



Sanctuary in Faith: A Descriptive Exploration on the Influence of Religious Devotion on the Well-Being and Personal Life of Catholic Students

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ABSTRACT

Religious devotion provides a meaningful framework for personal values, relationships, and a sense of purpose, significantly influencing well-being and personal life. Exploring Catholic students' practices highlights faith's unique role in fostering identity and resilience, offering insights into the interplay between spirituality and personal development in modern contexts. The research gathered insights through a structured online survey, utilizing adopted questionnaires to capture data on religious devotion, well-being, and personal life. Statistical analysis summarized the results, revealing patterns highlighting Catholic practices' impact on students' overall development. The findings exhibit that religious practices significantly shape students' personal lives, providing emotional stability, moral clarity, and a sense of purpose. Personal prayer emerged as a central practice, offering comfort and connection to faith, especially during challenging times. Communal activities strengthen students' resilience and foster a sense of belonging within their faith community. These practices also contribute to students' personal growth by promoting compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude, enhancing their relationships and social well-being. Furthermore, students perceive their faith as a guiding force that influences their decisions and helps them navigate life's complexities with confidence and hope. This holistic impact underscores the importance of religious devotion in fostering identity, resilience, and meaningful connections in students' lives.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Religious devotion is a profound aspect of human culture and identity, influencing individuals and communities across generations. It serves as a source of guidance, meaning, and purpose in life while fostering a sense of belonging in a collective belief system (Macaranas, 2021). For Catholic students, religious devotion often plays a unique role in their daily lives, as their faith involves practices deeply rooted in tradition, such as prayer, participation in sacraments, and communal worship (Baring, 2018). Understanding how these devotional practices affect their well-being and personal lives is essential, as they provide insight into the interplay between faith and individual development, particularly within the context of young adulthood when personal values and identities are actively being formed (Bautista, 2021).

Catholicism emphasizes structured religious practices such as attending Mass, receiving the sacraments, engaging in prayer, and participating in rituals tied to liturgical seasons (Ma, 2020). These practices reinforce a sense of moral responsibility (Sarmiento, 2021), spiritual reflection (Batugal, 2019), and personal discipline (Baring, 2018), guiding adherents in living a life aligned with the teachings of the Church (Baring et al., 2018). These devotional acts play a formative role in shaping their values, ethics, and character, offering a foundation for navigating challenges and making meaningful life decisions (Oracion & Madrigal, 2019). The role of religious devotion extends beyond spiritual obligations, fostering personal growth and serving as an anchor for moral and ethical reasoning (Jocano, 2019).

Well-being encompasses a multifaceted state of health, happiness, and life satisfaction, while personal life includes aspects such as identity, relationships, and one's sense of purpose (Madrigal et al., 2020; Tajonera & Madrigal, 2022). For many individuals, religious practices contribute to well-being by fostering inner peace (Entrego & Del Castillo, 2021), resilience (Calamba & Magallanes, 2023), and a sense of hope (Del Castillo et al., 2020). Devotional practices can play a significant role in personal life by shaping their sense of identity, strengthening interpersonal connections through shared faith, and providing a framework for understanding life's purpose (Pham & Del Castillo,

2020). This interplay between religious devotion and well-being highlights the potential for spiritual practices to influence emotional and psychological health positively (Cena & Bual, 2021; Mañez & Yabut, 2022).

In an increasingly multicultural and secular world, exploring the impact of religious devotion among students becomes vital for understanding its relevance in their lives. Catholic institutions play a crucial role in nurturing the spiritual and personal development of their students, providing spaces for reflection, community, and faith formation (Bual & Madrigal, 2018; Aguas, 2019). By understanding how religious devotion intersects with well-being and personal life, we gain a deeper appreciation of its role in shaping holistic student experiences, even amidst diverse societal influences.

While existing literature often highlights the general benefits of religion on mental health and community belonging, limited research focuses specifically on Catholic students, whose unique practices, such as participation in sacraments, prayer, and liturgical traditions, provide distinct frameworks for growth and resilience. The study aims to explore the influence of religious devotion on the well-being and personal lives of Catholic students, addressing an experiential gap in understanding how faith-based practices shape a person's life.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Identity Theory, Resilience Theory, and Attachment Theory, which collectively provide a structured framework for exploring the influence of religious devotion on the well-being and personal lives of Catholic students. Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2022) highlights how individuals develop and maintain a sense of self through roles, values, and group affiliations. Within the context of Catholicism, religious devotion becomes a key component of identity formation, as students align their beliefs and practices with the teachings of their faith, shaping their self-concept and guiding their interactions with the world.

