

Investigation of the Relationship between Spiritual  
Wellbeing and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination among  
Emerging Adults at College of Business and Economics,  
Addis Ababa University

By: Theodros Asrat

Supervisor: Professor Habtamu Wondimu

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Psychology,  
Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Master of Arts Degree in Social Psychology**

**Addis Ababa University  
College of Education and Behavioral Studies  
School of Psychology**

October 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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# Declaration

- i. I, *Theodros Asrat*, the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled: *Investigation of the Relationship Between Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Among Emerging Adults of Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics* is my original work. I have undertaken the research work independently with the guidance and support of *Professor Habtamu Wondimu*. This study has not been submitted for any degree or diploma program in this or any other institution and all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Theodros Asrat

Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This is to certify that the thesis entitled: *Investigation of the Relationship Between Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Among Emerging Adults of Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics* submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Degree in social psychology from the School of Psychology Addis Ababa University, and is a record of original research carried out by Theodros Asrat ID No GSR/4208/12 under my supervision, and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree or diploma. The assistance and help received during this investigation have been duly acknowledged. Therefore, I recommend it be accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirements.

Professor Habtamu Wondimu

Name of Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Certificate of Approval

- i. This is to certify that the thesis prepared by *Theodros Asrat*, entitled *Investigation of the Relationship Between Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Among Emerging Adults of Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics* submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Degree in Social Psychology from the School of Psychology, Addis Ababa University, complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards concerning originality and quality.

Signature of Board of Examiners:

Advisor	Signature	Date
Internal Examiner	Signature	Date
External Examiner	Signature	Date
Chair Person	Signature	Date

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## **Dedication**

I lovingly dedicate this thesis to my beloved sister, Yizeshiwal Asrat (Konjit). She was like a second mother to me. Though she now watches over me from heaven, her love, support, and guidance continue to inspire me every day.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AAU</b>	<b>Addis Ababa University</b>
<b>AD</b>	Acceptance of Diversity
<b>CBE</b>	College of Business and Economics
<b>CM</b>	Coping Mechanisms
<b>DV</b>	Dependent Variable
<b>EA</b>	Emerging Adults
<b>EED</b>	Experiences of Ethnic Discrimination
<b>EQ</b>	Existential Questions
<b>EHP</b>	Erosion of Hope and Purpose
<b>IDV</b>	Independent Variable
<b>LB</b>	Language Barriers
<b>NI</b>	Narrow Interactions
<b>NIP</b>	Negative Impact on Purpose
<b>NOI</b>	No Influence
<b>PIP</b>	Positive Interactions and Purpose
<b>PED</b>	Perceived Ethnic Discrimination
<b>RR</b>	Religious Reflection
<b>SME</b>	Subject matter experts
<b>SIT</b>	Social Identity Theory
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>SWB</b>	Spiritual Well-being
<b>TSWB</b>	Total Spiritual Well-Being
<b>TPED</b>	Total Perceived Ethnic Discrimination
<b>UO</b>	Unequal Opportunities

## Abstract

*This cross-sectional study investigated the relationship between Spiritual Well-being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) among emerging adults of Addis Ababa University, College of Business, and Economics (CBE), at two-time points: in 2021 and 2024. The study primarily employed a quantitative method supported by qualitative. A stratified random sampling procedure was used to select 282 (M=189, F=93) participants in 2021, and 280 (M 190=, F=90) in 2024. The Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) scales along with open-ended questions were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive, inferential statistics and content analysis procedures. The findings revealed a moderate, negative correlation between SWB and PED at both time points (2021:  $r_s = -0.469$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; 2024:  $r_s = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It suggests that higher levels of SWB were associated with lower levels of PED. For SWB, a statistically significant difference was observed in 2024 based on the living area before university enrollment ( $p = 0.041$ ). Although differences among language-speaking groups approached significance ( $p = 0.050$ ), pairwise comparisons revealed no significant group variations. For PED, significant differences were observed in 2024 across gender ( $p = 0.007$ ), living area before university enrollment ( $p < 0.001$ ), and language/mother tongue ( $p = 0.007$ ). However, pairwise comparisons did not reveal meaningful variations among specific groups. The study revealed that the majority of the participants often used spiritual coping mechanisms to buffer the negative effects of ethnic discrimination. In contrast, some expressed existential concerns, eroded hope; and questioned meaning and purpose in life. The findings also exhibited the inverse relationship between SWB and PED, emphasizing spirituality serving as a protective shield against the adverse effects of ethnic discrimination.*

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In this contemporary psychology era, the concept of ‘Emerging adulthood’ (EA) is frequently seen in numerous research findings; however, its reference differs among nations and their culture (Arnett, 2000; Hall et al., 2015). Variations in socioeconomic status and life circumstances also determine the extent to which a given young person may experience emerging adulthood, even within an affluent country (Côté, 2014).

According to Arnett (2014), it is not simply an “extended adolescence,” because it is much different from adolescence. EA is renowned for its abundant freedom and lack of hierarchy and control; it encourages deep autonomous self-exploration. However, it is not fully “young adulthood,” since EA is a way that an early stage of adulthood has been reached. In contrast, most young people in their twenties have not made the transitions historically associated with adult status—especially marriage and parenthood. During this stage of life, many of them feel they have not yet reached adulthood (Reifman et al., 2007). Almost all agree that EA is full of self-exploration and instability in various ways. It is a new and historically extraordinary period of the life course. It is characterized as a long journey to adulthood. Accordingly, self-evaluation and testimony are common activities of emerging adults (Negru, 2012).

Arnett et al. (2014) have uncovered when young people – average age 18 – 30 max. – explore possibilities for their lives in a variety of areas. As a rite of passage, exploring possibilities include love, work, balanced intimacy, acceptance, purpose, and meaning (Côté, 2014; Reifman et al.,

2007). Emerging adults clarify their identities in and outward; they learn more about who they are and what they want from life (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013).

As a fortune, Emerging adulthood offers the best opportunity – life in university- for such a complex self-exploration (Negru, 2012). Emerging adults have become more independent of their parents than they were as adolescents and most of them have left home to continue their education. Still, they have not yet entered the unchanging, continuing commitments typical of adult life (Schwartz et al., 2005). During this interval of years, they are neither obligated to their parents nor devoted to a web of adult roles. They have an exceptional opportunity to anticipate different ways of living and options for their overall life goal (Taylor et al., 2013). To summarize, as most scholars have agreed, this exploration is a time-consuming process. Gradual, incremental, and flexible changes have been influencing EA (Atal, 2005; Baggio et al., 2017; Negru, 2012).

During this gradual life journey (emerging adulthood period), there is a significant and profound attitude and perspective shift. Thus, young people experience heightened self-exploration concerning their beliefs and values, including those regarding religiosity and spirituality (McNamara Barry et al., 2010). Some studies have outlined that most don't like to follow religious philosophy though they have shown strong spirituality (Henin & Berman, 2016). Moreover, university students [as emerging adults] have used spirituality as a coping mechanism. Spirituality has served them to adjust themselves to their daily routines and new experiences (Shek, 2012; Smith et al., 2013).

On the other hand, spirituality is a fundamental human development to narrate the meaning of life (Hall et al., 2015). As the same token, research findings prove that emerging adults use spirituality as a meaning-searching engine. All in all, since emerging adulthood represents a critical identity

development time, spiritual development takes the lion's share of their means of self-exploration (Chirico, 2016; Smith et al., 2013).

In addition to other identity development dimensions, during college time, due to the new psychosocial environment, young people experience social change (Rosenfeld, 2006; Tribble, 2015). Since university students live in a diverse society, they need to deal with various types and forms of identity and discrimination (Allen et al., 2019; Toker Gökçe, 2013). As a main contributor to the 'major river', they follow racial and ethnic identity. One way or another, they are striving to get meaning from their diversified interpersonal interaction. As a result, they push themselves to rethink their identity related to their ethnic background. This fundamental developing period consists of constant instability in identification with one's ethnic and/or racial identity (Schwartz et al., 2005; Unger et al., 2016). Contrary to this, because of discrimination and racism, there are divergences in racial and ethnic experiences that could lead a person to question one's ethnic identity. Finding the appropriate and correct answer is a process to becoming independent adulthood; otherwise, identity confusion continues (Schwartz et al., 2005). Therefore, the transition period can be interrupted as they experience perceived discrimination against their ethnic background and due to the language, they speak (Allen et al., 2019; Toker Gökçe, 2013; Unger et al., 2016).

As has been discussed, young adults during emerging adulthood particularly those who study in higher education are with the intensified paradox of self-exploration – finding life's meaning in an unlimited world [spiritual well-being] whereas they are living in the limited horizon – ethnicity and perceived discrimination.

Discrimination, particularly ethnic discrimination, has got wider attention from researchers worldwide. As the dominant variable, it is studied in relationship with other aspects of human life, such as discrimination with health, social cohesion, academic achievement, and so on (Brody et al., 2015; Herda, 2016). Besides, the consequences of everyday ethnic discrimination have been investigated. Parallel to this, spirituality and spiritual well-being have been burning issues for the last half a century (Chirico, 2016; Feizi et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2013). The issues include spirituality and personality, spiritual well-being and emotional intelligence, spirituality with health-related issues, and social aspects to mention some of the major areas (Chirico, 2016; Feizi et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2013). Both spirituality and perceived ethnic/racial discrimination have individually been variables for emerging adulthood-based studies. However, spirituality and ethnic and/or racial discrimination have not appeared together so far as a research topic. Therefore, investigating the association between spiritual well-being and ethnic discrimination will have a new and significant value for the field.

In the Ethiopian context, ethnicity and perceived ethnic discrimination have received minimal scholarly attention, despite the significance of these issues in the social fabric of the country. Extensive searches, including through platforms like Google Scholar, manual literature reviews, and consultations with academic networks, reveal a near absence of research on these topics. Similarly, the concept of spiritual well-being has not been sufficiently explored within Ethiopian academia. Crucially, no existing research examines the relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination in Ethiopia. This gap highlights the necessity of this study, which holds substantial relevance for advancing the understanding of social psychological dynamics in Ethiopia and beyond.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Emerging adulthood is extremely significant and crucial next to adolescence (Arnett, 2016; Tribler, 2015). This complex phenomenon comes into existence due to the expansion of higher education. Education extends the classical early adulthood age group that now is called emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2016; Tribler, 2015). Young people must be patient enough to join the web of adulthood. Thus, many people are in a continuous and sophisticated transition process to become fully independent (Negru, 2012).

To illustrate, the number of higher education institutions has increased dramatically, and it is believed that many emerging adults are in universities. Over and above, in countries like Ethiopia, this age group is huge in terms of number. As an expected fact, the increase in the number of universities in Ethiopia extends the period in which adulthood fully begins; thus, the short path between adolescence and adulthood becomes an extreme challenge for most. Length of years in the university and establishing a new chapter of their life after graduation extend their time to be fully independent in their life (Tribler, 2015).

As a universal fact, universities have provided a diversified population. Notably, students are observed while dealing with new social forms and norms that are quite dissimilar from their hometown/city. Under this circumstance, experiencing various types and forms of discrimination is like a normal process while adjusting to their new living environment (Arnett, 2016; Henin & Berman, 2016b; Rosenfeld, 2006). As a comparison, gender, and physical-oriented discrimination have less effect than ethnic discrimination (Unger et al., 2016). Thus, as Unger et al. (2016) discuss it, emerging adults with sophisticated social interaction in universities usually experience

perceived discrimination. Consequently, emerging adults have restricted their social interaction; and it may result in social or/and self-isolation. This social and self-isolation limits young people's personal growth, psychosocial development, career choice, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, etc. (Allen et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2013). There is a continuous argument about whether ethnic prejudice and discrimination end in ethnic conflict. Thereupon, the problem never remains with individuals; it gradually becomes everyone's concern in each country (Green & Seher, 2003).

As an illustration, due to ethnic conflicts in Ethiopian universities, parents [even students themselves] are not confident enough to send their children to higher education – recently observed facts. Perceived ethnic discrimination is manifested by different forms of violence. For this reason, the level of the student's perceived ethnic discrimination is worth to be investigated to deal with accordingly.

Perceived ethnic discrimination can be affected by various factors or aspects of life. Political narrations and social unrest are major factors that negatively affect emerging adults' perception of ethnic background. Religious beliefs, urbanization, and socioeconomic status have had some relationships to ethnic discrimination from each endpoint – negatively and positively.

While emerging adults in the self-exploration stage, even if they believe religious beliefs are significant, religiosity declines (McNamara Barry et al., 2010). However, striving for the meaning of life dramatically increases during the transition period (Shek, 2012). Parallel to this, spirituality is the most influential trait of emerging adults. Spiritual well-being governs emerging adulthood as they constantly attempt to integrate spirituality into their life. Their life principles, attitudes, feelings, stress, and surroundings are viewed from a spiritual standpoint. Consequently, their

spiritual well-being determines their intra-personal and inter-personal relationship and their level of interaction with the community (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Crocetti et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2015).

While various studies have demonstrated that spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination are significant developmental characteristics during emerging adulthood (Allen et al., 2019; Shek, 2012; Smith et al., 2013b; Toker Gökçe, 2013), the nature of the relationship between these two constructs remains underexplored. Despite their relevance to social and psychological development, limited empirical research investigates how spiritual well-being interacts with perceived ethnic discrimination. This gap is particularly evident in the Ethiopian context, where such relationships have not been studied comprehensively. To address this, the present thesis conducted two cross-sectional studies at different time points, in 2021 and 2024. It explores the relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination among emerging adults from the College of Business and Economics (CBE) at Addis Ababa University.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions have been answered throughout the research process.

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination among emerging adults?
2. Is there a significant difference in the strength, direction, and relationship between spirituality and perceived ethnic discrimination among second and third-year university students in 2024 compared to a group of students (second and third-year) from 2021?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination across selected demographic variables (gender, age, year stay, living area before university ...) when comparing data collected at the two-time points, 2021 and 2024?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The issue – ethnicity- is quite sensitive in the Ethiopian context though everyone dares to speak about it. Since politics has aggravated for almost half a century, the country has suffered from ethnic-oriented political ideology and racial/ethnic-based social movements. The ideology and/or the movement is from universities – from both students and scholars. However, as far as the researcher has been able to find, no university or scholar has tried to investigate forms of ethnic discrimination. The same is true for spirituality. As the country is claimed for spiritual wisdom and civilization, Ethiopian universities have no courage to uncover whether the fact exists. Thus, this study is significant in bringing new insights into spiritual and ethnic discrimination in the Ethiopian context. The findings of this research will be initial for further investigations concerning spirituality and ethnicity. The comparison analysis of the two groups can bring in-depth insight into the nature of their relationships.

## **1.5 Delimitation of the Study**

Both spiritual well-being and ethnic discrimination have pulled researchers' attention to investigate factors affecting them, their ways of formation, and their consequences. Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to deal with all aspects of each variable. Therefore, as a correlational study, this thesis is limited to only investigating the association between spiritual well-being and perceived discrimination of emerging adults in two time points– [ 2021 and 2014]. In both cases, participants were year-two and year-three students of Addis Ababa University, CBE campus. Besides, through comparison analysis of the two groups, it will uncover whether gender and year of stay have a significant difference in spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination scores.

## 1.6 Operational Definitions

### ✍ **Emerging adulthood:**

EA is defined as periods for exploration, instability, and self-identification and a transition period from adolescence to adulthood and one-third of it passed via higher education. Therefore, university students are in the transition period. Thus, regarding the age group, *emerging adulthood* in this study refers to the age between 18 – 25, as reported by the student.

### ✍ **Spiritual Well-being**

Spiritual Well-being: Spirituality is defined as the exploration of the meaningfulness of life and the relationships an individual has with oneself, others, nature, or a higher power. This includes abstract connections with concepts such as God, Goddess, Creator, Great Spirit, or Universal Mind. Additionally, spirituality encompasses existential beliefs and self-regulation, as quantified through the Spiritual Well-being Scale (Lalajants, 2018). In this study, spirituality and spiritual well-being are used interchangeably because spiritual well-being represents the practical manifestation of spirituality in an individual's life. This interchangeable usage emphasizes the holistic experience of living a spiritually fulfilling life, as well as the measurable outcomes that result from engaging deeply with one's spiritual beliefs and practices.

### ✍ **Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

For this study, perceived discrimination refers to the belief that one has been received/treated unfavourably in any form of discrimination because of one's ethnic background; in the Ethiopian case being Oromo, Amhara, Tgrie ... etc. It also includes discrimination because of language and traditional customs. It refers to both the lifetime discrimination and day-to-day experiences of explicit or/ indirect acts of unfair treatment because of ethnic background.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the study. It focuses on key concepts and prior research findings that inform the exploration of spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination. The review begins by exploring definitions of spirituality and spiritual well-being, emphasizing their significance in the field of social psychology. It then addresses the concept of perceived ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, the chapter examines existing research on the relationship between spirituality and ethnic discrimination, with a particular focus on emerging adulthood as a critical developmental stage. Finally, the chapter presents both theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which serve to contextualize and guide the study's investigation.

### **Section One: Spiritual Well-being**

#### **2.1.1 Definitions and Dimensions**

Defining spirituality remains a complex endeavour; it reflects a myriad of perspectives and interpretations in psychology. At its core, spirituality encompasses a connection with something superior to oneself, the search for meaning, and purpose (de Brito Sena et al., 2021; Pargament & Mahoney, 2023). Scholars have proposed various conceptualizations of spirituality. Various literature highlights its multidimensional nature and implications for human life (Božek et al., 2020; Lysne & Wachholtz, 2011).

