



## Lecturers' Pedagogical Dispositions and University Religious Studies Students' Academic Engagement: Intel from Students in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the perceived effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions (professionalism, patience, and caring attitudes) on academic engagement among Religious Studies (RS) students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). The Socio-cultural theory underpinned this study. The explanatory sequential mixed methods design was employed. Through the census method, all 514 religion major students responded to the questionnaire (reliability coefficient of .971) while 10 were selected for the interview. Data from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential (multiple regression) statistics. The qualitative data from interviews were thematically analysed. Results showed that university RS lecturers possess high levels of professionalism, patience, and academic engagement. Students explained that the lecturers' patience during RS lessons is top-notch as they aid students' understanding, clearly explain concepts, teach with multiple approaches, promote comfortable student participation, boost interest, and make learning easy. The lecturers were found to have a genuine concern for students' well-being, be approachable and willing to help students, take time to know students, support students' academic-personal challenges, show empathy and support, build personal relationships, be objective disciplinarians, provide extra support and willingness to accept student weaknesses. It was discovered that the predictor (lecturers' professionalism, patience, and caring attitude) explained 55% of the variance in the outcome (university RS students' academic engagement)  $F(3, 510) = 205.330, p = .000, R = .740, R^2 = .547$ . Lecturers' caring attitudes positively increase engagement and academic performance. The findings imply that, UCC RS lecturers are on top of their job and that for lecturers to be able to engage students academically; they need to be professional, patient and caring. It was recommended that UCC lecturers should incorporate interactive and relevant real-world applications of RS during the engagement. RS lecturers in UCC should enhance their student-oriented teaching strategies and cherish contemporary issues in RS that can deepen RS students' interest so they connect with the subject to enhance engagement further.*

**Keywords:** Academic Engagement, Caring Attitude, Professionalism, Patience, Pedagogical Disposition, Religious Studies, Student

### I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, the role of the lecturer extends beyond the facilitation of knowledge and skills to students. Effective teaching encompasses a range of pedagogical dispositions that significantly impact students' academic engagement, particularly in fields such as Religious Studies, which require a deep and reflective learning approach (Mensah et al, 2024). In universities across the globe, the influence of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on students' academic engagement is a subject of growing interest. The lecturers' pedagogical dispositions encompassing teaching styles and methods, significantly affect students' academic engagement across various disciplines. For instance, Vimbelo and Bayaga (2024) indicate that the use of humanising pedagogy (HP) in education



led to increased student engagement and active participation. Lecturers' pedagogical dispositions are critical in fostering academic engagement among university students.

Pedagogical dispositions in the context of this study encapsulate professionalism, patience, and a caring attitude of lecturers, which fosters student engagement. Professionalism in teaching is characterised by a commitment to preparation, ethical behaviour, and continuous improvement (Kunter et al., 2013). Patience allows instructors to effectively manage diverse learning paces and address students' individual needs (Wardoyo & Herdiani, 2017). A caring attitude, marked by empathy and concern for students' well-being, has been shown to build trust and rapport, thereby increasing students' willingness to participate and engage in academic activities (Noddings, 2013).

Academic engagement, defined as students' involvement in academic activities or tasks and their commitment to learning, is crucial for achieving educational success (Fredricks et al., 2004). Engaged students are more likely to attend classes, participate in discussions, complete assignments, and achieve higher academic performance. McCarthy and Kuh (2006) defined engagement as a student's investment in learning, understanding, and mastering knowledge and abilities. Rotermund (2011) defined engagement as active participation in school and saw it as a critical notion for understanding students' failures, which result in severe individual social consequences and dropouts. Kortering and Christenson (2009) posit that absence is the most crucial indicator of disengagement and unhappiness at school, as well as an important prelude to dropping out. Given the complex and often abstract nature of Religious Studies (RS), high levels of academic engagement are critical to ensure that students can fully grasp and reflect upon the religious materials and concepts. Similarly, the adoption of modern pedagogical practices, as opposed to traditional didactic methods, has been shown to enhance student engagement and cognitive involvement (Yasin & Kabeta, 2023). Tang et al. (2020) suggest that formal teaching styles can moderate the relationship between lecturers' teaching. Additionally, the psychosocial and academic trust alienation theory posits that barriers to student engagement include classroom activities, relationships with teaching staff, and institutional factors (Jones, 2021). While the studies do not specifically address religious studies, the findings can be extrapolated to suggest that engaging teaching methods, alignment with students' learning preferences, and the cultivation of a supportive educational environment are likely to enhance engagement in this field as well.

The pedagogical dispositions of lecturers play a crucial role in influencing university RS students' academic engagement (Kunter et al., 2013; Ruhendi & Marta, 2022; Yanis, 2022). Lecturer competence positively impacts accountability and learning outcomes in Islamic religious higher education institutions. This emphasises the importance of effective teaching practices in enhancing student engagement. Additionally, the study on workplace spirituality and employee engagement among university lecturers highlights that lecturers derive motivation and satisfaction from their teaching roles, which can significantly affect their engagement levels and, consequently, students' academic engagement (Yanis, 2022). Idris and Lindrayeni (2019) indicate that factors such as education level, teaching experience, and gender significantly affect the professionalism and performance of academic teaching staff, which could be extrapolated to those teaching RS. Ziebertz and Heil (2004) discuss the professional competencies of teachers in religious education, particularly their ability to reason about students' religious expressions. Kartabayeva et al. (2015) highlight the accumulated experience in teaching RS as an academic discipline in Kazakhstan, suggesting a level of professionalism developed through curricular changes and specialization. Vogel (2009) provides insight into the professional ideals of Fachhochschul professors in Germany, which may differ from university professors but still contribute to the overall understanding of academic professionalism. Richit et al. (2024) emphasises the role of collaboration in professional development among university and other field professors, which could also be relevant to those in RS.

Professionalism encompasses a range of behaviours including expertise, punctuality, preparedness, and a commitment to ethical practices. Lecturers who demonstrate professionalism create an environment of respect and trust, which is foundational for student engagement. Cruickshank et al (2006) noted that professional conduct by teachers fosters a positive learning environment, promoting student participation and interest. Patience is the ability to remain calm and composed, especially when students struggle with understanding. This trait is critical in fostering a supportive learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable to express difficulties and ask questions. Duckworth et al. (2007) found that patient teachers help in developing students' perseverance and resilience, which are crucial for sustained engagement. Borich (2016) highlighted that patience in educators encourages a growth mindset among students, leading to higher academic motivation and engagement. Noddings (2005) argued that caring relationships in education promote a sense of belonging and motivation among students. Hattie (2009) found that teacher-student relationships, characterised by care and respect, have a significant impact on student achievement and engagement.