Meanwhile, Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022) emphasizes the capacity to adapt and thrive despite adversity, with faith and spirituality often acting as protective factors that foster inner strength and emotional stability. Religious practices serve as coping mechanisms that enhance resilience by providing comfort, hope, and a sense of meaning

during challenging times. These theories are further complemented by Attachment Theory (Scharfe, 2021), which focuses on the emotional bonds individuals form with others, including with God or a higher power in the context of religious devotion. For Catholic students, the attachment to their faith can mirror the security and support provided by interpersonal relationships, offering a source of reassurance and belonging.

Together, these theories create an integrated lens for examining the interplay between religious devotion, personal growth, and well-being. Identity Theory provides insights into how faith shapes self-perception, Resilience Theory underscores the role of devotion in fostering emotional strength, and Attachment Theory highlights the relational dimension of spirituality.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of this study is to describe the influence of religious devotion on the well-being and personal lives of Catholic students, focusing on their religious practices and the ways these practices contribute to their spiritual, emotional, and personal development. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What specific religious practices and activities are students actively engaged in?
2. What are the perceived effects of these religious practices on students' personal lives?
3. How does the religious life of students influence and shape their personal lives?

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design (Siedlecki, 2020) to examine the association between religious devotion, well-being, and personal life among students. This design facilitated the systematic collection and analysis of data to describe patterns and relationships within the chosen variables. The research was conducted in a Catholic institution under the Diocese of Malaybalay, situated in the city of Malaybalay, a context that reflects a rich environment for exploring the influence of Catholic practices on students' lives. This setting provided an ideal foundation for understanding religious devotion within a faith-based educational institution.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The study targeted Catholic students from first to fourth year, with 118 respondents. A random sampling technique (Berndt, 2020) was utilized to ensure that each student within the population had an equal opportunity to be included in the study. This method minimized selection bias and allowed for a representative sample that accurately reflected the experiences and practices of Catholic students in the institution.

Research Instrument

The study utilized standardized questionnaires adapted from previous research. The first instrument, developed by Hartwick and Kang (2013) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.879, was used to measure aspects related to religious devotion. The second instrument, from Soguilon and Relator (2022), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.944, focused on dimensions of well-being and personal life. Both instruments were pilot-tested to ensure reliability and validity within the study's context, providing robust tools for data collection and analysis.

Data Gathering

An online survey (Ball, 2019) was employed to collect data from the respondents. Before participation, ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent and assurances of confidentiality. Students were invited to complete the survey through secure online platforms, ensuring accessibility and convenience. The structured format of the questionnaire allowed for a streamlined data collection process, enabling the researchers to gather information on students' experiences and perceptions efficiently.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mishra et al., 2019), which provided a clear and comprehensive summary of the responses. This approach enabled the researchers to identify trends and patterns, offering meaningful insights into how religious devotion impacts well-being and personal life. Descriptive statistics also allowed for the presentation of findings in an unrestricted and easy-to-interpret manner, ensuring the results were effectively communicated to a broad audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students Religious Practices and Activities

Table 1 provides a summary of students' engagement in religious practices, highlighting the frequency, percentage, and rank of their responses. This comprehensive presentation offers a clear overview of the extent and prioritization of their religious activities.

Table 1. Summary of the religious practices of the students.

Religious Practices	F	%	Rank
Eucharist	51	43.2	4
Benediction	18	15.3	8
Confession	59	50.0	3
Rosary	88	74.6	2
Meditation	39	33.1	6
Breviary	24	20.3	7
Novena	44	37.3	5
Personal Prayer	95	80.5	1
Taize	24	20.3	7

Table 1 highlights the religious practices that students engage in, providing a ranking based on their frequency and percentage of participation. Personal prayer ranked highest, followed by praying the rosary and participating in confession. These results suggest that personal, introspective practices are preferred, as they offer flexibility and align with individual spirituality. Less frequently observed practices include the breviary, Taizé, and benediction. The data indicates that students are more inclined towards practices that allow them to independently connect with their faith rather than structured or communal rituals.

