

## **Religious Perspectives of Students in a Philippine Higher Education Institution**

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### **Abstract:**

The concept of religiosity as characterized by deep faith in a Divine Being still holds true to almost every individual human person. An individual seeks the presence of a Supreme Deity to govern him and for him to adore. The religiosity of a person has something to do with the moral character he or she is forming. This paper determined the level of religiosity of the students, extent of their religiosity and how they view these concepts in their lives. Most of the respondents are Roman Catholics since Catholicism is still the religion in the Philippines that has the most number of believers. The result reveals that the power of media, side by side with one's educational attainment can be influential to a person's religiosity.

**Keywords:** Religiosity, Perspective, Society, Grounded theory approach, Descriptive-survey design.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Roman Catholicism is still the predominant religion and the largest Christian denomination with estimates of approximately 82.9% of the total population belonging to this faith in the Philippines (Index Mundi, 2016). Since the colonial period, the same has been the cornerstone of the Filipino identity for most of its inhabitants. Thus, Filipinos are known for its colorful traditions and celebrations most of which are Christianity inspired. Christmas for example is one of the widely celebrated traditions in this country. It is the commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believed as the savior of the world. However, popular as it may seem, some of the Filipinos of today are more concern on the food preparations, parties and the cash gifts provided by the employers including the government. Jesus Christ, who is supposed to be the one celebrating birthday become the secondary element of the said celebration.

This is one of the many problems confronting the present society that can be attributed to the religiosity and morality of individuals. This problem is not purely organizational but societal in nature (Jocano, 1997). In Leyte Normal University, the personal notion of values of the students, dictates its effects on their personal life and actuation towards their individual action. Thus, there is a need to determine the personal conception of the university's students with regard to religiosity and analyze if their ideas are in conformity with the well-founded notions as written and explained in the different schools of thought or religious denominations. Obviously, religious beliefs have become foundations of moral systems in a group or society. This step would create a unified notion that would propel the university to a strong promotion of morality in the university (Bautista, 2016).

Religiosity is characterized by deep faith in God. Etymologically it is taken from a Latin word "religionem" meaning: respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods, obligation, the bond between man and the gods (Abun, 2012). In the strict sense of the word, a person who is religious imbibes and inculcates into his being the teachings of his church and practices all these teachings in his dealings with his fellowmen.

The church, as an important agency of socialization, provides the spiritual and moral needs of the members of society. Its followers learn the norms of conducts and codes of behavior set forth by every religious institution. What is right and what is wrong are delineated and prescriptions for rewards and punishments are made. Concepts of heaven and hell motivate individuals to do what is good in order to be at peace with his maker (Panopio, 2002).

Leyte Normal University, is one of the state university in the Philippines that caters teacher education. As such it become a pillar in teacher education in the region with other courses in the arts and sciences and management and entrepreneurship, must not only provide quality and relevant academic training but moral training as well. One of the problems that beset the university though is on the aspect of ethical realm during the years of formation of the students whereby through their learning experiences students can imbibe and likewise manifest both the ethical and the unethical practices of their mentors. It is worse when only the unethical practices come out to be readily recognizable in the mentors' practices thereby totally and negatively affecting the welfare of the teaching profession and eventually stains the quality of the graduates of the university.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the following theories: the Psychological Foundation of Education of Jean Piaget (McLeod, 2009), Social Influences in Cognitive Development of Vygotsky (McLeod, 2007 & Shaffer, 1996), the Social Learning theory of Bandura (McLeod, 2011) and the concept of Cognitive Dissonance as coined by Leon Festinger (McLeod, 2008).

Jean Piaget believed that learners discover their individual abilities and talents according to the stimuli that stir their interest and curiosity. The teacher guides the learners' own discovery and knowledge (McLeod, 2009). Every teacher should aim to bring about changes for the better in the light of the principle involved in the learning experiences of the individual student inside and outside the classroom. Thus, as guides, the moral turpitude of the teachers play a vital role. Learners' behavior changes as a result of observing other behaviors and consequences. Learners usually follow and imbibe the things they observe.

Vygotsky, shares the idea of Piaget, that young children are curious and actively involved in their own learning and the discovery and development of new understandings/schema (McLeod, 2007). He believed in social transmission as an important factor for cognitive development of the child learner. However, he placed more emphasis on social contributions to the process of development, whereas Piaget emphasized self-initiated discovery. Much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. The tutor may model behaviors and/or provide verbal instructions for the child. Vygotsky referred to this as co-operative or collaborative dialogue (Shaffer, 1996). In it, the child seeks to understand the actions or instruction provided by the tutor often, the parent or teacher, and then internalizes the information, using it to guide or regulate his own performance. This theory is utilized to know how the students were able to come up with those ideas about religiosity. Were they influenced and shaped by the people and social environment around them? Was it the organizational culture that sanctioned them?

