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**FEATURE**

**The Relationship Between Student Religiosity,  
Integration of Faith and Learning and Selected  
Congregational and Family Factors**

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*Abstract* – An investigation of the relationships among students' perceptions of selected congregational and family factors of adolescent religiosity, Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL), and student religiosity. The respondents were 374 students in SDA tertiary schools in North Philippines. They answered two instruments: the Students' Perceptions of Integration of Faith and Learning Practices (SPIP) and Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup> (VG<sup>2</sup>).

Results of the study showed that students perceived moderately positive influences on their spirituality from each of the four major variables of the study. Significant differences are revealed between congregational and family factors, IFL, and student religiosity when grouped with selected background variables. Significant relationships were noted between: (a) congregational and family factors, (b) congregational factors and student religiosity, (c) family factors and student religiosity, (d) IFL and congregational factors, (e) IFL and family factors, and (f) IFL and faith maturity. A predictive model of faith maturity was also established.

***The Church is always just one generation away from extinction***  
***--Martin Luther***

Passing the torch of faith to the next generation is a continuous challenge for parents, teachers, and religious leaders. The fear of the present generation is always that the next generation may not cherish the values they themselves have found important (Dudley, 1986). Wieting (as cited in Dudley, 1986) explains this concern: If a society is to continue its existence beyond one generation, the members must transmit what they consider to be necessary knowledge and values. The continuity of a social system by definition requires transmission between generations (p. 7).

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Christian schools and colleges are tasked with “the responsibility of purposely and consciously making faith connections throughout the formal or planned program of study” (Korniejczuk, 1994, p. 80). This is carried out when there is a deliberate integration by “consciously infusing the formal curriculum with a God-centered, Christian worldview” (Korniejczuk & Kijai, 1994, p. 80).

The practice of integration of faith and learning (IFL) in Christian schools is deemed important by many Christian writers. Taylor (2000) viewed Adventist education as a core ingredient in the fulfillment of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. He observed that IFL is central to Adventist educational philosophy and practice. This assertion is shared by other Adventist educators (Akers, 1993; Rasi, 2004; White, 1923).

Scriven (2001) explains that the need for IFL is built upon the role of education in developing conviction, in giving a more authentic spirit, and in making people more humane in their dealings with other people. Such a conviction provides students direction in their life amidst a plethora of differences in culture and the environment.

Most literature on the topic of IFL, however, is philosophical and theoretical in content (Korniejczuk, 1993). Very few studies have been conducted to investigate the actual practices of IFL in Adventist colleges. While IFL has been promoted and implemented in Adventist schools for the past two decades, to the knowledge of the researcher, no direct study so far has been conducted to find the relationship of IFL towards the religiosity of college students.

#### *The Concept of Student Religiosity*

The present study is based on Allport’s (1960) intrinsic-extrinsic model of religiosity and Fowler’s (1981) stages of faith development. Allport’s theory of religious orientation explains the reasons for the differing attitudes of young people toward religion on account of their religious maturity. On the other hand, Fowler’s theory of stages of faith describes the developmental process of faith development.

The connection between Christian education and faith development is a well-researched topic. Benson and Eklin (1990) discovered that the primary factor associated with faith maturity was the amount of exposure to effective Christian education provided by local churches. Among Adventist schools, the Valuegenesis study (Dudley, 1992) found that faith maturity had only a moderate positive correlation with positive attitudes toward Adventist schools and the church, endorsement of church standards, and altruism.

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*The Concept of Congregational Factors  
of Adolescent Religiosity*

The church has the specific role of nurturing the faith of its members. Dudley (1992) asserts that the perceptions that young people have of the church and the quality of the experiences they have in connection with it determine whether or not they decide to remain in its fellowship as they pass out of adolescence. He also suggests that how the church teaches religion seems to be directly related to how the youth “feels” his or her church is.

The role of the church in the faith development of the youth is based on the theory of socialization, particularly on religious socialization. Innskeep (1988) defines religious socialization as “the process of learning about a religious world” (p. 1). He further describes religious socialization as a process of education and through this education one learns to see the world differently—as a world of religious significance. He adds that the more important question of religious socialization has to do with whether or not children and adolescents will make a religious view of the world their own.

*The Concept of Family Factors  
on Religiosity*

The family plays an active and vital role in constructing, interpreting, and transmitting social behavior and moral values from one generation to the next (Strahan, 1994). Ozarak (1989) found that parental influence is the single strongest factor in religious development in adolescence.

