A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF PERCEIVED

SPIRITUALITY AND PERSISTENCE OF JAMAICAN WOMEN WHO HAVE RECEIVED A

TERTIARY DEGREE

by

Ashleigh Jacqueline Yearde

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2023

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Susan Stanley, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Dr. Shariva White, Ed.D., Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women who had received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. The theory guiding this research was Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Constructivists believe that knowledge was informed by perspective and shaped by values. The theoretical framework for the study was based on the positive foundation of social support in the learning process. Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological research design was used to analyze the data leading to the investigation of perceived spirituality and persistence of Jamaican women who had received a tertiary degree. The sample of this study was 10 subjects, aged 18 years or older, university graduates of any higher education institution in Jamaica, and who identify as Jamaican a woman. The site of this study was undergraduate and graduate institutions on the island of Jamaica. This study utilized triangulation. The following data collection approaches were provided in this study: individual interviews, focus group, and letter-writing. The thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke was used to analyze data. Analysis was done by identifying significant statements in the transcription and indicate the participants' statements that were repetitive and overlapping. The data were analyzed in categorical data aggregation. Patterns were identified with the Qualitative Data Analysis Software, MAXQDA. There were three themes that emerged from the data (a) support systems, (b) intrinsic value, and (c) spiritual support.

Keywords: spirituality, social integration, persistence, attrition, higher education, social constructivist theory, support systems, Jamaican Women

Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral dissertation to God, my creator, to whom I owe my existence and has mended my broken pieces. I dedicate this to my mother, Jacqueline A. Yearde, and my sister Alexis A. Yearde, for loving and inspiring me to follow my dreams. Mom, you taught me the definition of what it means to be resilient and powerful woman. To Dad, Andrew M. Yearde, I want to thank for your support, may this research begin a new chapter of catching up and the start of a new bond. To my parents, mom and dad, I appreciate the values and strength you instilled in me. Thank you for gifting me a beautiful Jamaican culture I know and love today. I dedicate this to my Great Grandmother Melva Gordon-Notice for her sacrifice and her legacy of strong women that power lives within me. I dedicate this to my grandmother, Cydel Victoria Notice-Dunkley and my Cousin Charmaine Edwards, for being my spiritual warriors so that I could complete the journey of earning my doctorate. To my Great-Aunt Monica Notice-Shepherd, you were the first to see me enter the world. To my God mother, Claudette Edwards thank you for believing in me. I dedicate this to my extended family because being a part of a family means that I am a part of something very beautiful, "Ohana". To Mrs. Ryan, my kindergarten teacher, who instilled a strong foundation and to my elementary school Principal Dr. Chomik for being an example of a strong female leader. I dedicate this to Faciel Belkhier the life mentor I never knew I needed. Thank you for believing in me and telling me I could be anything I wanted. To my Great-Aunt Beverly, you stressed the importance of an education and have always been my biggest cheerleader at every milestone. She passed away June 4th, 2022. To my Great-Aunt Gwendolyn Notice-Edwards, and my cousin Paulette Edwards, in honor of your memory, I dedicate this research to you. I dedicate this to the memory of my Uncles, Roger and

Courtney "Winks" Dunkley, who inspire hard work in everything I do, "Mi love you". I

dedicate this to the memory of my church youth leader, attorney at law, and magistrate

Teresa Resendez, a strong Latina who passed from her battle with amyotrophic lateral

sclerosis (ALS) in January 2022; she believed in my ability to earn a doctorate even before I

believed in myself. I dedicate this to the women across the world who have endured

negative stereotypes and have suffered inequalities they never wanted. To my students, may

you pursue knowledge throughout all of your lives. From the words of my favorite musician

"The sky is not the limit the universe is infinite" – Jennifer Lopez

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Without the direction and assistance of numerous exceptionally outstanding instructors, I would not have been able to complete my dissertation without my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Stanley, also known as "Dr. Git 'Er Done". Dr. Shariva White, my committee member. Dr. Castaneda, Dr. Wheeler, Dr. Street, and Dr. Baer for giving me the tools needed along the way. I want to express my gratitude for their incredible patience. As I learned to develop my writing skills. I would like to acknowledge the anonymous representative from Liberty University who took the time to pray for me during the summer of 2021. She may not know the impact her encouragement and kindness over the phone meant. I considered giving up, I was discouraged, and questioned if I could even do this. She prayed over this research study and the many students and professionals it can one day help. Thank you to my fellow classmates and colleagues who have pushed me every step of the way. Special thank you to my fiancé Aaron for being a supportive role and major force in my life. You have been a huge encouragement to get me to the end of this journey. You have all been a true gift from God!

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List of Abbreviations

Caribbean Examination Council (CSEC)

Central research question (CQ)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

Distance Education (DE)

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment (OECD)

Families and Schools Together (FAST)

First-Generation College Student (FGCS)

Followed by sub-questions (SQs)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Graduate GPA (GGPA)

GRE Physics (GRE-P)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Interfaith Diversity Experience Altitude Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)

Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS)

Students as Partners (SaP)

The Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL)

Undergraduate GPA (UGPA)

Universal Serial Bus (USB)

Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of Chapter One was to explain the framework provided in this qualitative study. Chapter One introduced the central phenomenon of this study and discovered the lived experiences of students who identify as a Jamaican woman and their perceived spirituality as it relates to their own persistence. The study included 10 subjects, aged 18 years or older, university graduates of any higher education institution in Jamaica. The first section of this chapter provided the context of literature relevant to the historical, social, and theoretical aspects that align with the perceived spirituality related to the persistence of Jamaican students at the university level. Chapter One also provides a comprehensive description of the problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study centered on the perceived spirituality related to the persistence of students at Jamaican universities. The next section of this chapter outlined the four research questions. The research questions were derived from this study's problem and purpose statement. The research questions were designed to examine the different aspects of the phenomenon of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final two sections of Chapter One provided definitions for the terms listed in this research and summarize the primary problem and purpose statements for this research study.

Background

This section provided the historical context of perceptions of spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. The historical context explained how the problem has evolved. The social context explained society, community, and areas affected by the problem. The problem is that Jamaican students' persistence has plagued institutions of higher education in Jamaica. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory

was used to guide this research. In Chapter one Tinto's (2017) theory of student persistence and Tinto's (1993) social integration theory has already studied the perceived spirituality related to student persistence. Both Theories were briefly discussed in Chapter one.

Historical Context

Historically, researchers have sought to understand why the experiences of students could impact a student's persistence. Some experiences that impact persistence and retention are not limited to inconsistency in student's sense of belonging, students believing that their instructors can adequately prepare them to succeed, financial burdens, balancing commitments, and student assistance resources. One may ask how can an institution improve student persistence? This can be done through improving the educational experience, support student mental health, develop intervention strategies, and gather student data (Price et al., 2021). A recent research study determined the importance of college retention (Huerta-Manzanilla et al., 2021). An island struck by crime, poverty, and violence could cause difficulty staying enrolled in a college program (Markham, 2021). In Jamaica, learning programs have had a long history of violence (Hardacre & Kinkead-Clark, 2019). The Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL), a family literacy program started in the mid-1970s to address low literacy levels across the island. Families and Schools Together (FAST) in the United Kingdom (UK) served an example of two programs that have been very successful in positive results (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2013). However, research on women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in the Caribbean is limited, since many of the indicators and data sets that assess gender parity and female empowerment are missing or aggregated with male data (Budhu and Watson-Williams, 2014). Accessing university-level education in Jamaica is a difficult task (Tinto, 2017; Huerta-Manzanilla et al., 2021). Jamaica has experienced challenges improving

access to quality primary education in inner-city Kingston, Jamaica. The role of religion and spirituality has been popular in Black diasporic communities in the Caribbean; this would address how religion and spirituality have historically been interwoven into every aspect of life for this community. This is presented in research with results on the effects of this on any aspect of life (Hardacre & Kinkead-Clark, 2019).

In 2003, Habenicht and Burton completed a study on a college located in the small town of Mandeville. The Church Teacher's College is over 44 years old and a member of the Joint Board of Teacher Education, in the association of the West Indies School of Education and the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture. The mission of this college was to promoting high academic standards supported by "Christian principles that develop the whole person" (Habenicht & Burton, 2004, n.d.). This concept reflects the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "*to educate a man in mind, and not in morals, were educate a menace to society*" (President Quotes, 2009, n.p.). Church Teacher's College focused on the spiritual, academic, social, physical, cultural, aesthetic, religious, and moral aspects of the student-teacher, accentuating its philosophy to access "divine grace" to achieve our full potential" (CTC, 2003, p. 5).

Social Context

Yang and Mao (2021) explained that, in the United States, there is financial support for students with low socioeconomic status. They also discovered that socioeconomic status, colleague preparation, academic support, and enhanced support are all factors that increase the likelihood of graduation. It has also been discovered that institutional barriers, such as environmental barriers, COVID-19 Pandemic, and stressors from work, family, and friends may play a role in student persistence (Heilporn & Lakhal, 2022; 2021).

Religion and spirituality are key determinants of success for many Black Caribbean

people (Hope et al., 2020). Hope et al. stated that religion and spirituality are key factors in the health and wellness of a person. Mental health has been tabooed in many Black diasporic communities. The indigenous people maintain beliefs and societal norms that are traditionally spiritual. There is a crisis for those in need of mental health services in the Caribbean. Helping professionals in the Caribbean desperately seek ways to expand and improve mental health services.

Many people are unaware that Jamaica, a little island off the coast of South America, has the global record for the most churches per square mile (Grant, 2018). Over 1,600 churches can be found in Jamaica. With such a vast number of churches, one can suggest there is a large spiritual support system in Jamaica, yet Jamaica is undergoing a mental health crisis (Pottinger, 2017). In recent years, the higher education landscape in Jamaica has continued to grow and transform. This research provided many institutions and their leaders with a better understanding of how to prepare their students to serve vulnerable populations, and identify how spiritual support that can assist students (Lipps et al., 2007). I explored the potential use of the philosophical assumption that led to this research. Epistemology is related to the theory of knowledge, especially concerning its methods, validity, scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.

Theoretical Context

According to Reeves and Hean (2013), theories are suggestions that connect concepts by a logical argument (Reeves & Heans, 2013). Theories create insightful and logical developments for institutions. Other researchers have reviewed theories, such as Tinto's theory of student persistence and Tinto's sense of belonging model. According to Dwyer (2017), Tinto's theory of student persistence provides empirical support. Tinto's theory explains that a student that

becomes socially integrated feels a sense of belonging and is likely to persist to graduation more than students who do not (Tinto, 2017). Tinto's social integration theory (1993) occurs when students develop relationships and connections outside the classroom (Tinto, 1993). One may consider that spirituality is the source of a person's sense of belonging and social integration. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory is how a person's perspective and values are informed by perspective. The cognitive-behaviorism theory framework is a cognitive behavioral approach to spirituality (Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham, 1988). Spirituality is explained with this paradigm's beliefs, values, actions, and experiences. Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham determined that a cyclical connection in which beliefs lead to values shapes our actions and has an experienced impact on spiritual belief systems. Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham made the connection between a person's spirituality and their actions. This study sought to uncover data regarding the spirituality of Jamaican women. There are challenges that a student may face during their time at an institution. Spiritualty could potentially create solutions to solve those challenges that plague persistence among Jamaican students. Research from Mitchell (2020) yielded new information regarding challenges that threaten the retention of non-traditional and part-time undergraduate students in Jamaica. The finding in Mitchell's phenomenological study reported that challenges experienced during enrollment can be the determining factor of whether or not a student decides to quit or stay until graduation. Part-time and non-traditional students who experience financial hardship, lack of academic assistance, lack of meaningful feedback, and an uncomfortable learning environment. This research refined the existing knowledge related to the persistence of Jamaican students at the university level by exploring the impact of their perceived spirituality.

Problem Statement

Creswell and Poth (2018) define a problem statement as an issue with theory, literature, or practice that suggests a need for future study. Student persistence is identified as a problem that suggests a need for future study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The problem is that Jamaican students' persistence has plagued institutions of higher in Jamaica. This study is intended to add to the body of knowledge that currently exists. Researchers recognize there is a problem because the persistence of college students has been a major concern for administrators, faculty, and educators at higher education institutions (Bell et al., 2018; Mitchell, 2020; Yang & Mao, 2021). It is important to understand the many different reasons a student may leave an institution. The problem of this study needs to be investigated empirically because it would provide insight into student persistence. This research aimed to investigate how spirituality is perceived by Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. This study is crucial to assist administrators of various programs to strategize and implement practices based on students' spiritual needs. It has been recommended that student needs should be further studied (Anandavalli et al., 2021). The persistence issue for university students in Jamaica is not unique to one country or institution. Student persistence is a problem worldwide (Yang & Mao, 2021). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree is were generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. The problem is relevant to higher education because academic persistence among college students is an important issue in higher education (Mitchell, 2020). According to Bell, Fryar, and Hillman (2018), academic failure occurs at alarming rates. Over the past 20 years,

more than 30 million students have enrolled in and then dropped out of college. This research is important to higher education because it identified the insight into student persistence among Jamaican university students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King, 2017).

Significance of the Study

This study investigated perceived spirituality and persistence of among Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. Persistence among female college students is relevant because in academic literature, it is known that gender segregation in college majors is important because it foreshadows gender segregation in jobs and gender inequalities in valued goods (such as pay, autonomy, job stability, and prestige) associated with various industries (Weeden, Gelbgiser, & Morgan, 2020). The significance of this study relies on supplying emergent knowledge to fill a gap in the existing knowledge base regarding the phenomenon. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist model was provided to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon.

Empirical Significance

The current study has empirical significance in the perceived spirituality of students who attended university in Jamaica as it relates to persistence were previously unknown. What is known is that students who attend university in Jamaica have experiences with family, finances, sense of belonging, lack of sense of belonging, relationship with faculty, relationship with other

students, and motivation (O'Garo et al., 2020; Lipps et al.2007; Lesli et al., 2021). The study

added to existing literature by providing information about what is not known about the

perceived spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary

degree.

Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research study explored theories of social-constructivist theory and

cognitive behaviorism theory. While theories of student persistence and social integration (Tinto,

1993, 2017) are present in the literature, no theory looks specifically at spirituality as related to

the persistence of university students in Jamaica. This study contributed and extend information

pertaining to the theoretical underpinning of the problem of persistence that has plagued

universities in Jamaica. Social-constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) was utilized in this

study to view how the social side of learning influences a student's experience. A researcher

might investigate the social aspect of spiritual support and one's sense of community through this

lens. Cognitive-behaviorism was discussed to explore how spirituality may impact a students'

academic and social experiences in a public university (Brown, Peterson, & Cunningham, 1988).

Practical Significance

Practically, this study offered information to universities in Jamaica to help foster

persistence in students. Universities in Jamaica may better understand the types of programming

and spiritual supports that aid students in completing their undergraduate or graduate degree. The

research findings assisted students interested in attending university in Jamaica. Stakeholders are

students who currently attend university in Jamaica and may better understand what spiritual,

social, and historical factors will lead to the successful completion of their degree (Gardner &

Webb, 2019; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021). Lastly, if there is an increase in the number of students

who completed their degree with spiritual support at a university in Jamaica, there was a presumably larger group of students at other universities around the world who completed their degree with spiritual support (Gardner & Webb, 2019; Crumb et al., 2020; Hill & O'Brien, 2021). There is potential for universities to provide a more diverse culture in academia and provided a more conducive environment for students who could benefit from spiritual support for future students who attend their institutions (Gardner & Webb, 2019; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How would the Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality during their time in college?

Sub-Question One

What challenges did Jamaican women experience during their time in college or university?

Sub-Question Two

What do Jamaican women believe contributed to the completion of their tertiary degree/degrees?

Sub-Question Three

How do Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality and academic success in higher education?

Sub-Question Four

How did spirituality impact Jamaican women and their persistence in their program/programs of study?

Definitions

Several terms were prevalent in the literature on the perceived spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree.

1. *Attitude* - Attitude is a psychological tendency that involves evaluating a particular object with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

2. *Interest* - The combination of emotion and personal valuation of a task resulting in a desire for various levels of enjoyment (Ainley & Ainley, 2011).

3. *Perseverance* - The persistence of doing or achieving anything in the face of challenges, failure, or resistance (Kizub et al, 2022).

4. *Persistence* - In the context of this research, persistence refers to a person's capacity to persevere in the face of adversity; their reluctance to give up when presented with challenges (Feather, 1962).

5. *Resilience* - The capacity to quickly bounce back from setbacks or adapt to change (Kizub et al, 2022).

6. *Social Integration* - Refers to the degree of collaboration between students and the institution's social structure. Peer group contacts, co-curricular activities, and interactions with instructors and administration show signs of social integration (Tinto, 1975).

7. *Spirituality* - Spirituality, in general meaning, is an inward connection to a supreme being and includes one's search for an ultimate purpose in life (Phipps, 2011). Spirituality is a relationship with something greater than the self, a combination of the various aspects of the self and the realization of one's growth and potential. Spirituality can also be defined as transformational, moral, and ethical self-development, authentic, meaningful, holistic,

and deeper understanding of the existential self, and an internal part of one's identity, which manifests itself through outward actions (Banke, Maldanado, & Lacey, 2012).

8. *Social Support* - The existence or availability of individuals on whom one may rely; people who openly transmit care, value, and affection toward another is referred to as social support (Basham et al., 1983)

9. *Tertiary Degree* - Tertiary education refers to all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King, 2017).

Summary

Chapter one introduced the central phenomenon of this qualitative research study. In the background section, the historical, theoretical, and social underpinnings were explained. Religion and spirituality in Black diasporic communities in the Caribbean were explained (Clarke,2020; Gardner & Webb, 2019; Markham, 2021). This section also examined how religion and spirituality have historically been interwoven into every aspect of life for the people of Jamaica (Hardacre & Kinkead-Clark, 2019). The theoretical significance of social-constructivist theory and how the social component of learning would influence a student's experience was examined (Vygotsky, 1978). The problem of student persistence, and the phenomenon of the completion of a tertiary degree and the problem of this study that has plagued Jamaican colleges was identified in chapter one.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training

institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King, 2017). This chapter discussed in practicality, how this research would provide information to colleges globally to aid in the development of student persistence. In this chapter, I discussed how personal experience engaging students revealed a need for student persistence among female students at universities in Jamaica. I also discussed the need to better understand the type of support that may help students finish their undergraduate or graduate degrees. I explained the empirical and theoretical significance of the study (Crumb et al., 2020; Gardner & Webb, 2019; Hill & O'Brien, 2021).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore how spirituality may influence Jamaican students' academic and social experiences in a public university setting in Jamaica. This chapter will present a review of recent literature related to the topic of study. The first section included theories related to the role of spirituality in communities in the Caribbean. The second section will synthesize literature and address how spirituality is interwoven into the life of a Jamaican. The role of spirituality in managing one's life experiences and the prevalence of spirituality in Jamaica is discussed in the second section. This section will investigate spirituality and belief system, spirituality in Jamaican people, the role of spirituality in education, education in the Caribbean, and persistence in university-level students. A gap in literature was identified, presenting a need for the current study of a transcendental phenomenological investigation of the perceived spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree.

Theoretical Framework

The subject of this study is guided by Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Spirituality is intertwined with the everyday life experiences of a Jamaican person (Williams, 2021). A theoretical framework for this study is directly related to spirituality. One may ask how is social constructivist theory related to spirituality? Social constructivism reveals that ways of thinking and values are not inherently, innately, or objectively given, but rather are constructed within the framework of social interaction with others (Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1994; Freedman and Combs, 1994; Gutterman, 1994). Student persistence through the lens of social constructivism has not been broadly adopted as a theoretical approach in the field.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools located in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree is were generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. There is a behavioral and cognitive approach to spirituality. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) explained how the social part of learning influences a student's experience. A researcher can consider the social aspect of spiritual support and one's sense of community through this lens. The prevalence of spirituality related to the function of beliefs is explained in cognitive behaviorism theory.

Social Constructivist Theory

The theory guiding this research is Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. Constructivists believe that knowledge is informed by perspective and shaped by values. Spiritual forms of social support were essential to the persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. It is said that spiritual support is considered an essential element of holistic care (Papadopoulos, 2021). The theoretical framework for the study is based on the positive foundation of social support in the learning process. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory contributed theories on the social part of learning. Therefore, Vygotsky's social constructivist theory will lead this study. The role of spirituality in a person's life may influence their experience. Vygotsky identifies social support as an essential part of the learning process.

The social constructivist theory (1978) informed the literature on the current phenomenon because it supports the notion that learners must be active in the learning process and that individual experiences influence learners in culture and social circles. Therefore, according to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, educational planning may be driven by values and

priorities deduced from social and environmental experiences. The research findings discussed in this review support Vygotsky's social constructivist theory of knowledge construction. This may influence outcomes and describe parents' choice of Christian schools for students with special needs.

This research study is related to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) because it focuses on the importance of social interaction, being the foundation for many other social support theories. For example, McMillan and Chavis (1986) created a new, expanded definition of a sense of community among learners. In their explanation, they emphasized the importance of "belonging" and "commitment" to a group as critical ingredients of a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Figure 1. is an illustration of social constructivism when meaning is negotiated through the social exchange of recent speech and social experience. Vygotsky discussed the importance of learning as a social process. Vygotsky determined that students who learn new skills best through social interaction. Vygotsky discussed the importance of learning as a social process. This was not limited to identifying what is considered complex, evaluated rea world experience, reflective practice, and the co-construction of knowledge. This theory evaluates contradictions in the idea of what is viewed as ideal, conflict between representations of reality, insight based on shared experience, and new insight on what a student believes they have experienced. He determined that students learned new skills best through social interaction. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory discussed the importance of building a psychological sense of community (Vygotsky, 1978).

