



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

## **THE ROLE OF RELIGION ON STUDENT WELLBEING**

**Lawrencia Afoakwa**

**Department of Psychology, University of York**

**Supervised by Dr Karisha Kimone George**

**Funded by The Irvine Laidlaw Foundation**

### **Acknowledgments**

This research could not have been completed without the generous funding of Lord Laidlaw and the valuable support from the Laidlaw Leadership and Research Programme team, to whom I am deeply grateful. I also want to thank Dr Karisha Kimone George for being a great source of inspiration, passion, and guidance throughout this project.

## INTRODUCTION

The health and wellbeing of students has become a topic of great contemporary concern for UK universities (Dodd et al, 2021). This is because studying in Higher Education is often accompanied by new stressors for emerging adults (Ewing et al., 2019) e.g., individuation, separation from family or having to self-fund education through student loans, resulting in combining study with paid employment (EMA Satisfaction Survey, 2008). Recent studies have in fact shown a steady increase in student drop-out (Cotton et al., 2017) and suicides rates (Dodd et al, 2021). Almost 10% of first-year students have also reported stress and anxiety when adjusting to university life, five times higher than 10 years ago (Kotera et al., 2021). However, resilience has emerged as one protective factor in relation to the stressful situations that students face (Beltman et al., 2011). It has been suggested that resilience consists of both behavioural characteristics such as resisting destructive behaviours and psychological characteristics such as maintaining good mental health despite adversity (Bonanno, 2004). In line with this, better outcomes are consistently found in resilient students, including overall academic success (Reyes et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, higher levels of resilience are achieved differently for all individuals (Gunnestad, 2006), which suggests that factors implicated in the resilience of different university student populations may vary. For instance, in recent decades, extensive research suggest a link between higher levels of religiosity/spirituality and both resilience and improved mental wellbeing (Pargament, 2010; Pargament et al., 2013). This hints that religious university students may have specific factors, most likely related to their religiosity, that enable them to develop higher levels of resilience. However, empirical work in this field remains underdeveloped, limiting existing understanding of resilience among these religious university students. Specifically, many of these studies have mainly focused on the relationship between religiousness/spirituality and coping with stress, using quantitative methods (Mattis, 2002). These methods fail to uncover the lived experiences of religious participants, thus equating the experiences of various religious ethnic groups, when other research has identified core differences among such groups (Graham, 2015). For example, issues of self-acceptance are likely to encompass colour and its role in the identity of ethnic minorities, while being absent for other non-minority ethnicities (Cousins, 2019), and self-acceptance has been linked to resilience (Sagone & Caroli, 2014).

Therefore, failing to explore these differences misses a core dimension of the relationship between religion and resilience. For BAME students in particular, understanding this protective role of religion is crucial (Galek et al, 2015) as they deal with heightened stressors like institutional racism whilst at university, leading to poorer mental health outcomes (Cummings, 2018). The situation is aggravated by the fact that there seems to be lack of help seeking among BAME students (Arday, 2018). While research suggests that this may be due to their religion/spirituality (Mantovani et al., 2017), findings rather show that this can be caused by the lack of “safe” spaces for religious BAME students to express and explore these struggles and/or the absence of practitioners who are cultured enough to understand these experiences (Arday, 2018).

This current state of the literature highlights a space for further research which focusses specifically in understanding the complex role of religion/spirituality in the wellbeing of BAME students. The study discussed within this article responds to this gap by posing the following research questions:

- How do religious BAME students respond to challenges in their university lives?
- Are there similarities or differences between the different religion/spiritual groups?
- Have BAME students mainly relied on religiously focused coping mechanisms? How have these impacted their capacity to handle challenges?
- How do BAME students feel about accessing mental health services in the face of challenge? What role does their religiosity play in these views?
- How do they rate the support that they have accessed? Have these been able to incorporate the recommendations into their religious/spiritual outlook?

These questions will be explored using the digital storytelling procedure. This entails three stages: (1) Initial workshops (also called focus groups), (2) video-creating individual sessions and, (3) video presentation session. In stage 1, there will be a discussion of university experiences, and these will be actively shaped through feedback by other participants. In stage 2, participants will be guided to create their own digital story using photographs, videos, voiceovers etc and in stage 3, participants will share their videos, enabling further discussions.

Collected data will be analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This is because IPA allows participants to express themselves and their lived experiences in a way that they see fit, allowing researchers to understand in-depth the subtleties and complexities of BAME students that are otherwise, non-accessible in previous literature (Alase, 2017).

## METHODS

9 BAME students as shown in Table 1 participated in the study.

Table 1. Provides some demographic information about the participants.

	Demographics				
	Participant Number	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Year of study
Focus group A	1	Female	24	Black-African	3 <sup>rd</sup> Undergraduate
	2	Female	26	Black-African	Postgraduate
	3	Male	21	Black-African	3 <sup>rd</sup> Undergraduate
	4	Female	22	Black-African	Postgraduate
	5	Female	20	Asian-British	3 <sup>rd</sup> Undergraduate
	6	Male	21	Black-African	3 <sup>rd</sup> Undergraduate
Focus group B	7	Female	21	Black-African	3 <sup>rd</sup> Undergraduate
	8	Female	18	Black-African	2 <sup>nd</sup> Undergraduate
	9	Female	23	Black-Caribbean	Postgraduate

After giving their informed consent, participants filled-out a group development questionnaire (Appendix A) to help maximise the degree of similarity between group members in the initial workshops/focus groups. Both sessions took place on zoom, as were the video-creating sessions and the final video presentation session. All three workshops which were conducted one weeks' time apart, were led by a student researcher (referred to as facilitator) who also identified as BAME.