Transmission of moral values and religiosity is primarily attributed to the socialization process in the home. The transmission of religiosity itself within families has been the focus of research on socialization. Many factors influence the transmission of religious beliefs and practices to children and adolescents, with parents and family generally being viewed as the primary agent of religious socialization (King, Furrow, & Roth, 2002).

Some researchers have studied how parents transmit their religious beliefs to their children, which is more likely to happen when parent-child relationships are warm and parental communication about religion is clear (Bao, Whitebeck, Hoyt, & Conger, 1999; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1989). Myers (1996) identified three factors in religious transmission: parental religiosity, quality of the family relationship, and traditional family structure. Of these factors, parental religiosity was found to be the biggest determinant of offspring's religiosity.

*The Concept of IFL*

The construct of IFL in this study is based on two philosophical models developed by Frank Gaebelein (1968) and Arthur Holmes (1999). Gaebelein

(1968) expounded the meaning of integration of faith and learning as the all-embracing truth of God in Christian education. This is achieved with “the living union of its subject matter, administration, and even of its personnel, with the eternal and infinite pattern of God’s truth” (p. 9). Holmes (1999) recommended the adoption of a comprehensive Christian worldview as a foundation for integration.

Taylor (2000) presents an operational model of IFL application in instruction. He organized it into four general strategies: contextual, illustrative, conceptual, and experiential. Taylor’s model of IFL explains how IFL is applied in the classroom setting. From this operational model of IFL, the researcher developed the questionnaire that assessed students’ perceptions of the IFL practices in Adventist colleges.

### **Methodology**

This study sought to bridge the gap between theory and practice in IFL. It begins with the hypothesis that IFL and selected congregational and family factors are significantly related with student religiosity. If relationships are found, there will be implications for instructional and extra-curricular programs in Christian colleges, and recommendations for the planning of youth ministry and religious education in local churches, as well as guidance for parents in rearing their children in the Christian faith. Thus, the students will be helped in their faith development.

The central purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of college students about congregation and family factors of adolescent religiosity, IFL practices, and student religiosity, and to determine the relationship between their perceptions and student religiosity in selected Adventist colleges of the North Philippines. The study also investigated whether there were any significant differences in students’ perceptions of congregational and family factors of adolescent religiosity, IFL practices, and student religiosity evident when students are grouped by gender, religious affiliation, year level, and program of study. Lastly, it sought to find predictive models of student religiosity based on the variables within the study. Descriptive statistics were used to assess student perceptions of factors relating to their religious experience. ANOVA provided information on differences between background variables and other factors, and Pearson Product Moment was employed to discover relationships between the variables. Multiple regression was used to derive predictive models of faith maturity.

The sample for this study consisted of 374 college students in the three SDA tertiary education institutions located in the region administered by North Philippine Union Mission in the school year 2005-2006. Two instruments were employed to collect pertinent data. These were the self-constructed Student

Perception of IFL Practices (SPIP) which was previously pilot-tested with a group of fifty students and the adapted Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup> (VG<sup>2</sup>) instrument. The reliability coefficient for the SPIP in the present study was .96. The results of reliability analysis of the VG<sup>2</sup> in this work ranged from .61 to .90 while the previous study of Valuegenesis (Gillespie, Donahue, Boyatt, & Gane, 2005) reported values ranging from .57 to .92. Reliability analysis, therefore found that both the SPIP and the VG<sup>2</sup> have acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

### **Report of Findings**

The student respondents gave positive interpretations of all four major variables of the study: congregational factors, family factors, IFL, and student religiosity. They viewed their local churches as warm and friendly and providing quality religious education that allowed students to think and ask questions on their beliefs. They also perceived that their families were warm and supportive and their parents were affectionate and exercised little constraint on their children's activities. They agreed that their schools and teachers practiced IFL. Moreover, they perceived their religiosity as high in terms of faith maturity. In each of the four areas, the overall means of each variable fell within the highest or second highest levels of agreement.

#### *Differences between Background Variables and Major Variables of the Study*

Significant differences were found between three of the four major constructs of the study and selected background variables. Only IFL was not significantly different with any of the selected background variables

The perceived quality of religious education was significantly different when grouped according to gender ( $F = 7.633, p < .006$ ) and religion ( $F = 4.216, p < .006$ ). Females (4.65) scored significantly higher than their male counterparts (4.35) in their assessment of the religious teaching practices of their local churches. This means that female students observed the frequency and quality of religious education in their churches higher than the male students.