Figure 1. *Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory*
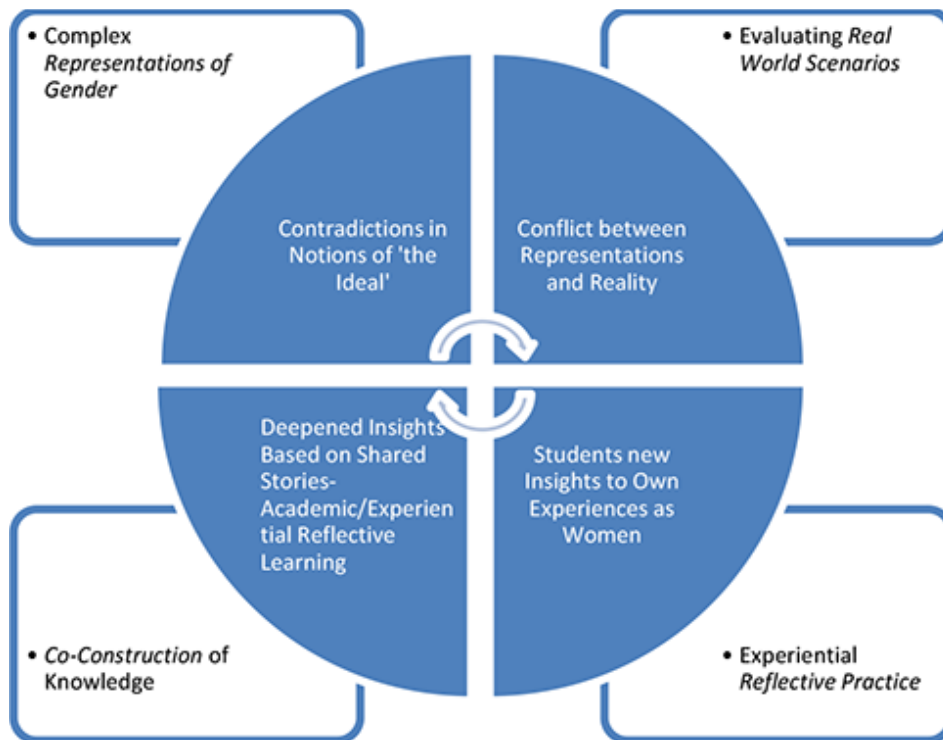
Note. Caroll et al., 2016

Related Literature

Several different links between spirituality and persistence exist among students in

Jamaica (Clarke, 2020). The following will expand on Jamaica's historical influence of

spirituality, culture, education in the Caribbean, persistence in university-level students, and the

role of spirituality. This investigation examined academic literature related to challenges and

opportunities for women in higher education, black women in higher education, Jamaican

women in higher education, Jamaican spirituality and belief systems, the variety of spirituality

among Jamaican people, the role of spirituality in education, education in the Caribbean,

persistence in university-level students, and persistence in university-level students. The

following subtopics and patterns in challenges of black women in higher education, Jamaican

women in higher education, the gender gap, social semiotics of spirituality, religiosity, attitudes

towards women in Jamaica, the historical influence of spirituality in Jamaica, the church and

support, undergraduate completion, and graduate completion. The following themes and patterns

emerged: self-efficacy, family relationships, community, and campus relationships (Clarke,

2020; Murgia et al.2020; Kent et al., 2021; Rybicki, 2020; Paul Victor et al., 2020; Hermawan et

al., 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Higher Education

There has been a great deal of emphasis placed on the need to increase the number of

women in higher education administration positions in American colleges and universities based

on the equality of civil rights (American Council on Education [ACE], 2020). There are recent

trends in examining leadership research to help leaders in higher education and those striving for

leadership to thrive in the multifaceted global environment and effectively prepare for the

challenge of leading complex institutions (Chance, 2022). Thus, focusing on Black women who

serve in leadership roles at colleges and universities will help expand the knowledge base on

higher education leadership, Black women in leadership, resilience, and overcoming adversity,

therefore opening up the door for more access by this population. Globally, how wide is the

gender gap in higher education? Although women continue to outnumber men in college at 39.1

percent and men at 36.6 percent. Women continue to be underrepresented in high paying jobs.

Women holding a bachelor's degree earned on average 1,541 U.S. dollars per week, compared

with men who on average earn 1,930 U.S dollars (NCES, 2022).

Women who attend university in the Caribbean are generally heightened risk of

victimization. This has been explored quantitively however, the fear of crime has been

investigated in their own words and experiences in a qualitative study, using a sample of women

at the University of the West Indies (UWI) (Bailey, 2021). New developments in higher

education are enabling women to advance. Among Black students in higher education, women

are more likely than men to earn degrees. Black women get 64.1% of bachelor's degrees and 71.5% of master's degrees. Despite a few gains by women and minorities, leadership in United States higher education has consistently been dominated by White males. Western society is gradually moving toward equality between genders, yet there is a disproportional number of males versus female senior leaders of colleges and universities. That gap widens severely when specifically evaluating Black women compared to White men in higher education leadership. Stories of younger and more experienced faculty who have experienced age discrimination in their day-to-day environments and in significant university or college processes, such as evaluation, promotion, and tenure, in interviews for our upcoming book, Leveraging Multigenerational Workforce Strategies in Higher Education. The disproportionate effect of ageism on women, persons of color, and LGBT people is one of the book's key conclusions (ACE, 2020; Chun & Evans, 2020; Inglehart et al., 2003).

Challenges of Black Women in Higher Education

Black people confront significant personal and professional challenges as a group and have in the past. But the Black community is accustomed to overcome hardship. However, when obstacles and difficulties are based in racial and gender disparities, black women are negatively impacted twice. Being a "woman" and being "Black," for example, are identity markers that do not exist in isolation from one another, generating a complex confluence of potentially negative experiences. Black women often feel that failure is not an option since they face more hardship and are given fewer opportunities (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Having said that, successful Black women in leadership positions have overcome many hurdles to get there. Black women in higher education leadership explain the problematic issues of intersectionality, stereotype threat, and tokenism (Chance, 2022). Lack of role models, the glass ceiling, the convergence of racism,

sexism, and ageism, as well as tokenism, are challenges faced by black women in leadership. The most recent research confirms that Black women in higher education leadership face challenges. Discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and ageism, and the confluence of these issues with identity, cultural diversity and belonging, resilience, and leadership callings were some of the more prominent codes that arose. Black women are referred to as "superwomen" because of their tenacity and power. The findings of this study show that Black women utilize hardship as fuel to help them acquire the abilities required to become leaders. Their ability to persevere in the face of hardship is a result of their resilience, which has taken the form of motivating elements including support from family and relationships, mentoring, and sponsorship as well as cultural identity and diversity. The present research backs up the idea that hardship molds Black women into leaders, with a focus on leadership in higher education (Chance, 2022; Rosette & Livingston, 2012).

Jamaican Women in Higher Education

Jamaica has come a very long way in terms of women's economic empowerment, female entrepreneurship, and development policies that support women (Saner & Yiu, 2019). The OECD study "Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment" emphasizes that more educational involvement by women can lead to more economic prospects for women. In Jamaica, however, this is not the case. Women currently outnumber and outperform men in schools, especially in tertiary education, according to the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) developed by The Bureau of Women's Affairs (Gender Affairs), Kingston, Jamaica, and The Gender Advisory Committee (2010), with 40.7 % women enrolled and 20.3 % men. In contrast to their male colleagues, they make less money, have more unemployment, and have fewer managerial positions. Women's empowerment means that women have the same chances as men to

participate in the economy and society as a whole, including social, cultural, and political decision-making. Women's economic empowerment, decent work, and women's entrepreneurship are all intertwined. In the Caribbean, active women's economic empowerment might assist encourage female entrepreneurship, which were beneficial to the economy and long-term growth (The World Bank, 2019; Saner & Yiu, 2019).

The Gender Gap

For educators in many nations, the gender gap in post-compulsory scientific education continues to be a major source of concern. Numerous programs designed to increase female involvement as well as the profile of science in schools have received a lot of attention during the past 20 years. The rate of female engagement in science has often remained lower than the age of male participation not withstanding these measures. Although numerous theories have been put out to explain this, little study has been done on the visual representations seen in classroom science textbooks. Lodge and Roger investigated the degree to which visual representations in a commonly provided school science textbook support or alleviate gender stereotypes in the context of gender inequality in the Jamaican educational. In their research they have expressed the need to lessen the gender gap of Jamaican people. Feminist academics have also called attention to additional problems relating to women's access to, involvement in, and success in school science (Cooper & Berry, 2020). The findings of their study show that, more subtly than may be expected, the textbook implicitly supports gender-biased ideas. In some instances, the images did not favor men over women, but in other instances, men were more frequently shown as strong and in high-status 'positions,' whilst women were more frequently portrayed in subordinate roles. Students' perceptions of themselves in connection to science may be impacted by these gender portrayals (Lodge & Reiss, 2021).

It is even more concerning that the situation in poorer nations like those in the Caribbean, like Jamaica, lags behind that in wealthy nation (George, 2020). Despite an increase in female participation in STEM fields, according to data from the University of the West Indies, males still made up the majority of the cohort between 2014 and 2017. (University of the West Indies, n.d.). Males continue to outperform females in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate at age 16 in biology (a pass rate of 75% compared to 70% for females), chemistry (a pass rate of 6% compared to 57%), and physics (a pass rate of 55% compared to 46%) despite some progress towards gender parity having been made (Caribbean Examination Council, 2016).

A common concern among feminists working in the field of international political economy is the complex and frequently invisible gender-specific obstacles that women and girls face in achieving autonomy and well-being as a result of unfair power dynamics and harmful practices that affect their health, intra-household labor division, access to and distribution of economic resources, indicators of human well-being, gendered patterns in, decency of, wages, and unpaid care (Waylen et al, 2013; Tanyag, 2018; Elias & Rai, 2019). It also enables an intersectional analysis that considers gendered, racial, and classed social reproduction arrangements as well as gendered injustices that uphold and perpetuate the social order required to uphold such power relations (Elias and Rai 2019; Caldwell 2017). Higher education continues to face serious problems with gender equity. It has been investigated that the idea that strengthening women's leadership and agency through the increasingly popular strategy of involving students as partners (SaP), may be a way to advance female representation (Acai, Mercer-Mapstone, & Guitman, 2022). Findings suggest that SaP may offer one strategy for advancing gender equity by establishing "brave places" and "sites of resistance" in academia that challenge gendered norms (Acai, Mercer-Mapstone, & Guitman, 2022).

Social Semiotics of Spirituality

Early in the nineteenth century, education was predominantly offered by the churches in Britain and her colonies and was seen as an essential component of missionary activity, providing women with a route to overseas service. In order to set an example of Christian family life, the Baptist Missionary Society required its (male) missionaries to be married, but also gave single women teachers the chance to engage in international missions and serve as possible brides for widower missionaries. One of England's richest possessions was Jamaica, the largest Caribbean Island. Additionally, it was the subject of bitter debate on the abolition of slavery, in which Baptist missionaries assumed a prominent position. Annual reports in The Missionary Herald and Baptist Herald demonstrate that following complete emancipation in 1838, a much higher proportion of women than males participated in the Baptist mission to Jamaica (Chappell, 2021). They had a significant impact on local women's and children's education and religious teaching as instructors and "assistant missionaries," as missionary spouses are frequently referred to (Walker, 2020). Spirituality and religion have always played significant roles in the psychological examination of human behavior. The works of Thomas Long and the idea of strong relationality contest the modern propensity to objectify and abstract from daily life, emphasizing how spiritual experiences are frequently reciprocal—a cooperative process of locating what is significant and worthy. The study of spirituality and the study of spirituality are conceptually distinct from one another, according to Watts (2020), who also noted three common notions associated with the term "spirituality": a semantic shift from religiosity to spirituality, a strong cultural affinity with Romanticism, and historical roots in the 1960s (Watts, 2020).

Numerous reviews and meta-analyses that outline the current state of the art emphasize how crucial it was continue the attempt to define spirituality. In their review of the term's major

definitions in the pertinent literature, Harris et al. (2018) discovered that spirituality was linked to eight ideas, including "an internal emphasis, a belief system, a relationship, an ultimate concern, meaningfulness, self-enhancement, self-transcendence, and monism" (Harris et al., 2018, p. 5) While this was going on, Santos and Michaels (2020) provided a partial prototype analysis is to determine how the general public views spirituality. They found six fundamental aspects of spirituality: self and values, religious belief, existential connection, life force, transcendence, and purpose. Their study viewed spirituality as a prototype phenomenon (Santos & Michaels, 2020). Therefore, according to Chirico's definition (Chirico, 2021, p. 152) spirituality refers to "a morality-oriented intellectual connectedness with the self, others, and the entire universe that is guided by a connection with the Transcendent and Superior." This makes spirituality interesting to study in relation to meaning-making processes and health. It incorporates the ideas of significance, completion, and connection, which offer cogent meaning, love, and pleasure. Indeed, it is generally known that spirituality may play a significant role in determining wellbeing and health, particularly in stressful situations (Del Castillo, 2020).

Jamaican Spirituality and Belief Systems

This literature review will define characteristics of spirituality, religion, and faith. Historically, these three names are provided interchangeably (Murgia et al., 2020). High levels of personal prayer, praying for others, American Indian women reported congregational criticism, negative coping, and theistic daily spiritual experiences. In contrast, low levels of appreciation and nontheistic daily spiritual experiences were recorded by American Indian males. Kent et al. (2021) recommends that future research by the National Consortium on Psychosocial Stress, Spirituality, and Health should focus on the effect of religious or spiritual practices and beliefs, with a special focus on racial/ethnic variations and the stress route. The importance of Jamaican

Pentecostalism, one of the new faiths that arrived in or flourished there between 1890 and 1930.

In the backdrop of local and regional socio-economic transformations, which led to both internal

and external migration to Jamaica, it situates this American missionary religion. In turn, these

modifications altered rural and urban life in ways that made room for new religious movements.

In order to understand the greater context of which it is a significant component, Pentecostalism

is also set within the background of other Jamaican popular religions (Austin-Brooks, 2020).

According to Hermawan (2021), belief system implementation is favorably related to

management performance. Belief systems could provide a foundation for understanding students'

performance at a public university. A common theme is that a belief system is an important

aspect of spirituality (Kent et al., 2021; Hermawan, 2021).

Religiosity

Spirituality and belief system may alter one's perception of lived experiences

(Hermawan, 2021). However, each of these terms has its own set of meanings. Spirituality, for

example, is made up of many concepts. It is abstract and subjective, as opposed to religion and

faith. A relationship with God, nature, others, and the environment can be spirituality.

Spirituality is connected to the value and quality of life. On the other hand, religion refers to a

group of people's or faith's traditional beliefs and rituals, tradition, rules, and culture guide

religion. In Jamaica religiosity is measured by asking "How frequently do you attend religious

services? Options include solely on exceptional occasions to at least once a week (such as

weddings, funerals, christening, et cetera). The question "To whose class do you belong?" is

provided to gauge subjective social class. Lower, middle, or upper social hierarchy are the

available alternatives (Patterson, 2022). According to Austin-Brooks, these characteristics need

to be considered appropriately in order to evaluate the relevance of Pentecostalism in modern-

day Jamaica. It is helpful to accomplish this by first addressing certain additional "religious affiliation/denomination" categories included in the 2011 census. Pentecostalists as a whole are outnumbered by either "No Religion" (572,008; 21.3%) or "Seventh Day Adventist" (322,228). (12.1%). Next with 295,195 (11%) is the category "Pentecostal," followed by "Other Church of God" with 246,838 (9.2%). Adventism first arrived in Jamaica in the 1890s, and it continued to expand quickly into the 20th century. If these categories were taken separately, they may imply that the most notable developments have been the rise in Adventist and Pentecostal membership, followed by secularization (Austin-Brooks, 2020).

Attitudes Towards Women in Jamaica

Attitudes, beliefs, and practices, or an organized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and actions, are described as spirituality. The service or adoration of God or the supernatural is religion. Religion and spirituality are frequently related to faith. Faith is a relationship with God that is more personal, subjective, and deeper than organized religion. Spirituality is associated with identifying and forming attitudes (Paul Victor et al., 2020; Rybicki, 2020). During the early nineteenth century, women performed a crucial but underappreciated and sometimes unacknowledged role in Baptist missions, such as those in Jamaica (Chappell, 2021).

Although political violence affects both male and female politicians. However, political violence has a subgroup known as Violence Against Women In Politics (VAWIP). According to this study, Jamaican culture has contributed in part to the acceptance of violence against women there. Women are also concerned about facing reprisals for coming out. Political violence deflects attention from the policies and accomplishments of women by raising questions about their capacity for leadership or by prohibiting them from standing for public office (Johnson-Myers, 2021). Based on gender identification, it aims to infringe upon, oppress, dissuade, and/or

regulate women's political rights. "Behaviors that particularly target women as women to abandon politics by forcing them to drop down as candidates or resign from a specific political post" are included in this. Another study found that the frequency of verbal assaults on women on social media by a constituent and other user is rising. Key acts of violence against female politicians in Jamaica include character assassination and verbal harassment. However, females are hardly mentioned in mission diaries and the writings of male missionaries, and they are virtually absent from the communication that has survived. Chappell investigates the scope of female mission work and the lives of the women who engaged in it by looking at source documents of the Baptist Missionary Society and published memoirs. It shows that, while being constrained by the rigid gender norms that were in place in England at the time, parochial and mission work gave women better chances outside the home. Using Jamaica after slavery as a case study, missionary work provided even more prospects for spiritual fulfillment by involving volunteers as mission school instructors and the wives of missionaries (Chappell, 2021).

The Variety of Spirituality among Jamaican People

There are more churches per square mile in Jamaica than anywhere else (Butler, 2019). It is apparent that geographically spirituality has a major influence. There is much that can be said about a large number of worship locations. Yelderman et al. (2018) and Taylor et al. (2019) introduce the common theme that spirituality significantly influences a person's values and morality. Related literature states that spirituality is interwoven in people's lives in Jamaica (Yelderman et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2019). In worship services that celebrate deliverance from sin and unlock pathways to the Holy Spirit, they sing and dance to rhythms and repertories that evoke feelings of home. A sense of collective distinctiveness is reinforced by the shared experience of religious transcendence, nostalgic narratives of the past, and the patrolling of

stylistic boundaries between the church and the wider world. Jamaican Pentecostals describe themselves as "in the world, but not of the world" (Butler, 2019). There is vast diversity in the spiritual beliefs of Jamaican people (Clark, 2020). An example is provided in Figure 2.

The island's great number of churches has the unintended consequence of their practices influencing one another (Nelson et al., 2020). Newspaper articles, television shows, gospel radio broadcasts, and casual conversations served as daily reminders of Christian morality teachings, which were articulated every day through song lyrics or Bible verses related to contemporary events (Ridgely, 2020). As a result, Jamaica strikes me as highly Christian. The island's great number of churches has the unintended consequence of their practices influencing one another (Nelson et al., 2020).

The Historical Influence of Spirituality in Jamaica

Religious and spiritual beliefs are strong among Afro-Caribbean people. Faith-based organizations may be helpful resources in the fight against mental illness. The history of the Black church is founded in societal transformation. These services stretch back to the days of slavery when going to church were a must for existence. There is a wealth of study and literature on the influence of spirituality on behavioral health outcomes. Jamaica's evolution of race and religion demonstrated a divide between European and Afro-Caribbean traditions (Clarke, 2020).

Although these three aspects of culture united to generate very comparable pluralistic complexes in Jamaican social structure and were characterized in colonial times by the title's Afro-Christian and Euro-Christian, this essay concentrates on religion rather than education or the family. The introduction of the slave plantation system under British colonial rule resulted in the creation of two forms of Jamaica, according to Clarke (2020), namely, European Jamaica and African Jamaica, reflecting the transformed cultures of the former white planter class and the

black slaves. Once established in Jamaica, this dichotomy was modified during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Duality still characterizes current views of Jamaican society, notwithstanding post-independence religious shifts, and is represented not just in rural settings but also in Kingston's social and physical organization, the capital city (Clarke, 2020). African diasporic peoples share a common history of captivity and deliverance.

In current day people are unaware that Jamaica, a little island off the coast of South America, has the global record for the most churches per square mile. In Jamaica one may find over 1,600 churches in Jamaica (Grant, 2018). Religion and spirituality are key determinants of many Black Caribbean people. Hope et al. (2020) state that religion and spirituality are key factors in the health and wellness of a person. Discussing well-being has been "tabooed" in many Black diasporic communities (Hope et al., 2020). The indigenous people maintain beliefs and societal norms that are traditionally spiritual. The challenge of persistence in Jamaican women to receive a tertiary degree has plagued institutions of higher education in Jamaica.

The Church and Support

Educators in the United States have studied the partnerships of the Black church and an urban high school. Researchers McIntosh and Curry (2020) have findings consistent with the black church's foundation, the importance of relationships, equity, and community. The implications of McIntosh and Curry's study indicate a positive relationship on students' needs of relationship and community. McIntosh and Curry provided student success and support through partnership efforts from the Black church in their study (McIntosh & Curry, 2020). The frequency of church attendance, contact with church members (seeing, writing, talking), emotional support from church members, and unpleasant contacts with church members did not significantly differ between older Black Caribbean people and older African American people.

SEM analysis comparison, however, shows that the quantity and kind of associations are different. For instance, church attendance was linked to emotional support among African Americans, while neither a direct nor an indirect link was found among Black Caribbean people (Taylor et al., 2022).

