ABSTRACT
PREDICTIVE FACTORS FOR COMMITMENT TO THE PRIESTLY VOCATION: A STUDY OF PRIESTS AND SEMINARIANS

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The present study examined factors for priestly commitment and the relationship between priestly commitment and well-being of Catholic priests and seminarians. While evidence for the effectiveness of assessment in identifying the suitability of applicants to the priesthood and evaluating the general psychological health of priests and seminarians has been well documented, the effectiveness of assessment in predicting commitment to the priesthood remains under question. This study addressed such an issue by identifying the individual and sets of factors for priestly commitment.

Through Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses, the study present examined the extent to which demographic factors (e.g., age and vocational status), social factors (e.g., parental environment, family religiosity, and religious experience), psychological factors (e.g., big five personality traits, defensiveness, gender characteristics, and loneliness), and religious factors (e.g., religious orientation, religious coping, spiritual support, perceived sacredness of the priesthood, and relationship with bishop/superior) affect priestly commitment. And, through Multiple Regression, this study examined a correlation between priestly commitment and well-being.

The results indicated that, when demographic, social, and psychological variables were controlled, agreeableness, defensiveness, masculinity, intrinsic religious orientation, sacred view of the priesthood, and relationship with bishop/superior have positive effects on affective commitment, while parental care, extraversion, and loneliness had negative effects. Parental overprotection, extraversion, and loneliness positively affected thought of leaving the priesthood, while masculinity, perceived sacredness of the priesthood, and relationship with bishop/superior had negative effects. Extrinsic religious orientation had a positive effect on continuance commitment to the priesthood. In contrast to the previous studies, no demographic effect was evident. The study also found that religious variables mediated the significance of parental care and moderated the effect of agreeableness on affective commitment.

Related to well-being, the study found a positive effect of affective commitment on psychological well-being, whereas continuance commitment and thought of leaving the priesthood had negative impacts on psychological well-being. Affective commitment has a positive effect on affect balance and religious well-being, while thought of leaving the priesthood had a negative impact on affect balance.