Note.* The table 4a indicates that Std. Residual and Cook's distance are not violated.

The variables in the analysis have Cook's distance values ranging from 0.00 to 0.07, all below the threshold of 1, indicating that no cases had undue influence on model 1.

Similarly, the standard residual ranges from -2.16 to 1.85, within the expected range of -3 to

3. These conditions meet the assumptions (Field, 2010).

### ***Assumption #3: Multicollinearity***

Table 4b below displays the values of Tolerance (VOT) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), if the Tolerance is less than 0.1 and VIF is greater than 10, multicollinearity is a concern. The researcher examined the data to determine if the assumption of collinearity was violated. The results are presented in Table 4b below: GAD Tolerance = 0.72, VIF = 1.39; Authoritarian Influence Tolerance = 0.74, VIF = 1.35; Negative Affect Tolerance = 0.90, VIF = 1.12; Neglect Tolerance = 0.75, VIF = 1.34; Quality of life Tolerance = 0.88, VIF = 1.14. Given that the tolerance in each case is greater than 0.1 and VIF is less than 10, the values indicate that the predictors did not significantly influence each other. The data were analysed using the "Enter Method" of simultaneous multilinear regression to assess the impact of the predicting variables on the outcome variable.

***Table 4b***

*Multicollinearity Table*

Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	0.615	0.486		1.266	0.207		
	Quality life	-0.042	0.026	-0.106	-1.639	0.102	0.881	1.135
	Submissive behaviour	-0.061	0.063	-0.060	-0.967	0.335	0.963	1.038
	Relationship	-0.026	0.051	-0.036	-0.505	0.614	0.739	1.353
	Anxiety GAD	-0.159	0.072	-0.157	-2.198	0.029	0.721	1.387
	Neglect	-0.054	0.017	-0.216	-3.252	0.001	0.747	1.339
	Authoritarian Influence	-0.031	0.048	-0.046	-0.651	0.516	0.742	1.347
	Searching Meaning	-0.030	0.028	-0.071	-1.046	0.296	0.802	1.247
	Purposefulness	-0.013	0.026	-0.035	-0.493	0.622	0.743	1.346

Positive Affect	-0.005	0.070	-0.005	-0.076	0.940	0.750	1.334
Negative Affect	0.230	0.066	0.224	3.492	0.001	0.896	1.116

a. Dependent Variable: likelihood of Remaining

#### ***Assumption #4 - Linearity***

A linear relationship was established between the odds ratio, or EXP(B), and each independent variable. According to Garson (2009), linearity is demonstrated if the beta coefficients increase or decrease in linear steps, indicating that the assumption of linearity is met (see Table 17). A sample of 259 participants was used for the study, which enabled the model to have sufficient statistical power to detect a significant effect. This ensured there were enough responses in each category.

#### **Case Processing Summary**

Classification Table 5 below (Case Processing Summary)

The Case Processing Summary or Classification Table describes the number of participants used in the analysis and the Missing Cases. The classification table consists of two rows. The first row is the number of participants included in the analysis, whilst the second row contains the Missing Cases. The number included in the analysis is 259 participants, and no missing cases were observed.

**Table 5**

*Classification Table*

Unweighted Cases <sup>a</sup>		N	Percent
Selected Cases	Included in Analysis	259	100.0
	Missing Cases	0	.0
	Total	259	100.0
Unselected Cases		0	.0
Total		259	100.0

If weight is in effect, see classification table for the total number of cases

**Table 6**

*Dependent Variable Encoding*

Original Value	Internal Value
Left	0
Remain	1

The *Dependent Variable Encoding* describes how the outcome variable is encoded with binary values – ‘0’ for left and ‘1’ for remain as shown in table 6 above.

Field (2010) highlights that in binary logistic regression for a dichotomous variable, the probabilities of occurrence and non-occurrence are 1 and 0, respectively. Therefore, in our study, the probability of 'Remain' is 1, while that of 'Left' is 0.

***Baseline Analysis***

***Block 0: Beginning Block***

In binary logistic regression, the classification table represents a 2x2 contingency table of observed and predicted outcomes (White, 2013). The Beginning Block characterises the scenario where no predictors are included in the model except for the constant. According to Ranganathan et al. (2017), this setup facilitates a comparison between models with and without predictors (referred to as the Null table). Table 7 below suggests that when no predictors were added, it is assumed that 74.1% of the cases were correctly classified. The implication is that the prediction is accurate 74.1% of the time.

**Table 7***Classification Table*

Classification Table <sup>a,b</sup>					
		Observed	Predicted		Percentage
			Sisters likely to leave		
			+Left	Remain	Correct
Step 0	Sisters likely to leave	Left	0	67	.0
		Remain	0	192	100.0
	Overall Percentage				74.1

- a. Constant is included in the model  
b. The cut value is .500

**Table 8***Variables In the Equation*

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	1.053	.142	55.052	1	.000	2.866

The variables in Equation Table 8 above represent the scenario where only the constant was included in the model. This table displays the coefficient for the constant (B), which is 1.053, with a Standard Error (SE) of 0.142. The Wald value (W) is computed as 55.05, where  $x'$  represents the estimated value obtained from the maximum likelihood estimation of the unconstrained likelihood function, and  $x$  denotes the hypothesized value. This calculation is performed using the equation:

Where  $x' - x = 1.053$  (coefficient of B)

The Wald value (W) assesses constraints on statistical parameters by measuring the

weighted distance between the unrestricted estimate and its hypothesized value under the null hypothesis, with the weight being the precision of the estimate. A large W implies that the constraint is unlikely to be true, especially as a starting point in this case with no parameters/variables entered. While the finite sample distributions of Wald tests are generally unknown, they follow an asymptotic  $\chi^2$ -distribution under the null hypothesis, which can be used to determine statistical significance.

Upon adding the constant, the model emerges as a statistically significant predictor of the outcome ( $p < .001$ ), despite achieving only 74.1% accuracy. The predictive power of this baseline model is influenced by the sample size, although its effect is just marginal.

**Table 9**

*Variables Not In The Equation*

			Score	df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	Quality life	3.610	1	.057
		belief of counselling	.198	1	.656
		Seeking support	.611	1	.434
		<i>Ambition</i>	<i>10.581</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.001</i>
		<i>Authoritarian influence</i>	<i>15.482</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.000</i>
		Approval (parental)	1.088	1	.297
		Dissatisfaction	1.311	1	.252
		Discrimination	.323	1	.570
		Dispute (daily)	.943	1	.331
		Employment	.257	1	.612
		Educational level	4.254	1	.039
		Peer encouragement	2.690	1	.101
		Meaning	.814	1	.367
		Intention to Marry	1.624	1	.202
		<i>Neglect</i>	<i>9.183</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.002</i>
		Loneliness	.056	1	.813
		Punishment	.986	1	.321
		Power Struggle	7.445	1	.006
		Temperament	.068	1	.794
		<i>Stress</i>	<i>6.176</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.013</i>

Submissive behaviour	1.225	1	.268
<i>Self-control</i>	<i>4.648</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.031</i>
Social equality	.237	1	.627
Relationship	.370	1	.543
Overall Statistics	53.668	25	.001

*Note.* The table 9 above (Variables not in the equation) describes the predictors left out of the model including the *significant variables* highlighted in *italic*. These are:

- Ambition
- Authoritarian influence
- Educational level
- Neglect
- Power Struggle
- Stress
- Self-control
- Quality of Life on the borderline of significance.

### **Binary logistic regression results**

All the following tables (10-13), come after the heading "Block 1: Method = Enter" and represent the results of the main logistic regression analysis with all independent variables added to the equation.

### ***Goodness of fit***

Stevens (2007) outlines two primary methods for assessing the goodness of fit of a logistic regression model: the omnibus test and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test. According to Stevens, the fit of a model to the data can be evaluated using the -2 times the log of the likelihood (-2Log WSR). Stevens further argues that a good model will exhibit a high likelihood of the observed results, resulting in a small value for -2Log WSR. When the data



perfectly fits the model, the likelihood will be 1, and the -2Log WSR will be 0.

The Omnibus test, as described by Stevens (2007) evaluates whether the new model (with predictors included) represents an improvement over the baseline model. It accomplishes this comparison by employing chi-squared tests to examine whether there is a significant difference between the Log-likelihoods, specifically the -2Log WSR, of the baseline model and the new model. If the -2Log WSR for the new model is significantly lower than that of the baseline model, it indicates that the new model explains more of the variance in the dependent variable, thereby constituting an improvement.

Table 9 above illustrates that the chi-square value is significant ( $\chi^2 = 58.027$ ,  $df = 25$ ,  $p < .000$ ), suggesting that the new model is significantly better. Consequently, hypotheses regarding Sisters remaining vs. Sisters leaving in Logistic regression are deemed significant.

### ***Block 1: Method = Enter***

**Table 10**

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients*

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	58.027	25	.000
	Block	58.027	25	.000
	Model	58.027	25	.000

**Table 11**

*Chi-squared Statistic*

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	11.947	8	.154

The Hosmer test also utilises chi-squared statistics to assess goodness of fit (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2007; Stevens, 2007). In the Hosmer and Lemeshow test, the chi-squared value is not expected to be statistically significant. If it is significant, it suggests a poor fit. In the example provided in Table 11 above, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test is not statistically significant ( $p = .154$ ,  $p > .05$ ), indicating that the model is a good fit (Lemeshow et al., 2013).

### ***Variance Explained***

The variation in the model is not as straightforward to calculate as compared to multiple regression. The variation in the outcome can be determined using Cox & Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square values (Field, 2010). These values are commonly referred to as pseudo R<sup>2</sup> values and typically have lower magnitudes than those in multiple regression (Cox & Snell, 2018; Nagelkerke, 1991). However, caution is advised in their interpretation, even though they can be interpreted similarly.

The Model Summary, Table 12 below, indicates the -2LL (i.e., - 2Log W<sub>SR</sub>) and pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> values for the full model. According to the table, the - 2Log W<sub>SR</sub> for this model is 238.103. When compared to the previous null model in the Omnibus test, with a decrease in - 2 Log W<sub>SR</sub>, it shows a better fit than the null model.

It is observed that the R<sup>2</sup> values for Cox & Snell and Nagelkerke are not the same; however, that of Nagelkerke is preferred because it explains about 29.5% of the variation, unlike Cox & Snell, which explains 20.1% of the variation (Cox & Snell, 2018; Nagelkerke, 1991).

**Table 12**

*Model Summary*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	238.103 <sup>a</sup>	.201	.295

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001

### ***Category Prediction***

Binary logistic regression, as mentioned earlier, can predict the probability of an event occurring or not occurring (Field, 2010). According to Field, SPSS Statistics classifies an event to have occurred if the probability is greater than or equal to 0.5; whereas if the probability is less than 0.5, it is classified as not having occurred.

Classification can be assessed in terms of the 'Cut Value,' which is shown in footnote 'a' on Table 13. "The cut value is .500." A Cut Value greater than 0.5 represents the "yes" category (i.e., Remain), whereas if it is less than 0.5, it represents the "no" category (i.e., not correctly classified).

**Table 13**

*Classification Table<sup>a</sup>*

Observed		Predicted		
		Sisters likely to leave Left	Remain	Percentage Correct
Step 1	Sisters likely to leave	Left 23	44	34.3
		Remain 15	177	92.2
Overall Percentage				77.2

a. The cut value is .500

According to Paxton (1999) Classification Table 13 is utilised to assess the accuracy of the model by indicating the percentage of how well the model predicts the possible values of the outcome variable. The 2x2 contingency table above is employed to classify each record

using computed probabilities ranging from 0 to 1, with 0.50 being the minimum probability or cut value. According to Stevens (2007), if the probability of a data record is greater than 0.50, it is classified as 1; whereas if it is less than 0.50, it is classified as 0.

The Null table (Table 7, which did not include any predictors) shows that 74.1% were correctly classified by the model as no disaffiliation or remaining. Upon adding the predictors, the model classifies 77.2% of cases overall, as evidenced by the overall percentage row. This implies that the addition of the predictors improves the overall prediction of cases by 3.1%.

### ***Sensitivity and Specificity***

Yerushalmy (1947) argues that the presence or absence of a condition can be accurately described by the *sensitivity* and *specificity* of the test. *Sensitivity* is the probability of a positive test being truly positive. Applying it to this study, the goal is to establish the percentage of Sisters who remain that were correctly predicted by the model. The table above shows that 92.2% of the Sisters who remain were correctly predicted by the model to remain (as evidenced in Table 13, the "Percentage Correct" column in the "Remain" row of the observed categories).

On the other hand, *specificity* is the probability of a negative test being truly negative (Yerushalmy, 1947). The goal is to establish the percentage of Sisters who left the Order that was correctly predicted by the model. The table above shows that 34.3% of the Sisters who left were correctly predicted by the model to leave (see "Percentage Correct" column in Table 13, the "Left" row of the observed categories). There is a trade-off between *sensitivity* and *specificity*, noting that the higher the *sensitivity*, the lower the *specificity*, and vice versa. In our study, we found that the *sensitivity* is high (92.2%), while the *specificity* is lower (34.3%).

### ***Positive Predictive Value***

Sensitivity of the test refers to the proportion of Sisters who test positive for remaining among those who participated in the study. The positive predictive value test determines if the percentage of Sisters who remain is correctly predicted as remaining. In essence, the positive predictive value represents the probability of correctly predicting the number of Sisters who remain compared to the total number of Sisters predicted as having left (Yerushalmy, 1947). Mathematically, this can be expressed as:

$$\text{Sensitivity} = (\text{Number of true positives} / (\text{Number of true positives} + \text{Number of false negatives})) \times 100$$

According to Table 13, the positive predictive value is calculated as:

$$\text{Positive Predictive Value} = (177 / (44 + 177)) \times 100$$

which equals 80.1%. This indicates that of all cases predicted as remaining, 80.1% were correctly predicted.

### ***The Negative Predictive Value***

The *negative predictive value* (i.e., *left value*) is the percentage of correctly predicted cases out of all the cases without the observed characteristic (Yerushalmy, 1947). In other words, it tests if the percentage of the people who have left (i.e., Ex-Sisters) is correctly predicted as left. Mathematically, it can be expressed as:

$$\text{Specificity (Sp)} = [\text{No of true negatives} \div (\text{No of true negatives} + \text{No of false positives})] \times 100$$

According to the table 13 above, the negative predictive value is calculated as  $[23 \div (23+15)] \times 100$  which is equals 60.5%. This indicates that of all cases predicted as left (*S*), 60.5% were correctly predicted.

### ***Receiver Operator Characteristic (ROC) Curve***

Unlike sensitivity and specificity, which typically rely on a fixed cut-off point of 0.5 (50%), the ROC (Receiver Operating Characteristic) curve considers all potential cut-off points within a dataset. It assesses how each of these cut-off points influences the test's specificity and sensitivity. Fawcett (2006) argues that raising the cut-off point tends to enhance specificity while reducing sensitivity.

The ROC curve provides a comprehensive overview of the binary logistic regression model's discriminatory capability (Hilbe, 2009). Discrimination, in this context, refers to the model's accuracy in distinguishing between cases categorised as 'participants with interest' and 'those without interest'. For instance, among Sisters in a community, some may express a desire to remain, while others may indicate an intention to leave. By examining all feasible cut-off points, the ROC curve illustrates how specificity and sensitivity are affected. Typically, the commonly used cut-off point is 0.5 (i.e., 50%). A higher cut-off point tends to elevate specificity but diminish sensitivity (Heller et al., 2017). This implies that a higher cut-off point makes it more challenging to classify participants as having the event of interest while making it easier to classify them as not having it.

The ROC curve is a plot of sensitivity (**Se**) against 1 minus specificity (**Sp**) represented by the equation:

$$Se = 1 - Sp$$

Classifiers that generate curves closer to the top-left corner of the graph are indicative of superior performance. Conversely, curves closer to the 45-degree diagonal or below it suggests lower accuracy. In essence, the accuracy of the test is gauged by its distance from the 45-degree diagonal (Hilbe, 2009).

### ***Interpreting the ROC curve***

A receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve is a graphical representation that illustrates the diagnostic performance of a binary classifier system as its discrimination threshold is adjusted. It's crucial to correctly code the event of interest before interpreting the results of the ROC curve (Fawcett, 2006). Referring to Table 14 (Case Processing Summary), the positive actual state is denoted as "Remain," indicating that the event has been accurately coded.

**Table 14**  
*Case Processing Summary*

Sisters likely to leave <sup>a</sup>	Valid N (listwise)
Positive <sup>b</sup>	192
Negative	67

Larger values of the test result variable(s) indicate stronger evidence for a positive actual state.

a. The test result variable(s): belief of counselling helpful, Power Struggle has at least one tie between the positive actual state group and the negative actual state group.

b. The positive actual state is Remain.

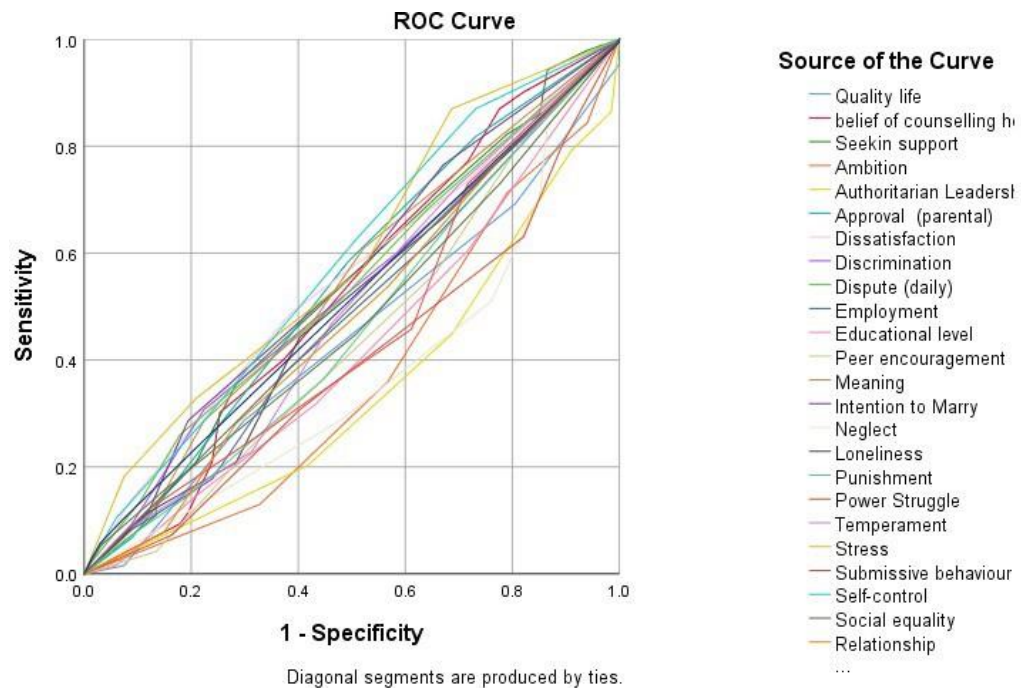
The ROC curve depicted below reveals that the majority of predictors cluster around the diagonal, with Parental Approval positioned notably above the diagonal and Stress lying further below it.