Additionally, the research shows that women are more likely than males to attend religious services, receive emotional support from church members, and have unfavorable relationships with them. Among Black Caribbean people, men are less likely than women to attend religious services (Muruthi, 2021). Additionally, findings show that women are more likely than males to attend religious services, receive emotional support from church members, and have unfavorable relationships with them. But among Black Caribbean people, men are less likely than women to attend religious services, and they also interact negatively with churchgoers more frequently. Significant variations in the experience of common discrimination and mental problems were found when group- and age-specific comparisons were made. The association between discrimination and mental problem among Afro-Caribbean people was partially mediated by mastery, but only among younger and older African Americans did religious support play a substantial moderating role. Implications: Together, the results of our study suggest that Caribbean people's feeling of competence might help mitigate the negative impacts of prejudice on their mental health (Taylor et al., 2022).

Popular religions in Jamaica

The census reveals the relationship between race and religion in Kingston at two points in time in recent Jamaican history: in 1960, two years before independence, and in 1991, three decades following freedom. The historical development of race and religious pluralism in Jamaica from slavery to the present day is sketched to contrast the distinction between

established, historic Christian denominations of European origin (such as the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Moravian, and United Church); post-slavery Afro-Christian religions. Additionally, the latter's replacement after World War I by the expansion and transformation of African-American religions (Clarke, 2020).

The 'Europeans' (mainly white Anglicans), 'Afro-Europeans,' and 'African' middle classes were all represented by denominational Protestants (31.5%) and Catholics (20.5%), who together accounted for little over half of the population. Afro-Christian faiths (the 'other Christians') accounted for about 40% of Kingston's population, with most adherents being black or Afro-European. Other minority religious groups included 'none,' 'other,' and 'not specified' (a total of 6.60%), Jewish (0.13%), Rastafari (0.18%), and non-Christian – predominantly Hindu or Confucian – (a total of 0.18%). So, although Jamaica claimed to be a Christian country, there were a significant cultural difference between upper-class denominational Christians and lower-class Afro-Christians. Figure 2 is a depiction of Clarke's (2020) study created by the researcher of this study for visual representation (Clarke, 2020).

Figure 2. Religious Affiliation of Jamaican People
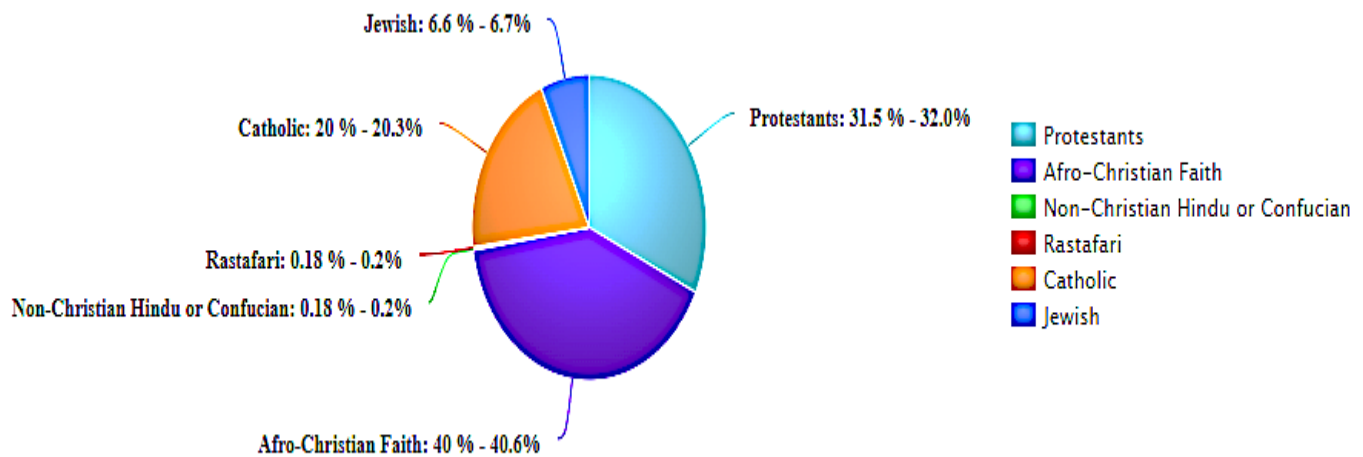
During the late twentieth century, the rise of secularism and the absence of church attendance, particularly in Kingston, have been notable. Jamaica's evolution of race and religion has exposed a divide between European and Afro-Caribbean traditions. Since independence in 1962, a new, secular worldview has complemented the twentieth-century entrance of the varied US-related Church of God, Pentecostals, and Seventh Day Adventists inside the violent garrisons of Kingston, which account for nearly a quarter of the city's population (Meadows, 2021; Clarke, 2020).

The Role of Spirituality in Education

It is said that students anticipate spirituality will play a role in their academic course work (Jacob et al., 2020). Students have also said that spirituality were incorporated into their education and professional practice. Spiritual care abilities, such as spiritual self-awareness and sensitivity to patients' spiritual beliefs, are examples of their role as health care providers. Spirituality has had a powerful role in the evolution of education throughout history. Roberson et

al. (2021) stated that faith and spirituality are recognized by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as a dimension of individual variety that shapes a person's identity and experiences in the world. Faith and spirituality must be ethically integrated into social workers' professional practices (Roberson et al., 2021). For higher education to continue to be of the highest caliber, academic staff retention is essential. These educational institutions must now put a greater emphasis on enhancing the effectiveness of their teaching personnel. This is made possible by creating an environment that fosters spirituality (Sapra, Khosla, & Dungrakoti, 2022).

Early in the nineteenth century, education was predominantly offered by the churches in Britain and her colonies and was seen as an essential component of missionary activity, providing women with a route to overseas service. In order to set an example of Christian family life, the Baptist Missionary Society required its (male) missionaries to be married, but also gave single women teachers the chance to engage in international missions and serve as possible brides for widower missionaries. One of England's richest possessions was Jamaica, the largest Caribbean Island. Additionally, it was the subject of bitter debate on the abolition of slavery, in which Baptist missionaries assumed a prominent position. Following complete emancipation in 1838, annual statistics from The Missionary Herald and Baptist Herald demonstrate that far more women than males participated in the Baptist mission to Jamaica. They had a significant impact on the education and religious training of indigenous women and children since they were instructors and "assistant missionaries," as missionary spouses are frequently referred to. The chronological period covered by this study does not go beyond 1860, the year that the first women were hired as missionaries in their own right. The Jamaican economy had collapsed at this point, and the Jamaican Baptist mission, which had chosen to secede from its parent

organization in 1843, had been drastically reduced. The effectiveness of higher education faculties can be favorably and dramatically enhanced by workplace spirituality. The outcome shows that the academic organizational performance of higher education institutions is improved in the presence of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence as there were an improvement in their academic reputation, graduate students' employability, research work, internationalization, Nobel-prized and field medals, research grant, resources, infrastructure, and community services (Sapra, Khosla, & Dungrakoti, 2022).

Spiritual Support

Literature indicates local, religious, and spiritual leaders assist patients nearing the end of their life with spiritual assistance. The idea was to make the person feel at ease with themselves (Ulrich, 2020; Wanget al., 2020). Spiritual leadership, for starters, is built on enhancing people's inner drive. Employees are motivated to achieve goals by spiritual leaders who provide a clear and compelling vision and increase their feeling of duty to the firm. The spiritual aspect of social support communication practices of participants. Related literature incorporated spiritual forms of social support into studying other social support components that affect pupils. Participants spoke about how they came up with spiritual support networks. The outcomes of my research demonstrated the critical need for ongoing spiritual support for online Ph.D. students at a Christian university throughout their studies (Wang et al., 2020; Keenan, K. & Stewart-Wells, 2021).

Spiritual Community. Friendships and other people, especially family, may provide a person with a larger focus and a positive self-image in times of need or disaster. Support improves one's quality of life and protects against adversity (Bosco-Ruggiero, 2020; Ingersoll et al., 2021). Hope (2020) delves into the spiritual form of social support provided by faculty,

family members, and others. Religion is a big deal among Black diasporic groups and impacts their health. Given the growing number of the Black Caribbean in the United States, it's critical. Related literature states that the United States Black diasporic communities include an extensive range of religious and spiritual institutions. The religious and spiritual communities provide social and civic resources, which ease health conditions and stressors for the community. The research question determined the efficacy of the religious and spiritual resources in alleviating the health conditions and stressors for Black diasporic communities. Spirituality was a key determinant in the health and support of Black Caribbean students (Hope et al., 2020).

Spirituality in the Family. Bills et al. (2020) stated that there needs to be further study on the effect of familial beliefs. Family spiritual beliefs are the assumptions and convictions that families have about their collective spirituality, whereas family spiritual actions are how family members internalize and express these assumptions and convictions. The two-dimensional nature of family spirituality is an important distinction between examining in future research since there is a probability for differential effect on family resilience factors not investigated in this study. Both Bills (2020) and Taylor et al. (2021) stated that a person's actions indicate spirituality in the family (Bills et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2021).

Religion

Religion creates a framework for ethical decisions. Religion encourages well-being for people. Religion offers individuals a sense of belonging and is a valuable source of social support. A spiritual journey unrelated to a specific kind of belief, for example, might explain religion (Szydłowski et al., 2021). Many Christians will picture prayers and rituals that are explicitly theistic and derived from the rich traditions of Christian communities when they think of religious activities. However, liturgical historians have long noted that Christian liturgical

rituals have their roots in everyday objects and actions. Despite lacking overt theism in their physical composition, daily rituals and practices have a significant impact on how people perceive the world and what they stand for (Turnbloom, 2021). Religion is important because it gives people meaning and purpose in their lives, and religion promotes people to live healthier lifestyles (Babie & Sarre, 2020; Szydłowski et al., 2021). Babie and Sarre (2020) suggest that Religion, particularly monotheistic faiths such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, can collectively tackle global concerns (Babie & Sarre, 2020; Szydłowski et al., 2021).

Religion and Culture. Culture is an integral part of how people identify and define themselves. While many in the Afro-Caribbean community share overlapping cultural norms, there are distinct behaviors and characteristics. These and other cultural influences and values can ungird one's view on life. The complicated history of the Caribbean's colonial past has impacted and continues to shape it. The Caribbean has served as a crossroads for more than 400 years of cultural interchange and mingling, as well as the power struggle between Africa, Europe, and the Americas (Zacharias et al., 2021). The authors show how embodied religious practices are essential in expressing and influencing interiority and spiritual life, national and ethnic belonging, methods of knowing and healing approaches, and sexual and gender politics. In this manner, the body is a critical locus of spiritually inspired social activity (Covington-Ward & Jouili 2021). Younkin's (2021) study revealed that students allegedly saw themselves as more of a support person than an evangelist. Spirituality framed their influence via the lens of so-called faith flags and saw more potential for influence with coworkers than with patients (Younkin, 2021). Next to China and the United States, India has the third-largest higher education system in the world. India's higher education system has grown gradually, and as of 2020, there are more than 1,000 universities there. Organizations that do not research and ignore workplace

spirituality for scholars. Those who are interested in studying for job may also profit from it (Sapra, Khosla, & Dungrakoti, 2022).

When it comes to interreligious discourse, hospitality means being open to encountering another faith, even if it differs fundamentally from one's own (Turnbloom, 2021). There is a core notion that God encourages all religions to engage one another and that we can do this by participating in relational interactions with the other religion. When it comes to interreligious discourse, hospitality means being open to encountering another faith, even if it differs fundamentally from one's own (Bone & Dein, 2021). With 94 percent of its population claiming to be religious, Ghana is among the top ten most religious countries in the world, according to the WIN/Gallup 2017 poll study, which examined the religious views of over 66,000 individuals in 68 countries. Additionally, a number of academics have emphasized the significance of religion in African culture (Hiadzi et al., 2021). The purpose of these interactions is not to convert adherents of other religions, but rather because it is God's intention that genuine religious expression include interfaith contact. In such interactions, vulnerability requires letting go of long-standing conceptual prejudices and accepting the experience as a brief act of grace. Hospitality in the context of interreligious discourse entails a readiness to engage another religion, even if that faith differs fundamentally from one's own. Since it is God's intention that genuine religious expression require encountering one another, the purpose of such interactions is not to convert adherents of other religions. Embracing the process as a moment of grace and being vulnerable in such meetings require letting go of centuries-old conceptual preconceptions. (Bone & Dein, 2021; Hiadzi et al., 2021; Turnbloom, 2021).

Spirituality and culture. Culture is foundational to the way many people define who they are. Many Jamaicans share common beliefs, cultural norms, and traditions. There are

specific behaviors that are unique to Jamaican culture. Culture can influence a person's views on religion and spirituality. For example, Wumkes' (2020) found that any misfortune is attributed to a demonic spirit. People may have a hard time understanding this cultural norm when working closely with people who belong to the Jamaican culture and community. Jamaican culture believes in the practice of Obeah. Obeah is the belief that a person with a supernatural power can cast a spell or put a spell on a person (Wumkes, 2020). With this supernatural power, a person can curse a person with any misfortune or illness. Understanding different beliefs in spirituality can help professionals understand a student's need for seeking help when they experience misfortune. Acculturation is an additional area that can be associated with stressors a student may experience.

Acculturation.

Students who travel to a new country may experience stressors. The transition from one culture to another culture that a person may not know about can take an emotional toll. Like many countries, immigrants can have the struggle to adapt to social norms, housing, isolation, prejudice, and cultural differences. Adjusting to a new culture includes feelings of isolation and disconnectedness for university students (Bui et al., 2021). There is also no connection with a student's country of origin and how a student maintains multiple homes. Failure to consider cultural differences will limit a college counselor's ability to assist students effectively. There are limitations in the literature that highlight the importance of understanding the spiritual influence of student persistence. O'Garo et al. identified that intercontinental travel loses its significance as a means of cultural exposure and exchange and as digital and internet access rises significantly throughout the Caribbean, it is imperative that the powerful effects of culture be well understood. The results of the current study indicate that Caribbean people face a high danger of internalizing

Western standards which will lower their self-esteem and eventually worsen depressive symptoms (O'Garo, K. et al., 2020).

Education in the Caribbean

Health and nutrition teaching methods that are culturally responsive have the most efficacy for improving general health among the Caribbean diaspora. Education and lifestyle interventions targeted to the Caribbean population's cultural needs can help reduce the burden of avoidable illnesses. The Caribbean is also home to a number of top-notch colleges and higher education institutions. While it is well recognized for its excellent medical education, it is also an up-and-coming destination for ambitious business leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators interested in industries like business, tourism, and finance (Hasaan et al., 2021). Caribbean destinations' ability to innovate and maintain a strong competitive position in the global tourist industry depends on higher education's capacity to develop a high quality, specialized labor force. Research aims to establish the degree to which Caribbean tertiary institutions are training students for destination success. Six institutions in the English-speaking Caribbean provided content analysis to assess the tourism programs. The Lewis-Cameron study found that there is strong agreement between the regional tourism curriculum and the criteria for successful destinations. To offer a better balance between information acquisition, knowledge invention, knowledge application, and knowledge transformation, the curriculum must be urgently reshaped (Lewis-Cameron, 2022).

Jamaica's Landscape of Higher Education

Extraneous factors such as demographic inequalities may have altered community and gang violence perceptions, the Jamaican education system, and faith in government entities. The spiritual experiences of participants remained constant and were the study's independent variable

(Walker, 2020). As intercontinental travel becomes less crucial as a method for cultural exposure and exchange, and as digital and internet access increases throughout the Caribbean, the strong impacts of culture must be better recognized. According to the findings, Caribbean are at a high risk of internalizing Western ideas of beauty, lowering their self-esteem, and, as a result, raising depressive symptoms. Cultural exchange's advantages and drawbacks should remain a research focus in the future (O'Garo et al., 2020; Ferguson et al., 2020; Leslie et al., 2021).

Persistence in University-level students

Mishra's (2020) study discovered the influence of social support provided by this paradigm on student persistence. Mishra (2020) also acknowledged the value of the cohort, claiming that the teamwork they experienced inside it were the primary reason they were able to finish their dissertations and programs (Mishra, 2020). Elder's (2021) study revealed that ethnicity and first-generation status affected connections between various variables. In terms of variable selection and assessment in predicting retention models for starting university students, the findings of this study have significant significance for higher education policymakers, administrators, and academics (Elder, 2021).

One study identified the association between different first-generation college students (FGCSs) criteria and 2- and 4-year college graduation rates. This study created eight definitions of FGCSs based on parents' highest level of education and the proportion of parents who reached that level using data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (Toutkoushian et al., 2021). The Lumina Foundation, have made college completion a priority, with Lumina establishing a specific goal of 60% of adults with a degree or certificate by 2025. This college completion agenda recognizes that although access to higher education is important, so is increasing degree attainment rates, especially for underserved student populations (Lumina Foundation, 2017).

Religion and Spirituality's Influence on Students

Fosnacht and Broderick (2020) explain that the lack of research is shocking because of the importance religion and spirituality have on the development and identity of a student. Fosnacht and Broderick's (2020) study conveys the importance of students' perception of spirituality on a college campus. Spirituality is a major part of college students and has a major impact on a student's well-being (Fosnacht & Broderick, 2020). A finding of the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) team is that the religious and spiritual atmosphere on campus is equally important for the establishment of varied relationships (Rockenbach et al., 2019).

Undergraduate completion

According to Pecina, his study (2020) was essential to my research since it demonstrated the relevance of having a peer support group in students' social support networks. Their findings indicated that this methodology had a favorable impact on university students' tenacity in their studies. This research also looked into the many forms of social support networks vital to students' long-term success. It broadened the scope of my investigation to include the importance of spiritual assistance. In recent findings, it is considered spiritual support systems are made up of peers, teachers, family, and others to see what effect these characteristics had on online doctorate students' perseverance (Pecina et al., 2020). It is a worldwide tendency that fewer men than women enroll in higher education. A national crisis exists in Jamaica as a result of its emergence. Thompson's 2021 research emphasizes how important family ties are, particularly the attitudes parents exhibit toward their children's education and the roles they play in it. These factors have a significant impact on how kids feel about school. While the family is the primary

concern, public policy may play a role in influencing attitudes toward education through both public discourse and the availability of resources to widen access (Thompson, 2021).

Higher levels of female involvement in postsecondary education have been seen throughout the last generation, "spurred by the global phenomenon of women's liberation." The following inquiry is posed by this study. What factors contribute to Jamaican women's success? Despite obstacles posed by politics and culture (Gayle & Bryan, 2019). The research conducted in-depth interviews with 186 purposefully chosen guys between the ages of 18 and 39 and compared their experiences to those of 74 girls in a comparable age range using a cross-sectional gender comparison design, which is rooted in a phenomenological approach. The sample was broken down into three socioeconomic groups—poor, near-poor, and upper-middle income—and distributed throughout rural and urban areas. It is important to consider how the Caribbean compares to the rest of the globe. The authors demonstrate that, while there was gender parity among first-degree graduates globally 51% females to 49 % males, the Caribbean is quite different, with a rise in female enrollment at the master's degree level 56 %, but a decline in male favorability at the doctoral level 56 %. It has been revealed that 69% of undergraduate students, 71% of master's students, and 64 % of doctorate students are female, making them the majority at all three levels (Thompson, 2021). The determination has been made that a student success is influenced by environment (Rockenbach et al., 2019; Pecina et al., 2020; Thompson, 2021; Mishra, 2020).

Graduate completion

Brissett (2019) defined social integration as students' success in becoming members of a social network of peers in their particular institutions and departments (Brissett, 2019). The students who had positive experiences in these two areas were more likely to persist in their

programs of study. In contrast, Bissett found that students that had negative experiences in these two areas were less likely to continue. Students discussed their positive social integration experiences with peers and family and discussed how these experiences helped them persist in their studies. The Barnett study were significant to my research because it explored social integration, which were the goal of the spiritual aspect of social support examined (Brissett, 2019). Fu et al. (2021) and De Clercq et al. (2021) also investigated the impact of primary relationships on student persistence. The doctoral students in her study discussed their personal experiences in their cohort program and their primary relationships with their persistence. The students emphasized the importance of positive relationships and collaborative experiences on their persistence and discussed the encouragement they received from their peers in their cohort. They also discussed the need for more focus group in their program so they could discuss their ideas on support systems. According to De Clercq et al. (2021), the positive impact of peer support is significant to the doctoral journey (Brissett, 2019; De Clercq et al., 202; Fu et al., 2021).

Although, GRE quantitative and GRE verbal scores are not predictive of graduate course grades, students' undergraduate GPA (UGPA) and GRE Physics (GRE-P) scores are. We also discover that, despite a statistically significant 18 percentile point difference in median GRE-P scores between sexes, men and women perform equally well in their graduate studies (Verostek et al., 2021). The results of the analysis show that only the UGPA, out of the entry metrics studied, is a significant predictor of overall Ph.D. completion, and that the UGPA indirectly predicts Ph.D. completion through graduate grades. Therefore, the UGPA evaluates characteristics associated with graduate course grades, which in turn forecast graduation. Despite the fact that GRE-P scores are not substantially linked to completing a Ph.D., our findings imply

that whatever predictive impact they could have also connected indirectly through graduate GPA (Verostek et al., 2021). Postsecondary education is still seen as essential for obtaining economic success and upward mobility.

