

## **Religion and Delinquency in Trinidad and Tobago**

By

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the relationship between religiosity, spirituality and delinquency among secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago. This study utilized the survey method to gather data from a population of secondary school students regarding student religiosity, delinquency, sexual behaviour, as well as other socio-demographic variables. A probability sampling technique was used to select the schools that participated in the study. Questionnaires were administered at fifteen different schools in order to cover the three different types of schools, (Denominational, Senior Comprehensives and Government Secondary schools), from each of the districts studied. It yielded a total sample size of 1497 students. The various hypotheses in the study were tested through two methods, Multiple Regression models and Tests about Means [the t test of significance & ANOVA]. Results indicated that students who are more religious, i.e. who have internalised religious morals and principles, are less likely to engage in delinquent activities. Results have also indicated that schools, that incorporate a higher level of religiosity in the school culture and climate, have a lower rate of delinquency. High academic achievement and high levels of parental religiosity also contribute to the decline in delinquency among adolescents.*

**Keywords:** *Religiosity, delinquency, secondary school students, Trinidad and Tobago.*

### **1. Introduction**

A major problem being faced by most Caribbean countries, as well as other 'developing' nations, is an increase in school violence and indiscipline among the juvenile population. Evidence shows a marked proliferation of violence and delinquent behaviour in schools during the past ten years. As a result, violence and disruptive behaviours in schools have been at the forefront of research. These studies focused on a wide range of issues ranging from its causes to its consequences, as well as remedial measures, including educational reform and strengthening of the family unit.

Within the existing literature there is a plethora of explanations on the issue, ranging from various attempts at defining the problem, holistic type research into the causes of the problem, as well as many proposals geared towards the effective eradication of the problem. Within the region, due to similarities of culture, heritage and global influences, both past and present, it is possible to ascertain that there is commonality of the salient features of the problem from territory to territory; this finding will prove as an advantage when implementing a plan of action that can be applied regionally.

As mentioned earlier, many attempts were made at exploration of this phenomenon of juvenile delinquency in schools and communities. These include Deosaran and Chadee (1997), Archibald (1992), and Deosaran (2003). However, despite such investigations and intervention strategies there still seems to be an increase in youth deviance.

It is highly likely that the problem of juvenile delinquency may be more serious than official statistics indicate. In light of this, it appears that the issue is inadequately researched and empirical data are inadequate. This paper is an excerpt of a larger study done on delinquency in Trinidad; it is geared towards isolating and analysing the relationship between religiosity and delinquent behaviour, with particular reference to Trinidad and Tobago.

### ***Rationale for study***

With the advent modernity, accompanied by ‘popular atheism’ and secularization (the decline of religion in people’s lives) there are some social scientists, philosophers and social demographers who will completely dismiss the influence of religion and spirituality in society. However, many policy makers and social scientists around the world have attributed the high levels of deviant and delinquent behaviour to the lack of moral values amongst our youth. It can also be asserted that religion and religious beliefs are the basis of moral principles.

Religiosity may be defined as the importance or prevalence of religion in a person’s life (Kosmin & Lachman, 1993; Shafranske, 1996). Religion is the knowledge, beliefs, feelings, actions, and experiences of an individual as expressed in relation to that person’s system. The person’s system may include a church group, a religious sect, or a religious organization to which they belong (Hood et al., 1996; Paloutzian, 1996). Krippner and Welsh (1996) also define religion as an institutionalised body of beliefs with common spiritual beliefs, practices and rituals.

Spirituality, on the other hand, has been summarised as man’s quest for personal meaning and mutual relationships between people, environment and a higher being, which most call God (Canda, 1988). This author identifies spirituality as one’s personal vital belief system. A different perspective of spirituality defines it as non-institutional, non traditional and internalised religiosity (Angell, Dennis & Dumain, 1998).

The main rationale of this study stems from the principles of spiritual values and morality. Morality is active in religious teachings and principles because religious doctrine shows people how to live and act in an appropriate manner (Flannery, 1997). Research has shown that religion can shape attitudes, especially social and political beliefs (Steensland et al, 2000). Belonging to and being active in religious organisations gives an individual something to turn to when in need of help in solving problems (Rice, 1999).

Prescott (2006) has argued that “with the increase of consumerism and materialism in the West, there has been a decline in spirituality and religious involvement; people now live in a different moral climate of declining religiosity.” Is it therefore possible to assert that this declining religiosity is a crucial factor contributing to lawlessness, violence and indiscipline among students in secondary schools? While it is not the goal of this paper to analyse the long term fluctuations of religious decline or increase, the analysis of its impact at a specific time in the nation’s history will be sought, as it is believed that an increase in religious influence, in a particular way, will in fact lead to a decrease in violence in the nation’s schools.