This suggests that Parental Approval exhibits better discrimination compared to the other predictors. In ROC analysis, a line situated above the diagonal indicates superior discrimination, as the further it deviates from the diagonal, the better the discrimination ability. The Concordance Statistic, which represents the area under the ROC curve, provides insight into the discrimination capability of a generalised linear model (Heller et al., 2017). The Area Under the Curve (AUC) can be found in the "Area" column of the Area Under the Curve table.

Listed below are some general rules of thumb as proposed by Hosmer & Lemeshow (2007) and Lemeshow et al. (2013).

***Figure 4.1 ROC Curve***





**Table 15 .**

*AUC Classification*

AUC	Classification
0.5	This suggests no discrimination, so we might as well flip a coin.
$0.5 < \text{AUC} < 0.7$	We consider this poor discrimination, not much better than a coin toss.
$0.7 \leq \text{AUC} < 0.8$	We consider this acceptable discrimination.
$0.8 \leq \text{AUC} < 0.9$	We consider this excellent discrimination.
$\text{AUC} \geq 0.9$	We consider this outstanding discrimination.

*Note.* Note: Table 15 displays the rules of thumb for interpreting the area under the ROC curve (AUC) according to Hosmer & Lemeshow (2007).

In our study, Table 16 below reveals that different predictors exhibit varying Areas Under the Curve (AUC), ranging from 0.5 to 1.0, where higher values indicate better discrimination. This study focuses on considering the significant AUCs, which are *Ambition*

(.371), *Authoritarian Leadership* (.344), *Neglect* (.371), *Power Struggle* (.395), *Stress* (.594), and *Self-Control* (.583). It is observed that while *Ambition*, *Authoritarian Leadership*, *Neglect*, and *Power Struggle* are below 0.5, *Stress* and *Self-Control*, on the other hand, demonstrate poor discrimination (as evidenced by  $0.5 < \text{AUC} < 0.7$ ).

# **Table 16**

*Area Under the Curve*

The  
test

Test Result Variable(s)	Area	Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Asymptotic Sig. <sup>b</sup>	Asymptotic 95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Quality life	.443	.039	.161	.365	.520
counselling helpful	.526	.043	.534	.440	.611
Seeking support	.535	.042	.391	.453	.617
<i>Ambition</i>	.371	.041	.002	.291	.451
<i>Authoritarian influence</i>	.344	.038	.000	.270	.419
Approval (parental)	.546	.042	.262	.463	.629
Dissatisfaction	.549	.040	.232	.471	.627
Discrimination	.525	.040	.549	.446	.603
Dispute (daily)	.536	.040	.375	.458	.615
Employment	.483	.041	.671	.402	.564
Educational level	.423	.041	.059	.343	.502
Peer encouragement	.441	.042	.147	.358	.523
Meaning	.540	.041	.331	.459	.621
Intention to Marry	.554	.041	.189	.473	.635
<i>Neglect</i>	.371	.040	.002	.293	.449
Loneliness	.495	.042	.901	.413	.576
Punishment	.462	.042	.354	.380	.544
<i>Power Struggle</i>	.395	.039	.011	.318	.472
Temperament	.493	.042	.861	.410	.576
Stress	.594	.041	.022	.514	.673
Submissive behaviour	.456	.042	.284	.374	.538
Self-control	.583	.041	.043	.502	.664
Social equality	.473	.040	.512	.394	.552
Relationship	.481	.042	.647	.399	.563
Searching Meaning	.411	.041	.030	.331	.491
Negative Affect	.652	.041	.000	.571	.732

result variable(s): Quality life, belief of counselling helpful, Seeking support, Ambition, Authoritarian Leadership , Approval (parental), Dissatisfaction, Discrimination, Dispute (daily), Employment, Educational level, Peer encouragement, Meaning, Intention to Marry, Neglect, Loneliness, Punishment, Power Struggle, Temperament, Stress, Submissive behaviour , Self-control, Social equality , Relationship.

- a. Under the nonparametric assumption
- b. Null hypothesis: true area = 0.5

The Wald test statistics assess the significance of specific explanatory variables in a statistical model. Logistic regression involves two sets of variables - a binary outcome variable and explanatory variables. Each explanatory variable typically has an associated parameter. According to Agresti (2012), the Wald test is one method for testing whether the parameters associated with a group of explanatory variables are zero. If the Wald test for a particular explanatory variable or set of explanatory variables is significant, it indicates that the parameters associated with these variables are not zero, thus necessitating their inclusion in the model. Conversely, if the Wald test is not significant, then the explanatory variables should be excluded from the model. In this context, "significant" means that the variable contributes something to the model. Variables that are not significant do not add value to the model and can be removed without affecting it.

The likelihood ratio test serves as an alternative approach for testing the significance of a few explanatory variables. Agresti (2012) argues that for small sample sizes or large parameters, it is preferable to use the likelihood ratio test.

**Table 17**

*Variables in the equation*

		<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>95% C.I. OR</i>	
								<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	<i>Quality life</i>	-.559	.224	6.246	1	.012	.572	.369	.886
	<i>counselling</i>	.037	.084	.198	1	.656	1.038	.881	1.224
	<i>helpful</i>								

Seeking support	.014	.101	.020	1	.888	1.014	.832	1.237
Ambition	-.268	.157	2.930	1	.087	.765	.562	1.040
<i>Authoritarian</i>	<i>-.432</i>	<i>.163</i>	<i>6.985</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.008</i>	<i>.649</i>	<i>.471</i>	<i>.894</i>
<i>Influence</i>								
Approval (parent	-.163	.164	.981	1	.322	.850	.616	1.172
Dissatisfaction	.202	.185	1.192	1	.275	1.224	.852	1.758
Discrimination	.142	.160	.781	1	.377	1.152	.842	1.577
Dispute (daily)	.089	.142	.396	1	.529	1.093	.828	1.444
Employment	-.118	.145	.667	1	.414	.888	.669	1.180
Educational level	-.281	.162	3.021	1	.082	.755	.549	1.037
Peer encourage	.119	.161	.543	1	.461	1.126	.821	1.545
Meaning	.086	.123	.494	1	.482	1.090	.857	1.387
Intention to Mar	.211	.139	2.326	1	.127	1.235	.941	1.621
<i>Neglect</i>	<i>-.370</i>	<i>.143</i>	<i>6.675</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.010</i>	<i>.691</i>	<i>.522</i>	<i>.915</i>
Loneliness	-.070	.135	.268	1	.605	.932	.715	1.216
Punishment	-.040	.160	.061	1	.805	.961	.702	1.315
Power Struggle	-.249	.179	1.942	1	.164	.779	.549	1.107
Temperament	.083	.145	.326	1	.568	1.086	.818	1.442
Stress	.140	.144	.946	1	.331	1.150	.868	1.525
Submissive beha	-.241	.132	3.341	1	.068	.786	.607	1.018
Self-control	.203	.152	1.787	1	.181	1.225	.910	1.649
Social equality	.072	.172	.176	1	.675	1.075	.768	1.505
Relationship	-.082	.140	.345	1	.557	.921	.700	1.212
<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>-1.313</i>	<i>.504</i>	<i>6.791</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.009</i>	<i>.269</i>	<i>.100</i>	<i>.722</i>
<i>Negative Affect</i>	<i>1.601</i>	<i>.474</i>	<i>11.388</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>.001</i>	<i>4.957</i>	<i>1.956</i>	<i>12.561</i>
Constant	5.702	1.501	14.440	1	.000	299.557		

- a. Authoritarian Leadership, Approval (parental), Dissatisfaction, Discrimination, Dispute (daily), Employment, Educational level, Peer encouragement, Meaning, Intention to Marry, Neglect, Loneliness, Punishment, Power Struggle, Temperament, Stress, Submissive behaviour, Self-control, Social equality, Relationship, Anxiety, Negative Affect

Table 17, "Variables in the Equation," presents details regarding the regression coefficients (B), the Wald Statistic (which tests significance), and the crucial Odds Ratio (Exp B) for all predictor categories. The Wald test evaluates the statistical significance of each predictor. According to Table 17, the variables deemed significant are *Quality of life* (*p*

= .012), *Authoritative Influence* ( $p = .008$ ), *Neglect* ( $p = .010$ ), *Anxiety* ( $p = .009$ ), and *Negative Affect* ( $p = .001$ ), all of which contributed to the model. Conversely, the remaining variables did not contribute significantly.

According to Field (2010), the  $B$  coefficient can be utilised to predict the likelihood of an event's occurrence. Keeping all predictors constant, this coefficient measures the relative change in the log odds when there is a one-unit change in a particular predictor. The  $B$  coefficient can be positive or negative, with a positive coefficient indicating an increase and a negative coefficient depicting a decrease. Referring to Table 17 above, *Quality of Life*, *Authoritative Influence*, *Neglect*, and *Anxiety* are all significant and negative, suggesting that decreasing influence is associated with decreased odds of remaining. Conversely, *Negative Affect* is significant and positive, indicating that increased influence is associated with increased odds of remaining.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the results, the odds ratios of the individual predictors in the "Exp(B)" column, along with their confidence intervals in the "95% C.I. for EXP(B)" column, were considered. According to Field (2010), values less than 1.000 imply decreased odds for an increase in one unit of the predictor. Thus, for *Quality of Life*, *Authoritative Influence*, *Neglect*, and *Anxiety*, an increase in one unit of the respective predictors decreases the odds by .572, .649, .691, and .269, respectively. Given that the  $B$  values are all negative and the odds are less than 1.000, it indicates that the likelihood of Sisters remaining decreases. In other words, the poorer the *Quality of Life*, the higher the *Authoritative Influence* and *Neglect*, the probability of Sisters remaining decreases. Neglect has a higher odds ratio (.691), suggesting that neglect contributes more to disaffiliation or not remaining.

However, the *B* value of *Negative Affect* is positive, and the odds are more than 1.000, indicating that the likelihood of Sisters remaining increases. This reveals that the more negative affective the Sisters are, the more likely they would remain.

"EXP(B)" denotes the change in the odds ratio for each increase in one unit of the predictor. For instance, for *Quality of Life*, *Authoritative Influence*, *Neglect*, and *Anxiety*, a decrease in one unit decreases the odds to remain by -.559, -.432, -.370, and -1.313 respectively. Put simply, a unit increase in *Quality of Life*, *Authoritative Influence*, and *Neglect* discourages Sisters from remaining with the Order. Values less than 1.000 indicate a decrease in odds for an increase in one unit of the independent variable. However, for example, when *Negative Affect* increases by one unit (i.e., remain), the odds will increase by 1.601, signifying that the odds of Sisters remaining are 1.601 times greater for "remain" as opposed to "left." This indicates that Negative Affect encourages Sisters to remain with the Order. Values greater than 1.000 indicate an increase in odds for an increase in one unit of the independent variable.

For *Quality of Life*, an increase in one unit (i.e., remain) decreases the odds by .572. This means that the odds of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) are .572 times less for "remain" as opposed to "left." In simpler terms, a unit decrease in *Quality of Life* discourages Sisters from remaining with the Order. Values more than 1.000 indicate a decrease in odds for an increase in one unit of the independent variable.

For *Authoritative Influence*, an increase in one unit (i.e., remain) decreases the odds by .649. This means that the odds of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) are .649 times less for "remain" as opposed to "left." In simpler terms, a unit increase in *Authoritative Influence* will

trigger a concomitant urge for disaffiliation. Values less than 1.000 indicate an increase in odds for an increase in one unit of the independent variable.

In addition, for *Neglect*, a one-unit increase (i.e., remain) decreases the odds by .691. This implies that the odds of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) are .691 times lower for "remain" compared to "left." In simpler terms, an increase in neglect triggers a corresponding urge for disaffiliation. Values less than 1.000 signify a decrease in odds for a one-unit increase in the independent variable.

Furthermore, consider *Anxiety*, where the log odds change is -1.313. This indicates a decrease in log odds (as *B* is negative) for the likelihood of remaining (with "Left" coded as "0" and "Remain" as "1"). For instance, in the case of anxiety, a one-unit increase (i.e., remain) decreases the odds by .269. Consequently, the odds of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) are .269 times lower for "remain" compared to "left." Simply put, an increase in anxiety corresponds to a heightened urge for disaffiliation. Values less than 1.000 denote a decreased odds for a one-unit increase in the independent variable.

Additionally, for *Negative Affect*, a one-unit increase (i.e., remain) boosts the odds by 1.601. This means that the odds of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) are 1.601 times higher for "remain" compared to "left." In other words, an increase in Negative Affect mitigates the urge for disaffiliation. Values greater than 1.000 indicate an increase in odds for a one-unit increase in the independent variable.

### **Results for Independent Samples Test**

An independent sample t-test was conducted on Sisters within the Order and Ex-Sisters to examine differences in scores for predictors potentially associated with



disaffiliation. An additional assumption of homogeneity of variances was assessed and met via Levene's  $F$  test (refer to Appendix 4.1 for the table).

The findings indicate a significant difference between the two groups, as all probabilities are less than .05.

There exists a notable disparity in the quality of relationships among the *Sisters* who remain within the *Order* ( $M=2.16$ ,  $SD=.46$ ) and those who have departed the *Order* ( $M=2.24$ ,  $SD=.42$ );  $t(257) = 1.29$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 1.83$ . With  $p < .05$ , this suggests that the *Sisters* who continue their affiliation might foster stronger bonds with their peers and authority figures in comparison to the *Ex-sisters*. Following the guidelines by Cohen (1988) and Cohen (1983), effect sizes are classified as small ( $d=0.2$ ), medium ( $d=0.5$ ), or large ( $d \geq 0.8$ ). An effect size of ( $d=1.83$ ) indicates a substantial relationship.

Similarly, a significant discrepancy is observed in the pursuit of meaning between the *Sisters* who persist within the *Order* ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) and the *Ex-Sisters* ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = .88$ ),  $t(257) = 1.96$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $d = 0.28$ . As per Cohen (1988), a  $d$  value of 0.28 signifies a large effect size. This implies that *Sisters* who remain affiliated with the *Order* are more inclined to seek meaning in their daily trials and tribulations for sustaining their commitment to the *Order*, contrasting with the disposition of the *Ex-Sisters*

A significant discrepancy emerged in the pursuit of purposeful meaning between the *Sisters* within the *Order* ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) and the *Ex-Sisters* ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .14$ ),  $t(257) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.17$ . With an effect size of ( $d =$

0.17), arguably large, this suggests that the remaining *Sisters* might derive more profound purposeful meaning from navigating day-to-day challenges than their counterparts who have left the *Order*.

Additionally, *Sisters* within the *Order* experienced significantly less neglect ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) compared to the *Ex-Sisters* ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ),  $t(257) = 3.07$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = 0.43$ . With effect size is large ( $d = 0.43$ ), it indicates that the relationship between the predictors is robust compared to the *Ex-Sisters*. However, it is noteworthy that the *Ex-Sisters* seem to endure higher levels of neglect than their counterparts who remain within the *Order*, which could potentially contribute to their decision to leave, as neglect has been identified as a predictor of disaffiliation.

Furthermore, a significant distinction in the expression of submissive behaviour was observed between the *Sisters* within the *Order* ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) and the *Ex-Sisters* ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ),  $t(257) = 1.11$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = 0.16$ . Although the effect size is large ( $d = 0.16$ ), it indicates a significant discrepancy emerged in the levels of submissiveness between the two groups. This suggests that the *Ex-Sisters* might exhibit a higher degree of submissiveness compared to the remaining *Sisters*, potentially indicating a reluctance to challenge situations and instead conforming to the rules of their *Order* compared to their counterparts who maintain their affiliation.

## **5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS**

This chapter delves into the principal discoveries derived from the analysis of questionnaires using descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and T-tests. These findings underwent comparison with existing predictors in the literature to determine whether they align with or contradict established predictors. Moreover, the discussion elaborates on the degree to which these findings address the research questions.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

As noted in the previous chapter (i.e., Results section), a total of 259 participants took part in the study. Most of the assumptions were within acceptable limits, and the kurtosis and skewness met all the assumptions. A predictor (resilience) with a skewness of 2.500 and kurtosis of 6.158 was excluded during the analysis due to its violation of this assumption.

### **Discussion on Statistical Analysis**

In the pursuit of answers to the research questions, Table 17 underwent analysis to discern the impact of predictors on the likelihood of Sisters remaining in the Order. According to Table 17, when all predictors were entered into SPSS, it selected predictors (i.e., Quality of life, Authoritarian influence, Neglect, Anxiety, and Negative Affect) with p-values less than or equal to .05 (Field, 2010). This significance, given a Confidence Interval of 95%, suggests that the selection was not random. The table reveals that Quality of life, Authoritarian influence, Neglect, and General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) exhibit negative B-values of -.559, -.432, -.370, and -1.313 respectively, while Negative Affect has a positive B-value of 1.601.

What do these findings elucidate about the dynamics within the convent for Sisters who choose to stay or leave? According to Table 17, Neglect (.691) emerges as the predictor

with the strongest effect, followed by Authoritarian Influence (.649). Notably, Quality of life appears relatively weaker with a value of .572, while Anxiety (GAD7) exhibits the least effect with a negative value of -1.313. The positive value of Negative Affect (i.e., 1.601) suggests that it could enhance the likelihood of Sisters remaining in the Order.

