

## The intersection of religion and society: Inconsistencies in the practice of Catholicism among Filipinos

Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar<sup>1\*</sup>, Rainiel Bryan Villanueva Domasian<sup>2</sup>,  
Hartosujono<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration, Southern Philippine Academy College, National Hi-way, Magaslong, Datu Piang, Maguindanao, Philippines, 9607

<sup>2</sup>College of Teacher Education, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Brgy. Malinta, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, 4030

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Jl. Batikan, UH-III Jl. Tuntungan No. 1043, Tahunan, Umbulharjo, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55167

\*Corresponding author

E-mail address: markgabrielaguilar@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v7i1.22528>

### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
religion  
Catholicism  
culture and religion  
religious  
perspectives  
perspectives and  
behavior

Religion, as an inherent part of individuals' identity, is intricately interwoven into the fabric of their lives, shaping their values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and influencing their interactions within the broader societal context. With this, the study guided by a descriptive research design and a quantitative research approach aimed to investigate people's perspectives towards selected practices that go against Catholicism in the Philippines being the only catholic country in Asia and the third largest in the world. A survey was conducted among Catholic Filipinos, and the results revealed that the majority do not adhere to all the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism. Despite being the dominant religion in the country, the practice has become selective. Most do not see cohabitation, extramarital sex, the punishment of death penalty for heinous crimes, and premarital sex as unfavorable, despite being sins in Catholicism. However, they had a negative perspective towards prostitution. The study also found that younger, male, and single individuals tend to be more accepting of cohabitation, premarital sex, and extramarital affairs. The study suggests that there is a need for the Catholic Church to reassess its teachings and find ways to better connect with the younger generation, while addressing the issue of selective adherence to its principles.

### Citation suggestion:

Aguilar, M. G. W., Domasian, R. B. V., & Hartosujono. (2024). The intersection of religion and society: Inconsistencies in the practice of Catholicism among Filipinos. *Simulacra*, 7(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v7i1.22528>

Received 1 October 2023; Received in revised form 25 October 2024; Accepted 31 May 2024; Published online 25 June 2024.

## Introduction

The Philippines is a country known for its religious beliefs, particularly its strong Catholic tradition (Cornelio, 2018). It is one of the few predominantly Catholic countries in Asia and the only nation in the region where Christianity is the national religion (Miller, n.d.). This contrasts with other countries in the region, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, where Islam and Buddhism are observed, respectively (Pew Research Center, 2023). Catholicism in the Philippines is deeply rooted in the country's culture and history, exerting a significant influence on its social, political, and economic landscape (Melgar and Carrera-Pacete, 2016). Catholicism, a branch of Christianity, is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. Its adherents believe in one God who is the creator of the universe and everything within it. Catholics also embrace the concept of the Holy Trinity, which states that there is one God existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Staples, 2014). Other commonly held beliefs include the importance of prayer, sacraments, and the Bible. However, the Philippines grapple with certain issues and practices that may potentially contradict the tenets of the Catholic faith on various levels.

One of the most significant issues is the prevalence of extramarital affairs and premarital sex, practices that contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church on the sanctity of marriage and chastity (Abalos, 2008; Cordero Jr., 2017). According to Church doctrine, sexual relations should only occur within the confines of marriage, and any sexual activity outside of marriage is considered a sin (Sprinkle, 2016). Despite the Church's active promotion of abstinence and fidelity, these efforts have not been sufficient to eradicate these practices. Another issue is the widespread use of contraceptives,

despite the Catholic Church's opposition to artificial birth control methods. The Church advocates for natural family planning methods (Ryder, 1993), which some individuals find challenging to follow or ineffective (Marshall, 2015). As a result, there is a high rate of unintended pregnancies and maternal mortality. The prevalence of gambling and other vices, considered sinful in Catholicism, is another societal issue. Many Filipinos regularly engage in gambling activities such as cockfighting, card games, and lotteries, leading to addiction, financial difficulties, and other adverse consequences. For instance, based on the findings of the TGM Sports Betting Survey carried out in the Philippines in October 2022, it was observed that 38.91% of the population had engaged in sports betting activities in the past year. Cockfighting has long been a favorite betting event among Filipinos, yet it is regrettable that this state-sanctioned revenue-generating activity has had detrimental effects on people's lives.