While there has been an increase in access to higher education over the past three decades, children whose parents did not get at least a bachelor's degree still have a significant disadvantage. First-generation college students confront unique hurdles since they tend to come from low-income and minority homes because of insufficient academic preparation; insufficient financial means; and a lack of support from classmates or family who have completed college (Hutson, 2022). Ph.D. completion overall is merely one indicator of graduate school "success." Graduate teachers frequently point to good grades, timely graduation, and post-graduation employment as signs of successful graduate students (Peterson et al., 2018) Therefore, it is vital for admissions committees to comprehend how these additional success indicators connect to other standard quantitative admissions metrics. Studying the importance of graduate grade point average (GGPA) in particular is crucial for both historical and contemporary reasons (Verostek et al., 2021). However, unlike their graduate counterparts, first-generation undergraduate students have not been fully examined in terms of their driving forces, difficulties, and special requirements for persistence, retention, and completion.

Overall, the findings show that UGPA, compared to other frequently provided quantitative admissions criteria, provides the most insight into two critical indicators of graduate school performance while posing less of a threat to fair admissions processes. However, unlike their graduate counterparts, first-generation undergraduate students have not been fully examined in terms of their driving forces, difficulties, and special requirements for persistence, retention, and completion. This mixed-methods study aims to ascertain the reasons why various

populations pursue graduate degrees, particularly first-generation graduate students who are the first in their families to do so, as well as their opinions of the value of education, the support systems they need in their social networks, and the additional help that is needed for a non-traditional population that has frequently been out of school for more than ten years (Hutson, 2022; Verostek et al., 2021).

Summary

Spirituality has played an essential role in Jamaicans' daily lives (Williams, 2021). This study's theoretical framework must be intimately tied to spirituality. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) explained how the social aspect of learning influences a student's experience. A researcher might study the social part of spiritual support and one's feeling of the community via this perspective. According to the cognitive-behaviorism hypothesis, spirituality impacts a students' academic and social experiences in a public university context (Brown et al., 1988). The importance of spirituality in a person's life may impact their life. Cognitive behaviorism theory explains the predominance of spirituality about the function of beliefs. The social and spiritual aspects of learning and their role in the learning process and learners' persistence have been studied. By examining the level of spirituality among university-level students in Jamaica, practitioners can better understand the needs of students in the Caribbean (Mishra, 2020).

Additionally, recent literature supports the role of spirituality in the achievement of university students. Another central theme throughout the related literature indicated a slight increase in the persistence of university-level students with more support than those with less support (Taylor et al., 2019; Bosco-Ruggiero, 2020; Hope et al., 2020). Student persistence has plagued institutions of higher education in Jamaica. Program administrators seek to provide

students with the design and support of advanced degrees needed to succeed. However, little is known about the experiences in life that develop the attainment of long-term goals. There is a large gap on the perceived spirituality as it relates to the persistence of students at Jamaican universities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in the Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King, 2017). This study will contain an investigation of the perceptions of Jamaican students' academic and social experiences in a public university setting in Jamaica. This study aims to research the perception of spirituality among Jamaican graduate students at public universities. A qualitative phenomenological study requires the exploration of perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth 2018). Recent literature supports the role of spirituality in the achievement of university students (Clarke, 2020). Student persistence has plagued institutions of higher education in Jamaica. Program administrators seek to provide students with the design and support of advanced degrees needed to succeed. However, little is known about the experiences in life that develop the attainment of long-term goals. A gap exists in the literature on Jamaican university-level students' persistence to completion. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative research design needs to have a clear strategy, clarify the purpose of the study, create a theoretical context for the research, and formulate a strong research question. Chapter three sections and subsections included the research design, research questions that were asked to the participants of the study, the setting and participants of the study, and the participant demographics were shared.

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design. A

qualitative research approach was suited for the study because the researcher intended to extract from the accounts of university-level students at Jamaican public universities the essence of spiritual support and experiences as it relates to persistence. As a qualitative study the focus is on the participants' descriptions of shared experiences instead of the interpretation of the data (Moustakas, 1994). Quantitative studies around student persistence are widely available, but qualitative research is needed to provide an abundance of depth of insight (Lemon & Buchanan, 2017).

Phenomenological research methods are provided in this study. Phenomenological studies seek to gain an understanding of phenomena via the combined experiences of multiple people (Moustakas, 1994). The subject and research question in phenomenological research designs have social importance and are grounded in the autobiographical meanings obtained from the participants' shared experience or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design in this study will lead to a discovery of the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received tertiary degrees at schools of higher education in Jamaica. The

scientific evidence for this phenomenological research originated from disciplined step-by-step processes (Moustakas, 1994). As an organized systematic study, a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature has been included (Moustakas, 1994). As human science research, this phenomenological qualitative research design will search for meaning and examined the essences of the participants' experience using comprehensive

descriptions of their experiences and feelings obtained primarily through interviews and conversations (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental phenomenological design is suitable since it adopts a human science

approach and facilitates for the participants' personal engagement (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenological research also enabled the study question to emerge from the researcher's deep interest and extensive personal experience in a given issue. Because it allowed for the participants' and the researcher's enthusiasm, this design is not only appropriate but required. Moustakas defined transcendental phenomenology as a scientific investigation of how things look to us, phenomena we observe and appear to us in awareness. The researcher selected the transcendental approach for this study because it investigated the core of Jamaican university-level students' shared spiritual support.

Research Questions

Analyzing the issue and the purpose statement led to the creation of the research questions. The main research question and its supporting questions are founded on autobiographical meanings obtained from the participants' shared experience (phenomenon), which is a phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994). Three supporting questions are included in the main research topic for this study.

Central Research Question

How would the Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality during their time in college?

Sub-Question One

What challenges did Jamaican women experience during their time in college or university?

Sub-Question Two

What do Jamaican women believe contributed to the completion of their tertiary degree/degrees?

Sub-Question Three

How do Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality and academic success in higher education?

Sub-Question Four

How did spirituality impact Jamaican women and their persistence in their program/programs of study? Please explain why or why not.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was undergraduate and graduate institutions in the Jamaica. When the participants mention the name of a university in their responses an anonymous institution were provided in place. Anonymous institutions were indicated based on the participants' responses. Institutions will vary because Jamaican women who will participate in this study will have received tertiary degrees/degrees from different institutions undergraduate and graduate institutions on the island of Jamaica. Pseudonyms were provided to hide the actual identity of participants in the study. The International Review Board (IRB) requires participant privacy in this this type of study. There are 24 private universities, 28 state universities, an incalculable number of colleges, community colleges, teacher preparation schools, polytechnics, and other educational establishments. The researcher will create a pseudonym for each institution mentioned. The top three universities in Jamaica that have the largest population are the University of the West Indies in Mona, the University of Technology in Kingston, and Northern Caribbean University in Mandeville. During the research study, the anonymity of the participant and institution was a priority at all times. The purpose of this selection has two parts. The first purpose is that this setting assisted in comprehending the research topic and the study's core phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007), the site should ". . . purposely inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p.

125). The second reason the setting was selected is based on the researcher's familiarity with the location and demographic of each institution on the island of Jamaica.

Setting

Undergraduate and graduate programs in Jamaicaserved as the study's site. All participants of this study identified as Jamaican woman who have completed a tertiary degree. Participants in this study will also have a pseudonym referenced in the research study. This setting is important because the research focuses not only on Jamaican university-level women' persistence but also on their perceived spirituality. The participants that were selected for this study were from a broad range of identified religious identification, occupation, major, and age. A successful study is required to be in a place that could "...purposefully educate an understanding of the research topic and core phenomena in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125).

Participants

The study included 10 subjects, aged 18 years or older, university graduates, and identify as Jamaican women. The participants of this study will take part in the triangulation study (Moustakas, 1994). The questions asked to participants were in-depth interviews individual interviews, focus group, and letter-writing to capture their lived experiences guided by probing questions. Potential variables in the study are differences in demographic background, altered impressions of community, and cultural expectations (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2018). Information on the participants' demographics were added once participants are selected for the research study. The sample size of the study were 10 participants (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

The researcher currently serves as the GEAR UP Success Coach at Pitt Community College under the Enrollment Services division. The University of North Carolina System employs a team of eight GEAR UP success coaches from community colleges and public universities across the state of North Carolina. The goal was to increase the number of students who persist in postsecondary education. This team is responsible for assisting first-year college students with one-on-one foundational success coaching. This includes support in the following focus areas: academics, effectiveness, school community, health, managing commitments, career development, and commitment to graduation. I am not explicitly involved in the higher education system in Jamaica. However, I have personal concerns about the need to provide more training and support for faculty and staff to provide spiritual support for students in Jamaica. I understand that my experiences as a Jamaican-American Woman, interactions in Jamaica, and my experience working in higher education will help relate to participant experiences.

The selection of the transcendental phenomenological approach is intentional. The study will examine the evolution of themes and patterns from the viewpoints of the participants who had persevered in higher education in Jamaica (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2018). I believe that people give meaning to their lives through their interactions with others and their social context's historical and cultural norms. Others have said that people find meaning in their lives based on their interactions with other people and cultural norms (Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2014). My passion for students' persistence at Jamaican universities has fueled my motivation to pursue this research. The procedures provided for a transcendental approach provided a structure for investigating the themes and patterns that arise from the viewpoints and experiences of the participants in this study.

Interpretive Framework

I believe that people give meaning to their lives through their interactions with others and their social surroundings' historical and cultural norms. My qualitative research aimed to report the perceptions of the spirituality of Jamaican university alumni and those who have completed their program of study. The interpretive framework selected for this study is social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was completed through the words of Jamaican university alumni who described their experiences with spirituality as it relates to their persistence at a Jamaican university. This task was completed through an individual interview, focus group, and written letters of advice by research participants to a Jamaican university student. The study used triangulation as the format for the data collection plan (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014).

Philosophical Assumptions

Every individual should be able to explore and develop their particular traits and talents. This is best addressed by ensuring that every individual has access to a high-quality education. It is critical to establish educational environments that support this process for college students to continue to develop their skills and growth. Quality education, entails meeting all of the student's spiritual and social needs. This includes meeting the student's cognitive demands and their physical, social, and psychological needs.

Ontological Assumption

An ontological assumption is that reality and any experience an individual may have been subjective. I desire to understand the world by gaining meaning through my very own life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I believe that life experiences for each person are different and develop complex views (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). My research study was contingent on

the participants' experiences and views. I believe that the research participant's experiences with the phenomenon that is being studied has shaped their life experiences through cultural norms, historical norms, and social interactions with others. My choice to conduct a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, study was influenced by my ontological assumption. I selected a qualitative method of research because it aligns with my belief as a researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014; van Manen, 2016).

Epistemological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth, the epistemological assumption addresses what is considered knowledge and how the claims of the study are justified, specifically, the relationship between what is currently being researched and the current researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am a qualitative researcher, and I believe that I should try to understand and get as close as I can to the participants in my study. I believe that knowledge is known through the subjective experiences of individuals. I feel that this is established by making the participants feel comfortable expressing their most authentic feeling and thoughts. The comfortability of the participants in the study was the process of getting an abundance of descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. If the research participants are uncomfortable with the person who is conducting the research, the participants deem the researcher as un-relatable, which can compromise the interview process and the data of the phenomenological experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Axiological Assumption

According to Moustakas (1994), the axiological assumption is the extent to which the researcher's values are known and brought into a study. A qualitative researcher reveals the nature of the study and openly acknowledges values and biases. Qualitative researchers place

themselves by identifying their gender, age, color, immigration status, and other personal experiences. I believe that my values and biases may reflect on all stages of this research process. However, this created a need for me to separate my thoughts and feelings (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Additionally, I sought to capture the true essence of the phenomenon by utilizing the exact words of the research participants, which was provided throughout the development of the thematic units.

Researcher's Role

According to Moustakas (1994), the research must thoroughly explain how participants serve as a human instrument in the research study to have sound qualitative research. I investigated common patterns and themes in the participant's responses. Although I do not have any control over my research participants, I have many things in common with the participants in the study. I am the child of Jamaican parents, experienced Jamaican society firsthand, and completed university. However, I do not have any relationship with the participants of the study, but I strongly identify with my research participants. I will separate my feelings about spirituality as it relates to student persistence. I will work hard to make sure that I listened to the exact words of the research participants, to ensure that I will accurately portray the participants' experiences with the phenomenon of the study. Separating my personal feelings and personal bias was beneficial to the research participants to be given a 'true voice' and draw accurate thematic conclusions based on their own words and their own experiences. This process permitted my research study to be sound and valid. This study can be provided to effectively develop programs because the study was built on solid analysis and factual data that can assist students who attend Jamaican universities to continue until degree completion.

Procedures

The first step in conducting this study was to submit the application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and receive permission to conduct the research. I am aware that no data collection or other activity could have taken place without the clearance of the IRB (see Appendix A). Before I contact Liberty University IRB, I know that I was required to get permission from the study location and the university. I prepared accordingly. The data collection provided in this study was based on the works of Moustakas' (1994) steps for a transcendental study phenomenological research. This was made up of participant surveys, semi-structured individual interviews, and written letters to current Jamaican university students (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The following procedures were implemented once the research was authorized by the IRB at Liberty University, including the setting sites giving their consent.

The recruitment flyers provided to match the criteria for participants. The participants of this study were located by use of social media recruitment (Appendix E) and (Appendix F). The researcher conducted one round of semi-structured individual interviews with open-ended questions regarding the phenomenon in this research (see Appendix C). The researcher conducted one focus group with five participants discussions centered around themes and patterns developed during individual interviews (see Appendix D). After the focus group was complete participants received an email prompt to complete and submit written letters to current high school or college students (see Appendix E). Data analysis was completed using Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis and MAXQDA. The data will then be recorded and stored in compliance with standards to protect and safeguard the collected information.

Permissions

After the proposed dissertation, and I have passed the dissertation proposal review and defense, I will request approval from the IRB approval from Liberty University (Appendix A). Once I have received approval from Liberty University, I will move forward with the research process and start gathering my research data.

Recruitment Plan

Once the approval from the IRB at Liberty University is received, consent from each of the participants were collected. The researcher requested permission to post both recruitment flyers (Appendix E) and (Appendix F) from Facebook group administrator. Afterwards I received approval from Facebook Group One Administrator to post recruitment flyers on the page (Appendix B). Participants for this study were recruited utilizing social media, The previous Facebook group was placed under pseudonym in order to protect the privacy of the participants of this study. The Facebook Group One Administrator posted social media recruitment flyer (Appendix E) and a photo of recruitment flyer (Appendix F) to the Facebook Group One page. Once those who are interested in the study emailed me they were sent a consent form. Once the consent form has been signed they were contacted to set up a time for the first part of the study, individual interviews via Zoom. The study included participants who each obtained an undergraduate or graduate degree. Nine participants of the study had a Bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned One participant had a Master's degree as the highest degree earned. Demographics of the participants such as age, occupation, religious affiliation, participants varied. All of the participants of the study in the study will met the minimum requirement for the participants in this study. There were only female participants in this study.

This study's participants were Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. Participants were from anonymous cities. The emphasis was placed on the perceived spirituality

and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. This context is significant since the study focuses not just on the persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree but also on the perceived spirituality of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. The sample size included 10 participants, all Jamaican women aged 18 and up. Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree will answer a series of questions. The questions asked to participants were in-depth individual interviews capturing their lived experiences in college guided by probing questions. It is important to select the appropriate participants to understand the phenomenon being study. Purposeful criterion sampling was provided to select participants of the study because of the discovery of important criteria, their articulation, and a systematic assessment and analysis of examples that fulfill the criteria. The goal of criteria sampling was used to find major system flaws so that they may be addressed (Patton, 2015). This allowed valuable insight into the perceptions of spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. Educational stakeholders at all level can benefit from an understanding of the additional support necessary for student efficacy. The researcher of the study proceeded to obtain the written consent of the participants of this study. Then observation of the participants during the interviews and reminding them that participation was entirely voluntary, as stated on the consent form, and that they might withdraw from the study at any moment (see Appendix G). Potential variables in the study are differences in demographic background, altered impressions of community, and cultural expectations. A transcendental phenomenological study was ideal for understanding students' persistence for spirituality and persistence.

Data Collection Plan

There were three data collection procedures in this study. Semi-structure individual interviews, letter writing, and focus group were dependable in this study's findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). These qualitative data gathering techniques would yield detailed information important for developing textural and structural descriptions. The transcendental phenomenological approach in this research examined the evolution of themes and patterns from the participants' viewpoints who have or have not persevered in higher education in Jamaica throughout time. All data collecting strategies that were provided in this investigation followed accepted research methodology and published literature guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

Participant for this study were recruited utilizing social media, the previous Facebook groups were placed under pseudonym in order to protect the privacy of the participants of this study. The pseudonym of Facebook group was titled FB Group One. The researcher will post social media recruitment flyer (Appendix E) and a photo of recruitment flyer (Appendix F) to the Facebook pages to recruit participants for the study.

Data were gathered using synchronous participant interviews and focus group, synchronous and asynchronous researcher field notes, and electronic communication (asynchronous). Through triangulation of the data and consistent descriptions of the phenomenon's core from numerous viewpoints, the validity of this research study was reinforced by the intentional use of three different collecting procedures. Data collection will not begin until the IRB it was given clearance (see Appendix A), and all consent forms (see Appendix G) are signed and returned to the researcher. Time limitations will not be imposed on interviews, focus group, or written letters allowing adequate time for respondent replies. A digital conferencing

platform was provided for interviews and focus group discussions via Zoom, a live transcription and recording was taken using Zoom. Recorded files were saved to a password encrypted computer and kept confidential.

Individual Interviews (Data Collection Approach #1)

After approval was received from the IRB and participants consent allowed this study to be conducted. This data collection technique involved audio recording and semi-professional transcriptions of interviews with the study participants. Interviews were placed at convenient times for the participants, who may have prior arrangements. A total of one hour were allotted for the interviews. For this study, open-ended questions were asked, listen for replies, and avoid non-verbal reactions to comprehensively understand the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Semi-structured interview questions were developed according to the research objectives to give valuable descriptions of the perceived self-efficacy on the perseverance of the individuals who would take part in the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Individual interview data collection method was selected because it would allow the participants to have a private one-on-one opportunity to share their viewpoints without the influence of others. The interview questions contained more intimate questions, that were specific to the individual's experiences. The following were the open-ended interview questions for each individual (See Appendix C):

1. Please tell me about yourself and your educational background. (Ice breaker question)

2. How would you describe your experience with spirituality during your time in college? (CRQ)

3. What experiences, if any contributed to the completion of your tertiary degree/degrees? (SQ2)

4. Why do you believe you completed your tertiary degree/degrees? (SQ2)

5. How would you describe spiritual influences on academic success in higher education? (SQ3)

6. What was your experience with spiritual support and your persistence in your program/programs of study? (CRQ)

7. Describe the spiritual background of your parents. (SQ1)

8. Describe your experience with spirituality regarding educational goals. (SQ4)

9. Describe your experience with spirituality and your academic success. (SQ4)

10. Describe your perceived self-efficacy (innate thinking about your ability to achieve success). (SQ2)

11. Describe what influenced your persistence to not drop out of higher education. (SQ2)

12. Describe what experiences influenced your perceived self-efficacy. (SQ1)

13. Describe your experience with motivation. (SQ2)

14. Describe relationships and involvement with spirituality at your current institution of higher education. (CRQ)

15. What other information would you like to provide regarding your overall perceived self-efficacy related to persistence in higher education in Jamaica? (SQ3)

Individual Interviews Data Analysis Plan

Question 1served as an icebreaker to begin a discourse with the participants by inviting them to speak about themselves. Question two will have the same purpose (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Questions 2–4 were intended to elicit information about the participants' interpersonal interactions and family structure (Brooks, 2015). Question five defined self-efficacy as applied in this research, and participants asked to express their internal knowledge of their capabilities

(Bandura, 1977). It was decided to include question six to better grasp the participants' perceived understanding of their natural capacity to pursue higher education (Brooms, 2018). According to the results, question seven was relevant in terms of the present issues that participants would say affects their confidence as a college student (Bormon et al., 2016). Question eight provided an opportunity for participants to describe their learning goals and their experiences pertinent to this research's fundamental phenomena (Goings, 2018; Ma & Shea, 2019). Specifically, I created question nine was to gather information on perceived relationships with professors and perceived educational engagement, including meaningful data for those who were involved in educational decision-making (Morales, 2014; Neville & Parker, 2017). As a result, participants had the option to elaborate on information they had learned about the core phenomena of this study during the last question of their interview (Patton, 2015). The question in this section were developed in accordance with Moustakas' phenomenological research methodologies and guidelines, the questions in this section were developed (Moustakas, 1994).

After each interview, I uploaded the audio files from the Zoom software, that were kept on my password-protected PC, to the speech-to-text transcription program Otter.ai. Otter. ai provided to transcribe the discourse that took place. If the Zoom recordings and transcription became damaged, I would have additional backup audio files on my computer using the program Voice Recorder Pro. I ensured that there were no corrupt files discovered throughout the transcribing process. Within one week of finishing the transcriptions, I provided a digital copy of the study to participants for evaluation and personal records. Through email, I allowed study participants to explain, amend, or update their comments digitally. The usage of member verification was used to verify the veracity of the data obtained and boost the credibility of my research. All communication and interview transcripts were kept on a password-protected

computer and password-protected cloud storage, with a hard copy backup kept in a personal safe. All files were uploaded to the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) application and MAXQDA as a tool to evaluate and initially code the data that is acquired. Member checking was completed when participants make their adjustments to the transcription. MAXQDA maintained the collected interview data and categorize major recurrent themes as distinct data notes as I read through the transcriptions that were collected. I manually organized the data using various color highlighting on a separate digital document when these nodes arise during the first coding phase. Additional data was evaluated and was included in this disaggregated data before data synthesis were in. This will accomplish triangulation between numerous data sources from the free-response phase of the individual interview and the focus group interviews. Before beginning data synthesis, additional data were analyzed and were included in this disaggregated data to accomplish triangulation between various data sources.