### **Correctness of the Model in its Prediction – Sensitivity and Specificity**

Table 13 indicates that 92.2% of the Sisters who *remained* were correctly predicted by the model to remain (*Sensitivity*), as evidenced in the "Percentage Correct" column in the "Remain" row of the observed categories. Additionally, the probability of a negative test was truly negative (*Specificity*) in the sense that 34.3% of the Sisters who *left* were correctly predicted by the model to leave, as evidenced in the "Percentage Correct" column in the "Remain" row of the observed categories. In sum, it could be said it is evident from the study that neglect is a significant predictor affecting the likelihood of Sisters to remain in the Order. The findings indicate that increased experiences of neglect are associated with decreased odds of Sisters remaining, as anticipated. Neglect emerges as the strongest predictor for Sisters' disaffiliation from the Order. In real-life scenarios, neglect can manifest in various forms, such as unmet needs, lack of support during health challenges, limited opportunities for further studies, or even through overt or covert forms of punishment. When Sisters experience neglect, it profoundly impacts their well-being and may influence their decision to remain within the Order.

The analysis of *neglect* yields negative results, indicating that increased neglect experienced by Sisters correlates with a higher likelihood of disaffiliation. In other words, prolonged exposure to neglect within the community may contribute to Sisters' decision to leave. Neglect can manifest in various forms within community life. For instance, it may

involve denying requests, administering punishment, excluding individuals from assigned duties, or failing to meet emotional needs. When individuals experience *neglect*, it can have significant emotional and psychological effects, including anxiety, confusion, instability, disintegration, and the development of a false selfhood. Furthermore, in line with these findings, Avdibegovic and Brkic (2020) argue that neglect is influenced by the 'Deficit Model,' encompassing parental, ecological, and ecological-transaction deficit models. They suggest that individuals exposed to neglect during their formative years may face health, cognitive, emotional, and social consequences later in life.

Further supporting this claim, Brock (2007) notes that when people are *neglected* or not supported, their inclination to leave the community and seek intimate or sexual relationships with both men and women increases.

In addition, if a Sister's emotions are not managed, it could lead to disagreements, quarrels, and misunderstandings, which in turn could trigger disaffiliation. Supporting this finding, Becker (1963) notes that a *lack of self-control and unhealthy relationships* with peers or leaders can lead to mental health issues at the slightest provocation. Becker adds that if an individual is continually exposed to elevated levels of *neglect or stress*, which affects their *self-esteem*, it could lead to depression, making life feel meaningless, and ultimately leading to disaffiliation.

What does it mean for Sisters to be *neglected*? When individuals are neglected, they may struggle to relate well with their leaders, peers, and other community members (Dash & Jena, 2020; Grossman et al., 2017; Schneider, 1987). Neglected Sisters are likely to distance themselves and feel uncomfortable in social situations. Their actions may be misunderstood by other members of the community or their leaders.

When a Sister experiences *neglect* in the community or workplace, she may decide to disaffiliate when she feels that she is not meeting her life goals. Supporting this view, Mauss (1969) argues that people could defect for various reasons, including psychological, emotional, cultural, intellectual, social, and residual factors. So, when Sisters feel powerless to change their situation or cannot trust the system anymore because experience has taught them that the members of their Order cannot be trusted and probably will not meet their needs, disaffiliation could be an alternative. In line with this perspective, Eze et al. (2016) point out that Sisters' performance of *identity* has been hindered by power relations and dominance, which often lead the Sisters to struggle for survival.

However, when Sisters have an emotional connection with members of the community, they are more likely to share their affection, problems, vulnerabilities, and fears of abandonment and rejection with trusted members of the community. Blieszner and Roberto (2004) argue that when the environment is not conducive for people (Sisters) to feel they belong, they will not be able to share their problems with others. Conversely, when an individual is not neglected, her contributions are recognised and encouraged by colleagues, family, and friends; she is motivated to do more and feels good because everyone wants to be appreciated (Dash & Jena, 2020). When there is encouragement, Sisters are likely to feel part of the community and not like strangers among friends and other members of the Order

It must be argued that neglect is not the best way to handle Sisters' mistakes or when they are not living up to expectations. Leaders should be able to motivate, encourage, and provide pastoral care to individuals rather than using neglect as a form of correction. Members of the community need to show empathy. People come from different backgrounds, and those who do not live up to expectations should be supported by the community. Sisters need to be humble and open to accepting support without prejudice.

According to our findings, the more Sisters are *neglected*, the less likely they are to stay. In other words, the more Sisters are exposed to constant *neglect*, the more likely they are to disaffiliate.

### **Quality of life**

The study shows that as the *quality-of-life* decreases, the odds of Sisters remaining also decrease. Analysis of quality of life shows negative results, indicating that as the quality-of-life decreases, the likelihood of remaining decreases as well. In other words, the poor quality of life experienced by Sisters in their community is likely to lead them to disaffiliate from the Order, further decreasing the likelihood of remaining.

This finding can be linked to Seligman's (2011) five elements of wellbeing (PERMA), which are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. According to Seligman, when any of these elements is lacking, an individual does not fully enjoy life. Additionally, supporting this view, Adikoeswanto et al. (2020) suggest that an excellent quality of work life promotes active participation, employee development, a good compensation scheme, a conducive work environment, and support and supervision from leaders. In line with the above claim, Lawrence and Nohria (2002) argue that individuals are motivated by four sets of drives: Acquire and achieve, Bond and belong, Challenge and comprehend, and Define and defend. They add that if all these drives are in place in any organization, the quality of life, job satisfaction, and productivity are enhanced.

In the context of the convent, *quality of life* means the provision of basic needs and the ability to satisfy spiritual, social, psychological, and physical needs. The primary function of Sisters is to pray and maintain an intimate relationship with God.

### *Spiritual Needs*

The results reveal that the B value of negative affect is positive and the odds are more than 1.000, meaning that the likelihood of Sisters remaining increases. This indicates that the more negative affective a Sister is, the higher the likelihood of her remaining within the Order.

Regarding spiritual needs, a robust prayer life encourages Sisters to find meaning and connections in the Absolute regarding their challenging situations. Prayer life can help Sisters understand their *vows of poverty and* follow the right channels to seek permission from the Order to support their families. If a Sister is not prayerful, she would likely lose the *meaning of the life* she has chosen. With prayers, many challenges can be addressed effectively. In support of this finding, Geruntd et al. (2022) note that faith equips Sisters with the steadfast hope to confront any form of hardships or challenges with endurance. These authors assert that hope enables Sisters to live a life of religious teaching, challenge the status quo, and preach *justice for all*. They contend that with prayers, individuals can live a simple and humane life like Mother Teresa. Morgan and Munroe (2022) argue that faith and love enable someone to attain a level of religious sphere where they are in constant communion with God, supporting Coburn's (2021) assertion that faith enables Sisters to find hope, solace, and perseverance to overcome challenges.

To achieve this, a Sister must strip herself of all worldly enjoyments such as material acquisition, intimate relationships with family, and traditional rites. However, a lack of prayers could cause one to disconnect from reality and the Absolute, leading to attempts to satisfy their needs with other means, whether legitimate or illegitimate. Augustine (2008) in his *'Free Will'* argues that individuals can determine to do good or evil because of their free



will, while Wilson (2018) posits that free will can be used to achieve good or commit crimes. These authors, highlight that it takes the grace of God for individuals to heed their good conscience (Augustine, 2008; Cross & Living tone, 2005). Conversely, making choices contrary to one's conscience could lead to disaffiliation.

In the Convent, psychological and emotional needs manifest in the form of educational achievement, leadership positions at work or within the congregation, and overall life satisfaction, all of which contribute to boosting self-esteem (Durà-Vilà et al., 2010). When these needs are lacking, Sisters may feel inferior or intimidated.

*Every human being craves higher goals in life*, and Sisters are no exception. Despite their vows, as noted in the author's personal experience in the Introduction Section, individuals may still choose to leave the religious Order to pursue a more fulfilling vocation, such as further education or marriage. In support of this, Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1993) point out that people disaffiliate for various reasons, including seeking greater satisfaction in their pursuits.

In the Convent, psychological/emotional needs take the form of educational achievement, leadership position at work or in the congregation, and life satisfaction, and all these boost self-esteem (Durà-Vilà et al., 2010). When these are lacking, Sisters feel inferior or intimidated.

### ***Psychological Need***

The study reveals that as anxiety increases by one unit (i.e., remain), the odds decrease by -1.313. This indicates that the likelihood of Sisters remaining ("yes" category) is -1.313 times greater for those who remain compared to those who left, meaning that the

likelihood of Sisters remaining decreases. Some Sisters may choose to disaffiliate to pursue more lucrative employment opportunities to support their families financially and enhance their well-being, thereby reducing their elevated levels of anxiety.

Additionally, some Sisters may feel unhappy when they are unable to provide financial support to their families due to their vows. Being a Sister does not mean that an individual is no longer a part of their family; anything that happens within the family affects them as well. Symister and Friend (2003) argue that individuals who receive moral and financial support from their families often have good self-esteem and better mental health. After making their profession and joining the religious Order, the Order becomes their religious family, expected to provide financial, moral, and basic support to the Sisters, as well as extending support to the biological families of the Sisters who may require assistance. When a Sister does not receive the necessary support to help her biological family, this can lead to frustration and eventual disaffiliation.

### ***Social Need***

The results reveal that with each unit increase in authoritative influence (i.e., remaining), the odds of Sisters remaining decrease by 0.649. This implies that Sisters who choose to remain are 0.649 times less likely to stay compared to those who leave. Thus, as authoritative influence grows, fewer Sisters are inclined to remain within the convent.

Social needs within the convent encompass elements like friendship, support, and participation. As observed in Eze et al. (2016), a harmonious relationship between Sisters and their Superiors fosters friendship, positive interaction, empathy, and openness. Conversely, insensitivity can lead to feelings of animosity, disharmony, disputes, gossip, unhealthy competition, and individualistic behaviour.

Insensitivity within a religious order may manifest as disregard for Sisters' emotions, denial of their requests (e.g., refusal to approve further studies or preferred courses), lack of financial support for their families, pervasive inequality, neglect of sick or vulnerable Sisters, and direct or indirect punishment following complaints about inequality. Such insensitivity significantly contributes to disaffiliation, exacerbating feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction when Sisters face challenges without emotional support.

Another aspect of social needs that can be challenging in a convent is the absence of intimate relationships (Brock, 2007). Although the choice to remain celibate is made by the Sisters, the lack of inclusive relationships within the religious community can lead to feelings of isolation. In such cases, Sisters might seek understanding and companionship outside the convent. While they experience sexual urges like anyone else, they are encouraged to manage these healthily rather than pursuing exclusive relationships to fulfil these urges.

Mwaura identifies coping mechanisms such as prayer, spiritual direction, and community activities to help sustain the vow of chastity. Similarly, Armbruster (2022) highlights psychological strategies like self-discipline, meditation, and seeking guidance from spiritual mentors. Physical practices include regular exercise, maintaining celibacy and abstinence through self-discipline, engaging in productive activities for community benefit and personal growth, and leading a healthy lifestyle (Armbruster, 2022; Elliott & McGlinchey, 2021; Mwaura).

These authors argue that robust support systems are essential for managing sexual urges. Strong relationships within the religious community, participation in support groups to discuss challenges, and forming strong partnerships can be effective. They emphasise the importance of emotional well-being in managing sexual urges, highlighting the role of

strong sense of purpose, effective stress and emotion management, and maintaining positive relationships with others.

In summary, Sisters are encouraged to redirect their sexual desires which enable them to switch their sexual urge to interesting hobbies like farming, gardening, artwork, reading spiritual books and so many others. This is complemented by praying without ceasing, avoiding tempting situations (such as watching porno films), and choosing friends wisely.

In support of the above findings, Ó Murchu (1999) points out that sex is not a dreadful thing to engage in for those who are married; rather, it is a sign of union and love. However, a

Sister vows to be celibate throughout her life and chooses to express union and love in other ways, such as rendering services to the community and building relationships to propagate the spread of the Kingdom of God.

A conducive environment can alleviate elevated levels of stress by providing individuals with the freedom to share their struggles with leaders and peers, thereby mitigating negative impacts on their self-construct (Eze et al., 2016). Conversely, when Sisters feel neglected or anxious, they may find it challenging to discuss their experiences. In such cases, when Sisters are unable to cope, they may opt to disaffiliate. Ó Murchu (1999) similarly emphasizes the importance of discussing urges for sex with a trusted friend or mentor as a lasting solution. Additionally, communal living enables Sisters to interact with esteemed women, such as female leaders in the Church, who are willing to offer support to ensure their religious journey remains on track. Community life facilitates access to genuine relationships that sustain joy and provide intimacy beyond mere sexual desires. Overcoming or managing sexual thoughts contributes to Sisters' retention, whereas succumbing to such thoughts may lead to disaffiliation. Ó Murchu argues that fidelity to the vow of chastity brings happiness, satisfaction, and joy, highlighting that chastity involves more than abstaining from sex or remaining unmarried—it entails overcoming sexual urges and fostering positive relationships with others. True relationship, he asserts, involves dedicating oneself to serving others rather than viewing communal joy or friendship as a substitute for sexual desires.

In my experience, communication among Sisters empowers them to acquire knowledge on managing sexual urges. Ó Murchu (1999) identifies factors that could stimulate sexual desires among Sisters and suggests strategies to mitigate them, such as

avoiding trials, fatigue, suffering, isolation, and lack of motivation. Additionally, Sisters may be susceptible to sexual temptation if they lack self-control, possess shallow spirituality, maintain a poor prayer life, watch inappropriate films, or engage in idleness. Self-control serves as a mechanism for interrupting sexual thoughts and desires, with fasting aiding in relinquishing sexual desires through deliberate avoidance of intimate relationships with both sexes. Furthermore, self-control fosters inner strength to overcome temptations, as noted by Manuel (1989), who warns against idle activities like excessive movie-watching or engaging in frivolous conversations, which detract from authentic living.

In summary, Eze et al. (2016) assert that a Sister's social life is communal, serving as a sanctuary where they find refreshment, nourishment, and fulfilment. When communal support is lacking, their commitment to chastity may wane, leading to heightened sexual desires that could precipitate disaffiliation. To address this, leaders must proactively identify Sisters experiencing distress and take immediate steps to rectify the situation (Lawrence & Nohria, 2002). Additionally, community members should offer support to Sisters in distress, who should in turn be open to discussing their concerns with legitimate authority (Eze et al., 2016), which may recommend pastoral care or other interventions. However, as indicated by the results of this study, negative authoritative influence may diminish the likelihood of Sisters remaining.

### ***Physiological Needs***

The study emphasises that a decline in the quality of life correlates with a decrease in the likelihood of Sisters remaining within the convent. The analysis reveals a negative B-value of  $-.559$  for the variable representing quality of life, indicating that Sisters experiencing poor quality of life in the convent are more prone to consider disaffiliation.

What are the physiological needs of the Sisters in a Convent? Physiological needs encompass the fundamental requirements for human survival, such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, and sleep. For instance, residing in an unhealthy environment can significantly impact the quality of life. Inadequate nutrition, insufficient heating, and lack of adequate rest can also diminish the quality of life for Sisters. Excessive workload both within and outside the convent can induce stress, adversely affecting their health and interpersonal relationships within the community, thereby exacerbating the decline in quality of life.

Concern for the substandard quality of life experienced by immediate family members often preoccupies Sisters. For instance, if the family's quality of life falls below average, it becomes a source of distress for the Sister. In situations where the Sister is the sole resourceful individual in a struggling family and receives no support from the Order during familial crises, she may contemplate disaffiliation in pursuit of a more fulfilling life to assist her family. A prolonged stay in the convent may fail to provide her with joy or contentment. Those who opt to remain may resort to forming relationships to financially support their families, a decision that may either bolster or jeopardize their vocation.

A Sister may choose to leave the convent to care for an ailing parent if she is the only child or if there is no other capable caregiver available. In such circumstances, remaining in the convent may lead to divided attention between her duties and her parent's care.

In support of these findings, Premasiri (1999) posits that as human beings, there exists a minimum threshold of necessities required for a decent standard of living, with anything falling below this threshold constituting poverty. However, the vow of poverty mandates Sisters to embrace simplicity, eschew material attachment, and adopt a moderate lifestyle. Eze et al. (2016) argue that the vow of poverty requires Sisters to emulate Jesus's poverty in

spirit and live a life of moderation, thereby imposing restrictions on the ownership of material possessions. Consequently, in situations where a Sister's family faces challenges without support from the Order, she may opt to depart from the convent.

To ameliorate the quality of life for Sisters, it is imperative for Superiors to identify Sisters facing such challenges and provide support in addressing them. While the Order may lack financial resources for individual assistance, they should offer guidance and empathy, rather than dismissing requests outright. Sisters should also feel comfortable seeking assistance from the Order without fear of neglect. It is crucial for Sisters to uplift one another and utilise their talents to achieve their potential, rather than succumbing to envy, backbiting, or jealousy, which may indirectly hinder a Sister's ability to contribute fully and lead to disaffiliation.

In conclusion, the study evaluates quality of life in terms of spiritual, psychological, physiological, and social needs, elucidating that the absence of these needs can significantly impact Sisters' quality of life within the Order. The more pronounced the negative impact on quality of life, the higher the likelihood of Sisters considering disaffiliation, as evidenced by the findings indicating that poor quality of life could trigger disaffiliation among Sisters.

### **Authoritative Influence**

The study also revealed a significant correlation between increasing *authoritative influence* and decreasing odds of Sisters remaining within the Order, as anticipated. The obtained negative B-value of  $-.432$  for 'authoritative' suggests that as authoritative influence over the Sisters intensifies, their likelihood of defecting or disaffiliating increases.

Authoritative influence may detrimentally impact Sisters by straining their relationship with leaders, inducing feelings of disenchantment, exclusion from the community, and hindering



personal development, consequently fostering low self-esteem. This finding aligns with prior research by Bahati (2003) and Kupalo (1997), who independently observed that authority within religious communities often serves as a means of exerting power to subordinate others. Furthermore, Van Deurzen (1997), in her examination of the Social and Psychological Dimensions of Existence, argues that community interactions can evoke either love or animosity, suggesting that this dichotomy can be mitigated if individuals acquire fame or power to temporarily dominate others.

