The Influence of Religion on Stress and Coping of College Students

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Abstract: **The focus of this study is to investigate the association of religion on college student's stress and coping. The study use Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) with 10 items and the COPE Inventory (COPE) with 60 items. Total of 287 undergraduate students participated in the study with an age range of 18-57 years. The sample was made up of Male 98 (34%) and female (189) 66% participants. The findings indicate non-traditional students have a higher intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment than traditional students. Students who score high on both intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment have higher life satisfaction than those students who score low on religious commitment. Female college students score higher on religious coping than male college students. In addition, students who have high social support also have higher level of coping with stress compared to students with low social support.**

Keywords: **stress, coping, intrapersonal, interpersonal, non-traditional, social support.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is to investigate the association of religion on college student's stress and coping. The term religion is associated with many different definitions and therefore no single definition will incorporate the varied set of traditions, practices, and ideas which constitute religion. However the belief in a religion has shown to be beneficial for people dealing with stress in their lives. Previous research has shown that religion has a beneficial influence on both positive and negative outcomes related to college students stress (Merrill, 2009). People with high scores of religiosity also have an increased sense of well-being (Abdel-Khalek, 2010).

Religion has been found to positively affect college students grades, achievement and satisfaction levels. Students who attend religious services reported higher grades and students who identify themselves as religious reported studying more, partying less, and spent more time in extracurricular activities (Mooney, 2010). College students who see themselves as religious report a significant and positive effect on students' satisfaction at college (Mooney, 2010). Evidence has also shown that college students who associate with a level of religion have fewer symptoms of depression than those students who claim no religion (Phillips, 2006). Most college students experience some form of stress during their academic career. Stress negatively affects the body, mood, and behavior, while chronic stress can lead to severe health problems (Mayo, 2016). Li (2013) found that lower stressed college students are more likely to routinely practice health-promoting behaviors than higher stressed students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have examined the connection between religion and spirituality among college students. One study revealed that college students have an overall moderate level of spirituality, with female college students indicating a higher measure of religiosity than male college students (Dennis, Muller, Miller, & Banerjee, 2004). Religion has been shown in studies to be associated with positive adjustment and overall well-being (Ross, Handal, Clark, & Vander Wal, 2009). Religious participation among college students has been proven to provide help in coping with stressful life events (Pargament, Poloma, & Tarakeshwar, 1997).

A college or university environment can offer students a variety of difficult and stressful situations (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, & Phillips, 1990; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). Attending a college or university alone can be a large source of stress for students and a majority of students report daily college life is more stressful than expected (Compas, Wagner, Slavin, & Vannatta, 1986; Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000). Some factors including academic requirements, curricula, teaching practices, social institution and climate, are sources of stress for college students (Astin, 1993). Often, these educational level factors can become a source of chronic stress for college students (Murphy & Archer, 1996; Tennant, 2002). A survey of undergraduate students found 77% of students experienced moderate stress and 10% of students experienced serious stress; this stress was directly related to academic performance and workload (Abouserie, 1994).

In addition, past studies have investigated the coping strategies among college students. There are many ways a college student can cope with stress, of which can have positive or negative outcome on their life and well-being (Deckro et al., 2002; Macan et al., 1990; Struthers, Perry, & Menec, 2000). Religious-spiritual coping can be defined as "a process that people engage in to attain psycho-moral strength in stressful circumstances" (Bergin, 1983). Religious coping is a set of living standards and values and individual uses in stressful situations (Khan, Mughal, & Khan, 2013). Previous studies found college students coping abilities are associated with perceived stress and mental health (Chang, 1998; Halamandaris & Power, 1999). Religion has also been found to have significant effects on the ability to cope in college students (Merrill et al., 2009).

College Students and Religion:

A survey of 112,000 college freshman resulted in 67% of the students reported praying and 80% reported believing in God, however most of these students did not have a specific religious preference (Finder, 2007). Of the college students that were surveyed in the Li and Lindsey (2013) study, approximately 50% of females and 43% of males believed their lives have purpose and 51% of females and 43% of males were aware of what was important to them in life.