Several studies have tried working on other issues related to encouraging students' engagement. Afridah (2023) highlight the importance of mental health among university lecturers, noting that factors like spirituality, education level, and certification status significantly influence their mental health condition. Sivtseva et al. (2024) delve into communicative tolerance, a trait that could be associated with patience, and identify various socio-psychological factors that influence it, such as empathy and emotional stability. Additionally, Asfahani (2024)



discusses psychological resilience, which is related to the ability to cope with stress and adversity, potentially reflecting a lecturer's capacity for patience. The studies suggest that factors contributing to mental health, communicative tolerance, and resilience are relevant and may indirectly reflect on their patient levels.

Lecturers demonstrate caring attitudes through their approach to teaching adult learners, acknowledging the complex interplay of external factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and private lives that shape students' learning experiences (Merrill, 2001). Additionally, the nurturing and caring environments created by lecturers, as observed in the context of nursing education, allow students to integrate caring attitudes into their professional roles (Umubyeyi et al., 2024). Interestingly, while some studies emphasize the importance of compassion and empathy in teaching practices, there is debate about whether these attributes can be taught or are innate, suggesting a potential divergence in lecturers' perceptions of their role in fostering these qualities (Richards et al., 2016). Moreover, the presence of Graduate Academic Assistants who offer compassionate support to undergraduates highlights the recognition of the need for caring attitudes within the academic staff, bridging the gap between students and more senior academics (Gill & Ursuleanu, 2017).

The level of university students' academic engagement varies across studies and contexts. Delfino (2019) reports that the level of student engagement along behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions was high among students of Partido State University with a mean of 2.84 on their scale. Similarly, Reyes-De-Cózar et al. (2023) indicate that students feel connected to and interested in their studies, suggesting a positive level of engagement. However, these findings are not universally consistent, as engagement levels can be influenced by various factors, including institutional culture, teaching strategies, and individual student characteristics. Interestingly, while some studies found a positive correlation between student engagement and academic performance (Delfino, 2019), others did not find a direct improvement in academic performance due to student engagement (Monsanto, 2015). This suggests that the relationship between engagement and performance may be complex and potentially influenced by other mediating factors.

The combined effect of these dispositions (professionalism, patience, and caring attitudes) of lecturers has implications for the student's willingness to pay much attention to religious activities that involve studying religion. The link is that professionalism sets the foundation by creating a structured and respectful learning environment. Patience builds on this by supporting students through their learning challenges, fostering resilience and a willingness to engage. A caring attitude ties it all together by establishing strong relational bonds that motivate students to participate actively and take ownership of their learning. The University of Cape Coast has been classified by the Times High Education as the first university in Ghana, the first university in West Africa, and the seventh in Africa. Despite the recognised importance of these pedagogical dispositions, limited research specifically focuses on their impact within the context of RS at the University of Cape Coast. Understanding how professionalism, patience, and a caring attitude influence academic engagement can provide valuable insights for improving teaching practices and student outcomes in this field.

### 1.1 Statement of Problem

Religious studies enable one to appreciate the world of beliefs of the various religions across the world (Mensah & Ampem, 2023). RS students hold in high esteem their religions and it needs to be understood by lecturers who instruct them, an attribute christened as pedagogical disposition. In religious studies, a field characterised by abstract thinking and often sensitive subject matter, lecturers need to adopt teaching strategies that not only communicate knowledge but also stimulate critical thinking and reflective learning (Kartabayeva et al., 2015; Başıbek, et al (2014). The effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on students' academic engagement goes a long way in influencing the religious student's readiness to participate voluntarily in religious tasks without being coerced. While attributes such as professionalism, patience, and a caring attitude are widely acknowledged as essential components for effective teaching, we do not know much about their effect on students' engagement in the Ghanaian University context and this study was purposed to bridge this knowledge gap.

Prior to this study, regular conversations with many students who are reluctant to learn and engage wholeheartedly in religious studies courses as required by the university reveals that they would not come back to the university (the alma mater) for postgraduate studies. Again, students disengage in lectures because they think their lecturers don't show professionalism, patience, and care. Intel from the RS students presents nerve-breaking news and hope as their lecturers teach virtues and practice vice. This shows that the RS students do not seem to give any regard to the lecturers because they know that at the end of the day, whatever they are learning here cannot be viably practised. The university's policies recommend that the lecturers get evaluated in the students' portal. However, the data are kept away from the public, making it cumbersome for upcoming educators to know what to do and what not to do so as lecturers' professionalism, patience, and caring traits for better ways of teaching RS. This leaves students and the university community in doubt regarding the kind of training and examples being given to the learners. This gave us the impetus to conduct the study in the University of Cape Coast.



Existing literature highlights the importance of these dispositions (professionalism, patience, and caring attitudes) in fostering a conducive learning environment (Kunter et al., 2013; Noddings, 2013), yet empirical data on their impact on academic engagement in RS at the University of Cape Coast is scarce. This knowledge gap poses a challenge for developing targeted strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve student engagement in this field. Appleton et al. (2006) did not include sub-dimensions of student engagement. Yanis (2022) also studied how workplace spirituality and employee engagement of university lecturers help them derive motivation and satisfaction from their teaching roles which affects students' academic engagement. Idris and Lindrayeni (2019) indicate that factors such as education level, teaching experience, and gender significantly affect the professionalism and performance of academic teaching staff without any arduous study on their ability to engage learners. Richit et al. (2024) emphasizes the role of collaboration in professional development among university professors. Afridah (2023) highlight the importance of the mental health of university lecturers, emphasising spirituality, education level, and certification status. Asfahani (2024) discusses psychological resilience. Umubyeyi et al., (2024) studied how lecturers value the professional development of their students. Gill and Ursuleanu (2017) researched Graduate Academic Assistants who offer compassionate support to undergraduates.

Meticulous and ardent efforts in perusing empirical works suggest a need to establish the effects of the pedagogical dispositions (professionalism, patience, and caring attitudes) on RS students' academic engagement to provide clear directions for out-of-field teachers and para-professional teachers. No study seems to have emerged to measure the effect of the dispositions on RS students' academic engagement. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on University RS students' academic engagement. The study informs teaching practices and contributes to the enhancement of educational outcomes. It will also help the university to continue its appearance in the world domain, as a top-notch institution that moved from the bottom to a higher level which will attract more sponsors and clients (students) to patronise its programmes. The study was undergirded by the following research questions and a hypothesis.

## 1.2 Research questions

- i. What is the level of university lecturers' professionalism in teaching RS?
- ii. What is the level of university lecturers' patience in teaching RS?
- iii. What are the university lecturers' Caring Attitudes in teaching RS?
- iv. What is the level of university students' academic engagement?