### Initial workshops

These began very informally to allow participants to feel comfortable. Using the pre-session questions in Table 2, the researcher maximised the likelihood that these entailed similar opinions such as the intention to share a "common" experience, thus establishing a mutual sense of trust. Participants shared their opinions and university experiences and were free to speak from their own personal experiences or more generally. The facilitator allowed stories to emerge as they needed to, without imposing structures or styles, whilst using prompts when necessary to guide discussions. However, as each focus group varied on the structure or style of the discussion, prompts naturally also differed.

Table 2. Shows the questions used in the focus groups.

Questions	
1.	What comes to mind then when you think about resilience?
2.	What were the challenges that you experienced at university and how did your religion or spirituality helped you?
3.	What were the coping mechanisms that you used to overcome your challenges at university?
4.	Was there anything else that you considered using? How did this interact with your religious or spiritual beliefs?
5.	During your challenges at university did you access or thought of accessing some of the mental health services available to you?

#### **Video-creating individual sessions**

Participants were guided in developing their own digital story, that is, a creative video where the dynamism of the impact of their religion/spirituality on their day-to-day university lives could be more effectively expressed (Gubrium, 2009). This was held individually allowing for more one-to-one exploration of the perceived core aspects of each students' lived experience. Example videos were shown to help participants understand what their final videos could look like, and prompts were used when needed to help participants reflect on aspects they deemed important and wanted to include in their videos (Appendix B).

#### **Video presentation session**

Participants came together to share their final videos enabling further discussions and deeper reflections, not only about their experiences, but also about the personal benefits acquired by being part of the digital storytelling process.

Following completion of the study, participants were fully debriefed and were offered a one-to-one session with a BAME practitioner if they felt the research had raised any issues for them which they wanted to talk about further.

## RESULTS

A step-by-step guide, as shown in Table 3, was developed to adapt IPA for use with the focus groups.

Table 3. IPA procedure

	Process	Description
Data immersion	Student researcher transcribes the audio recordings of initial workshops and turns them into verbatim transcripts	Verbatim transcripts, include descriptions of students' tone, use of irony and emotions
Initial noting and emergence of themes	Considers meanings for each participant, as well as across the whole text	Themes are expressed as phrases which hold particular importance to both the meaning-making of the participant and research question(s).
Developing superordinate themes	Student researcher connects emergent themes to develop super-ordinate themes	
	Student researcher repeats the first 3 steps for both video creating and presentation sessions	
	Student researcher identifies patterns across all transcripts	

We developed 4 themes responding to the research questions. These were: (1) Enabling survival; (2) Maintaining a positive outlook; (3) Protecting psychological integrity; (4) Providing agape.

The reader should be aware that this study had a distinctly Christian focus because most participants self-identified as Cristian. However, all different aspects of religion/spirituality were fully integrated in the themes. For instance, whilst resilience was defined differently across individuals, all students understood it in terms of their religion/spirituality.

“Resilience...I see it as being able to overcome certain challenges that you may be facing but you always need something to help you to be resilient. As a child of God, you need grace in all things, in general life...like you would need grace to do well, to pass an exam, to get a job like in life you will get to a point where like your human ability is not enough to succeed in what you're trying to do so that's where like grace comes in”. (Participant 3)

“For me like resilience means having trust no matter what because in Islam we believe that everything has been written...what's going to happen to us...what decisions we are going to be going to make...all in written down, so it's just trust the plan and trust your instincts...you know just trust God's plan to be honest”. (Participant 5)

## Enabling Survival

In all focus groups, students spoke about different adversities, yet each rendered their religiosity/spirituality crucial to understand all events as part of a larger and divine plan. As such, negative events were viewed as challenges and as significant opportunities for both spiritual and personal growth. Thus, those who adhered to these beliefs responded to their university challenges in a way that reflected high resiliency.