Bandura's theory comparably stated that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning (McLeod, 2011). In this theory, learners observe people around them, who they call models. These models provide examples of behaviors that are observed and can be imitated. Learners most of the time pay attention to these models and copy their behaviors. And at the later time they may imitate those behaviors they observed regardless of whether these behaviors are appropriate or not.

Some models existing around the learners do sometimes respond to the behavior that is being imitated with either reinforcement or punishment. Reinforcement can either be positive or negative that will usually lead to a change in a person's behavior.

This study used the above mentioned theories to get the idea on how the Leyte Normal University employees promote religiosity because they exist as models to the students. The behavior of each LNU faculty reinforces the student's idea about things. The students' actions in the future may have something to do from what they have observed and believed from the faculty while they were still students.

In the process of learning and development, sometimes man is confronted with two or more conflicting cognitions such as ideas, values, beliefs or emotional reactions. These produce a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance. Such theory is called cognitive dissonance theory coined by Leon Festinger (McLeod, 2008). He believed that, to be able

to cope up with such a feeling, man must focus on more supportive beliefs or behaviors that outweigh the dissonant one existing in him. Man must also reduce the importance of the conflicting beliefs and change the same so that it would be consistent with other beliefs and behaviors.

This theory somehow supports the study conducted by Bulatao (1966), on Split-level Christianity, wherein Filipinos tend to join religious activities yet commit cultural practices which are deemed as unethical in the context of public office. In a sense, only those who view the continuity between the religious and the secular realm manifest consistency of morality.

The theories mentioned above support the beliefs that man's nature is highly influenced by the kind of society or environment where he is in. Individuals choose the kind of life they wanted to follow with the idea that such choice would give them the goodness that they wanted to attain (Bautista, 2016).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

A three-part self-made questionnaire was utilized as an instrument in data gathering. The said questionnaire was patterned after several approaches available that were developed by credible contemporary scholars such as, Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, who came up with his four-dimensional orientation model and Charles Y. Glock, who proposed the so called five core dimensions of religiosity.

The said questionnaire was validated and subsequently improved by conducting a dry run. To fill-in unanswered items in the questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with grounded theory approach, an inductive way of analyzing data, to selected LNU students to determine their individual inputs with regard to morality.

This study used the descriptive survey design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. Library research, more particularly on the different principles and ideas about religiosity was employed.

In this study, the respondents were ten percent (10%) of the total population of the students, of Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines.

### **4. RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS**

The respondents are male and female but belonging to different age brackets where age bracket 10-19 were the majority, which explains that majority of the Leyte Normal University students are still young. Further, the Roman Catholics dominated it because of the fact that the Philippines is a Catholic nation. The data reveals further that, Born Again Christians come next. Most of the respondents were exposed to both the broadcast media and the print media, which in one way or the other may propel one to think that all have access to information.

It is gleaned in Table 1 that majority of the student respondents possess knowledge that pertains to the basic ideas about the existence of God, the importance of religion in their lives, and acceptance of the different doctrines such as the existence of heaven and hell, life after death, and judgement time.

**Table 1**  
**Student's View on Religiosity**

<b>Ideas, Beliefs, Doctrines, Practices and Consequences</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
God exists.	529	94	0	0	0
God created the world.	540	79	0	0	0
God created man according to His image and likeness.	501	121	0	0	0
Satan and hell exist.	408	215	0	0	0
There is life after death.	414	209	0	0	0
I believe that my religion is very important in my life.	446	177	0	0	0
I believe that the whole creation of God is good and must be respected.	494	129	0	0	0
I believe that there is heaven.	488	135	0	0	0
I believe that in the end of time, we will be judge according to what we did.	411	212	0	0	0
I believe that the Bible is the word of God.	465	158	0	0	0
I live my life in accordance with the teachings of my religion.	405	218	0	0	0
Prayer is a tool to communicate with God.	499	124	0	0	0
I must respect my fellow men.	501	122	0	0	0
Avoiding sin is a must.	470	153	0	0	0
I am willing to share my blessings with others especially the needy.	477	146	0	0	0
I admit my sin to God and ask for His forgiveness.	530	93	0	0	0
I always pray.	339	279	0	0	0
Attendance in religious services and activities is a must.	426	197	0	0	0
I am willing to do what God, as per religious teaching wants me to do.	400	209	0	0	14
Doing good things while alive would merit a place in heaven.	465	158	0	0	0
The important decisions of my life are always influenced by my religious beliefs.	241	382	0	0	0
I am influenced by my religious beliefs on what I wear.	292	317	0	0	14
I am influenced by my religious beliefs and affiliation on what I do.	280	343	0	0	0
I am influenced by my religious beliefs on what or whom I associate with.	247	376	0	0	0
I am influenced by my religious beliefs on what social activities I undertake.	263	360	0	0	0

5 – Strongly Agree    4- Moderately Agree    3 – Agree    2-Fairly Agree    1-Uncertain

Such beliefs and practices have been in existence in the society even before the coming of the Spaniards who introduced Catholicism. In everything that they do, they always invoke the presence of God, which is a good manifestation since teachers are not only expected to enhance the intellectual capability of their students but also uplift their spirituality.

