

YOUTH, RELIGION AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

¹RONALYN C. TABORA, ²KATHRYN ROBERT R. TEE, ³JOSEPH D. VILLANUEVA,
⁴RACIDON P. BERNARTE

^{1,2,3,4}Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Philippines
¹rtabora58@gmail.com, ²kathryntee@gmail.com, ³sephvillanueva06@gmail.com, ⁴rpbernarte@pup.edu.ph

Abstract: This study identified the relationship of religious practices of college students from sectarian and non-sectarian sectors, and their attitude towards same-sex marriage. The issue of same-sex marriage is considered as one of the sensitive concerns in the Philippines since it is a Catholic-influenced country. The respondents in this study were 781 college students from the Adamson University (AdU) and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), selected through stratified sampling method. In addition, data were gathered through online and self-administered surveys. The results revealed that college students from both sectors have different general attitudes toward same-sex marriage despite of being highly involved to their religious practices. Respondents from AdU, the sectarian sector, opposed the issue, while college students from PUP, the non-sectarian sector, supported same-sex marriage. Furthermore, this study found out that spiritual association of an educational institution plays a small but a significant role in explaining attitude towards same-sex marriage.

Keywords: Religious Practices, Attitude, Same-sex Marriage, Sectarian Sector, Non-sectarian Sector, College Students, Polytechnic University of the Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, religion is a vague term, which resulted for different applications in life. Theorists even emphasized that religions provide meaning in the face of a meaningless world. It was believed that religions offer people a sense of identity and a place in the world from where to act [1]. Also, religions typically prescribe an ethical life for people through teachings to identify what is right or wrong [2]. For people to recognize the importance of religion, religious practices play a significant role [3].

Under religious practices, there lies the essence of religious experience, which provides basis for a permanent attitude of an individual [4]. Moreover, religious values, beliefs and practices not only affect economic life, but also influence social relationships at family, community and societal levels [5]. In society, social problems were omnipresent; from neighborhood crimes to national interest up to global concerns. Religious communities were increasingly reclaiming some of the functions that the state cannot adequately provide. Thus, in public consciousness, religion has a role in social matters [6].

One of the sensitive issues in the society today is the debate over same-sex marriage. It is an up-to-date issue to most people and still evokes as much uncertainty and anxiety [7]. With the outgrowing number of gays and lesbians, people have become more familiar and aware on the immense range of rights, protections, benefits, and obligations of homosexuals. Some were sympathizers, but growing numbers of people are deeply offended, even outraged, by injustices [7].

Legalizing same-sex marriage leads to several debates and controversies. Various principles and beliefs of different parties are still proving each one's

point towards the issue. In a landmark view, a divided Supreme Court ruled on June 26th where it stated that it cannot ban same-sex marriage [8]. The United States is now the 21st country to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide. Married same-sex couples will now enjoy the same legal rights and benefits as married heterosexual couples and will be recognized in official documents such as birth and death certificates.

The latest legalization of same-sex marriage in United States drew so much attention that led to diverse opinions all over the world. Today, people can freely and clearly state what they believe in through group discussions and debates. These are obviously seen on the landscape.

In the Philippines, the government had a fierce debate on the issue of same-sex unions. Despite that, some organizations such as Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and Metropolitan Community Church of the Philippines (MCCP) were conducting same-sex marriages in the country. Indicating that it is a Catholic country, the Roman Catholic Church opposes this issue and the government did not recognize such unification as provided in the constitution [9].

The Philippines is one of the Catholic-influenced countries in the world. It always observes the laws of God. However, many Filipino homosexuals have been protesting their freedom rights to consider the union between same sex relationships. Until now, the government has no grant given for this plea.

Referring to the study conducted by Philippines Social Science Center (PSSC), a great number of Filipino youth have a strong believe in the existence of God, in the concept of sin, in the idea of heaven, and principle of resurrection. Furthermore, majority of them are actively involved in religious services and regularly praying for their faith [10].

On the other hand, a survey conducted by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, one of the main broadsheet providers in the country, indicated that the young Filipinos did not completely follow all the teachings of their religion in conveying their opinions on moral issues. This includes the concern on divorce, abortion, homosexuality, use of contraceptives, and premarital sex. The youth found the views of the church outdated regarding these issues [10].