Adding further credence to this argument, Eze et al. (2016) highlight that Sisters' interactions with their superiors, leaders, elders, and peers can vary between unfriendly and harmonious, with cultural and background factors influencing such dynamics

In further support of the findings, Durà-Vilà et al. (2010) contend that authoritative influence within religious communities often engenders *discrimination* and *inequality*. In all religious contexts, individuals hold positions of authority, such as the Mother Superior and community leaders, whose roles can significantly impact the communal living of Sisters, either positively or negatively. *Authoritative influence* tends to detrimentally affect the social, mental, and emotional well-being of Sisters. As posited by Sukumaran and Balakrishna (2021) authoritative influence diminishes people's quality of life by imposing stringent rules without formal agreement from subordinates. This research elucidates that authoritative influence may impede the collective efforts of Sisters within a religious Order, potentially fostering conflicts and reducing productivity when departmental heads hold divergent opinions.

Within the Convent context, *authoritative influence* involves nurturing Sisters, being responsive to their needs, providing support, and establishing firm operational boundaries.

This entails the Mother Superior overseeing daily activities, delegating duties, and ensuring tasks adhere to the Order's constitution. The leadership of the Order also bears the responsibility of disciplining Sisters who transgress. Discipline may manifest through various forms, including punishment, sanctions (such as exclusion from group activities), withholding tasks, neglecting certain needs, and enforcing unquestioning obedience. Moreover, some Superiors may exploit their position to intimidate Sisters, displaying favouritism towards select individuals.

It is noteworthy that unquestioning obedience to authority amounts to authoritarianism. In the Convent, authoritarianism manifests as Sisters blindly adhering to constituted authority without the freedom of critical thought, a choice they have made. Authoritarianism is inherently tied to obedience.

The *vow of obedience* poses significant challenges within a religious Order. When a Sister does not perceive the Superior as Christ's representative, or lacks faith that the Superior represents God, achieving obedience becomes arduous. Additionally, overly authoritative Superiors may lead some Sisters astray from their vows (Eze et al., 2016). Excessive demands placed on Sisters, particularly when they favour specific cohorts, can elevate stress levels, impairing their ability to function and enjoy communal life. Furthermore, a lack of humility and patience from both Superiors and Sisters may impede mutual relationships within the Order.

In support of the findings, Eze et al. (2016) posit that adherence to the directives of Superiors equates to compliance with the Will of God. Obedience, as a social phenomenon, serves to prevent the fragmentation of a community into a state of lawlessness and pandemonium. The vow of obedience entails that Sisters submit to or unreservedly accept

directives from legitimate authorities. This suggests that obedience within the Order is not contingent upon individual conscience or autonomy but rather on the vow they have undertaken. Nevertheless, instances of disobedience do occur among Sisters, inevitably resulting in consequences.

Within all religious Orders, obedience follows a hierarchical structure wherein Superiors issue commands or requests to the Sisters (Ballard, 2023; McLeod, 2007). This signifies that the pronouncements of Superiors carry considerable weight, being regarded as final. Following orders unquestioningly, as highlighted by McLeod, holds significant importance to the Sisters, potentially leading to the loss of individual identity devoid of reflection or dialogue. Ballard notes that not every Sister can endure such circumstances; those unable to may opt to disaffiliate from the Order to reclaim their autonomy and avoid being subjected to control or abuse by institutional leaders.

In summary, the study reveals a negative correlation between authoritative influence and the likelihood of Sisters remaining within the Order. In essence, authoritative influence may foster disaffiliation, thereby undermining the unity and productivity of a religious Order. However, the decision to defect, disaffiliate, or remain within an Order demands deep contemplation and reflection by the Sisters, often spanning months or even years subsequent to reaching the threshold of endurance. This process is typically characterized by trauma and exhaustion, particularly in the absence of emotional support from the Order, family, and friends.

### **Anxiety (GAD7)**

The study reveals a negative correlation between anxiety levels, as measured by the GAD7 scale, and the likelihood of Sisters remaining within the convent. This suggests that as

anxiety increases, the propensity for Sisters to leave also rises. This finding aligns with Kirsch and Windmann's (2009) assertion that heightened anxiety is associated with intolerance towards uncertainty, which can impact decision-making processes. Individuals experiencing anxiety may avoid risks associated with uncertain outcomes, potentially leading to disaffiliation from the convent.

Within the convent environment, anxiety manifests in various forms of fear, including fear of authority figures, betrayal from peers, incompetence, rejection, and expulsion. These fears can lead Sisters to withdraw from social interactions and communal activities, affecting their social integration and identity development, as noted by scholars such as Van Deurzen (1997), Eze et al. (2016), and Buténaité et al. (2016). The structured nature of religious life may exacerbate anxiety, as Sisters feel pressure to meet expectations and avoid being perceived as inadequate. Moreover, the constant need for approval from others may result in a loss of personal identity. Additionally, anxiety can contribute to physical health issues such as muscle tension, depression, and sleep disturbances.

It is evident that anxiety poses a significant challenge for Sisters in their religious journey, with potential implications for disaffiliation. This is consistent with Tillich's (1952) assertion that anxiety, whether existential, spiritual, or moral, can lead individuals to question the meaning of life and their faith, potentially resulting in self-condemnation.

Addressing anxiety among Sisters requires early intervention and support mechanisms, such as pastoral care. Additionally, providing training opportunities to align Sisters' skills with their responsibilities can enhance job performance, reduce anxiety, and promote a sense of competency and belonging within the convent community.

In summary, effectively managing anxiety among Sisters is crucial for their overall well-being and retention within the convent. This necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses early intervention, social support, and skills development to mitigate the adverse effects of anxiety on Sisters' religious journey.

### **Is there is a significant difference in wellbeing between current Sisters in the Order and Ex- Sisters?**

The T- test analysis indicated that Sisters in the Order received higher scores in relating with others than the Ex- Sisters. The reason could be that daily challenges experienced by Sisters and their intimate connection with God strengthen them and give them an opportunity of being optimistic in the face of difficult moments. Good relationship fosters good quality of life and wellbeing; however, arguments and hatred often result in conflict which could affect their mental wellbeing. Supporting this finding, Easterlin (2012) argues that human beings always seek physical contact and emotional ties with other people, pointing out that they experience threat when there is lack of social ties and connections. Also supporting the above argument, the World Health Organisation (2002) note that the health of an individual is determined by the circumstances, environment, and the social networks of families, friends, and communities, and where these are lacking, it could affect the wellbeing of the individual to the extent that the individual could decide to leave the Order.

Furthermore, even though there is a significant difference on the search for meaning between the Ex-Sisters and the Sisters in the Order, but the effect size is small which implies that the Sisters who remain with the Order are able to search for meaning in their day to day challenging life experiences for their sustainability in the Order compared to the Ex-Sisters who might not bother to search for meanings but would prefer to take alternative decision.

The search for meaning with regards to the Sisters could be due to their resilience because of their connection with God.

Like searching for meaning the Ex- Sisters significantly differ in making purposeful meaning from Sisters in the Order. This shows that leaving the Order still gives hope to the Ex- Sisters. Their choice of leaving the Order did not have a devastating effect on them to move on in life. The quality of life of the Ex-Sisters could be better than the Sisters still with the Order because they have more options in terms of providing immediate solution to their problem in the matters related to finance because they are not under vows which require them to obtain permission from their superior before they could spend from the community account.

The Ex-Sisters score higher on neglect than the Sisters in the Order which indicates that the basic temporal, spiritual, mental and emotional needs of the Ex-Sisters were not met. This result is in line with the findings on Logistic regression analysis. When Sisters are constantly exposed to elevated levels of neglect, their well-being could be affected which might lead to dissatisfaction and low productivity. Such individuals need to be identified by the leaders and support them in all ramifications to motivate them; this could curb the number of the Sisters who would like to disaffiliate from the Order as a result of neglect.

The Ex-Sisters score high on Submissive behaviour compared to the score of the Sisters in the Order. What is going on here? Is it that they fear being assertive or are they intimidated by the superiors? It could be argued that they were not able to express how they feel, which could have affected how they construct their identity. This indicates that they could be losing their identity because of group think

## **Analyses of Surprises**

### **Negative Affectivity**

According to Watson et al. (1988) *negative affectivity* measures the tendency of individuals to experience negative emotions. In the Convent context, when Sisters are high on negative affectivity, they are more likely to be pessimistic in emotions and expressions.

The study found that the more the Negative affectivity (AffN) increases, the odds of Sisters remaining increases, contrary to expectation. In simple parlance, the more they experience negative emotions, the more the likelihood they remain. AffN is the most significant predictor of Sisters likelihood of remaining with the Order. This result is quite surprising. Aquino et al. (2017) argue that people with high negative affectivity often see themselves as victims of their peers and superior's aggression. This result is a surprise as one cannot imagine how negative affectivity (AffN) could influence people to remain. The reason one could adduce for this is that Sisters are able to manage their emotions well through their intimate relationship with God (Beyers, 2014). The Sisters have also modelled their life in the pattern of the suffering Christ whom they have chosen to imitate. The pain and suffering experienced by the Sisters offer them the opportunity to gain insight and grow in their spiritual journey. This is in line with Beyers's work the vows plays many roles in Sisters lives. Apart from placing Sisters in a position where they become poor like Jesus, it also makes them to be poor in spirit and live moderate life without depending on people and embrace the suffering Christ as their model.

The explanation for this contradiction could be rooted in Frankl's (1964) work where he points out that people make meaning in every life experience, even in suffering and in death. Kierkegaard's (1847) work on the three primary modes of life also offers useful explanation to the above observed contradiction. According to this author, the aesthetic

person seeks satisfaction from things beyond their control, the ethical person focuses on self as a goal, whilst the religious person maintains constant communion with God through pray. This means, the Sisters find meaning in relating with God which influences their response to any negative reactions or behaviour they might experience in their religious Order (Gerundt et al., 2022). Having embraced this type of life, leaving the convent would have a significant impact on such an individual even though the individual is not bound by any vows after leaving the convent (Heinlein (2020). Furthermore, Park (2016) expands on this notion, suggesting that the search for meaning is dynamic rather than static. Even individuals who perceive their lives as meaning-filled continue to seek deeper understanding or alternative sources of meaning. For instance, a Sister may initially find meaning within a religious Order but may shift her focus to other sources of meaning, such as marriage or independent living, upon leaving the Order.

Another reason could be that the challenges make them stronger and resilient and bring out the best in them, rather than giving up and waste all the years they have spent in the Order. In support of the above claim, Van Deurzen (1997) in her *Spiritual Dimension* highlights that people find meaning and purpose in life when they connect with Higher Being. In addition, Buténaité et al. (2016) note that spirituality is about finding meaning and relating with the Absolute. The explanation for this is that Sisters find meaning in associating with their God no matter the challenges they face in their communal living. They believe that their reward is in heaven (Gerundt, et al., 2022; Staniloae, 2023). According to Augustine (2008), Wilson (2018), their choice to remain is born out of freewill as they are not forced. Picirilli (2002) argues that people have the capacity to make the right choice and forgo evil because of the grace of God. Amid all the challenges in their communal living, Sisters still choose to



remain because of the grace of God. In other words, the more negative affect Sisters incline, the more likely they yond for seeking comfort and positive affect from God.

Supporting the above argument on meaning, Holstein and Gubrium (2007) notes that individuals are strongly motivated to find meaning in their lives. This author argues that people who *search for meaning* feel happier and less distressed; adding the *search for meaning* drives them into religion. Cohen and Cairns (2012) observe that the *search for meaning* is not static, arguing that people with full meaning in their lives still search for a deeper understanding of that meaning or still source for new meaning. According to Cohen and Cairns (2012) the more people *search for meaning*, the less they become happy, the more they are anxious, and the more they become depressed until they successfully find the meaning.

### **Implications of the Findings regarding Negative Affectivity**

The finding that an increase in Negative Affectivity (AffN) may encourage Sisters to stay in the convent can be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, the positive relationship between Negative Affectivity and remaining in the Order suggests that Sisters have a strong sense of purpose and commitment to their religious calling. Despite experiencing negative emotions, Sisters may find meaning and fulfilment in their vocation, motivating them to remain.

Community support plays a significant role in encouraging Sisters to stay despite experiencing negative emotions. The supportive network fostered by shared values, a sense of belonging, and communal living assists Sisters in navigating distress and challenges, influencing their decision to stay.

Moreover, negative affectivity may nurture stronger relationships among Sisters, enabling them to collectively overcome potential challenges and conflicts. Negative emotions often catalyse increased support, understanding, and empathy among Sisters, leading to stronger bonds, as argued by Aceves et al. (2020) and Davis et al. (2020).

Group cohesion also plays a crucial role. Negative affectivity fosters collective strength and resilience, as Sisters unite to garner support and solidarity during adversity, as suggested by Zong and Tsaur (2023).

Furthermore, the unexpected finding may be attributed to Sisters' union with Christ, identifying with His redemptive suffering. Sisters may believe that their suffering can lead to purification and eternal life with God, akin to Christ's resurrection and victory over death.

In conclusion, the finding underscores the significant role of negative affectivity in Sisters' decision to remain in the convent. It highlights Sisters' sense of purpose, coping mechanisms, community support, sisterhood dynamics, and group cohesion. This clarity provides a foundation for further research and intervention development to support Sisters during times of adversity.

It is intriguing to note that certain predictors, such as *loneliness*, did not emerge as significant factors influencing Sisters' decisions to stay or leave the convent, contrary to expectations. External observers may assume that the convent environment could lead to loneliness due to Sisters' perceived exclusion from the outside world. However, the insignificance of loneliness in the study suggests otherwise. This implies that loneliness may not play a significant role in the lives of Sisters within the convent, potentially due to the training and support systems they receive. Sisters are equipped with tools to manage loneliness and the challenges they encounter in the convent, and their constant communion with God may fill any perceived gaps in companionship.

It is important to recognise that loneliness can manifest differently for individuals of all ages, circumstances, and backgrounds. Some Sisters may choose solitude and minimise contact with others, while for others, loneliness may be transient. Additionally, loneliness can take various forms, including feelings of isolation, lack of attention in relationships, or misunderstandings within a community.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that *temperament* did not emerge as significant predictors in the study. This prompts further exploration into the reasons for their non-significance. Despite the potential for clashes among Sisters from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, continuous development training and seminars provided by various Orders have had a positive impact. Professional development courses, such as Enneagram and Myers Bridge seminars, enable Sisters to manage their individual temperaments effectively, thereby fostering positive communal interactions. Encouraging the continuation of such seminars is essential for ongoing support and development within the convent community.

It is also surprising that counselling is not significant. *Counselling* is not significant because Sisters are not accessing it. Sisters may choose counselling when they are experiencing difficulties or any form of distress. Individuals do not access counselling because they do not want to be judged or criticised by the counsellor. Coşan (2015) study reveals that individuals do not access counselling; this is in line with the author's personal observation and interaction with Sisters in different Orders who are distressed and the following reasons are reported by Coşan:

- 1) individuals are not open and comfortable to discuss with counsellors who do not express warmth and empathetic and judgemental to enable a sound relationship to be built to achieve meaningful outcome. When the professional

relationship is not cordial, individuals are scared to express their feelings and therefore jettison the idea of accessing counselling.

- 2) some people feel that it is only the people with mental health issues that access counselling therefore they do not want to be stigmatised. Some feel that they would be perceived as people with mental health if they access counselling. Certain underlying factors could also skew individuals' perception. Such factors include unrealistic expectations, unhealthy boundaries, aggression, black and white thinking, and criticisms. For example, a person who is too sensitive to criticism might not understand the areas of growth highlighted by the counsellor. Rather, they would view everything as a form of criticisms. Also, a rigid thinker might be resistant to expected behavioural changes. In addition, an individual with unrealistic expectations and impatience might believe that counselling will not work. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy works best for a person with phobia, anxiety depression (Mor, 2009) whilst Existential Therapy is good for here-and-now issues (Van Deurzen, 1997). So, if the appropriate intervention is not employed, the counselling will seem ineffective.
- 3) Some individuals prematurely disengage with counselling because they do not want to change the status quo. This means they do not want to change so that they would not be given more responsibilities. This is a form of avoidance strategy.
- 4) Some people feel that counselling is unhelpful because counsellors tend to focus on behaviour rather than symptoms. A counsellor must have different approaches to different issues and not a one-size-fits-all approach. For

example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy works best for a person with phobia and anxiety whilst Existential Therapy is good for here-and-now issues (Van Deurzen, 1997). So, if the appropriate intervention is not employed, the counselling will seem ineffective.

To encourage Sisters to access counselling, they need to be given the right information, the right help and support, and follow the process through to achieve the desired outcome. Sisters should be reminded that they do not need to be in crisis, or on the verge of it, before they access counselling. In fact, the earlier they seek help, the more effective the counselling may be.

### **The Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this cross-sectional research method are that the data was collected at one specific point in time and the focus on the association between variables. This makes it impossible to draw conclusion regarding the direction of the causal effects, and it could be possible that some of the recorded relationships could have been accounted for by other variables. It recommends the use of different approaches such as a mixed method to validate these findings in the future research.

Another limitation of the study was the sole use of self-report questionnaire to collect data. The mood or mental state of participants can affect the completion of the questionnaire. This implies that participants who were experiencing low mood when completing the questionnaire may be influenced to report their experiences more negatively than participants who had the same experience but are not experiencing any low mood (McGuire et al., 2012). Further, self-report surveys may be limited by false responses given by the participants due to their inadequate self-awareness (Dimiceli, et al., 2010). The number of predictors considered

was so large that not all were included in the final analysis. It is recommended that future research should concentrate on a few predictors to facilitate easy analysis.

Although the sample size is large, however, it was limited to the UK residents. Further research should be generalised to include participants in Asia, Africa, and America to increase the existing knowledge in the area.

Unfortunately, this study did not employ any form of randomisation because the lists of questionnaires have different scaling as depicted in Appendix 2. If all the questions have the same scaling, randomisation is easy to apply.

The author was unable to examine how other factors such as childhood neglect, abuse, and attachment style could trigger disaffiliation. However, future researchers could explore these avenues. Finally, recommendations were made on how to promote the continuing practice of living as a Sister in an ordered community that is supported by the Catholic Church.

