P-ISSN: 2394-1685
E-ISSN: 2394-1693
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.93
IJPESH 2025; 12(4): 516-520

https://www.kheljournal.com
Received: 25-06-2025
Accepted: 26-07-2025

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Impact of physical activity and morning devotion on the well-being of female teacher trainees at Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education, Ghana

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DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.22271/kheljournal.2025.v12.i4h.3945

Abstract
This study explores the influence of physical activity and morning devotion on the well-being of female teacher trainees at Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education, Ghana. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Spiritual Well-being Framework, the research employs a quantitative cross-sectional design to assess the behavioural patterns and perceived effects of these two practices on student well-being. A total of 218 Level 100 students were randomly selected to complete standardized instruments, including the International Physical Activity Questionnaire-Short Form (IPAQ-SF), a researcher developed Morning Devotion Frequency Scale, and the WHO-5 Well-being Index. Results revealed low engagement in physical activity, with most students reporting minimal or no participation despite recognizing its potential benefits. In contrast, morning devotion was more consistently practiced, particularly in group settings, though it's perceived impact on emotional and spiritual well-being varied. Most participants rated their overall well-being as moderate, citing academic workload as a key barrier to maintaining both physical and spiritual self-care practices. The study concludes that while spiritual routines are more commonly upheld, neither practice is being fully optimized to support holistic well-being. The findings call for institutional strategies to better integrate wellness initiatives into the academic environment.

Keywords: Physical activity, morning devotion, student well-being

Introduction
In recent years, student well-being has emerged as a critical concern within higher education, particularly in teacher training institutions that emphasize the holistic development of learners spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually (Rani, Mahapatra, & Bahri, 2023 [21]; Mahmoudi *et al.*, 2012) [17]. Within this context, faith-based colleges such as Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education in Ghana incorporate structured morning devotions and, to a lesser extent, physical activity into their institutional routines. Despite the prevalence of these practices, there is a paucity of empirical research investigating their influence on the overall well-being of student-teachers.

The positive effects of physical activity on psychological and physiological health are well-established (Simpson *et al.*, 2024) [23]. Concurrently, spiritual engagement particularly in the form of religious devotion has been associated with enhanced emotional regulation, a strengthened sense of purpose, and increased psychological resilience (Koenig, 2012 [15]; Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003) [8]. A lot of work has been done on physical activity (Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006 [29]; Strain *et al.*, 2024 [25]; Herrmann *et al.*, 2024) [11] and morning devotion (Syafi'i, & Mulya, 2024 [26]; Dugan, 2016) [7]. However, limited attention has been given to examining the synergistic effects of physical and spiritual practices on the well-being of students in Agogo college of education.

The present study is underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) [1], which posits that behaviour is guided by intentions, attitudes, and perceived behavioural control. Furthermore, the Spiritual Well-being Framework (Ghaffari *et al.*, 2013) [10] provides theoretical support for the notion that spiritual engagement can buffer the negative effects of

stress and promote resilience. Together, these frameworks offer a conceptual basis for hypothesizing that consistent participation in both physical activity and morning devotions may contribute to enhanced student well-being.

This research aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 4 (Quality Education) by contributing to national and global efforts to promote holistic education and the development of resilient educators (Kucuksuleymanoglu, 2025) [16]. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns of physical activity among Level 100 students at Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education?
2. What are the patterns of morning devotion practices among the students?
3. What is the relationship between physical activity and morning devotion in influencing student well-being?

2. Materials and Methods: This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationships among physical activity, spiritual engagement, and psychological well-being among first-year students.

The target population consisted of all Level 100 students at Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education. A sample of 218 out of 312 students (Hoover Green, & Cohen, 2021) [12]. were selected using simple random sampling to ensure a representative distribution across academic departments. The instrument are:

International Physical Activity Questionnaire - Short Form (IPAQ-SF): This tool measured physical activity levels over the past seven days, capturing data on intensity (vigorous, moderate) and duration of activity (Craig *et al.*, 2003) [4].

Morning Devotion Frequency Scale

A researcher-developed instrument assessing the frequency of participation in morning devotions (e.g., daily, 1-2 times/week, 3-4 times/week, 5-6 times/week or more).

WHO-5 Well-Being Index

A widely used five-item scale assessing subjective psychological well-being over the previous two weeks, rated on a six-point Likert scale (Topp *et al.*, 2015) [27].

To assess the reliability and validity of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted involving 30 Level 100 students from St. Louis College of education. Cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.78, indicating acceptable levels of internal consistency.