Hence, this study seeks to recognize the views of the college students as representation of Filipino youth on the issue of same-sex marriage. Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) Mabini Campus was one of the state universities that has a large population of college students in Manila. Most of the students belong to the bottom most economic class of families in the social order, who have possibilities to be highly exposed and well aware of the current and significant concerns of the society. The State University is considered as a non-sectarian school since it is not owned by any sector or group. Adamson University (AdU) is a Catholic Vincentian educational institution which is located in Ermita, Manila. The sectarian University is known for about more than eighty years of providing for quality education for young Filipinos.

The study aims to discover such information related to religious practices and same-sex marriage and to be able to tabulate answers without unbiased conclusions. The religious practices of PUP-Manila and Adamson University students are significant as these serve as bases in identifying if these influence their attitude on same-sex marriage. Also, the views of these college students help in generating new findings related to issues of this moral concern.

Along these lines, this study is worth pursuing because everyone is involved on this matter. Homosexuals have been emerging its number for the past years and being a part of the picture is necessary and inevitable. With the news and information that were casted around, opinions and attitudes were being formed.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to find out the relationship of religious practices and generalized attitude on same-sex marriage of the college students from sectarian and non-sectarian universities based on their level of involvement to their religious practices and level of attitude towards same-sex marriage. In terms of level of involvement on religious practices, college students affiliated from different religions are substantial to evaluate and distinguish the difference of commitments of the respondents to their religious practices. Finally, for their level of attitude, they were requested to impart their opinion on same-sex marriage in different circumstances.

III. METHODS

This study was conducted to determine the relationship of the religious practices of the college students and their attitude towards same-sex marriage. The survey research method was applied in the study. Likewise, the study was descriptive in nature. Descriptive research gathers quantifiable information that can be used for statistical inference on your target audience through data analysis [11].

The respondents in the study were 781 college students from AdU and PUP. They were selected through stratified sampling, particularly categorized as (a) a representative from a college of both university and (b) division of sexuality of male and female. Their rights and inscrutability were considered. The purpose of the study was fully explained in the instrument for the respondents to understand. Lastly, informed consent was established with the respondents and the confidentiality of the results was assured and was taken with consideration.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the result of the survey conducted by the researchers together with the presentation of the table based on the objectives of the study.

4.1. Level of Religious Practices of the Students

The religiosity of the youth grounds their measurements on practices such as praying, attending worship services, and moving to a pilgrimage [12].

Table 1: Level of Religious Practices among Catholic students

| Religious Practices | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| | □ | VI | □ | VI |
| Praying | 8.06 | Excellent | 9.37 | Excellent |
| Reading the Bible | 6.88 | Good | 8.29 | Excellent |
| Confession | 8.60 | Excellent | 9.12 | Excellent |
| Praying the Rosary | 6.46 | Good | 7.08 | Good |
| Lighting of Church Candle | 6.47 | Good | 6.76 | Good |
| Receiving of Communion | 7.57 | Good | 8.04 | Excellent |
| Fasting | 5.80 | Good | 8.04 | Excellent |
| Partaking on Processions | 6.69 | Good | 7.16 | Good |
| Participating in Religious Activities during Holy Days | 7.05 | Good | 7.18 | Good |
| Celebration of Feast Day | 7.50 | Good | 7.63 | Good |
| Monetary Donation | 6.60 | Good | 7.12 | Good |
| Choir Rehearsal | 4.69 | Fair | 5.84 | Good |
| Youth Ministries | 6.54 | Good | 6.94 | Good |
| Group Bible Studies/Devotion | 6.29 | Good | 6.80 | Good |
| Total | 6.801 | Good Involvement | 7.526 | Good Involvement |

Both sectarian and non-sectarian (\bar{x} = 6.801 & \bar{x} = 7.526) students obtained Good Involvement as their level of involvement on religious practices. Minimal difference of one scale occurred only on the religious practices like Reading the Bible, Receiving of Communion/Eucharist, Fasting and Choir Rehearse.

According to the National Filipino Catholic Youth Study (2013), 50% of Filipino youth go to confession a few times in a year. Moreover, Catholic youth in the country pray the rosary, visit Blessed Sacrament, attend Bible studies and join prayer meetings at least thrice a month.