The results reveal that students actively engage in religious practices, with personal prayer ranking the highest (80.5%) among respondents. This suggests that personal prayer is a foundational practice for many students, offering a private and accessible means of reflection and connection with their faith (Embalsado et al., 2024). The high engagement in personal prayer reflects its role in

fostering a strong sense of self as students draw upon their relationship with God to affirm their identity and values (Del Castillo et al., 2023). The practice of praying the rosary follows closely (74.6%), emphasizing the importance of traditional Catholic rituals in helping students navigate their spiritual journey and find comfort in the structure and repetition of this devotion (Macaranas, 2021).

Other religious practices, such as attending confession (50%) and participating in the Eucharist (43.2%), highlight communal and sacramental dimensions of faith that support students' emotional and spiritual well-being. These practices reinforce moral values and provide a sense of renewal and resilience, allowing students to release burdens and regain strength during challenging times (Baring, 2018; Bautista, 2021). Meanwhile, meditation (33.1%), novena (37.3%), and less commonly practiced activities such as the breviary (20.3%), Taizé prayer (20.3%), and Benediction (15.3%) demonstrate the diversity of students' spiritual engagements, catering to their individual needs for solace, guidance, and connection.

These findings underscore how religious practices fulfill multiple roles in students' lives, from shaping their sense of identity through regular, meaningful engagement with faith to fostering resilience by providing spiritual coping mechanisms during stress (Dunlop, 2018; Oracion & Madrigal, 2019). Moreover, these practices' collective and relational nature, particularly those involving communal worship and sacraments, underscores the importance of connection to God and a faith community (Madrigal et al., 2020). This interplay between personal and collective dimensions of faith contributes to a holistic understanding of how religious devotion influences students' well-being and personal development.

Table 2 provides a comprehensive summary of students' engagement in religious activities. It includes the frequency, percentage, and rank of their responses, offering a clear overview of their participation levels.

Table 2. Summary of the religious activities of the when they are facing personal struggles.

Religious Activities	F	%	Rank
I pray a personal prayer	105	89.0	1
I go to benediction and open my heart to God and express my problems	13	11.0	7
I go to Mass and receive the Holy Communions to make myself strong and face the struggles of life.	62	52.5	3
I meditate in order to ease my struggles.	48	40.7	4
I pray the Liturgy of the hours to keep in touch with God.	13	11.0	7
I pray the rosary to ease the struggle that I feel.	28	23.7	5
I go to confession to release feelings of anxiety.	20	16.9	6
I join <i>lectio divina</i> or bible sharing to express my struggle.	6	5.1	8
I do a novena to keep myself concentrated in prayer and avoid the struggles of life.	13	11.0	7
I talk to the spiritual director to express myself.	5	4.2	9
I pray to God silently at night.	84	71.2	2

Table 2 explores the religious activities students engage in when facing personal struggles. The most frequent activity is personal prayer, reflecting its accessibility and individual significance during challenging times. Other notable activities include praying silently at night and attending Mass. Conversely, activities like *lectio divina* (5.1%) and consulting a spiritual director (4.2%) rank lowest, indicating limited participation in communal or guided religious exercises during personal struggles. The data underscores the preference for private and personalized religious practices as coping mechanisms for personal struggles.

The findings highlight that students primarily turn to personal prayer when faced with stress, with a significant majority (89.0%) engaging in this practice. This indicates that personal prayer is a cornerstone of their spiritual life and a vital coping mechanism, allowing them to find solace and clarity in moments of difficulty (Del Castillo & Alino, 2020). Praying silently at night (71.2%) also emerged as a prevalent activity, emphasizing the role of quiet reflection in fostering a deeper connection with their faith. These practices reflect how students integrate spirituality into their personal lives, using it as a tool for self-reassurance and emotional grounding (Del Castillo et al., 2023).

Attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion (52.5%) stands out as a key collective activity that students find empowering during

stressful times, illustrating the role of communal worship in providing strength and renewal. Similarly, meditation (40.7%) and praying the rosary (23.7%) were identified as meaningful activities that help ease stress. These practices demonstrate how students use structured and contemplative rituals to reinforce their resilience, drawing strength from their faith while navigating life's challenges (Waters-Tozier, 2022).