The SDA students (4.59) also rated the quality of religious education in their local churches more highly than the Roman Catholic (RC) students (4.19) did. This may suggest that SDA students perceived the quality of religious education in their churches higher than with those of the RC. This higher perception could be expected since majority of the respondents were SDA and were presently enrolled in Adventist colleges that prepare meaningful and interesting programs for its church services.

Significant differences were also discovered with the congregational warmth climate ( $F = 3.486, p < .004$ ) and the congregational thinking climate ( $F = 2.803, p < .040$ ) in terms of year level. Freshmen rated both the warmth and

the thinking climate of their churches significantly more highly than did sophomores. Overall, the Bachelor of Theology (BTh) students perceived congregational warmth climate ( $F = 3.486, p < .004$ ) and congregational thinking climate ( $F = 3.210, p < .008$ ) to be significantly higher than did students from other programs of study.

When grouped according to gender, two family factors were found to be significantly different: the religiosity of the father ( $F = 9.81, p < .002$ ) and caring father parenting style ( $F = 11.73, p < .001$ ). The female students rated the religiosity and caring of their fathers significantly higher than their male counterparts.

Three family factors were found significantly different according to religion: religiosity of the father ( $F = 3.462, p < .017$ ), parental control ( $F = 3.096, p < .027$ ), and caring father parenting style ( $F = 3.084, p < .027$ ). Overall, the SDA students observed the existence of these family practices in their homes significantly differently from the other religious groups.

According to year in school, two family factors were found significantly different: overprotective mother parenting style ( $F = 5.068, p < .002$ ) and overprotective father parenting style ( $F = 3.377, p < .019$ ). A decrease in the means of the groups is observed as the students move to the next year level. This implies the growing independence of the students from their parents as they move from one year to the next.

In terms of programs of study, four family factors were found to be significantly different. There were significant differences in religiosity of mothers ( $F = 2.751, p < .019$ ), parental control ( $F = 2.485, p < .031$ ), caring mother parenting style ( $F = 2.951, p < .013$ ), and caring father parenting style ( $F = 2.934, p < .013$ ). Nursing (BSN) students perceived that their parents were significantly more caring than did students from other programs of study.

Of the four selected background variables, faith maturity was found to be significantly different for the BTh students ( $F = 2.96, p < .012$ ). This implies that theology students had a better understanding of religious matters than other students from different programs of study.

#### *Relationship between Congregational and Family Factors*

Data analysis (see Table 1) revealed a significant relationship between the three congregational factors and the five family factors. The three congregational factors were highly significantly correlated with family climate: congregational warmth climate ( $r = .292, p < .001$ ), congregational thinking climate ( $r = .287, p < 0.01$ ), and quality of religious education ( $r = .432, p < .001$ ). Thus, the family climate accounted for 8% of the variance in perceived congregational warmth climate, 8% of the variance in perceived congregational

thinking climate, and 19% of the variance in perception of the quality of religious education. This shows that students' perception of a warm, friendly, supportive, and thinking church is related with their perception of having a warm and supportive family.

Table 1  
*Relationship between Congregational and Family Factors*

Congregational Factors	Family Factors	R	r <sup>2</sup>	p
Warmth climate	Family climate	.292	.08	<.001
	Caring mother	.233	.05	<.001
	Caring father	.222	.05	<.001
	Parental control	.152	.02	.003
	Religiosity of mother	.128	.02	.013
	Religiosity of father	.102	.01	.048
Thinking Climate	Family climate	.287	.08	<.001
	Parental control	.194	.04	<.001
	Caring father	.182	.03	<.001
	Caring mother	.177	.03	.001
	Religiosity of father	.145	.02	.005
	Religiosity of mother	.118	.01	.023
Quality of religious education	Family climate	.432	.19	<.001
	Parental control	.263	.07	<.001
	Caring father	.231	.05	<.001
	Caring mother	.206	.04	<.001
	Religiosity of father	.182	.03	<.001
	Religiosity of mother	.158	.02	.002

*Note:* Meaningful relationship is considered when the effect size is  $r^2 \geq 0.09$ .