Table 2: Level of Religious Practices among Non-Catholic Students

| Religious Practices | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| | \bar{x} | VI | \bar{x} | VI |
| Praying | 9.38 | Excellent | 9.21 | Excellent |
| Reading the Bible | 7.50 | Good | 8.16 | Excellent |
| Asking God for Forgiveness | 6.75 | Excellent | 9.15 | Excellent |
| Midweek Services | 7.00 | Good | 6.04 | Good |
| Group Bible Studies | 5.88 | Good | 7.35 | Good |
| Children Outreaches | 6.00 | Good | 7.23 | Good |
| Youth Ministries | 5.75 | Good | 6.28 | Good |
| Monetary Donation | 4.75 | Good | 8.63 | Good |
| Evangelistic Crusade | 3.13 | Good | 7.22 | Good |
| Choir Rehearsal | 5.88 | Fair | 8.84 | Good |
| Fasting | 4.63 | Good | 4.14 | Good |
| Lord's Supper | 3.75 | Good | 5.40 | Good |
| Total | 5.913 | Good Involvement | 7.414 | Good Involvement |

Similar to the data results of the Roman Catholic respondents, the gathered data implied no great difference between the level of involvement of the sectarian and non-sectarian students which were Non-Catholics. Both schools (\bar{x} = 5.913 & \bar{x} = 7.414) obtained Good Involvement as their level of involvement in religious practices.

students in America. Concerning the denominational teachings about homosexuality, two thirds of the sample reported that their religion teaches that same-sex marriage is a sin [14].

The data reflected is similar to the research of International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology. According to the reviewed study, the Filipino youth were religious in general. Similar to the Non-Catholics students of AdU and PUP, it also showed that young Filipinos have a high involvement in private and public religious practices[13].

Table 3.1:

| | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|
| | \bar{x} | VI | \bar{x} | VI |
| Same-sex marriage is a taboo. | 4.69 | Positive | 4.84 | Positive |

Respondents mutually disagreed that same-sex marriage is a taboo (\bar{x} = 4.69 & \bar{x} = 4.84) which means they believe that it is an acceptable topic to be discussed both in public and in private. It denoted a positive attitude on same-sex marriage.

4.2 Attitude on Same-Sex Marriage

Table 3: Attitude on Same-Sex Marriage

| | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|--|-----------|--------------------|---------------|----------|
| | \bar{x} | VI | \bar{x} | VI |
| Same-sex marriage is a sin. | 7.94 | Extremely Negative | 5.60 | Negative |
| Same-sex marriage is not an important political issue. | 7.78 | Extremely Negative | 5.61 | Negative |
| Same-sex marriage is immoral. | 8.14 | Extremely Negative | 6.02 | Negative |
| Same-sex marriage is unnatural. | 6.97 | Negative | 6.14 | Negative |

Sectarian and non-sectarian students mutually agreed that same-sex marriage is a sin, an unimportant political issue, immoral and unnatural which resulted to a negative attitude. It can be observed that sectarian students show a more negative attitude on same-sex marriage compared to non-sectarian students.

Table 3.2:

| | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|---|-----------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | \bar{x} | VI | \bar{x} | VI |
| Same-sex marriage jeopardizes the institution of marriage. | 8.71 | Extremely Negative | 4.92 | Positive |
| Same-sex marriage upholds equality. | 7.62 | Negative | 4.87 | Positive |
| Same-sex marriage is an expression of love. | 7.92 | Extremely Negative | 4.77 | Positive |
| Same-sex marriage is not for the Filipino culture. | 7.90 | Extremely Negative | 4.53 | Positive |
| Same-sex marriage is for free-thinking individuals only. | 8.48 | Extremely Negative | 4.89 | Extremely Positive |
| Learning from my religious doctrines, I have come to know that marriage is for a man and a woman. | 6.65 | Negative | 4.30 | Extremely Positive |
| I will never attend a same-sex marriage ceremony because it is against my religious practices. | 7.04 | Negative | 3.33 | Positive |
| I believe that same-sex marriage could materialize in my religion if most of | 6.70 | Negative | 2.66 | Positive |

The results were somehow parallel to the study of Woodford, Walls, and Levy among selected college

| | | | | |
|---|------|----------|------|----------|
| I agree that same-sex partners who have a strong faith in their religion will gain blessing from their God. | 7.31 | Negative | 4.41 | Positive |
| I consider that whenever the religious minister of my religion or his/her relative is gay or lesbian, he/she can be considered for same-sex marriage freely in my religion. | 6.59 | Positive | 6.47 | Negative |
| From what I've learned during our church sermon, there's nothing wrong being in a same-sex marriage as long as you're both serving the Lord. | 7.22 | Negative | 4.78 | Positive |

Sectarian and non-sectarian students disagreed on more than half of all the statements provided about same-sex marriage. Sectarian students showed a positive attitude about same-sex marriage while non-sectarian students are negative about it.