According to Suralta (2022), many Filipinos have become ensnared in this online gambling industry, resulting in financial ruin, involvement in criminal activities, deteriorating personal health, and heightened family conflicts. Corruption is also evident in the Philippines, ranging from petty bribery to large-scale graft and corruption (Nawaz and Bridi, 2008). Such acts go against the Catholic Church's teachings on honesty and integrity. Although the Church actively promotes these values in public life, their efforts have not been enough to curb the problem. Over the years, the Catholic Church in the Philippines has also faced several controversies, including allegations of sexual abuse by priests and its involvement in political affairs (Ang, 2017; Aravilla, 2003; Mahtani and Cabato, 2020). These issues have raised questions about the Church's effectiveness and relevance in modern-day society.

Despite these, many claim that Filipinos are very religious, and have gotten more because of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a Pew Research Center survey, nearly 9 in 10 Filipinos see religion as extremely important in their lives, and the Philippines placed 10th in religiosity among the 40 nations examined. Sub-Saharan African countries like Ethiopia and Uganda came out on top in the poll (Bagaoisan, 2016). Besides that, Filipinos were ranked third among ten Asia-Pacific countries, trailing only Indonesians and Pakistanis.

The feast of the Black Nazarene, for example, draws millions of Filipino Catholics to the streets of Manila each year to display their piety and devotion. As per Mangahas (2023), Filipinos all over the world are deeply religious, not because they are mostly Catholic or Christian, but simply because they are Filipino. It has been stated that Filipinos have surprisingly similar moral standards regardless of religion, whether Muslim or Christian, and regardless of the sort of Christianity we practice; their views are even more conservative when compared to other Christian countries, notably "Catholic" Spain. Cornelio (2020) backed this by reporting that in a national study of 1,200 respondents, the majority (51.8%) stated that they got more religious over the years. In comparison, only 1.5% said they had become less religious. Nevertheless, faith has been viewed as an urgent resource for Filipinos in times of crisis; a study conducted in June 2020 by Radyo Veritas found that faith is "extremely crucial" in the fight against Covid-19 for 89% of respondents.

Canete (2021) and Corpuz and Sarmiento (2020) have similar interpretations, explaining that Filipinos' faith in Christ takes precedence over the destructive force of the pandemic; even during lockdown, Catholic Filipinos have found ways to express their unity and togetherness by professing their faith through attending online masses,

listening to faith conferences, reciting some devotional prayers online and even at home. It was also stated that the pandemic did not destroy Filipino Christians' faith, but rather strengthened it. This is supported by GMA Integrated News (2023) that in a December 2022 survey, it was found out that roughly 70% Filipino Catholics pray at least once every day, nearly 40% attend weekly church services, and 9 out of 10 personally visited places of worship in the last couple of months, establishing information that confirms religiosity of Filipinos. While these data serve as confirmation to many on the religiosity of Filipinos, it's important to question whether these actions alone can really justify one's religiosity or if they are enough to label someone as a true Catholic.

Religion is an integral part of Filipino culture and serves as a guide to its followers. It goes beyond just a label on one's birth documents or something that is filled out on forms. It is an inherent part of which people are and is reflected in their values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and practices. With this, the researchers suggest that claiming to be a follower of a specific religion is not enough if one does not adhere to the religion's teachings and violates the group's beliefs. In this case, the claim of being a follower is not valid. Therefore, it's crucial to understand that religiosity is not just about external actions like praying, attending church services, or visiting places of worship. It's about living and embodying the teachings of one's religion in daily life, treating others with kindness and compassion, and striving to make the world a better place.

Indeed, Catholicism has a significant presence in the Philippines, with the religion playing an important role in shaping the country's culture and history. However, there are several issues and practices observed in the country that potentially violate Catholicism's teachings, leading to questions about the effectiveness of the

Church in modern-day society. With these, there is a need to conduct studies on whether Catholicism in the Philippines is successful or failing. These studies can help shed light on the effectiveness of the Church's teachings and practices, as well as provide insight into how the Church can adapt to better meet the needs of its followers. Additionally, these studies can help identify areas where the Church can improve its engagement with the wider community and address some of the social issues that are prevalent in the country, hence, motivating the researchers to conduct this research.