One influential perspective conceptualizes spirituality as a holistic integration of spirit, mind, and body (Vieten et al., 2013). According to this view, it involves the cultivation of harmony and balance across the dimensions. It is believed to lead to a feeling of integrity and well-being (Leung

& Pong, 2021). For that paradigm, individuals engage in spiritual practices and experiences to nurture their inner selves and foster personal growth (de Brito Sena et al., 2021) .

Another prominent perspective emphasizes spirituality's transcendent and sacred aspects (Moreira-Almeida & Koenig, 2021). From this viewpoint, spirituality involves seeking a bond with the Almighty (Higher Power), divine presence, or ultimate reality. This search for wholeness often involves religious practices, rituals, and beliefs. It can also manifest in non-religious settings through experiences of awe, wonder, and admiration for the natural world (Harris et al., 2018).

Moreira-Almeida and Koenig (2021) suggest that spirituality comprehends existential inquiries and the pursuit of ultimate truths about the nature of existence. Individuals participate in spiritual journeys to grasp intense mysteries. These mysteries include the meaning of life, the nature of suffering, and the existence of a higher purpose (Bernard et al., 2017). The process echoes an essential aspect of human experience which shapes individuals' sense of identity, purpose, and interconnectedness with the universe (Zsolnai & Flanagan, 2019).

The other endpoint clears the overlap between spirituality and religion. Though they look alike, it is essential to recognize their distinctiveness as psychological constructs (Schnell, 2012). While religion typically involves adherence to organized belief systems and practices, spirituality surpasses institutional boundaries and comprehends a broader spectrum of beliefs and experiences. Therefore, individuals can be spiritual without affiliating with formal religious institutions. Contrary to this, they can engage in religious practices without experiencing a deep spiritual connection (Morgan Consoli et al., 2018; Schnell, 2012).

Furthermore, research proposes that spirituality can serve as a source of resilience and coping against hardship (Emmons, 2000; Pargament, 1999). Spiritually motivated individuals may draw

upon their convictions, principles and rituals to find meaning, hope, and comfort during challenging times (Vieten et al., 2013). This capacity for spiritual resilience promotes psychological well-being and nurtures a sense of purpose in life (Prieto-Ursúa & Jódar, 2020).

In summary, spirituality represents a multi-layered and profound personal aspect of human experience; it incorporates the search for connection, meaning, and transcendence. Whether complete religious traditions, secular practices, or existential inquiry, individuals engage in spiritual exploration to navigate the complexities of reality to cultivate a sense of purpose and fulfilment (Božek et al., 2020; de Brito Sena et al., 2021; Kay, 2021; Marselle et al., 2019)

### **2.1.2 Meaning-Making Processes**

Spirituality is linked to meaning-making processes; wherein people improve their ultimate life purpose, coherence, and significance from their beliefs and experiences. Through spirituality, individuals construct narratives that glue their lives with meaning. It guides their understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them (Paloutzian & Park, 2021). These meaning-making processes are central to coping with life's challenges. Besides, spirituality offers people a sense of purpose to help them explore meaning in hardship; it cultivates resilience in the face of hardship (Ko et al., 2017). Likewise, spirituality empowers individuals to transcend their circumstances by fostering an enhanced awareness of the self and the universe. Surprisingly, as most papers show, it can even create meaning out of suffering. This sense of meaning offers a source of strength and hope; it enables individuals to persevere in facing discrimination and injustice (Hinkel et al., 2021; Seitz & Angelb, 2015; Uwland-Sikkema et al., 2018).

All interpretations considered, spirituality includes miscellaneous dimensions that contribute to individuals' sense of meaning, purpose, and connection. Religious and non-religious dimensions

offer diverse trails for individuals to explore their spirituality and investigate fulfilment in their lives. Transcendence and connection foster feelings of unity and harmony with the universe. Along the same lines, spirituality promotes empathy, compassion, and solidarity among individuals. By the same token, meaning-making processes empower individuals to find purpose wherein they navigate life's challenges with resilience and hope. Eventually most have agreed that spirituality often results in a meaning-making process. In consequence, spirituality can be seen as an influential meaning-making process.

### **2.1.3 Relationship Between Spirituality and Religion**

Spirituality and religion are often interconnected concepts, but both carry distinct meanings and implications. While religion typically refers to organized systems of beliefs, practices, and rituals centred around a higher power, spirituality comprehends a broader sense of connection to something greater than oneself (Xu, 2016). Religion often involves faithfulness to specific doctrines, moral codes, and institutional structures, whereas spirituality emphasizes personal experiences, inner growth, and existential exploration (Pargament, 1999; Pargament & Mahoney, 2023; Xu, 2016).

Despite these differences, spirituality and religion are not mutually exclusive and often intersect in individuals' lives. Many people draw upon religious traditions and teachings to inform their spiritual values and rituals to gain insight (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Conversely, some individuals are spiritual but not religious since they are seeking transcendence and purpose outside of traditional religious frameworks (Schnell, 2012).

Summarizing the interpretations, research suggests that both spirituality and religion can contribute to individuals' well-being and sense of meaning in life though it could be through

different pathways (Zarzycka & Puchalska-Wasył, 2020). Religious involvement has been linked to positive outcomes such as greater social support, lower levels of stress, and increased life satisfaction. At the same time, spirituality is connected with a feeling of purpose, inner harmony, and personal development (Mahoney & Shafranske, 2012). However, in the higher order of thoughts, most agree that spiritual well-being has been the basement where meaning is built. As it is believed that spirit is the origin of life, some fundamental questions like ‘Who am I?’, ‘Where do I come from?’ and ‘Where do I go?’ can be answered in a spiritual journey with or without religious ceremonies and performs (Yonker et al., 2012).

#### **2.1.4 Spiritual Well-Being During Transition Period**

The journey into adulthood is a crucial time marked by a deep search for purpose and significance. During this period, spirituality becomes a central theme that incorporates the exploration of life's big questions and the development of personal beliefs and principles (Arnett, 2007). While some people focus on spiritual contemplation and investigate deeper into their inner selves, others navigate a complex relationship between spirituality and organized religion (Barry et al., 2020). For many, this phase represents a move away from formal religious practices towards a more individualized and experimental approach to spirituality which is characterized by a link to a superpower or divine presence (Nadal et al., 2018). However, it's important to note that even when questioning the existence of a traditional deity, individuals often maintain a sense of spiritual alignment with the natural world and the universe. (McNamara Barry et al., 2010). Consequently, the journey into adulthood is a dynamic exploration of spirituality that incorporates a variety of perspectives and interpretations of the divine.

As Henin and Berman (2016) discussed well, perspectives are factors that affect young adults' spiritual journey. Accordingly, the transition to young adulthood is marked by various forms of instability, including emotional, social, and environmental challenges. External factors such as family dynamics, societal expectations, and economic pressures can contribute to feelings of uncertainty and instability among young adults (Barry et al., 2020; Nadal et al., 2018). Additionally, internal factors such as identity exploration, existential questioning, and personal crises can further aggravate feelings of instability during this transitional period (Arnett, 2007).

On the flip side, when continuing the exploration, spirituality serves as a coping mechanism for many young adults. It provides a source of strength, resilience, and meaning in the face of misfortune (Fenzel & Richardson, 2022). As the same token, most research reveals that spiritual beliefs and practices can help individuals during instability by nurturing a sense of connection to something greater than themselves (Büssing, 2017; Hardy et al., 2019; Koenig et al., 2015). Moreover, during the transition period, spiritual well-being has been associated with greater psychological resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and a sense of purpose in life (Fenzel & Richardson, 2022; Raj & Padmakumari, 2023).

As discussed in detail, spirituality plays a pivotal role in the formation of identity, particularly during the developmental stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2007). When individuals deal with inquiries of meaning, purpose, and belonging, spirituality serves as a magnifying glass for identity exploration and self-discovery (Paloutzian & Park, 2021). On the flip side, cultural and social factors intersect with personal beliefs and values to shape individuals' spiritual identities, influencing how they perceive themselves and their place in the world (Koenig et al., 2015; Xu, 2016).

### **2.1.5 Spirituality in Gender**

Gender differences in spiritual well-being have been widely studied by scholars. It has been suggested that women tend to be more spiritual than men, but this does not necessarily translate to higher levels of religiosity. Rather, differences in how individuals experience their spirituality may exist between genders (Singh & Bahadur, 2021). To illustrate, women often prioritize introspection and personal growth in their spirituality, while men tend to focus on communal connections and social bonds. However, it's important to note that these trends are not absolute and individual variations exist within each gender category. Differently, most findings confirm that women exhibit more spirituality than men. Nevertheless, the difference needs more investigation to identify areas where the distinction lies (Hammermeister et al., 2005; Singh & Bahadur, 2021).

Of equal importance, despite these observations, the exact nature and characteristics of gender differences in spirituality are not yet fully understood. While studies using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) have identified significant gender differences in religiosity, the differences in spirituality are less clear (Paloutzian et al., 2020). In particular, the relationship between gender and the perception of the Creator or the Almighty remains unclear, particularly in societies where religiosity is blended with spirituality. For this reason, it is crucial to distinguish these concepts and clarify gender-specific patterns of spiritual engagement and belief systems (Hammermeister et al., 2005). Ultimately, understanding gender differences in spirituality is key to promoting inclusive spiritual practices and improving individual well-being, both at the community and university levels (Hammermeister et al., 2005; Mattis, 2014; Singh & Bahadur, 2021).

### **2.1.6 Cultural Influences on Spirituality**

Cultural and social contexts are crucial in shaping individuals' spiritual principles and practices. Cultural norms, values, and traditions provide a framework through which individuals interpret and engage with spiritual concepts (Zozulak, 2021). As a result, the process can influence their worldview and sense of identity. Contrary to this, spirituality via religious rituals can also shape one's culture (Jensen, 2021). Therefore, understanding the cultural influences on spirituality and vice versa is vital (Platovnjak, 2017).

In summation, most findings conclude that culture significantly shapes individuals' spiritual beliefs and practices, and vice versa. Each variable can influence each other (Joseph et al., 2006). For instance, collectivist cultures often intertwine spirituality with communal values and social cohesion, emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness and harmony with others and the environment (Heinke & Louis, 2009; Marselle et al., 2019). On the other hand, individualistic cultures may prioritize personal autonomy and self-expression in spiritual exploration. Conversely, spirituality results in promoting collective and individual lifestyles (Geaquinto & Fry, 2023; Platovnjak, 2017; Saroglou & Cohen, 2013).

### **2.1.7 Spirituality During War and Political Unrest**

As most agreed, spirituality plays a crucial role in young adults' lives which is a period marked by exposure to societal and political disturbances (Parker et al., 2023). In countries or regions affected by war or political unrest, young adults may struggle with existential queries related to suffering, justice, and the connotation of life (Garbarino et al., 1991; Williams, 2007). Accordingly, wherever there is searching, spiritual beliefs and practices serve as a coping mechanism during times of crisis, providing individuals with a sense of relief, hope, and resilience (Dill, 2017; Xu, 2016).

As has often been noted, engaging in prayer, meditation, or religious rites often creates a relationship with a transcendent power and instills comfort in the face of uncertainty and harsh conditions (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Nonetheless, the experience of war and political unrest can also challenge individuals' faith and spiritual beliefs. It further results in leading to existential doubt, moral questioning, and spiritual struggle (Howard et al., 2023; Stauner et al., 2019).

Moreover, university campuses play a crucial role in shaping young adults' identity and spiritual development and responses to different forms of unrest (McKay et al., 2022). Higher education institutions serve as sites of intellectual inquiry, critical reflection, and social activism, wherein students are exposed to diverse perspectives and worldviews (Huitt & Robbins, 2003; McKay et al., 2022). Universities can provide spaces for dialogue and reflection on the intersection of spirituality social justice, and political activism to empower students to channel their spiritual values. (Dalton et al., 2006). Opposite to the actual expectations, universities can aggravate the social unrest that causes uncertainty in spiritual beliefs.

Arnett (2016) concludes that university campuses often become hubs of dialogue, advocacy, and social justice movements. Within this context, as most agree, spirituality becomes their best life experience to challenge the uncertain world around them (Graça & Brandão, 2024; Hall et al., 2016; Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013).

## **Section Two: Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

### **2.2.1 Definitions and Dimensions**

Perceived ethnic discrimination is a complicated phenomenon with significant implications for individuals' comprehensive health including mental and physical (Brondolo et al., 2005a; Knauss

et al., 2015). It is defined as the subjective experience of unfair action of one's ethnic background or perceived ethnic identity (Wang & Shaheen, 2022). It forces individuals to feel various forms of discrimination in incalculable contexts (Stevens & Thijs, 2018). All findings have similar concepts on PED although it has been studied with different social and mental health variables (Brondolo et al., 2005).

Perceived ethnic discrimination can be seen in three major forms: interpersonal, institutional, and internalized discrimination. Interpersonal discrimination includes explicit behaviours of unfairness, ethnic-based disgraces, offensive remarks, and exclusionary behaviours directed towards individuals from other ethnic groups (Stevens & Thijs, 2018). Institutional discrimination, on the other corner, functions at the level of societal institutions (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2023). At this level, systematic favouritisms and structural inequalities disseminate disparities and create hidden or visible chains to the disadvantage of certain ethnic groups (Ziller & Spörlein, 2020). As a result of the two, internalized discrimination happens when individuals internalize societal stereotypes and biases. It causes feelings of shame, self-doubt, and inferiority (Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Wang & Shaheen, 2022).

A meta-analysis found that ethnic discrimination has increased social withdrawal, exclusion, and distrust among individuals of different ethnicities (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). This form of discrimination fosters ethnic exclusion and creates social tension. For example, self and social isolation leads to depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Brondolo et al., 2008). It impedes social cohesion and limits opportunities for social mobility and economic advancement (Ziller & Spörlein, 2020). Additionally, ethnic discrimination perpetuates inequalities, reinforcing patterns of disadvantage within society (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Another study found that perceived discrimination was correlated with increased symptoms of

hopelessness, isolation, as well as reduced life satisfaction and self-esteem (Brondolo et al., 2005; Wang & Shaheen, 2022; Ziller & Spörlein, 2020).

Several social psychology research has explored the impact of perceived ethnic discrimination on social relationships and identity formation. A study of Asian American college students found that perceived discrimination was associated with lower levels of social support and higher levels of social isolation (Umaña-Taylor, 2016). Another study found that perceived discrimination was associated with reduced identification with one's ethnic group and increased identification with the dominant culture (Cénat et al., 2022; Yip et al., 2008). Studies conducted in the Ethiopian context also provide strong support for the arguments mentioned above. (Dengechi et al., 2018; Riddle, 2015; Walsh et al., 2015).

From the other endpoint, while the literature focuses on the negative impacts of perceived ethnic discrimination, some findings suggest potential positive outcomes connected with these experiences (Slobodin et al., 2021). Specifically, research by Cheng et al. (2019) Has indicated that perceived ethnic discrimination can foster a stronger sense of ethnic identity and in-group solidarity among minority individuals. Accordingly, this enhanced ethnic identity can serve as a protective factor, buffering the negative psychological effects of discrimination and promoting resilience. (Slobodin et al., 2021). Additionally, the experience of overcoming perceived discrimination can encourage a sense of empowerment and motivation to challenge systemic inequalities. (Beccia et al., 2020; Coutinho & Koinis-Mitchell, 2014; Kressin et al., 2008).

All in all, it's important to understand that the potential benefits of discrimination are heavily dependent on context and should never be used to justify or downplay the harmful effects it can have on an individual's overall quality of life. As supported by a wealth of literature, this requires

strong attention to take a serious stance against discrimination and strive towards a society that is both healthier and more inclusive.

### **2.2.2 Perceived Ethnic Discrimination During Emerging Adulthood:**

The transition from adolescence to adulthood, commonly referred to as emerging adulthood, is a critical developmental stage marked by significant changes and challenges in various domains. (Arnett, 2023). This challenge includes ethnic identity formation and social integration. (Grilo et al., 2023). During this period, emerging adults are predominantly vulnerable to experiences of PED. It could have detrimental effects on their psychological well-being and overall development (Arnett, 2016). It can manifest in numerous forms and contexts that can embrace the university setting. The university context, in particular, is a significant setting where perceived ethnic discrimination can occur. The diverse and heterogeneous student population and the potential for intergroup contact can be aggravating factors (Bravo et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2019; Hua et al., 2023).

Moreover, meta-analysis studies show that perceived ethnic discrimination also has significant social implications for individuals in the transition period. Discriminatory experiences can undermine individuals' social integration and sense of belonging within university settings. It limits their ability to form meaningful relationships and participate fully in campus life (de Freitas et al., 2018; Stevens & Thijs, 2018). Even though it has little motivational outcomes in the university context (Slobodin et al., 2021), ethnic discrimination can contribute to intergroup tensions and conflicts within diverse student communities (D'hondt et al., 2016). It results in fostering a climate of hostility and division that undermines efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. These social dynamics not only disseminate inequalities inside academic environments

but also have broader implications for social cohesion within society.(Bracegirdle et al., 2023; Vedder et al., 2006).