Focus Group (Data Collection Approach #2)

Once the individual participant interviews were completed, I scheduled a focus group in Zoom for the study participants to allow reflections on questions (See Appendix D) and possible additional responses about shared experiences relevant to the phenomenon in this study. I requested the participants' schedules to accommodate the participants' availability. The focus group will create a space for the participants to expand on their initial responses and collaboratively share their views and experiences in a non-threatening space. An adequate time frame between the individual interviews and focus group allowed the participants time for reflection on their initial responses (Seidman, 2019). I did expect that there would a wide range of responses. The focus group allowed an intimate and balanced conversation to compare and contrast the individual interview and letter-writing responses (Kruger & Casey, 2014).

Focus Group Questions

To capture insights on perceptions of spirituality as it pertains to persistence at Jamaican Universities. Questions one and two formed a standard of commonalities for the focus group participants. The intrinsic motivation and perceived sense of autonomy that the participants have experienced in their studies were discussed in questions three and four (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Questions five and six were asked to collect information about the perceived benefits and downsides of spirituality; these questions were asked to determine data that is considered helpful to students who currently attend university and want to complete their undergraduate or graduate education. Questions seven and eight were asked to produce insight to assist the researcher in comprehending the perception of the relationship between spirituality and persistence. Question nine will allow focus group participants to share additional information they would like to add to the discussion. The following questions are archived in Appendix D.

1. What do you believe about your participation in spirituality and your persistence at a Jamaican university? (CRQ)

2. Explain how spirituality has changed your experience at your institution. (SQ4)

3. What is your experience with spirituality? (CRQ)

4. Explain what experiences motivated you to complete your degree at your institution. (SQ2)

5. What benefits and challenges have you experienced at your institution? (SQ1)

6. What resources did you find most helpful in the completion of your degree? (SQ3)

7. What are your perceptions of spirituality and persistence? (CRQ)

8. What else would you like to add to this discussion or feel is important to share with the group? (CRQ)

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The focus group was video captured and recorded on the Zoom web-conferencing platform. After the focus group, I transcribed the focus group and replaced the assigned pseudonyms for anonymity and confidentiality using in MAXQDA. I utilized the speech-to-text transcription program in Zoom and Otter.ai to transcribe the discussion that took place. The audio files and transcription from Zoom were kept on my password-protected PC. Additional backup audio files captured on my computer using the Voice Recorder Pro were also accessible if the Zoom recordings are corrupt. During the transcribing process, I ensured that corrupted files would have a backup. Once the transcriptions are complete, a digital copy were provided to the research participants for their records within one week of finishing the transcription.

This step allowed study participants to explain, amend, or update comments via email responses to the researcher. The validity was ensured by frequent member checking. This increased the reliability of my research study. All communication and interview transcriptions were saved on a password-protected computer and password-protected digital cloud storage, with an extra backup physical copy on an encrypted USB flash drive in a personal safe.

The focus group lasted a minimum of 1 hour and were video recorded using the Zoom online conferencing technology, participants will be assigned pseudonyms in transcription to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. After each interview, I uploaded the audio files from Zoom that were kept on my password-protected PC to the speech-to-text transcription program Zoom and Otter.ai to transcribe the discourse that had taken place. If the Zoom recordings became damaged, I would l have had additional backup audio files captured on my phone using

the program Voice Recorder Pro. I documented if there are any corrupted files discovered

throughout the transcribing process. Within one week of finishing the transcriptions, a digital

copy was provided to the research participants for evaluation and personal records.

All files were uploaded to the application MAXQDA as a tool to evaluate and initially

code the acquired data whenever adjustments to the transcription record were made following

member validation. As the researcher goes through the transcriptions, MAXQDA provided as an

organization tool to collect focus group data and classify major recurrent themes as discrete data

nodes. The researcher manually disaggregated the data using various colored highlighting on a

separate digital document for each data node when these nodes emerge during the first coding

procedure. Additional data from the student questionnaire's free-response section and individual

participant interviews were examined and included in the disaggregated data before data

synthesis begins, allowing for triangulation between several data sources.

Letter-Writing (Data Collection Approach #3)

This data collecting strategy offered an extra outlet for the research study participants to

reflect on their personal experiences and identified resources and relationships that were useful

in their capacity to finish their college degree effectively (Patton, 2015). After each focus group

concludes, all study participants were permitted to send letters of advice to a high school student.

(See Appendix I). The purpose of the letter-writing, prompt is to learn about what the participant

wishes they knew earlier in their lives or educational journey. Participants were given a

minimum of two weeks to complete the letter which is adequate time to draft, review, and submit

their letter to the primary investigator. Letter writing served as the third data collection method

of this research study.

Letter writing took take place after the completion of the focus group. Each participant was asked to write a letter of advice to a high school student. This would take 30-45 minutes to write. This letter would be typed by the participant and sent via email to ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Once the study participants finished their letters of advice, I asked them, participants, to check through their letters of advice to make sure that they appropriately expressed their opinions in their letters.

Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan

The letters of advice to other students attending Jamaican public universities were a major part of the data analysis process. The letters (See Appendix I) written by each participant in the study provide a deeper understanding of the true essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). According to Moustakas (1994), I will give the participants' written advice an equal value. I eliminated any repetitive statements unrelated to the research study questions from the analysis. Additionally, themes from frequent terms and phrases from the study participants' questionnaires, interviews, and written letters of advice was analyzed.

The justification for using this primary source technique was to analyze participants' writing prompts will give more information to raise the degree of saturation in data collecting. All data collection papers were photocopied, with personally identifying information removed. I to then followed Moustakas' (1994) instruction, giving all participants' written letters equal weight. All of the participants' written remarks that were repetitious and did not connect to the research questions and topic, were discarded (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). After that, I developed themes from the data by selecting common terms and phrases from the research participants' questionnaires, interviews, and written letters of advice.

Data Analysis

Collecting evidence is a major part of the data analysis of this study. After the interview, there were a word-for-word transcription. After the focus group via Zoom, a recording was taken to analyze afterward. The letters of advice written by participants of this study were collected for evidence and analysis. Saldana's coding manual were utilized as a guide to analyzing the data received from the study (Saldana, 2016). Braun & Clarke (2006) was also thematic analysis was also used. The goal of this was to expand the understanding the phenomenon. The interview transcripts, and written documents. Artifacts were assigned as labels. Data was coded into words, phrases, or sentences that represent the essence of the data. The data was reduced without losing the meaning of the data and keeping the ideas or issues significant to the phenomenon of the study. Then the researcher attempted to get a better understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher devised categories and themes. Then a theory was developed from the coding as a result. The data was collected and put into codes. Second, split into categories. Third, the data were clustered into themes. Lastly, a theory was generated (Saldana, 2016).

I transcribed the Zoom recordings of the focus group by utilizing Otter.ai. Otter.ai is a speech-to-text transcription software. I carefully read each section of the focus group transcription and create a list of signing statements to the phenomenon being studied. MAXQDA identified significant statements and coding in the transcription and indicate the participants' statements that are repetitive and overlapping. Categorical data aggregation resulted in this process (see Appendix N) (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). I looked specifically for statements that were unique to each participant, correspondingly the common statements among groups in my cross-case analysis.

Both Merriam & Tisdell (2016) and Stake (1995) was utilized as a supportive guide to cluster individual responses and statements into thematic groups. This was done through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process assisted the researcher in develop a meaning and context for the research phenomenon. The data collected from the study were disaggregated through inductive and comparative analysis processes. I identified relationships between spirituality and student persistence during this research study stage (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used a vignette on each participant to expand on the participants' relevant life experiences. I did this in a universal approach (Yin, 2018). This process allowed the data collected to be concise and relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). Coding reliability was provided to interpret data, code themes, and develop a conceptualization. Patterns and themes were selected among the data collected. Themes reflect the key components of coding in each type. This identified elements of differences across the data (Saldana, 2016).

Naturalistic generalization of the relationship between spirituality and student persistence were provided to analyze the data retrieved from the study. Direct interpretation of the participants' statements in their own words were provided. This maintained the validity and continuity of the research study. There was a written report that combines both narrative description and my interpretation of statements made during the conclusion of my research (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data Synthesis

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) explain to find common themes in the data involves interpreting what the researcher has learned from the study, consolidating, and reducing. I separated my own experiences related to student persistence in Jamaica during the data collection phase of the research study. I removed all of my personal biases and viewpoints to

discover a new perspective on the phenomenon. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), removing the researchers' personal bias allowed the researcher to identify and understand the new perspective of the research participants. The responses to the participant's interviews focus group, and I analyzed letter writing to identify the synchronicity and themes in the perceptions of spirituality related to the persistence of students who attended a Jamaican public university. The data from the study was put together in categories related to statements in the transcription and indicate the participants' statements. All of the data collected from the study were simplified. The statements and viewpoints were narrowed down to only information that were only relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

I followed Moustakas' (1994) structure to phenomenological research; this method evaluated participants' lived experiences in the study. This is done through open-ended questions and dialogue. I had dialogue with each of the participants during the individual interviews, focus group, and written letter prompt. The transcendental approach was selected for this study because it investigated the core of Jamaican university-level students' shared spiritual support. A major component of qualitative methods is that it is the only way to evaluate human experiences. Human experiences cannot be evaluated with quantitative methods. Selections of a topic that sought to understand human lived experience and the lens through which a person views their relationship with the world require a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design (Lossky, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this phenomenological study is often questioned because it is not a quantitative study. Because phenomenological investigations lack the same level of validity and reliability as quantitative research, their credibility is frequently questioned (Shenton, 2004).

Smaller subgroups and populations are provided in qualitative investigations, resulting in lower reliability and validity. Guba (1981) proposed four factors for determining reliability. Credibility (internal validity), generalizability (generalizability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability are the four criteria (objectivity).

If there is a high level of trust in the study data, qualitative research is considered to have great transferability. The utilization of detailed study descriptions was provided to prove transferability. Transferability was attained when the suggested research study's findings reflected the opinions of the participants in the study and when the maximum amount of variety were provided. Purposeful criterion sampling was utilized to achieve maximum variety in the participant sample (See Appendix N). My choice of a pool of participants with a wide variety of criteria that placed the student in a self-described at-risk group, as well as differences in race and gender, highlighted such issues (Moustakas, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Allowing research participants to evaluate the study's findings and their agreement that the description of their experiences was correctly documented were provided to achieve transferability. Thick explanations of the phenomena provide the reader with a thorough grasp of the event, allowing them to compare examples of the phenomenon described in other research papers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). It was critical to recognize that research can only help to create the circumstances for transferability, not guarantee it. Only the reader of the research paper may make this decision.

Credibility

A qualitative study and a quantitative study both require the researcher to establish credibility in a study. One may ask, how can credibility be established? This can be done using multiple methods or methodologies to confirm ideas. The current study established credibility

through focus group, interviews, and written responses to prompts. Additionally, data were checked through the process of triangulation (Gutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). To increase the validity of the study, various procedures took place, such as triangulation of the data sources, triangulation of the methods, and continuous reliability checks with colleagues (Bloomberg & Vlope, 2008). The study presented a trustworthy integration of recent literature, data gathered directly from the participants, and assess the reliability of sources.

Triangulation

The collection of data methods was implemented with Triangulation. Triangulation were provided to identify themes among the participants. The researcher of this study followed Saldana's (2013) method. The transcript of the interviews, focus group, and written letters were reviewed multiple times to detect key phrases in the transcripts. These key phrases were categorized into different concepts and then classified into themes. To validate the coding and interpretation of the findings, analyst triangulation was applied (Mitchell, 1986). The reflective written letters from each participant were subject to examination to investigate the expressions or words that describe the experiences of the participants. These phrases in the written responses may not have been revealed in the individual interviews and focus group. This process was repeated as new themes emerge, codes were revised, and new codes were created. There was a follow-up opportunity for participants to provide any additional thoughts, correct, clarify, and enhance the emerging themes from the data sources in this study. This would also provide an opportunity to double-check the participants' responses (Patton, 2014).

Member Checking

The researcher's very own experience with the phenomenon being studied was beneficial during the individual interview process. The researcher has an inside perspective on the Jamaican

language and culture (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). This personal experience allowed for immediate member-checking or the validation of respondents. Once the researcher transcribes the individual interviews and focus group, a copy was given to each participant. Each participant received a copy of their letter, the video recording of both individual interview and transcript of both interview and focus group in the email indicated on their permission form. Each study participant was then given 25-dollar visa gift card as a gesture of thanks once the transcript and video recordings are reviewed for accuracy by the participant. This will allow the participant to check their words for an error, accuracy in their words, and intentions. This allowed the participants of the study to confirm the validity of the transcription (Lietz et al., 2006). Additionally, follow-up interviews provided an opportunity to confirm the validity of the interpretations.

Peer Debriefing

To apply peer debriefing, qualitative researchers are asked to review and evaluate written documents in the research study. The research documents that were reviewed is the transcription of the individual interviews, focus group, and reflective written letter. Peer debriefing is done to improve the trustworthiness of the research study. The qualitative researchers also assessed the emerging themes and categories, and themes identified by the researcher of this study (Lietz et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Janesick, 2015).

Transferability

According to Denscombe (2008), research is transferrable because it serves as an example within a larger group. Because the instructors' opinions were from a variety of genders, ages, subject areas, and marital statuses, Administrators at other institutions can apply the findings from this study. Shenton (2004) disagreed, claiming that because qualitative research is conducted on smaller populations, data from qualitative studies is practically hard to apply to

other scenarios. The findings in this study apply to different educational settings that are comparable to undergraduate and Graduate institutions in Jamaica. This is not limited to the terms of socioeconomic position, gender, and ethnicity of pupils, as well as age range, gender, and teaching experience of professors. Transferability in this study is present because the researcher allowed the research participants to review the results of the study. No matter the environment, attitudes and behaviors that are known to be agents of resilience are likely to be applicable. The participants' experience was studied using the variety of data collection methods, individual interviews, focus group, and letter-writing provided a thick description of the perceived spirituality and persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree (Zainuddin & Perera, 2019). Additionally, a thick description technique that gave a detailed descriptions and interpretations of situations observed by a researcher (Denscombe; 2008; Shenton; 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). Due to the common experiences of the participants taking place at multiple different institutions in both the Caribbean and the United States. The study's transferability provided significant improvements (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability and reliability are significant pieces of the study. Often the results of multiple researchers tend to be comparable. This is also known as dependability or reliability. This is not always the case involving qualitative research. An example of this is when a researcher's experience, academic expertise, and various location lead to reporting many different types of data. This may lead to many different conclusions (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). One can also say there is a strong connection between credibility and dependability. Although both are similar, focus group, interviews, and written responses also provide dependability. The

dependability of this study contained trustworthiness because it had a detailed effective

description of the procedures taken during the study. An inquiry audit was completed to examine

the procedures for data collecting, data processing, and the research study's findings separately

from those processes. This was done to ensure that the findings are accurate and that the data

obtained supports the conclusions (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985).

Confirmability

To guarantee that the interpretation of the data was consistent and precautions were

taken. Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the researcher's views being excluded from

the data acquired from the participants (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability refers to using many

procedures in the same research so that the results are consistent (Gutcliffe & McKenna, 1999).

This research used triangulation as an additional step and form of data collection. Individual

interviews, focus group, and letter-writing. Capturing the participants' experiences in multiple

different forms of data collection increased the confirmability of the research study.

Additionally, dependability and confirmability were established using direct quotes to ensure

rich and thick descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To implement reflexivity, I examined my

own beliefs, judgements, and practices during the research process. This step was made to

maintain the integrity of the study. As the human instrument, my position in the research study

would be to provide reflexivity and unbiased (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The confirmability made

the study trustworthy because it makes sure the data were consistent.

Ethical Considerations

I took ethical considerations at all times during the research study. To ensure all practices

in this study are ethical I did not begin research until the Institutional Review Board, IRB has

given their approval. The approval was included in (Appendix A) of this study. I received

informed consent from all research participants before I conducted any interviews or collect any

data. All research participants were given full disclosure of the purpose of the study and

understand that they were able to freely withdraw at any point without question (Moustakas,

1994). Participants of the study were also informed of the time frame of each part of the study,

how their privacy would be protected, and who would have access to their responses in

(Appendix G) of this study. Each participant received a copy of their letter, the video recording

of both individual interview and transcript of both interview and focus group in the email

indicated on their permission form. Each study participant was then given 20-dollar visa gift card

as a gesture of thanks once the transcript and video recordings are reviewed for accuracy by the

participant. This allowed the participant to check their words for an error, accuracy in their

words, and intentions. I did not share my reflections or experiences with perceived spirituality

and persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree as the researcher. I

remained objective and non-judgmental during the entire data collection and data analysis

process. This action will prevent any influence on the participants' or their responses. The

recorded responses were a true reflection of the participants' experiences. All names and

locations were pseudonyms to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and sites. There

were ethical considerations to confirm the study's trustworthiness by protecting the participants'

and sites' privacy; all names and places were protected by the use of pseudonyms. To safeguard

the participants' identity, their employment was generalized. The professions of the study

participants would disclose their true identities. Only the researcher and co-investigator had

access to the study records, which were preserved securely.

This study's data may be shared with other researchers or provided in other research

studies in the future. If the participants' data is released, I erased, if necessary, any information

that may be provided to personally identify them. Pseudonyms were continuously provided to protect the privacy of participant replies. Interviews were held at a place where it won't be simple for others to overhear what is said. Future presentations may make use of data that is kept on a password-protected computer, password-protected cloud storage accounts, and a closed file cabinet. All electronic records were removed after three years, and all hard copy material were destroyed. Interviews were captured on tape and written down. A password-protected computer saved recordings for three years before being deleted. These recordings were only accessible to the researcher. Focus group settings cannot ensure confidentiality. While not encouraged, additional focus group participants could discuss what was said with people outside the group.

Summary

Chapter three explains the reason why the researcher selected qualitative research for this study and why it was the best option. Qualitative research for this study were the most appropriate method for the research question. This chapter's methodology suggests that a transcendental phenomenological approach was understanding the perceived spirituality and persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. The qualitative research approach described in this chapter were developed and detailed in its design, data collection, and data analysis. To examine the shared experiences of first-generation participants in terms of self-efficacy and its link to study persistence, researchers provided detailed descriptions of the study participants, venues, processes, and the researcher's role. The transcendental phenomenological method allowed the researcher to develop a set of criteria for a better understanding of the perceived spirituality and persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. According to Moustakas, transcendental phenomenology is a scientific analysis of how things appear to us, of phenomena as we experience them and as they appear to us in consciousness.

Phenomenology was used to eliminate everything that demonstrates prejudice or preconception. It entails looking at things objectively, without regard for the natural world's inclinations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived

spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in

Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-

secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training

institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King , 2017). Chapter Four describes the findings of

this study. First, this chapter will show a table of the demographic (Table 1). Afterward there

will be a description of each participant. The Second part of this chapter will show the results of

the themes and subthemes that surface from the data analysis. The next section will be the

research question responses section, which will have a list of the study's research questions,

along with their narrative responses. The last section of Chapter Four concluded with a summary

of major themes and significant findings in the study.

Participants

For this study, there were 10 Jamaican women aged 18 years or older, university

graduates of any higher education institution in Jamaica, who participated in this study. The

researcher utilized the social media recruitment flyer (Appendix E) and a photo of the

recruitment flyer (Appendix F) to the Facebook pages to recruit participants for the study. Once

those who were interested in the study emailed me, they were sent a consent form. Once the

consent form had been signed, those who were over 18 years old, identify as Jamaican, a woman,

and had completed a tertiary degree, were contacted to set up a time for the first part of the study,

individual interviews via Zoom. The following Facebook groups were placed under pseudonym

in order to protect the privacy of the participants of this study (see Table 1). Purposeful criterion

sampling was utilized to select and identify participants of the study based on criteria, their

articulation, and a systematic assessment and analysis of examples that fulfilled the criteria.

Aside from gender, each participant was unique based on their demographic features, such as

age, affiliation with any religious denomination, highest degree earned, field of study, and

occupation.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics*

PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYM	AGE	HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED	RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (S) /BELIEF (S)	AREA OF STUDY	OCCUPATION
ARIELLE	27	Bachelors	Christian	Food Science	Sheriff
AURRORA	30	Bachelors	Christian/Catholic	Accounting & Finance	Business Accountant
BELL	46	Masters	None	Technology	Receptionist
CYNDERELLA	30	Bachelors	Christian	Engineering	Engineer
JAZMINE	26	Bachelors	Catholic	Procurement	Virtual Assistant
MOANNA	25	Bachelors	Christian/Catholic	Computer Science	Graphic Design
MULANN	26	Bachelors	Christian	Information Communication &Technology	Cashier
POCCAHONTAS	26	Bachelors	Christian/ Catholic	Computer Science, Certified Nurse Assistant	Caregiver

RAPUNZELLE	55	Masters	Seventh-Day Adventist	Communicatio n	Financial Services
TIANA	56	Masters	Christian	Theology, Human Resource Management, & Literature	Administrative Officer & College Professor

Note. Religion refers to the person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Highest degree earned is generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools.

Arielle

Arielle was a 27-year-old Jamaican woman from the island of Jamaica. She was a Christian. She studied food science full time in Jamaica. She worked as a sheriff. Her highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. She stated that she came from a Christian family that values an education. She described that she was more exposed to religion during her time in college. She said she was exposed to people who belong to "different religions, Christians, Muslims, Paeans, and Rasta lifestyle". She explained that family, friends, and spirituality motivated her to complete college. She said the "willingness of my parents to educate me, and the intrinsic motivation and the friends I had in college" and "encouragement and intrinsic motivation" assisted her to complete. She stated that the motivation that comes from within was more important than motivation from external factors. Her belief system was something that helped her to want to finish college. Arielle was a member of a Christian organization on her college campus. She stated that they would meet together at a specific time each week. They

would pray together and organized activities together. She stated that being involved in sports made her feel like she was a part of a community. She said "that was really amazing because it kept us together. It kept us encouraged. She believed that it helped her to abandon cultural beliefs and learn more and focus on education..