The theory on double standards of Foschi (2000) was the inspiration of the researchers to conduct this study and to analyze the beliefs and actions of Filipinos, particularly in relation to their religious practices influenced by their Catholic faith. This sociological lens helps to examine how societal factors, such as societal acceptance, influence individuals to break certain religious beliefs and engage in behaviors that may be contrary to Catholic teachings but acceptable in society. It considers the tension between religious beliefs and social expectations, shedding light on the inconsistencies in individuals' beliefs and actions. Simultaneously, a review of literature on Catholicism helps to explore the religious aspects of Filipinos' beliefs and actions. It delves into the teachings of the Catholic Church, specifically beliefs on what is right and wrong that reflect the strong religiosity of the Filipino people. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the inconsistent beliefs and actions of Filipinos as both members of society and as Catholics. Based on this analysis, the study can then provide recommendations on how to maintain the image of the Philippines as a predominantly Catholic country, while addressing the inconsistencies and challenges faced by individuals in navigating their religious beliefs within the broader social context.

Specifically, this study aimed to meet the following objectives:

1. To determine perspectives towards the following selected practices that are against Catholicism; cohabitation, extramarital sex, imposition of the death penalty for heinous crimes, prostitution, and premarital sex;
2. To determine if there is significant difference on the people's perspectives when grouped according to their age, sex, and civil status.

## Method

This study was guided by a descriptive research design and a quantitative research approach involving Catholic Filipinos. Creswell (2009) contends that in quantitative research, variables are characterized by their measurability and quantifiability, enabling researchers to collect numerical data that can be rigorously analyzed through statistical methods. Given that this study involves the collection and analysis of numerical data, it is inherently quantitative in nature. To determine the number of respondents needed to meet the objectives, the sample size was computed from the total population of Catholics in the Philippines based on the 2020 census of the Philippines Statistics Authority (Mapa, 2023). Through Slovin's Formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the sample size of 385 was determined out of the 85,645,362 population, which were randomly selected across the country to avoid biases. A survey questionnaire created using Google form has been disseminated via social media platforms. The questionnaire was composed of 12 questions, 3 of which were designed to learn about the profile of the respondents, particularly information about their age, sexuality, and civil status, while 9 were asked to determine their perspective towards



personal and social practices that violates the beliefs and teachings of Catholicism including Cohabitation, Extramarital Sex, Death Penalty, Prostitution, and Premarital Sex. Data gathering took a total of 3 months and 17 days since not all who were contacted were willing to be involved in the study. In fact, the researchers have to reach out to 457 people to convince 385. To analyze and interpret data collected, statistical formulas were used; Frequency and percentage were computed to determine the distribution of respondents' responses on their stance on the five practices, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine significant differences in their stance when grouped according to their age, sexuality, and civil status.

To qualify as a respondent, the person must be a Filipino, Catholic, at least 18 years of age, and currently residing in the Philippines. Prior answering the survey, respondents were informed about the identities of the researchers, the purpose of the study, and questions that will be asked. It was also explained that they may refuse to answer even after seeing the questions as participation is completely voluntary, hence, no person was forced to be a part of this endeavor.

## Results and Discussion

With Filipinos becoming more religious, as detailed in various articles, there are claims

that the Philippines is still a Catholic nation. However, it has been noted throughout time that this may no longer be the case. The results that follow paint a clear picture of the country's real state.

The survey among Catholic Filipinos reveal that many respondents do not view cohabitation, extramarital sex, the death penalty for heinous crimes, and premarital sex as unfavorable, despite being sins in Catholicism. In fact, the overwhelming majority believe that people who love each other can choose to live together if they are independent and can find ways to support themselves. Additionally, many respondents believe that it is acceptable for a married person to seek another partner if they have been cheated on by their spouse, stating that if it makes the individual happy, then it is okay. Moreover, most Filipinos believe that imposing the death penalty as punishment for heinous crimes, including rape and murder, and the act of having sexual intercourse prior to getting married, are acceptable. These results clearly indicate that while the respondents identify as Catholics, they do not adhere to all the teachings of the Catholic Church and hold opposing views on several key issues. It is also noteworthy that the respondents express a negative perspective towards prostitution, which is the only activity that goes against the principles of the Catholic Church that they disagree with. The theory of double standards, as proposed by Foschi (2000), reinforces the

**Table 1. Catholic Filipinos opinion towards selected practices that violates the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism**