### **Implications to practice in the Order**

In addition to providing Sisters with the impetus to challenge pervasive abuses within their religious Orders, this study has created new opportunities for learning and growth, fostering the development of fresh ideas and perspectives within religious communities. Furthermore, the study will enhance the knowledge base of leaders and Sisters, equipping them with a deeper understanding to cultivate strong and sustainable relationships within the Order. It will also aid those contemplating disaffiliation in effectively managing their situations, potentially reducing the incidence of disaffiliation within religious Orders. Finally,

the study will serve as a valuable resource for non-Catholics interested in gaining insight into convent life.

### **Implications to Counselling psychology in practice**

The understanding the disaffiliation of Sisters from a religious order provides valuable insights for counselling psychologists, into various psychological, social, and cultural aspects.

Firstly, it enables counselling psychologists to provide support to Sisters and Ex-Sisters overcome a variety of challenges including loss of community, renegotiation of identity, and shifts in belief systems. Understanding these challenges can equip counselling psychologists with insights into suitable intervention strategies, such as effective coping mechanisms, resilience building, and adaptation support.

Cultural and religious practices, as well as belief systems and values, play significant roles in disaffiliation. A comprehensive understanding of these predictors can enable counselling psychologists to offer evidence-based interventions and create therapeutic environments that acknowledge the needs and backgrounds of Sisters.

Disaffiliation typically entails a significant shift in identity across personal, social, and religious dimensions. A thorough understanding of these psychological processes enables counselling psychologists to support Sisters/Ex-Sisters as they navigate major life changes.

The disaffiliation process involves re-evaluating spiritual and existential beliefs. A clear understanding of this process can provide counselling psychologists with insights into the relationship between spirituality, identity, and mental well-being.

Disaffiliation may trigger grief and entail the loss of community support.

Understanding Sisters' coping mechanisms provides insight into attachment styles, grief processes, and the type of social support needed during transition periods.

Insights into the potential mental health implications of disaffiliation, such as stress, anxiety, depression, and existential concerns, enable counselling psychologists to tailor intervention strategies to alleviate these challenges.

Family and social dynamics significantly impact disaffiliation, affecting family and social relationships. Understanding potential conflicts within the family resulting from the disaffiliation process informs counselling psychologists about the broader context of Ex-Sisters' lives.

Beyond cultural sensitivity and competence, personal doubt and growth, conflict with religious practices, and community clashes play vital roles in the disaffiliation process. Examining these factors helps counselling psychologists create safe and non-judgmental therapeutic spaces for Sisters and Ex-Sisters to explore their emotions, doubts, and struggles.

Ultimately, findings from this study can empower counselling psychologists to design and implement support interventions that address the unique needs of Sisters and Ex-Sisters.



### **| The Recommendations/Implications for the future research**

This study was conducted using one-single wave survey method. It recommends the use of qualitative approach such as focus group as part of mixed methods or longitudinal in future research to validate the above findings. Given the focus of this research was on the United Kingdom, it recommends that further research should be generalised to include participants in Asia, Africa, and America to increase the existing knowledge in the area. Finally, it will serve as a reference base for future researchers who would want to conduct a detailed study on any aspect of this research.

## 6.0 CHAPTER SIX Conclusion

The present study investigates the potential predictors of disaffiliation of Sisters from a religious Order in the UK. using quantitative method to bridge the gaps of qualitative approaches identified by the literature review and qualitative approaches. The current study adopted a single-wave survey method to supplement existing knowledge by further exploring the potential predictors associated with religious disaffiliation.

The findings of the study suggest that *Quality of life*, *Authoritative influence*, *Neglect*, and *General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)* all predict disaffiliation. Surprisingly, it was observed that *Negative Affectivity (AffN)* co-relates with Sisters who remain in the Order, implying faith is a key to meaning and resilience that help individuals to overcome all challenges.

Comparisons between the remained Sisters and the Ex-Sisters using t-test, showed that Sisters who remained tended to exhibit more relational behaviours with their superiors and peers than the Ex-Sisters. This demonstrates that the Sisters who remain are more resilient in finding meaning in their challenges and aligning with the Absolute, whereas those who left might have found their experiences unbearable.

### **Researcher Reflexivity**

Upon reflection, every research endeavour aims to uncover answers to known phenomena, bridge knowledge gaps, or catalyse changes in existing processes or systems. My investigation into disaffiliation has delved into a novel area, exposing me to the predictors that can trigger disaffiliation. This work has empowered me to challenge pervasive abuses within religious Orders and strengthened my ability to provide appropriate interventions to clients, potentially averting situations that could lead to disaffiliation. Furthermore, the study

has equipped me with knowledge and tools to implement proactive measures, fostering reflection on issues rather than reactive responses.

Throughout the research process, I ensured that my role as a participant observer never compromised my role as a researcher. This was achieved by maintaining objectivity and approaching the topic with an open mind.

Given the scarcity of knowledge in the field of religious disaffiliation, this study has opened new avenues for learning and growth, providing an opportunity to generate novel ideas that can serve as reference points for future researchers. Comprehensive understanding in a particular field fosters confidence, leading to further improvements and idea generation by challenging existing mindsets.

Completing this research holds significant personal meaning for me, as it has facilitated a sense of healing from past hurts accumulated due to my previous inability to provide effective interventions to those who have left their Orders. I am particularly pleased that I am now better equipped to address any existential crises that may arise in the future.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations for further research including similar survey using larger sample size across different geographical locations and longitudinal survey with qualitative approaches such as focused group as mixed methods. From the results of the research, it is recommended that the following dos and don'ts.

Do:

1. challenge pervasive abuse;
2. ensure a good quality of life;

3. offer counselling and psychotherapy for reducing anxiety; and  
pray.

Don't:

- 1.suffer in silence;
- 2.be authoritative;
- 3.neglect yourself and others;
- 4.give up hopes.

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## Appendix 1

### Definition of terms

**Apostates:** is one who renounces a religion.

**Apostasy:** Renunciation of a religious

**Community:** This refers to either the whole order (congregation) or to a local group of Sisters living together. Even two Sisters living together are referred to as a community.

**Congregation:** Refers to the whole group of the Sisters who belong to a particular group of religious life. It may also be referred to as an order or institute.

**Disaffiliate: Disassociate from a group**

**Evangelical Counsels:** A term from Catholic Canon Law referring to the vows taken by the Sisters. The vows are based on the example set by Jesus in the Gospels and hence are evangelical.

**Final Vows:** As part of initiation as a member of a religious congregation, Sisters take final vows which are referred to as perpetual vows by which they are admitted as full members of the congregation. Perpetual vows are usually taken 3–9 years after making the first profession of vows.

**Formation:** The process of initiating new members into the Spirit and mission of the religious congregation. Formation is on-going throughout the life of a religious.

**Formator (s):** These are the official designated personnel by the congregation whose job it is to train and orient the new members into religious life. Formators may also be referred to as candidates or novice mistresses/directresses.

**Habit:** This is the Rev Sisters' uniform

**Laity:** Members of the Church who are not part of the Church hierarchy. Sisters are laity.

**Negative affectivity:** Negative emotions or expression

**Novice:** Official name for candidates who are at the early stage of religious life. Their training lasts for two years; their place of abode is known as the novitiate.

**Postulant:** Official name for candidates who are at the first stage of religious life.

**Postulancy:** is the first stage of religious formation

**Religious Sister:** The title by which Sisters are referred to in the Church; often members of the religious life call each other Sister. They are also referred to as nuns.

**Significant:** Marked difference

**Sisters:** women who live, minister, and pray within the world. Their life is often called "active" or "apostolic" because they engage in the works of mercy and other ministries that take the Gospel to others where they are.

**Superior:** A term from Canon Law which denotes the Sister who is elected or appointed to oversee the congregation (order), a region, or a local community of women religious. Today most congregations refer to the superior as the local leader, servant Sister etc.

**Temporary Professed:** A term used to refer to Sisters who have made their first profession of vows after initial formation and are in the continuous process of discerning their call to religious life and their congregation towards making final vows.

**Vocation:** A call to a particular way of life, such as marriage, religious life or single life.

Before Vatican II this was used exclusively for religious life.

**Vows:** The vow is a solemn, public promise made to God. Most Sisters take three vows, namely chastity (celibacy), poverty and obedience. In some congregations, the unpronounced fourth vow is community which may be referred to as the small family unit of religious life.

## Appendix 2

### Letter, Participant information sheet, Consent form, Questionnaire and debrief form



Middlesex University School of Health and Social Sciences

Psychology Department

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

61-63 Fortune Green Road

London

NW6 1DR

Dear Sister,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to solicit your co-operation in filling the attached questionnaire to enable me conduct research on the topic titled: **A Study of Convent life and the Impact of Communal Living on Sisters, who disaffiliate from the Convent**

I would be grateful if the completed questionnaire could be posted to the address below on or before 25 May 2020 (that is 2 weeks from now).

No 60 Hillfoot Road

Romford,

Rm5 3LL

United Kingdom

Thank you for your anticipated support.

Yours sincerely,

Sr. Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu

Dear Sister,

Thank you for completing and returning the questionnaire that was sent in May before the deadline.

The next stage of my study is the retesting of the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. To achieve this goal, I would be grateful if you could support me to complete the attached questionnaire and return the completed questionnaire to the address below on or before 24 June 2020:

No 60 Hillfoot Road

Romford,

Rm5 3LL

United Kingdom

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Sr. Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu



Middlesex University School of Health and Social Sciences  
Psychology Department  
New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
61-63 Fortune Green Road  
London  
NW6 1DR

Dated: [September 2021]

## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **1. Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and take your time to decide whether you wish to take part. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

This research is conducted by Sr. Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from NSPC and Middlesex University

### **2. Study Title:**

“A Study of Convent life and the Impact of Communal Living on Sisters, who disaffiliate from the Convent ”.

#### **2a. Context**

Young women choose religious life for many reasons. Most common reasons are it offers opportunities to: live a selfless life and occupy a position of authority and influence; travel to exotic countries for missionary work; and escape the challenges associated with marital life and childbearing. However, the religious life also provides many challenges that might trigger potential Sister to disaffiliate with the religious order.

### **3. Purpose of the research**

The aim of this research is to assess the impact of the community on some Sisters who disaffiliate (willingly and unwillingly) from the convent with an objective to reduce further exit of future Sisters. This will be achieved by carrying out a survey for all Sisters (potential candidates, present- and existed- Sister). The research questions include: What predictors prompt disaffiliates to quit their religious life? What consequences flow from disaffiliation?

### **4. Consent**

Having read this information sheet, if you agree to take part, please sign the attached consent form before you answer the questionnaire. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to.

### **5. What will happen to my data?**

Data will be stored according to the BPS ethical guidelines, the Data Protection Act 2018 and in accordance with GDPR requirements. Although the questionnaires themselves are NOT confidential and all the responses will be anonymized, the confidential identifying personal details will be kept separately and stored securely encrypted and stored on a password protected laptop and paper copies will be held in a locked cabinet in the researcher's own home and will be destroyed after 10 years. Links will not be possible between identifiable data and coded or anonymous data. . Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Social Sciences Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits

### **6. What will happen if I want to withdraw?**

If at any time you do not wish to continue in this research you have to contact me on Phone: 07821255662 Email: [mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk](mailto:mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk) before data analysis begins in July 2020 indicating your intention to withdraw your data and citing your questionnaire reference number. The data will be removed immediately and confidentially destroyed.

### **7. What will happen to me if I take part?**

To take part please complete a set of questionnaires, based on your experience of pre and post convent life and the impact of community on some Sisters. Questionnaires will be circulated to you. It takes about 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Each questionnaire is identified by a unique reference number (serial number: 01 to 300) which should be noted by you the participant for reference purposes. The information from the questionnaire will be combined with the information from other participants for statistical analysis. The findings from this study will determine the best intervention the counselling psychologist will employ to assist the active Sisters and ex-sisters to move on. You will be given a stamped addressed envelope to return the questionnaires. Once to be completed the questionnaire at your convenient time and place, please return it within two weeks.

**8. What will you do with the information that I provide?**

Your participation is confidential and anonymous? Anonymous participation implies your name, and the name of your Order will not be required whilst the issue of confidentiality places a duty on the researcher not to disclose any information to anyone. The findings will be published at the end of analysis.

**9. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There is no risk known to be associated with this study. The fact that you are reading this information leaflet would mean that the research has been reviewed and approved by the NSPC Research Ethics Sub-Committee. Any risk predictors would have been identified and action plan in place to present or mediate those risks. If for whatever reasons, you have found some questions difficult to answer or remind you unpleasant experiences that make you upset, you can seek counselling, help and support in the Annex of this information leaflet.

**10. What are the possible advantages of taking part?**

You might feel better as a direct result of completing the questionnaire by taking part of the survey and contributing to the research. This research will be useful in equipping Counselling Practitioners with the knowledge about convent life to enable them fashion out early intervention to both active Sisters and Ex-Sisters who are struggling to continue with their religious calling/life. So, it is a worthy cause.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me at:

Sr. Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu  
New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
61-63 Fortune Green Road  
London  
NW6 1DR  
[mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk](mailto:mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study, you may contact my supervisor:

Prof. Ho Law,  
[Email: drholaw@gmail.com](mailto:drholaw@gmail.com)  
NSPC Ltd. 61-63 Fortune Green Road  
London NW6 1DR  
Phone: 01733760005  
Or  
The principal  
NSPC Ltd. 61-63 Fortune Green Road  
London NW6 1DR  
[Admin@nspc.org.uk](mailto:Admin@nspc.org.uk)  
0044 (0) 20 7624 0471



**Annex:**

**Crossroads Counselling**

Address: 144 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RY

**Phone:** 020 8981 8388

Email: [info@crossroadscounselling.org](mailto:info@crossroadscounselling.org) / [www.crossroadscounselling.org](http://www.crossroadscounselling.org)



**Middlesex University School of Health and Social Sciences**

**Psychology Department**

**Written Informed Consent**

**Title of study:** A Study of Convent life and the Impact of Communal Living on Sisters, who disaffiliate from the Convent.

**Researcher:** Sr. Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu Phone: 02074358067  
Email: [mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk](mailto:mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk) .

**Supervisor:** Prof. Ho Law,  
NSPC Ltd. 61-63 Fortune Green Road  
London NW6 1DR Email:  
Tel: 01733760005

I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet to keep and confirm that I have read the information sheet and understand that:

1. I will be required to complete a set of questionnaires on my experience of pre and post convent life and impact of community on some Sisters.
2. the aims and objectives of the research, as well as the risks and benefits of participating, have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so and request that my data is destroyed.

4. the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and providing that my consent was given.

5. confidential data collected will be encrypted and stored on a password protected laptop and paper copy in a locked cabinet in the researcher's own home which will be destroyed after 10 years.

6. the name of the religious Order will not be requested on the questionnaires.

7. data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Social Sciences Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits

I hereby to give my consent to take part of the research.

Researcher\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Questionnaire Sections**

Below is a questionnaire in 12 different sections (A to N). Each section measures a particular dimension of human behaviour. There are specific instructions for completing each sub-section. The author would be highly obliged if you could complete all the sections listed below:

Section A: Background information of the respondent

Section B: Submissive behaviour

Section C: Loneliness

Section D: Relationship Scale

Section E: Patient Health Questionnaire

Section F: Generalised Anxiety

Section G: Locus of Control

Section H: The F-Scale

Section I: Brief resilience Scale

Section J: Existential Anxiety Questionnaire

Section K: Meaning

Section L: Questionnaire for ex- women religious

Section M: The Predictors

Section N: General Question for active women religious

# Questionnaires

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## Introduction

The aim of this study is to carry out an in-depth study on pre and post convent life and the impact of the community on some Rev Sister who disaffiliate willingly and unwillingly from the convent with a view to curbing further exiting of potential Sisters. This questionnaire consists of 12 different sections (A to N). Each section measures a particular dimension of human behaviour. There are specific instructions for completing each sub-section. Please complete all the sections listed below:

**Section A: Please answer each question as accurately as possible by circling the correct answer or filling in the space provided.**

A1. What is your age?

1 ☐ 20- 29      2 ☐ 30-39      3 ☐ 40-49      4 ☐ 50-59      5 ☐ 60-69      6 ☐ 70-79      7 ☐ 80-89  
8 ☐ 90-99

A2. Your ethnic background?

1 ☐ White British   2 ☐ Black   3 ☐ American   4 ☐ Asian   5 ☐ Irish   6 ☐ Latino   7 ☐ Other

A3. Your gender?

1 Female ☐      2 Male ☐

A4. Locality where you are now

1 England ☐   2 Ireland ☐

A5. Level of education attained

1 No education... ☐ 2 GCSE... ☐ 3 A- Level ... ☐ 4 Higher national Certificate... ☐ 5 Higher National diploma... ☐ 6 first degree Graduate... ☐ 7 Masters... ☐ 8 Doctorate... ☐

A6. Your spiritual & religious belief:

1 ☐ Catholic.. ☐ 2 Christianity.. ☐ 3 Hinduism.. ☐ 4 Buddhism.. ☐ 5 Islam.. ☐ Other .....

A7. Years in religious life

1 ☐ 1-9      2 ☐ 10-19      3 ☐ 20- 29      4 ☐ 30-39      5 ☐ 40-49      6 ☐ 50-59      7 ☐ 60-69      8 ☐  
70-79      9 ☐ 80-89

How would you rate your overall quality of life?

Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Very much	An extreme amount
1	2	3	4	5

## Section B.

Below are a series of statements which describe how people act and feel about social situations. Tick the number to the right of the statements which best describes the degree to which a statement is true for you.