The relatively lower participation in activities such as *lectio divina* and consulting a spiritual director highlight the diverse preferences in how students express their devotion. While less frequent, these activities still represent significant spiritual outlets for those who engage in them, offering opportunities to deepen their connection to their faith and community. These findings underscore the multifaceted ways religious practices address students' emotional and spiritual needs, reinforcing their sense of identity, building resilience, and nurturing a secure attachment to their faith and its supportive structures (Oracion & Madrigal, 2019; Tajonera & Madrigal, 2022; Embalsado et al., 2024).

Religious Practices on Students Personal Life

Table 3 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and qualitative interpretations of the perceived influence of religious practices on students' personal lives.

Table 3. Summary of the self-evaluation on the perceived influence on the religious practices towards the students.

Perceived Effect	\bar{x}	σ_x	Q.I.
Feeling Stress-free, empowered, and hopeful.	3.68	1.205	SI
Helps me become a better person.	4.13	0.966	SI
Encourages me to live a meaningful and vibrant life.	4.19	1.088	SI
Helps me connect with others through prayer.	4.03	1.021	SI
Makes me feel nearer to God.	4.33	1.094	VSI
Overall gives me a broader outlook or perspective in life.	4.17	1.015	SI

Legend: VSI – Very Strong Influence MI – Moderate Influence NI – No Influence
SI – Strong Influence LI – Little Influence

Table 3 provides insights into how students perceive the effects of their religious practices. Students reported that these practices strongly influence their lives, with statements such as "*makes me feel nearer to God*" receiving the highest mean score (4.33), interpreted as "*Very Strong Influence*". Other notable effects include providing a "*broader outlook on life*" (4.17) and encouraging a "*meaningful and vibrant life*" (4.19), both categorized as "*Strong Influence*". These findings suggest that religious practices foster a deep spiritual connection, promote optimism, and contribute to personal development.

The results reveal that students perceive their religious practices as having a profound and meaningful impact on their lives. A significant effect noted is the sense of being nearer to God, rated as having a strong influence. This underscores the spiritual depth and connection fostered by these practices, providing students with a firm foundation of faith that serves as a source of guidance and comfort (Macaranas, 2021). The consistent engagement in prayer, sacraments, and other rituals reflects how students integrate their faith into their daily lives, shaping their values and identity in alignment with their religious beliefs (Dunlop, 2018; Oracion & Madrigal, 2019; Bautista, 2021).

Students also identified these practices as encouraging them to live meaningful and vibrant lives, helping them become better individuals, and offering a broader perspective on life (Castillo,

2018). These findings highlight how spiritual engagement promotes self-reflection, ethical growth, and purpose, particularly during a period of life when students are actively navigating personal and social challenges (Baring, 2018; Macaranas, 2021; Del Castillo et al., 2023). By fostering a sense of resilience, religious practices enable students to overcome difficulties with empowerment and hope, reinforcing their emotional and psychological well-being (Tajonera & Madrigal, 2022).

Additionally, these practices help students connect with others through prayer, enhancing a sense of belonging and shared spirituality within their community. This relational aspect reinforces the emotional bonds between individuals and their faith, creating a secure environment to seek support and mutual understanding (Madrigal et al., 2020). The collective influence of these practices on personal transformation, emotional stability, and interpersonal connections illustrates their central role in the holistic development of students (Entegro & Del Castillo, 2021). Through their faith, students cultivate inner strength and outward relationships, allowing them to navigate life's challenges with a grounded and purposeful perspective.

Religious Life of Student and their Personal Life

Table 4 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and qualitative interpretations of the perceived influence of the religious practices and activities on students' personal lives.

Table 4. Summary of the impact of the religious practices and activities of the students towards their personal life

Perceived Impact	\bar{x}	σ_x	Q.I.
Source of Comfort and Strength During Challenges	4.61	0.915	VSI
Foundation for Personal Growth and Positive Transformation	3.67	1.305	SI
Guidance for Values, Decisions, and Life Purpose	3.63	0.924	SI
Connection to God and Deepened Faith	4.69	0.932	VSI
Peace of Mind and Stress Relief	3.72	0.847	SI
Encouragement for Compassion and Forgiveness	3.56	1.017	SI
Positive Influence on Social and Emotional Well-being	3.73	0.897	SI
Perspective on Life's Challenges and Gratitude	3.47	0.881	SI
Motivation to Strive and Serve	3.55	1.085	SI