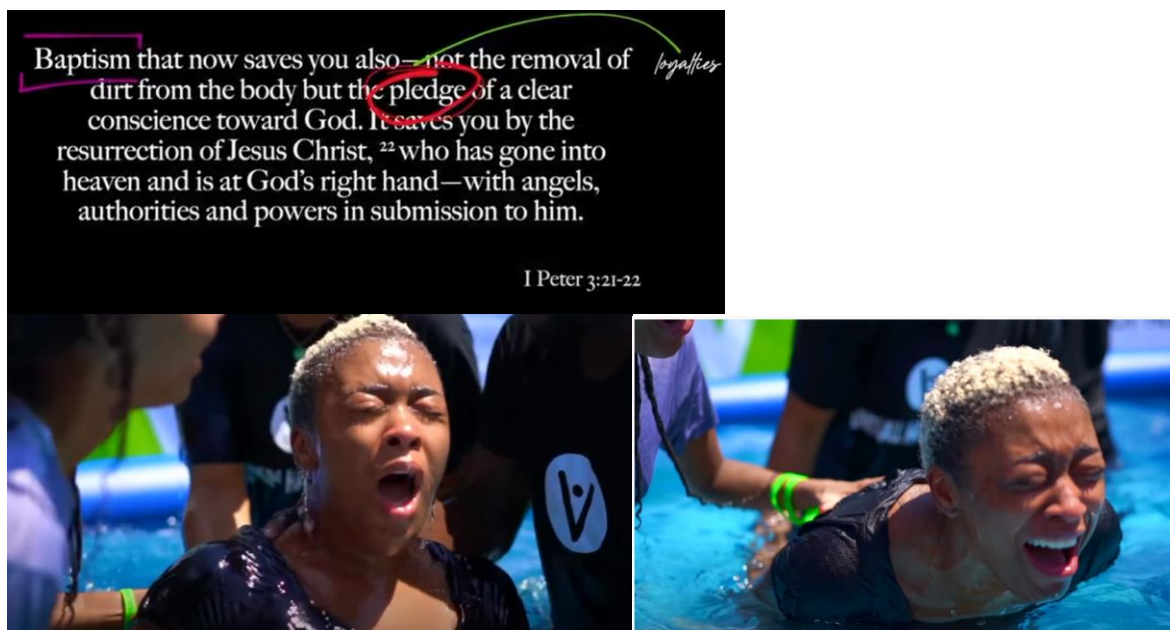
### Hope

Central to the dialogues about how they respond to challenges in their university lives, many participants suggested that their religiosity/spirituality gave them hope and permitted them to develop alternative concepts of possibilities in their lives. Participant 1 for example, pointed to the role that religiosity/spirituality played for her in confronting limitations that she faced as a Black woman, whilst being a mother and a full-time student.

**"I remember several time...um...I just broke down and cried because I couldn't find the strength but each time I somehow got hope, I just placed my hope in God knowing and trusting that things are going to get better. I knew that many in my position were dropping out, that is the real fact, but I told myself and my husband, it doesn't have to be the truth for us".**

According to Participant 1, her intimacy with God disrupted the semantic relationship between fact and truth. That is, she was able to distinguish between socially constructed reality and the divine destiny that God had in store for her, ultimately allowing her to re-envision her future and enable survival despite desperate life circumstances.

The digital story produced by some of the participants, e.g., Participant 9, resonated with this subtheme.



"Baptism as a sacrament and, more specifically, as a movement can be read as a physical representation of the Christian academic journey. In the video, I selected scriptures which speak of baptism as a pledge of loyalty to Christ. Since the water was associated with death, emersion in water represents death. In death, one faces the imprisoned spirits but does not remain in this circumstance but instead is raised by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the academic journey can feel beyond hope as one faces the difficulties of studying away from home. Still, when we trust the God we are loyal to, he saves us from our difficult predicament, effectively bringing us back to life. Though problems plague us, they will not keep us imprisoned but see us rise above them."

## Lifeline

In all focus groups, some students also held that in times of adversity, religiosity/spirituality functioned by highlighting Christ as their lifeline, the only person they could hold onto as a safety rope, support, and assistance in critical times. For example, according to participant 2

“the word of God is life...when I received that letter from student finance, and you know this system when they say no it is no...I just said...hmm...my God in heaven...I stood in prayer; I went to fight”

whilst for participant 9,

“when all hope was lost, I just repeated Hebrews 6:19 to myself. Like, I had no choice but to grab the promised hope from God, with both my hands literally haha and never let it go. Not even for a second. Honestly, when everything was falling apart, holding to God, knowing that the bond I have with him is unbreakable, was the only thing that kept me strong”.

Interestingly, one student went further and emphasised that having a spiritual lifeline not only made them resilient but had a positive impact on their capacity to handle further challenges such as undergoing a Masters programme, despite the possibilities of financial issues re-emerging.

## **Maintaining a positive outlook**

Central in participants’ dialogues about the role of religion/spirituality in meaning-making and wellbeing were discussions about the mechanisms and strategies by which they came to acquire or maintain a positive outlook despite adversities. Many participants suggested that prayers, dreams, meditating on scriptures and listening to Christian music were a few of the modes that offered hope, insight, and sound mind in difficult times.

“Maybe some people imagine or define prayer as long hours with God, but prayer is speaking to the Holy spirit, who is like your best friend. Because most of the time when you are in that low point in life, like where even though you are not alone you feel lonely, He is the only that can understand you, so prayer helped me a lot. Reassuring myself with the word, knowing that he wouldn’t let me go through things that I wouldn’t be able to go through. The word of God saw me through”

(Participant 1)

Students most frequently discussed two methods - affirmations and spiritual surrender.

## Affirmation

Some participants in the focus groups highlighted declarations of faith to Christ, which involved relying on the Lord’s willingness to act on their behalf, enabled them to maintain a positive outlook through the reassurance that the words they spoke had the power to change the challenges they faced (in other words affirmations).