**Please use the following scale:**

**0 = NEVER 1 = RARELY 2 = SOMETIMES 3 = MOSTLY 4 = ALWAYS**

S/N	Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Mostly	Always
		0	1	2	3	4
B1.	I agree that I am wrong even though I know I'm not.					
B2.	I do things because other people are doing them, rather than because want to.					
B3.	I let others criticise me or put me down without defending myself					
B4.	I do what is expected of me even when I don't want to					
B5.	If I try to speak and others continue, I shut up					
B6.	I continue to apologise for minor mistakes					
B7.	I listen quietly if people in authority say unpleasant things about me					
B8.	I am not able to tell my friends when I am angry with them					
B9.	At meetings and gatherings, I let others monopolise the conversation					
B10.	I don't like people to look straight at me when they are talking					

## Section C

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Indicate how oft each of the statements below is descriptive of you

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
C1. How often do you feel that you are "in tune" with the people around you?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
*C2. How often do you feel part of a group of friends?	1	2	3	4
C3. How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone?	1	2	3	4
*C4. How often do you feel close to people?	1	2	3	4
C5. How often do you feel left out?	1	2	3	4
*C6. How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it?	1	2	3	4
*C7. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you?	1	2	3	4
C8. How often do you feel shy?	1	2	3	4
*C9. How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to?	1	2	3	4
*C10. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to?	1	2	3	4
C11. How often do you feel left out?	1	2	3	4
C12. How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful?	1	2	3	4
C13. How often do you feel that no one really knows you well?	1	2	3	4
C14. How often do you feel isolated from others?	1	2	3	4
*C15. How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it?	1	2	3	4
*C16. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you?	1	2	3	4
C17. How often do you feel shy?	1	2	3	4
C18. How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you?	1	2	3	4
C*19. How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to?	1	2	3	4
*C20. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to	1	2	3	4



## Section D.

**Instructions:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each question that best describes your stand:

- 1= not at all like me
- 2= rarely like me
- 3= somewhat like me
- 4= often like me
- 5= very like me

S/N	Questions	Not at all like me	Rarely like me	Somewh at like me	Often like me	Very like me
		1	2	3	4	5
D1.	I find it difficult to depend on others.					
D2.	I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.					
D3.	I worry about being abandoned.					
D4.	I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.					
D5.	I worry about being alone.					
D6.	My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away.					
D7.	I find it difficult to trust others completely.					
D8.	I worry about others getting too close to me					
D9.	I worry that others don't value me as much as I value them					
D10.	People are never there when you need them.					
D11.	I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me.					
D12.	I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me					
D13.	I worry about being abandoned					

## Section E.

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

(Use “✓” to indicate your answer).

S/ N	Questions	Not all	Several days	More than	Nearly everyday
		0	1	2	3
E1	Little interest or pleasure in doing things				
E2	Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless				
E3	Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much				
E4	Feeling tired or having little energy				
E5	Poor appetite or overeating				
E6	Feeling bad about yourself — or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down				
E7	Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television				
E8	Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite — being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual				
E9	Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way				

## Section F.

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all sure	Several days	Over half the days	Nearly every day
F1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
F2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
F3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
F4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
F5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
F6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
F7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all \_\_\_\_Somewhat difficult \_\_\_\_ Very difficult\_\_\_\_Extremely difficult-

## Section G.

For each question select the statement that you agree with the most (A or B)

A		B		
G1	Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.	A	Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.	B
G2	No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.		People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.	B
G3	I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.	A	Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.	B
G4	Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.	A	Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.	B
G5	When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.	A	It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to-be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.	B
G6	In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.	A	Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	B
G7	Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.	A	There really is no such thing as "luck."	B

G8	Many times, I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.	A	It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.	B
G9	People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.	A	There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.	B
G10	What happens to me is my own doing.	A	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	B

## Section H. The F-Scale

Kindly respond by indicating how much you agree or disagree with each statement

(Use “✓” to indicate your answer)

S/N	Questions	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
H1.	Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues people should learn.						
H2.	A person who has bad manners, habits, and breeding can hardly expect to get along with decent.						
H3.	If people would talk less and work more, everybody would be better off.						
H4.	Every person should have complete faith in some supernatural power whose decisions he obeys without question.						
H5.	People sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow up, they ought to get over them and settle down.						
H6.	No sane, normal, decent person could ever think of hurting a close friend or relative.						
H7.	Nobody ever learned anything important except through suffering.						
H8.	An insult to our honour should always be punished.						
H9.	When a person has a problem or worry, it is best for her not to think about it, but to keep busy with more cheerful things.						
H10.	I sometimes get rebellious ideas but as I grow up, I ought to get over them and settle down.						

## Section I.

Please respond to each item by Use “✓” to indicate your answer)

S/ N	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		0	1	2	3	5
I1.	I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.					
I2.	I have a hard time making it through stressful events.					
I3.	It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.					
I4.	It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.					
I5.	I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.					
I6.	I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life.					

**Section J.**

Kindly tick either YES/ NO

S/N	Questions	Yes	No
J1.	I often think about death, and this causes me anxiety.	Yes	No
*J2.	I am not anxious about fate because I am resigned to it.	Yes	No
J3.	I often feel anxious because I am worried that life might have no meaning.	Yes	No
*J4	I am not worried about nor think about being guilty.	Yes	No
J5	I often feel anxious because of feelings of guilt.	Yes	No
J6	I often feel anxious because I feel condemned.	Yes	No
*J7	I never think about emptiness	Yes	No
J8	I often think that the things that were once important in life are empty.	Yes	No
*J9.	I never feel anxious about being condemned.	Yes	No
*J10 .	I am not anxious about death because I am prepared for whatever it may bring.	Yes	No
*J11 .	I often think about fate, and it causes me to feel anxious.	Yes	No
*J12 .	I am not anxious about fate because I am sure things will work out.	Yes	No
*J13	I know that life has meaning.	Yes	No



## Section K.

**MLQ** Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:

S/N	Questions	Absolutely Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Can' t say True or	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Absolutely True
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
K1.	I understand my life's meaning.							
K2.	I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.							
K3.	I am always looking to find my life's purpose.							
K4.	My life has a clear sense of purpose.							
K5.	I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.							
K6.	I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.							
K7.	I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.							
K8.	I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life							
K9	My life has no clear purpose.							
K10 .	I am searching for meaning in my life.							

## Section L.

### Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)

Indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week.		Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremel y
PANAS 1	Interested	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 2	Distressed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 3	Excited	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 4	Upset	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 5	Strong	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 6	Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 7	Scared	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 8	Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 9	Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 10	Proud	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 11	Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 12	Alert	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 13	Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 14	Inspired	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 15	Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 16	Determined	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 17	Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 18	Jittery	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 19	Active	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 20	Afraid	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

## Session M.

Please answer the following question:

- (A) How likely do you think you will leave the Order within the next 12 months?

**Note:** If you have already left the Order, please select 10 on the scale.

Please circle a number (1 = extremely unlikely; ..... 9 = extremely likely; 10 = I already left the Order).

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- (B) What would be the probable reason for you to leave the Order?

.....  
.....

- (C) How would you describe the Vows of poverty in relation to disaffiliation?

.....  
.....

- (D) How would you describe the Vows of chastity in relation to disaffiliation?

.....  
.....

- (E) How would you describe the Vows of obedience in relation to disaffiliation?

.....  
.....

- (F) How likely do you think counselling/psychotherapy would have helped you to stay?

Please circle a number (1 = extremely unlikely; ..... 10 = extremely likely).

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

(G) If counselling/psychotherapy were available, how likely do you think you would seek its support?

1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10

## Section N.

Finally, please answer each question as accurately as possible by ticking as follows:

Absolutely not a reason = 1; Rarely a reason = 2; Somewhat a reason = 3; Often = 4;

Absolutely a reason = 5

To which extent would the following statements be the possible reason for you to leave the Order?

S/N	Questions	Absolute ly not a	Rarely a reason	Somewh at a reason	Often	Absolute ly a reason
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Ambition of Sisters to have a high position.					
2.	The authoritarian Leadership					
3.	No approval by Sisters' parents.					
4.	The dissatisfaction					
5.	The discrimination					
6.	The dispute (daily)					
7.	The employment.					
8.	The education level					
9.	The peer encouragement					
10.	The meaning.					
11.	The intention to marry.					
12.	The neglect.					
13.	The loneliness.					
14.	The punishment.					
15.	The power Struggle.					
16.	The Sisters' temperament					
17.	The stress from the apostolate and community life					
18.	The submissive rather than Sister being assertive.					
19.	Lack of self-control.					
20.	The social inequality in the religious life.					
21.	The no cordial relationship					
22.	The resilience					

Thank you for your participation.

End of the questionnaire



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### **DEBRIEFING SHEET**

**Researcher:** Maria Ugochinyere Nwachukwu Tel: 02074358067  
email: mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk

**Supervisor:** Prof Ho Law, Tel: 01733760005 Email: drholaw@gmail.com

**RESEARCH TITLE:** “A Study of Convent life and the Impact of Communal Living on Sisters, who disaffiliate from the Convent”.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project and for making a valuable contribution to our knowledge about Pre and post convent life and the impact of the community on some Sister who disaffiliate willingly and unwillingly from the convent.

This research was designed to explore the phenomenon of disaffiliation in relation to experiences encountered by active Sister and ex-sisters in the community. The aim of this research is to assess the impact of the community on the Sister, with a view to reducing further exit of future Sister. This was achieved by carrying out an in-depth study on pre and post convent life of some Sister including those who disaffiliate willingly and unwillingly from the convent with a view to curbing further exiting of potential Sister. This research will be useful in equipping Counselling Practitioners with the knowledge about convent life to enable them to develop early intervention to both active Sister and Ex-Sisters who are struggling to continue with their religious calling/life.

The data collected will be anonymised and the confidential identifying personal details will be encrypted and stored on a password protected laptop in the researcher's own home and paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet. The confidential data will be destroyed after 10 years.

If you would like to be provided with the results of the study, you can email me at [mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk](mailto:mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (Tel: [02074358067](tel:02074358067) email: [mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk](mailto:mn724@live.mdx.ac.uk)).

If you wish to explore any issues about this research, you can contact **Crossroads Counselling**

Address: 144 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RY

**Phone:** 020 8981 8388

Email: [info@crossroadscounselling.org](mailto:info@crossroadscounselling.org) / [www.crossroadscounselling.org](http://www.crossroadscounselling.org)

If you have any concerns or wish to make a complaint about the conduct of this research please contact my supervisor,

Prof. Ho Law

NSPC Ltd. 61-63 Fortune Green Road

London NW6 1DR

[Admin@nspc.org.uk](mailto:Admin@nspc.org.uk)

Tel: 01733760005

Or

The principal

NSPC Ltd. 61-63 Fortune Green Road

London NW6 1DR

[Admin@nspc.org.uk](mailto:Admin@nspc.org.uk)

0044 (0) 20 7624 0471

Thank you once again for your participation in this research study.

Appendix 3

Scoring sheet Questionnaire

Below is a questionnaire in 12 different sections (A to L). Each section measures a particular dimension of human behaviour. There are specific instructions for completing each sub-section. The author would be highly obliged if you could complete all the sections listed below:

**Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006).** The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 53, 80-93.

Steger, M. F., & Shin, J. Y. (2010). The relevance of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire to therapeutic practice: A look at the initial evidence. *International Forum on Logotherapy*, 33, 95-104.

**MLQ** Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:

<b>Absolutely</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Can't Say</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Absolutely</b>
<b>Untrue</b>	<b>Untrue</b>	<b>Untrue</b>	<b>True or False</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>True</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

1.

I understand my life’s meaning.
2.

I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
3.

I am always looking to find my life’s purpose.
4.

My life has a clear sense of purpose.
5.

I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
6.

I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
7.

I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
8.

I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.
9.

My life has no clear purpose.
10.

I am searching for meaning in my life.





MLQ scoring:

Presence = 1, 4, 5, 6, & 9-reverse-coded

Search = 2, 3, 7, 8, & 10

The copyright for this questionnaire is owned by the University of Minnesota. This questionnaire is intended for free use in research and clinical applications. Please contact Michael F. Steger prior to any such non-commercial use. This questionnaire may not be used for commercial purposes.

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) is a 10-item measure of the Presence of Meaning in Life, and the Search for Meaning in Life. It is free to use for educational, therapeutic, and research purposed. Commercial use is prohibited without permission. I ask that you contact me to let me know how you're using it and let me know what you find out. You can download a copy [here](#):

**The Meaning in Life Questionnaire - How the MLQ is used**

## Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)

Indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week.	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
PANAS 1 Interested	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 2 Distressed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 3 Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 4 Upset	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 5 Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 6 Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 7 Scared	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 8 Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 9 Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 10 Proud	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 11 Irritable	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 12 Alert	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 13 Ashamed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 14 Inspired	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 15 Nervous	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 16 Determined	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 17 Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 18 Jittery	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 19 Active	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 20 Afraid	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**Scoring:**

**Positive Affect Score:** Add the scores on items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect.

Mean Scores: 33.3 (SD $\pm$ 7.2)

**Negative Affect Score:** Add the scores on items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with lower scores representing lower levels of negative affect.

Mean Score: 17.4 (SD  $\pm$  6.2)

**Your scores** on the PANAS: Positive: \_                      Negative: \_\_\_\_

Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(6), 1063.

## Appendix 4

### Variables abbreviations with their meaning

Variable	SPSS Var	Meaning
ID	ID	Identifier
Age	Age	Age
Ethnicity	Ethnicity	Ethnicity
Gender	Gender	Gender
Place	Place	Place
Education	Education	Education Level
Religion	Religion	Religion
Yrs of prof	Yrs of prof	Years of profession
Quality lif	Quality lif	Quality life
Sb	Sb	Submissive behaviour
Ln	Ln	Loneliness
R	R	Relationship
PHQ	PHQ	Depression
GAD	GAD	Anxiety
Sc	Sc	Self-control
F	F	Authoritarian Leadership
Rs	Rs	Resilience
Ax	Ax	Existential Anxiety
Mp	Mp	Purposefulness
Ms	Ms	Searching Meaning
M	M	Meaning
AffP	AffP	Positive Affect
AffN	AffN	Negative Affect
lkly leave	lkly leave	likelihood of leaving
pl	Pl	probability of leaving
Lsr	Lsr	likelihood of Remaining
Coun ben	Coun ben	belief of counselling helpful
support	support	likelihood of seeking support
A	Ambition	Ambition
Al	Authorita	Authoritarian Leadership
Ap	Papproval	Approval (parental)
D	Dissatisfa	Dissatisfaction
Dc	Discrimin	Discrimination
Dd	Dispute	Dispute (daily)
E	Employment	Employment
Ed	Leveducat	Educational level

Ep	Peer enco	Peer encouragement
M	Meaning	Meaning
Mi	Int Marry	Intention to Marry
N	Neglect	Neglect
Ln	Lonliness	Loneliness
P	Punishme	Punishment
Ps	Power str	Power Struggle
T	Tempram	Temperament
S	Stress	Stress
Sb	Submissiv	Submissive behaviour
Sc	Lackofself	Self-control
Se	Inequality	Social equality
R	Norelation	Relationship
Rs	Resilience	Resilience

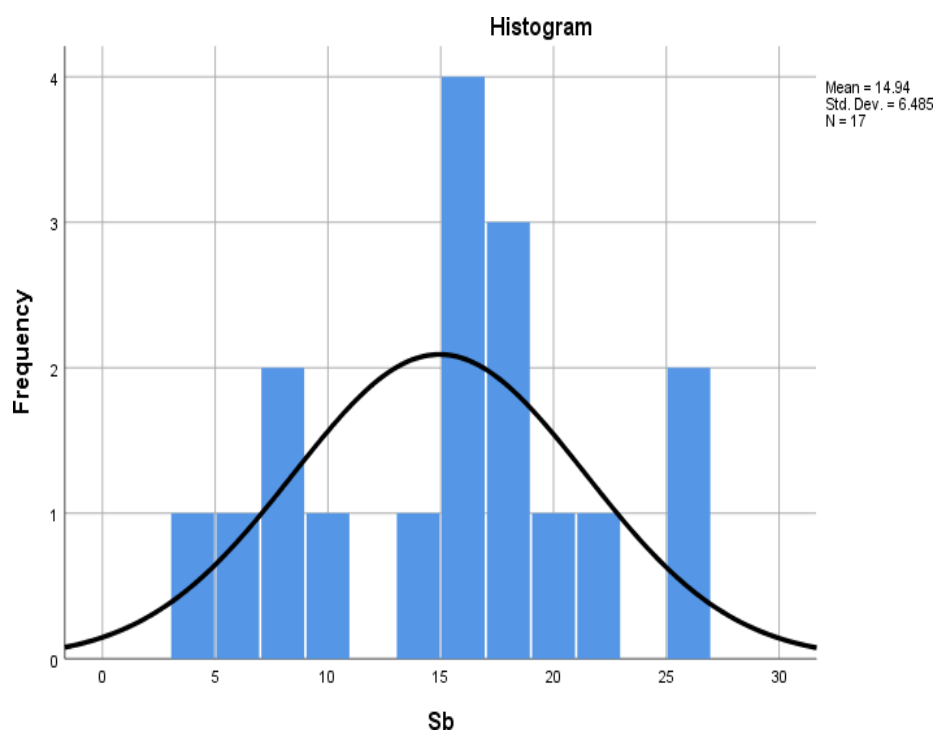
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## Appendix 4.1