In summary, perceived ethnic discrimination is a significant concern for emerging adults in university settings (Herrera, 2009). Most research suggests that it is a persistent issue that can have negative effects on psychosocial well-being. While perceived ethnic discrimination may stimulate petite resilience and solidarity among individuals during the transition period, its negative impacts can't be compromised.

### **2.3 Relationship Between Spiritual Wellbeing and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

Spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination have not received sufficient attention from researchers compared to other areas and variables of psychology studies. However, a growing body of research has explored these two concepts even though they lack direct examination of their association.

As elaborated upon well in previous sections, the two variables are examined in various settings. For example, research regularly demonstrates a connection between bad mental health outcomes, like anxiety and depression, and perceived discrimination (Bravo et al., 2023). According to Jones et al. (2017) African Americans who reported high levels of discrimination were more likely to exhibit signs of anxiety and despair. Few other studies, on the other hand, show that spiritual health might serve as a shield against the detrimental effects of discrimination on mental health (Jafari et al., 2010; Scales et al., 2014). Most research suggests that strong spiritual well-being appears to be protective against the negative impact of discrimination on mental health (Akbar & Keten, 2024; Madan & Rastogi, 2021; Smith et al., 2013). This implies those who have a strong sense of meaning in life and a bond with something greater than themselves might be more resilient

to discrimination. Religious communities, for example, can offer a sense of community and social support. It can be a buffer against discrimination. Additionally, spirituality can provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life; it helps individuals cope with challenges like discrimination.

Empirical studies have not yet directly explored the relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination. On the contrary, the other side of spirituality – religiosity – has been studied. For instance, Ellison et al. (2017) explored how religious service attendance mitigated the negative effects of racial discrimination on African Americans' mental health. They found that frequent attendance at religious services protected the negative impact of discrimination. Another meta-analysis by Chen et al. (2020) shows the positive impact of religious attendance to moderate between perceived discrimination and mental health. According to their findings, people's coping mechanisms for dealing with discrimination are influenced by their religious affiliation and level of spirituality or religion. Nevertheless, all studies have lacked spiritual well-being concepts and stuck with religious practices instead. As the same token, in the Ethiopian Context, studies have examined Spiritual Well-being with other variables like psychological well-being, emotion, intelligence and so on. Few dared to study discrimination and ethnic conflict in general with other variables (Dengechi et al., 2018a; Riddle, 2015; Young, 1996). Unfortunately, while there is no specific meta-analysis solely focused on ethnicity and spiritual well-being, some broader meta-analyses clued the relationship between religion/spirituality and discrimination (Parker et al., 2023).

In general, based on the study findings, there seems to be a correlation between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination. As can be inferred from the studies, a strong spiritual well-being can help mitigate the harmful effects of discrimination. However, there is a lack of research in social psychology and the Ethiopian context on the connection between religiosity,

spiritual well-being, and perceived ethnic discrimination. Therefore, further investigation is needed to fully comprehend the complex relationship between these factors.

### **2.3.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **Examining the Association Between Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and Spiritual Well-being in Emerging Adults**

This framework explores the potential association between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination among emerging adults (ages 18-25) through the lens of social psychology theories: Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Meaning-making Process Model.

#### **Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Meaning-Making Process**

Spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination are interconnected through the lens of Social Identity Theory (SIT). SIT theorises that individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships, including religious and/or ethnic affiliations (Houkamau et al., 2023). In spiritual well-being, a strong sense of one's spirituality can be a protective factor against the negative impacts of perceived discrimination. Correspondingly, individuals with a closer identification with a strong sense of spirituality may experience better psychological well-being and life satisfaction, even in the face of discrimination (Oman & Nuru-Jeter, 2018).

Moreover, social identity is a fundamental feature of an individual's self-concept. It contributes meaningfully to their perception of self-esteem and belongingness. As discussed in SIT, ethnic identity can be a result of individuals' self-worth and belongingness gained from social groups (Jenkins, 2008). Nevertheless, when individuals encounter ethnic discrimination, it creates feelings of exclusion, reduced self-esteem, and heightened stress (Torres & Vallejo, 2015). According to SIT, our social identity, shaped by shared characteristics like ethnicity, has an important role in

defining how we perceive ourselves and others. Besides, when individuals draw strength from their spiritual practices, they reinforce their encouraging social identity. This, in turn, buffers the impact of discrimination (Oman & Nuru-Jeter, 2018). When individuals face discrimination, their spiritual beliefs are potentially reinforced as a source of comfort and resilience. Strong or a high level of Spiritual well-being may provide a sense of meaning which can mitigate the negative psychological impact of discrimination. Therefore, the process lessens the perception of ethnic discrimination (Houkamau et al., 2023; Oman, 2018).

Meanwhile, most papers do not explicitly discuss the direction of the correlation between Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and Spiritual Well-being through SIT, but they do provide evidence for the complex interplay between perceived ethnic discrimination, ethnic identity, and spiritual well-being. Successively, it can be inferred that this framework suggests an indirect correlation between perceived ethnic discrimination and spiritual well-being via SIT (Straiton et al., 2019; Vines et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Social Identity Theory (SIT) helps explain why discrimination might lead to a need for meaning-making, which in turn, influences spiritual well-being. As previously highlighted, in the reciprocal nature of spiritual well-being and the meaning-making process, it is crucial to examine the correlation of the two main variables through this model. To illustrate this view, for instance, in response to perceived ethnic discrimination, individuals are often involved in the meaning-making process. This cognitive and emotional process involves seeking to understand and reframe their experiences to manage the negative emotions associated with discrimination. Consequently, meaning-making becomes a coping mechanism, which enables

individuals to derive a sense of purpose, significance, and coherence from their experiences (Park, 2013).

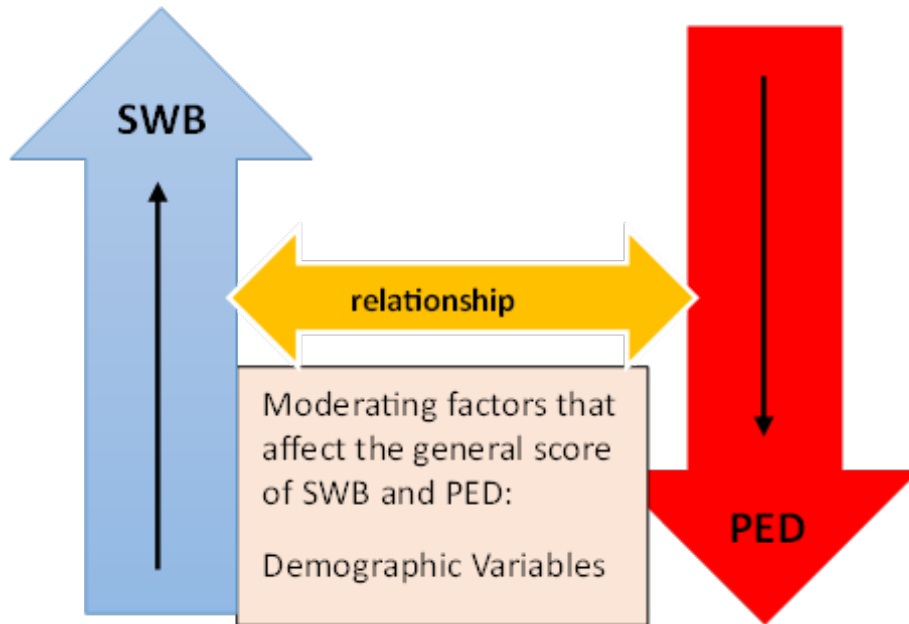
One crucial characteristic of the meaning-making process, from the other end, is the role of spiritual well-being. Spiritual beliefs and practices have helped individuals make sense even from discrimination (Lee, 2014). Drawing on their spiritual well-being, people may extract relief, strength, and resilience in the face of hardship. For example, they may view their experiences of discrimination as part of a broader spiritual journey; likewise, it leads them to make meaning out of the challenges they face and derive comfort from spiritual practices (Lee, 2014; Uwland-Sikkema et al., 2018).

Furthermore, enhanced spiritual well-being facilitates successful meaning-making processes. Consequently, it can equip individuals with better resources to cope with future experiences of discrimination. This positive feedback loop reinforces individuals' resilience and coping strategies; the overall process enables them to navigate future challenges with greater ease and effectiveness. Through meaning-making processes, spirituality can facilitate adjustment, personal growth, and better psychological well-being in the face of adversity and discrimination (King et al., 2022; Park, 2013).

In conclusion, this theoretical framework integrates Social Identity Theory and the Meaning-Making Model to examine the association between perceived ethnic discrimination and spiritual well-being in emerging adults. The framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the complex interplay of the variables, their direction, and their strength in shaping individuals' responses to adversity.

### 2.3.2 Conceptual Framework

As the conceptual framework of the study, based on the empirical findings and the theoretical framework, the following diagram provides a summary of the relationship between Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED).



**Figure 1**  
Conceptual Framework

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

This chapter of the research provides a detailed description of the research design, study variables, sample and sampling, instrument validation procedures, data collecting tools, procedures, and methods used in data analysis.

### **3.1 Research Design**

Using comprehensive methods and techniques is essential for conducting high-quality research (Hafsa, 2019; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). This study employed a predominantly quantitative research design, supplemented by qualitative data to provide additional context and depth. The quantitative component used structured scales to measure Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination which allows for the statistical analysis of trends and relationships.

While the study's primary focus is on quantitative data, open-ended questions were included to support and enrich the findings. These qualitative responses offered deeper insights into participants' perceptions of spirituality and ethnic discrimination that added a layer of understanding to the numerical results. By incorporating qualitative data in a supportive role, the study was able to address some of the limitations inherent in a purely quantitative design (Greene, 2008).

This combination of methods does not constitute a full mixed-method approach but rather a quantitative design enhanced with qualitative elements. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically to complement and clarify the quantitative findings, which were integrated during

the interpretation phase. This approach ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, while still maintaining a primary emphasis on quantitative analysis.

Above and beyond, this study adopted a serial cross-sectional design because of its proven effectiveness in capturing social variations over time. Serial cross-sectional is commonly used to track changes over time, especially regarding sensitive issues like ethnic discrimination and spiritual well-being in a dynamic context. Empirical evidence supports this method; Cummings (2013) emphasizes its value in repeatedly sampling from the same population using different groups. It enables the analysis of evolving trends without the complexities of longitudinal data collection. The three-year period is sufficient to observe shifts influenced by societal events, such as political unrest (Cummings, 2013). Accordingly, this approach is particularly relevant in Ethiopia, where rapid socio-political developments can significantly alter the landscape of ethnic relations and overall well-being. In this study, the cross-sectional design facilitated a simultaneous comparison of key variables among different groups—specifically, second-year and third-year university students—before and after a three-year interval: in 2021 and 2024. Given the nature of the issues being studied, permission for this approach was granted by the department and my supervisor, both of whom recognized its appropriateness for effectively addressing the study's objectives.

## **3.2 Population and Sampling**

### **3.2.1 Population**

This research aimed to examine the association between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination among emerging adults. Accordingly, the population of the study needs to be diversified where emerging adults – students live in. The ideal population for the mentioned

reasons is the University. In this case, the research population was set to be Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics undergraduate students. As expected, the community was heterogenous: students of different sex, culture, religion, political, and ethnic orientations were observed unsurprisingly. From a top and a wider view, this diversified nature of students has always been considered “little Ethiopia”. Consequently, the population proposed and used was the best fit for the objective of the research. Additionally, AAU’s location in a relatively peaceful and accessible city further supports the research process, making it the best fit for achieving the study’s objectives.

Students in any given university are expected to have intensified social interaction. On the other end, spiritual well-being is characterized by unconditional, healthy, and smooth relationships with others. During this intensified interaction with others, various forms of discrimination might be perceived. Uniquely, as social science students generally and being students of business & economics, in particular, their field of studies more or less has highlighted human interactions and relationships in various aspects. Their academic curriculum neutrally emphasizes human interactions and relationships, exploring concepts like social dynamics, economic equity, and organizational behaviour. Thus, the issue would not be new for them; therefore, considering the above facts as a primary reason, business, and economics students were chosen for the study. Of equal importance, since all schools and colleges could not be studied due to resource and time constraints, the College of Business and Economics was examined for each time point.

### **3.2.2 Sampling**

#### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select participants.

##### ***A. Inclusion***

Students who participated in this study fulfilled the following inclusion criteria.

- ✍ Regular undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University, who were enrolled in any of the business and economics departments.
- ✍ Unmarried
- ✍ Students between the age of 18 – 25

##### ***B. Exclusion criteria***

The following were the exclusion criteria:

- ✍ Extension, summer, distance, master's students in any field of studies.
- ✍ Married
- ✍ Students who were below or above the age of 18 and 25 respectively.

#### **First-Round sampling**

An appropriate sample is crucial and the most fundamental part of any research work. Sampling encompasses two critical issues: (1) how a sample is taken/ how a population is represented and (2) how many elements will be selected (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). All these facts considered; samples of this research consisted of students from heterogeneous groups such as departments, sex, year level, the place where they come from and the language they speak. As discussed earlier, the research had purposefully chosen the College of Business and Economics as a target population of the study.

The sampling process involved selecting participants from the target population of second-year and third-year university students. For the first round of data collection (three years ago- 2021), the sampling was considering all situations as follows.

According to the CBE Registrar's office, in the 2020/21 academic year, there were 1044 students enrolled in the college. 699 were male while 345 were female students. The sample size was determined by the widely used formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

$$= \frac{Z^2(p q)N}{d^2(N - 1) + Z^2 p q}$$

Where: -      Z= 95% confidence interval = 1.96

P= Since there is no available related research with the same title this study has used a prevalence of proportion to 50% = 0.5

q= 1-p

d= margin of error 5% = 0.05

N= Total population = **1044**, according to the CBE Registrar's Office

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)1044}{(0.05)^2(1043) + (1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)} \\ &= \frac{1002.6576}{2.6075 + 0.9604} \\ &= \frac{1002.6576}{3.5679} \\ n &= \underline{\underline{281.02}} \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the sample size of the study confirmed through the formula is  $\approx$  **282**. Because of COVID-19, the university received only 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students. As a result, the sample size was by default drawn from this group.

## **Second Round sampling**

For the second round of data collection, the study adhered to consistent sampling procedures to ensure the same number of participants were drawn as in the first round. By maintaining consistency in sampling methods, such as stratified random sampling, the study aimed to select participants from the target population of second-year and third-year university students. This approach could enhance the comparability of the samples and allow for meaningful comparisons of variables of interest across heterogeneous groups within the same facility over a three-year interval. The utilization of the same sample size facilitates data quality, validity, reliability, consistency, and effectiveness in the comparison process, enabling the researcher to confidently assess changes or trends over time while minimizing the potential for bias. Overall, adherence to consistent sampling methods underscores the strength and integrity of the study, ensuring that any observed differences in variables such as spirituality and perceived ethnic discrimination can be attributed to temporal changes rather than variations in sample size or composition.

Accordingly, the same procedures were used to determine the sample size. Therefore, as obtained from the CBE Registrar's office, in the 2023/24 academic year, there were 1028 second and third-year students enrolled in the college. 702 were male while 326 were female students. The sample size was determined by the widely used formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

$$\begin{aligned}
&= \frac{Z^2(p q)N}{d^2(N - 1) + Z^2 p q} \\
n &= \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)1028}{(0.05)^2(1027) + (1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)} \\
&= \frac{987.2912}{2.5675 + 0.9604} \\
&= \frac{987.2912}{3.5279} \\
n &= \underline{\underline{279.852}}
\end{aligned}$$

Thus, the study's sample size, as confirmed by the formula, was  $\approx$  **280**. Fortunately, the two groups' total population and sample size were almost identical. Therefore, it's a green light for a cross-sectional comparison study type of analysis.

### 3.2.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling procedure was used to select research participants for both cases. The first layer of strata was the student's field of study. There were four departments under CBE: Accounting, Economics, Management, and Public Administration. Each department was considered. The second layer of strata was the sex of respondents so that an appropriate proportional number of males and females were calculated in the sample. In the third layer, students at different year levels (batch), second and third years were also considered. Consequently, each year level was involved in the sample. In addition to the above procedure, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select participants. Hence, equal chance and randomization were kept. In the sampling process, it was crucial to account for potential losses or damage to questionnaires during data collection. For a sample size of 282, assuming a replacement

rate of 5%, it was recommended to prepare 14 additional questionnaires to replace any ruined or lost ones. This replacement number ensured that the study maintained its intended sample size and minimized the impact of missing data on the research outcomes. This procedure was also used for the second round of data collection.

The following tables summarise the first and second-round sample sizes with a proportional distribution for each department, batch, and sex proportion.