“I just took the name of the person in charge of my situation, whilst I will be walking at university I will be declaring, you, you have to favour me. I would cite his name and I’ll be talking to him and say, you have to favour me and that did really help me”

(Participant 2)

“ I don’t know about other Christians, but I see the Bible as a love letter, like so awesome...when I read it sometimes it gives me hope like...you can actually do well in life....like you can do this...in the Bible it even says that You know, we can do all things through Christ so it was these scriptures that encouraged me and there are times where I’ll be in my room I’m just reading and affirming this to myself and I feel so encouraged like that day that it really it really helps whenever I’m feeling down”.

(Participant 3)

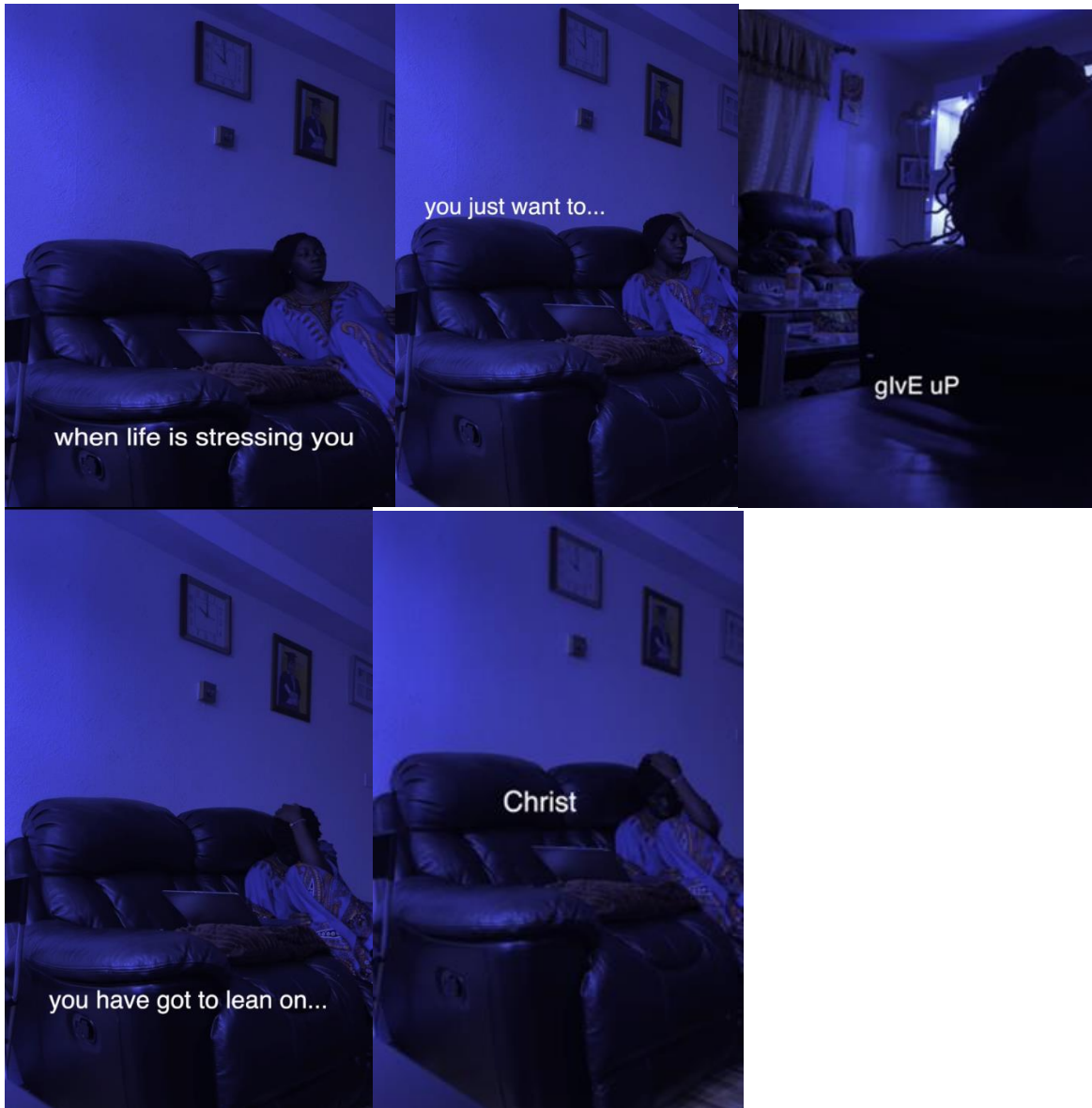
### Spiritual surrender

According to some participants, adversity tended to highlight a tension between one’s desires, that is, acting according to one’s own strength and reality, surrendering all to God. Religiosity/spirituality played a key role in students’ efforts to resolve such tension, and so maintain a positive outlook. For instance, Participant 4 discusses how this could be achieved:

“~~ermm~~ a good cry...yeah just letting it out...yeah me and crying we best friends...like I wept...you know the scripture that says Jesus wept...yeah that was me like 100% coz I feel like as much as much as we pray, like I agree with all of the points that were mentioned earlier like seriously I see them used very evidently, but for me crying was like a release...I think it’s much easier as well cause then it’s like you’ve got it out of your system is still obviously in the back of your mind, but I think physically, it allows your body to just at least reset”.