Aurrora

Aurrora was a 30-year-old female that had a Christian upbringing. She considered herself a Catholic; that has been her religion since she was born and "holds" on to her Catholic beliefs even as an adult. Growing up, she used to admire people who worked in banks. It was a big deal for her to have financial responsibility. She wanted to offer financial services. She said that after high school she spoke with career coaches. She admired the responsibility where "a person is trusting you to make decisions about their finances and all that". She said that she worked with a few career coaches that advised her on what path she should follow if she wanted to "make her dream come true". She worked with business and advised them on what to do, what loans to take, what loans not to take, and it made her feel good. She believed that in a business, it is important to manage the expenditures. She says she feels so good to hold this position, and it was a passion and dream come true. "I can say that since my childhood spirituality has always held a big position and a role in my life and, it will help me learn something". Her highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. Aurrora stated:

> Christianity is something that I turn for when I needed help, because we had so many support groups that were constructive. One of the support groups was about that I felt like they were part of my family and it played a big role in my ability to complete college.

She feels that an environment of a supportive group with commonalities is conducive for learning. She also shared that her family supporting her and believing in her motivated her to complete her degree.

Bell

Bell was a 30-year-old woman. Her highest degree earned was a master's. She was from a Christian family, with exception of her cousin, who is Muslim. She believed that both parties contributed supporting her during her studies. She had no religious affiliation. Belle worked as a receptionist in college. She believed it helped her to become more independent, improved her self-efficacy, and her ability to complete a tertiary degree. She has had the opportunity to travel and said that her travel to many places in college helped her to become "balanced". She defined faith as the ability to put your mind to something and believe that it will happen. She believed that humility really contributed to her success. She recalled that her ability to be observant and show humility allowed her to catch opportunities that she would miss otherwise.

Cynderella

Cynderella was a 30-year-old East Indian woman who lived in Jamaica. She attended a university in Jamaica. Her field of study was engineering. She was self-employed and stated what she does for work is "confidential". Her highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. She believed that her hard work and her spiritual life influenced her ability to stay in school. Her spiritual partners prayed for her and encouraged her to stay in school. She shared a story about when she was in college, and she did not have money to pay her school fee. She stated that her relationship with her spiritual life is what caused a miracle to happen because she prayed for a resolution.

Jazmine

Jazmine was a 26-year-old woman. She worked as a virtual assistant. She went to college to study procurement. She stated that her religious affiliation was Catholic. Her highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. She stated that she joined a local support group for Black Christian students. Jazmine said that her biggest motivation in college was that she had friends. She also was certain that friends in the same classes also helped her.

Moanna

Moanna was 25-years old and worked as a graphic designer. She obtained a bachelor's degree in computer science. She stated that she was Christian and Catholic. She is certain that her success in college was because she had friends. She stated that it made life easier on campus. She said when she first "went off to college she barely knew anyone, but when she made friends campus life was easier."

Mulann

Mulann was 26-years old and a Christian. She stated that she worked as a cashier. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Information Communication and Technology. Her parents motivated her to finish college. She recalled support from friends and family was the most helpful tool. She also was a member of "discussion groups" within her classes. She defined "discussion groups" as a group that was between her and her classmates. These groups were outside of the class work, but became a way for her and her classmates to communicate. She said it was similar to a group chat; this motivated her because she knew people where there for her if she needed help.

Poccahontas

Poccahontas was 26-years old who had a Christian and Catholic upbringing throughout her childhood. She has Christian beliefs. She completed a bachelor's degree in Computer

Science. Later she went back to school to earn a Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate. She worked as a Caregiver with her Certified Nurse Assistant credentials. She believed that spirituality could have a good and bad impact. She stated that through college she had seen others spend "too much" time on biblical studies and that it could take away time from a person's studies. She has had a "positive experience" with spirituality because she knew the importance of balance.

Rapunzelle

Rapunzelle was a 53-year-old, who considered herself a Seventh-Day Adventist. She was born in Jamaica. She also attended all of her schooling in Jamaica. She then earned a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution. She majored in communication. She then relocated to the United States.. Rapunzelle recollected that, "God has been with her every step of the way". She believed that the principles she learned in church were why she could say, "she is successful today".

Tiana

Tiana was a 54-year-old administrative officer and college professor. She was indigenous to the island of Jamaica. She was born and raised and went to school in Jamaica, primary school, high school, and University. Tiana had three degrees, a Bachelor of Arts in Theology at a Theological Seminary, a Master of Science in Human Resource Management, and a Bachelors of Arts in Literature of English. Tiana said that she "fell in love with literature" and that is what made her want to "pursue another Bachelors in English Literature". She had a very religious upbringing. She was exposed to the belief of God "from the time she was a little girl". Tiana was raised by a single mother, who made it her duty to take her to Sunday school every Sunday. This gave her a strong foundation in biblical principles. Tiana said that the way she was raised was an

integral part of her ability to succeed. She remembers that her belief in God played a major role in her ability to complete her undergraduate and graduate education.

Results

The results of this study were collected by three data collection methods: individual semi-structured interviews, focus group session, and a letter-writing activity. Triangulation was completed by using three different data collection methods. This increased the level of credibility and trustworthiness of the results of this study. The goal of using three data collection methods was to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Individual semi-structured interviews were the first method of data collection. After each interview with the participants, the audio files were saved and uploaded to Otter.ai for transcription. Each transcription was uploaded to Microsoft Word. The transcription was then labeled with the participant's pseudonym, date, and the time the interview took place. Within Microsoft Word, I could clean up the transcriptions to ensure accuracy. I then emailed each of the participants a copy of their interview transcription so the participant could check for accuracy and could notify me if they would like to make any corrections or to clarify. This was done to establish trustworthiness. All of the members of the study participated in member checking. They all provided me with feedback. I then used the feedback to update the transcripts.

The focus group session was conducted after all the participants were interviewed. The focus group session was conducted to give all the participants of the study a chance to speak and elaborate on responses in the interview. The audio recording of the focus group was uploaded to Otter.ai to transcribe. The transcription from Otter.ai was then put into a Microsoft Word document. Similar to the interviews, I listened to the audio from the focus group session, cleaned up the transcription, and checked for accuracy where it was needed. The focus group sessions

allowed me to gain a more in-depth and wide view of the patterns and themes emerging for the individual interviews (Patton, 2015).

The third method of data collection was the letter-writing activity. This method allowed the participants of the study to write their perceptions, thoughts, experiences, and words of advice to students who are in danger of dropping out or who want to finish their degree. The letter-writing added to the perspectives of the participants that was shared earlier in the individual interviews and focus group.

During the data collection process, I used journaling to keep track of my personal thoughts and preconceptions regarding spirituality and persistence of Jamaican women's perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Separating my own professional, academic, and personal experiences allowed me to only focus on the participants and their experiences. After the member checking process was completed. I listened to the audio recordings from all of the interviews and focus group again for accuracy. While I listened for an additional time, I took notes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I used MAXQDA to assist me in organizing the individual interviews, focus group, and letter-writing transcript. I found MAXQDA to be a very useful tool to organize and view the transcripts simultaneously. Before I uploaded the transcripts into MAXQDA, I printed the research questions and the theoretical framework that I used to guide this study to also guide me during the data analysis process. Subsequently, I uploaded every interview, focus group, and letter transcript into MAXQDA. All of the uploaded transcripts were named using pseudonyms given to each participant. All real names were replaced with pseudonyms.

I used the research question and the theoretical framework as a guide to create initial codes to begin the data analysis process. After I created the initial codes, I then started the first

round of coding. I added any new codes that emerged. I then analyzed sentence by sentence to identify patterns. I reread excerpts that were coded to ensure the appropriate codes were applied. I then continued to add, combine, or expand codes as necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016). I repeated multiple rounds of coding until I was satisfied, and no more new codes were appearing (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). Next, I rearranged all of the codes, extrapolated in order to determine potential themes and patterns emerging. Three major themes emerged from the individual interviews, focus group, and letter writing: Support Systems, Intrinsic Values, and Spiritual Support. (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Themes and Subthemes*

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Support Systems	Family Support, Friends, Faculty Support & Career Coaches, Clubs & Organizations	Work Ethic Family Cohesiveness Values Religious Upbringing, Groups, Clubs, Friends
Intrinsic Value	Motivation, Accountability, Perseverance & Resilience	Motivated, Sticking With It, Not Giving Up, Try Hard, Set An Example, Within Myself, My Belief
Spiritual Support	Biblical Principles & Prayer	Bible Study, Prayer, My Faith, Meditation Humility, Kindness

Support Systems

Support systems was the first dominant theme that emerged in the data. Some of the women that were interviewed stated that they had family, friends, and/or career coaches as support. These people influenced success in college. They stated that having someone they could

turn to for help influenced their ability to complete their college degree. Participants discussed

that their upbringing taught them values that later helped them to stay in college, even when it

became hard. Participants stated that family provided them motivational words and support.

Cynderalla stated that her father "encouraged her and also prayer". Two participants stated that

they belonged to a group of Christians on campus. One participant stated that this group helped

them to grow spiritually, turning to this group for help when needed, and played a large role in

her success in college.

> I participated in so many activities about spirituality. You know I joined like there were
>
> some groups that the students are formed. Groups I was a part of helped me grow
>
> spiritually. It would help me learn something; you know. So, [spirituality] has always held
>
> a high position [in my] life when it comes to Christianity. It [spirituality] was something
>
> that I turn to when I needed [help], because we had so many support groups that were
>
> constructive and [conducive for learning]. Groups for Black Christians made you feel you
>
> [belong somewhere]. You feel that this is your family. Yeah, I think it made me feel so
>
> well, and it [played a big role].

Family Support

All of the Jamaican women in this research study shared how supportive their family was

during college. The participants described that their parents helped motivate them to finish

college and helped support them when they needed it. Some participants said that they're family

upbringing is what helped them to have the ability to persevere. Aurrora said, "I have been

brought up in a Christian family to be specific Catholic. Yeah, that has been my religion since I

was born, and [I still hold on to the values, even as an adult]".

I think the fact that [my family believed in me], and that they [supported] my dream is also something that really [motivated me]. The fact that my family stood with me and I believed in my dream was also a big deal for me. Yeah, that was a big [motivation].

Friends

The data revealed that having a supportive group of friends made a great influence on their ability to be successful in college. Aurrora stated that she had support from her friends and family and discussion groups. She stated that in a group chat, they would help each other if they did not understand the work. It helped her stay motivated because she was able to talk with classmates about home work. Participants reported experiencing friends' support. Participants reported that they would often turn to their families for assistance and that they would pray to a higher power for help with any obstacles they felt would hinder them from finishing their tertiary degree.

Faculty Support & Career Coach

All of the participants said that faculty support and career coaches had been a positive part of their ability to succeed in college. The data revealed that this was an influential role in helping them to make decisions.. Aurrora stated that she consulted with a career coach who helped her to decide a career path while she was in college.

Clubs and Organizations

The Jamaican women explained how being a part of clubs and organizations was an influential part of their persistence in college. All of the participants shared being a part of a group of people who share common interests. Arielle explained the programs that she participated in included a "Christian organization was a very supportive role in my life." She also remembered her perceptions being a member in a group with people who had common interests.

She said, "As a member of the Christian organization, we would pray together." An example of this was when Arielle stated that one of the factors contributed to her persistence was being a part of a group at her college where they would usually "pray together;" they also "motivated and encouraged each other to complete college".

Intrinsic Values

One theme that emerged in the findings was intrinsic values of the participants. The participants stated that they all had values from within, such as motivation, resilience, and perseverance that helped them to successfully complete their tertiary degree. Although intrinsic values were a motivating factor, it was a combination of support systems, external environments, and spirituality, helping them to finish their tertiary degree while they were in college.

Motivation

One participant in the study was six feet tall in the fifth grade and presented an option for teachers to speak with this student while standing up. This can be beneficial when developing the maturity of adolescents, as it can be a way to speak with them, as adults tend to speak with each other standing up. John offered, "I have bad knees, so when I need to talk with Andre, it is a bit nicer because we can stand and speak because he is almost as tall as I am!" Despite this observation, it is uncommon for many fifth graders to be able to stand and speak with comfort to an adult teacher.

Accountability

Participants stated that during their time in college, they felt as though they were responsible for succeeding or to represent their family as the first generation to finish college. Arielle stated that she wanted to "set an example for her younger siblings." The participants did express that accountability was a contributing factor to their success as it related to their

persistence in completing a tertiary degree. It appeared to be a self-imposed form of pressure to fulfill higher ideals and goals.

Perseverance and Resilience

Some of the participants were able to develop the skills to persist because of a desire to accomplish the goal of completing their studies or to reach career goals. There was a goal for personal achievement to make their family proud and to set an example that higher education is an achievable goal. Academic success was achieved by the ability to have a continued effort despite facing challenges or opposition. For Arielle and Aurrora, this was motivated by goals of personal achievement. They both stated that if they were not persistent, they would lose the opportunity to obtain their degree and have higher earning potential. Some participants felt good having a group of people they could relate to, and it created a safe space at their institution. Some participants stated that they felt "safe" and "understood".

Spiritual Support

The final theme that emerged was the importance of spiritual support through prayer from family, friends, and others at their place of study. All participants stated that spiritual support was meaningful to their persistence. My findings supported the importance of spiritual support from family, friends, and others at their place of study during college. The majority of the participants stated that spiritual support was meaningful to them while in college. Bell discussed a positive support from a Christian group she joined on campus. She explained that this group helped her through the challenges she faced in college. She stated that the friends in her group encouraged her when she was feeling discouraged. Arielle also explained that praying gave her peace, and she believed everything would be okay.

Biblical Principles

Participants all said they were exposed to spirituality by their family; some participants stated that their faith came from upbringing. Faith was developed by exposure to what their parents taught them while growing up. Bell said that her spirituality taught her to have faith and believe in the things she is unable to see. She had faith that she could complete her degree. Participants described faith as an integral part of their ability to complete their degree. Some participants stated that the biblical principles they learned when they were young helped them to be successful in college and attributed to their success. Tiana said that during her graduate school program that she was "living and working in Jamaica" but even then she said that she would have divine intervention. She recalls during her graduate studies "that my school fees were in US dollars and that I had to depend on God providing for me. Two years of school modules and I only had to pay for one module out of pocket. Everything else was paid by people sponsoring, divine intervention, and God providing for me." Tiana stated that:

> I am a Christian, and I was so involved in church that I decided to get my degree in
> Theology. I would say I am a very spiritual person and that I am from the Christian
> religion. I am very deep in my spirituality, and attending seminary was not hard for me,
> to be surrounded by Christians and other spiritual people. Spirituality is very important to
> me as an individual and to a lot of Jamaicans as well.

Prayer

The subtheme that spiritual support revealed was help from God that was received through prayer. Arielle said that, "Prayer from my family and friends helped me to finish college". The finding revealed that prayer was meaningful to participants and their persistence. Some participants shared experiences with the phenomenon of prayer; some participants said that

prayer made them feel peace regarding situations they were stressed about before prayer. Although Cynderella stated she had no religious affiliation, she said that it felt good to know that her family was praying for her while she was in college. Tiana stated that she "prayed a lot and depended on God to come through with the school fee part". Tiana also stated that she would pray at times when it would get close to exams and if finances did not come through just yet, and she would get some "headaches" or "worries." Then she would continue to trust God and would pray and her school fees would then "maybe two days or so" her school "would get paid"

Aligning Vision & Action. In the focus group, participants explained that honest contemplation, modest self-evaluation, an attitude of openness, and a commitment to ongoing revision (a "whatever-it-takes" mentality) are necessary for the alignment of vision and action. Participants explained that creating a vision or goal and working towards it by taking the right steps also attributed to their success in college. Participants also made a point that they knew that college would not be easy but they committed to the journey. Some participants also joined Christlike community and said that it helped them to make good decisions. Tiana stated that she believed that her ability to succeed in higher education came from her belief in God. She stated:

> In terms of I believe in God and yes, God. If spirituality for you is equal to my personal belief in God, if that is what it is equal to then, Yes. Because, I am totally dependent on him [God]. I did not have any money for myself to pay not even one cent. You're looking at a person who got a 4-year degree who did not have one cent. My mother did not give me one cent, and I didn't have any for myself. I was 17 to 21, and it was strictly God providing for me, paying for that degree.

She also explained that she continued her involvement in church. She taught Sunday school and then she would receive a note saying, "Dear, Tiana your school fees have been paid." She stated that God provided for her all the way. She stated:

> I would get a little note saying, 'Dear, Tiana your school has been paid' now tell me if that's not God! Amazing! That it is how it was for me. It was just God provided for me straight through. So how could I not be spiritual? How can I not be thankful? How can I not be grateful?"

Research Question Responses

In this section are the answers to the research questions to the study of spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. The following themes are developed from the semi structured individual interviews, focus group, and letter writing. Three themes emerged for the data collected: (a) support systems, (b) intrinsic values, (c) spiritual support. The corresponding subthemes associated with support systems is family support, friends, faculty support, and clubs and organizations. The subthemes that corresponded with the intrinsic values of the participants were motivation, accountability, perseverance, and resilience. The third theme was spiritual support, and the subthemes that emerged were prayer and faith. Codes were also present. The quotes of the participants are applied to the appropriate research question.

Central Research Question

How would the Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality during their time in college? The participants expressed how having a group of family or friends encouraged them to persist academically. Participants also stated that as a member of a community or close-

knit group of supportive people they were exposed to qualities, such as accountability, that led them to complete a tertiary degree.

Clubs and Oorganizations

The findings of the current study found a significant relationship between participation in clubs and organizations. Across all data collection measures (1:1 interview, focus group, and writing prompt), participants consistently mentioned how their experience in clubs or organizations allowed them to learn more and improved their sense of belonging on their college campus. All of the participants recalled memorable moments when their club or organization played a supportive role in their college education. Perhaps the most common sentiment made by the participants was that, through their participation in the club or organization on their campus, they realized that they could connect with students who shared "similar interests" and they could truly relate when they were asked for help. Participants all stated that peer members were an overwhelmingly positive attribute to their experience in college and was vital to their ability to finish their degree. Participants were able to discover areas for personal development, as well as alter their perspective on fellowship as a result.

Sub-Question One

What challenges did Jamaican women experience during their time in college or university? The challenges that all participants mentioned were financial or academic. Participants recalled a time when they worried about being able to cover expenses during their time of study. All participants also expressed that they each had at least one challenge academically. All but one participant mentioned seeking a higher power or sought out their spirituality for support during challenging times. Arielle stated, "I know that God resolved my issue because I went to Him in prayer". Arielle believed that there was a "divine intervention".

Arielle explained that she would also call family or friends for support during times of her study when it was difficult.

Perseverance and Resilience

As stated in the definition section of this research study, to have perseverance is doing or achieving anything in the face of challenges, failure, or resistance, and, to be resilient is to be able to go beyond obstacles and challenges (Kizub et al, 2022). Participants discussed their own experiences with loss, money problems, and academic challenges. Through their efforts, the participants were able to acquire resilience as a result of the difficulties they encountered. Over time, participants' resilience grew, and it assisted them in achieving their academic objectives. Mulann stated that she had numerous obstacles in life but overcame them by being resilient as a result of having to live on her own. She remarked, "The support from my friends and family, my parents were really a big motivation for me". Her perseverance was influenced by her family, so she understood that she had to leave for college to finish her degree. She used the phrase "Jamaican upbringings" to explain how the teachings of her parents helped her to learn perseverance and resilience. Tiana stated:

> It was just hard work on my part was just a lot, because that first degree was so much
> harder and more difficult than high school. I was in for a rude awakening, just because
> you are bright in high school, you think University is going to be the same, but it's not the
> same. It was just a lot of hard work, and I did not know what I was in for, and so it was
> just a level higher, and I had to just stretch myself more and write more. Write more
> papers, do more research, and learn how to write a research paper. I spent a lot of time in
> the library.

Support Systems

The findings of this study stated that having a support system allowed participants to build confidence through their academic journey. They found that having a support system during their college studies helped them get through struggles and hardships they experienced in college. Mulann said she improved as a student thanks to assistance from his professors and lessons learned from life. She was aware that everyone who had completed college had had challenges at some point, but they had managed to reach their objectives. Her drive originated from outside forces and become internal. She had a strong desire to complete her education and was confident in her ability to achieve.

I had support from my friends and family, and yeah discussion groups. We just made groups with my classmates. So, like for example the instructor was not in them. It was not any type of homework. We used to talk in a group chat and help each other if we did not understand the work. It motivated me because I was able to talk with classmates about home work.

The participants' academic success was influenced by a number of external factors. Each participant's educational path was significantly aided by their families. For the participants, education and family support were crucial. It was clear from the participants' behavior that they had supportive families. Parents, grandparents, and other relatives provided the family's assistance. Cynderella spoke about the encouragement she received from her mother and how she was raised to appreciate education. "I think that my father usually encouraged me and kept praying for me". Tiana stated:

All right. I grew up with my mother alone. So single parent family. My mother. She sent me to Sunday School, but she never came to church, but she sent me, and I could not miss on the school one day. But she never came. Then afterwards, you know, when she

got older, she just said she wanted to go to church, and she just give her life to the Lord. I

grew up in Christianity. I am a Christian today because my mother sent me to church

every Sunday.