## 1.3 Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub> There is no statistically significant effect of lecturers' dispositions on university students' academic engagement.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Sociocultural Theory

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) which emphasises that social and cultural contexts strongly shape learning. He argued that students achieve optimal learning through interactions with others, particularly with peers or instructors who possess greater expertise (Sahoriar, 2024). Through social interaction, students participate in meaningful discussions, share ideas, and collaboratively build knowledge, leading to a deeper understanding and increased motivation to learn. Pedagogical disposition encompasses instructors' approach to content delivery, interaction with students, and the overall learning environment they foster (Korthagen, 2017). Active learning techniques, such as group discussions, case studies, and debates, are particularly effective in fostering engagement in such settings (Bain, 2012). In universities, educators can apply Vygotsky's principles to boost student engagement and create a supportive learning atmosphere. By capturing students' interest and simplifying complex ideas, teachers can make learning RS more effective. Strategies aligned with Vygotsky's theory, such as student-centred learning, collaborative group work, and hands-on projects, promote social interaction and knowledge construction. Educators serve as cognitive mentors, assisting students with challenging tasks and fostering active involvement. Lecturers can achieve this by being accessible, encouraging open communication, and accommodating individual learning needs. Such an environment empowers students to explore new concepts without fearing criticism. There is a belief that the presence of professionalism, patience, and caring attitudes will soften the hearts of RS students to pay more attention to their studies. According to Noddings (2005), the relational aspect of teaching is central to pedagogical disposition, and lecturers who demonstrate empathy and adaptability are more likely to engage students effectively.



## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 University Lecturers' Level of Professionalism

Research suggests that lecturers' professional identities are in a state of flux, shaped by the demands of their institutions and the changing landscape of higher education (Turner et al., 2009). Lecturers demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting learners and take pride in their role as educators, particularly in further education colleges offering higher education programs despite the doubt (Turner et al., 2009; Young, 2002). The increasing demand for higher education has led to tensions between academic values and consumeristic student expectations, forcing lecturers to balance their roles as educators and entertainers (Wong & Chiu, 2017). The development of professionalism requires ongoing support, recognition, and opportunities for professional learning (Tatto, 2021). Institutions should consider providing postgraduate certificates in teaching higher education to help new lecturers acculturate into the discourses of university learning and teaching (Butcher & Stoncel, 2012) and fostering professional agency and creating spaces for lecturers to influence and develop their teaching practices can contribute to sustainable educational change and enhanced professionalism (Kusters et al., 2023).

### 2.2.2 University Lecturers' Level of Patience

University lecturers generally demonstrate high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for their teaching roles, despite various challenges. For instance, Young (2002) notes that lecturers demonstrated a remarkable level of enthusiasm and personal commitment to teaching in Universities (Young, 2002). This suggests that lecturers may exhibit patience and dedication in their teaching, regardless of the subject area. Wong and Chiu (2018), reveal that lecturers focus on the qualities of students such as preparation, engagement, and commitment, as well as being critical, reflective, and making progress rather than high grades. This implies that lecturers value students' efforts and growth, which may indicate a patient approach to teaching.

### 2.2.3 University Lecturers' Level of Care

Caring teaching involves nurturing students' characters, demonstrating awareness, and employing respectful didactics (Gholami & Tirri, 2012). Lecturers tend to place more pedagogical value on personal care aspects, which suggests a focus on students' overall well-being and development beyond just academic achievement. Interestingly, the implementation of caring attitudes may vary depending on factors such as the medium of instruction and teaching experience. For instance, lecturers in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes may feel less capable of performing their teaching duties or find certain aspects more challenging (Başibek et al., 2014). Additionally, experienced lecturers tend to have more positive expectations of student engagement compared to their less experienced counterparts (Hassel & Ridout, 2018). The use of pedagogical innovations like care can support learning, professionalization, and student satisfaction (Walder, 2016).

### 2.2.4 Level of Students' Engagement by Lecturers

Assunção et al. (2020) report that university students across nine countries showed weak measurement invariance in academic engagement levels. Jones (2021) detected moderately high engagement and low burnout levels among first-year medical students across four universities. Interestingly, Delfino (2019) found that students at Partido State University had high levels of engagement across behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, with a mean score of 2.84 out of a possible 4.

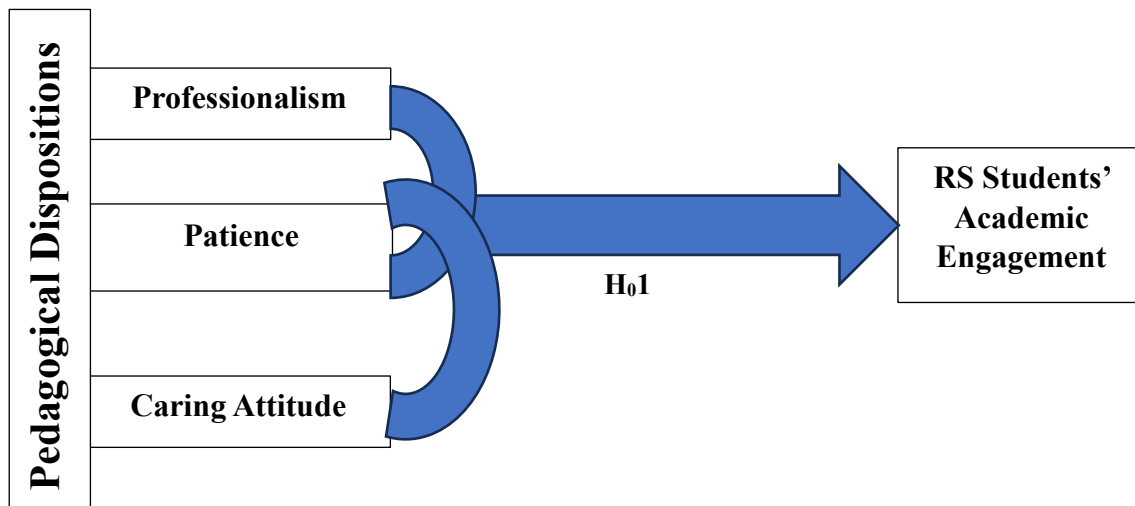
### 2.2.5 Effect of Pedagogical Dispositions on Students' Engagement

Research suggests that supportive pedagogical environments, characterized by cognitive demands and social support from professors and peers, positively influence students' psychosocial dispositions and academic achievement (Clifton et al., 2004; Pampaka et al., 2012). Specifically, these environments affect students' perceived academic control and coping strategies, which in turn impact their academic performance. This highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining supportive pedagogical climates to enhance student engagement and success. Interestingly, some studies have found contradictory results regarding certain pedagogical approaches. For instance, 'transmissionism' pedagogic practices have been associated with declining dispositions towards further study of mathematics and reduced interest in STEM subjects at the university level (Pampaka et al., 2012).