Thus, “spiritual surrendering” allowed her to confront the limits of her abilities and helped her relinquish the safety that came with perceived personal control, ultimately bringing emotional stability and maintaining positive outlook.

The digital story produced by some of the participants, e.g., Participant 4, resonated with this subtheme.



“I remember in the previous workshops, I talked about me crying as a coping mechanism...as a joke but there was also a truth to that joke. My video was based on leaning on Christ, and I used the different angles to symbolize people not really grasping how I was at my lowest points, hence why the lighting was so dark, and I was alone. Only God could fully understand me. Only with God could I surrender the real me, the broken me”.

## **Protecting psychological integrity**

Participants spoke extensively about painfully confronting the full significance of an adversity and how this left them feeling broken. Religiosity/spirituality provided the strength and protection to maintain their psychological integrity, that is, their individual “wholeness”, a necessary condition for resiliency.

### Anchor

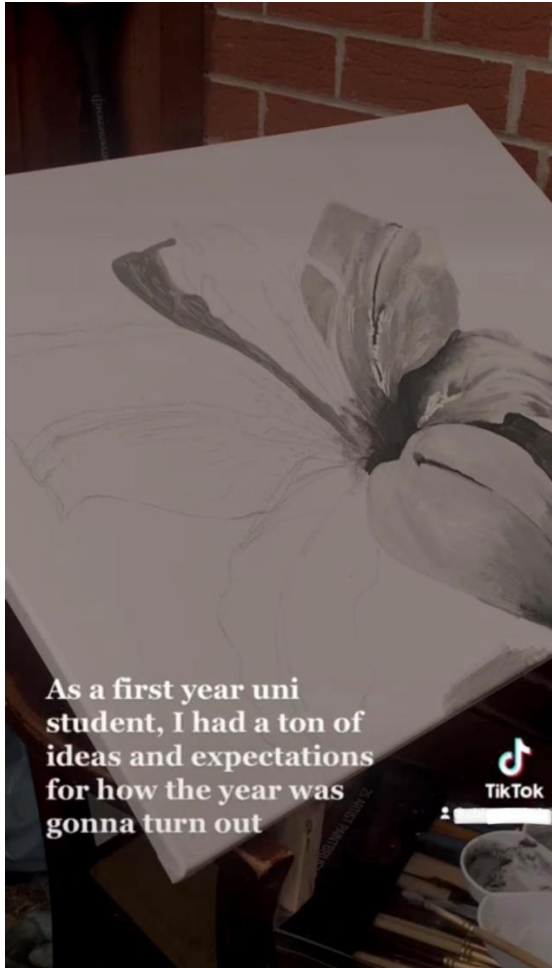
Participants stated that they took comfort in seeing God as their solid foundation. Participant 5, for example, spoke extensively about how lack of relatedness from her flatmates and other individuals at her university affected her overall wellbeing. She reported feeling excluded and distressed during her first year. She began to question her identity, both as a Muslim and as a BAME student. Here, her religiously/spiritually-informed morals became her anchor to navigate between secular and expedient choices and spiritually appropriate choices.

**“I came in and the people who I was sharing a flat with.. they weren't really like my sort of people they were partygoers and like I felt isolated because I don't drink like I don't really feel comfortable around alcohol either, so I felt really isolated. I felt like I didn't have any friends at uni and that made me quite anxious and sad. I had to go back and turn back to my morals like quite a few times I should be like right well this is what I believe in, does this align with what I'm doing? and stuff like that so yeah I think it's just about grounding myself being like okay well this situation is unfortunate, but these are your morals, and this is what God says, and this is who you are... remind myself that yes I am amazing”.**

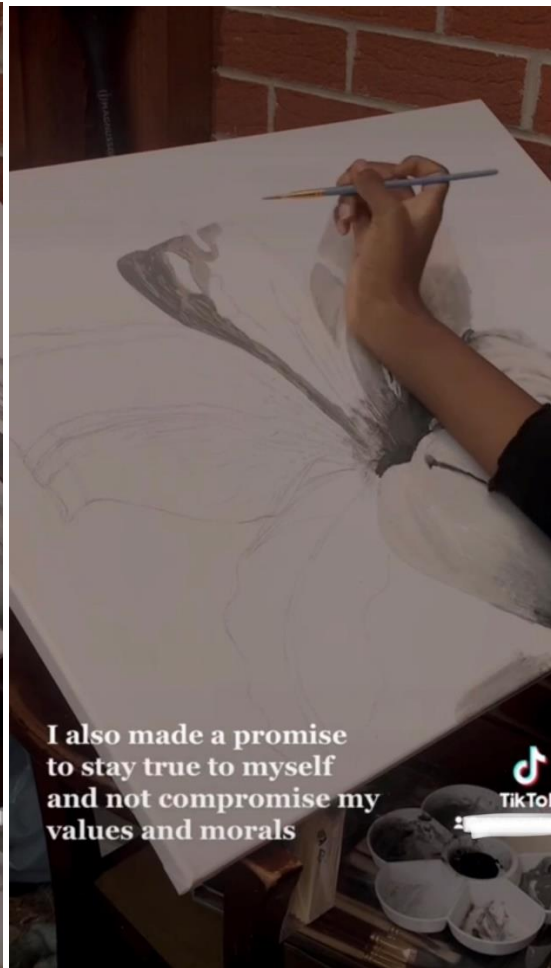
In a similar perspective, Participant 8 spoke about wanting to go through the full university experience of making new friends yet finding herself compromising her morals to fit-in and be liked by others.