Data were collected during scheduled lecture-free periods with the assistance of trained research assistants. Ethical approval was obtained from the College Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

Data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the patterns of physical activity and spiritual engagement. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to explore relationships among variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive influence of physical activity and morning devotion practices on psychological well-being, with statistical significance set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Patterns of Physical Activity Among Students

Statement	S. Agree	Agree	Neutral	S. Disagree	Disagree
How often do you engage in physical activity					
Daily	9(4.1%)	15(6.9%)	8(3.7%)	89(40.8%)	97(44.5%)
1-2 times a week	15(6.9%)	31(14.2%)	6(2.7%)	90(41.3%)	76(34.9%)
3-4 times a week	12(5.5%)	21(9.6%)	3(1.4%)	92(42.2%)	90(41.3%)
Rarely	96(44%)	82(37.6%)	8(3.7%)	21(9.6%)	11(5%)
Never	32(14.6%)	54(24.8%)	11(5%)	76(34.9%)	45(20.6%)
What types of physical activity do you regularly do?					
Walking	176(80.7%)	32(14.7%)	0(0%)	4(1.8%)	6(2.7%)
Jogging	76(34.9%)	46(21.1%)	0(0%)	50(22.9%)	46(21.1%)
Sports (e.g., football, volleyball)	19(8.7%)	24(11.0%)	7(3.2%)	79(36.2%)	89(40.8%)
What motivates you to be physically active?					
To stay healthy	96(44%)	45(20.6%)	7(3.2%)	40(18.3%)	30(13.8%)
To reduce stress	78(35.8%)	61(28%)	5(2.3%)	35(16.1%)	39(17.9%)
To keep fit	84(38.5%)	70(32.1%)	0(0%)	44(20.2%)	20(9.2%)
Peer influence	55(25.2%)	65(29.8%)	4(1.8%)	40(18.3%)	54(24.8%)
Physical activity improves my mood and reduces stress	67(30.7%)	59(27.0%)	0(0%)	55(25.2%)	37(17%)

Table 1 shows that participation in physical activity among students is generally low. Majority of the participants reported that they engage in physical activity either "rarely" (77.6%) or "never" (39.4%). Daily engagement in physical activity was minimal, with only 11% of students affirming this level of consistency. These patterns point to a sedentary lifestyle among the student population, potentially exacerbated by academic obligations, time constraints, and limited motivation or institutional support.

Walking emerged as the most reported physical activity, with 95.4% of students either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they regularly walk. In contrast, more intensive physical activities such as jogging (56%) or participation in organized sports (19.7%) were significantly less common. These findings are consistent with global research showing that while light activity like walking is relatively accessible, engagement in moderate to vigorous physical activity declines during late adolescence and early adulthood (Bull *et al.*, 2020 [3]; Johannes *et al.*, 2024) [14].

Despite low participation rate, many students value physical activity. Specifically, 67.7% of respondents agreed that physical activity improves mood and reduces stress. Furthermore, health maintenance (64.6%), fitness (70.6%), and stress reduction (63.8%) were the most endorsed motivators for being physically active. However, this awareness did not appear to translate into consistent

behavioural engagement. This disconnect between knowledge and action is well-documented in the literature, particularly in university settings where academic demands often take precedence over self-care behaviours (Warburton *et al.*, 2021; Pujari, 2024) [20].

Peer influence was a less prominent motivator, with only 55% agreeing that their physical activity habits were shaped by their social circle. This suggests that, for this population, internal motivations such as health and stress relief are more influential than external pressures though even internal motivation may be insufficient when faced with academic or structural barriers.

Table 2: Patterns of morning devotion practices

Statement	S. Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	S. Disagree
How often do you participate in morning devotion?					
1-2 times	31(14.3%)	12(5.5%)	0(0%)	77(35.3%)	98(45%)
3-4 times a week	43(19.7%)	36(16.5%)	0(0%)	63(28.9%)	76(36.2%)
5-6 times a week	90(41.2%)	74(34%)	0(0%)	33(15.1%)	21(9.6%)
Occasionally	45(20.6%)	31(14.2%)	3(1.4%)	73(33.5%)	66(30.3%)
How do you usually have your morning devotion?					
Individually	28(12.8%)	38(17.3%)	0(0%)	87(40%)	65(30%)
In a group	87(40%)	71(32.6%)	0(0%)	37(17%)	23(10.5%)
Both	43(19.7%)	71(32.6%)	0(0%)	51(23.4%)	53(24.3%)
Morning devotion gives me peace of mind and helps me start my day positively.	32(14.7%)	12(5.5%)	0(0%)	97(44.5%)	77(35.3%)
Morning devotion helps me cope better with academic or personal challenges.	29(13.3%)	38(17.4%)	5(2.3%)	81(37.2%)	65(29.8%)

The results indicate that students exhibit varied levels of engagement in morning devotion. Notably, 75.2% of participants reported attending morning devotion five to six times per week, suggesting that a significant portion of students follow a consistent devotional routine. Conversely, low participation is also evident; 80.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with engaging in devotion only one to two times weekly.

Research by Violante *et al.* (2025) [28] emphasizes that structured spiritual routines such as daily devotional practices can promote emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and a sense of communal belonging. However, variability in participation may be influenced by several factors, including individual belief systems, family background, school policies, and competing academic demands (Rizki, 2025 [22]; White, Parker, & Meyer, 2023 [31]; Jacob, 2025) [13]. Students who are raised in environments that emphasize religious practice are more likely to maintain regular participation, while others may experience devotion as obligatory or peripheral to their daily priorities.

When examining how students engage in morning devotion, the data reveal a strong preference for group-based worship. Approximately 72.6% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they participate in group devotion, while 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed with doing so individually. This preference may reflect institutional or cultural norms that encourage communal worship, particularly in faith-based educational settings.