Research found spirituality had a positive effect on perceived wellness in college students (Adams, Bezner, Drabbs, Zambrano, & Steinhardt, 2000). Salsman, Brown, Bretching, and Carlson (2005) found a relationship between prayer fulfillment and life satisfaction in college students. Other studies have shown a positive relationship between spirituality and good health in college students (Ellison & Smith, 1991; Koenig, McCulough, & Larson, 2001; Adams et al., 2000). Additionally, a positive correlation exists between religion and well-being throughout several cultural samples (Myers & Diener, 1995). Anye, Gallien, Bian, and Moulton (2013) investigated the relationship between college students identifying with a religion and health-related quality of life. This research discovered that religious activity was significantly associated with student's healthy days, fewer unhealthy days, and general health (Anye et al, 2013).

Research advises college students had a less decline of religious beliefs and practices than youth who did not go to college (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Students who were religious in high school managed the transition to college differently than students who were not religious in high school (Lehmann, 2007). A survey of more than 100,000 college students from 236 colleges and universities revealed approximately 80% of students believe in God and attend religious services occasionally (UCLA, 2005). American students who identified with the Christian faith scored a significantly higher mean score for happiness and love of life than their international peers identifying with other religions; international students who did not identify with the Christian faith obtained a higher mean score on the depression scale than American students (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2010).

In addition the UCLA (2005) study found college students who partake in religious practices report (1) higher satisfaction of social life, (2) more positive interaction with others on campus, (3) greater satisfaction of one's college career, and (4) higher grade point averages (GPAs). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) polled roughly 150,000 college students from 461 college and universities across the United States and found students that participate frequently in religious activities have a higher level of engagement in campus life and spend less time relaxing or socializing (Kuh & Gonyea, 2005). Students who attend religious services at least once a week during their senior year of high school report higher grades at college compared to students who did not attend religious services, and students who saw themselves as religious reported studying more, partying less, and spent more time in extracurricular activities (Mooney, 2010).

Phillips and Henderson (2006) found a definitive link between self-reported religiousness and symptoms of depression by students who identify at some level with religion had few symptoms than those students who claimed no identification with religion (Phillips & Henderson, 2006). Religiousness provided a protective factor against depression for college students who scored lower in attachment to homesickness, whereas, those high in attachment to homesickness were found to not have a significant predictor of depression due to religiousness (Longo & Kim-Spoon, 2013).

For individuals who have faith in God, religion can cause a person to view "bad" events in life as an opportunity for growth and give meaning and purpose in life's challenges (Merrill et al., 2009). Religion and faith in God changes the way an individual views life by believing God is aware of their needs and will help them suitably (Masters, Hill, Kircher, Lensegrav Benson, & Fallon, 2004). Research confirms religious interventions, including referencing scripture passages, teaching religious concepts, encouraging forgiveness, and involving religious community resources, during psychotherapy for clients have been found helpful and useful (Martinez, Smith, & Barlow, 2007).

When individuals were scored on levels of religion, it was found that participants who scored low on religion had a mean score above the cutoff for individuals in distress and need of psychological treatment, whereas participants who scored high on religion scored below the cutoff (Fabricatore et al., 2004). Ross et al. (2008) found individuals who believe their relationship with God is a vital part of daily life are more likely to engage in strategies which lean on God through the problem solving stage instead of putting the entire responsibility on themselves. Byrd and McKinney (2012) added that strong identity in a religion, coping abilities, confidence in communication skills and academics, heterosexual orientation, and social engagement is directly correlated to positive mental health.

College Students and Stress:

Colleges and universities are reporting a high number of students in psychological stress (University of California, 2006). Of the campus counseling centers surveyed in 2008, 95% identified significant increase in mental issues among current college students (Gallagher, 2008). Several colleges have reported a large increase in college students use of counseling services (Kitzrow, 2003; Berger, 2002; Goetz, 2002; Voelker, 2003), more severe symptoms of stress (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Kadison & Digeronimo, 2004), and increased length of treatment (Levine & Cureton, 1998).