**“I didn't wanna be the boring friend that said no to partying and drinking”.**

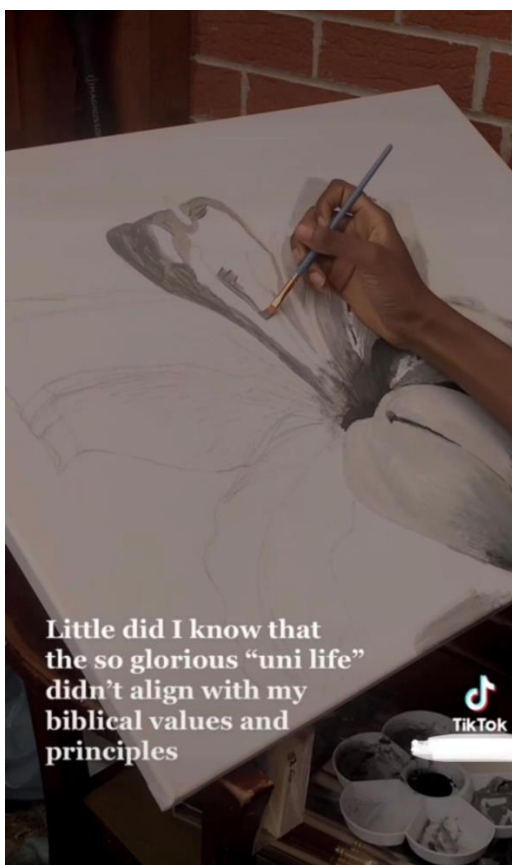
As such she began to have no confidence in herself, and started doubting her worth as a student, a friend, and a Christian. However, anchoring herself back to scriptures reminded her that it was never too late to reinforce her standards. This subtheme resonated with her digital story later on.



As a first year uni student, I had a ton of ideas and expectations for how the year was gonna turn out



I also made a promise to stay true to myself and not compromise my values and morals

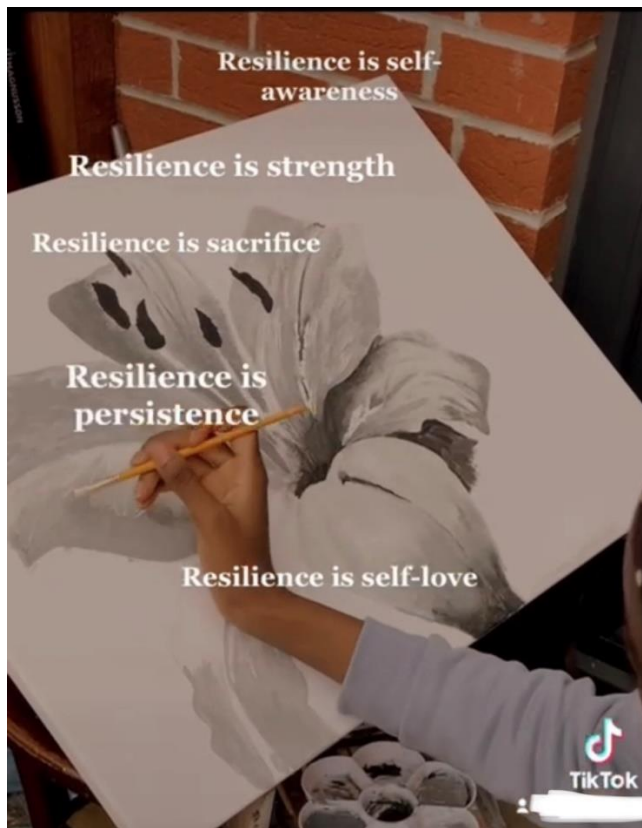


Little did I know that the so glorious "uni life" didn't align with my biblical values and principles



I started a 30 day challenge on the book of Proverbs





### Misunderstood

Whilst discussing about accessing mental health services in the face of challenges, some students recounted both direct and indirect incidents of institutional racism, discrimination and “white privilege”. This often had detrimental impacts on their wellbeing and sense of belonging at university and led to negative attitudes/perceptions in seeking support.

For example, participant 9 reported how she was often ignored or avoided by some of her non-BAME student peers and excluded from groups within and outside of her tutorials. She also spoke about being frequently misunderstood and stereotyped.

“They told me to quit and leave because I was making everyone uncomfortable as I was the only Black girl there...I felt so disgusted by this behaviour...they contacted me for my supervision hours and the lady on the board said that there was something wrong with me...like it appeared to them that I was self-sabotaging...like I was pessimistic on every aspect of my work...they had no clue about why I was doing this, about where I was coming from and that made me angry”.