Practices	Yes	No	Interpretation
Cohabitation	95.3%	4.7%	Majority view cohabitation as acceptable
Extramarital Sex	80.7%	19.3%	Majority view extramarital sex as acceptable
Imposition of Death Penalty	77.1%	22.9%	Majority view the imposition of death penalty for heinous crimes as acceptable
Prostitution	36.7%	63.3%	Majority view prostitution as unacceptable
Premarital Sex	65.6%	34.4%	Majority view premarital sex as acceptable

findings of this study. This theory posits that individuals apply varying principles or rules to different individuals, groups, and situations, leading to unfair or unequal treatment and inconsistent judgments. This phenomenon is also evident in the realm of morality, as highlighted in the study, however, is perceived as a manifestation of moral hypocrisy or inconsistency. In such cases, individuals, or society as a whole fail to apply moral principles consistently and impartially. This ethical inconsistency is generally regarded as problematic and serves as a focal point for debates and criticisms within discussions pertaining to fairness, justice, and moral philosophy.

Data supports the article by De la Cruz (2022) that has explained that cohabitation has increased 4 times in incidence among young adult women in the Philippines, rising from 6% in 1993 to 24% in 2013, while Abalos (2021) revealed that based on the data of the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA), the share of illegitimate births in the Philippines has increased from less than 1% in 1960 to 54% in 2018, indicating that the practice is indeed being seen as acceptable by people over the years. In terms of extramarital sex, Filipinos remain to be conservative with 5% seeing it as morally acceptable, while 90% view it otherwise (Pew Research Center, 2014), which contradicts the findings of this study. Meanwhile, numbers recorded for perspective towards death penalty were synonymous with the report of Cabico (2018) stating that according to the survey of the Social Weather Stations and the Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines, majority or 59% of Filipinos favors the imposition of death penalty to people proven guilty of heinous crimes. It is also worthy to take note that during this time, the former President Duterte has been expressing full support to its restoration in the country as crimes associated with illegal drugs increases. This, however, was strongly

rejected by the Amnesty International's Director for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Champa Patel, arguing that the idea to have death penalty as a means of eradicating drug-related crimes is misguided and inhumane, and will not be effective in solving the problem. In fact, she believes that it will only bring notoriety to the country as one of the few nations to revive such a barbaric practice (Amnesty International, 2017).

For the perception towards premarital sex, result seems to be slightly contradicting but somehow in support with the findings of Valenzuela et al (2021) that has revealed that while young adults acknowledge the presence of premarital sex in their environment, they do not consider it an ideal behavior for teenagers. However, generally view it acceptable for mature adults. The respondent's negative perception towards prostitution on other hand may have been influenced by the fact that the practice is illegal in the Philippines (Article 202 of the Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code, Republic Act No. 10158). Overall, the survey underscores the importance of recognizing that individuals may interpret and practice their faith differently, and that personal beliefs and values may not always align with religious teachings. It also highlights the need for ongoing dialogue and reflection within faith communities on how to navigate and address such issues.

The analysis of Catholic Filipinos' perspectives towards cohabitation, extramarital sex, imposition of death penalty, and premarital sex, reveals significant differences when grouped by age. The study found that those aged between 28-37 years old had the most favorable responses towards cohabitation, while those between 38 and 47 years old had the least favorable responses, with the majority not seeing the practice as acceptable. On the other hand, those aged between 28-37 years old recorded the highest number of favorable responses

**Table 2. Significant difference of Catholic Filipinos' opinion towards selected practices that violates the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism when grouped based on their age**

		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perspective on Cohabitation	Between Groups	10.109	3.370	181.704	.000
	Within Groups	7.047	.019		
Perspective on Extramarital Sex	Between Groups	6.874	2.291	16.471	.000
	Within Groups	52.865	.139		
Perspective on the imposition of Death Penalty	Between Groups	12.626	4.209	28.969	.000
	Within Groups	55.207	.145		
Perspective on Prostitution	Between Groups	1.597	.532	2.309	.076
	Within Groups	87.629	.231		
Perspective on Premarital Sex	Between Groups	21.690	7.230	42.310	.000
	Within Groups	64.935	.171		

towards extramarital sex, imposition of death penalty, and premarital sex, while those between 38 and 47 years old recorded the least favorable responses. These results suggest that people between 28 and 37 years old during the study were less adherent to Catholicism's teachings and beliefs, while those between 38 and 47 years old were the most conservative among the groups. Results also showed no significant differences in the people's perspectives towards prostitution, regardless of age group.