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework outlines the relationship between lecturers' pedagogical dispositions and university religious studies students' academic engagement. At the heart of this framework is the assumption that how lecturers engage with students directly affects student participation, motivation, and academic success. The framework suggests a direct effect of the pedagogical dispositions of lecturers on the level of academic engagement among students. A high level of professionalism encourages students to take the course seriously, trust the lecturer, and invest effort in

their studies. Patience allows students to feel supported, especially when faced with challenging material, leading to persistence and higher levels of engagement. A caring attitude fosters a sense of belonging and trust, which motivates students to participate more fully in classroom activities and learning experiences. The framework visually represents these relationships through the inclusion of a hypothesis (**H01**), which likely suggests no significant effect of these pedagogical dispositions (professionalism, patience, and caring Attitude) on student engagement.



**Figure 1**

*A framework showing the effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on University RS Students' Academic Engagement*

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Procedures

The explanatory sequential mixed methods design was employed in this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). The primary aim was to first quantify the effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on students' engagement, and then gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of students through interviews. This approach allowed the researchers to explain the quantitative results with rich, narrative data, which provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Haynes-Brown, 2023).

Participants were all students who studied religion in the Departments of Religion and Human Values, Arts Education, and Distance Education at the University of Cape Coast in the 2023/24 academic year. Students were involved because they were mature enough to speak of their observations and encounters with the various RS lecturers. Participants of 514 students were obtained through the census method, which provided a sufficient sample size for the quantitative analyses. The census method made it possible for data to be collected from every individual in the population (Zhang, 2023). For the qualitative analysis, 10 of the participants were purposefully selected to explain the findings of the former approach.

Ethical standards were rigorously upheld throughout the study. An introductory letter was secured from the Department of Arts Education at the University of Cape Coast to formally obtain permission to engage with the students. All ethical principles were observed, ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity. Verbal consent was sought from the students. The study's purpose was clearly explained to the students, who willingly agreed to participate, with the assurance that their information would be used solely for academic purposes. They were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable or pressured.

#### 3.2 Measures

Data were collected with a questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire was adapted and self-designed for the quantitative phase. The professionalism scale comprises 11 items adapted from Wardoyo and Herdiani (2017) and İlgan et al (2015). The patience scale with 15 items was adapted from Bülbül and Izgar (2018). The caring attitudes made of 14 items were self-designed. The student's academic engagement scale by Fredricks et al. (2004) includes behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects were adapted. The 29 items were fashioned to reflect the Ghanaian context of RS. All the constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The interview guide was used during the qualitative phase to explore students' in-depth experiences and perspectives regarding how their lecturers' teaching methods affected their engagement in RS classes.



### 3.3 Validity and Reliability

The instruments underwent assessment for content and face validity by experts and the researchers themselves. To verify the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the items about lecturers' professionalism, patience, caring attitudes, and academic engagement. The overall alpha value was .971, with individual values of .815, .914, .916, and .946 for the aforementioned variables. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), an alpha value between 0.70 and 0.95 is regarded as strong and acceptable.

### 3.4 Data Treatments

Data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistical methods and processed with Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 27. The demographic portion of the questionnaire was analysed through frequencies and percentages. Data for research questions were analysed with frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyse the hypothesis. The qualitative data from interviews were thematically analysed, following Clarke and Braun's (2017) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, to identify key themes that reflected the students' experiences and perspectives.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 What is the level of university lecturers' professionalism in teaching RS?

This question established the level of university lecturers' professionalism in teaching RS. The students were to respond to 11 items on a Likert scale to measure the level of their lecturers' professionalism in RS. Students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the items constructed on the scales: 1= Uncertain; 2 = Strongly Disagree; 3= Disagree; 4= Agree and 5, = Strongly Agree. The mean scores and overall mean were interpreted as 1.00-1.9= (low) 2.0- 3.4= (moderate) and 3.5-5.0= (high). The findings were presented in Table 1.

A significant majority of the students (n = 479, 93.2%) of them agreed that their lecturers attend promptly and regularly (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8). Almost all (n = 469, 91.3%) of them affirmed that their lecturers comply with school and class rules (M = 4.3, SD = 0.9). A notable proportion (n = 408, 79.4%) acknowledged that their lecturers challenge stereotypical attitudes (M = 3.8, SD = 1.2). Lastly, most students (n = 424, 82.5%) agreed that their lecturers follow proper procedures for reporting students' welfare and safety (M = 3.8, SD = 1.1). An average mean score of 4.1(SD= 1.0) was obtained indicating from students' intel that there is a high level of professionalism among university lecturers in teaching RS in the University although students learning of the subject seem to dwindle.

**Table 1**

*Level of University Lecturers' Professionalism in Teaching RS (n= 514)*

Statements	SA/A		D/SD		U		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
My lecturer...								
uses relevant codes of ethics for the teaching profession	477	92.5	17	3.3	20	3.9	4.2	.9
follows proper procedures for reporting students' welfare and safety	424	82.5	41	8.0	49	9.5	3.8	1.1
acts responsibly regarding school and personal property	465	88.5	24	4.7	35	6.8	3.9	1.0
challenges stereotypical attitudes	408	79.4	46	8.9	60	11.7	3.8	1.2
ensures that all students receive an equitable opportunity to succeed	461	89.7	30	5.8	23	4.5	4.2	.9
attends promptly and regularly	479	93.2	26	5.1	9	1.8	4.3	.8
dresses professionally in the school setting	473	92.0	12.	2.4	29	5.6	4.2	1.0
practices personal hygiene and neat grooming	478	93.0	4	.8	32	6.2	4.2	1.0
completes assignments, and other paperwork on time	446	86.8	38	7.4	30	5.8	4.1	1.0
completes work in the manner prescribed by the university	32	6.2	457	88.9	25	4.9	4.2	1.0
complies with school and class rules	469	91.3	29	5.7	16	3.1	4.3	.9
<b>Average</b>							<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>

### 4.2 What is the level of university lecturers' patience in teaching RS?

This question purported to establish the level of university lecturers' patience in teaching RS. The students were to respond to 15 items on a five-point Likert scale to measure the level of patience in teaching. Students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the items based on the scales: 1= Uncertain; 2 = Strongly Disagree; 3= Disagree; 4= Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The mean scores and overall mean were interpreted as 1.00- 1.9= (low) 2.0-3.4= (moderate) and 3.5-5.0= (high). Table 2 details the results.

Almost all of the students (n = 473, 92.0%) of them agreed that their lecturers patiently answered all student religious questions (M = 4.3, SD = 0.7). Finally, the majority (n = 380, 77.0%) agreed that their lecturers waited for all



students to catch up before proceeding ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ). An overall mean score of 4.1( $SD= 1.0$ ) was obtained indicating from students' intel that there is a high level of patience among university lecturers in teaching RS.