**Table 1**

*First Round Sample*

<b>Dep</b>	<b>Acc II</b>	<b>Acc III</b>	<b>Eco II</b>	<b>Eco III</b>	<b>Mgmt. II</b>	<b>Mgmt. III</b>	<b>PAD II</b>	<b>PAD III</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>No</b>	144	92	154	145	250	137	94	28	1044
<b>Male</b>	98	69	122	118	134	84	50	24	699
<b>Female</b>	46	23	32	27	116	53	44	4	345
<b>Proportion</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>67.5</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>281.88</b>
<b>≈</b>	39	25	42	40	67	37	25	7	282
<b>Male</b>	27	19	33	33	36	23	13	5	189
<b>Female</b>	12	6	9	7	31	14	12	2	93
<b>TOTAL</b>									<b>282+(5%)</b>

Note. Dep= Department, Acc= Accounting, Eco = Economics, Mgmt= Management, Pad= Public Administration, II 2<sup>nd</sup>, III= 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Table 2***Second Round Sample*

<b>Dep</b>	<b>Acc II</b>	<b>Acc III</b>	<b>Eco II</b>	<b>Eco III</b>	<b>Mgmt. II</b>	<b>Mgmt. III</b>	<b>PAD II</b>	<b>PAD III</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>No</b>	240	64	160	129	222	132	42	39	1028
<b>Male</b>	138	43	118	98	162	84	33	26	702
<b>Female</b>	102	21	42	31	60	48	48	13	326
<b>Proportion</b>	<b>65.3</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>2280</b>
<b>≈</b>	65	17	44	35	60	36	12	11	280
<b>Male</b>	36	11	33	27	44	23	9	7	<b>190</b>
<b>Female</b>	29	6	11	8	16	13	3	4	<b>90</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>									<b>280+(5%)</b>

Note. Dep= Department, Acc= Accounting, Eco = Economics, Mgmt= Management, Pad= Public Administration, II 2<sup>nd</sup>, III= 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **3.3 Study Variables and Data Collecting Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Demographic Variables**

Demographic data about the participants were generated using demographic information items developed for this study. These items included the participants' gender, age, year level, leaving area before university, and mother tongue.

#### **3.3.2 Spiritual Well-being**

In the past three decades, studies have noted that features of spirituality often include a connection with others, God, and Higher powers, as well as hope, strength, meaning/purpose of life, guidance, coping, and peace (Genia, 2015). Of equal importance, spiritual well-being gradually lacks its direct connection with religiosity. Its extended nature encompasses additional concepts: meaning,

purposes, and well-being are the basics to mention (Lu et al., 2019; Malinakova & Kopcakova, 2017).

The widely used scale to measure spiritual well-being (SWBS) was developed by Paloutzian and Ellison (1982); SWBS is one of the most used instruments in the psychological study of religion and/spirituality (Stanfill, 2017).

The 20-item SWBS has two subscales; each is composed of 10 items. Individuals' relationship with God is assessed by The Religious Well-Being (RWB) subscale whereas items of the Existential Well-Being (EWB) subscale measure individuals' sense of life satisfaction and life purpose. A combined Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) score provides an overall, general assessment of SWB. To avoid particular ideal/belief dependency, SWB never depends on a specific religious or ideological orientation (Lalajants, 2018b; Stanfill, 2017; Vicky Genia, 2015). Besides, each scale and generally SWBS have demonstrated virtuous internal consistency and construct validity.

The 20 items of SWBS are in positive and negative statements. Each positive item is to be answered on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (score 1) to “strongly agree” (score 6). Conversely, each negative item is reverse-scored, ranging from “strongly agree” (score 1) to “strongly disagree” (score 6). Most importantly, SWBS has proven its reliability from various studies. Accordingly, the last three decades of SWBS' representative reliability can be summarized as follows: Cronbach's alpha of SWBS calculated for the subscales and total scale: RWB alpha = 0.91 and EWB alpha = 0.91 and SWB=0.93 (Jafari et al., 2010; Vicky Genia, 2015). Findings that used SWBS have reported Cronbach's alpha not less than 0.75 for subscales and generally for SWBS (Feizi et al., 2020). Other studies confirmed that SWBS and both subscales are reliable and valid to utilize in health, behavioural studies, and psychology.

Based on the above explanation, the SWBS scale is the best choice to generate valid and reliable data. Accordingly, this study employed SWBS to examine emerging adults' spiritual well-being.

### **3.3.3 Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination is one of the variables examined throughout the research process. As a lifetime experience, along with daily experience of ethnic discrimination, participants' level of perceived ethnic discrimination was investigated using a brief (17-item) version of the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale (PEDQ-CV). It was adopted by Brondolo et al. (2005) as a Community Version (PedQ-CV) from the Perceived ethnic discrimination Questionnaire (PedQ), originally a 70-item scale (Rondolo et al., 2005). It is cross-culturally validated and used in different societal contexts. Therefore, this study accepted the short version of PED-CV- (17 items) since it provides equivalent services to the extended version (Ped) – 70 items; besides, its brief nature makes the data collection and the analysis job easier.

PED-CV has five subscales which have made the assessment all-rounded; it includes the appraisal of the intensity and frequency of exposure to different magnitudes of ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, it views discrimination from different settings, and across different periods (Milam & Virginia, 2020). Having the five subscales, PED-CV investigates perceived ethnic discrimination as a lifetime experience considering interpersonal interaction whereas subscales assess different types of interpersonal maltreatment associated with ethnic discrimination.

The PED-CV scale with its subscales has virtuous internal consistency. Though the subscales are interrelated, each subscale presents unique information. Altogether, the PED-CV scale comprehensively measures daily and lifetime ethnic discrimination (Yamanaka & Norman, 2004).

The internal consistency for the (Cronbach’s alpha) 17-item Brief PED-CV ranged from .7 to .88 using a full group, community, and student sample (Milam & Virginia, 2020; Rondolo et al., 2005; Yamanaka & Norman, 2004). All in all, Cronbach's alpha of PED-CV is no less than .8. Each subscale’s internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) is summarised as follows in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*PED’s Subscales Internal Consistency*

<b>No</b>	<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Full</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>1</b>	Lifetime Exposure	.87	.87	.88
<b>2</b>	Exclusion/rejection	.70	.70	.69
<b>3</b>	Stigmatisation/devaluation	.74	.70	.78
<b>4</b>	Discrimination at work/school	.69	.71	.65
<b>5</b>	Threat/aggression	.80	.75	.88

Based on the above explanation, this study utilised PED-CV to investigate emerging adults’ perceived ethnic discrimination.

### **3.4 Validation of the Instruments**

The qualities of all instruments had been validated before being used in actual research. The content validity of the instrument was certified by subject matter experts. Three (two social psychologists – associate professors of psychology, and one senior social psychologist), Subject Matter Experts (SME) evaluated each scale and ensured the quality of the scales. Considering the modifications, all had agreed that the tools could be used in the Ethiopian context. Thus, some amendments were made accordingly. Confusing terminologies in Ethiopian context were cancelled and some were added to make clarity.

This led the researcher to conduct a pilot study to check the internal consistency of the Amharic Versions of the instrument.

### 3.4.1 Pilot Study

To determine the consistency level – Cronbach’s alpha - of the Amharic version of each tool, pilot research was mandatory. Thus, considering the actual sampling technique, an adequate number of students participated in the pilot study to estimate Cronbach’s alpha for each sub and main scale. Accordingly, Second and third-year 35 undergraduate psychology students were the participants in the pilot study. Cronbach’s Alpha of the two scales – Spiritual Well-Beingness (SWBS) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) was computed. Both printed acceptable reliabilities, as they scored .87 and .861 respectively. Subscales of SWBS such as religious well-being (RWBS) and Existential well-being (EWBS) have Cronbach’s Alpha .87 and .73 respectively.

Regarding Subscales of PED, *exclusion/rejection and discrimination* at work/school showed acceptable Cronbach’s Alpha while *stigmatization/devaluation and threat/aggression* are below standard. However, the main scale, PED, has an excellent alpha for analysis purposes. The following table depicts the four subscales of PED’ Cronbach’ Alpha.

**Table 4**

*Cronbach Alpha Level of PED Subscales obtained from the pilot study*

Items for each subscale	Cronbach’s Alpha
Lifetime exposure - discrimination [mean of all 17 items)	.861 ✓
exclusion/rejection (items 8,11,12,13)	.812 ✓
stigmatization/devaluation (items 10,15,16,17)	.571 X
discrimination at work/school (items 1,2,9,14)	.755 ✓
threat/aggression (items 3,4,6,7)	.292 X

## **3.5 Procedure**

### **3.5.1 Data Collection**

Gathering data is one of the basic jobs of any research. Before the actual data collection, the researcher took a letter from the School of Psychology that requested collaboration to collect data. Besides, class representatives, teachers, and department offices were contacted to get their aid. The researcher collected classroom schedules of each department to trace participants at ease. Besides, the researcher hired data enumerators for each time point.

During data gathering, an explanation about the aim of the study was made, and consent of the participants was obtained. Instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire were explained. Enumerators facilitated the task of collecting the data in a short period.

After the data was fully collected, encoding was important for the entire analysis. Thus, a few incomplete questionnaires were identified and replaced from the 5% extra questionnaires collected for this purpose. After a negatively reversed item arrangement, SPSS was employed to encode the data. Hence, participants' responses were registered according to each scale.

Regarding open-ended questions, following thematic analysis producers, conceptually similar responses for each question were collected and organized under the same thematic category. Each response to open-ended questions was flagged, coded, and quoted for its thematic area to be simplified for analysis purposes.

### **3.6 Method of Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Spiritual Well-being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) at each time point: in 2021, and 2024; two distinct groups of university students. The groups included 2nd and 3rd-year students (282) from the 2020-21 academic year and 2nd and 3rd-year students (280) from the 2023-24 academic year. As a cross-sectional study, results from each time point were compared for a comprehensive understanding of the issue. To gain a complete thought of the research objectives, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used.

Initially, descriptive statistics were computed to gain an overview of the levels of SWB and PED within each group. The percentages, mean, and standard deviations were calculated to depict the distribution of scores for both SWB and PED. The questionnaire scale used in the study provides interval-scale data, making it easy to compute these descriptive statistics. For an all-inclusive analysis of results, normality was checked. As a result, the distribution was not normal for both time points.

Considering the nature of the data, for each time point, non-parametric tests were used. To compare the means of SWB and PED across demographic variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. This analysis aimed to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of SWB and PED across two-grouped demographic variables such as gender, grouped age, and year stay for each time point. Additionally, the effects of demographic groups by language spoken, and living area before university on SWB and PED were explored using the Kruskal-Wallis H test.

The next step was conducting a Correlation Analysis to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between SWB and PED. Separate Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) analyses were conducted for each time point to explore and compare potential changes in the relationship between SWB and PED over time. The objective of this analysis was to identify whether there was a significant association between SWB and PED.

Furthermore, based on each scale guideline, participants' levels of SWB and PED were compared at each time point. This analysis provided insights into the overall levels of SWB and PED of participants; it aided comparisons between the two-time point results clear.

Qualitative data analysis was based on the data obtained from open-ended responses as part of the study. Themes and patterns within the narratives were identified to provide a narrative description of the qualitative findings. This analysis was aimed to complement the quantitative results and provide a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, experiences, and reactions concerning SWB and PED.

Regarding data analysis tools, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS. V27.0) was used for all necessary statistical analyses which ensured accurate and efficient computation of the quantitative data. Of equal importance, qualitative analyses were conducted using predominantly Excel, with the help of Nivio. For the major theme of Spiritual Well-being, the most dominant sub-themes identified were Religious Reflection and Coping Mechanisms, Positive Interactions and Life Purpose, and Existential Reflection. Regarding perceived ethnic discrimination, key sub-themes included Direct and Indirect Experiences of Discrimination, Impact on Social and Economic Opportunities, Restricted Social Interactions, Negative Impact on Life Purpose and Meaning, and Erosion of Hope and Purpose.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

In this study, participants were ensured that they were free from any imposing /harmful factors. The researcher of this study received informed consent from the participants so that respondents completed the questionnaire booklet. Thus, the data collection was carried out based on the willingness of the participants without any imposition. Besides, participants had the full right to participate or not to participate and even to refuse or withdraw from the participation of the study at any time. To ensure and grant confidentiality and privacy of participant's responses, participants' names were not included in the questionnaire. Furthermore, participants were informed that data collected from the participants would be used only for this study and for educational purposes.

## **Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter presents the results of the data collected from university students on spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination using a predominantly quantitative approach. The analysis begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of participants at two-time points: 2021 and 2024. Following this, mean differences are presented, and the correlations between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination at each time point are examined, with appropriate comparisons highlighted.

Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses is also included to support and deepen the understanding of the quantitative findings. The qualitative data provides additional insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, enriching the overall interpretation of the results. Finally, the discussion integrates quantitative and qualitative findings, offering a comprehensive interpretation of the research objectives.

## Quantitative Data Presentation

### 4.1.1 Demographic Data

*Table 5:*

*Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample*

Demographic Characteristics		Time Point 1 (2021) <i>f p (%)</i>	Time Point 2 (2024) <i>f p (%)</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	189 (67.0%)	190 (67.9%)
	Female	93 (33.0%)	90 (32.1%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Age Group</b>	18 – 21	190 (67.4%)	206 (73.6%)
	22 – 25	91 (32.3%)	74 (26.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Year Level</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	173 (61.3%)	181 (64.6%)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	109 (38.7%)	99 (35.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Mother Tongues: Languages</b>	Amharic	209 (74.1%)	214 (76.4%)
	Oromifa	44 (15.6%)	25 (8.9%)
	Amharic and Oromifa	17 (6.0%)	24 (8.6%)
	Tigreña	6 (2.1%)	7 (2.5%)
	Welaytigna	3 (1.1%)	3 (1.1%)
	Guragegina	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.4%)
	Amharic and Tigreña	-	3 (1.1%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Living Area Before University</b>	Amhara Region	145 (51.4%)	97 (34.6%)
	Oromia Region	81 (28.7%)	61 (21.8%)
	Addis Ababa City	24 (8.5%)	<b>83 (29.6%)</b>
	SNNPR Region	26 (9.2%)	<b>35 (12.5%)</b>
	Tigray Region	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.4%)
	Riyad City	2 (0.7%)	-
	Gambella Region	1 (0.4%)	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>

Demographic Characteristics		Time Point 1 (2021) <i>f p (%)</i>	Time Point 2 (2024) <i>f p (%)</i>
<b>Preferred Future Residences</b>	Amhara Region	114 (40.4%)	83 (29.6%)
	Addis Ababa	37 (13.1%)	<b>89 (31.8%)</b>
	Oromia Region	55 (19.5%)	50 (17.9%)
	Anywhere	25 (8.9%)	19 (6.8%)
	SNNPR Region	24 (8.5%)	31 (11.1%)
	Any City	22 (7.8%)	3 (1.1%)
	Tigray Region	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.4%)
	Dire Dawa	-	1 (0.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>280</b>

Note. *f p (%)*: Frequency and Percentage

Table 5 shows that the majority of participants were male at both Time Point 1 (2021) with 189 (67.0%) and Time Point 2 (2024) with 190 (67.9%). Female participants were 93 (33.0%) at Time Point 1 and decreased to 90 (32.1%) at Time Point 2.

In terms of age, the majority of participants were in the 18 – 21 age group, with 190 (67.4%) at Time Point 1 and an increase to 206 (73.6%) at Time Point 2, indicating a more concentrated age distribution. Participants aged 22 – 25 decreased from 91 (32.3%) at Time Point 1 to 74 (26.4%) at Time Point 2. Regarding year level, the majority were in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of university at both Time Points: time point 1 (173, 61.3%) and time point 2 (181, 64.6%). The percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students decreased from 109 (38.7%) at Time Point 1 to 99 (35.4%) at Time Point 2.

Concerning the mother tongue, Amharic remained the predominant language, increasing from 209 (74.1%) at Time Point 1 to 214 (76.4%) at Time Point 2. The percentage of Oromifa speakers decreased from 44 (15.6%) to 25 (8.9%), while the proportion of participants speaking both Amharic and Oromifa increased from 17 (6.0%) to 24 (8.6%). The remaining languages showed minor fluctuations in their representation.

The data on the living area before the university revealed a decrease in participants from the Amhara region, from 145 (51.4%) at Time Point 1 to 97 (34.6%) at Time Point 2. The percentage of participants from Oromia also decreased from 81 (28.7%) to 61 (21.8%). In contrast, the percentage of participants from Addis Ababa increased significantly from 24 (8.5%) at Time Point 1 to 83 (29.6%) at Time Point 2. The percentage of participants from the SNNPR region increased from 26 (9.2%) to 35 (12.5%).

Overall, the data indicates that the majority of participants were male, predominantly in the 18 - 21 age group, and in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of university. Amharic remained the most commonly spoken language, while there were notable shifts in the regions participants came from, particularly with an increase in those from Addis Ababa City.

#### 4.1.2 Emerging Adult’s Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination across Gender, Age and Year Level at each time point: in 2021 and 2024

**Table 6**

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Emerging Adults’ SWB and PED*

Scale		Spiritual Well-being (SWB)						Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED)					
Variables	Groups	Time-point 1 2021 (SWB-1)			Time-Point 2 2024 (SWB-2)			Time-point 1 2021 (PED-1)			Time-point 2 2024 (PED-2)		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
		Gender	Male	189	101.2	13.26	190	100	11.9	189	31.4	11.8	190
Female	93		100.0	15.91	90	102	9.5	93	30.3	14.4	90	25.3	11.5
Overall	282		100.7	14.17	280	100	11	282	31	12.7	280	27.9	11.5
Age	18 – 21	190	101.01	14.35	206	101	10.9	190	30.3	12.4	206	27.5	13.2
	22 – 25	91	100.29	13.75	74	99.9	11.9	91	32.4	13.4	74	29.2	11.4
	Overall	282	100.70	14.17	280	100	11.2	282	31	12.7	280	27.9	12.8
Year Level	Second	173	100.66	13.56	181	100	11	173	31.7	12.7	181	28.7	14
	Third	109	100.77	15.15	99	101	11	109	29.9	12.7	99	26.5	9.9
	Overall	282	100.70	14.17	280	100	11	282	31	12.7	280	27.9	12.8

**Note.** SWB = Spiritual Well-Being; PED = Perceived Ethnic Discrimination; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation

As Table 6 presents, the analysis of spiritual well-being (SWBS) and perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) across two-time points reveals notable trends among the participants based on gender, age group, and year level.