In the report of Mendoza (2022), in reference to Veritas Truth Survey conducted in January 2022, among Filipino Catholics aged 40-60, 48% believe that couples should be married before living together, while 29% consider it unnecessary. In the age group of 21-39, 21% believe that only married couples can cohabit, while 58% do not consider it important. For respondents between 13 and 20 years old during the survey, 34% believe that marriage is a prerequisite for cohabitation, while 51% believe it is not necessary. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which indicates that young adults are the least conservative and least likely to adhere to the Catholic Church's teachings on cohabitation, while older adults are more conservative, and teenagers fall in

the middle. The study's results on premarital sex are also supported by the consistent increase in the number of 15–24-year-olds engaging in this practice, from 18% in 1994 to 23% in 2002 and 32% in 2013 (Reyes, 2022).

The data presented in the table indicates that when respondents were grouped based on their sexuality; their perspectives on cohabitation, extramarital sex, imposition of death penalty, and prostitution were statistically similar. However, when it comes to premarital sex, there was a notable difference between men and women. The results suggest that a greater number of men favor premarital sex compared to women, although both groups view this practice as more acceptable than sinful. This is consistent with the findings of Bocar and Perez (2013), which indicate a difference in perception between males and females regarding premarital sex. Specifically, the study revealed that males tended to have a slightly conservative view on premarital sex, while females expressed a more conservative opinion. It is important to note that these findings reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the respondents and do not necessarily align with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The study showed that there is a significant difference in the perspectives of

**Table 3. Significant difference of Catholic Filipinos’ opinion towards selected practices that violates the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism when grouped based on their sexuality**

		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perspective on Cohabitation	Between Groups	.167	.167	3.751	<b>.054</b>
	Within Groups	16.989	.044		
Perspective on Extramarital Sex	Between Groups	.019	.019	.124	<b>.725</b>
	Within Groups	59.720	.156		
Perspective on the imposition of Death Penalty	Between Groups	.001	.001	.006	<b>.938</b>
	Within Groups	67.832	.178		
Perspective on Prostitution	Between Groups	.278	.278	1.195	<b>.275</b>
	Within Groups	88.948	.233		
Perspective on Premarital Sex	Between Groups	10.274	10.274	51.405	<b>.000</b>
	Within Groups	76.351	.200		

**Table 4. Significant difference of Catholic Filipinos’ opinion towards selected practices that violates the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism when grouped based on their civil status**

		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perspective on Cohabitation	Between Groups	1.787	1.787	44.420	<b>.000</b>
	Within Groups	15.369	.040		
Perspective on Extramarital Sex	Between Groups	.007	.007	.044	<b>.834</b>
	Within Groups	59.733	.156		
Perspective on the imposition of Death Penalty	Between Groups	.096	.096	.540	<b>.463</b>
	Within Groups	67.738	.177		
Perspective on Prostitution	Between Groups	.013	.013	.058	<b>.810</b>
	Within Groups	89.213	.234		
Perspective on Premarital Sex	Between Groups	.279	.279	1.235	<b>.267</b>
	Within Groups	86.346	.226		

Catholic Filipinos towards cohabitation when they are grouped according to their civil status. However, there were no significant differences in their views on extramarital sex, imposition of death penalty, prostitution, and premarital sex. The data revealed that single individuals are more in favor of two people in a relationship living together under one roof, compared to those who are married. This suggests that married individuals are more likely to adhere to the teachings of Catholicism that emphasize the importance of marriage before cohabitation. However, it is worth noting that both groups view

cohabitation as more acceptable than being a sin, despite their differing perspectives.

***Global decline in adherence to Church’s teachings***

Adherence to the church’s teachings and beliefs has been observed declining over the years, in fact, this has been evident even in the largest Christian nation in the world, the United States of America. According to Twenge et al. (2016), from 2006 to 2014, there were less Americans who participated in religious activities or displayed religious



beliefs between, with particularly dramatic losses among 18-to-29-year-olds in reference to a nationally represented survey from 1972 to 2014. Yet, it revealed they prayed, believed in God, took the Bible literally, attended religious services, identified as religious, belonged to a religion, or trusted religious organizations. Moreover, a significant portion of the Millennial population, approximately one-third, was identified as secular. This means they not only lacked religious affiliation but also displayed a lack of belief in God, low levels of religiosity, and infrequent attendance at religious services.