**Table 2**

*Level of University Lecturers' Patience in Teaching RS (n= 514)*

Statement	SA/A		D/SD		U		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
My lecturer patiently answers all student religious questions.	473	92.0	41	7.9	0	0	4.3	.7
My lecturer remains calm even when students are disruptive.	402	78.2	98	17.3	23	4.5	3.9	1.0
My lecturer is willing to explain complex topics multiple times.	473	92.0	32	6.2	9	1.8	4.2	.8
My lecturer listens attentively to students' religious concerns.	472	91.8	26	5.1	16	3.1	4.2	.8
My lecturer handles religious interruptions smoothly without frustration.	463	90.1	28	5.4	23	4.5	4.1	.9
My lecturer shows understanding when students struggle with the various religious materials.	458	89.0	30	5.9	26	5.1	4.1	.9
My lecturer waits for all students to catch up before moving on.	380	77.0	78	15.2	56	10.9	3.8	1.2
My lecturer gives students ample time to complete tasks and assignments.	466	90.6	33	7.0	15	2.9	4.1	.8
My lecturer remains composed even during stressful situations.	457	88.9	27	5.3s	30	5.8	4.0	.9
My lecturer encourages students to take their time in understanding the content.	482	93.8	20	3.9	12	2.3	4.2	.8
My lecturer is patient with students who need extra help.	437	83.1	52	10.1	35	6.8	4.0	1.1
My lecturer responds kindly to repeated questions from students.	440	85.6	43	8.3	31	6.0	4.0	1.0
My lecturer maintains a positive attitude despite challenging circumstances.	443	86.2	40	7.8	31	6.0	4.0	1.0
My lecturer avoids rushing through lectures to ensure student comprehension.	451	87.8	51	9.9	12	2.3	4.1	.8
My lecturer demonstrates patience when providing feedback on assignments.	445	86.6	40	7.7	29	5.6	4.0	1.0
<b>Average</b>							<b>4.1</b>	<b>.9</b>

To explain how the lecturers practically demonstrate patience, some students were purposefully chosen to express their subjective views on their lecturers' caring nature. It was revealed that the lecturers demonstrate caring in their dealings. The students about the high level of lecturers' patience explained that patience is essential to the student as patience was used as a teaching tool. One of them indicated *"The patience of lecturers during religious studies lessons are top notch"* and that lecturers via patience aid student understanding *"The lecturer exercises patience when teaching and it's above average"*. The exercise of patience is above average. Another presents *"The patience demonstrated by lecturers during RS lessons show their willingness to engage with students at different learning paces, and this goes a long way to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment and foster effective teaching"*. Here, the lecturers regard every student in the class and try to vary their methods to teach RS as it was revealed that their patience is imperative and critical as they are willing to engage with students at different learning paces. The lecturers' high patience comes in when they clearly explain concepts. One posits that *"Lecturers generally demonstrate good patience during RS lessons, taking time to explain complex concepts and answer students' questions"*. There is commendation as the lecturers regardless answer all students' questions, demonstration of patience. Another way of showing patience is the use of multiple approaches to teaching. Patience is showcased in taking time to re-explain concepts. It was opined *"I recall a lecturer who took the time to explain difficult concepts multiple times, using different approaches, and procedures, ensuring everyone understood. Promoting comfortable student participation was captured "my lecturer allowed for a more open environment, where students felt comfortable asking questions without fear of judgment and tremble. This, however, increases our interest as it fosters curiosity."*

Lecturers' patience makes students feel comfortable, asking questions without fear of judgment and trembling as a student stated *"lecturers' patience makes me feel more comfortable asking questions and engaging with the subject. I'm less afraid of making mistakes"*. Patience appears to be a powerful tool that paves the way for students to overcome the hurdles in learning. **Patience boosts interest.** Another benefit indicated includes making learning easy for learners and inciting them to like the RS positively no matter the challenges students encounter. Another said *"The patience of a lecturer positively influenced me to like the subject, and so performance will increase."* One other reason for a high level of patience was its **positive learning impact.** It was declared *"I got to understand certain things about other religions that have shaped my attitude towards people in other religions. It made me understand that every*



*religion has a purpose of doing whatever they do, and the practitioners of the religion are always right*". The above reasons explain why lecturers have a high level of patience. Lecturers' patience is a key tool for effective teaching. It shows that patient lecturers take the time to explain complex or difficult concepts in multiple ways, helping students fully grasp the material. This approach helps create an inclusive learning environment where all students, regardless of their pace, can understand and succeed. When lecturers are patient, it makes students confident to ask questions and express their thoughts, which increases their involvement and sustains interest in the course. This emotional and intellectual engagement enhances their overall learning experience.

### 4.3 What are University Lecturers' Caring Attitudes in Teaching RS?

This question purported to establish university lecturers' caring attitudes in teaching RS. The students were to respond to 14 items on a Likert scale to measure the extent their environment motivates them to learn. Students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the items based on the scales: 1= Uncertain; 2 = Strongly Disagree; 3= Disagree; 4= Agree and 5, = Strongly Agree. The mean scores and overall mean were interpreted as 1-49% (Uncaring Attitude) and 50-100% (Caring Attitude). Table 3 details the results.

Almost all of the students (n= 491, 95.5%) of them agreed that their lecturers are attentive to students' questions and concerns (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8). Furthermore, over half (402, 78.3%) of them agreed that their lecturers accommodate students' needs (M = 3.7, SD = 1.3). Lastly, the majority (378, 73.5%) of them agreed that lecturers take time to know students personally (M = 3.6, SD = 1.3). The overall mean score shows that the lecturers highly care for their students. The results obtained above 50% show that the lecturers possess such CA. It was seen that the lecturers as part of their caring activities show genuine concern for students' well-being (442, 86.0%), approachable and willing to help students (437, 85.0%), take time to know students (378, 73.5%), supportive of students' academic-personal challenges (446, 88.8%), encourage inclusive classroom environment (479, 93.2%), provide timely encouraging feedback (457, 88.9%), accommodate students' needs (402, 78.3%), respects students' perspectives (478, 93.0%) attentive to students' concerns (491, 95.5%), help students to succeed (440, 85.6%), fosters a sense of community within the class (472, 91.9%), celebrates students' achievements and milestones (423, 82.3%), empathetic towards students' struggles (423, 82.3%) and maintains open lines of communication with students (455, 88.5%).