According to participant 4

“the thing with (\*name of the university) they are still trying to build counsellors or some kind of mental service that will help BAME students. Like to say I have reached out is actually the biggest lie I'm not going to pretend...and I think it's because the uni is still trying to figure out and understand how to deal with race...how to deal with people that are from like different communities...so let alone deal with religion and race together”

Other students, like participant 3 who did seek mental health support at university, reported experiencing racialised stereotypes and being constantly misunderstood, as the services were focussed largely on a white, western paradigm, thus her experiences as a BAME student were treated as a

homogenous experience. Thus, religiosity/spirituality was the only factor that could provide support in order to maintain psychological integrity.

**“I requested for support in my second year with one of the mental health services. I started to open up and it was terrible. The appointments were inconsistent, and they didn’t know what kind of advice to give me, rather it seems that I had to constantly explain and educate them about Brown culture and my experiences also as a Muslim girl...so that is why I had to turn to my religion and religion helped me instead. There is a verse in the Quran about depression and anxiety...I just came back to that quite a few times...I reached for help, but it wasn’t working so I had to go back to my faith and re-evaluate everything...I used my religion to get myself out of that depressive state”.**

### **Providing agape**

BAME students’ experiences of multiple marginalisation in the form of racism and discrimination meant that finding other religious/spiritual individuals and being able to bond with them offered a powerful sense of support and played a key role in their resilience, this can be referred to as Agape. For example, participant 6 stated:

**“what you don’t realise is that being in a community with people who share similar values to yours or similar relationship with God...it really helps...it really empowers you. Like God will always send people in your way and community is one way that you can be in that presence”.**

Participant 7 articulated a similar perspective:

**“Religion is perceived increasingly by many people as irrelevant or toxic even. Like I’ve heard people tell me that Christians are toxic, not knowing that I’m a Christian..umm yeah it’s peak... so it is difficult to be myself because already they are judging you for being Black, let alone being religious too. So, I thank God that I managed to find a community and some friends who had the same Christian mindset...like fellowshiping with others definitely helped my wellbeing journey and helped be more resilient, 100”.**

Participant 2 suggested an even deeper level of this agape, whereby community provided a spiritual solidarity, by hearing of or witnessing God at work in the lives of others in the community and seeing Him support them through a similar adversity to hers.

**“There is this sister in my church who came to testify that her children’s’ child benefits wouldn’t start, she stood in prayer against the system and became victorious” (Participant 2).**

This bonding with other Christians through shared adversities, provided her with a sense of support. That is, hearing others’ stories became the catalyst for her to remain resilient in her adversities.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our study aimed to explore the role of religion/spirituality in the wellbeing of BAME students, particularly focusing on resilience. The findings support evidence from previous literature in the field of religion/spirituality and resilience (Pargament, 2010; Pargament et al., 2013), as well as respond to the specific research questions.

Answering our first research question, we found that contrary to traditional perspectives that individuals use religion/spirituality to shield themselves from the realities of their circumstances (Marx, 1990), students suggested that religion/spirituality gave them hope and allowed them to break the semantic relationship between fact and truth. As such, they were able to distinguish between socially constructed realities and the divine destinies that their God had in store for them, ultimately enabling resilience. Students responded to their university challenges by also viewing God as a

lifeline, thus, founding themselves upon a bond that was unbreakable with God, kept them strong throughout adversities and had positive impacts in their capacity to handle further challenges.

To answer our second research question, we found that whilst students spoke about different adversities, there was a strong overlap between different religions. That is, each student rendered their religiosity/spirituality crucial and understood all events as part of a larger and divine plan. Consequently, negative events were viewed as challenges and as significant opportunities for both spiritual and personal growth, thus allowing them to maintain high resiliency.

Central to our third research question was the notion of Agape. Some participants in the study suggested that their relationships with other religious/spiritual BAME students helped them to navigate through adversities, especially after being marginalised in the form of discrimination and racism. Students also relied on other religiously/spiritually focussed coping mechanisms such as prayer, affirmation, dreams, meditating on scriptures, listening to Christian music and relinquish their emotions to God, and these allowed them to maintain their emotional stability, and by extension, their resilience.

Answering our last research questions, some students recounted both direct and indirect incidents of institutional racism, discrimination and “white privilege”. This often had detrimental impacts on their wellbeing and sense of belonging at university and led to negative attitudes/perceptions in seeking support. Others felt that even after seeking support, they had to internalise their issues later on because they were often misunderstood and feared that these may be used to highlight academic incapability. Religious students described experiences of being “othered” by a campus culture that did not challenge derogatory remarks towards them. This finding suggests that for BAME students, a large aspect of their wellbeing may be deeply rooted in institutional factors (Stoll et al., 2022), and as such our findings urge universities to provide relevant training on equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring that staff internalise the importance of challenging racism and discrimination (Bunce et al., 2021). Our findings should also inspire researchers and practitioners to explore more fully the ways in which BAME students use religion/spirituality to challenge particular adversities in the world they live in (Mattis, 2002). Whilst we recognise that professional and institutional procedures cannot be universally altered to accommodate one’s personal needs, practitioners should attempt to work within or collaboratively with the religious/spiritual interpretative ideologies of BAME individuals.