### ***Theoretical Background***

For years, researchers have examined the relationship between religiosity and delinquent behaviour. It has been a widely held view that religiosity deters delinquency. However, after decades of research and dozens of subsequent studies, the only certain conclusion that was founded was that “some aspects of religion inhibit at least some kinds of illegal behaviour, at least under some conditions” (Grasmick, Bursik, and Cochran 1991: 251). Within the literature some researchers have further argued that the deterrent effect of religiosity on delinquency is particularly pronounced for certain forms of delinquency, especially ascetic delinquency, which incorporates the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Harris (2003: 32) makes the claim that these acts are strongly condemned by most religious institutions, but only weakly or ambiguously condemned by secular society.

Baier and Wright (2001) undertook a meta-analysis of 60 studies on the relationship between religiosity and delinquency. What was discovered was that most studies focused on behaviours like alcohol and marijuana use, while 29% examined other non-substance abuse crimes, like theft robbery assault and murder. They further found that religious beliefs and behaviours served as a statistically significant

deterrent on individual level delinquent behaviour. In another study, Johnson, Tompkins and Webb (2002) examined nearly 200 studies on the relationship between delinquency and religiosity and found that religiosity was inversely related to alcohol (N=97 studies), drugs (N=54 studies) and non-substance use delinquency (N=46 studies). Overall, these reviews seem to suggest that there is, statistically, a negative relationship between religiosity and delinquency.

Another study by Wallace et al (2007) examined the relationship between religiosity and substance use. They looked at the phenomenon at two different levels: individual level religiosity and contextual level religiosity. Their research sought :

- (1) to ascertain whether there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between individual level religiosity and individual level alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use across contexts;
- (2) to investigate the extent to which there is an inverse relationship between contextual level religiosity and individual level substance use;
- (3) To examine the impact of contextual level religiosity on individual level substance use, over and above the impact of individual level religiosity; and
- (4) to test the hypothesis that the relationship between individual level substance use and individual level religiosity varies, depending upon the religiosity of the context in which the individual is located.

Firstly, the results indicate that the higher adolescents' level of religiosity, the less likely they are to be adult tobacco users, to engage in binge drinking, or to have used marijuana in the past year. Secondly, it depicted that as the level of religiosity in a school increases, adolescent frequency of cigarette use, binge drinking and marijuana use decreases. Thirdly, the religiosity of the school seems to influence students' substance use, over and above their individual religiosity; however, this relationship exists only for marijuana. And in the last case, the strength of the relationship between individual level religiosity and individual level substance use varies, depending on the religiosity of the context; so it purports that adolescents who are highly religious and in highly religious contexts are less likely to engage in binge drinking or marijuana use than those who are equally religious but in less religious contexts.

Another study supporting the inverse relationship between the two variables was done by Johnson et al. (2001). These researchers examined the degree to which an individual's religious involvement significantly mediates the effects of neighbourhood disorder on youth crime. Their findings indicated that the effects of neighbourhood disorder on crime among black youth are partly mediated by an individual's religious involvement. Furthermore, they posit that the involvement of African-American youth, in religious institutions, significantly reduces the likelihood of criminal acts in the neighbourhood.

Rhodes and Reiss (1970) showed that the life chances of being delinquent or truant depend upon the religious orientation and participation of adolescents and their families. It was found that Jews and non-fundamental Protestants have the lowest delinquency rates, while adolescents with no church affiliation have the highest rates of delinquency.

Thomson (1986) conducted a study where his objectives were (1) to test delinquency theories in social settings that vary by their degree of religiousness; and (2) to determine whether delinquency's causal processes vary according to the nature of religious ecology. He measured religious ecology by tapping a dimension of school religious characteristics including a school's level of religiosity and a school's religious group composition. The findings were as follows: adolescent boys who are opposed to the confines of schools that are predominantly irreligious or disproportionately low in orthodoxy are significantly more likely to engage in delinquent activity than boys from more moral or highly orthodox schools. Experiences in fundamentalist religious groups also protect youngsters against engaging in substance use. It was ascertained that these patterns are independent of demographic variables such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, family size and community size.