**Table 3**

*University Lecturers' Caring Attitudes in Teaching RS (n=514)*

Statement	SA/A		D/SD		U		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	No		
My lecturer...								
Shows genuine concern for students' well-being.	442	86.0	34	6.6	38	7.4	4.0	1.1
Is approachable and willing to help outside of class.	437	85.0	36	7.0	41	8.0	4.0	1.1
Takes time to know students personally.	378	73.5	56	10.9	80	15.6	3.6	1.3
Is supportive of students' academic and personal challenges.	446	88.8	26	5.1	42	8.2	4.0	1.1
Encourages an inclusive classroom environment.	479	93.2	14	2.8	21	4.1	4.2	.9
Provides timely encouraging feedback.	457	88.9	26	5.0	31	6.0	4.0	1.0
Is accommodating students' needs.	402	78.3	35	6.9	77	15.0	3.7	1.3
Respects students' perspectives.	478	93.0	26	5.0	10	1.9	4.2	.8
Is attentive to students' questions and concerns.	491	95.5	9	1.8	14	2.7	4.3	.8
goes above and beyond to help students succeed.	440	85.6	30	5.8	44	8.6	4.0	1.1
Fosters a sense of community within the class.	472	91.9	27	5.2	17	5.2	4.2	.8
Celebrates students' achievements and milestones.	423	82.3	27	5.2	64	12.5	3.9	1.3
Is empathetic towards students' struggles.	423	82.3	37	7.2	54	10.5	3.9	1.2
Maintains open lines of communication with students.	455	88.5	33	6.5	26	5.1	4.1	.9
<b>Average</b>							<b>4.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>

To explain how the lecturers practically demonstrate their caring attitudes, some students were purposefully chosen to express their subjective views on their lecturers' caring nature. It was revealed that the lecturers demonstrate caring in their dealings. From the intel, it sufficed that caring attitudes include empathising and supporting, personalising engagement and connection, motivating and inspiring students, creating a positive class atmosphere, and seeking professionalism and well-being. The intel is provided under the following themes.

Empathy and support: The lecturers show empathy and support as one of the respondents indicated



*"A caring attitude is when lecturers show empathy and support toward students, understanding their challenges and providing guidance that goes beyond just teaching the content. Another caring trait is willingness to accept student weaknesses "...a lecturer noticed I was struggling and reached out to offer additional help outside of class. This extra support made me feel valued and motivated to stay engaged in the course".*

Caring is shown in lecturers' genuine interest in students' wellbeing. One added

*"A caring attitude means showing genuine interest in students' learning and wellbeing, being approachable and supportive." Guiding content is another trait as depicted in an intel "He gave us the assignment and provided us with resources that could aid in answering our assignment questions, and this helped improve class engagement."*

Personalised Engagement and Connection: Another form lecturers show caring is by recognizing individual students. Another student said,

*"A caring attitude is when you meet the lecturer and they call you by your name and find out what you are doing." One added referring to Building personal relationships. There was an affirmative statement saying "Oh yes, due to our number (few), the lecturer knew all of us and related with us like her children, which made us love going to class at all times". Lecturers being objective disciplinarians were spoken about "He/she should be able to put you on track when you're deviating and applaud you when you're doing well." Approachable and available "It is when the lecturers have the students at heart during the lessons and even after".*

When lecturers engage with students personally, understand academic progress, offer individualized guidance, and create a more positive and engaging learning environment.

Motivating and Inspiring Students: The students revealed that the lecturers provided extra support. It was highlighted by a student

*"One time, a lecturer noticed I was struggling and reached out to offer additional help outside of class which made me feel valued and motivated". It was again indicated "A lecturer once took extra time after class to discuss a challenging topic with me one-on-one which motivated me to dig deeper into the subject." Another person revealed surprised as lecturers encourage students' progress "I have been surprised about a lecturer whom students are afraid of, coming to the level of his students in a dialogue and giving coaching on how we can go about our NSS, and even admonishing us to do well and come back to UCC for our MPhil.". Offering counselling and guidance "I remember some of them will use part of the lecture period to tell us reality in academia and how to survive at all costs. Providing academic resources "He gave us assignment and provided us with resources that could aid in answering our assignment questions.*

#### 4.4 What is the Level of University RS Students' Academic Engagement?

This question purported to establish the level of university RS students' academic engagement. The students were to respond to 9 items on a Likert scale to measure their levels of participating in lessons. Students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the items based on the scales: 1= Uncertain; 2 = Strongly Disagree; 3= Disagree; 4= Agree and 5, = Strongly Agree. The mean scores and overall mean were interpreted as 1.00- 1.9= (low) 2.0- 3.4= (moderate) and 3.5-5.0= (high). Table 4 details the results.

Regarding the student's emotional engagement (M = 4.0, SD = 1.1), almost all of the students (n = 491, 95.5%) of them agreed that they believe they are receiving a good education in my school. agreed (M = 4.4, SD = 0.7). Finally, more than half (n = 366, 71.2%) of them agreed that their lecturers understood me (M = 3.5, SD = 1.3). On their cognitive engagement (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8) too, almost all (n = 496, 96.5%) of them agreed that they do their best in class (M = 4.4, SD = 0.7), and (n = 406, 88.0%) agreed that they check mistakes in their religious studies assignment (M = 3.9, SD = 1.3). Students' responses on behavioural engagement (M = 4.4, SD = 0.7) revealed that almost all (n = 499, 97.1%) of them agreed that they wanted to further their education in this university (M = 4.6, SD = 0.6). Likewise, almost all (n = 477, 92.8%) of them agreed that they are committed to completing their education (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8). Lastly, 470 (91.4%) out of 514 of them agreed that they attend school regularly and make the most of their learning opportunities (M = 4.2, SD = 0.9). An average mean score of 4.1(SD= 1.0) was obtained indicating from students' intel that they have a high level of academic engagement in RS at the university