The college or university environment itself can lead to many stressful situations. College students have reported common stressors including time-management issues, change in sleeping habits, different responsibilities, increased academic pressure, financial stressors, and changes in social activities (Macan et al., 1990; Ross et al., 1999). A minimal amount of stress is necessary at times, however too much stress negatively impacts an individual's health (Anderson & Arnoult, 1989). Research has found interesting results regarding college students stress; 69% report having excessive stress, 62% self-report themselves as feeling more anxious than most people, and 45% of students reported insomnia due to stress (Deckro et al., 2002).

Self-esteem of college students has been found to be a central component of psychological well-being and strongly related to coping abilities, as a result, high self-esteem is considered a protective factor that helps students hold more positive views about themselves and improves ability to cope with stressful college events (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). Students who report a higher level of stress report a lower level of self-esteem and these students also have a greater risk for depression and suicide (Wilburn & Smith, 2005; Hudd et al., 2000). College student's stressful life events are associated with anxiety and depression (Segrin, 1999). Stress in college students has specifically been documented as a predictor of suicidal thoughts and hopelessness (Dixon, Rumford, Heppner, & Lips, 1992). A strong sense of self-worth results in students being less affected by stressful college and life experiences (Byrd & McKinney, 2012).

Stress also has been shown to alter college students' health promotion practices (Cress & Lampman, 2007). In addition, a relationship has been found between high levels of stress in students and behavior patterns that negatively influences physical health (Sadava & Pak, 1993; Naquin & Gilbert, 1996). Many disease conditions can be traced to stress (McEwen, 1998). When college students experience excess stress it has been associated to a higher frequency of headaches, sleep disturbances, and common colds (Labbe, Murphy, & O'Brien, 1997; Farnill & Robertson, 1990; Giesecke, 1987).

Maton (1989) found perceived spiritual support including faith, peace, purpose, and connection to God was positively correlated with the adjustment to college for students who experience high stress levels. Fabricatore et al., (2004) discovered college students that include God in their responsibilities had a more positive mental-health outcome from stressful life events. Another study specifically found that religion lowered feelings of anger and promoted feelings of confidence during stressful times (Merrill et al., 2009).

Religion strongly influences how college students deal with daily normal stress and religion has been found to be strongly associated with a decreased alcohol use among college students (Stoltzfus & Farkas, 2012). Students who relied on their religion during times of stress were found to have a decrease of hazardous drinking (Giordano et al., 2015). Nonusers of drugs had higher scores of religiousness and spirituality dimensions that pertained to self-worth, hope, provide meaning to life, self-strengths, internal peace, and reliance of self for decisions, those students who experienced a lack of purpose in life and lack of reliance on inner resources experienced stress and anxiety which often resulted in drug use (Giordano et al., 2015).

Research found religious activities including prayer reduces stress, anxiety, depression and results in overall better mental health (Loewenthal & MacLeod, 1996). This study also found the use of prayer had personal benefits to the individual and helped find meaning behind the stressor with an understanding God is in control (Loewenthal & MacLeod, 1996). Identifying with a religion has been found to beneficially effect outcomes associated with stress, and religion can provide one to view both the bad and good events of life as opportunities for growth and part of God's plan for their life, which ultimately gives one meaning and purpose for one's life (Merrill et al., 2009).

College Students and Coping with Stress:

Religion has many beneficial effects on physical and mental health (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) found when positive religious coping strategies (reaching out to support from church leadership, seeking God, and working with God on a solution) were used, individuals reported positive mental health outcomes such as emotional well-being, happiness, optimism, and hope. Contrarily, negative religious coping strategies (attributing the stress to a demonic presence or viewing the stressor as a punishment from God) the individuals reported negative health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, stress, and guilt (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Religion has been found to provide an increased ability to cope with negative emotions and stress and a venue to combat compulsive behavior (Graham, Furr, Flowers, & Burke, 2001).

Past research found positive religious coping was strongly associated with positive psychological adjustment among undergraduate college students and those who collaborated highly with God when dealing with life problems tended to be more satisfied and well adjusted (Ross et al., 2009). Other research findings support high self-esteem and good coping skills, that include positive religious coping abilities and spirituality, improve a college student's ability to handle stressful events (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). Further, those students in the Byrd and McKinney (2012) study who reported higher levels of perceived coping skills and abilities along with a strong spiritual identity reported overall better mental health.