Additionally, Tiana remembered being the youngest person on her campus at her seminary while

working on her first degree. She said that she had some good friends that looked out for her and

mentored her. She stated, " I would say that my friends that looked out for me and mentored me

contributed to my success. I still keep in touch with some of these people today."

Sub-Question Two

What do Jamaican women believe contributed to the completion of their tertiary

degree/degrees? Several participants believed that their ability to complete their tertiary degree

was a result of family support, having a supportive group of friends, and being a member of a

close-knit community of people. The participants experienced feeling support from friends.

Participants shared that they would pray to a higher power to assist in challenges they believed

would prevent them from the completion of their tertiary degree. They stated that family would

often be a source of support. Tiana stated that she received scholarship from her church and from

other Christian international organizations for her first degree.

Motivation

Setting and achieving objectives requires motivation, which may be found both inside

and externally. The ability to be motivated is essential for achieving educational objectives. It is

a self-desire to accomplish self-fulfilling objectives and undertake the unthinkable. Due to its

importance to each participant, motivation is a crucial component in their academic path.

Motivation is influenced by a variety of factors, including failure and the challenges people

confront. Jazmine said in reference to motivation that her inspiration came from lecturers and

their motivating comments. She mentioned how she had to be motivated in order to succeed in college. Mulann also said that she motivated by "parents really motivate me." Aurrora said that:

> I think the fact that my family believed in me, and that they supported my dream is also something that really motivated me. You know they would have chosen to not allow me to maybe choose that school or not. But the fact that my family stood with me and I believed in my dream was also a big deal for me. Yeah, that was a big motivation.

Sub-Question Three

How do Jamaican women describe their experience with spirituality and academic success in higher education?

Goals for Personal Achievement

Participants demonstrated their own drive for success. Through their own will and drive, they understood that to move forward from the hardships was to have self-determination. Participants were aware of the value and importance of education. They realized that without self-determination, they would not have been able to achieve their educational objectives. Participants knew they required an innate motivation to help them achieve their goals, despite facing challenges and adversities. Mulann also said that she was "driven by success". Self-determination can take various forms, yet they are all equivalent in meaning. Participants attributed their success to goals of personal achievement. They learned while in their first year of college to deal with real-world challenges that they would experience later on in college, which would eventually lead to their own success or goals for personal achievement. Tiana believed that education was the way out of poverty. She explained:

> Education is the way out of poverty. That was it for me. My family was poor, and I knew from a younger age that the only way I am not going to be poor is if I became educated.

That was the way out of poverty. So that was my number one motivation. I need to get

this degree, so that I can get a job so that I can live at a standard that I want to live. When

I did my master, that was my motivation because of how Jamaica is. now, if you don't

have a master's degree. You can't get a good job. I did my masters because, this is what's

going to put me at a level to command a certain level of pay. That was my motivation to

move up and out of poverty. To be able to own my own home and my own car that's what

motivated me.

Sub-Question Four

How did spirituality impact Jamaican women and their persistence in their

program/programs of study? Please explain why or why not.

Spiritual Support

Aurrora said that:

I think I would always choose her anything that makes me feel better spiritually anytime.

Yeah, it is something that I turn for when I needed help, because we had so many support

groups that were constructive. One of the support groups was about was for Black

Christian students and it really united us like you feel you belong somewhere. You feel

that this is your family. Yeah, I think it made me feel so well, and it played a big role."

Biblical Principles and Prayer

All of the participants stated that their parents encouraged Christian growth by teaching

them about God during their childhood. The focus group revealed that the basis for perseverance

in college is spiritual formation. All of the participants said that prioritizing spirituality was

fundamental, not just in college but in their life. Some of the participants stated that it helped

them to have characteristics that shaped them into good people. Cynderella said that kindness

and humility created a teachable spirit to accept instruction, even when it went against the student's own personal beliefs. She also explained that if she had a "know it all" attitude and remained arrogant she would not be able to learn as much as she did. She believed that those teachings of humility allowed her to successfully complete her degree. The concept of faith was discussed in the focus group. Aurrora explained that faith is a concept she learned from her spirituality and that she learned that faith is the ability to believe in things you "cannot see". As a result of this learned faith, she was able to believe in the ability to finish her college degree. Some of the other participants in the focus group agreed. Aurrora said:

> I can say that since my childhood spirituality has always held a big position and a role in my life. Coming to campus things were not any different. Yeah. So, I can say that the influence is a positive, because we also need some kind of strength and perseverance, you know. I believe that spiritually also gives you strength. You also need to have strength in life. I can say that when it comes to something like a spirituality. I don't think it is also something that is easy. you know, to believe in something. You know. Spirituality is more about your faith or what you believe in. So, the fact that I had faith and understand how faith works and grew up believing that. I believed that when it comes my education. I just have to have faith in myself .

Tiana also shared that:

> Through my first degree. But as I matured. I learned that you can speak the truth in love. You don't have to be blunt and hurtful. You can still speed it through, but you can be diplomatic about it, and just cover it with a lot of softness and gentleness and love. I learned that after the 4 years and I've been practicing that, even in my job today.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to investigate the impact of perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that had received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. This chapter contained a detailed description of the participants and the results of the qualitative study. The data was presented in themes that emerged from the data collection process. The six themes that were identified in the data collection process were: (a) support systems, (b) intrinsic values, (c) spiritual support. The corresponding subthemes associated with support systems was family support, friends, faculty support, and clubs and organizations. The subthemes that corresponded with the intrinsic values of the participants were motivation, accountability, perseverance, and resilience. The third theme was spiritual support, and the subthemes that emerged were biblical principles and prayer. The study's conclusion developed from the completed process that included document analysis of individual interviews, a focus group, and written letters. Appendix J illustrated the coding process used to cluster the statements into major themes.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological investigation was to investigate the impact of perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that had received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. This chapter contains the interpretations and ideas related to the findings in the study for further discussion. Chapter Five consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the finding of the study through the lens of developed themes. The empirical and theoretical sources support the interpretation of the findings. The data collected in this study were used to continue the discussion. The discussion section will include the five significant subsections: (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research.

Interpretation of Findings

The three themes that were identified in the data collection process were: (a) support systems, (b) intrinsic values, (c) spiritual support. The corresponding subthemes associated with support systems are family support, friends, faculty support, and clubs and organizations. The first theme identified was supports systems, as the participants answered the individual interview and focus group questions, they all spoke of family members that they found a supportive role. They also spoke of support from friends and their involvement in clubs and organizations that

helped them by having people to relate to and talk about challenges faced while in college. Some participants mentioned having supportive members of faculty, career coaches, and mentors while in college, who helped them decide on a career path.

The second theme that emerged was the intrinsic values of the participants. Participants recall having motivation, accountability, perseverance, and resilience. Some participants stated that they believed their own ability to succeed because of their own personal values and goals set on their own. All participants agreed with each other in the idea that a degree had easier access to a wide range of employment prospects. Participants believed that those with a tertiary degree in Jamaica will make significantly more financial stability overall, even if they had to take on debt to pay for their education. Participants believed that higher education frequently translates into more secure employment.

The third theme was spiritual support. The majority of participants attribute their success to biblical principles, such as the ability to learn life lessons like humility, vision, and action. Some participants said that they linked their success directly to prayer and the faith they had through college. Some participants believed that learning a concept like faith in church helped them while in college because it helped them to believe in things that cannot be seen. For example, the belief that one could finish their degree, before it happened.

Summary of Thematic Findings

When the participants discussed support from friends, clubs and organizations on their college campus, they emphasized how learning is a collaborative process. How people interact with one another, their culture, and society at large shapes knowledge. The building blocks that students use to develop their own knowledge and reality are often derived from others, and learning from others also aids in this process (Vygotsky, 1978). There were several

interpretations that formed from the data collected. Participants identified support from friends and peers. They told stories of learning concepts, such as accountability, perseverance, and resilience from friends and family. The summary of thematic findings includes: (a) support systems, (b) intrinsic values, (c) and spiritual support.

Support systems. Support systems reveal that when obstacles arrive, students occasionally need a assistance putting our objectives in perspective when challenges inevitably come along. Participants explained that it is beneficial to speak to someone when feeling overburdened with job, school, or other commitments. Participants in the study spoke of individuals in their support network that were there for them. Supportive friends, family, teachers, and coworkers were there to acknowledge accomplishments and assist them in their challenges.

The research revealed that cultivation and maintaining a social support is beneficial to college completion. Support systems do more than just offer a sense of community and belonging. Participants stated that communication with classmates helped them successfully complete assignments. Clubs, sports, and organizations are excellent places to meet others who share your interests and objectives. Participants say that having campus involvement can also assist you in creating a variety of social support networks.

Findings revealed that establishing connections with your friends and classmates will keep you interested in your studies and drive you to do well. Participants stated that a peer support network would be ready to assist and provide advice, insight, and success tips if they ever felt overwhelmed or had academic difficulties. All participants agreed that collaborating closely with people in their program, clubs, and organizations is advantageous. They claimed that deep connections created lasting friendships.

Intrinsic values. Participants' discussions were over whether finishing college is "worth it," the expense of attendance for students assumed center stage during the focus group. A graduate with a degree has easier access to a wide range of employment prospects. The vast majority of longitudinal statistics show that those with four-year degrees and post-graduate degrees will make significantly more money overall, even if they had to take on debt to pay for their education. Students who graduate from college are more prepared to perceive the opportunities that exist across disciplines.

Participants explained that they were driven to finish their degree because they were intrinsically driven. These factors included getting out of poverty, finding meaningful employment, and becoming an expert in their field. Participants all agreed that they were inspired by the challenge of completing something they had not completed before. Findings revealed that their motivation to complete a college degree was more than just external reward but included the internal values.

In this research findings, it was revealed that accountability, motivation, perseverance, and resilience guarantee success in the case of the participants in this study. It is known that students will face difficulties, roadblocks, and setbacks along the way. It is important for you to understand that this is a normal, and natural, part of achieving your educational goals.

Spiritual support. All participants acknowledged the importance of spiritual guidance to their perseverance. The study confirmed usefulness of spiritual support. The findings found that biblical principles and prayer helped participants complete their college degree. Participants recalled the significance of receiving spiritual support from loved ones, friends, and others in their place of study through prayer.

The participants and their perseverance in school were impacted by the teacher, school, and peers' spiritual support through prayer, according to the first theme that emerged. The second element that emerged was that participants and their perseverance benefited from non-school-related spiritual support provided by family, friends, and the church through prayer.

Implications for Policy or Practice

This section is comprised of the implication for practice. This transcendental phenomenological study investigated the perceived factors that contributed to a Jamaican woman's ability to complete a tertiary degree in Jamaica. The phenomenon of this study holds theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for college administrators and educators. This study has implications that reveal that college students can benefit from support from family and friends.

Implications for Practice

One participant stated, "When I was at seminary for my very first degree, I was a youngest person there. I made some good friends who looked out for me, who mentored me, and I would say they contributed to my success." This research provided information to Jamaican institutions that may be used to encourage student persistence. Jamaican universities may have a better understanding of the kinds of programs and spiritual assistance that help students finish their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Students who were considering attending university in Jamaica benefited from the research findings. Students who are enrolled in universities in Jamaica are stakeholders and may have a greater understanding of the spiritual, social, and historical issues that would enable them to successfully complete their degrees (Gardner & Webb, 2019; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021). The findings of this research design hold practical implications for the researchers in higher education who seek to find the gaps to student

persistence. Researchers may have a greater understanding of the spiritual elements that contribute to their degrees being successfully completed (Gardner & Webb, 2019; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021). By analyzing data through the lens of the social constructivist framework, it can be understood that universities have the opportunity to foster a more supportive culture in the classroom, especially creating an environment that allows students to have an option to use resources such as spiritual guidance, clubs, and organizations. Researchers have found that more information regarding this phenomenon could be beneficial for future practice (Gardner & Webb, 2019; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021).

In this study, participants' experiences could be generalized to support this type of research. For example, some participants in this study expressed gratitude for having the ability to ask/ pray to "God" for support or intervention. An example of this was Tiana and Aurora's stories about prayer. They both shared that "God" intervened to provide a solution. Other participants expressed the willingness and ability to find motivation from within helped them to successfully complete their college degree. This reveals that the learner is at the center of social constructivism. Practically, one can utilize the ability to foster an environment that facilitates or creates a support system, intrinsic value, or spiritual support.

Implications for Policy

If there was an increase in the number of students who received spiritual help to finish their degrees at a Jamaican institution, there was probably a larger group of students at other colleges throughout the globe. Institutions could consider policy that facilitates a student's freedoms to discuss spirituality among peers. This study revealed that a student could benefit from spiritual support. There are institutions in Jamaica that could successfully provide resources, services, and accommodations that facilitate an environment for students who could

benefit from a support system, intrinsic value, or spiritual support. Due to the information

provided in this study, universities have the opportunity to foster a more varied culture in the

classroom and create a setting that is more hospitable for students who might use spiritual

guidance for future students who attend their schools.

The data in this study revealed that students can learn skills necessary to complete a college

degree from a network of support systems, developed intrinsic values, and spiritual support. The

college experiences of the participants revealed the value of a person's environment. The data

discovered that a person becomes aware of their own abilities while in their environment.

Participants indicated a sense of personal achievement, meaning, and purpose because of their

social and spiritual interaction in college. This understanding may cause a change in policy and

practice regarding persistence in college students. Finally, this study may allow researchers and

educators in Jamaica facilitate an environment that could increase college attrition and

persistence. In addition, In Jamaica, there were probably more students who received spiritual

help to finish their degrees at other institutions throughout the globe (Gardner & Webb, 2019;

Crumb et al., 2020; Hill & O'Brien, 2021). Universities have the opportunity to offer a more

diversified academic culture while also creating a more welcoming atmosphere for students who

might benefit from receiving spiritual assistance for their future pupils (Gardner & Webb, 2019;

Studebaker & Curtis, 2021).

Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this section addressed the theoretical and empirical implications of the

study. The theory used to guide this study was social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The

participants in this study expressed how family, friends, and supportive community helped them

to persist academically. The participants' motivations were derived from an established sense of community with those who shared similar beliefs and interests.

The study's theoretical significance was to analyze the participants' perceived spirituality and experiences related to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. In this group, family, friends, and community support at Jamaican post-secondary institutions were a resource. The participants' motivations, persistence, and willingness to complete their tertiary degree came from support (within self) known as altruism. Family, friends, and community support (group membership) at Jamaican post-secondary institutions were a resource for students to have a sense of belonging (feel supported), for the Jamaican women who completed their tertiary degree.

This section explores this study's theoretical implications in light of the research results and the theoretical literature covered in the previous section. As stated in my review of the theoretical literature previously, my study findings supported both Tinto's theory (2017) on the beneficial effects of social support on learners' perseverance, as well as Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) on the value of social interaction to the learning process. According to what the participants said, the study's main theoretical consequence was that the spiritual component of social support contributed favorably to the learning and perseverance. Theoretically, Vygotsky argued, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (Vygotsky,1978, p. 90). This implication backs up Vygotsky's assertion that learning occurs receiving social interaction, which is crucial for the learning process.

The learner referenced in this study is a college student. A college student, through observation and scientific method, is able to construct their own set of problems and solutions. Social constructivism stated that it is only through lived experiences that the student will have

success in learning. In this study, participants recalled challenges and solutions. An example of

this is the intrinsic value of perseverance and resilience referenced in Appendix J. Some

participants said that they learned how to persevere or be resilient from family, friends, or

mentors. This skill was credited as one of the reasons for college completion.

Empirical Implications

Empirically, the information regarding the current phenomenon is unknown. This data

from the study added to existing literature by extending information regarding three themes: (a)

support systems, (b) intrinsic values, and (c) spiritual support. Other studies highlight the

importance of experiences with family, finances, sense of belonging, lack of sense of belonging,

relationship with faculty, relationship with other students, and motivation (O'Gara et al., 2020;

Lipps et al.2007; Lesli et al., 2021). The study contributed to the body of knowledge by revealing

what was unknown on the perceived spirituality and perseverance of Jamaican women who had

earned tertiary degrees. It can be said that the data revealed that having a support system while in

college can positively impact a student's ability to complete a college degree. According to

Mulann, having "support from my friends and family, and yeah discussion groups" was named a

valuable resource in her response to question six (Appendix C) in her individual interview.

Participants in the study also emphasized that the impact of intrinsic value was positive in their

ability to complete a college degree. An example of this was when all participants recalled

motivation and goal setting for personal achievement during the focus group, after question six

and eight in Appendix D. Participants in this study explained that spirituality had a positive

impact on their ability to complete a college degree. This study revealed that participants who

used biblical principles and had religious affiliation attribute their success to their spirituality. An

example of this is statements made in both Appendix H and K. One participant stated members

of her college organization "would pray together or organize activities together. Even in sports, as a community and a society of Christians, that was really amazing, because it kept us together. It keeps us encouraged." The empirical implication confirms the importance of experiences with family, finances, sense of belonging, lack of sense of belonging, relationship with faculty, relationship with other students, and motivation (O'Garo et al., 2020; Lipps et al.2007; Lesli et al., 2021).

Delimitations and Limitations

There were a few delimitations and limitations identified in this study. The qualitative nature of this study's design prohibited numerous possibilities as a result of the significant time commitment required to participate in the research. Delimitations of this study pertain to characteristics of the design or methodology. I chose phenomenology because Jamaican women are often misunderstood, and their voices are absent in research. Only female participants were selected for this study because it is well known that gender inequality in valued items (such as compensation, autonomy, job security, and prestige) associated with particular industries is essential since it foreshadows gender inequality in occupations (Weeden et. al, 2020). I found that to be true in a review of literature on the topic. Phenomenology attempts to fill that gap as an effort is made to describe participants' experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). The optimum sample size for this type of study is 10 to 15 participants, which places delimitations on the study (Appendix L). I also chose only participants who identify as Jamaican who have completed a tertiary degree. This eliminated those who currently attend an institution in Jamaica because their experience is subject to change. The delimitations occurred from purposeful decisions for the boundaries of the study. The delimitations included ethnicity and geographical location on the island of Jamaica. The purposeful selection of each participant to be over the age

of 18 was a delimitation. The participants were required to identify as a Jamaican woman and have completed a tertiary degree. It was important for the current phenomenon to be studied as transcendental to better discover and bring added dimension to the participants' experiences. This allowed an in-depth insight into the intrinsic structures of consciousness through the contents of the participants' experiences.

There were a few limitations of the study that were unpreventable. The limitations were related to participants who identified as a Jamaican woman. The possibility that the participants were not indigenous or direct descendants was up to the discretion of the participants' self-disclosure. It is difficult to generalize with a small sample that is not broad in age range. The size of the sample was a limitation, as the ethnicity of participants was limited to only one ethnic group. The small size and volunteer nature of the study, as well as the ages of the participants were a limitation. Ages of participants ranged from late-twenties to mid-fifties. There were no participants below the age of 30 or above 60. The data were predominantly self-reported data from participants referenced in Appendix L. Due to the interaction with others, it was further limited. Although I tried to avoid bias by excluding my own personal experiences with the phenomena, I am flawed as a human, and this affects the study's limitations (Moustakas, 1994). Participants also reported experiences and events from their own viewpoints and recollections, but depending on these judgements and memories has its own uncertainties.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research were developed from the study's findings and the limitations and delimitations that were placed on the research studies. One recommendation would be to consider adjusting the population size of the participants. A change of geographical location should also be an option. To further compare the experiences of Jamaican women, both

number of participants and location of the research study changes should be taken into consideration.

Other Ppopulations of Women

In this recent research study, there was no research completed on the disparities based on gender or marital status in the current study. Future research considering the disparities between female and male instructors and their opinions on the perceptions of spirituality, as well as married with families vs. unmarried and without children might be interesting from a different style of study. If there are any, further research should be completed to determine how having a family affects a student's ability to finish a college degree. An increased population size may give the researcher a much larger scope of data collected. More themes may be identified, and data could vary among different and more age groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as a formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (Schrader-King , 2017). Many of the study participants expressed a positive perception of spirituality, as well as a positive impact of membership of clubs and organizations through their time in college. As noted in the writing of the participants, they associated their success in college and ability to finish their degree to having support from their support system, intrinsic value, and spiritual support. Higher education institutions should encourage and open environments that facilitates a student's sense of belonging and support. This would address how religion and spirituality have historically been woven into every aspect

of life for this community and present research with results on the effects of this on any aspect of life. The role of religion and spirituality has been popular in Black diasporic communities in the Caribbean (Hardacre & Kinkead-Clark, 2019).

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Appendix A

Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 19, 2023

Ashleigh Yearde
Susan Stanley

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-545 A Transcendental Phenomenological Investigation of Perceived Spirituality and Persistence of Jamaican Women

Dear Ashleigh Yearde, Susan Stanley,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: January 19, 2023. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent to Post Recruitment Flyer on Facebook Group

Jan 22, 2023, 7:06 PM

Researcher (me): Hello and good evening, I am I am a Ph.D. student in Higher Education. I am currently doing a research study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. At this stage in the research, a tertiary degree was generally defined as all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. I am looking for 10-15, Jamaican women who have completed a post-secondary degree. I will offer each person who participates a $25 visa gift card. My research study is approved by the International Review Board. I am asking for permission to post my flyer for my research study on your FB page?