Forliti and Benson (1986) surveyed 8,165 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 10,467 of their parents who belonged to 13 Protestant and Catholic youth serving organisations. Connections to the church and religion were related to pro-social action, as were certain parenting practices (e.g., nurturance, democratic controls), sexual intercourse, drug use, and anti-social, behaviour among youth which resulted from less emphasis on religion and less nurturing and support from parents. The majority of the youth surveyed saw religion as important although it was less important to boys than to girls. A restrictive religious orientation was found to be tied to antisocial behaviour, alcohol use, racism and sexual activity.

Van, Hulst & Murray (1997) noted that earlier literature suggests that religiosity deters adolescent delinquent behaviour. They also made mention of discussions that focused on individual variables in explaining delinquent behaviour. They advocate that although these variables may play a role in producing delinquent behaviour they contend that it is important to acknowledge that cultural institutions mediate psychological and familial variables. They investigated the impact of social support received via religious and community involvements on the delinquent behaviour of youths. It was hypothesized that religious and community involvements have similar effects in providing social ties. They analysed data from monitoring the future dataset and examined the effect of religiosity and community involvement which revealed that religiosity has an effect on drug and alcohol use, but that community involvement has more of an effect on delinquency and norm violating behaviour. However, the combined interaction between religion and community involvement appears to have the greatest effect in reducing drug and alcohol use and delinquency.

The major conclusion from these studies is that religiosity or religious influence in adolescents acts as a deviance inhibitor. It is the assertion therefore that if religious and moral principles are internalized at an early age, it may have significant long term benefits in diminishing the high levels of deviant and delinquent behaviours in the long run.

Religion is therefore able to deter immoral and unlawful behaviour (Medoff & Skoff, 1992). It has rituals that reinforce commitment to those values. Religion has a system of rewards and punishments for various behaviours that work to cause its members to adhere to that system.

Stark and Bainbridge (1980) argue that church attendance contributes to moral integration which inhibits a wide range of deviant activity. They proposed that the preventative effect of religiosity is one of the few general propositions in the sociology of deviance that applies at both the individual and collective levels. If this assertion is true then most students who attend places of worship such as Church, Mosque or Temple are less inclined to committing deviant acts they will be effectively integrated into a sound moral tradition that is based on the teachings of their own religion. In this sense, Stark & Bainbridge (1980) support Durkheim's propositions in that religion enhances social solidarity by establishing and reinforcing fundamental cultural values that are based on the principles of morality. By assembling periodically for public rituals people can maintain a sense of common identity and shared purpose. This resulted in what Durkheim called a moral community; a group bonded together by their religious values and ethical principles.

Durkheim (1951) posited that religion aids in the preservation of social order by offering a set of values and beliefs that can be collectively held. The moral commitments that these values foster and their internalization decrease the likelihood that people will engage in deviant behaviour (Brenda, 1997). Participation in religious activities reinforces and strengthens moral commitments and aids in the internalization of values. Many of the values taught through religious activities are reflections of societal norms for proper behaviour. Religion and worship of God teaches people to respect authority, follow the rules, and conform to societal standards (Brenda, 1997; Tittle & Welch, 1983). It is the assumption therefore that people who believe in religion and follow a general set of religious principles usually do not challenge authority figures. These people abide by the rules and procedures that are set forth by those people who are regarded as authority figures. Therefore, people who adhere to some form of religion will

follow the rules and will avoid committing criminal acts or behaving aggressively, which are normally discouraged in these groups (Ellis, 1985).

Sociologists have always studied the way in which belief systems influence the behaviours of the members of a society. Hirschi's (1969) four main areas through which people bond to society and build moral behaviours are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. These four areas can all be found in and fostered by religion and religious association (Matsueda, 1989). Social bonds change over time as a person's social interactions, socialization, and other processes change. Weak bonds to religion, institutions, or others may make a person more susceptible to act in a deviant manner due to the belief that there is no authoritative figure in which to answer. Strong bonds to religion, institutions, or others cause a person to feel responsible to society and other people for his or her actions, so deviance is less likely. Engaging in deviant acts further weakens already compromised social bonds. It weakens a person's belief in morality, decreases attachments to other people, and reduces commitments. However, bonds may be strengthened by refraining from involvement in deviant acts (Matsueda, 1989).

## **2. Method:**

This study employed the survey method to gather data from a population of secondary school students regarding student religiosity, delinquency, sexual behaviour, as well as other demographic variables. A probability sampling technique was used to select the schools that participated in the study. Data for the study were collected via questionnaires that were administered to schools from six of the eight educational districts (Victoria, Caroni, South Eastern, St Patrick, North Eastern, and St George). Due to time constraints data was not collected from the districts of Port of Spain and environs, nor Tobago. Questionnaires were conducted from fifteen different schools in order to comprehensively cover the three different types of schools, (Denominational, Senior Comprehensives and Government Secondary schools), from each of the districts studied. It yielded a total sample size of 1497 students.