*Relationship between Congregational and Family Factors and Student Religiosity*

The study also shows that there were significant relationships between congregational factors and student religiosity and family factors and student religiosity as measured by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. All three congregational factors were found to be meaningfully and significantly correlated with faith maturity: warmth climate ( $r = .376$ ), thinking climate ( $r =$

.483), and quality of religious education ( $r = .395$ ) (see Table 2). Faith maturity accounted for 14% of the variance in congregational warmth climate, 23% of the variance in congregational thinking climate, and 16% of the variance in quality of religious education. This implies that faith maturity is significantly and meaningfully related with the warmth and thinking environment of the local congregation as well as the meaningful religious instruction it provides.

Table 2  
*Relationship between Congregational Factors and Faith Maturity*

Congregational Factor	R	r <sup>2</sup>	p
Warmth climate	.376	.14	<.001
Thinking climate	.483	.23	<.001
Quality of religious education	.395	.16	<.001

Table 3 shows the relationship between family factors and faith maturity. All family factors studied were significantly related with faith maturity with family climate having the highest correlation ( $r = .247$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This means that a loving, accepting, and warm family may be critically important in developing faith maturity in the students.

Table 3  
*Significant Relationship between Family Factors and Faith Maturity*

Family Factor	R	r <sup>2</sup>	p
Family climate	.247	.06	<.001
Religiosity of father	.108	.01	.037
Religiosity of mother	.136	.02	.009
Parental control	.186	.03	<.001
Caring mother	.181	.03	<.001
Caring father	.180	.03	.001
Overprotective mother	-.129	.02	.0131
Overprotective father	-.107	.01	.040



*Relationship between Congregational and Family Factors and IFL Practices*

The data (see Table 4) show a significantly strong and meaningful correlation between IFL practices and all three congregational factors: warmth climate ( $r = 0.40, p < .001$ ); thinking climate ( $r = 0.35, p < .001$ ); and quality of religious education ( $r = 0.34, p < .001$ ). These results accounted for the following variance in IFL practices as perceived by college students: congregational warmth climate (16%), congregational thinking climate (12%), and quality of religious education (11%). These positive results imply that the churches that were warm, which encouraged thinking and provided meaningful religious education, contributed to high student perception of IFL practices.

Table 4  
*Relationships between Congregational Factors and IFL Practices*

Congregational Factor	r	r <sup>2</sup>	p
Congregational Warmth Climate	.400	.16	<.001
Congregational Thinking Climate	.352	.12	<.001
Quality of Religious Education	.338	.11	<.001

Of the eight selected family factors of adolescent religiosity (see Table 5), only four factors were significantly correlated with student perceptions of IFL practices in Adventist colleges in North Philippine Union Mission: family climate ( $r = 0.22, p < .001$ ); parental control ( $r = 0.18, p < .001$ ); caring mother ( $r = 0.15, p < .01$ ); and caring father ( $r = 0.13, p < .01$ ). While the magnitude of these correlations is weak, these results indicate positive relationships between warm and supportive families, limited parental constraint, and caring parenting to the student perception of IFL practices in Adventist colleges.

Table 5  
*Relationships between Family Factors and IFL Practices*

Family Factor	R	r <sup>2</sup>	p
Family climate	.219	.05	<.001
Parental control	.184	.03	<.001
Caring mother	.145	.02	.005
Caring father	.128	.02	.014

*Relationship between IFL Practices  
and Faith Maturity*

Table 6 reveals that there were significant relationships between student perception of IFL practices and faith maturity ( $r = 0.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This accounted for 15% of the variance in faith maturity. The results of the analysis also indicate a strong relationship between IFL practices and the faith maturity of the respondents.

Table 6  
*Relationship between IFL Practices and Faith Maturity*

IFL Practices	R	$r^2$	p
IFL	.392	.15	<.001

There were seven variables (see Table 7) that entered the regression equation model for faith maturity: IFL ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), congregational warmth climate ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p = .02$ ), congregational thinking climate ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), religiosity of mother ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p = .02$ ), quality of religious education ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p = .03$ ), overprotective mother ( $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $p = .01$ ), and BTh versus BSN ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $p = .05$ ). These seven variables that entered the regression equation accounted for 34.2% of the variance in the faith maturity of college students. This means that students who came from churches that allowed them to think and ask question about their beliefs and offered them meaningful religious education, from schools that practice IFL, and those who had religious mothers were more likely to be more mature in their faith. Of all the predictors, congregational thinking climate was the most predictive ( $\beta = 0.45$ ) of faith maturity.