Group worship has been shown to enhance emotional connectedness and reduce feelings of isolation among adolescents (Gemar, 2024).[9] Shared religious experiences often foster a sense of unity and accountability, contributing to students perceived social support systems. In contrast, individual devotion though potentially more reflective or personal appears less common among the surveyed population, possibly due to a lack of privacy, motivation, or encouragement.

Despite regular participation in morning devotion, most students did not report substantial mental health benefits. Majority of the participants (79.8%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that morning devotion helps them begin their day with peace of mind. Similarly, 67% did not believe that devotion helps them manage academic or personal challenges.

This aligns with prior findings in the literature, which note that the positive effects of religious practices on well-being are contingent on the personal significance of the practice. Newman, Nezlek, and Thrash (2023) [18] argue that spirituality enhances mental health when it is internalized and intrinsically motivated. Similarly, Davis *et al.* (2023) [5] found that youth who engage in meaningful, rather than routine-based, spiritual practices report higher emotional resilience.

Table 3: Relationship between physical activity and morning devotion in influencing well-being

Statements	S. Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	S. Disagree
How would you rate your overall well-being?					
Excellent	18(8.3%)	27(12.4%)	3(1.4%)	97(44.5%)	73(33.5%)
Good	26(11.9%)	29(13.3%)	0(0%)	69(31.6%)	94(43.1%)
Fair	97(44.5%)	61(28%)	2(0.9%)	22(10.1%)	36(16.5%)
Physical activity contributes positively to my academic performance	34(15,6%)	28(12.8%)	0(0%)	87(39.9%)	69(31.6%)
Morning devotion contributes positively to my emotional and spiritual well-being.	83(38.1%)	55(25.2%)	0(0%)	37(17%)	43(19.7%)
I find it difficult to maintain both physical activity and devotion due to academic workload	83(38.1%)	72(33.0%)	0(0%)	43(19.7%)	20(9.2%)

The data presented in Table 3 highlighted important insights into students' perceptions of well-being and the role of physical activity and morning devotion in shaping their daily experiences. A significant proportion of students (72.5%) rated their well-being as "fair", while a small section reported it as "excellent" (20.7%) or "good" (25.2%). These findings suggest that most students experience moderate levels of well-being, which may reflect broader challenges such as academic

stress, insufficient coping mechanisms, or limited time for self-care practices.

This observation is consistent with existing literature indicating that adolescent well-being is closely tied to contextual factors such as school environment, peer relationships, and engagement in health-promoting behaviours (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023) [32]. Academic workload appears to be a major source of strain that influences students' perceived quality of life.

Interestingly, most students (71.5%) disagreed with the statement that physical activity positively affects their academic performance. In contrast, 63.3% agreed that morning devotion enhances their emotional and spiritual well-being. This disparity suggests that students perceive spiritual practices as more beneficial to their inner emotional state than physical activity is to their academic success. This aligns with findings from Almutairi (2024) [2] and Downing (2025) [6], who note that spiritual engagement during adolescence can provide emotional stability and foster resilience.

Despite recognizing the emotional and spiritual benefits of morning devotion, students also reported difficulties in maintaining both physical activity and devotion due to academic responsibilities. Over 70% acknowledged struggling to balance these practices with their academic workload. These findings point to a broader issue of time management and suggest that although students may value wellness practices, they often lack the time or institutional support to sustain them consistently. Pérez-Jorge *et al.* (2025) [19] emphasize that excessive academic demands can significantly reduce student participation in both physical and emotional self-care activities.

Furthermore, the data reveal a limited appreciation of the cognitive and academic benefits of physical activity. Only 29.4% of respondents perceived physical activity as enhancing academic performance. This underestimation is noteworthy, considering a substantial body of research indicates that regular physical exercise improves attention, memory, and stress regulation, all of which are critical to academic success (Singh *et al.*, 2019) [24].

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of physical activity and morning devotion on the well-being of female teacher trainees in a faith-based college in Ghana. The findings revealed that while morning devotion is more routinely practiced often in group settings physical activity is infrequent, largely due to academic pressures and possible structural limitations. Despite general awareness of the benefits of these practices, most students reported only moderate levels of well-being. The disconnect between motivation and participation suggests the need for more intentional institutional efforts to embed holistic wellness into the college environment. Ultimately, fostering a culture that equally values spiritual, emotional, and physical health will be essential to developing resilient and well-rounded educators.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Timetables should include dedicated periods for physical activity and personal devotion to reduce conflict with academic demands.
- The college should initiate structured programs that combine physical activity (e.g., aerobics, walking clubs) with spiritual practices to foster balanced development.
- Students need more awareness of the cognitive, emotional, and academic benefits of regular physical activity. Guest lectures and wellness seminars can help bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour.
- Facilities such as fitness areas or quiet reflection spaces should be made available and accessible to students, especially women.
- Qualitative studies should be conducted to explore the underlying personal, cultural, and systemic barriers that hinder participation in physical activity and devotion, especially from a gendered perspective.

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