For gender, the mean SWB for males slightly decreased from 101.2 (SD = 13.26) at Time Point 1 to 100 (SD = 11.9) at Time Point 2, while for females, the mean increased from 100.06 (SD = 15.91) to 102 (SD = 9.5). In contrast, the mean PED scores for males showed a reduction from

31.4 (SD = 11.8) to 29.3 (SD = 13.1), and for females, the mean PED scores dropped from 30.3 (SD = 14.4) to 25.3 (SD = 11.5). The overall trend across genders reveals a significant decrease in perceived ethnic discrimination.

When comparing age groups, participants aged 18 – 21 had a consistent SWB mean, maintaining around 101 at both time points, while their PED scores decreased from 30.3 (SD = 12.4) to 27.5 (SD = 13.2). Participants aged 22 – 25 experienced a slight decrease in SWB mean from 100.29 (SD = 13.75) to 99.9 (SD = 11.9), with their PED scores also showing a reduction from 32.4 (SD = 13.4) to 29.2 (SD = 11.4). This indicates that both age groups exhibited a reduction in perceived discrimination.

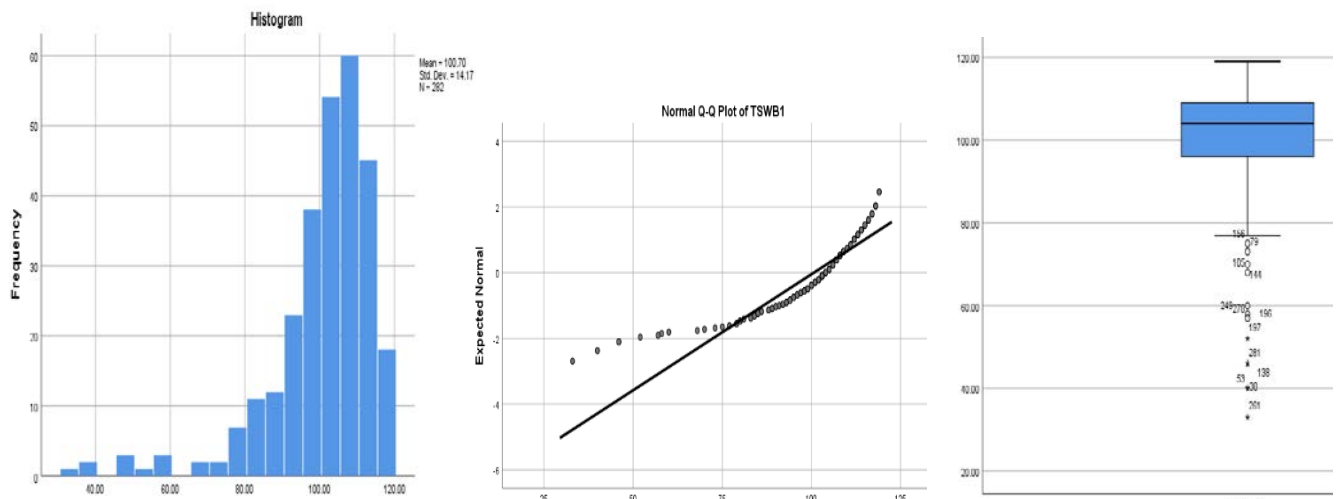
Regarding year level, 2nd-year students had a consistent SWBS mean of approximately 100 at both time points, with PED scores decreasing from 31.7 (SD = 12.7) to 28.7 (SD = 14). For 3rd-year students, the SWBS mean remained stable at around 100, while their PED scores decreased from 29.9 (SD = 12.7) to 26.5 (SD = 9.9).

In summary, the data indicate a general stability in spiritual well-being over time, with a slight decrease in perceived ethnic discrimination across the various demographic groups. All in all, across all variables, both male and female students at each time point showed SWB scores above the theoretical mean of 70, and they exhibited PED scores below the theoretical mean of 51. In this case, the variations in scores shown above remain unnoticeable.

## Nature of Data Distribution

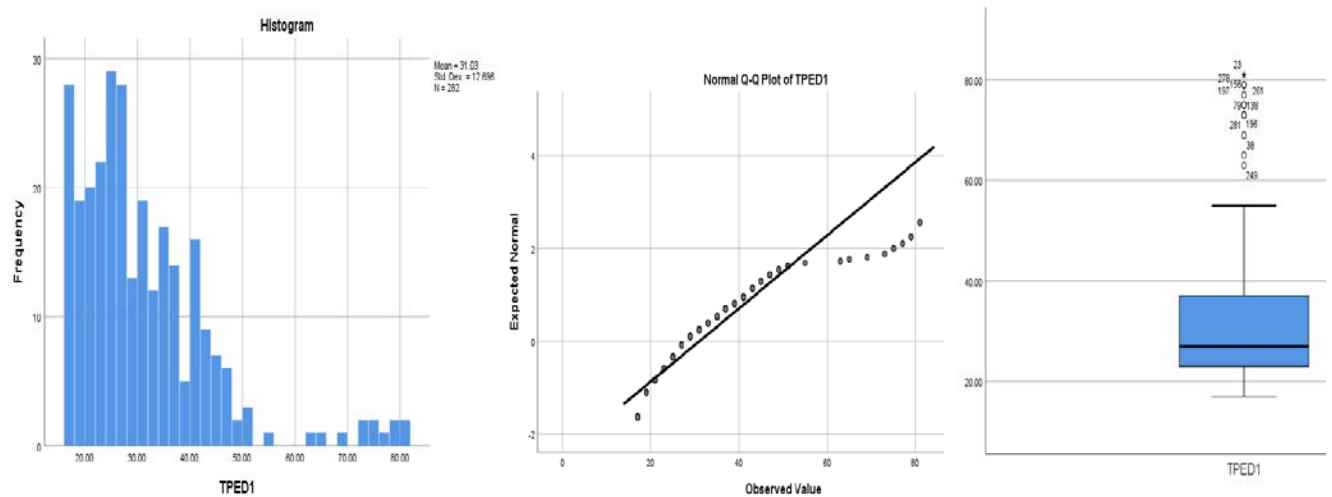
Before analyzing the mean differences in Spiritual Well-Being Scores (SWBS) across various demographic variables at each time point, it's essential to assess the distribution of the data using both visual and statistical methods.

Accordingly, Figures 2 through 5, (histograms, Q-Q plots, and box plots appeared together), provide a detailed view of the data distribution for Total Spiritual Well-Being (TSWB) and Total Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (TPED) scores at two different time points. Besides, the summary of the normality test table presents details of the nature of the data. As a result, Figure 2 below shows the distribution of TSWB1. The histogram reveals a left-skewed distribution. This skewness is further validated by the Q-Q plot, where the data points deviate significantly from the diagonal line, particularly at the tails. The box plot also discloses several outliers below the lower quartile that support the non-normality of the distribution.



**Figure 2**  
*Distribution of Total Spiritual Well-being (TSWB1), Time Point 1*

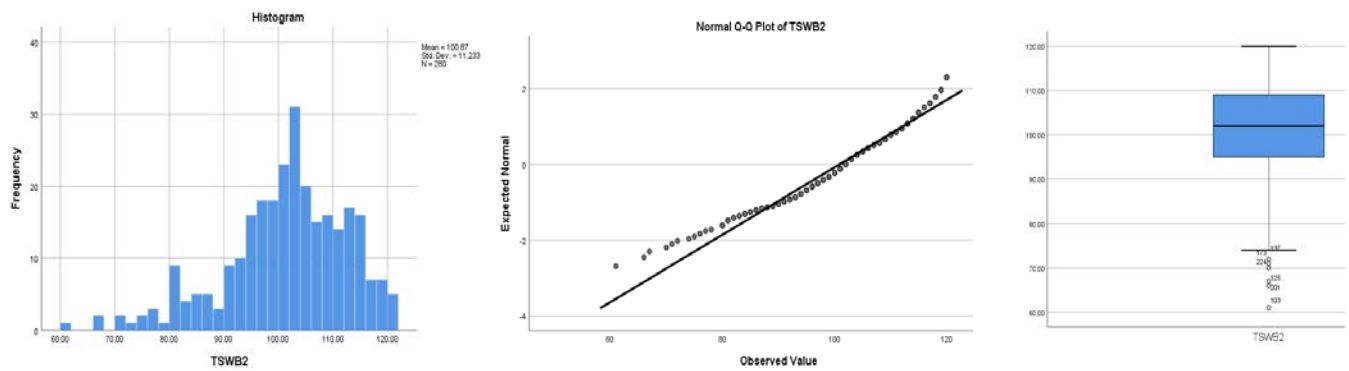
In contrast, Figure 3 below illustrates the distribution of TPED1 by demonstrating a right-skewed pattern. The histogram exhibits a tail extending towards higher values. The Q-Q plot supports it as it shows the presence of outliers in the box plot. The statistical evidence, including skewness, kurtosis, and Shapiro-Wilk test results, confirms that these distributions significantly deviate from normality ( $p < .000$ ).



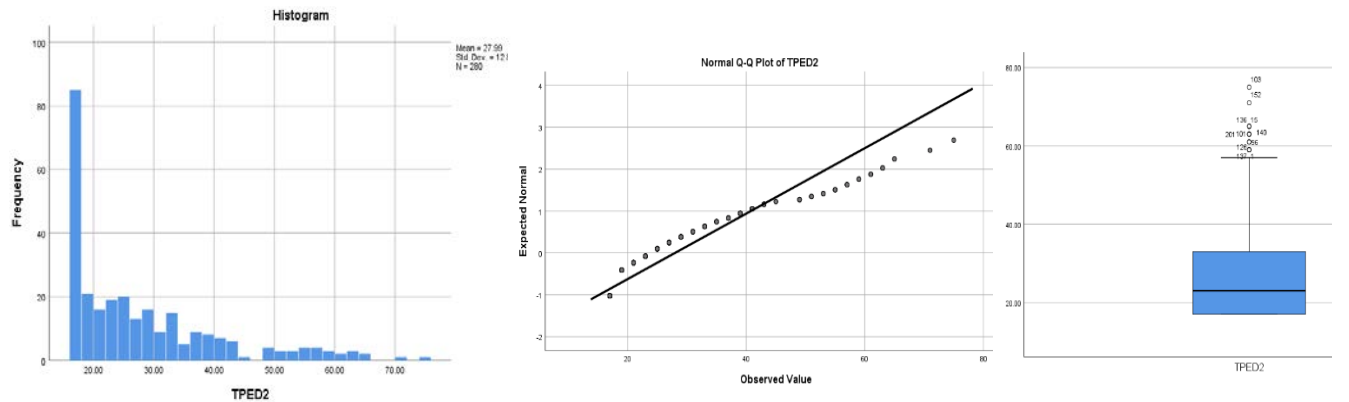
**Figure 3**

*Distribution of Total Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (TPED1), Timepoint 1*

At Time Point 2, the distributions of Total Spiritual Well-being (TSWB2) and Total Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (TPED2) remain non-normal. Visual inspection of the histograms, Q-Q plots, and boxplots (Figures 4 and 5) reveals departures from normality. It depicts skewness and the presence of outliers. These findings are supported by the Shapiro-Wilk test results. Accordingly, there are significant deviations from normality for both TSWB2 and TPED2 ( $p < .000$ ).



**Figure 4**  
*Distribution of Total Spiritual Well-being (TSWB2), Time Point 2*



**Figure 5**  
*Distribution of Total Perceived Ethnic Discrimination, Time Point 2*

Considering these findings, using non-parametric tests to analyze the data across demographic variables is appropriate. Non-parametric methods do not rely on assumptions of normality and are robust against the presence of outliers. Therefore, they are more suitable for the nature of this data.

The following table details the results of the normality test discussed above.

**Table 7**

*Nature of Distribution Summary*

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk (p-value)	Normality
<b>TSWB1</b>	100.7	14.17	33	119	-2.1	5.87	0.000	Not Normal
<b>TPED1</b>	31.03	12.7	17	81	1.74	3.9	0.000	Not Normal
<b>TSWB2</b>	100.87	11.23	61	120	-0.75	0.6	0.000	Not Normal
<b>TPED2</b>	27.99	12.8	17	75	1.37	1.29	0.000	Not Normal

Note. SD= Standard Deviation, Min= Minimum, Max= Maximum

#### 4.1.3 Significant Mean Difference of SWB across Demographic Variables

**Table 8**

*Significant Mean Difference of SWBS for Each Time Point*

IDV>IDV	Spiritual Well-being (SWBS)							
	Time-points 1- 2021 (SWBS-1)				Time-Point 2 – 2024 (SWBS-2)			
	Test	Statistic	Df	Sig(2-tailed)	Test	Statistic	df	Sig(2-tailed)
<b>Gender</b>	Mann-Whitney U	8683.500	-	0.870	Mann-Whitney U	7671.500	-	0.165
<b>Year Stay</b>		9162.000	-	0.689		8924.500	-	0.957
<b>Living area before Joining the University</b>	Kruskal-Wallis H	3.143	6	0.791	Kruskal-Wallis H	9.979	4	0.041*
<b>Language/Mother Tongue</b>		7.266	5	0.202		12.568	6	0.050

Note.  $p < 0.05$ , df = Degrees of freedom

The above table (8) summarizes spiritual well-being (SWB) score differences across selected demographic variables in comparison to the two-time points, 2021 and 2024.

#### *Gender and Year of Study*

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to evaluate differences in spiritual well-being based on gender and year of study at both time points. The results indicated no statistically significant differences in spiritual well-being between male and female students in either 2021 ( $p = 0.870$ ) or 2024 ( $p = 0.165$ ). Similarly, the findings showed that in 2021 ( $p = 0.870$ ) or 2024 ( $p = 0.165$ ). Thus, there were no statistically significant differences in the spiritual well-being of male and female pupils. Comparing students' spiritual well-being according to their year of study in 2021 ( $p = 0.689$ ) and 2024 ( $p = 0.957$ ), no significant changes were discovered. Accordingly, there haven't been any appreciable changes in university students' spiritual well-being over time, regardless of their gender or length of stay.

#### *Living Area Before University*

The study utilized the Kruskal-Wallis H test to assess the differences in spiritual well-being among students from different living areas before they entered the university. In 2021, no significant differences in spiritual well-being based on the living area were observed ( $p = 0.791$ ). However, by 2024, a statistically significant difference was observed ( $p = 0.041$ ).

In contrast, after conducting further investigation with Dunn's post-hoc test and adjusting for multiple comparisons, it was found that there were no significant differences between specific living area groups. This suggests that although there is a general significant difference in 2024, the specific groups do not show meaningful differences when compared pairwise.

### *Language/Mother Tongue*

The evaluation of spiritual well-being scores across different language-speaking groups using the Kruskal-Wallis H test did not reveal any statistically significant differences in 2021 ( $p = 0.202$ ). However, in 2024, the results approached the threshold of significance ( $p = 0.050$ ) but still did not provide strong evidence of score differences across different language-speaking groups.

In conclusion, the analysis shows no statistically significant mean differences in spiritual well-being (SWB) across the demographic variables of gender, year of study, and language/mother-tongue at the two-time points, 2021 and 2024.

Although a significant difference was observed in 2024 concerning the living area before joining the university, further pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between specific groups within this variable.

### *Level of Spiritual Well-being across selected variables*

Based on the SWBS guideline (Paloutzian & Ellison, 2021), scores were divided into three categories to examine the level of Spiritual Well-being:

A score in the range of 20 – 40 reflects a sense of low overall spiritual well-being.

A score in the range of 41 – 99 reflects a sense of moderate spiritual well-being.

A score in the range of 100 – 120 reflects a sense of high spiritual well-being.

This table presents the distribution of these categories across different demographic groups, including gender, age, and year of study, at two-time points.

**Table 9**

*Comparison of Levels of Spiritual Well-being*

IDV>DV		Spiritual Well-being (SWBS)							
		Time-points 1- 2021 (SWBS-1)				Time-Point 2 – 2024 (SWBS-2)			
		N	low	Mod	High	N	low	Mod	High (%)
Gender	Male	189	2	59 (31.2%)	128 (67.77%)	190	0	79 (41.6%)	111 (58.4%)
	Female	93	1	30 (32.3%)	62 (66.7%)	90	0	30 (33.3%)	60 (66.7%)
Age	18 – 21	191	3	56 (29.3%)	132 (69.1%)	206	0	75 (36.4%)	131 (63.6%)
	22 – 25	91	0	33 (36.3%)	58 (63.7%)	74	0	34 (45.9%)	40 (54.1%)
Year Stay	2 <sup>nd</sup>	173	2	52 (30.1%)	119 (68.7%)	181	0	68 (37.5%)	113 (62.5%)
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	109	1	37 (33.9%)	71 (65.1%)	99	0	41 (41.4%)	58 (58.6%)
Total		282	3	89 (31.6%)	190 (67.4%)	280	0	109 (38.9%)	171 (61.1%)

**Note.** Mod= Moderate

The reporting Table 8 provides an overview of the levels of Spiritual Well-being (SWB) across gender, age, and year of stay at the two-time points of 2021 and 2024.