Chai et al. (2012) sought to investigate the use of religious coping strategies between international and domestic college students. The study did not find a significant difference in self-perceived rating of religiosity between the international and domestic students. However, international students had a lower physical and environmental quality of life than domestic students and this study found that in international students, religious coping had a positive effect on life experiences regardless of the type of stress level present (Chai et al., 2012).

The Pargament (1997) found that religious coping contributes to the prediction of well-being and good health over other forms of coping. Pargament, Smith, Koenig, and Perez (1998) follow up study identified that religious coping can either be used as a positive or negative strategy, whereas positive religious coping strategies include strong spiritual connection to God, understanding of religious forgiveness, and benevolent religious activities while negative coping strategies include spiritual discontent, a punishing God, and a decrease in personal well-being and health. Positive religious coping strategies can be based upon a religious knowledge which reflects secure relationships with God that in turn increases personal well-being and health since people who use positive religious coping strategies are more likely to seek help and support from others in their religious neighborhood due to their increased sense of life purpose (Pargament et al., 1998).

Coping strategies among college students widely varies. One way a college student might cope with stress is by being sexually active. Over time, this coping strategy may turn into a sexual addiction or sexual compulsivity that can also be referred to as hyper-sexuality (Kafka, 2010). College students who struggle with hyper-sexuality are more likely to not have a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, and more likely engage in negative religious coping behaviors (Giordano & Cecil, 2014). This study also found negative religious coping strategies significantly predicted hyper-sexuality among college students and reflect tension and struggle in one's relationship with God (Giordano & Cecil, 2014).

Another way college students might cope with stress is with substance abuse; this can include binge drinking, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse and misuse. Higher levels of religion-spirituality are associated with lower levels of drug abuse among students (Brown et al., 2007). A significant negative association was found between religiosity and substance abuse disorders (Edlund et al., 2010). The type of spiritual coping used by college students is strongly associated between attachment to God and alcohol use (Hernandez, Salerno, & Bottoms, 2010). Both high levels of positive religious coping strategies and low level of negative religious coping strategies among college students were found to result in less frequent drug use (Puffer, Skalski, & Meade, 2012). These findings were confirmed in the Giordano et al. (2015) study where increases in positive religious coping and decreases of negative religious coping resulted in lower alcohol and drug use.

Knabb and Grigorian-Routon (2014) found Christians who are actively growing their faith, feel God's presence with their relationships with others, believe their lives have purpose, share their faith with others, believe God guides them and follows Jesus Christ by their behavioral actions are more likely to use the faith to cope with major life events and stressors. In addition, Christians who use their faith to cope with stress greatly report reaching out to God seeking a stronger connection, work with God to let go of anger, ask for forgiveness of sins, and use their religion to reduce worrying about life stressors, therefore were significantly less likely to use negative coping strategies to deal with stress (Knabb & Grigorian-Routon, 2014).

3. METHOD

Participants:

The data in this study was collected from undergraduate students in urban University College from various majors of study. The total number of participants in this study was 287, Male participants (98) 34% and female participants (187)66%. Participants age range from 18 to 57 years old with mean age of 21 years. Ethnicity of participants included; Caucasian 80%, Black Non-Hispanic 7%, and other 13%. Each participant was informed the participation in this study is voluntary, confidential and anonymous.

Research Questions:

RQ1. Is there a difference between traditional and non-traditional students on how they incorporate religion in their college life?

RQ2. Is there a difference between students dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life on how they incorporate religion in their college life?

RQ3. Is there a difference in gender on how college students cope with stress?

RQ4. Is there a difference in high student social support and low student social support on how students cope with stress?

Materials:

The RCI-10 by Worthington, Wade, Hight, Ripley, McCullough, Berry, Schmitt, Berry, Bursley, & O'Conner (2003). This survey is a brief 10-item screening assessment of the level of one's religious commitment using a 5-point Likert rating scale from 1-'Not at all true of me' to 5-'Totally true of me'. This survey is a measure of the extent to which an individual adheres to one's religious beliefs, values, and practices and whether one utilizes them in everyday living. RCI-10 examines intrapersonal religious commitment (six items) and interpersonal commitment (four items).