A strength of the current study is its credibility. The process of analysing audio-recordings from focus groups introduces subjectivity as those who code the data may inevitably bring their identities/biases on their evaluation and interpretation of themes (Mattis, 2002). However, by keeping a reflective journal, the student researcher was able to identify and discuss any feelings emerged during the workshops, thus ensuring these did not confound the credibility of the data.

Nonetheless, one limitation is that despite measures taken to recruit a religiously/spiritually diverse sample, most participants were Christians, thus our data would have been enriched and aspects of the themes that emerged may have been altered, if more diverse perspectives were included. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the potential impact of social desirability in qualitative research. Some participants may have placed their attention on the importance of religion/spirituality in their resilience whilst being reluctant to discuss times where they did not rely on religion/spirituality and/or times where the latter had a negative impact in their lives (Mattis, 2002). These are both critical issues that need careful consideration in future research.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alase, A. (2017). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A Guide to a Good Qualitative Research Approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 9. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>
- Arday, J. (2018). Understanding mental health: What are the issues for black and ethnic minority students at University? *Social Sciences*, 7(10). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7100196>
- Beltman, S., Mansfield, C., & Price, A. (2011). Thriving not just surviving: A review of research on teacher resilience. *Educational research review*, 6(3), 185-207
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive after Extremely Aversive Events? In *American Psychologist* (Vol. 59, Issue 1, pp. 20–28). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.20>
- Bunce, L., King, N., Saran, S., & Talib, N. (2021). Experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) students in higher education: applying self-determination theory to understand the BME attainment gap. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(3), 534–547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1643305>
- Cotton, D. R. E., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, 16(1), 62–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629>
- Cummings, S. (2018). *Attainment and identity in the face of dual oppression: Exploring the educational experiences of British females of Caribbean heritage*. May. <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/21340/>
- EMA Satisfaction Survey (2008) @ NUS Connect. (n.d.). [www.nusconnect.org.uk](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk). Retrieved September 20, 2022, from <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/ema-satisfaction-survey-2008>
- Ewing, L., Hamza, C. A., & Willoughby, T. (2019). Stressful Experiences, Emotion Dysregulation, and Nonsuicidal Self-Injury among University Students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(7), 1379–1389. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01025-y>
- Galek, K., Flannelly, K. J., Ellison, C. G., Sifton, N. R., & Jankowski, K. R. (2015). Religion, meaning and purpose, and mental health. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7(1), 1.
- Gubrium, A. (2009). Digital Storytelling: An Emergent Method for Health Promotion Research and Practice. *Health Promotion Practice*, 10(2), 186–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839909332600>
- Gunnestad, B. A. A. (2006). Resilience in a cross-cultural perspective: How resilience is generated in different cultures. In *Journal of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 1404–1634). Immigrant-institutet. <https://open.dmmh.no/dmmh-xmlui/handle/11250/2564077>
- Kotera, Y., Ting, S. H., & Neary, S. (2021). Mental health of Malaysian university students: UK comparison, and relationship between negative mental health attitudes, self-compassion, and resilience. *Higher Education*, 81(2), 403–419. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00547-w>
- Mantovani, N., Pizzolati, M., & Edge, D. (2017). Exploring the relationship between stigma and help-seeking for mental illness in African-descended faith communities in the UK. *Health Expectations*, 20(3), 373–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12464>
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1990). Religion, the opium of the people. *The world treasury of modern religious thought*, 79-91.
- Mattis, J. S. (2002). Religion and spirituality in the meaning-making and coping experiences of

African American women: A qualitative analysis. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26(4), 309–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-6402.t01-2-00070>

Pargament, K. I. (2011). Religion and coping: The current state of knowledge.

Pargament, K. I., Falb, M. D., Ano, G. G., & Wachholtz, A. B. (2013). The religious dimension of coping: Advances in theory, research, and practice.

Reyes, A. T., Andrusyszyn, M. A., Iwasiw, C., Forchuk, C., & Babenko-Mould, Y. (2015). Resilience in nursing education: An integrative review. In *Journal of Nursing Education* (Vol. 54, Issue 8, pp. 438–444). Slack Incorporated. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20150717-03>

Sagone, E., & Caroli, M. E. De. (2014). Relationships between Psychological Well-being and Resilience in Middle and Late Adolescents. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 141, 881–887. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.05.154>

Stoll, N., Yalipende, Y., Byrom, N. C., Hatch, S. L., & Lempp, H. (2022). Mental health and mental well-being of Black students at UK universities: a review and thematic synthesis. In *BMJ open* (Vol. 12, Issue 2, p. e050720). British Medical Journal Publishing Group. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-050720>

Tyrrell, M., Cygan, K., Newell, S., & Byrom, N. C. (2021). University student well-being in the United Kingdom: a scoping review of its conceptualisation and measurement. *Journal of Mental Health*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2021.1875419>

## APPENDIX A

### Questions

---

1. What do you want to achieve in this workshop?
  2. What do you need to feel comfortable and productive in this workshop?
  3. What will make this process successful for you?
-

## APPENDIX B

### Questions

---

1. What are the main aspects related to how religion helps you in university that you want to put in your video?
  2. How do you think your resilience has been impacted by your religion?
  3. How are you going to develop your digital story? Over one main experience or showing how it has changed over time
-