For purposes of clarity and understanding the various hypotheses in the study were tested through namely two methods, Multiple Regression models and Tests about Means [the T test of significance & ANOVA]. In addition to this, data will be represented through graphs, charts, as well as the cross tabulation of variables.

The research does not intend to assess how many students are religious compared to those who are not, or to ascertain the level and varying types of delinquency in each type of school in each district. Rather, the research seeks to discover the impact of religiosity on general delinquent and deviant behaviour where religiosity was treated as the main independent variable in the analysis. The various hypotheses that were tested were as follows:

**Hypothesis 1** - *There is a strong inverse relationship between the various Subscales of religiosity and the measure of delinquency, enough to say that there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency*

**Hypothesis 2** - *There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between the total measure of religiosity and all six subscales of delinquency*

**Hypothesis 3** - *Participants who score highly on the measures of religiosity will also score highly on the forgiveness scale enough to state that there is a strong positive relationship between religiosity and forgiveness.*

**Hypothesis 4** - *The five subscales of spirituality will have a significant inverse relationship on the measure of delinquency as well.*

**Hypothesis 5** - *There is a significant difference between the mean religiosity scores among the students of the different school types [Denominational, Government secondary and Senior Comprehensives]*

### 3. Findings

#### Hypothesis 1

*H1* - *There is a significant inverse relationship between the measures of religiosity and delinquency.*

*H0* - *There is no significant relationship between both variables which is equivalent to testing that the slope of the regression line is 0.*

The variables entered in the regression equation were (1) The general delinquency measure which was the dependent variable in the analysis and (2) The measure of religious attendance (3) The frequency of reading a religious text (4) A measure of parental religiosity (5) The importance of god in the respondents life (6) The frequency of prayer and (7) The religious morality scale.

These variables all have negative coefficients, so what can be discerned, is that as these measures increase, delinquency decreases. The observed significance is less than .0005. As such the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is no linear relationship between delinquency and the six measures of religiosity but there is a strong inverse relationship between the two variables.

#### Hypothesis 2

*H1* - *There is a significant negative relationship between the total score of religiosity and all subscales of delinquency*

*H0* - *There is no significant relationship between the total score of religiosity and all subscales of delinquency*

The second hypothesis also proves that there are negative correlations between the total religiosity score and all subscales of delinquency. The hypothesis is supported, thus there are inverse relationships between the variables. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis 3

*H1* - *Participants who score highly on the forgiveness scale will also score highly on the Saliency scale enough to state that there is a statistically significant positive relationship.*

*H0* - *There is no significant relationship between the two variables*

In the t-test conducted, one can discern that there is a difference between the means. However, because of the fact that the significance level is less than .005, it is possible to conclude that there is no significant difference in the means of the two variables. As such the null hypothesis can be rejected, in favor of the alternative hypothesis, which asserts that there is a positive relationship between religiosity and forgiveness.

#### Hypothesis 4

*H1* - *there is an inverse relationship between the measures of spirituality and the level of delinquency of the student.*

*H0* - *There is no relationship between the subscales of spirituality and the measure of delinquency*

When analysing the results of the regression we can see that only two of the constructs are significant in influencing delinquency, i.e. meaning and spirituality. Both measures of social support from god as well as inspiration and discernment are insignificant in the analysis. The model however yielded an r square of 14.2 which means that 14% of the variability in the dependent variable can be explained by the measures

of spirituality with most of the variability contributed by the significant measures. An analysis of the beta coefficients show that they are negative, so as they increase, general delinquency decreases. As such, it is difficult to reject or accept the null hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis had to be modified first before the null hypothesis could be rejected.

The alternative Hypothesis was therefore modified to: ***H1 There is an inverse relationship between the measures of meaning and spirituality and delinquency in adolescents.*** In this case, the correlation matrix shows negative relationships between all measures of spirituality and delinquency. What can be discerned, from the regression analysis, is that the measures of meaning and spirituality have most of the impact on the dependent measure (delinquency). These variables also most strongly correlated with a correlation coefficient of .743 significant at the .01 level.