Table 7  
*Predictive Model for Faith Maturity*

Step	Variables Entered	$R^2$	B	$\beta$	p
1	IFL	.237	0.28	0.26	<.01
2	Congregational warmth climate	.288	-0.10	-0.18	.02
3	Congregational thinking climate	.305	0.26	0.45	<.01
4	Religiosity of mother	.316	0.05	0.10	.02
5	Quality of religious education	.324	0.06	0.11	.03
6	Overprotective mother	.332	-0.17	-0.14	.01
7	BTh versus BSN	.340	-0.10	-0.09	.05
Constant = 2.101			Total $R^2 = .342$		

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### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the major findings of this study:

1. The respondents perceived congregational and family factors and IFL moderately. They perceived student religiosity from moderate to high agreement.
2. There were significant differences between congregational factors and background variables. Female college students perceived the quality of religious education significantly higher than their male counterparts. The SDA students perceived the quality of religious education of their churches as significantly higher than the Roman Catholic students. Freshmen had significantly higher perceptions of congregational warmth climate and congregational thinking climate than the sophomores and other higher year levels did. BTh students perceived congregational warmth climate as significantly higher than the BSN students.
3. There were significant differences between family factors and background variables. Female students had significantly higher perceptions of the religiosity and caring of their fathers. SDA and Roman Catholic students differed significantly in their perceptions of the religiosity of their fathers, parental control, and the caring of their fathers. The overprotectiveness of mothers was perceived significantly differently between year levels. The sophomores and seniors also differed significantly in their perceptions of the overprotectiveness of their fathers. The third and fourth year college students viewed the problem as much less of a concern. BSN students perceived parental control as significantly higher than Computer (BSCS) students. BSN students' perceptions that both of their parents were caring was also significantly higher than BTh students.
4. There was no significant difference between students' perceptions on IFL and background variables.
5. There were significant differences between student religiosity and background variables. BTh students perceived faith maturity significantly higher than BSN students.
6. There were significant relationships between congregational and family factors. Congregational warmth climate, congregational thinking climate, and quality of religious education are all significantly related with family climate, caring mother, caring father, parental control, religiosity of mother, and religiosity of father.
7. There were significant relationships between congregational factors and student religiosity. Congregational warmth climate, congregational thinking

climate, and quality of religious education were each significantly related with faith maturity.

8. There were significant relationships between family factors and student religiosity. Faith maturity was positively and significantly correlated with faith climate, religiosity of father, religiosity of mother, parental control, caring mother, and caring father. It was negatively and significantly correlated with overprotective mother and father.
9. There were significant relationships between IFL and congregational factors. IFL was significantly related with congregational warmth climate, congregational thinking climate, and quality of religious education.
10. There were significant relationships between IFL and family factors. IFL was significantly related with family climate, parental control, caring mother, and caring father.
11. There was significant relationship between IFL and faith maturity.

#### *Recommendations for Educational Practice*

Based on the partial results of the study presented here, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation concerning educational practice and for future research.

1. Since the findings of the study have shown that the three local congregational factors were strongly related with faith maturity, it is recommended that SDA churches should provide a warm, caring, and supportive environment for its young people to develop their faith. They should be open for questions raised by young people in terms of their beliefs and standards if they want them to internalize later on these set of beliefs and practices in their own personal lives. SDA churches should continue to find ways to improve its programs offered to its youth (e.g. Sabbath School, Adventist Youth) to make them meaningful and relevant for religious instruction of its young people.
2. Since religiosity of parents is related to faith maturity, it is recommended that parents should continue to model Christ-like characters to their children.
3. A warm family climate and caring parents were also found to be significantly related to faith maturity. It is also recommended that Adventist families should seek to provide warm, supportive, and friendly family environment for their children to grow and mature in their faith. Parents should manifest care for their children with moderate constraint as their children move toward self-government.

4. The students had also perceived that practice of IFL was also significantly related to faith maturity. It is, therefore, recommended that SDA schools should continue to promote IFL not only in the classrooms but in all school programs and activities. SDA schools should make it a regular program to conduct IFL seminars for its teachers and staff.
5. Since a thinking climate was found to be significantly related to student religiosity, it is recommended that our schools, churches, and home should enhance critical thinking in all their instruction and activities.

More specific research on IFL practice in Adventist colleges should be undertaken with teachers as respondents of the study. A similar study should also be conducted in SDA academies.

The youth are the future of the church. Keeping them loyal and committed to God is a constant challenge to parents, teachers, and church leaders. All the efforts and resources of the home, church, and school should be given to meet this objective. This is the only way that we can be assured that the Christian faith will still be kept by the next generation.

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