This secular trend among Millennials greatly surpassed the numbers observed among both Boomers and Generation X individuals when they were at the same age. The study also revealed that the decline in religious commitment was primarily influenced by time rather than generational differences. Specifically, the decline in public religious practices and beliefs was more substantial and began earlier compared to the relatively smaller decline in private religious practices and beliefs, which predominantly started after 2006. The nation's religious commitment is showing signs of increasing polarization, with notable variations across gender, race, education, and region. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center (2019) revealed that 65% of Americans identified themselves as Christians when asked about their religious affiliation, marking a 12-point decrease compared to the previous decade. Conversely, the population without religious affiliation, including atheists, agnostics, and those who identify as "nothing in particular," has risen to 26%, up from 17% in 2009. Both Protestantism and Catholicism have also experienced a decline in their demographic shares; Protestant identification has decreased from 51% in 2009 to 43%, while Catholic identification has decreased from 23% in 2009 to 20%. However, most Americans, 77% of all adults, still maintain

a religious identity (Pew Research Center, 2015); this religiously affiliated population encompasses various religious traditions such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Mormonism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other faiths. Interestingly, their level of religious dedication has remained relatively consistent since 2007. About two-thirds of religiously affiliated individuals report praying daily and consider religion to be of great importance to them. Additionally, nearly 60% state that they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. These figures have shown minimal changes in recent years. Almost all individuals in the religiously affiliated group, which accounts for 97% of the study's participants, continue to believe in God. However, there has been a slight decrease in the proportion expressing this conviction, with 74% and 79% expressing belief in 2014 and 2007, respectively.

Religious matters have been a subject of controversy in Thailand for a considerable period. Assanangkornchai et al. (2002) discovered that despite Buddhism being the country's national religion, a significant number of Thai individuals consumes alcohol, with some of them developing dependence or engaging in hazardous and destructive drinking patterns. This contradicts the teachings of Buddhism, which emphasize abstinence from intoxicants. Additionally, the survey participants reported infrequent or rare participation in group activities at temples. Everyday practices for Buddhist men, such as worshipping the Triple Gems, were only practiced by half or fewer of the men. Offering alms to Buddhist monks was carried out by only 17-29% of the participants, and activities like morning or evening chanting and meditation, which are typically associated with devout individuals, were performed by a mere 5-6% of the respondents.

These data unmistakably highlight that the struggle with religious adherence

extends beyond the Filipino Catholic context and is a global challenge that demands more comprehensive discussion and immediate attention. This is particularly pertinent in nations where religious affiliations play a significant role in shaping society, underscoring the pronounced significance of the present study.

## Conclusion

It is evident that the majority of Catholic Filipinos do not adhere to all the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism. Despite being the dominant religion in the country, the practice has become selective, where people only follow some of its principles and have chosen not to agree with all its teachings. This finding challenges the notion that the Philippines is a Catholic country, as the practice of Catholicism is not consistent throughout the population.

The study revealed that cohabitation, extramarital sex, the imposition of death penalty for heinous crimes, and premarital sex are practices that many Catholics in the Philippines consider acceptable, despite being considered sins in Catholicism. Surprisingly, the respondents have a negative perspective towards prostitution, making it the only activity included in this study against the religious principles that they also go against. It was also found that there are significant differences on Catholic Filipinos' perspectives on cohabitation, extramarital sex, imposition of death penalty, and premarital sex, when grouped according to different demographic variables. Regarding cohabitation, single people are more accepting of the practice compared to married people, although both groups generally see it as more acceptable than a sin. When it comes to extramarital sex, most respondents believe that it is acceptable for a married person to find another partner in case of infidelity, which goes against the

teachings of the Catholic Church. Many respondents also believe that the death penalty is an acceptable punishment for heinous crimes, and premarital sex is seen as favorable by both men and women. The age of the respondents also plays a significant role in their perspectives on these issues. People who are between 28 and 37 years old are the least adherent to the teachings and beliefs of Catholicism, while those who are between 38 and 47 years old are the most conservative among groups.

These findings suggest that Catholicism has failed to influence the perspectives and behaviors of many Filipinos, hence, failed in the country despite being known as the only Catholic country in Asia and the world's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest according to literatures. Although Catholicism continues to be an influential institution in the country, its teachings are not being fully embraced by most of the population. The results also highlight the importance of understanding the complexities of the religious landscape in the Philippines, and the need for a deeper understanding of the factors that shape individual beliefs and attitudes towards religion and morality.