The COPE instrument is by Carver, C.S. (2013). This survey's primary purpose is a measure of coping and is a multidimensional coping inventory used to access the different ways people respond to stress. Cronbch's alpha for the total fifteen scales of COPE range from 0.37 to 0.93. The alphas were all above 0.59, the majority above 0.70, with the alone exception of mental disengagement. The average alpha for this scale was 0.79 (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Procedure:

Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed, submitted, and approved. Investigator emailed professors at the university asking for permission to give survey during class time. Once teachers responded and agreed to allow data collection in their classroom, investigator took surveys and consent letters to the classrooms. Investigator passed out surveys and consent letters. Students were given 10-15 minutes to complete the survey and the investigator collected all finished surveys. The data from all collected surveys were then individually entered into SPSS by the investigator. All hard copies of surveys will be kept in the office of the principal investigator for several years before they are destroyed.

4. RESULTS

RQ1. Is there a difference between traditional and non-traditional students on how they incorporate religion in their college life?

Table 1: Influence of religion on college student life

		N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intrapersonal Religious Commitment	Tradition	242	13.462	6.8663	1	223.34	4.525	.034
	Non-Tradition	45	15.888	7.8399	285	49.357		
	Total	287	13.843	7.0686	286			
Interpersonal Religious Commitment	Tradition	242	7.9091	3.9969	1	79.389	4.547	.034
	Non-Tradition	45	9.3556	5.0594	285	17.461		
	Total	287	8.1359	4.2044	286			

One-way ANOVA was computed using non-traditional students and traditional students to compare intrapersonal religious commitment and interpersonal religious commitment. A significant difference was found among intrapersonal religious commitment where $(F(1,285) = 4.525, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that traditional students scored lower in intrapersonal religious commitment (m=13.463, sd=6.866) than non-traditional students (m=15.889, sd = 7.8399). A significant difference was also found on interpersonal religious commitment $(F(1,285) = 4.547, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that traditional students scored lower in interpersonal religious commitment (m=7.909, sd=3.997) than non-traditional students (m=9.3556, sd=5.05944). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the traditional and non-traditional students.

RQ2. Is there a difference between students dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life on how they incorporate religion in their college life?

Table 2: Influence religion of dissatisfied and satisfied life of college students

		N	Mean	Std. Deviati	df	Mean Squar	F	Sig.
Intrapersonal Religious Commitment	Dissatisfied life	85	12.200	5.89148	1	326.1	6.655	.010
	Satisfied life	202	14.535	7.41394	285	48.99		

	Total	287	13.843	7.06858	286			
	Dissatisfied life	85	7.2588	3.60275	1	92.89	5.335	.022
Interpersonal Religious Commitment	Satisfied life	202	8.5050	4.38932	285	17.41		
	Total	287	8.1359	4.20444	286			

One-way ANOVA was computed using students with dissatisfied life and those with satisfied life to compare intrapersonal religious commitment and interpersonal religious commitment. A significant difference was found among intrapersonal religious commitment where $(F(1,285) = 6.655, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that students with dissatisfied life scored lower (m=12.200, sd=5.89148) than students satisfied with life (m=14.5347, sd=7.414). A significant difference was also found on interpersonal religious commitment $(F(1,285) = 5.335, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that students dissatisfied with life scored lower (m=7.2589, sd=3.6028) than students satisfied with life (m=8.5050, sd=4.38932). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between students with dissatisfied life with students with satisfied life.

RQ3. Is there a difference in gender on how college students cope with stress?