**Table 4***Level of University Students' Academic Engagement in RS (n= 514)*

Statement	SA/A		D/SD		U		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
<b>Emotional Engagement</b>								
Lecturers in my school are honest with their students.	429	83.5	41	7.9	44	8.6	3.9	1.1
I like the lecturers in my programme of study at my school.	453	88.1	31	6.0	30	5.8	4.1	1.0
Lecturers in my school are fair concerning discipline	449	87.0	29	5.6	36	7.0	4.0	1.0
My Lecturers care about me	361	72.1	48	9.4	95	18.5	3.6	1.5
My lecturers are good at their job	476	92.6	21	4.0	17	3.3	4.2	.9
My lecturers understand me	366	71.2	75	14.5	73	14.3	3.5	1.3
My lecturers help me whenever I need	382	74.4	74	14.4	58	11.3	3.7	1.2
I feel I am a member of my school	456	88.7	32	6.2	26	5.1	4.1	1.0
I recommend other students to come to my school	442	86.0	56	10.9	16	3.1	4.1	1.0
I believe I am receiving a good education in my school	491	95.5	15	2.9	8	1.6	4.4	.7
Average							<b>4.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Cognitive Engagement</b>								
COG I spend a lot of time on my studies and homework.	486	94.5	24	4.7	4	.9	4.3	.7
I give all my attention to the lesson in the class	483	93.9	17	3.3	14	2.7	4.3	.8
I do my homework (work about the school) on time	496	96.5	8	1.6	10	1.9	4.3	.7
I work as hard as I can in my lessons	493	95.9	18	3.5	3	.6	4.3	.7
I do my best in class	478	93.1	26	5.0	10	1.9	4.4	.7
I don't give up trying even when the lessons are hard.	494	96.1	12	1.4	8	1.6	4.4	.7
I believe I do my best to learn in class.	496	96.5	7	1.4	11	2.1	4.4	.7
I try my best when working on my lessons.	478	93.0	29	5.6	7	1.4	4.3	.8
I usually plan before doing my lecturers' assignment.	477	92.8	27	5.3	10	1.9	4.3	.8
I share the knowledge I learned at school with other people.	481	93.6	22	4.3	11	2.1	4.3	.8
I check mistakes in my religious studies assignment	406	88.0	49	9.5	59	11.5	3.9	1.3
Average							4.3	.8
<b>Behavioural Engagement</b>								
I want to further my education at this university	499	97.1	15	2.9	0	0	4.6	.6
I am going to graduate from this university without quitting	484	94.8	25	4.8	5	1.0	4.4	.8
I stay out of trouble in religious studies classes in this school.	487	94.7	20	3.8	7	1.4	4.4	.7
I resolve conflicts peacefully and avoid fights in school.	499	96.1	10	1.9	5	1.0	4.5	.7
I behave well and avoid being sent to the disciplinary board.	495	96.3	19	3.7	0	0	4.5	.6
I attend school regularly and make the most of my learning opportunities.	470	91.4	26	5.1	18	3.5	4.2	.9
I am punctual and arrive at class on time.	492	95.7	14	2.7	8	1.6	4.5	.7
I am committed to completing my education.	477	92.8	24	4.7	13	2.5	4.3	.8
Average							4.4	.7
<b>Overall Mean Score</b>							<b>4.2</b>	<b>.9</b>

#### 4.4.1 There is no Statistically Significant Effect of Lecturers' Dispositions on University Students' Academic Engagement

This hypothesis sought to establish the effect of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on university students' academic engagement. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of lecturers' pedagogical dispositions on university students' academic engagement. Results from the analysis, using the enter method showed that the predictor (lecturers' dispositions- professionalism, patience, and caring attitude) explained 55% of the variance in the university students' academic engagement  $F(3,510) = 205.330, p=.000, R = .740a, R^2=.547, R^2_{Adjusted} = .544$ . Refer to Table 5 for the model.

**Table 5**

*ANOVA and Model Summary for Lecturers' Dispositions on University Students' Academic Engagement*

Model		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Adj.
1	Regression	3	29.147	205.330	.000b	.740a	.547	.544
	Residual	510	.142					
	Total	513						

Results from the analysis further indicated that professionalism, ( $\beta = .233, t = 4.935, p = .000$ ), patience ( $\beta = .145, t = 2.463, p = .014$ ), and caring attitude ( $\beta = .425, t = 8.058, p = .000$ ) statistically significantly predict the students' academic engagement (Table 6). Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This connotes that when teachers' dispositions (caring, professionalism, and patience) are harnessed students' academic engagement goes high. The lecturers being professional, patient, and caring as indicated did influence RS students' academic engagement in religious activities.

**Table 6**

*Regression Pedagogical Dispositions on Students' Academic Engagement*

Model		B	SE	Beta	T	Sig.	95.0% CI
1	Constant	1.438	.124		11.621	.000	(1.195, 1.681)
	Professionalism	.227	.046	.233	4.935	.000	(.137, .318)
	Patience	.131	.053	.145	2.463	.014	(.026, .235)
	Caring Attitude	.328	.041	.425	8.058	.000	(.248, .408)

This part explores how lecturers' positive pedagogical dispositions directly affect their academic engagement. The students explained how each pedagogical disposition influences the students' engagement in RS. The caring attitude, positively increases engagement

*"The good attitudes and behaviours of lecturers directly cause a positive impact on my academic involvement" as shown by another to be making a positive impact "It impacts my academic engagement positively".*

Disposition helps the lecturers to become enthusiastic lecturers and negative attitudes reduce engagement.

*"The attitudes directly affect students' engagement. Another highlighted "Enthusiastic, knowledgeable lecturers inspire me to put more effort into the course".*

Again, the lecturers' attitude affects participation. One of them indicated

*"The positive attitudes will boost the interest of students towards the subject". On another hand negative end, low dispositions lead to disengagement. A student revealed, "Lecturers who use interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions or debates, as well as being able to tailor lessons according to the diverse needs and background of students significantly increase students' engagement".*

It was revealed that when lecturer's attitude is negative, students lose interest in the course. One of them opined

*"I lose interest in the course if the lecturer's attitude is negative". It was revealed "The affection shown on the students build on their confidence level which will directly make them professionals in their area of study in the future."*

Positive influence on future professionals

*"Lecturers who convey genuine passion for RS spark long-term interest in students influencing career choices".*

The lecturers' dispositions develop long-term interest development. A student noted

*"A lecturer's positive disposition and how he/she exercises control over the subject matter as well as the classroom setting can spark in students a long-term interest in religious studies."*

A frank revelation was made that lack of patience harms performance. A student retorted

*"It can lead to the student disliking the course and it will lead to failure." "It will cause the majority of the learners to be less active in the lessons, which will also affect performance." Affects academic success "A lack of patience can make students feel rushed or inadequate, discouraging them from asking questions or engaging with the content. This could lead to a lack of understanding, and interest, and impedes their academic pursuit in the long-term."*

Lecturers' professionalism -respectful communication, open-mindedness, and enthusiasm, positively influence student engagement. a lecturer's disposition can shape a student's long-term interest in religious studies and even influence their future career path. Positive attitudes, care, and passion from lecturers contribute to students' confidence and spark a lasting interest in the subject, motivating them to pursue further academic and professional goals in the



field. Approachable lecturers, who provide constructive feedback, and maintain a positive, inclusive classroom environment were more likely to foster student participation, increase academic involvement, and strengthen the student-teacher relationship. The attitudes of lecturers have a direct effect on students' academic engagement. Positive and enthusiastic lecturer dispositions inspire students to engage more with the content and actively participate in the lessons, while negative attitudes can cause disengagement, reduce participation, and lower students' academic motivation.