Based on the presented results, the researchers put forth several recommendations. The first recommendation is to enhance religious education in the Philippines, with a particular focus on Catholicism. This improvement should aim to provide more accessible and comprehensive religious education for all Filipinos, especially the youth. One effective strategy could involve integrating religious education, like culture and heritage, and language, into the curriculum of schools and universities. This initiative is envisioned to equip Filipinos with a deeper understanding of their faith, enabling them to make informed decisions in various aspects of their lives. Another critical recommendation is to raise awareness among Filipinos, particularly

the younger generation, about the potential consequences of engaging in practices that run counter to the teachings of the Catholic Church, such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, and cohabitation.

This awareness could be fostered through the implementation of campaigns, seminars, and related activities designed to educate the public about the moral and ethical implications of such behaviors. By doing so, the aim is to empower Filipinos to make more prudent decisions and encourage them to align their actions with the values inherent in their faith. The third recommendation calls for the promotion of dialogue between the Catholic Church and the laity to bridge the gap between the teachings of the Church and the practices of Filipinos. This could be achieved by creating platforms and opportunities for Filipinos to express their opinions and concerns, as well as for the Church to actively listen and respond to these voices. The goal is to foster a more collaborative and cooperative relationship between the Church and the laity, thereby deepening the understanding of Catholicism among Filipinos. Such dialogues may serve to harmonize the principles of faith with the lived experiences of the people.

## Acknowledgments

The authors had the privilege of presenting this research at the 2023 *International Conference on Indigenous Psychology and Culture*, which was held at Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa in Indonesia. We wish to express our deep appreciation to the conference's organizing committee for affording them the chance to share our discoveries with a global audience.

## Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

## Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

## References

- Assanangkornchai, S., Conigrave, K., & Saunders, J. (2002). Religious beliefs and practice, and alcohol use in Thai men. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 37(2), 193–197. <https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/37.2.193>
- Abalos, J. (2008). Determinants of extramarital sex among Filipino Men. *Pre-print Paper*. University of the Philippines, Population Institute. <https://www.uppi.upd.edu.ph/acad/abstracts/2008/jbabalos>
- Abalos, J. (2021). *Do Filipinos still say 'I do'? The rise of non-marriage and cohabitation in the Philippines*. Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/ariscopes/do-filipinos-still-say-i-do-the-rise-of-non-marriage-and-cohabitation-in-the-philippines/>
- Amnesty International. (2017). *Philippines: The death penalty is an inhumane, unlawful and ineffective response to drugs*. Press Release. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/03/philippines-the-death-penalty-is-an-inhumane-unlawful-and-ineffective-response-to-drugs/>
- Ang, T. (2017). *Sexual abuse and the Catholic church in the Philippines*. Al Jazeera Media Network, Human Rights. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/2/16/sexual-abuse-and-the-catholic-church-in-the-philippines>
- Aravilla, J. (2003). *The troubles of the Catholic church in RP*. PhilStar Global. <https://www.philstar.com/>

- headlines/2003/08/11/216798/troubles-catholic-church-rp
- Bagoisan, A. (2016). *Why Filipinos are among world's most religious*. ABS-CBN News Philippines. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/01/07/16/why-filipinos-are-among-worlds-most-religious>
- Bocar, A., and Perez, N. (2013). *Students' perception towards premarital sex*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2440761> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2440761>
- Cabico, G. (2018). *Majority of Filipinos want death penalty brought back*. SWS Poll Finds. Philstar Global. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/10/10/1858915/majority-filipinos-want-death-penalty-brought-back-sws-poll-finds/amp/>
- Canete, J. J. O. (2021). When expressions of faith in the Philippines becomes a potential Covid-19 'superspreader'. *Journal of Public Health*, 43(2), e366–e367. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab082>
- Cordero, Jr., D. (2017). A community-based sexual ethics for teens: Addressing Premarital sex using a sociotheological approach. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 17(1), 34-51. <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/research/journals/apssr/2017-June-vol17-1/4-a-community-based-sexual-ethics-for-teens-addressing-premarital-sex-using-a-sociotheological-approach.pdf>
- Cornelio, J. (2018). *How the Philippines became Catholic*. Christianity Today. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2018/february/philippines.html>
- Cornelio, J. (2020). *Are Filipinos more religious because of Covid-19?* Rappler Philippines. <https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/analysis-are-filipinos-more-religious-because-covid-19/>
- Corpuz, J., & Sarmiento, P. (2020). Going back to basics: Experiencing domus ecclesiae (House Church) in the celebration of the liturgy during Covid-19. *Practical Theology*, 14(1-2), 23-45 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1841454>
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd Edition)*. Sage Publications. [https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog\\_609332/objava\\_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf](https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf)
- De la Cruz, J. (2022). *Emergence of cohabitation in the Philippines*. News and Updates, Bria. <https://www.bria.com.ph/articles/emergence-of-cohabitation-in-the-philippines/>
- Foschi, M. (2000). Double standards for competence: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 21-42. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.21>
- GMA Integrated News. (2023). *SWS: 7 out of 10 Filipinos pray daily*. GMA News Online Philippines. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/861473/sws-7-out-of-10-filipinos-pray-daily/story/>
- Mahtani, S., & Cabato, R. (2020). *In Philippines, a child alleges abuse by Catholic priest — and tests Vatican promise for global reckoning*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/06/23/philippines-child-alleges-abuse-by-catholic-priest-tests-vatican-promise-global-reckoning/>
- Mangahas, M. (2023). *Religious, because Filipino*. Inquirer Philippines, Social Climate. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/161301/religious-because-filipino>
- Mapa, D. (2023). *Religious affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)*. Philippine Statistics Authority. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
- Marshall, L. (2015). *Why Filipinas can't get birth control—even though it's now free by law*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/kzeekm/why-filipinas-cant-get-birth-control-even-though-its-now-free-by-law>