In 2021, among the 282 respondents, the majority stated high spiritual well-being. 67.4% have fallen into this category while there were no significant numbers for low spiritual well-being. By 2024, the trend remained consistent; 61.1% of participants had high spiritual well-being. The data showed that in 2024, there were again no significant numbers for low spiritual well-being. Regarding gender, males and females conveyed high spiritual well-being in both periods. It read (67.7% in 2021 and 58.4% in 2024) and females (66.7% in 2021 and 66.7% in 2024). Age-wise, maintained a high spiritual well-being: students aged 18-21 (69.1% in 2021 and 63.6% in 2024), while those aged 22-25 showed 63.7% in 2021 and 54.1% in 2024. Accordingly, the findings demonstrate that most participants enjoyed high spiritual well-being while the majority exhibited moderate spiritual well-being. This evaluation has supported the earlier analysis that showed both male and female students at each time point showed SWB scores above the theoretical mean of 70.

### 4.1.3 Significant Mean Differences of PED across Demographic Variables

Table 10

*Significant Mean Differences of PED*

IDV>DV	Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED)							
	Time-points 1- 2021 (PED-1)				Time-Point 2 - 2024 (PED-2)			
	Test	Statistic	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Test	Statistic	df	Sig(2-tailed)
<b>Gender</b>	Mann-Whitney U	7623.500	-	0.070	Mann-Whitney U	6867.500	-	0.007*
<b>Year Stay</b>		8399.000	-	0.122		8901.500	-	0.928
<b>Living area before Joining the University</b>	Kruskal-Wallis H	10.049	6	0.123	Kruskal-Wallis H	31.408	7	0.000*
<b>Language/Mother Tongue</b>		8.049	5	0.154		17.808	6	0.007*

Note.  $p < 0.05$ , df = Degrees of freedom

Table 10 summarizes the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) score differences across selected demographic variables in comparison to the two-time points, 2021 and 2024.

*Gender and Year of Study:*

At both time points, variations in PED scores according to gender and year of study were assessed using the Mann-Whitney U test. In 2021, the results revealed no statistically significant difference in PED scores between male and female students ( $p = 0.070$ ). However, in 2024, a statistically significant difference emerged ( $p = 0.007$ ). It indicates that gender-based disparities in perceived ethnic discrimination became more pronounced. Regarding the year of study, no statistically significant differences in PED scores were observed in either 2021 ( $p = 0.122$ ) or 2024 ( $p = 0.928$ ).

These findings show that there haven't been any notable changes in university students' perceived ethnic discrimination over time, regardless of their length of stay.

#### *Living Area Before University:*

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to assess differences in PED scores among students from different living areas before entering the university. There were no visible variations in 2021 according to the living area before university ( $p = 0.123$ ). However, by 2024, a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) was noted. This indicates that living areas before university were associated with differences in perceived ethnic discrimination at this time point. Nevertheless, further analysis using Dunn's post-hoc test and multiple comparison adjustment showed no significant differences between particular living area groups. It indicates that although there was a significant difference overall in 2024, particular groups did not exhibit significant differences when compared pairwise.

#### *Language/Mother Tongue*

The Kruskal-Wallis H test did not reveal statistically significant differences in PED scores across different language-speaking groups in 2021 ( $p = 0.154$ ). Nevertheless, in 2024, a statistically significant difference was identified ( $p = 0.007$ ), suggesting that there may be some score variations between various language-speaking groups, but not strong evidence of score differences across different language-speaking groups.

All in all, referring to the two-time points, 2021 and 2024, the analysis reveals no statistically significant mean differences in PED across the demographic factors of gender, year of study, and language/mother tongue. While there was a notable variation in 2024 concerning the living area before enrolment in the institution and among different language-speaking groups, additional

pairwise comparisons did not show any meaningful differences between particular groups in this variable.

*Level of PED across selected demographic variable*

Based on common practices (Brondolo et al., 2005) in measuring Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED), scores can be divided into three categories to examine the level of perceived discrimination:

A score in the range of 17 – 40 reflects a sense of low perceived ethnic discrimination.

A score in the range of 41 – 60 reflects a sense of moderate perceived ethnic discrimination.

A score in the range of 61 and above reflects a sense of high perceived ethnic discrimination.

The table below (Table 11) presents the distribution of these categories across different demographic groups, including gender, age, and year of study, at two-time points.

**Table 11***Comparison of Level of PED*

IDV>DV		Perceived Ethnic Discrimination							
		Time-points 1- 2021 (PED-1)				Time-Point 2 – 2024 (PED-2)			
		N	Low (%)	Mod (%)	High (%)	N	Low (%)	Mod (%)	High (%)
Gender	Male	189	52 (80.4%)	31 (16.4%)	6	190	157 (82.6%)	26 (13.7%)	7
	Female	93	74 (79.6%)	13 (14.0%)	6	90	79 (87.8%)	9	2
Age	18 – 21	191	155 (81.2%)	28 (14.7%)	8	206	74 (84.5%)	23 (11.2%)	9
	22 – 25	91	71 (78.0%)	16 (17.6%)	4	74	62 (83.8%)	12 (16.2%)	0
Year Stay	2 <sup>nd</sup>	173	35 (78.0%)	30 (17.3%)	8	181	147 (81.2%)	26	8
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	109	91 (83.5%)	14 (12.8%)	4	99	89 (89.9%)	9	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>226 (80.1%)</b>	<b>44 (15.6%)</b>	<b>12 (4.3%)</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>236 (84.3%)</b>	<b>35 (12.5%)</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 11 above presents an overview of the levels of Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) across gender, age, and year of stay at the two-time points of 2021 and 2024. In 2021, among the 282 respondents, the majority (80.1%) reported low levels of perceived ethnic discrimination. 15.6% reported moderate levels, and only 4.3% reported high levels. By 2024, the trend remained consistent, of 280 participants 84.3% reported low PED, 12.5% had moderate PED, and 3.2% showed high PED. The data showed that in 2024, there were again no significant numbers for high perceived ethnic discrimination. According to the report, there were no appreciable figures for high levels of PED in 2024. In terms of gender, during both time points, the majority of males and

females reported modest levels of PED. In 2021 and 2024, males testified 80.4% and 82.6% low PED, respectively, while females had 79.6% and 87.8% low PED, respectively. Age-wise, both age groups continued to exhibit low levels: students in the 18–21 age group stated 81.2% low PED in 2021 and 84.5% in 2024, while students in the 22–25 age group exhibited 78.0% low PED in 2021 and 83.8% in 2024.

The findings generally indicate that most participants experienced low levels of PED, with a slight increase in the percentage reporting low PED from 2021 to 2024. This pattern was consistent across gender and age groups at both time points. This evaluation has supported the earlier analysis that both male and female students at each time point showed PED scores below the theoretical mean of 51.

#### **4.1.4 The relationship between Spiritual Wellbeing (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

To examine the association between Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED), a non-parametric test was selected due to the specific features of the data distribution. As previously discussed in section 4.1.3, the data exhibited a deviation from normality, which warranted the use of non-parametric methods. In this context, Spearman's correlation coefficient was employed to investigate the relationship between SWB and PED at both time points, 2021 and 2024. This method is particularly well-suited for assessing the strength and direction of associations between variables when the data do not conform to a normal distribution. Consequently, it ensures that the analysis accurately reflects the characteristics of the collected data.

The relationship between Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) was uncovered at two time points: 2021 and 2024 using Spearman's rank-order correlation. It

disclosed the strength and direction of the relationship between these two variables across both time points.

**Table 12**  
*Correlation between SWBS and PED at the two-time points*

Correlations Between SWB and PED Time Point 1: 2021				Correlations Between SWB and PED Time Point 2: 2024						
		TSWB1	TPED1			TSWB2	TPED2			
<b>Spearman's rho</b>	TSWB1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.469**	<b>Spearman's rho</b>	TSWB1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.445**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000			TPED1	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	282	282				N	280	280
	Correlation Coefficient	-.469**	1.000	TPED1		Correlation Coefficient		-.445**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.		
	N	282	282			N	280	280		

**Note.**  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed).

In 2021, the correlation coefficient between SWB and PED was -0.469, indicating a moderate, statistically significant negative relationship ( $p < 0.01$ ). As the same token, in 2024, the correlation revealed a similar negative relationship between SWB and PED, with a correlation coefficient of -0.445, which was again statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the scores for spiritual well-being increased, the scores for perceived ethnic discrimination tended to decrease and vice versa. Across both time points, a consistent moderate negative correlation was noted between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination. The correlation was slightly stronger in 2021 (-0.469) than in 2024 (-0.445), still, both results indicate a stable negative relationship over time.

## **Qualitative Data Presentation**

This section presents the findings from the open-ended questions in the study. To get comprehensive results, the analysis process was supported by predominantly Excel\_2021 with the help of Nvivo qualitative analysis software tools.

At both time points, approximately half of the participants willingly responded to the open-ended questions following the Likert Scales. The five open-ended questions focused on exploring participants' personal experiences with discrimination, their responses and coping strategies, and the impact of discrimination on their sense of meaning and life purpose. These insights provide a deeper understanding of the qualitative aspects of ethnic discrimination and spiritual well-being. The responses also help contextualize the quantitative data and offer a broader perspective on the research topic. Of all respondents, around 25% reported that they had not experienced or perceived ethnic discrimination. Accordingly, their response was irrelevant/ incomplete to the context of the study. Therefore, the responses were excluded. The remaining answers were examined through the coding process. 68 questionnaires at time point 1, and 55 at time point 2 were with detailed responses. This qualitative analysis presentation emphasized two major thematic areas: Spiritual Well-being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED). Each has sub-categories. Throughout the coding process, these themes were identified and categorized. This table purely sorted out each thematic category and its basic concept.

**Table 13**

*Thematic Categories and Their Concepts*

<b>Main Theme</b>	<b>Sub-thematic Area</b>	<b>Sub-Category Themes</b>
<b>Spiritual Well-being (SWB)</b>	Religious Reflection and Coping Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ RR (Religious Reflection): Spiritual or divine intervention reflections.</li> <li>➤ CM (Coping Mechanisms): Strategies for coping with discrimination involving spiritual elements.</li> </ul>
	Positive Interactions and Life Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ PIP (Positive Interactions and Purpose): Positive interactions contribute to life's purpose.</li> <li>➤ AD (Acceptance of Diversity): Expressing positive feelings about diversity.</li> </ul>
	Existential Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EQ (Existential Questions): Philosophical questions about humanity and life related to discrimination.</li> </ul>

Main Theme	Sub-thematic Area	Sub-Category Themes
<b>Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED)</b>	Direct and Indirect Experiences of Discrimination	➤ ED (Experiences of Ethnic Discrimination): Personal experiences of discrimination.
	Impact on Social and Economic Opportunities	➤ UO (Unequal Opportunities): Disparities in opportunities due to ethnicity.  ➤ LB (Language Barriers): Challenges due to language differences tied to ethnicity.
	Restricted Social Interactions	➤ NI (Narrow Interactions): Limited interactions due to ethnic or language differences.
<b>Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED)</b>	Negative Impact on Purpose and Meaning in Life	➤ NIP (Negative Impact on Purpose): Discrimination is negatively seen as affecting life purpose or potential.
	Erosion of Hope and Purpose	➤ EHP (Erosion of Hope and Purpose): Responses reflect a sense of hopelessness regarding the future and the impact of discrimination.
	No Influence	➤ NOI (No Influence): Responses indicate that individuals believe there is no influence from discrimination.

These sub-category themes were identified from participants' responses. Accordingly, table 14 below summarizes the frequency of responses across these themes. It highlights the prevalence of each theme.

## 4.2.1 Frequency Distribution of Thematic Responses from Participants at Time-point 1

**Table 14**

*Thematic Frequencies of SWB and PED at Time Point 1*

<b>Sub-category theme for Spiritual Well-being (SWB) Time-point 1, 2021</b>	<b>Sub-category theme for Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) Time-point 2, 2024</b>
RR (Religious Reflection)	ED (Experiences of Discrimination)
CM (Coping Mechanisms)	UO (Unequal Opportunities)
PIP (Positive Interactions and Purpose)	LB (Language Barriers)
AD (Acceptance of Diversity)	NIP (Negative Impact on Purpose)
EQ (Existential Questions)	EHP (Erosion of Hope and Purpose)
	NOI (No Influence)
	NI (Narrow Interaction)
	NE (No Experience)
<b>Interacted Themes</b>	
<b>Sub-category theme for Spiritual Well-being (SWB) Time-point 1; 2021</b>	<b>Sub-category theme for Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) Time-point 1; 2024</b>
CM, AD	ED, UO
RR, NIP	ED, EV
CM, RR, AD	ED, EV, OD
AD, PIP	ED, LB
EQ, EHP	NIP, EHP

From the above table (14), the findings are summarized as follows.

### **Spiritual Well-Being (SWB), Time-point 1**

At time-point 1, Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP) emerged as the dominant theme, alongside significant themes of Coping Mechanisms (CM) and Religious Reflection (RR). Students described how they addressed perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) through these central aspects of spiritual well-being. In particular, Positive Interactions and Purpose were closely linked to Acceptance of Diversity (AD), highlighting that individuals who embraced diversity were more

likely to engage in meaningful and purposeful interactions with others. This connection suggests that accepting diversity plays a key role in fostering positive, purposeful relationships despite the challenges posed by discrimination.

### **Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED), Time-point 1**

At time-point 2, the theme of Negative Impact on Purpose (NIP) emerged as the most dominant, alongside themes of Experiences of Discrimination (ED) and Unequal Opportunities (UO). Participants highlighted how discrimination negatively influenced their sense of purpose and well-being, reflecting a significant erosion of hope and opportunities. Additionally, themes like Erosion of Hope and Purpose (EHP) and Language Barrier (LB) appeared, though less prominently. Neutral responses such as No Experience (NE) and Narrow Interaction (NI) reflected the complex relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination. It underscores the varied ways in which discrimination shapes individuals' experiences and interactions.

## 4.2.2 Frequency Distribution of Thematic Responses from Participants at Time Point 2

**Table 15**

*Thematic Frequencies of SWB and PED at time point 2*

<b>Sub-category theme for Spiritual Well-being (SWB) Time-point 2, 2024</b>	<b>Sub-category theme for Spiritual Well-being (PED) Time-point 2, 2024</b>
RR (Religious Reflection)	ED (Experiences of Discrimination)
CM (Coping Mechanisms)	UO (Unequal Opportunities)
PIP (Positive Interactions and Purpose)	LB (Language Barriers)
AD (Acceptance of Diversity)	NIP (Negative Impact on Purpose)
EQ (Existential Questions)	NE (No Experience)
	NI (Narrow Interactions)
	EHP (Erosion of Hope and Purpose)
	NOI (No Influence)
	NI (Narrow Interactions)
<b>Interacted Themes</b>	
<b>Sub-category theme for Spiritual Well-being (SWB)</b>	<b>Sub-category theme for Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED)</b>
CM, AD	ED, UO
CM, EHP	ED, LB
RR, CM	ED, NIP
AD, PIP	ED, UO
CM, AD	ED, LB

From the above table (15), the findings are discussed as follows.

### **Spiritual Well-Being (SWB), Time-point 2**

At time-point 2, Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP) emerged as the most prominent theme, with students expressing how their sense of purpose and meaningful connections contributed to their spiritual well-being, especially in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination (PED). Another significant theme was Coping Religious Reflection (RR), which highlighted the role of religious reflections in helping students cope with experiences of PED. Additionally, Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP) were closely associated with Acceptance of Diversity (AD),

suggesting that students who accepted diversity were more likely to engage in positive and purposeful interactions with others.

### **Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED), Time-point 2**

At time-point 2, Experiences of Discrimination (ED) emerged as the most prominent theme, with students highlighting the significant impact of ethnic discrimination on their lives. Additionally, Erosion of Hope and Purpose (EHP) was frequently mentioned, reflecting how discrimination undermines individuals' sense of direction and well-being. Themes such as Unequal Opportunities (UO) and Negative Impact on Purpose (NIP) also surfaced, illustrating how ethnic discrimination limits access to opportunities and affects one's life purpose. Language Barrier (LB) appeared though it was less significant, and some students reported neutral responses, such as No Experience (NE), indicating no perceived discrimination. Other less frequent responses like Narrow Interaction (NI) and No Influence (NOI) were noted. It revealed the complex interplay between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination.

#### **A. Comparing the thematic distribution of the two-time points**

##### **Spiritual Well-Being (SWB):**

- i. Showing that meaningful interactions helped students cope with discrimination, at Time Point 1 (2021), the themes of Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP) were the most frequent (14 mentions). Coping Mechanisms (CM) and Religious Reflection (RR) were also noticeable.
- ii. At Time Point 2 (2024), PIP became even more dominant (23 mentions), while RR dropped to 5. The occurrence of PIP with Acceptance of Diversity (AD) decreased. Students have reported that they were enjoying positive interaction with less acceptance of diversity.

**Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED):**

- i. As reflecting the strong negative effect of discrimination on participants’ sense of purpose, at Time Point 1 (2021), Experiences of Discrimination (ED) (23 mentions) and Negative Impact on Purpose (NIP) (18) were the most prominent themes.
- ii. Time Point 2 (2024), ED remained unchanged (17 mentions), but Erosion of Hope and Purpose (EHP) increased when neutral responses like No Experience (NE) rose (f, 26).