#### 4.5 Discussion

The results indicate that there is a high level of professionalism among university lecturers who teach RS although students learning of the subject seem to dwindle. This finding corroborates with Kunter et al. (2013) who found that professionalism was high among the teachers. The level of university lecturers' professionalism in teaching RS appears to be multifaceted and influenced by educational background, teaching experience, and the ability to integrate professional competencies into teaching practice (Idris & Lindrayeni, 2019; Ziebertz & Heil, 2004). The experience of teaching RS seemed to be high in Kazakhstan and the professional development provides additional context to the understanding of professionalism in this field (Kartabayeva et al., 2015; Richit et al., 2024). However, the potential perception gaps between lecturers and students regarding professionalism, as well as the unique professional ideals held by non-university professors, indicate that the concept of professionalism in teaching RS is complex and may vary across different academic settings (Vogel, 2009).

Further, the study revealed a high level of patience of lecturers teaching RS. Through patience, lecturers aid students' understanding, and engagement, and clearly explain concepts. This finding supports Butcher (2016) who discovered that the teachers were moderately patient and encouraged a growth mindset among students, leading to higher academic motivation and engagement. Patience is critical as it fosters a supportive learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable to express difficulties and ask questions. Duckworth et al. (2007) and Richit et al. (2024) found that the patience of RS teachers was moderate and it helps in developing students' perseverance and resilience, which are crucial for sustained engagement. This shows that the teachers in RS can guide students no matter their difficulty. This finding indicates that continuous practice of patience will lead to students feeling accepted and helps with the realisation of the aim of the University.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the lecturers showed genuine concern for students' well-being, willingness to help students, took time to know students, supported students' academic-personal challenges, encouraged an inclusive classroom environment, provided timely encouraging feedback, accommodated students' needs, and respected students' perspectives. They as part of their caring attitude recognize individual students, build personal relationships, are objective disciplinarians, provide extra support, inspire students' engagement, and encourage student progress. The finding corroborates with Nodding (2013) who discovered that the caring attitude of teachers is known to be empathic and concerned for students' well-being. The increasing rate of students' willingness to participate and engage in academic activities and University lecturers' caring attitudes can be inferred from several studies (Gill & Ursuleanu, 2017; Merrill, 2001; Umubyeyi et al., 2024). University lecturers' caring attitudes are characterised by recognition of the diverse challenges faced by students, a commitment to fostering professional growth, and the provision of compassionate support. These attitudes are integral to creating a positive learning environment, are reflected in various teaching practices, and support structures within the university setting.

The study again showed that the students possess a high level of academic engagement. This finding corroborates Delfino (2019) who discovered that the level of student engagement along behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions was high among students of Partido State University. Similarly, Reyes-De-Cózar et al. (2023) found that students have a high level of engagement. However, these findings are not universally consistent, as engagement levels can be influenced by various factors, including institutional culture, teaching strategies, and individual student characteristics. The level of academic engagement among university students is generally reported to be moderate, but it is subject to variation based on a multitude of factors. While studies (Delfino, 2019; Monsanto, 2015) on engagement often associate engagement with improved academic performance, this relationship is not straightforward and may depend on additional variables such as the type of engagement, institutional factors, and individual student differences.

Finally, the multiple regressions revealed that professionalism, patience, and care from lecturers have a significant effect on students' level of academic engagement. Kunter, et al (2013) found that teacher professionalism, encompassing preparation, ethical commitment, and instructional quality, significantly impacts students' motivation and engagement. Skaldic and Skaldic (2017) similarly highlighted that students respond positively to professional educators, viewing them as role models whose consistent behaviours foster a stable academic setting conducive to engagement. Also, Duckworth et al. (2007) introduced the concept of "grit," where resilience and patience in educators encourage these traits in students, allowing them to engage with challenging material. Borich (2016) further found that patience helps create a positive atmosphere, crucial for students' willingness to persist in their academic



tasks, especially in challenging subjects like RS. Again, Nodding (2013) found that caring relationships between teachers and students promote a supportive learning environment. Bain (2012) found that students who feel cared for by their instructors demonstrate higher psychological and emotional engagement, leading to better academic performance and overall satisfaction with the learning experience. Studies reveal that the combination of professionalism, patience, and caring dispositions strongly influences student engagement. Lufthansa et al. (2015) demonstrated that educators who foster Psychological Capital in students create learning environments that support academic engagement. Fredricks et al. (2004) also confirm that educators with these traits enhance student behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which promotes better academic outcomes.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

It can be surmised that the RS lecturers at UCC demonstrate a strong sense of professionalism, as recognized by students. Again, the data suggest that the lecturers create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that bestows on students understanding, interest, and ease of learning. This implies that the decline in student interest and reluctance to learn RS and not coming to further their education may be attributed to other factors. It can be concluded that lecturers exhibit caring, demonstrated by their attentiveness, empathy, inclusivity, and support for students' academic and personal challenges. This caring approach helps to build a positive classroom environment and supports students' well-being. Therefore, the decline in students' interest and reluctance to learn RS and plan of not coming to further their education and in participating in all religious activities could also be pinned on other features not discovered yet. While students may be generally engaged, other factors such as personal interest in RS or perceived course relevance may affect their willingness to continue with RS in postgraduate studies. Finally, it can be concluded that the lecturers' dispositions collectively account for fluctuations in students' academic engagement, emphasizing the impact of lecturer attitudes and approaches on RS students' participation and interest in further career expansion in UCC. The findings emphasise the importance of lecturer qualities in fostering a conducive learning environment that encourages active participation and enthusiasm. This implies that other factors will have a role to play in increasing students' readiness to massively engage in religious activities proposed by their lecturers.

### 5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that lecturers should keep on practising their professionalism and incorporate interactive and relevant real-world applications of RS. This will create a more relatable and practical experience for students. Additionally, RS lecturers in UCC should keep on enhancing student-oriented teaching strategies and cherish contemporary issues in RS that can deepen RS students' interest and help them connect with the subject matter on a personal level. Again, it is suggested that RS lecturers should continue to adopt patient teaching methods while also exploring additional instructional strategies that foster engagement. To maximize the positive impact of their caring attitudes, lecturers could be highly encouraged to actively seek feedback from students to understand their ongoing needs and concerns better. Establishing a structured mentorship programme at UCC could also reinforce student-lecturer relationships and provide additional support for students facing personal and academic challenges. Furthermore, RS lecturers should consider including interdisciplinary topics within RS that relate to students' interests and career goals to further enhance engagement. Integrating group projects or real-world case studies in RS could make the subject more dynamic, providing students with a deeper understanding of its practical applications. Management of UCC should organise regular professional development programmes for lecturers focusing on enhancing their teaching dispositions. Workshops on empathetic communication, and motivational teaching strategies would empower lecturers to effectively engage students. UCC RS Lecturers should prioritize creating a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere where open communication and respect are encouraged. This environment helps build rapport and supports students in feeling valued and motivated to participate actively. Universities should provide access to counselling and wellness resources to help lecturers manage stress and maintain positive attitudes. This support can help lecturers sustain the patience and empathy needed to create an engaging learning environment.

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