- Miller, J. (n.d.). *Religion in the Philippines*. Asia Society, Education. <https://asiasociety.org/education/religion-philippines>
- Melgar, J., & Carrera-Pacete, J. (2016). *Understanding Catholic fundamentalism in the Philippines: How conservative religious teachings on women, family and contraception are wielded to impede the reproductive health law and other reproductive health policies*. Likhaan Center for Women's Health, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/gdcovop/2017343079/2017343079.pdf>
- Mendoza, J. (2022). *Radio veritas survey: More Filipino Catholics see marriage unnecessary before 'living-in'*. Philippine Inquirer. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1555930/radio-veritas-survey-more-filipino-catholics-see-marriage-unnecessary-before-living-in>
- Nawaz, F., & Bridi, A. (2008). *Overview of corruption and anticorruption in the Philippines*. U4 Helpdesk, Transparency International. <https://www.u4.no/publications/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-the-philippines.pdf>
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2023). *Religious affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)*. Population and Housing. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
- Pew Research Center. (2014). *Global morality*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/interactives/global-morality/>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). *U.S. public becoming less religious*. Research Topics. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>
- Pew Research Center. (2019). *In U.S., decline of Christianity continues at rapid pace*. Research Topics. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>
- Pew Research Center. (2023). *Buddhism, Islam and religious pluralism in South and Southeast Asia*. Research Topics. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/09/12/buddhism-islam-and-religious-pluralism-in-south-and-southeast-asia/>
- Republic Act No. 10158. *Republic of the Philippines, Congress of the Philippines*. <https://mirror.officialgazette.gov.ph/2012/03/27/republic-act-no-10158/>
- Reyes, D. (2022). *More young Filipino are shunning premarital sex, study finds*. Philippine Inquirer. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1680379/more-ph-youth-shunning-premarital-sex-study-finds>
- Ryder, R. E. (1993). "Natural family planning": effective birth control supported by the Catholic Church. *BMJ*, 307(6906), 723–726. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.307.6906.723>
- Sprinkle, P. (2016). *Does the bible really prohibit sex outside of marriage?*. Theology in the Raw. <https://theologyintheraw.com/does-the-bible-really-prohibit-sex-outside-of-marriage/>
- Staples, T. (2014). *Explaining the Trinity*. Catholic Answers. <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/explaining-the-trinity>
- Suralta, R. (2022). *E-sabong's social impact*. The Freeman, PhilStar Media Group. <https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/opinion/2022/04/14/2174427/e-sabongs-social-impact>
- Twenge, J. M., Sherman, R. A., Exline, J. J., & Grubbs, J. B. (2016). Declines in American adults' religious participation and beliefs, 1972-2014. *SAGE Open*, 6(1), 41-56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016638133>
- Valenzuela, C., Felizardo, J., Poyo, J., & Lucero, J. (2021). Students' attitude and

perception on premarital sex: Basis for a sex education program. *Asia Pacific Journal of Academic Research in Social Science*, 6(2), 7-14. <https://research.lpubatangas.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2-APJARSS-2021-15.pdf>