Jan 22, 2023, 7:19 PM

███████████████ Sure, I will go ahead and post it to my page.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and your educational background. (Ice breaker question)

2. How would you describe your experience with spirituality during your time in college? (CRQ)

3. What experiences, if any contributed to the completion of your tertiary degree/degrees? (SQ2)

4. Why do you believe you completed your tertiary degree/degrees? (SQ2)

5. How would you describe spiritual influences on academic success in higher education? (SQ3)

6. What was your experience with spiritual support and your persistence in your program/programs of study? (CRQ)

7. Describe the spiritual background of your parents. (SQ1)

8. Describe your experience with spirituality regarding educational goals. (SQ4)

9. Describe your experience with spirituality and your academic success. (SQ4)

10. Describe your perceived self-efficacy (innate thinking about your ability to achieve success). (SQ2)

11. Describe what influenced your persistence to not drop out of higher education. (SQ2)

12. Describe what experiences influenced your perceived self-efficacy. (SQ1)

13. Describe your experience with motivation. (SQ2)

14. Describe relationships and involvement with spirituality at your current institution of higher education. (CRQ)

15. What other information would you like to provide regarding your overall perceived self-

efficacy related to persistence in higher education in Jamaica? (SQ3)

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you believe about your participation in spirituality and your persistence at a Jamaican University? (CRQ)

2. Explain how spirituality has changed your experience at your institution. (SQ4)

3. What is your experience with spirituality? (CRQ)

4. Explain what experiences motivated you to complete your degree at your institution. (SQ2)

5. What benefits and challenges have you experienced at your institution? (SQ1)

6. What resources did you find most helpful in the completion of your degree? (SQ3)

7. What are your perceptions of spirituality and persistence? (CRQ)

8. What else would you like to add to this discussion or feel is important to share with the group? (CRQ)

Appendix E

Recruitment Social Media

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my Doctorate of Philosophy in Higher Education Administration & Leadership at Liberty University. The purpose of this study will be to discover the perceived spirituality and persistence for Jamaican women that have received a tertiary degree at schools in Jamaica. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, identify as a Jamaican woman, and be a university graduate of any higher education institution in Jamaica. Participants will be asked to participate in an individual, recorded interview with me over the Zoom platform (30-45 minutes), participate in a recorded focus group (1-1.5 hrs.) meeting through Zoom, write a letter (30-45 minutes), and review the interview and focus group transcripts for accuracy. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ for more information. A consent form will be emailed to you after you contact me. Participants will receive a $25 VISA gift card as compensation.

Ashleigh Yearde, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Appendix F

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

A Transcendental Phenomenological Investigation of Perceived Spirituality and Persistence of Jamaican Women

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Do you identify as a Jamaican woman?
- Are you a university graduate from a higher education institution in Jamaica?

If you answered **yes** to the above questions, you may be eligible to participate in a study that examines the perceived spirituality and perceived persistence among **Jamaican women** who have received a tertiary degree.

The purpose of my research is to examine the perceived spirituality and persistence among Jamaican Women. Participants will be asked to participate in an individual, recorded interview with the researcher over the Zoom platform (30-45 minutes), participate in a recorded focus group (1-1.5 hrs.) meeting through Zoom, write a letter (30-45 minutes), and review the interview and focus group transcripts for accuracy. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please contact me at ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ for more information.

A consent form will be emailed to you after you contact me.

Participants will be asked to either print the consent form, physically sign it, and return it to me as a scanned attachment via email/by mail/by taking a picture with their phone and texting it to me at ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ OR they will be asked to sign the consent document using e-sign.

Participants will receive a $25 VISA gift card as compensation.

Ashleigh Yearde, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Appendix G

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Investigation of Perceived Spirituality and Perceived Persistence of Jamaican Women
Principal Investigator: Ashleigh Yearde, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, identify as a Jamaican woman, and be a university graduate from any higher education institution in Jamaica. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived spirituality and perceived persistence of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. The researcher wishes to determine if there are any perceived gains from spirituality.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an individual interview. The interview will be audio- and video-recorded and conducted through the web-conferencing platform Zoom, lasting 30-45 minutes.
2. Participate in a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion will be audio- and video-recorded and will last approximately 1-1.5 hours. This focus group discussion will also take place via Zoom with at maximum 14 other participants.
3. Write a letter of advice to an at-risk high school student and send it to me via email at Ayearde@liberty.edu. This should take 30-45 minutes.
4. Review the interview and focus group transcripts for accuracy. Once the transcripts from your interview and focus group have been compiled, the transcripts will be emailed to you to be reviewed for accuracy. This process should take approximately 10 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include contributing to the literature regarding the experiences of Jamaican women who have received a tertiary degree. This increased understanding may assist professionals in the field of education to establish mentorship programs to assist in this process and thus help reduce the drop-out rate of Jamaican college students.

What risks might you experience from being in this study

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research documents will be stored securely, and only the researcher and faculty sponsor will have access to the records. Data collected as a part of this study may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from the participants is reused or shared, any information that could identify them, if applicable, will be removed before I share the data.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer, password-protected cloud storage accounts, and in a locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hard copy data will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher and the faculty sponsor will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive a $25 VISA gift card. This token of appreciation will be sent to participants through email once the participants email me their letters of advice and thus help reduce the drop-out rate of Jamaican college students.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Ashleigh Yearde. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ███████████████
You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, ████████████████
████████████

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board █████████████████████ █████ ; our phone number is ████████ , and our email address is ██████████████

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio- and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix H

Sample Interview Transcript

Interview Transcript- **Tiana**

Researcher (me)	00:00	Please tell me about yourself and your educational background.
Tiana	00:05	I agree. Yes. My name is ████, and I am a Jamaican I have. I was born and raised and went to school in Jamaica attended primary school, high school, and my university education in Jamaica. I have three degrees. I have a Bachelor of Arts in theology, which was done at the ██████ Theological Seminary. That's my first degree. And then I had a Master of Science MSc in human resource management. But that was done ████████████████████████, also ██ ████████.
Tiana	00:15	But at the time, we didn't have a lot of master's programs in Jamaica. We████████████████████████████████ I did it on the weekend. It was accredited by our university body. My master's is really from the ██. But I did it here while living in Jamaica.
Tiana	01:36	The last course though, they kept course, I had to go away for three weeks and stayed on campus at ██████████ to finish up that, that last course. I wrote a major paper, that kind of thing. I had connected with my classmates there and the lecturer there.
Tiana	01:51	Now I, I have worked with government for most of my life. I did a little stint in banking and a little teaching. And then I, I got a job now at the ████████████. And to winning back in work in here, I went back to do another bachelor that I've always wanted to do in literature of English, bachelor of arts and literature of English, where ended up with three degrees, but I have to be a and one math. Awesome. So that is my education. So, I have one from ████████ ████████████████████ And I have one from the Jamaica Theological Seminary.
Tiana	03:54	You can go ahead with your questions?
Researcher (me)	03:59	How would you describe your experience with spirituality during your time in college?
Tiana	04:12	I am a Christian, growing up. I was so involved in church that my I decided to do my, my first degree in theology, I really wanted to do it and guidance and counseling, but that the seminary didn't have a

course in guidance and counseling at the time, but they had a minor. I did a major in theology and a minor in a guidance and counseling for spiritual I was I'm very spiritual person, from the Christianity, religion. Very deep in my spirituality. And so, in attending seminary, it was not hard for me at all to be in that place, surrounded by Christian people and other spiritual people. Spirituality is, it's very important, it is very important to me as an individual and to a lot of Jamaicans as well.

| Researcher (me) | 05:09 | What experiences, if any contributed to the completion of your tertiary degree/degrees? |

| Tiana | 05:26 | Alright, so financially, I got help from my church and from other International Christian organizations, for my first degree. And all the rest of it was just hard work on my part was just a lot. Because that first degree was so much harder and more difficult than high school. I was in for a rude awakening, just because you're bright in high school, you think university is going to be the same, but it's not the same. It was just a lot of hard work. And I did not know what I was in for. It was just a level higher, and I had to just stretch myself more and write more papers, do more research, learn how to write a research paper, spend lots of time in library, and that kind of commitment. And of course, I prayed a lot and depend on God a lot to come through with the school fee part for me. |

| Researcher (me) | 06:31 | Why do you believe you completed your tertiary degree/degrees? |
| Tiana | 06:44 | In terms of I believe in God and yes, God. If spirituality for you is equal to my personal belief in God, if that is what it is equal to then, Yes. Because, I am totally dependent on him [God]. |

| Tiana | 07:48 | I did not have any money for myself to pay not even one cent. You're looking at a person who got a 4-year degree who did not have one cent. My mother did not give me one cent, and I didn't have any for myself. |

| Researcher (me) | 07:59 | How would you describe spiritual influences on academic success in higher education? |

| Tiana | 08:16 | Alright, so I didn't worry about it because I put my just trust in God, but there were times when it was near to exams and it didn't come through. I did get some "headaches" and then after pray, then maybe two days later, would send a note to say, your school team. But most of the times, it just came through for me, divine intervention, divine |

intervention, even with my master's when I was doing it through ███████████████████, I was living and working in Jamaica, but the school fees were in ████████. And I had to depend on God provided for me. I had about eight modules or I don't remember how many modules but two years' worth of studies.

| Tiana | 09:15 | I only paid for one module out of my pocket. Everything else was just paid by people sponsoring me, divine intervention, and God provided. |

| Researcher (me) | 09:31 | What was your experience with spiritual support and your persistence in your program/programs of study? |

| Tiana | 10:17 | Alright, my first degree was because my church say they said they would sponsor me. I just took it. And because I wanted that degree, and I ended up from that degree, I taught religious education at my alma mater, St. John's or high school girls what to weird. I got a job afterwards. And then I became, I became this grid administrator from working in the bank, and then with a minister. I moved into administration. I thought to get a business degree, which was that where I went and got the Master's in HR. And when I got that master's, I felt myself, you know, when you grow after you finish a program, with all the knowledge and learning and the case studies and all of that. I just became very efficient in my job. I just started moving up and everybody that I was introduced to the, I would like to have an administrator like you, so I just kind of stayed into administration, per se. But when I started working at the ███████ ████████████, the Literature degree was a degree that I've always wanted to do, because I love to read, I read a lot of affection and love picture on and so I went into that and I did a degree and I read a lot of books███████████, and I had to write about them |

| Tiana | 10:59 | Alright, I did my degree in Literature of English. That is what you would call my love degree. Yes, I did that one also not because I needed it. Because I already had a master's when I did it, okay. But I did it because I love it. And I love to read and it's I read lots of books. And I was introduced to a lot of African literature, and Western literature, because in high school, we just started doing Western literature. I went to one of those colonial high school so they were teaching us European literature, and European history. But this degree in introduced me to Caribbean literature and African literature. I'm happy I did it. Yeah. And as I did it, I felt like I had just more knowledge, understand, like better literature in English. It's such a great area, you just make you have a great understanding of life in general.
Researcher   11:52 |

| (me) | | Describe the spiritual background of your parents. |
| Tiana | 12:59 | |

I grew up with my mother alone. So single parent family, okay. And my mother, she sent me to Sunday school, but she never came to church. But she sent me and I could not miss Sunday school one day, but she never came and then afterwards know when she got older. She just said she wants to go to church and she just give our life to the Lord and got baptized. I grew up in Christianity. Okay. yes, she's very spiritual. Even though she wasn't living the life, she should trust God for everything to provide for her. She thanked him for every provision that ██ gave to us. Yeah, um, I am a Christian today because my mother sent me to church every Sunday.

| Researcher (me) | 13:05 | Describe your experience with spirituality regarding educational goals. |
| Tiana | 13:45 | |

Alright, so no, I was like a netball person. I never really went to a club. I've played netball for ██ when I was there doing my first degree and for you when I was here, many years ago when I was younger. Yeah. So that was my, my extracurricular activity. Okay, ball. Yeah. No, but they attributed to my socialization. Getting to know persons outside of my class outside of my group, you know, different people,

| Researcher (me) | 13:53 | Describe your experience with spirituality and your academic success. |
| Tiana | 13:59 | |

Alright, so financially, I got help from my church and from other International Christian international organizations, for my first degree.

| Researcher | 14:44 | Describe your perceived self-efficacy (innate thinking about your ability to achieve success). |
| Tiana | 15:53 | |

Actually, to, to be very honest with you, my number one motivation was this. Education is the way out of poverty. That was it for me. My family was poor. And I knew from a younger age that the only way I am not going to be poor is if I became educated, that was the way out. That was my number one motivation, I need to get this degree so that I can get a job so that I can live at a standard that I want to live. And when I did my and relating to people in sports is a whole different social movement, right, than sitting in class and taking notes. with somebody, the interactions are so much different.

| Researcher (me) | 17:29 | Describe what influenced your persistence to not drop out of higher education. |

Tiana	17:42	I said, this is what's going to put me at a level to command a certain key. And so that was my motivation to move up. That was my number one motivating factor. right? Yes. So that's what motivated me. I'll be able to own my own house and drive my own car. That sort of thing,
Researcher (me)	17:53	Describe what experiences influenced your perceived self-efficacy. I would say all of them contributed to my success. When I was at seminary for my very first degree, I was the youngest person they're on campus. And the I had me I made some good friends who looked out for me who mentored me. And yes, I would say the contributed to my success. And I still have some of those friends today. Yes. Especially one. And he's a pastor. Yes, I still have some friendships from my very first degree. That's a, I still keep in touch with these people. Sure. And we can call and say, Can you do this? Because based on where this person is
Researcher (me)	18:23	Describe your experience with motivation.
Tiana	18:42	When I did my masters, that was my motivation, because of how Jamaica is no, if you don't have a masters, you can't get a good job, you're going to get a low paid job. So, I did my masters.
Researcher (me)	19:46	Describe relationships and involvement with spirituality at your current institution of higher education. (CRQ)
Tiana	19:52	Alright, so remember, we talked about the motivating factor was the move from low income into your livable income category. And then my personality though, even though I was very outspoken, and very blunt. I was very honest, and so you would have the people who love people like that gravitate towards me. and cannot handle people like that they would move away from me. And so that was my personality, through my first degree, but as I matured, I learned that you can speak the truth in law. You don't have to be blunt and hurtful, you can still speak the truth, but you can be diplomatic about it, and, and just cover it with a lot of softness and gentleness and love. I learned that after the four years, and I've been practicing that wonderful. And so even in my job today, when I'm dealing with students, I deal with them like that. If I have bad news, I try to wrap it in law, the delivery must be done in in love and gentleness and softness.

Researcher (me)	24:18	What other information would you like to provide regarding your overall perceived self-efficacy related to persistence in higher education in Jamaica?
Tiana	24:38	There were these times when it wasn't easy because I had five papers to write for five different courses. I just had to tell told my social life sacrifices, you have to make some sacrifices. You have to shut down the social life you have to be absent from church probably a week or two weeks, because you have to put away some time to write these papers and to do the research for the papers. So yes, I had to make some sacrifices, I had to not talk to some of my outside friends for a little while. For the period that I was under pressure when I had exams on final people's view, and family members to I had to just be, I won't be able to see you until three weeks' time, you know, that kind of thing? Yes, I had to make some sacrifices as well.
Researcher (me)	25:36	Thank you so much for participating in the study again.
Tiana	25:48	Okay, Goodbye. Yes. Thank you.

Appendix I

Sample Letter of Advice to current college students in Jamaica

Now that you have reflected on your experiences with spirituality while attending a Jamaican public university. What would you share with other current students who are in danger of dropping out? What specific advice would you give to high school students who want to finish their degree?

Written by Mulann

Students in Jamaica, I've been there and I feel I'm good enough to dish out some nuggets that'll help you as a college student.

Honesty is the best policy. Avoid cheating in all its forms – collusion, plagiarism, copying, etc. Students who cheat seriously fail to learn what is oftentimes important, and this doesn't help them in the long run. Sometimes the only things they do learn – after getting caught – is that cheating doesn't pay.

Don't ignore or deny your personal and academic problems. Problems will often get worse if they are not directly addressed in a timely fashion. Procrastination in any of its many forms can lead to a small problem getting much worse. Get help when you need it. Speak to your course instructors, your advisor, or your parents.

Don't make important decisions based on second-hand information. Jumping to rash conclusions based in incorrect information can cause you significant personal and professional problems. If you are uncertain about something, check it out before you decide.

Seek out special opportunities. College is a time to expand your mind and your experiences. Select your general education courses wisely. Consider student research, field trip opportunities, or a new language. Choose courses that will expand your world; avoid taking courses merely because they are "an easy A" or a "blow-off course."

Get a job. Studies show that students who work from about 8-10 hours per week tend to organize and spend their "free" time more wisely. Overworking or not working at all sometimes can be detrimental to personal and academic success.

Don't over-commit yourself. Mature students always take responsibility for their actions – all of them. Some students will commit themselves to more work than they are capable of completing. Don't let this happen to you; you owe it to others to be honest to your word.

I really hope this helps. Thank you, and good luck on your pursuit for academic excellence.

Appendix J

Theme Development (Codes)

Theme Development

Support Systems

- Family Support
  - Mother
  - Father
  - Family
    - Upbringing
- Friends
  - Friends
  - Peers
  - Classmates
- Faculty
  - Professor
  - Instructor
  - Teacher
- Career coaches
  - Career coach
  - Guidance counselor
  - Mentor
  - Academic advisor
- Clubs & organizations
  - Club for Christian students
  - Christian group for black students
  - Net ball
  - Sports club

Intrinsic Values

- Motivation
  - Motivation
- Accountability
  - Responsibility
- Perseverance & Resilience
  - Sticking with it
  - Not giving up

Spiritual Support

- Biblical Principles
  - Bible studies
  - Humility
  - Kindness
- Prayer
  - Faith
  - Prayer
  - Divine intervention

Appendix K

Theme Development with Codes and Significant Statements (Sample)

Theme: Support Systems
Sub-Themes: Family Support, Friends, Faculty Support, Career Coaches, Clubs & Organizations
Codes: Mother (mom), father (dad), family, parents, upbringing, friends, classmates, professor, instructor, teacher, career coach, mentor, academic advisor, club, club for Christian students, net ball, sports club, support
Significant Statements: It (church & Sunday school) showed me how to pray. I grew up with my dad. Support from my friends and family in my schooling. Parents would also be very happy to be associated with students who have grown spiritually. It is very important even when there's no one to watch you in the college to choose the right company and always be on the right side. This is not because anyone is watching is you but for your own good as a student in college. I grew up with my mother alone. So single parent family. am a Christian today because my mother sent me to church every Sunday I was a netball person. When I was doing my first degree. That was my extracurricular activity. I can attribute my socialization getting to know persons outside of my class. when I was at seminary for my very first degree. I was a youngest person there. When I was at seminary for my very first degree. I was a youngest person there. I made some good friends who looked out for me, who mentored me, and I would say they contributed to my success. One of my biggest motivations was that I had friends. We came together and helped each other. Get to know a wide range of people faculty, staff, and students. Networking is important. It is often true that who you know is just as important as what you know. Use your acquaintances to advantage, but don't take advantage of them. It is hard to find someone who is genuinely willing to tell you the truth as a student because most of them know it well but are influenced by peer pressure and the urge to be seen as people who know everything and are updated with luxury and worldly things. I would advise

every student to always have faith and trust in God because before Him everything is possible. I hope this advice helps.

The friends around me and their influence. I would always advice anyone joining school to always be in the right company, doing the right thing and also under the right influence.

My college advisors and career coach helped me decide on a career.

Willingness of my parents to educate me, and the intrinsic motivation and the friends I had in college, encouragement, and intrinsic motivation.

They would pray together or organize activities together. Even in sports, as a as a community is a society of Christians, that was really amazing, because it keeps us together. It keeps us encouraged. even in sports, as a as a community is a society of Christians. That was really amazing, because it keeps us together. It kept us encouraged. She believes that it helped me to abandon cultural beliefs and learn more and focus on education and learn more.

My father encouraged me in prayer.

A club for Christians on campus, this group helped me to grow spiritually. I turned to this group for help when I felt like I needed support.

I would say that my friends that looked out for me and mentored me contributed to my success. I still keep in touch with some of these people today.

Many people may not realize the impact of influence until it is too late so I would advise that students stay in the right company and do what is right. Most people will not always tell you the truth but the truth is you need spiritual support and involvement in everything you do.

My family provided me to motivational support. Groups for black Christians made you feel you belong somewhere. You feel that this is your family. Yeah, I think it made me feel so well, and it played a big role.

I think the fact that my family believed in me, and that they supported my dream is also something that really motivated me. The fact that my family stood with me and I believed in my dream was also a big deal for me. Yeah, that was a big motivation.

Christianity, is something that I turn for when I needed help, because we had so many support groups that were constructive. One of the support groups was about that I felt like they were part of my family and it played a big role in her ability to complete college.

Choose your friends carefully. Friends can support you in your efforts to maximize the benefits of a college education. Friends too set on having a good time at the expense of a good education can be seriously detrimental. Get to know people who express high social, academic, and personal values.

Get help when you need it. Speak to your course instructors, your advisor, or your parents. Don't make important decisions based on second-hand information. Jumping to rash conclusions based in incorrect information can cause you significant personal and professional problems. If you are uncertain about something, check it out before you decide.

Speak to your course instructors, your advisor, or your parents.
Don't make important decisions based on second-hand information. Jumping to rash conclusions based in incorrect information can cause you significant personal and professional problems.

Appendix L

Research Study Log

Name	Pseudonym	1:1 Interview Complete	Written Response Received	Sent Consent Form	Sent Consent Form	Focus Group
		Yes=1	Yes=1			1 or 2
	Poccahontas	1	1	Yes	Electronic signature	1
	Mulan	1	1	Yes	Electronic signature	1
	Rapunzelle	1		Yes	Electronic signature	1
	Jazmine	1	1	Yes	Signature	1
	Bell	1	1	Yes	Signature	1
	Arielle	1		Yes	Signature	1
	Moanna	1	1	Yes	Signature	1
	Tiana	1		Yes	Signature	1
	Aurrora	1		Yes	Electronic signature	1
	Cynderalla	1	1	Yes	Electronic signature	1