It is posited there that majority of the student respondents have high sense of religiosity. Majority of the respondents strongly agree to the statements. On the issues regarding the influence of their religious belief when they make important decisions in their lives, on what they wear, what they do, what and whom they associate with and the kind of social activity they undertake, majority of the respondents showed moderate agreement.

Fourteen student respondents were uncertain on other issues like that of their willingness to do what God as per religious teaching want them to do and the influence of their religious belief on what they wear. This should not be viewed as a problem, since with the influence of the worldly thing confronting us every day, it is not impossible that anybody

might try to practice what is contrary to his/her belief. The influence now of the parents, teachers, school workers, and the church must interfere. They play a vital role in the formation of this young men and women who will constitute the new breed of citizens. That is why, a university that is being manned by religious and moral professors and personnel, can produce students having the same values.

Table 2 reveals that factors such as parents' education, and their moral conviction, the place of residence, the classification of programs, movies and reading materials they resorted to, and the perceived moral effects of the chosen media have a high significant relationship with the religiosity of the student respondents. While the school previously enrolled in and the frequent access to newspaper have a highly significant relationship with their religiosity.

Parents have crucial roles in shedding light, proper guidance and instilling values among their children. Religious values are under attack in this highly digital world and the parents' task in countering negative influences seems daunting. Factors such as the previous school enrolled in and the frequency of access to newspaper has significant effects. This result shows that parents, the media, and the environment where they live significantly affect children's religiosity. This affirms the Social Learning theory of Bandura that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Children observe the people around them behaving in various ways (McLeod, 2011).

**Table 2**  
**Relationship between Religiosity and Demographic and Personal Factors of Students**

Demographic and Personal Factors	Contingency Coefficient	Pearson chi-square value	df	Significance
Sex	.009	.052	2	.974
Age	.048	1.425	4	.840
Civil Status	.073	3.321	4	.506
Religion	.015	.138	2	.933
Parents' Education	.188	22.904	8	.003**
Parents, Occupation	.067	2.848	4	.594
Family's Social Spectrum	.064	2.598	6	.857
Fathers' Moral Conviction	.317	69.443	8	.000**
Mothers' Moral Conviction	.318	69.952	8	.000**
Previous School Enrolled In	.092	5.352	2	.069*
Place of Residence	.204	26.896	6	.000**
Frequency of Access to				
Newspaper	.158	15.842	8	.045*
Radio	.096	5.778	8	.672
TV	.135	11.336	8	.183
Internet	.130	10.654	8	.222
Classification of Program, Movies, Reading Material Resorted to	.276	50.791	10	.000**
Perceived Moral Effect of the chosen media	.217	30.712	8	.000**

\* $\alpha < .05$  Significant    \*\*  $\alpha < .01$  Highly Significant

The student respondents are young and mostly dependent on their parents that factors like parent's education, father's and mother's moral convictions, place of residence, newspaper, and classification of movies have high significant relationship. Parents therefore should not only teach their children good things but also show them that they do what they teach. It is ironical for parents to demand from their children to always do what is right when they themselves fail to deliver morally good deeds.

This leads to the belief that parents, family, and the media have a positive influence to the religiosity of the students. The power of the trimedia, side by side with one's educational attainment can be influential to a person's religiosity.

Thus, the above results are good revelation of the quality of Leyte Normal University students. With a university giving high regard for religiosity and morality, chances are, students will tend to be equally moral.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were derived:

1. Majority of Leyte Normal University students are dominated by members of the Roman Catholic Church.
2. Majority of the respondents believe that God exists. They are aware of His divine teachings and laws. Having accepted and practiced the doctrines of the church to which they belong, majority of the respondents imbibe distinctive characters that radiate the goodness that they possess.
3. The students of the university are exposed to different religious ideas and practices, that sometimes it is difficult for them to discern which of these ideas are acceptable and which are contrary to their faith. The diversity of ideas is manifested in their different views of religiosity.
4. Despite the varying views among respondents, it was found out that there is a significant relationship between the two variables such as Previous school enrolled in and Frequent access to newspapers.
5. Factors such as Parent's education. Parent's moral conviction, Place of residence, Classification of programs, Movies, reading materials resorted to and Perceived moral effects of the chosen media have contributed to the Leyte Normal University student's high religiosity.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions presented, the following are thus recommended:

1. The university may consider enhancing its curriculum program. Values Education can be integrated as a subject on certain disciplines.
2. The faculty must integrate values in every subject taught, as it is imperative in promoting desirable qualities of learners alongside their technological and conceptual life skills.

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