Table 4: Gender on how college students cope with stress

		N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Male	98	9.6122	2.3535	1	54.251	8.894	.003
Mental Disengagement	Female	189	10.529	2.5276	285	6.099		
	Total	287	10.216	2.5036	286			
	Male	98	11.592	2.5438	1	39.497	5.747	.017
Active Coping	Female	189	10.810	2.6609	285	6.873		
	Total	287	11.077	2.6433	286			
	Male	98	5.7755	2.2270	1	25.339	4.911	.027
Behavioral Disengagement	Female	189	6.4021	2.2941	285	5.160		
	Total	287	6.1882	2.2870	286			
	Male	98	9.1633	3.6600	1	238.25	19.192	.000
Emotional Social Support	Female	189	11.085	3.4508	285	12.414		
	Total	287	10.429	3.6337	286			
	Male	98	8.2857	2.7732	1	321.74	37.440	.000
Focus on & Venting of Emotions	Female	189	10.519	3.0099	285	8.594		
	Total	287	9.7561	3.1126	286			
	Male	98	8.1633	4.0172	1	152.09	8.906	.003
Religious Coping	Female	189	9.6984	4.1908	285	17.078		
	Total	287	9.1742	4.1893	286			

One-way ANOVA was computed using difference in gender to compare mental disengagement, active coping, behavioral disengagement, use of emotional social support, focus on and venting of emotions, and religious coping. A significant difference was found on mental disengagement where $(F(1,285) = 8.894, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that males scored lower on using mental disengagement to cope with stress (m=9.612, sd=2.354) than females (m=10.529, sd=2.528). A significant difference was found on active coping where $(F(1,285) = 5.747, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that females scored lower (m=10.8095, sd=2.66093) than males (m=11.5918, sd=2.54379). A significant difference was also found on behavioral disengagement where $(F(1,285) = 4.911, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that males scored lower (m=9.163, sd=3.660) than females (m=11.085, sd=3.451). A significant difference was found on use of emotional support where $(F(1,285) = 19.192, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that males scored lower (m=5.7755, sd=2.22697) than females (m=6.4021, sd=2.29412). A significant difference was found on focus on and venting of emotions where $(F(1,285) = 37.440, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that males scored lower (m=8.2857, sd=2.77322) than females (m=10.5185, sd=3.00990). A significant difference was found on religious coping where $(F(1,285) = 8.906, p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that males scored lower (m=8.1633, sd=4.01722) than females (m=9.6984, sd=4.19080). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the students gender.

RQ4. Is there a difference in high student social support and low student social support on how students cope with stress?

Table 5: High and low student social support on coping with stress

		N	Mean	Std. Devi	df	Mean Squar	F	Sig.
Active Coping	Low Social Support	68	10.485	2.8884	1	31.16	4.515	.034
	High Social Support	219	11.260	2.5416	285	6.902		
	Total	287	11.077	2.6433	286			
BehavioraDisengagement	Low Social Support	68	6.9706	2.6876	1	54.56	10.788	.001
	High Social Support	219	5.9452	2.0956	285	5.057		
	Total	287	6.1882	2.2870	286			
Emotional Social Support	Low Social Support	68	8.9118	3.6065	1	205.3	16.362	.000
	High Social Support	219	10.899	3.5191	285	12.53		
	Total	287	10.429	3.6337	286			
Religious Coping	Low Social Support	68	8.2353	3.8831	1	78.56	4.532	.034
	High Social Support	219	9.4658	4.2462	285	17.34		
	Total	287	9.1742	4.1893	286			
Instrumental Social Support	Low Social Support	68	9.8824	3.3659	1	99.83	10.375	.001
	High Social Support	219	11.270	3.0161	285	9.622		
	Total	287	10.941	3.1523	286			

One-way ANOVA was computed using difference of students with low social support and high social support to compare active coping, behavioral disengagement, use of emotional social support, religious coping, use of instrumental social support.