In general, while PIP remained the most important theme for SWB at both time points, it increased in the second group. The negative impact of PED, although still present, appeared to lessen in the second group. However, Erosion of Hope and Purpose (EHP) increased with more participants reporting neutral responses. To be more specific, Table 17 sorts out the most dominant thematic distributions across basic demographic variables.

**Table 16**

*Thematic Distributions across Gender and Year of Stay, Time Points 1 and 2*

Variables		Thematic Area Spiritual Well-being (SWB1), time-point 1				Thematic Area Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED1), time-point 1				
		PIP	RR	CM	AD-PIP	ED	UO	NIP	NE	EHP
<b>N= 40</b>										
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	6	7	5	6	13	8	10	6	3
	<b>Female</b>	8	4	6	9	10	10	8	8	4
<b>Year Stay</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	10	7	7	10	13	11	10	8	4
	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	4	4	4	5	10	7	8	6	3
Variables		Thematic Area Spiritual Well-being (SWB1), time-point 2				Thematic Area Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED1), time-point 2				
		PIP	RR	CM	AD-PIP	ED	UO	NIP	NE	EHP
<b>N= 33</b>										
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	12	5	1	4	13	3	3	14	7
	<b>Female</b>	11	-	1	1	4	2	3	12	5
<b>Year Stay</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	12	3	2	-	7	2	4	15	6
	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	11	2	-	5	10	3	2	11	6

The above table (16) shows that across the two time-points, males reported higher frequencies in themes across both time points. Males have reported higher frequencies of Experience of discrimination (ED). Contrary to this, the Positive interaction and Purpose (PIP) theme remains consistently high among both genders. In time point 2, females did not explicitly report religious reflections (RR). All in all, analyzing the overall thematic areas, there is no noticeable distribution difference across gender and years of stay.

### **B. Relationship between SWB and PED across thematic analysis**

At both time points, the association between Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) was observed through complex dynamic thematic concepts gained from participant's unique reflections.

In time-point 1 (2021), participants reported distinct incidents of discrimination and how this occurrence disturbed their spiritual and emotional well-being. As counteract, the most dominant responses were Coping Mechanisms (CM), Religious Reflection (RR), and Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP). As it was continually detected, these themes illustrate how participants relied on their faith and spiritual beliefs to express their feelings. Consequently, they don't take discrimination personally. More frequent responses revealed that spirituality enables them to move forward with a more positive outlook on life. Though there are feelings of exclusion, a robust connection with self and others maintains their sense of purpose beyond discrimination. Therefore, to encounter feelings of discrimination, they relied on spirituality to help them navigate the complications.

By time-point 2 (2024), participants expressed their experiences with discrimination in a broader and more generalized manner, but still, the content of the responses remained the same. Instead of

discussing incidents, the overall impact of discrimination in their life was discussed. The thematic focus also shifted slightly. Positive Interactions and Purpose (PIP) remain central, but themes like Acceptance of Diversity (AD) and Coping Mechanisms (CM) becoming more prominent. This group discussed how spirituality served to serve as a stabilizing force in their lives. It furthermore, helped them navigate the complexities of ethnic discrimination.

Interestingly, at both time points, a smaller group of participants struggled with deeper existential questions. Themes like Existential Questions (EQ) and Negative Impact on Purpose (NIP) were more prevalent among these individuals. These participants found that their experiences with PED unsettled their sense of spiritual well-being and personal purpose. In both time points, significantly a few participants voiced feelings of hopelessness and despair; they questioned the meaning of life and their place in a world marked by discrimination. Similarly, some described an ongoing erosion of hope and purpose – EHP. However, a large number of others indicated a growing sense of resilience. They suggested that while discrimination challenged their spirituality, it also prompted deeper reflections on faith and identity.

Taking everything into account, a complex relationship between spirituality (SWB) and perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) has been observed through a detailed thematic assessment. This insight has also been supported by the complex comparison of the two-time points. As a result, for most participants, spiritual well-being served as a buffer to maintain and lessen the feelings and the negative effects of discrimination. The qualitative analysis found that it also awarded them a sense of purpose in life while dealing with discrimination. On the other corner of the thematic analysis, it is revealed that for a few participants, discrimination eroded their spiritual well-being. They remained with meaning and existential questions. To conclude, the overall thematic assessment demonstrated an inverse relationship between SWB and PED.

## Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study comparing its results with theories, broader literature and empirical discoveries.

### 4.3.1 Level of Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination

The sampled students of the College of Business and Economics, over the years 2021 and 2024 experienced key trends regarding levels of SWB and PED. While there was a notable reduction in PED, the overall levels of SWB remained relatively stable across gender, age groups and year-stay. For instance, male participants' mean SWB was 101.2 and 100, respectively, while their PED score dropped from 31.4 to 29.3. The same pattern was observed for both age groups (18 – 21 and 22 – 25), and year levels – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years showed consistency for SWB while decreases in PED were reported. Accordingly, while there was no difference in SWB level, a shift in perceptions of PED was observed.

In both cases, according to the two scales (SWB and PED) guidelines, most students exhibited moderate (31.36%, & 38.9%) and high (38.9, & 61.1%) levels of SWB. Contrary to this, the majority of the participants fell in low (80.1% & 84.3%) and moderate (15.6% & 12.5%) levels of PED. In summation, for both time points, the comparison of the actual mean of SWB and PED are above and below the theoretical mean respectively:  $SWB > 70$ , and  $PED < 70$ .

The qualitative segment of the study also supported this insight; students use their spiritual well-being to lessen the feelings of ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, a study by Jones et al. (2017) supported the idea that spiritual well-being might act as a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination. Other studies also discussed that during the war and political unrest, individuals will rely on their spiritual beliefs as a coping mechanism (Dill, 2017; Xu, 2016). From the other

perspective, Arnett (2016) discovered that university campuses are hubs of dialogues and interactions. The qualitative findings of this study also revealed that students enjoyed positive interaction to maintain spirituality and to lessen feelings of discrimination. Within this context, as most agree, spirituality becomes their best life experience to challenge the uncertain world around them. Thus, the current findings have a high level of SWB and a low level of PED aligns with other study reflections.

#### **4.3.2 Differences in Spiritual Well-being across Demographic Variables**

One of the aims of the study is to investigate if there are differences in Spiritual Well-being scores across demographic variables: gender, year of study, living area, and language/mother-tongue. As a result, the analysis uncovered that SWB scores didn't show significant differences across these variables in both time points. Due to the nature of the distribution, non-parametric tests were employed.

##### *Gender and Year of Stay*

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine the differences in SWBS scores across gender and year of study. In both time points, 2021 and 2024, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students' SWBS scores. Accordingly, gender didn't play a role in shaping students' spiritual well-being. The same was true for year stay as SWB scores showed no significant variations. From the results of the two-time points, gender and year stay probably have minimal effects but not significantly. From the thematic analysis, it's understood that the diversified environment has contributed a lot to maintaining their SWB. The SWB elements have been seen the same across responses. Therefore, the variation can't be seen even if there are minimal differences. Generally speaking, women are expected to be more spiritual than men.

Nevertheless, as Singh & Bahadur (2021) discussed the nature of spirituality, most studies didn't identify potential differences in SWB scores across genders. Paloutzian et al. (2020) noted that while studies using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) have identified significant gender differences in religiosity; the differences in spirituality are less clear.

Regardless of year stay, the findings indicated that time in university does not significantly affect spiritual well-being. This backs the concept that SWB is a more personal construct that cannot easily be fragile in front of challenges. This finding contrasts with the research that reflects how campus life strongly breaks spirituality due to high stress and anxiety (Arnett, 2023). Nevertheless, in the two-time points, SWB remained constant across different batches. The thematic analysis supports the quantitative findings that SWB scores were even. Therefore, regardless of year stay on campus, students equally benefit from the protective quality of SWB.

#### *Living Area before University and Language*

To analyze differences in SWB scores based on students' living areas before joining the university, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied. Although there were no significant differences in 2021 ( $P = 0.791$ ), statistically significant differences were observed in 2024 ( $p = 0.041$ ). Conversely, when pairwise comparisons were conducted for further exploration of the differences, no specific living area group showed meaningful variations. As the same token, from the qualitative section of the study, no answers talked about how their living area before they joined the university made a difference in SWB. Different from these results, when Zozulak, (2021), examined cultural and social contexts in shaping individuals' spiritual beliefs and practices, the findings revealed that culture significantly shapes individuals' spiritual beliefs, and practices. Consequently, the difference in SWB scores varies based on the context. Thus, the overall differences, in SWB scores

in 2024 before the pairwise comparison, might have been the results of societal tensions in their living area before they joined university.

Similarly, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to examine the SWB scores across different language-speaking groups. While the analysis didn't show significant differences in 2021 ( $p=0.202$ ), by 2024, the results appeared significant ( $p=0,050$ ). Despite this, again the pairwise comparison analysis exhibited no evidence to conclude that language significantly affects spiritual well-being. From the thematic analysis, the language barrier was one of the sub-themes which exhibited the limitations of interpersonal connections it caused. In the Ethiopian context language and ethnic identity tend to intersect (Dengechi et al., 2018). As a result, experiences of discrimination and social segregation potentially influence spiritual well-being.

#### **4.3.3 Differences in Perceived Ethnic Discrimination across Demographic Variables**

To target one of the objectives of the study, this section discussed PED scores across selected variables: gender, year of study, living area, and language/mother-tongue. Due to the nature of the data distribution, non-parametric tests were used to uncover the differences.

##### *Gender and Year of Study*

The Mann-Whitney U test was employed to analyze differences in PED scores based on gender and year of study for each time point. The test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in PED scores for male and female students. In 2021, the results revealed no statistically significant difference in PED scores between male and female students ( $p = 0.070$ ). However, in 2024, a statistically significant difference emerged ( $p = 0.007$ ). Despite this finding, pairwise analysis is not applicable when comparing only two groups; the significant result directly reflects differences between the groups. These findings suggest that gender-based disparities in perceived ethnic discrimination became more pronounced over time.

Supporting this insight, from the thematic analysis males have reported higher frequencies of Experience of discrimination (ED) though almost the same pattern was identified in expressing their feelings of discrimination across genders. Thereby, even though the frequency varies, no noticeable differences were recorded when examining the major and sub-category thematic areas of PED. This concludes that male and female students perceive ethnic discrimination similarly. Unfortunately, as far as the researcher dug out, other studies have lacked focus on identifying gender differences; as the broader concept, they figured out the general implication of perceived ethnic discrimination. Owing to this, it's difficult to make comparisons with other research findings.

To get insight from a broader concept, previous studies highlighted that women may deal with heightened discrimination due to gender and ethnicity (Stevens & Thijs, 2018). As Brondolo et al. (2005) the lack of gender differences in PED scores is the reason that perceived ethnic discrimination can be experienced universally across genders. Contrary to this, as noted by Dengechi et al. (2018), in the Majo minority study, women scored slightly higher than men in perceived discrimination.

When comparing PED scores based on the year of study, there is no significant differences were observed: 2021:  $p = 0.122$ ; 2024:  $p = 0.928$ . This reflects that students have stable perceptions of discrimination throughout their stay in university. In line with Cheng et al. (2019), the year they stay in university may not influence them. Instead, students may face similar socio-cultural dynamics throughout their time in higher education.

### *Living Area Before University*

To examine the difference in PED scores based on the living area before joining the university, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized. In 2021, no statistically significant differences were discovered ( $p = 0.123$ ). On the other hand, in 2024 there was a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ). The result suggested that students' geographical background may influence their perception of ethnic discrimination before university enrollment. Previous studies have also highlighted the impact of pre-university exposure to diverse environments on perceptions of inequality (Brondolo et al., 2008). Nonetheless, Dunn's post-hoc test showed no significant pairwise differences. To support this, the Manjo minority study (Dengechi et al., 2018) revealed that specific groups for living areas didn't show significant differences when examined by pairwise comparisons. Thus, the overall difference across groups was not meaningful when compared individually. However, the difference in PED scores is seen in time-point two, (in 2024, before pairwise comparison) hints that it might have happened due to the growing unrest, and conflict in the country.

### *Language/Mother-tongue*

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed to disclose the difference in PED scores based on language/mother tongue. While no significant differences were recorded in 2021 ( $p = 0.154$ ), by 2024, the results advanced statistical significance ( $p = 0.007$ ). The quantitative analysis also recognized language barriers as sub-thematic categories. Negative thoughts like jokes and fun against one's language accent were among the responses to darken the perception of ethnic discrimination. Hence, language may progressively contribute to perceptions of ethnic discrimination. In the Ethiopian context, ethnic identity is closely tied to language; as a result, language might continue to be a proxy for deeper ethnic division. This supports the study that

identified that language barriers can aggravate feelings of discrimination in multicultural settings (Cassidy et al., 2005; Vedder et al., 2006).

#### **4.3.4 Relationship Between Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Discrimination**

As the main objective of the study, the relationship between Spiritual Well-being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) was examined at two-time points, 2021 and 2024. Due to the non-normality distribution of the data, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used. The results revealed a consistent negative correlation between SWB and PED over time.

In 2021, the correlation coefficient was  $r_s = -0.469$ . It exhibited a moderate, statistically significant inverse relationship ( $p < 0.01$ ). With a similar pattern, in 2024, with a coefficient of  $-0.445$ , the correlation remained negative and statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation result suggests that higher levels of spiritual well-being were associated with lower levels of perceived ethnic discrimination. Comparing the two time points, (very slight differences), the findings indicated that a sustained pattern where an increase in SWB was linked to a decrease in PED. The qualitative analysis also revealed a higher sense of spiritual engagement lessens feelings of ethnic discrimination.

The finding aligns with several empirical studies which reflect that spirituality can serve as a buffer against the negative impacts of discrimination. Spirituality is a source of meaning which provides purpose and resilience. For instance, research by Jafari et al. (2010) and Scales et al. (2014) hold the same perspectives that individuals with a strong sense of SWB, are capable of mitigating the negative impact of inequality. Although there is no direct study examining the link between SWB and PED, studies have shown that spirituality is a mechanism to deal with any form of stressors like discrimination (Akbar & Keten, 2024; Scales et al., 2014). The current findings, from

quantitative and qualitative analysis, also pronounce the protective nature of spiritual well-being. As the same token, the Manjo ethnic minority study in Ethiopia found a negative correlation between psychological well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination (Dengechi et al., 2018). The findings revealed that individuals with a higher sense of spiritual or psychological resources may be stronger in challenging the effects of discrimination.

The current findings align with the Meaning-Making Process Model to support the above discussion. The model implies that individuals with high spiritual well-being are more likely to find meaning in adverse experiences. According to Lee (2014), spirituality is a framework where negative experience like PED is reframed. The current findings from thematic analysis support the idea that students with higher levels of SWB view discrimination as part of a life journey rather than a direct threat.

From the other corner of the study, the inverse correlation shows the complex interplay between SWB and PED. On one hand, a higher SWB carries a coping mechanism against discrimination to maintain a sense of purpose and psychological stability. On the other hand, tenacious PED can sometimes weaken SWB. As noted in broader literature (Brondolo et al., 2008), it might lead to existential crises and reduced life satisfaction. The thematic analysis also reported that significant few questioned meaning and purpose in life. They worried as they discussed the erosion of hope and purpose. This concept is supported by the social identity theory notion; as it has indirectly discussed the inverse relation of these constructs – SWB and PED.

#### **4.3.5 Variation in Correlation Strength Overtime**

Variation in correlation strength overtime was one of the findings of the current study. While negative associations between SWB and PED remained over time, a slight weakening of

correlation was observed: from -0.469 in 2021 to -0.445 in 2024. It hints that the buffering and protective role of SWB might be challenged. As discussed in the Meaning-Making Model, and social identity theory, this could be because of social changes like unrest, conflict, and war increased exposure to discrimination. The Manjo study also discoursed that chronic exposure to discrimination could gradually erode psychological support (Dengechi et al., 2018). As the same pattern, the thematic analysis has figured out that a few participants in 2024 showed eroded hope and purpose due to the frequent occurrence of ethnic discrimination.

## **Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Summary**

This study aimed to explore the relationship between spiritual well-being (SWB) and Perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) among emerging adults of Addis Ababa University College of Business and Economics (CBE). As a cross-sectional study, the research compared two distinct groups of second- and third-year university students at two different time points, 2021 and 2024. The following research questions guided the thesis.

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination among emerging adults?
2. Is there a significant difference in the strength, direction, and relationship between spirituality and perceived ethnic discrimination among second- and third-year university students in 2024 compared to a group of students (second- and third-year) from 2021?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination across selected demographic variables (gender, year of study, living area, language) when comparing data collected from two-time points, 2021 and 2024?

This study employed a quantitative research design, supported by qualitative data from open-ended questions, to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Stratified random sampling was used to select participants, with 282 students in 2021 and 280 students in 2024. The quantitative data were collected using two standardized instruments: the Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS), which consists of 20 questions, and the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) scale, with 17 questions. For the qualitative component, participants responded to five open-ended questions following the scales. During data analysis, thematic coding was applied. This approach allowed for a robust

analysis of both the statistical trends and the deeper, qualitative insights regarding spiritual well-being and perceived ethnic discrimination.

For the data analysis, descriptive statistics were used (mean, median ... etc.) to summarise demographic and thematic data. Due to the nature of the data, non-parametric tests, (the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test) were employed to examine mean differences in SWB and PED across demographic variables. Spearman's rank-order correlation was conducted to investigate the relationship between SWB and PED at both time points. Data analysis software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for quantitative analysis, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data using Excel with the help of NVivo.