#### **Hypothesis 5**

***H1 - There is a significant difference between the mean religiosity scores among the students of the different school types [Denominational, Government Secondary, Senior Comprehensives]***

***H0 - There is no significant difference between the mean religiosity scores among the students of different school types [Denominational, Government Secondary, Senior Comprehensives]***

An ANOVA procedure was done in order to discern whether or not there are significant differences in the level of religiosity of students among the different school types sampled. At first glance of the descriptive statistics, one can clearly see a difference in the means for all three types of schools. These differences are not a product of chance or natural variability in the population, the ANOVA table shows significant differences (see Appendix, Figure 1). The Bonferroni Multiple Comparison of Groups Test also showed a significant difference. As such, the null hypothesis was rejected.

With regards to religiosity and gender, **it is clear that girls have a higher level of religiosity than boys** (see Appendix 2). Why do girls have a higher level of religiosity than boys? Could this be related to the lower academic achievement and higher delinquency rates among boys?

#### **4. Discussion**

The main objective of this research paper was to test several hypotheses that were derived from earlier studies. The following are the propositions gained from the aforementioned findings:

***[1] There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between the following religious engagement measures and juvenile delinquency:*** religious attendance, frequency of reading a religious text, parental religiosity, salience, the frequency of prayer and religious morality.

Hypothesis 1 was supported because of the significant inverse relationship to the general delinquency scale. Therefore, as these predictors seem to increase in the adolescent, these youth will more likely be deterred to commit delinquent acts. What can also be discerned is that the variable 'salience' has the largest impact on the dependent variable followed by the frequency of prayer. Is it possible to make such generalisations for any normally distributed sample of adolescents? According to Johnson et al (2001), it is possible to make such generalisations because religious measures are inversely related to deviance. Studies have shown that high religiosity and favorable attitudes towards religion and the church are related to less aggressive, violent, or criminal behaviors. Alternately, negative attitudes, low religious commitment, and low religiosity are related to higher rates of criminal, violent, and aggressive behaviors (Brenda, 1997; Brinkerhoff et al., 1992; Ellis, 1985; Flannery, 1997; Morgan, 1983; Reiss, 2000; Tittle & Welch, 1983).

So how do societal institutions foster greater religious influence? Religious influence must be incorporated at home. Parsons believe that religion is functional for society in that it reinforces value consensus and must be internalized from birth. Religious texts tend to reinforce the right and wrong in

society, i.e. what behaviours are considered moral and what are considered immoral. It is up to the parents to teach the children the positive values that religion reinforces.

**[2] *There is a significant negative relationship between the total score of religiosity and all subscales of delinquency.***

This hypothesis was also supported as it is based on the same principle as Hypothesis 1. The purpose of this hypothesis was to investigate the impact of the total religiosity measure on each self report item. It was done in order to attain a picture of which of the items it impacts on the most and which of the items does it impact on the least. This hypothesis was tested through Pearson's Correlation where the closer the correlation is to 1 we see the strongest relationship.

What we can discern is that religiosity appears to impact the most on drug use (marijuana, cigarettes, alcohol) with a coefficient of -.213 and the weakest but still significant correlation is that of the total religiosity score and sexual behaviour (-.131) (see Appendix 3). Harris (2003: 32) also believes that the deterrent effect of religiosity on delinquency is particularly pronounced for ascetic forms of delinquency (such as drug use) which are strongly condemned by religious institutions.

**But what about pre-marital sex? Do religious institutions in Trinidad and Tobago condemn the use of drugs more than pre-marital sex?** Johnson et al (2001) insists that religiosity plays a key role in deciding whether or not to engage in sexual behaviours. They claim that religious adolescents tend to have fewer sexual experiences than non-religious adolescents. Given the detrimental consequences of sexual behaviour the social work profession needs to develop a better understanding of religious traditions to address adolescent sexual behaviours. The juvenile population must be sensitized of the religious principles regarding pre-marital sex as well as its implications.

It should also be noted that religious variables are not the only variables that determine the level of delinquency. It is acknowledged that there are many variables that social scientists have underscored as impacting on delinquency; however these variables were not given central importance in this study.

**[3] *Participants who score highly on the forgiveness scale will also score highly on the religiosity scale enough to state that there is a strong positive relationship.***

This hypothesis was supported in the study. As stated earlier, Rye et al (2000) argues that forgiveness is the one value that seems to be encouraged by many world religions and one would expect to find that highly religious individuals, including adolescents, hold firm to the value of forgiveness. Forgiveness was strongly correlated with the total religiosity scale.

Traditionally, people may have refrained from expressing forgiveness for fear of feeling less in control, but researchers have discovered that a greater sense of control and power can be brought about by forgiveness. Therefore, by promoting more religious influence, one will also tend to promote more forgiving behaviors.