Legend: VSI – Very Strong Influence MI – Moderate Influence NI – No Influence
SI – Strong Influence LI – Little Influence

Table 4 evaluates the broader impact of religious life on students. The most significant impact is seen in areas like fostering a connection to God and deepened faith (4.69) and providing a source of comfort and strength during challenges (4.61), both interpreted as “*Very Strong Influence.*” Other aspects, such as serving as a positive influence on social and emotional well-being (3.73) and offering peace of mind and stress relief (3.72), are marked as “*Strong Influence.*” This demonstrates that religious life is a crucial source of resilience, moral guidance, and emotional support, although its influence on aspects like perspective on life’s challenges (3.47) and motivation to strive and serve (3.55) is comparatively moderate.

The findings demonstrate that religious life considerably influences students' personal lives, providing comfort and strength during challenges. This strong connection to their faith provides emotional stability and a sense of security, enabling students to face difficulties with confidence and resilience (Baring, 2018; Calamba & Magallanes, 2023). The deepened relationship with God, perceived as a strong influence, reflects the spiritual bond that nurtures students' emotional well-being and fosters hope, even in adversity (Macaranas, 2021). This connection creates a foundation for personal transformation, where students draw from their spiritual experiences to navigate life's complexities.

Students also perceive their religious life as a guiding force in shaping their values, decisions, and sense of purpose (Oracion & Madrigal, 2019). By aligning their actions with their faith, they develop a stronger moral compass and a clearer direction in life. This alignment enhances their ability to make meaningful choices, supporting their personal growth and their contributions to their community (Castillo, 2018). The spiritual practices provide guidance and reinforce gratitude and a positive outlook on life’s challenges, fostering an adaptive mindset that allows students to embrace growth and transformation.

Moreover, religious life positively impacts students' social and emotional well-being, encouraging compassion, forgiveness, and empathy in their relationships. This relational dimension highlights the importance of community within their faith, where shared beliefs and practices strengthen interpersonal bonds and provide a sense of belonging (Dunlop, 2018; Tajonera & Madrigal, 2022). Students cultivate emotional resilience, a deeper sense of identity, and meaningful connections with others through their religious life (Aguas, 2019). This holistic influence underscores the central role of faith in shaping their character, enriching their personal lives, and empowering them to lead purposeful and fulfilling lives.

CONCLUSION

The findings underscore the significant influence of religious life on students' personal growth and well-being, emphasizing its role as a source of strength, guidance, and emotional stability. Students experience a deep connection to their faith, which provides comfort during challenging times and shapes their values and decisions, fostering a clear sense of purpose in life. Their engagement in religious practices and belonging within a faith-based community enrich their social and emotional well-being, promoting compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude. This holistic impact highlights the significance of religious devotion in nurturing students' identity, resilience, and interpersonal relationships, enabling them to navigate life with confidence and clarity.

Limitations

The study's scope is limited by its focus on students from a single Catholic institution, which may not fully capture students' experiences from diverse cultural and institutional contexts. While effective for capturing perceptions, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys may introduce biases or limitations in the depth of responses. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional nature limits its ability to examine changes in students' religious practices and personal development over time. These factors could be considered when interpreting the findings and their applicability to broader contexts.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results, Catholic institutions are recommended to enhance opportunities for students to engage in diverse religious practices that foster individual and communal spiritual growth. Programs such as guided prayer sessions, regular spiritual retreats, and opportunities for sacramental participation can strengthen students' connection to their faith and support their well-being. Additionally, counselors and educators within these institutions could integrate faith-based approaches into student support programs, addressing emotional challenges through spiritual guidance and promoting practices that reinforce resilience and moral development. Creating a supportive environment that encourages open discussions about faith and its influence on personal growth can further empower students to

effectively integrate their spiritual beliefs into their daily lives.

Future research could explore the influence of religious devotion on students in different cultural, denominational, and institutional contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its impact. Longitudinal studies that track changes in students' religious practices, well-being, and personal growth can provide deeper insights into how faith evolves throughout their educational journey. Additionally, qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could complement quantitative findings, offering richer narratives about students' experiences and the nuanced ways religious devotion shapes their lives. These studies can help broaden our understanding of the interplay between faith, resilience, and personal development.

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