By employing all the above-listed tests, measures, statistics and procedures, the current study has revealed the following major findings:

A moderate, statistically significant negative correlation between SWB and PED at both time points was observed (2021:  $r_s = -0.469$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; 2024:  $r_s = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). From the overall discussions, it is concluded that higher spiritual well-being is associated with lower perceived ethnic discrimination. These results align with the thematic analysis discussed that participants rely on their spiritual well-being. They use spiritual coping mechanisms including prayer, self-reflection, and seeking comfort in their spirituality to lessen the feelings of discrimination. In contrast, as the qualitative analysis revealed, a smaller group of participants emphasized the intense feeling of ethnic discrimination. They voiced it led them to existential questioning and a crisis of purpose. Thereby, it underlines the inverse relationship between SWB and PED.

Examining differences in SWB and PED across time points, no statistically significant differences in spiritual well-being were observed across gender, and year of stay at either time point (2021: p

= 0.870; 2024:  $p = 0.165$ ). In contrast, significant differences emerged in SWB across living areas before university enrollment at time point two, in 2024 ( $p = 0.041$ ). However, post-hoc tests did not reveal significant group differences. A qualitative analysis supported this insight that participants from various backgrounds expressed similar experiences while using spirituality to manage feelings of ethnic discrimination. In both time points, SWB was a protective shield to maintain their sense of belonging, meaning and purpose in the face of ethnic discrimination.

Contrary to this, Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) scores exhibited a different pattern with some significant differences across genders, a year of study, living area before joining university and among language-speaking groups. In 2021 at time point 1, no statistically significant differences in spiritual well-being were observed across gender ( $p = 0.070$ ). However, in 2024, a statistically significant difference emerged ( $p = 0.007$ ). It indicates that gender-based disparities in perceived ethnic discrimination became more pronounced. Regarding the year of study, no statistically significant differences in PED scores were observed in either 2021 ( $p = 0.122$ ) or 2024 ( $p = 0.928$ ). Nevertheless, at time point 2, in 2024, there were significant differences in PED scores across living areas before joining the university ( $p < 0.001$ ), but again pairwise comparisons didn't show clear variations between specific groups. The thematic analysis of the study backs the results as most participants don't show different experiences of ethnic discrimination.

## 5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Relationship between SWB and PED: A moderate, statistically significant negative relationship was identified between spiritual well-being (SWB) and perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) at both time points, 2021 ( $r_s = -0.469$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 2024 ( $r_s = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Accordingly, higher levels of spirituality are associated with lower perceptions of ethnic discrimination among emerging adults in the College of Business and Economics at the AAU.
2. Differences in Spiritual Well-being: No statistically significant differences were observed in spiritual well-being across gender and year of study at either time point. It suggested that these demographic factors didn't influence students' SWB. For living areas before university in 2024, statistically significant differences were observed ( $p = 0.041$ ) though no significant pairwise differences exist between groups.
3. Differences in Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED): As of SWB, no significant differences in PED scores were found across gender and year of study at both time points. However, in 2024, a statistically significant difference emerged ( $p = 0.007$ ). In 2024, there was significant variation in PED based on the living area ( $p < 0.001$ ); however, the pairwise comparison did not show meaningful differences.
4. Qualitative Findings: The qualitative analysis identified key spiritual themes as coping mechanisms for dealing with PED. Prayers, reflection, fostering positive interaction and acceptance of diversity were dominant SWB themes to buffer and reduce the effects of PED. As a result of the persistence of discrimination, existential questions, eroded hope, and dim purpose were alarming key PED themes.

5. The role of Spiritual Well-being: For many participants, spiritual well-being served as a protective factor. It helped them maintain a sense of purpose and resilience in the face of ethnic discrimination. Nonetheless, a minority of students' spirituality was challenged due to persistent perception of ethnic discrimination which led to feelings of hopelessness and unclear meaning in life.
6. No significant Interaction across some Demographics: Across both time points, no significant interaction between SWB and PED was discovered based on gender and years of stay. This suggested that SWB and PED didn't vary across gender and year level in the study sample.

### **5.3 Implication of the findings**

The findings of this study carry important implications for both academic research and practical applications. First, the study highlights the protective role of spirituality in mitigating the impact of ethnic discrimination. Spiritual well-being was shown to buffer the negative effects of perceived ethnic discrimination (PED). It suggested that promoting spiritual well-being among students could play a key role in helping them navigate and cope with experiences of discrimination. Interventions designed to foster spiritual growth and well-being. Therefore, it could be particularly beneficial in educational settings where students from diverse backgrounds may encounter various forms of ethnic discrimination.

The study also reveals that spirituality serves as an effective tool for coping with discrimination. Spiritual practices that promote a sense of meaning, acceptance, and connection with others can help individuals face the challenges of discrimination with resilience. Encouraging students to engage in spiritual reflection, strengthen their spiritual beliefs, and participate in supportive

spiritual communities can provide them with a sense of purpose and hope, even in the face of adversity.

An additional significant implication is the finding that there were no significant differences in how spirituality influenced students' ability to cope with discrimination across demographic categories, such as gender and year level. This suggests that spirituality may serve as a universal tool for coping with discrimination, regardless of individual differences. Therefore, spiritual well-being can be a broadly applicable resource for students, regardless of their background. It could also be promoted across diverse groups within educational institutions.

These findings suggest the importance of integrating spiritual well-being into student support programs. Educational institutions should consider offering initiatives that encourage spiritual development, such as spiritual retreats, workshops, or counselling services centred on fostering spiritual well-being. By creating an environment where students can explore and deepen their spirituality, institutions could enhance their ability to cope with ethnic discrimination. It leads to a more inclusive and supportive campus culture.

All in all, this study underlines the importance of spirituality in helping individuals cope with ethnic discrimination. By emphasizing and promoting spiritual well-being, educational institutions can provide students with a powerful tool to enhance their resilience and foster a greater sense of purpose and community. Via the process, it ultimately improves their overall well-being.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

The study faced a few limitations. First, scholars from various fields of study were hesitant to engage in open discussions on ethnic discrimination. This limited the opportunity of having the scope of expert insights. Besides, the scarcity of available research on examining Spiritual Well-

being (SWB) and Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) made it difficult to have a more intense comparison with directly related literature. Considering only a three-year gap (2021 to 2024) though it is widely acceptable in cross-sectional studies, it might not be an adequate duration for such observations and conclusions. These gaps underline the need for further exploration in this area.

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## Appendix – 1 Questionnaire in English

**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**  
**School of Psychology**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get some relevant information for the MA thesis research aims to examine the relationship between Emerging Adults' Spiritual Well-being and Perceived Discrimination among Addis Ababa University Graduate Students. Accordingly, the information and responses obtained from you are very essential for this research to achieve its main objective. The study can be fruitfully accomplished solely when you complete all the items genuinely and honestly. The data and responses obtained from you will be by default kept confidential and will be used only for this research purpose. No need to write your name on the questionnaire.

*Thank you for your cooperation.*

### **Section One: Demographic Data:**

The following are some items about your personal information. For each question, you are kindly requested to write the required information in the blank space provided.

1. Sex: 1. Male 2 Female
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Department: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Year of study
5. Where (city/town/ region/ or, all of them) did you study your primary and secondary education before you joined University?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What place (town/city/region, or all of them) do you consider to be your home?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What language(s) did you first learn at home or in childhood and still understand and intensively use?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Section Two: Spirituality Well-being Scale 1, 2, 5,6,9,12,13,16,18**

**Instruction:** The questions below measure your Spiritual Well-being. Thus, read each statement carefully and indicate your degree of agreement by putting (X) in front of the statement according to:

***Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Agree, Disagree, Moderately Disagree, Strongly Disagree***

No	items	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God.						
2	I don't know who I am, where I came from, or where I'm going.						
3	I believe that God loves me and cares about me.						
4	I feel that life is a positive experience.						
5	I believe that God is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations.						
6	I feel unsettled about my future.						
7	I have a personally meaningful relationship with God.						
8	I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life.						
9	I don't get much personal strength and support from my God.						
10	I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in.						
11	I believe that God is concerned about my problems.						
12	I don't enjoy much about life.						

No	items	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly disagree
13	I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God.						
14	I feel good about my future.						
15	My relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely.						
16	I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.						
17	I feel most fulfilled when I'm in close communion with God.						
18	Life doesn't have much meaning.						
19	My relation with God contributes to my sense of well-being.						
20	I believe there is some real purpose in my life.						

**Section Three: Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale (PED-CV)**

How often have any of the things listed below ever happened to you, because of your ethnicity?

Read each statement carefully and indicate your degree of agreement by putting (X) in front of the statement according to:

**1 = never happened**

**3 = sometimes**

**5 = happened very often**

No	Items	1 = never happened	3 = sometimes	5 = happened very often
1	Have you been treated unfairly by teachers, principals, or other staff at school?			
2	Have others thought you couldn't do things or handle a job?			

No	Items	1 = never happened	3 = sometimes	5 = happened very often
3	Have others threatened to hurt you (ex: said they would hit you)?			
4	Have others actually hurt you or tried to hurt you (ex: kicked or hit you)?			
5	Have policemen or security officers been unfair to you?			
6	Have others threatened to damage your property?			
7	Have others actually damaged your property?			
8	Have others made you feel like an outsider who doesn't fit in because of your dress, speech, or other characteristics related to your ethnicity?			
9	Have you been treated unfairly by co-workers or classmates?			
10	Have others hinted that you are dishonest or can't be trusted?			
11	Have people been nice to your face, but said bad things about you behind your back?			
12	Have people who speak a different language made you feel like an outsider?			
13	Have others ignored you or not paid attention to you?			
14	Has your boss or supervisor been unfair to you?			
15	Have others hinted that you must not be clean			
16	Have people not trusted you?			
17	Has it been hinted that you must be lazy?			

*Open-ended Questions:*

1. If you would like to tell us more about your experiences of discrimination, please write your story here:

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2. What do you usually do when you feel you are discriminated against?

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3. Have you frequently observed others are being discriminated against in their ethnic background/ language? If so, what kind of discrimination?

---

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4. Have you enjoyed diversified friendships or interactions? If not, why?

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---

---

5. How does discrimination affect your meaning of life?

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## Appendix – 2: Questionnaire in Amharic

### አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

### የትምህርትና ማህበራዊ ጥናቶች ኮሌጅ

### የሳይኮሎጂ ትምህርት ቤት

የዚህ መጠይቅ ዓላማ ለሁለተኛ ዲግሪ ጥናት ጠቃሚ መረጃ ለማግኘት ሲሆን ጥናቱም በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የመጀመሪያ ዲግሪ ተማሪዎች መንፈሳዊ ደህንነት እና የብሔር ተኮር አድልዎ ግንዛቤያቸው መካከል ያለውን ግንኙነት መመርመርን ዓላማ ያደረገ ነው። በዚህ መሠረት ዋና ዓላማውን ለማሳካት ከአርስዎ የተገኙት መረጃዎች እና ምላሾች ለዚህ ምርምር በጣም አስፈላጊ ናቸው። ጥናቱ ፍሬያማ እንዲሆን ያስችል ዘንድ ሁሉንም ጥያቄዎች በሐቀኝነት መልስ ይስጡባቸው። ከአርስዎ የተገኙት መረጃዎች እና ምላሾች ሙሉ ለሙሉ በምስጢር የሚያዙ እና ለዚህ ምርምር ዓላማ ብቻ የሚያገለግሉ ናቸው። በመጠይቁ ላይ ስምዎን መጻፍ አያስፈልግዎትም።

ለትብብርዎ ከልብ አመሰግናለሁ።

### ክፍል አንድ - የስነሕዝብ መረጃ

የሚከተሉት ጥያቄዎች ስለግል ሁኔታዎ የሚያጠነጥኑ ናቸው። ለእያንዳንዱ ጥያቄ በተቀመጠው ክፍት ቦታ ላይ የሚፈለገውን መረጃ እንዲጽፉ በአክብሮት እጠይቃለሁ።

1. ጾታ \_\_\_\_\_
2. ዕድሜ \_\_\_\_\_
3. የትምህርት ዘርፍ \_\_\_\_\_
4. የስንተኛ ዓመት ተማሪ \_\_\_\_\_
5. ዩኒቨርሲቲን ከመቀላቀልዎ በፊት የአንደኛና የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርትዎን የተማሩት የት ነው? (ከተማ/ክልል / ወይም ሁሉንም ይጥቀሱ)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. የትኛውን ስፍራ እንደቤትዎ ይቆጥሩታል? (ከተማ/ክልል ወይም ሁሉንም ይጥቀሱ)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. በቤት ውስጥ የሚገባብዎት ወይም በልጅነትዎ በመጀመሪያ የተማሩት እና አሁንም በጥልቀት የሚያወቁትና የሚጠቀሙትን ቋንቋ (ቋንቋዎች) ይጥቀሱ?  
\_\_\_\_\_



**ክፍል ሶስት - ብሔር ተኮር የመድልዎ ግንዛቤ መጠን (PED-CV)**

በህይወት ዘመንዎ በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ከዚህ በታች ከተዘረዘሩት ውስጥ አንዳቸውም አጋጥመውዎት ያውቃል? እያንዳንዱን ጥያቄ በጥንቃቄ ያንብቡ እና በሚከተለው መሠረት በጥያቄው ፊት ለፊት የስምምነት ደረጃዎን በዚህ ምልክት (X) ያመልክቱ-

**1=በጭራሽ አልተከሰተም      3=አንዳንድ ጊዜ      5=በጣም ብዙ ጊዜ ይከሰታል**

ተ.ቁ	ጥያቄ	በጭራሽ አልተከሰተም	አንዳንድ ጊዜ	በጣም ብዙ ጊዜ ይከሰታል
1	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት በመምህራን ፣ ርዕሰ መምህራን ወይም በትምህርት ቤት ባሉ ሌሎች ስራተኞች ኢ-ፍትሃዊ ድርጊት ተፈጽሞብዎታል?			
2	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች መሥራት እንደማትችሉ/ችል ወይም አቅም እንደሌላሽ/ህ አስበው ያውቃሉ?			
3	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች ሊጎዱሽ/ህ አስፈራርተውሽ/ህ ይሆን? (ለምሳሌ ፣ እንመታሻለን/ሃለን ብለው)?			
4	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች ጎድተውሽ/ህ ወይም ሊጎዱሽ/ህ ሞክረዋል (ለምሳሌ፡- መደብደብ)?			
5	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ፖሊሶች ወይም የደህንነት መኮንኖች በእርስዎ ላይ ተገቢ ያልሆነ ድርጊት ፈጽመዋል?			
6	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች ንብረትዎን ለመጉዳት አስፈራርተዎታል?			
7	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች ንብረትዎ ላይ ጉዳት አድርሰዋል?			
8	በአለባበስዎ ፣ በንግግርዎ ወይም ከጎሳዎ (ከብሔርዎ) ጋር በተዛመዱ ሌሎች ባህሪዎች ምክንያት የባዳነት ስሜት እንዲሰማዎት አድርገዎታል?			
9	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ከሥራ ባልደረቦችዎ ወይም የክፍል ጓደኞችዎ አግባብ ያልሆነ ድርጊት/በደል ተፈጽሞብዎታል?			
10	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት እርስዎ ሐቀኝነት የጎደለው ወይም እምነት የሚጣልብዎት እንዳልሆኑ ሌሎች ጠቁመዋል?			
11	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሰዎች በእርስዎ ፊት ጥሩዎች ሆነው ከኋላዎ ስለ እረሶ መጥፎ ነገር ይናገራሉ?			
12	በሌላ ቋንቋ የሚናገሩ ሰዎች እንደ ባዕድ እንዲሰማዎት አድርገዋል?			
13	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሌሎች ችላ ብለውዎታል ወይም ለእርስዎ ትኩረት አልሰጥዎትም?			
14	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት አለቃዎ ወይም ተቆጣጣሪዎ ለእርስዎ ኢ-ፍትሃዊ ነበሩ?			
15	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት እረስዎ ንጹህ እንዳልሆኑ ሌሎች ጠቁመዋል?			
16	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሰዎች አላመኑዎትም?			
17	በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ሰነፍ ነዎት የሚል ፍንጭ ተሰጥቶዎታል?			

**ክፍት ጥያቄዎች**

1. በብሔርዎ ምክንያት ስለደረሱብዎ አድልዎ የበለጠ የሚነግሩን ካለ እባክዎ ታሪክዎን እዚህ ይጻፉ--

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2. በብሔርዎ ምክንያት አድልዎ እንደደረሱብዎ ሲሰማዎት ብዙውን ጊዜ ምን ያደርጋሉ?

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3. ሌሎች በብሔራቸው / ቋንቋቸው ላይ ልዩነት ሲደረግባቸው በተደጋጋሚ አስተውለዋል? እንደዚያ ከሆነ ምን ዓይነት አድልዎ?

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4. ከተለያዩ ብሄሮች ከመጡ ግለሰቦች ጋር ባለዎት ወዳጅነቶች ወይም ግንኙነቶች ተደስተዋል? ካልሆነስ ለምን?

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5. ብሄር ተኮር መድልዎ በሕይወትዎ ትርጉም ላይ ምን ተጽዕኖ ያሳድራል?

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**እናመሰግናለን!**