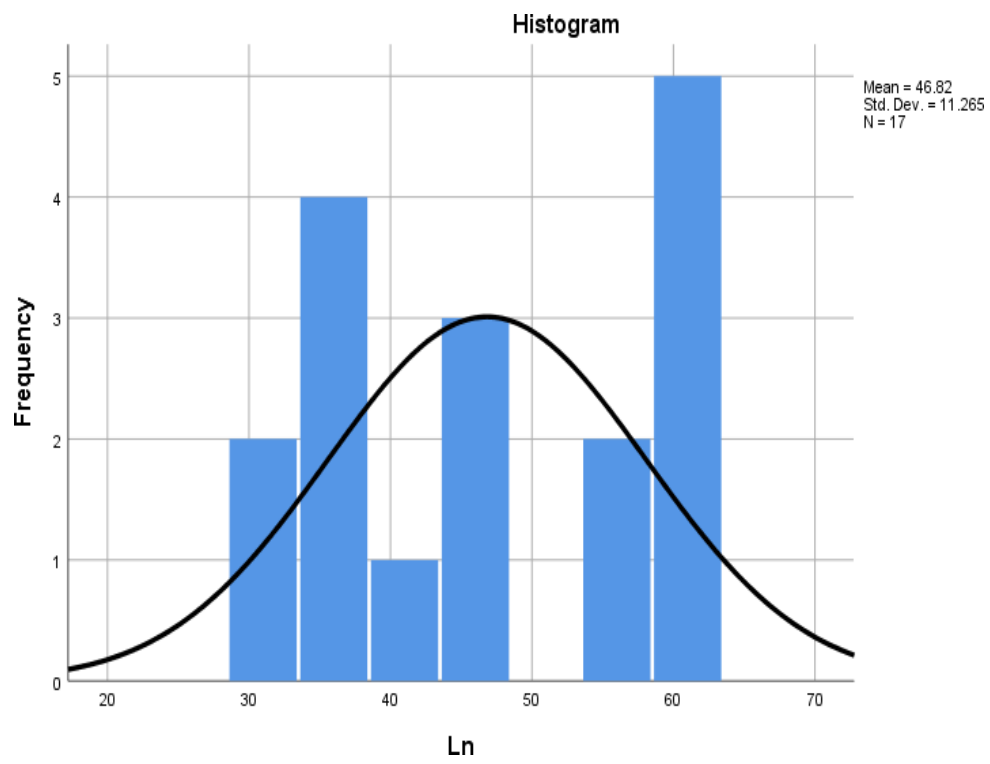
**Descriptive Statistics Table**

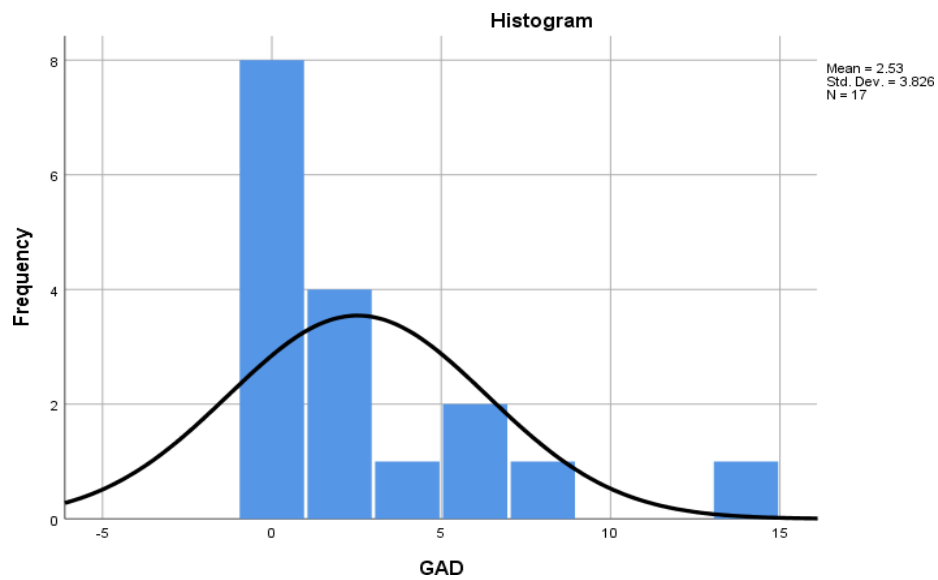
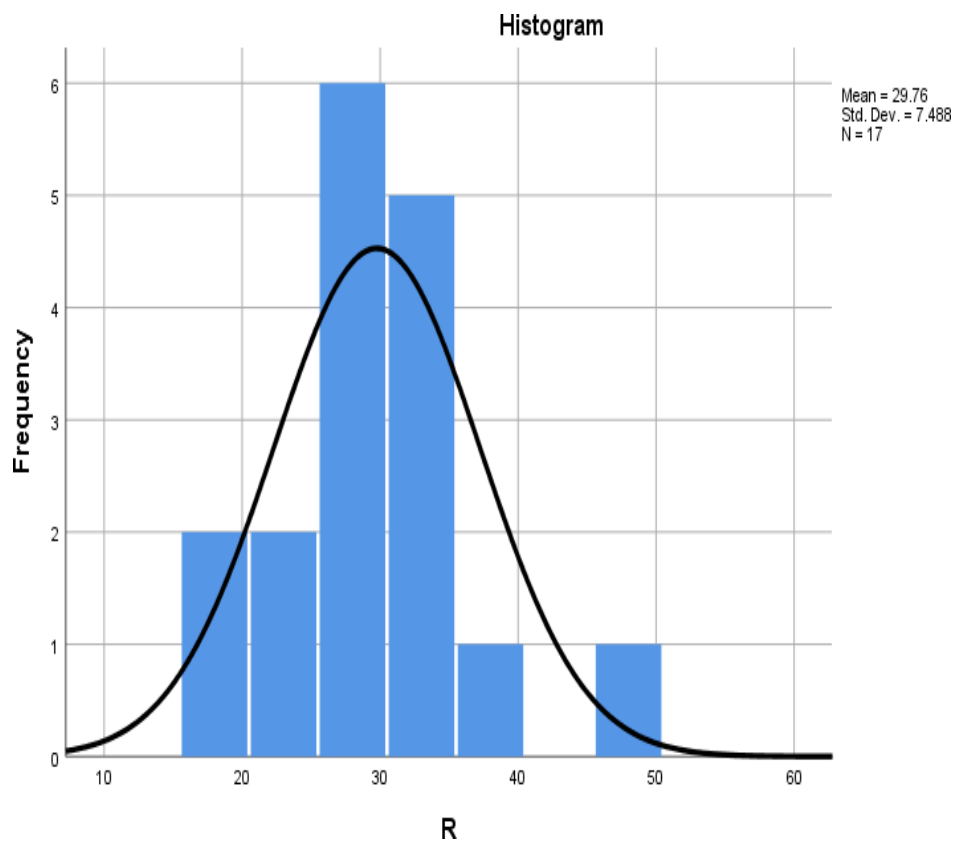
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Age	259	1	7	3.61	1.504	.245	.151	-.498	.302
Education	259	1	8	5.35	1.396	-1.197	.151	1.209	.302
Yrs of profession	259	1	7	3.13	1.608	.519	.151	-.654	.302
Quality life	259	0	5	3.00	.898	-.227	.151	.212	.302
Submissive behaviour	259	1.00	3.30	1.6943	.35297	.733	.151	1.616	.302
Loneliness	259	1.90	3.00	2.4415	.22092	-.036	.151	-.224	.302
Relationship	259	1.15	4.08	2.2801	.49583	.233	.151	.349	.302
Depression	259	.00	1.56	.6834	.27279	.540	.151	.497	.302
Anxiety	259	.00	1.57	.5328	.35387	.443	.151	-.351	.302
Self-control	259	.00	.90	.4520	.15294	-.184	.151	.449	.302
Authoritarian	259	2.30	4.90	3.5861	.52237	-.205	.151	-.097	.302
Leadership									
Resilience	259	1.33	3.33	2.1837	.45280	.170	.151	-.806	.302
Existential Anxiety	259	.31	.77	.5554	.11676	.132	.151	-.798	.302
Searching Meaning	259	1.60	6.60	4.6185	.85488	-.036	.151	-.244	.302
Purposefulness	259	1.20	6.00	3.3274	.98247	.512	.151	-.308	.302
Positive Affect	259	2.50	4.60	3.4004	.35888	.324	.151	-.233	.302
Negative Affect	259	1.00	3.80	2.4839	.34961	-.542	.151	2.779	.302
Ex- Sisters	259	0	1	.26	.439	1.109	.151	-.777	.302
Sisters with Order	259	0	1	.74	.439	-1.109	.151	-.777	.302
belief of counselling	259	1	10	5.24	2.651	.218	.151	-.669	.302
helpful									
Seeking support	259	1	10	6.05	2.201	-.110	.151	.019	.302
Ambition	259	1	5	3.20	1.259	-.224	.151	-.847	.302
Authoritarian	259	1	5	3.49	1.243	-.500	.151	-.568	.302
Leadership									
Approval (parental)	259	1	5	2.68	1.198	.168	.151	-.860	.302
Dissatisfaction	259	1	5	3.22	1.178	-.341	.151	-.742	.302
Discrimination	259	1	5	2.80	1.202	.115	.151	-.848	.302
Dispute (daily)	259	1	6	2.54	1.387	.426	.151	-.969	.302
Employment	259	1	5	2.29	1.290	.713	.151	-.600	.302
Educational level	259	1	5	2.17	1.145	.645	.151	-.633	.302
Peer encouragement	259	1	5	2.71	1.184	.078	.151	-.868	.302

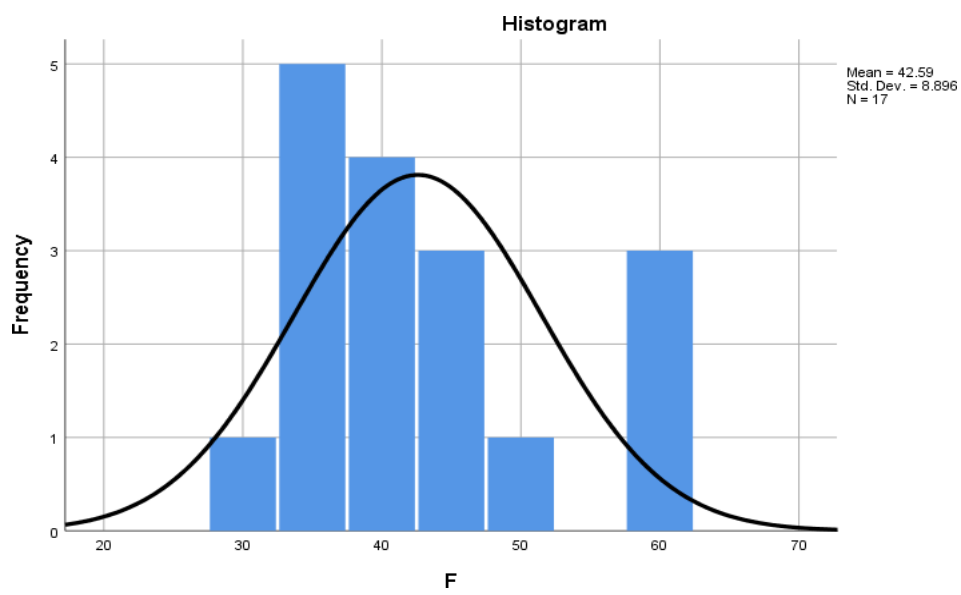
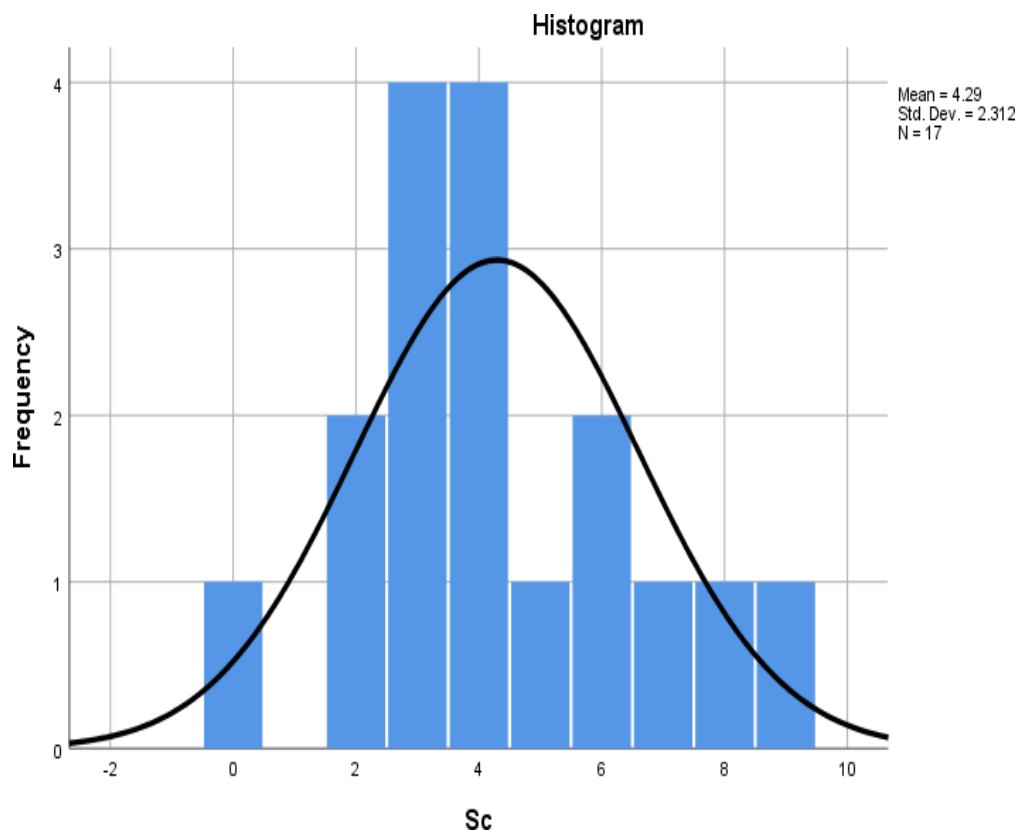
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Meaning	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
Intention to Marry	259	1	5	2.68	1.315	.220	.151	-1.008	.302
Neglect	259	1	5	3.50	1.437	-.549	.151	-1.041	.302
Loneliness	259	1	5	2.44	1.355	.557	.151	-.882	.302
Punishment	259	1	5	2.29	1.194	.684	.151	-.378	.302
Power Struggle	259	1	5	2.94	1.206	-.135	.151	-.819	.302
Temperament	259	1	5	2.52	1.274	.375	.151	-.976	.302
Stress	259	1	5	2.83	1.309	.248	.151	-1.003	.302
Submissive behaviour	259	1	5	2.63	1.359	.314	.151	-1.123	.302
Self-control	259	1	5	2.79	1.189	.145	.151	-.779	.302
Social equality	259	1	5	2.41	1.121	.413	.151	-.531	.302
Relationship	259	0	5	2.71	1.263	.187	.151	-.937	.302
Resilience	259	0	5	1.41	.900	2.500	.151	6.158	.302
Valid N (listwise)	259								

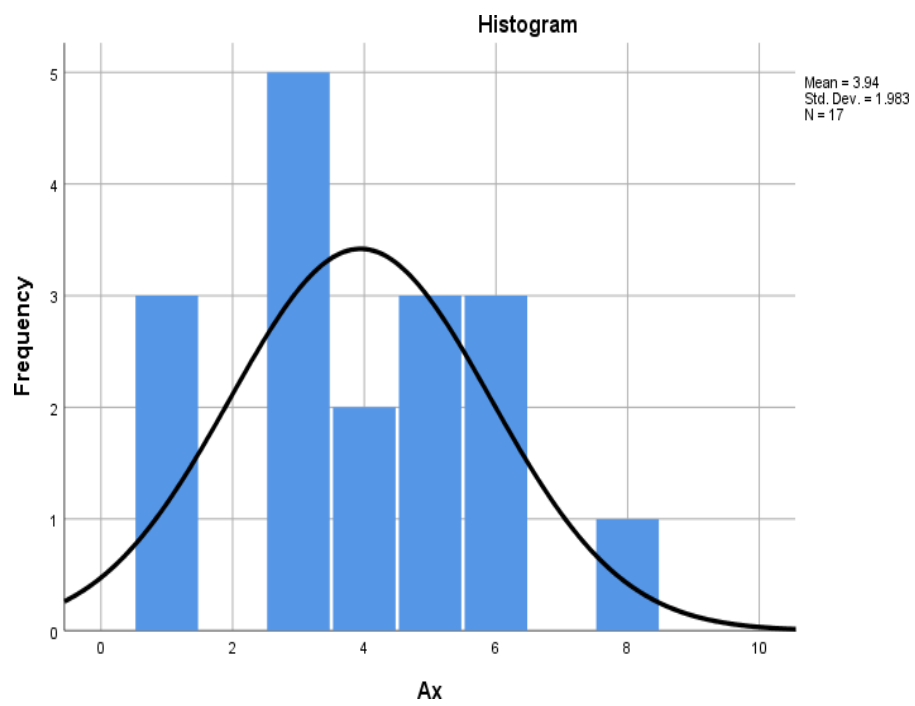
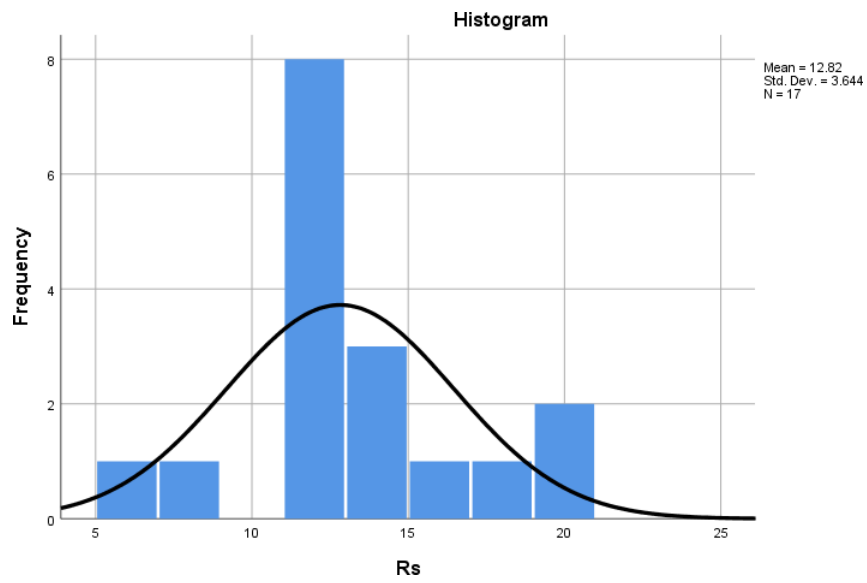