**[4] *There is an inverse relationship between the measures of spirituality and the level of delinquency of the student.***

This hypothesis was modified into: ***There is an inverse relationship between the measure of Meaning and spirituality and Delinquency.*** Social support from God, and inspiration and discernment had an insignificant impact on delinquency. This was believed to be because the participants were of an adolescent age and had not developed a higher sense of spirituality for those measures to impact. These will tend to be more realised in adults, where systems of institutionalised work and care giving towards family members are of a greater importance.

However most students seemed to adhere to the meaning and spirituality which were supposed to give their lives a “sense of purpose” and help them “achieve goals” which seemed necessary in the competitive nature of the current school climate.

**[5] *There is a significant difference in the mean religiosity scores among the students of the different schools.***

This hypothesis was also supported. It was revealed that there were significant variations in the religiosity of the students in the schools. The mean rate of religiosity was found to be higher in the denominational schools, followed by the government secondary schools and then, lastly, by the senior comprehensives. These differences stem from both internal and external circumstances; internal being that the denominational schools generally place more emphasis on religiosity as they are assisted by denominational religious bodies, external could be the importance parents or guardians placed on religion at the home. However, it is believed that denominational schools foster a greater internalisation of religious principles within the student, as it is reported that students from those schools commit less “delinquent” behaviour.

***Sexual Behaviour***

It was derived from the analysis that the level of religiosity in females was greater than that of males; their level of delinquency was also lower since females were less prone to engagement in delinquent behaviour. Their sexual behaviour also turned out to be less than the males in terms of the number of females in the sample out of 963 females, 18% reported to engage in sexual activity whereas out of the male population of 534, 26% reported the same. Another important finding is that females are less likely to engage in multiple partner relationships.

Studies examining the relationship between sexuality and religious behaviours more generally have found that individuals who attend religious services more often are less likely to be sexually active and, if active, have fewer sexual partners and less frequent sexual intercourse (Lefkowitz et al, 2004). Other studies that use different measures of religiosity have found similar results. These results suggest that religiosity may deter individuals from engaging in behaviors that could transmit HIV infection, other STDs, or unwanted pregnancies.

In this study, 62% of the females who engage in sexual behaviour do so in one-partner relationships whereas only 23% of the males who engage in sexual behaviour have sex with only one partner. If one deduces from previous findings one can then argue that it is the greater religiosity in the female population which inclines them to engage in less risky sexual behaviour and possibly less frequent sexual behaviour

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Results from the study, regarding delinquency indicated that students who are more religious, i.e. who have internalised religious morals and principles, are less likely to engage in delinquent activities. Results have also indicated that schools, that incorporate a higher level of religiosity in the school culture and climate, have a lower rate of delinquency. High academic achievement and high levels of parental religiosity also contribute to the decline in delinquency among adolescents.

The results of this study illustrate the effect of religiosity and religious beliefs on delinquent behaviours and may be of use to policy maker’s law enforcement officials and school authorities. Understanding this relationship is very important because it gives more insight into how religiosity and spirituality impact upon adolescent delinquency in general. High religiosity plays a crucial role in teaching moral standards, charitable behaviour, the crucial value of forgiveness and teaching a person how to act responsibly and care for others.

Examination and evaluation of the possible impacts of religiosity on aggressiveness, crime and violence are important because these social problems are becoming more widespread, not only in Trinidadian society, but worldwide. As the prevalence of delinquent behaviour, crime and violence in our nations schools increase, identifying ways in which these issues may be solved is even more necessary. As suggested in the study, one possible solution may be to promote genuine religious involvement and charitable involvement among the adolescents of the country. The following are some other recommendations which may help alleviate the high incidence of deviance and delinquent behaviour that have engulfed not only the school, but other institutions in society today:

- ❖ Teaching universal moral and spiritual education in the public schools - In all schools in Trinidad and Tobago, a class on religious and moral education should be taught. The teaching of morality must be holistic and integrated into the curriculum.
- ❖ The incorporation of critical thinking in the classroom - Critical thinking must emerge as teaching unfolds. Student must be taught to think for themselves, analyse and make sound decisions. The incorporation of critical thinking will enable the adolescent to rationalise and understand religion beyond mere rituals, so as to be relevant to day-to-day life.
- ❖ Role model influence – Role models must provide guidance about moral behaviour and ways to act appropriately. Many sports personalities should be sensitized on the critical responsibility they have towards these youths who are in a crucial stage of their development. Role models should place special emphasis on encouraging the student's spiritual growth.
- ❖ A more positive contribution by the media - The various media within the country should make an attempt to project a teen image of someone rich in morals and values. Religion should be promoted as a healthy teen choice that should be practised. Programmes on youth upliftment should be highlighted by the media. The media should be bent on highlighting the good that people do, and not concentrate as much on the negatives.
- ❖ Religious denominational participation - The heads of the various denominational religious organizations should take up an active role in the condemnation of school violence. They should aim to empower the adolescent population. An understanding of pre-marital sex and its consequences should also be projected. It has often been argued that religious bodies in the country do not place proper emphasis on adolescent violence and juvenile delinquency.

A genuine attempt must also be made by the relevant government Ministries, as well as the practitioners in the education system, to ensure that these recommendations are implemented. It is critically important that trained and competent teachers are also used in making these proposals a reality. In keeping with the philosophy of participation in the planning process, various denominational religious bodies should also be consulted so as to ensure the successful implementation of an effective plan.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

## Hypothesis 5

## Descriptive

|   |                      | N    | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean |             | Min. | Max. |
|---|----------------------|------|------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|------|------|
|   |                      |      |      |                |            | Lower Bound                      | Upper Bound |      |      |
| Religious attendance Church/Mandir/Mosque | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.26 | 1.307          | .059       | 3.15                             | 3.38        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 3.83 | 1.251          | .063       | 3.71                             | 3.95        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 3.53 | 1.248          | .051       | 3.43                             | 3.63        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Total                | 1497 | 3.31 | 1.268          | .033       | 3.24                             | 3.37        | 1    | 5    |
| The frequency of reading a religious text | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.16 | 1.289          | .058       | 3.04                             | 3.27        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 4.10 | 1.096          | .055       | 3.79                             | 4.11        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 3.48 | 1.314          | .054       | 3.38                             | 3.59        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Total                | 1497 | 3.40 | 1.264          | .033       | 3.34                             | 3.47        | 1    | 5    |
| Parental religiosity                      | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.09 | .901           | .040       | 3.01                             | 3.17        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 4.16 | .799           | .040       | 4.08                             | 3.24        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 3.78 | .837           | .034       | 3.62                             | 3.85        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Total                | 1497 | 3.14 | .849           | .022       | 3.10                             | 3.19        | 1    | 5    |
| Religious morality scale                  | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.47 | 1.003          | .045       | 3.88                             | 4.06        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 4.22 | .937           | .047       | 4.12                             | 4.31        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 4.10 | .946           | .039       | 4.13                             | 4.28        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Total                | 1497 | 4.13 | .969           | .025       | 4.08                             | 4.18        | 1    | 5    |
| The importance of god in respondents life | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.51 | .689           | .031       | 3.55                             | 3.67        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 4.36 | .591           | .030       | 4.20                             | 4.42        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 3.71 | .656           | .027       | 3.66                             | 3.76        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Total                | 1497 | 3.69 | .653           | .017       | 3.66                             | 3.72        | 1    | 5    |
| The frequency of prayer                   | Senior Comprehensive | 499  | 3.37 | 1.276          | .057       | 3.26                             | 3.48        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Denominational       | 397  | 4.44 | 1.059          | .053       | 4.34                             | 4.55        | 1    | 5    |
|   | Government secondary | 601  | 3.43 | 1.022          | .042       | 3.35                             | 3.51        | 1    | 5    |

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|  |       |      |      |       |      |      |      |   |   |
|--|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|---|---|
|  | Total | 1497 | 5.41 | 1.122 | .029 | 5.36 | 5.47 | 1 | 5 |
|--|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|---|---|