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A significant difference was found on active coping where ($F(1,285) = 4.515$, $p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that students with low social support scored lower (m=10.485, sd=2.888) than students with high social support (m=11.2603, sd=2.542). A significant difference was found on behavioral disengagement where ($F(1,285) = 10.788$, $p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that high social support scored lower (m=5.9452, sd=2.0956) than low social support (m=6.9706, sd=2.68756). A significant difference was found on use of emotional support where ($F(1,285) = 16.362$, $p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that low social support scored lower (m=8.912, sd=3.607) than high social support (m=10.8995, sd=3.51914). A significant difference was found on religious coping where ($F(1,285) = 4.532$, $p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that low social support students scored lower (m=8.2353, sd=3.88306) than high social support (m=9.4658, sd=4.24615). A significant difference was found on use of instrumental social support where ($F(1,285) = 10.375$, $p<0.05$. This analysis reveals that low social support students scored lower (m=9.8824, sd=3.36589) than high social support students (m=11.2694, sd=3.01609). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between low social support students and high social support surdents.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that non-traditional students have a higher intrapersonal religious commitment and a higher interpersonal religious commitment than traditional students. Religious commitment refers to how much an individual is involved in his or her religion (Koenig et al., 2001). Intrapersonal refers to existing or occurring within one self or one's mind where interpersonal refers to the relations between persons. Therefore non-traditional students (ages 24-57 years old) have a higher religious commitment both internally and externally than traditional students (ages 18-23 years old). Mooney (2010) found students who identify themselves as religious report studying more, partying less, and spent more time in extracurricular activities, and have a higher satisfaction at college. Similar studies investigated the differences between traditional and non-traditional students and found traditional students go to college with higher expectations of increasing their social network than non-traditional students (Adams & Corbett, 2010). In addition, it was found that non-traditional students report dealing with more stress than traditional students, although they had a higher level of academic success measured by their GPA (Forbus, et al., 2011). The explanation may be non-traditional students have experienced more overall life events to establish their self-awareness than traditional students so they are more comfortable with reporting their religion or they have had more time to establish and identify their religion.

The findings indicate students satisfied with life scored higher on both intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment. Religious commitment refers to how much an individual is involved in his or her religion (Koenig et al., 2001). Students who scored higher on intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment also scored higher on satisfaction with life and. Mooney (2010) found college students who see themselves as religions report a significant and positive effect on students' satisfaction at college. In addition the UCLA (2005) study found college students who engage in religious practices report a higher satisfaction of social life, more positive interactions with others on campus, greater satisfaction of one's college career, and higher GPA's. This study shows Students with religious commitment are more satisfied with life compared to students with less or no religious commitment.

The study found several associations between students dissatisfied with life or satisfied with life and the way they cope with stress. The findings suggest students satisfied with life scored higher than students dissatisfied with life on active coping. Active coping has been referred to as the process of taking steps to remove the stressor that may include direction action or increasing one's efforts (Carver et al., 1989). Therefore this means students who scored higher on satisfaction with life also scored higher with active coping where students who scored lower on satisfaction with life also scored lower with active coping. Other studies support similar findings that high self-esteem and good coping skills, which includes positive religious coping abilities and spirituality, improve a college student's ability to handle stressful events (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). Li and Lindsey (2013) found that less stressed college students are more likely to routinely practice health-promoting behaviors than higher stressed students. The study findings found several associations between student's gender and how students cope with stress. The male students scored higher on active coping than female students. Active coping has been referred to as the process of taking steps to remove the stressor that may include direction action or increasing one's efforts (Carver et al., 1989). Therefore this means male students report a higher use of active coping skills than female students. Other studies found similar findings where females compared to males experience more severe daily stressors and gender does play an active role in the stress and coping process (Qian et al., 2014).

The finding also indicates female college students scored higher on religious coping than male college students. Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) described positive religious coping strategies as reaching out to support from church leadership, seeking God, and working with God on a solution. Therefore this means female college students use religious coping more than male college students. Several other studies found similar findings that college students have an overall moderate level of spirituality, with female college students indicating a higher measure of religiosity than male college students (Dennis, Muller, Miller, & Banerjee, 2004). Byrd and McKinney (2012) reported higher levels of perceived coping skills and abilities along with a strong spiritual identity reported overall better mental health.

The study found that students who have high social support also have high religious coping skills than those with low social support. Social support refers to the help people receive from others. This means there is a direct correlation between students with social support and religious coping. Similar findings report stress negatively affects the body, mood, and behavior, while chronic stress can lead to severe health problems (Mayo Clinic, 2016). Additional findings indicate that students with high social support scored lower on substance use than students with low social support. Li and Lindsey (2013) found that less stressed college students are more likely to routinely practice health-promoting behaviors than higher stressed students.

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