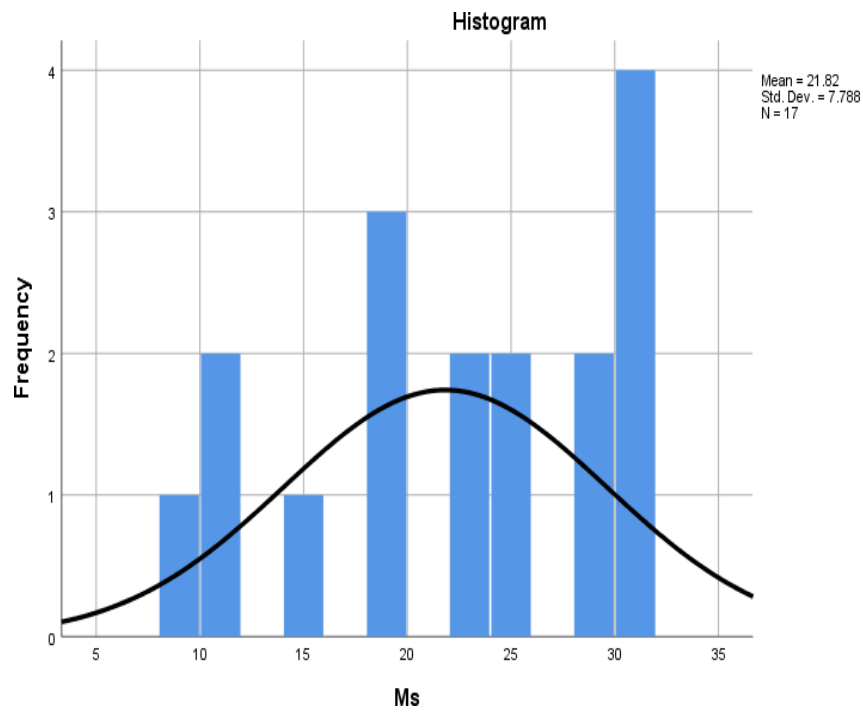
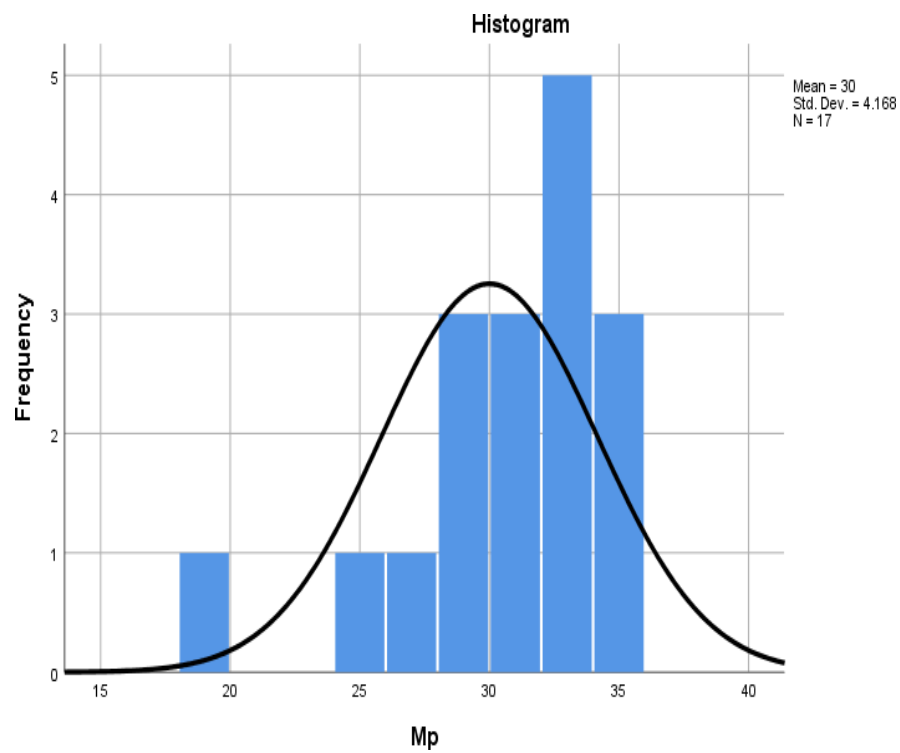


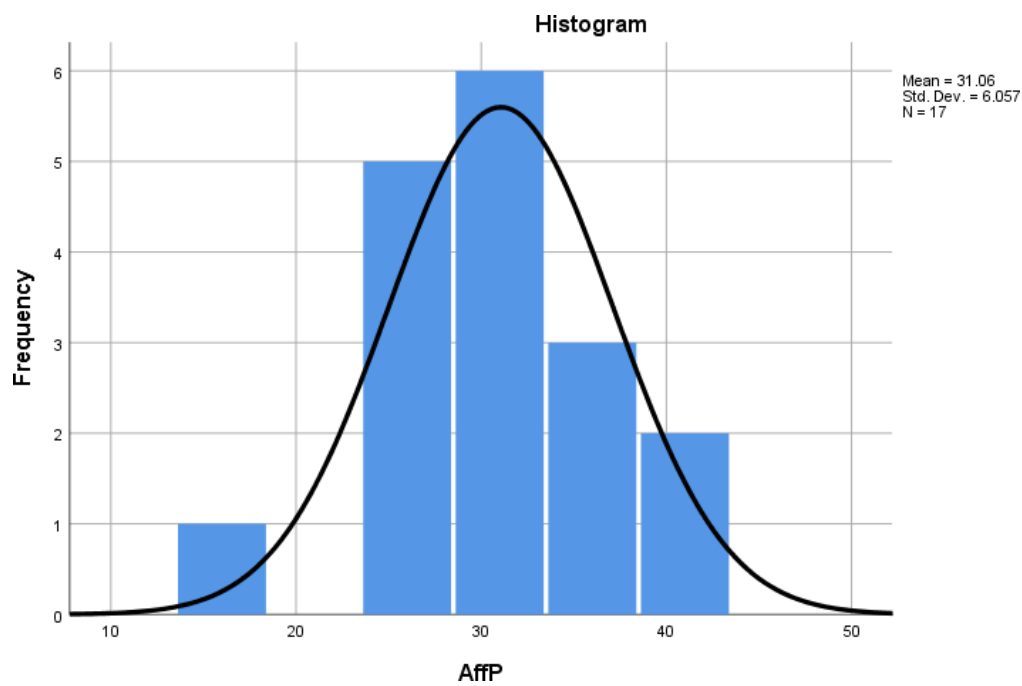
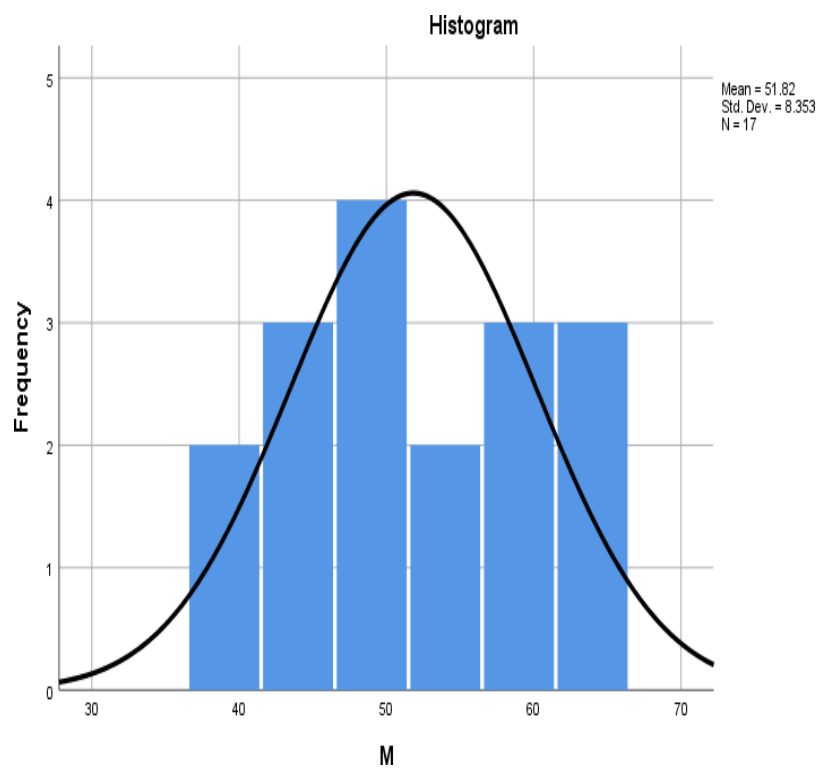


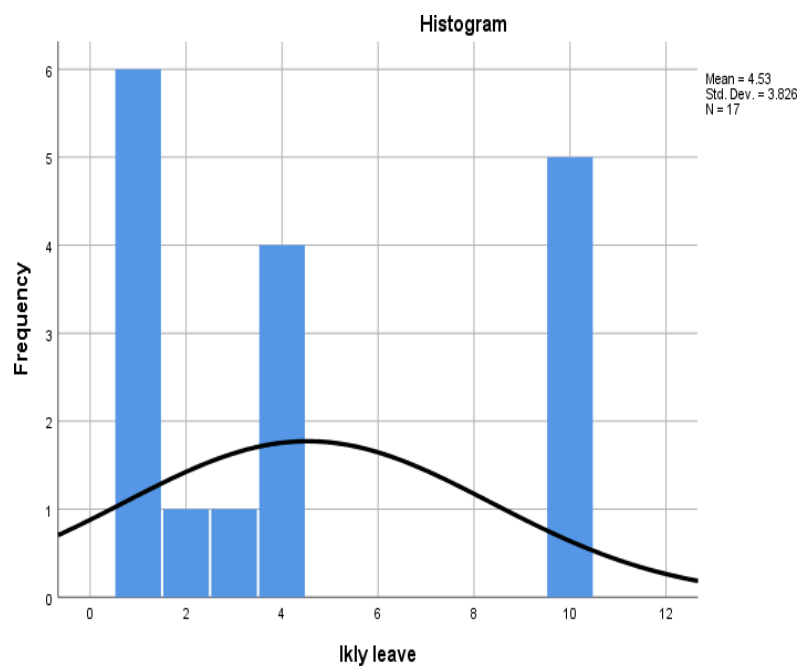
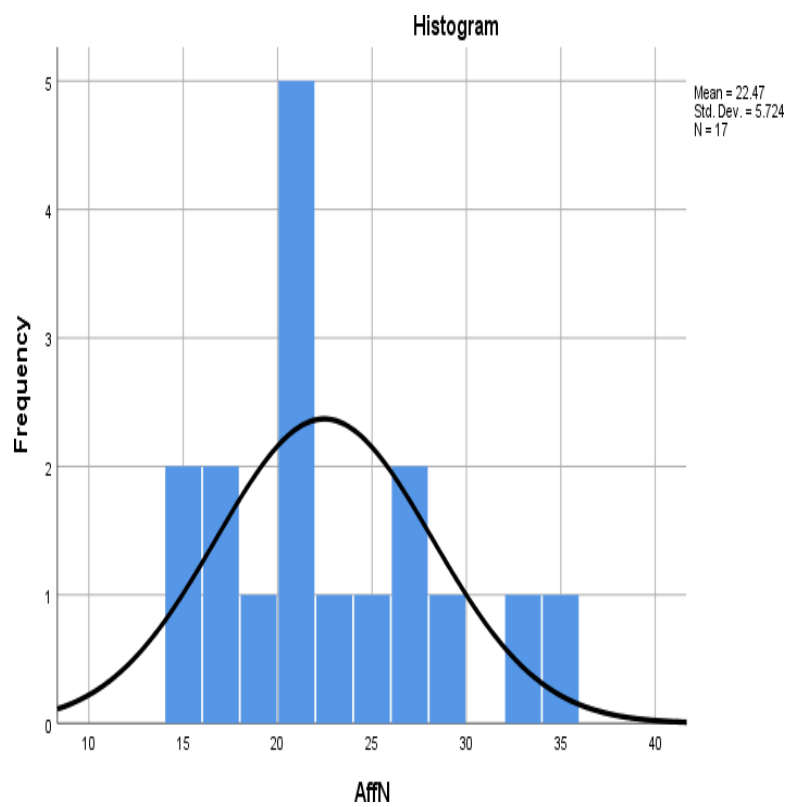


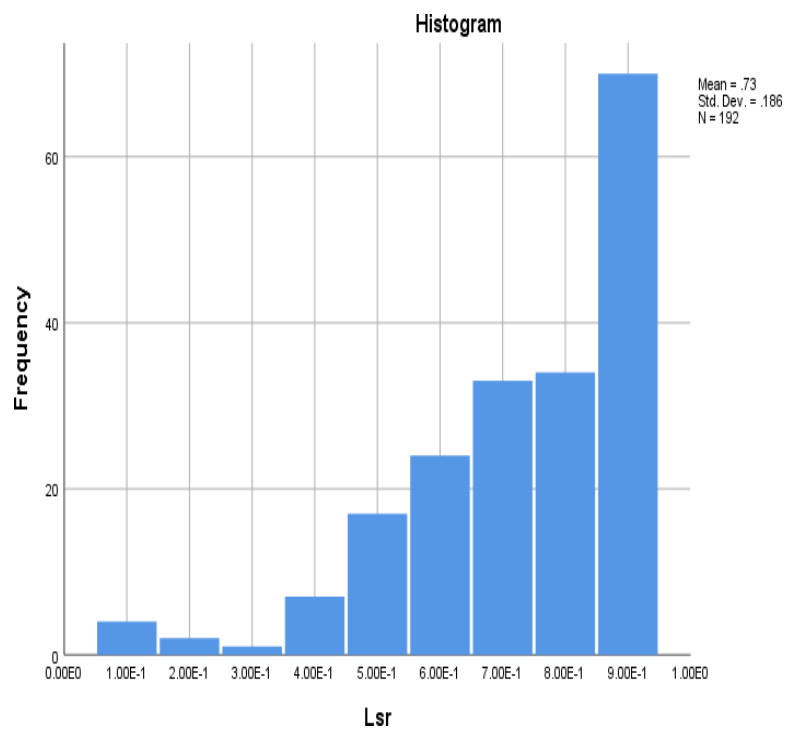














**Group Statistics**

	Remain	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Quality lif	Remain	192	2.94	.913	.066
	Left	67	3.18	.833	.102
Sb	Remain	192	1.6948	.36103	.02605
	Left	67	1.6929	.33142	.04049
R	Remain	192	2.2813	.48361	.03490
	Left	67	2.2767	.53312	.06513
PHQ	Remain	192	.6869	.26889	.01941
	Left	67	.6733	.28550	.03488
GAD	Remain	192	.5112	.34514	.02491
	Left	67	.5949	.37352	.04563
Sc	Remain	192	.4505	.15620	.01127
	Left	67	.4561	.14427	.01763
F	Remain	192	3.5516	.53861	.03887
	Left	67	3.6851	.46229	.05648
Rs	Remain	192	2.1623	.46030	.03322
	Left	67	2.2448	.42800	.05229
AX	Remain	192	.5577	.11325	.00817
	Left	67	.5488	.12696	.01551
Ms	Remain	192	4.5573	.83963	.06059
	Left	67	4.7940	.88006	.10752
Mp	Remain	192	3.3708	.99758	.07199
	Left	67	3.2030	.93387	.11409
AffP	Remain	192	3.3818	.35275	.02546
	Left	67	3.4537	.37349	.04563
AffN	Remain	192	2.5245	.33390	.02410
	Left	67	2.3677	.36964	.04516
Coun ben	Remain	192	5.29	2.520	.182
	Left	67	5.12	3.013	.368
support	Remain	192	6.11	2.128	.154
	Left	67	5.87	2.405	.294
Ambition	Remain	192	3.05	1.229	.089
	Left	67	3.63	1.253	.153
Authoritan	Remain	192	3.31	1.259	.091
	Remain	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
				Deviation	Mean
	Left	67	4.00	1.044	.128
Papproval	Remain	192	2.73	1.167	.084
	Left	67	2.55	1.283	.157
Dissatisf	Remain	192	3.27	1.188	.086
	Left	67	3.07	1.146	.140
Discrimin	Remain	192	2.83	1.218	.088
	Left	67	2.73	1.162	.142
Dispute	Remain	192	2.59	1.407	.102
	Left	67	2.40	1.326	.162
Employment	Remain	192	2.27	1.277	.092
	Left	67	2.36	1.334	.163
Leveducat	Remain	192	2.08	1.108	.080
	Left	67	2.42	1.220	.149
Peer enco	Remain	192	2.64	1.141	.082

## Appendix 4.2

### Test-retest reliability

Correlation Coefficient	K's tau_b	Spearman's rho
Yrs of prof	1.000**	1.000**
Quality lif	1.000**	1.000**
Sb	.615**	.674**
Ln	.672**	.654**
R	.931**	.979**
PHQ	.942**	.985**
GAD	.827**	.885**
Sc	.508**	.603*
F	.737**	.828**
Rs	.826**	.910**
Ax	.460*	0.478
Mi	.633**	.749**
Ms	.566**	.619**
M	.604**	.699**
AffP	.550**	.614**
AffN	.863**	.951**
lkly leave	.909**	.965**
pl	.677**	.692**
Lsr	.909**	.965**
Coun ben	.963**	.987**
support	.867**	.987**
Ambition	.737**	.758**
Authorita	.859**	.893**
Papproval	.796**	.872**
Meaning	.741**	.788**
Int Marry	.911**	.946**
Neglect	.628**	.691**
Lonliness	.875**	.915**
Punishme	.603**	.636**
Power str	.645**	.667**
Tempram	.588**	.656**
Stress	.600**	.635**
Submissiv	.913**	.954**
Lackofself	.901**	.931**
Inequality	.702**	.715**
Norelation	.856**	.894**
Resilience	.758**	.787**
Dissatisfa	.758**	.736**
Discrimin	.733**	.746**

Correlation coefficie	K's tau_b	Spearman's rho
Dispute	.811**	.854**
Employment	.796**	.829**
Leveducat	.901**	.936**
Peer enco	.835**	.890**
MEAN	0.775	0.821
MAX	1	1
MIN	0.508	0.603
Exception		
Ax	0.46	0.478072

---

## Appendix 4.3

### Literature review Database search results

*Table: Databases used for the systematic literature reviews*

JSTOR,
Psych- Articles search with Psych INFO MEDLINE PubMed

*Table: Literature search for the predictors leading to disaffiliation*

Search	Search Term	JSTOR	Psych- Articles	MEDLI NE	PubMed
First Search	Nuns living in the convent	11,323	1	0	2
Second Search	Catholic nuns disaffiliatio n	27	2	0	0
Third Search	Catholic nuns leaving the convent	4,847	2	0	1
Fourth Search	Growth and declining catholic nuns	14	5	0	0
Fifth  Search	Predictors  leading nun's disaffiliatio	226	2	0	0

	n				
Sixth Search	Meaning making	128	1	120,293	0
Seventh Search	Meaning making in hard situations by Catholic nuns	107	2	0	25
Eighth Search	Meaning making by nuns	24	0	22	1
Ninth Search	The impact of prayer on Catholic nun's disaffiliation	114,329	2	0	25

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## **Appendix 4.4**

### **The link for the raw data**

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WAUt53s9fmm\\_Y6Eeh1HjrKNfE-s-9kKO/edit#gid=1792957725](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WAUt53s9fmm_Y6Eeh1HjrKNfE-s-9kKO/edit#gid=1792957725)