The data mutually agreed and disagreed to the longitudinal study of Pew Research Center about same-sex marriage. Since 2003 up to present, American youth, considered as the Millennials (Americans who were born from 1981), had a positive attitude towards same-sex marriage. From 51% who favored same-sex marriage in 2003, the young generation of Americans expressed higher level of support for same-sex marriage in the present year with 70% [15].

The negative attitude of students from the sectarian sector opposed the poll survey by the Washington Post – ABC News, while the positive attitude from the non-sectarian sector supported it. It showed that a decrease in age directly corresponded to an increase in acceptance of same-sex marriage [16]. The survey showed that among ages of 18 – 29 years old 65% accepted same-sex marriage while the percentage of acceptance from the adults is 47%. Hence, the negative attitude of AdU students on same-sex marriage differed from the reviewed studies, whereas these empirical data corresponded to the positive attitude of PUP students towards same-sex marriage.

Table 3.3:

| | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|--|-----------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| | □ | VI | □ | VI |
| I do not see myself worshipping in a house of God that allows same-sex marriage. | 6.27 | Negative | 3.65 | Negative |
| I believe that same-sex partners who give more donations/financial support to their religious institution can be considered for same-sex marriage. | 6.55 | Negative | 7.20 | Negative |
| Same-sex marriage is acceptable to me as long as the ceremony will not be held on the church I'm worshipping. | 5.22 | Negative | 8.17 | Extremely Negative |

| | | | | |
|---|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| I am willing to change my religion to another which would allow me to have same-sex marriage. | 8.48 | Extremely Negative | 7.76 | Extremely Negative |
| I do not see myself worshipping in a house of God that allows same-sex marriage. | 6.27 | Negative | 3.65 | Negative |

It can be observed that non-sectarian students mostly showed positive attitude on the statements mentioned above. However, same-sex marriage is acceptable to them if the ceremony will not be held at the church where they are worshipping (□= 8.17).

Moreover, both sectarian and non-sectarian (□=8.48 & □= 7.76) students are not willing to change their religious affiliation to another which would allow them to have same-sex marriage.

Table 3.4:

| | Sectarian | | Non-Sectarian | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | □ | VI | □ | VI |
| Total | 7.21 | Negative | 5.25 | Positive |

In general, sectarian students (□= 7.21) showed negative attitude on same-sex marriage while non-sectarian students (□= 5.25) demonstrated a positive attitude.

4.3 Religious Practices of the Students as to their Sex and Type of School

Table 4: Independent Sample T-Test of Religious Practices and Sex

| | □ | | p-value | Remarks |
|---------------|--------|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| | Male | Female | | |
| Catholics | 5.2495 | 7.2176 | .000 | Significant Different |
| Non-Catholics | 6.0584 | 7.4747 | .006 | Significantly Different |

To know if there is a significant difference among variables, the researchers utilized the SPSS Program by Independent Sample T-Test and it revealed that there is a significant difference on the level of religious practices between male and female for both Catholic and Non-Catholic respondents. It denoted that female respondents were more involved in religious practices compared to male respondents regardless of their religious affiliation.

According to the report of Philippines Social Science Council (2003), gender is the most significant variable in determining the youth's religiosity, for surveys on the religiosity of youth noted that female adolescents were more religious than their male counterparts [10]. Hence, female students from both AdU and PUP were more involved in religious practices compared to male students.

Table 5: Independent Sample T-Test of religious practices and type of school

| | □ | | p-value | Remarks |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|---------|-------------------------|
| | Sectarian | Non-Sectarian | | |
| Catholics | 6.8007 | 7.5260 | .000 | Significant Different |
| Non-Catholics | 5.9129 | 7.4143 | .006 | Significantly Different |

There is a significant difference on the level of involvement in religious practices between sectarian and non-sectarian institutions, and both catholic and non-Catholic respondents. Non-sectarian respondents are more involved in religious practices than sectarian respondents regardless of religious affiliation.