**ANOVA**

|  |                | Sum of Squares | df   | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|--|----------------|----------------|------|-------------|--------|------|
| Religious attendance Church/Mandir/ Mosque | Between Groups | 1.411          | 2    | .706        | .438   | .645 |
|  | Within Groups  | 2405.624       | 1494 | 1.610       |        |      |
|  | Total          | 2407.035       | 1496 |             |        |      |
| The frequency of reading a religious text  | Between Groups | 49.104         | 2    | 24.552      | 15.680 | .000 |
|  | Within Groups  | 2339.391       | 1494 | 1.566       |        |      |
|  | Total          | 2388.494       | 1496 |             |        |      |
| Parental religiosity                       | Between Groups | 2.555          | 2    | 1.277       | 1.772  | .170 |
|  | Within Groups  | 1076.990       | 1494 | .721        |        |      |
|  | Total          | 1079.544       | 1496 |             |        |      |
| Religious morality scale                   | Between Groups | 18.964         | 2    | 9.482       | 10.227 | .000 |
|  | Within Groups  | 1385.154       | 1494 | .927        |        |      |
|  | Total          | 1404.118       | 1496 |             |        |      |
| The importance of God in respondents life  | Between Groups | 5.294          | 2    | 2.647       | 6.249  | .002 |
|  | Within Groups  | 632.887        | 1494 | .424        |        |      |
|  | Total          | 638.182        | 1496 |             |        |      |
| The frequency of prayer                    | Between Groups | 1.325          | 2    | .663        | .526   | .591 |
|  | Within Groups  | 1881.373       | 1494 | 1.259       |        |      |
|  | Total          | 1882.699       | 1496 |             |        |      |

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: The total religiosity score  
Bonferroni

| (I) Type of school   | (J) Type of school   | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                      |                      |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Senior Comprehensive | Denominational       | -.247(*)              | .065       | .000 | -.40                    | -.09        |
|                      | Government secondary | -.233(*)              | .058       | .000 | -.37                    | -.09        |
| Denominational       | Senior               | .247(*)               | .065       | .000 | .09                     | .40         |

|                      |                      |         |      |       |      |     |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|------|-------|------|-----|
|                      | Comprehensive        |         |      |       |      |     |
|                      | Government secondary | .014    | .062 | 1.000 | -.14 | .16 |
| Government secondary | Senior Comprehensive | .233(*) | .058 | .000  | .09  | .37 |
|                      | Denominational       | -.014   | .062 | 1.000 | -.16 | .14 |

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

**Appendix 2**

**RELIGIOSITY AND GENDER**

Group Statistics

|                             | Sex of respondent | N   | Mean         | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| The total religiosity score | Male              | 534 | <b>17.81</b> | 1.095          | .047            |
|                             | Female            | 963 | <b>23.31</b> | .840           | .027            |

Independent Samples Test

|                             |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |   |       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
|                             |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |       |
|                             |                             |   |      |                              |         |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper |
| The total religiosity score | Equal variances assumed     | 37.965                                  | .000 | -9.874                       | 1495    | .000            | -.500           | .051                  | -.600                                     | -.401 |
|                             | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -9.166                       | 885.466 | .000            | -.500           | .055                  | -.607                                     | -.393 |

## Appendix 3

## HYPOTHESIS 2

## Correlations [a]

|  |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self Report 1 Frequency of physical fights |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| The Total religiosity score                | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.196(**)                                  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000                                       |
|  | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                                       |
| Self Report 1 Frequency of physical fights | Pearson Correlation | -.196(**)                   | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .  |
|  | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                                       |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Correlations [b]

|   |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self report 2 drug use Marijuana/Cigarettes/Alcohol |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| The Total religiosity score                         | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.213(**)   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000  |
|   | N                   | 1497                        | 1497  |
| Self report 2 drug use Marijuana/Cigarettes/Alcohol | Pearson Correlation | -.213(**)                   | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .   |
|   | N                   | 1497                        | 1497  |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Correlations [c]

|  |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self report 3 sexual activity on/off school compound |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| The Total religiosity score                          | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.131(**)  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000   |
|  | N                   | 1497                        | 1497   |
| Self report 3 sexual activity on/off school compound | Pearson Correlation | -.131(**)                   | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .  |
|  | N                   | 1497                        | 1497   |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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**Correlations [d]**

|   |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self report 4 threatened teacher or student |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| The Total religiosity score                 | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.174(**)                                   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000  |
|   | N                   | 1497                        | 1497  |
| Self report 4 threatened teacher or student | Pearson Correlation | -.174(**)                   | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .   |
|   | N                   | 1497                        | 1497  |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlations [e]**

|                                |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self report 4 stolen something |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| The Total religiosity score    | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.155(**)                      |
|                                | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000                           |
|                                | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                           |
| Self report 4 stolen something | Pearson Correlation | -.155(**)                   | 1                              |
|                                | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .                              |
|                                | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                           |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlations [f]**

|                                       |                     | The Total religiosity score | Self report 6 damaged school property |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The Total religiosity score           | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | -.194(**)                             |
|                                       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                           | .000                                  |
|                                       | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                                  |
| Self report 6 damaged school property | Pearson Correlation | -.194(**)                   | 1                                     |
|                                       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                        | .                                     |
|                                       | N                   | 1497                        | 1497                                  |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).