The results adopt the culture of religions within the premises of both Universities. PUP, a non-sectarian university, deals with various religious organizations to promote spiritual growth to their students. According to the official list of student organizations of the University in the Academic Year 2011-2012, 21% of the student organizations or 26 out of 122 were recognized as religious organizations [17]. Moreover, these organizations stimulate such religious activities, including prayer meetings, cell groups, etc. that feasibly reflected the high involvement of PUP students in religious practices. However, Adamson University, as a sectarian institution, has a Campus Ministry Office in providing the spiritual care of their students. It offers programs that promote values formation, holistic development and faith formation which signified the high involvement of respondents from this sector to religious practices.

4.4 Religious Practices and Attitude on Same-Sex Marriage

Table 6: Pearson's Correlation of Religious Practices and Same-Sex Marriage among Catholic Respondents

| | r | p-value | Remarks |
|---------------|-------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Sectarian | .108* | .036 | Significant, Positively Very Weak |
| Non-Sectarian | .102 | 0.058 | Not Significant |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The decision is to reject the hypothesis if the computed p-value is less than or equal to the 0.05 level of significance, otherwise accept the hypothesis. The relationship of sectarian respondents' level of religious practices and attitude on same-sex marriage is positively very weak. This shows that the more the respondents are involved in religious practices, the more they will disagree on same-sex marriage while for the non-sectarian, and the responses were found to be insignificant.

Table 7: Pearson's Correlation of Religious Practices and Same-Sex Marriage among Non-Catholic Respondents

| | r | p-value | Remarks |
|---------------|-------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Sectarian | .811* | .015 | Significant, Positively Very Strong |
| Non-Sectarian | .004 | .979 | Not Significant |

Similar to the data obtained from the Catholic students, the relationship of non-Catholic sectarian respondents' level of religious practices and attitude on same-sex marriage is Positively Very Strong. This shows that the more the respondents are involved in religious practices, the more they will disagree on same-sex marriage while the non-sectarian responses are not significant since the obtained p-value is .979.

The data mutually resembled and conflicted to the studies on the subject same – sex marriage published abroad. The involvement in religious practices and attitude on same-sex marriage of AdU students were related to the study of Woodford, Walls, and Levy (2012), where it justified that religion variables have consistently been found to be some of the strongest predictors of opinions on same-sex marriage. Moreover, as Olson et al. (2006) put it, individuals who participate actively in religious practices are more likely to oppose unions among same-sex.

Thus, the high involvement of sectarian respondents in religious practices causes their negative attitude towards same-sex marriage and the viewpoint of several Christian-affiliated religions on this issue reflected this result. In the rationalization of the result from the AdU, students enrolled in a sectarian university were required to take courses about supplementary religion of the institution.

However, the attitudes of Non-Catholic students from PUP were assumed to have a higher involvement on religious practices diverge to the results of the empirical studies. As a university in a non-sectarian model, the religious knowledge and commitments of students play no role in the way the university organizes its core activities. Furthermore, non-sectarian universities were more guided by the rules focused on the good order, respect for race and ethnicity, gender diversity, and freedom of speech [18]. Hence, there is no relationship between the high involvement of PUP students in their religious practices and their positive attitude towards same-sex marriage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results showed that both sectarian and non-sectarian students have good involvement on their religious practices. However, females are more religious than males as to their involvement on religious practices regardless of their religious affiliation. The results also showed that the type of school is not an indicator of religiosity.

As to their attitude towards same-sex marriage, sectarian students have a negative attitude while respondents from the non-sectarian institution are positive about it. Results implied that, among sectarian students, the more they become involved in religious practices the more they tend to have negative attitude or view on same-sex marriage.

With this, the researchers recommend the concerned sectors especially the religious sectors to prolong programs and activities that will guide the spirituality of the Filipino youth. Also, administrations of different schools and universities must take part in enhancing the knowledge of the students without any biased intentions.

The future scholars can improve this study through extending the communication factors that influence the opinion of youth on same-sex marriage such as family and friend relationships, and political relations. Also, the researchers suggest to include other universities from both sectarian and non-sectarian sectors for enriched results of this topic.

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