

Transcendence in Higher Education: Religious and Spiritual Values of College Students in a Central Visayan University

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Abstract: In general, young people are perceived to be persons with an insatiable desire to explore the world of inter-personal, social, technological, and professional engagement as they enter the halls of the university and its challenging environment. As their young age affords them physical agility, mental idealism and active skills for human interaction, it is often ignored that college students possess a delicate sensitivity towards things religious or spiritual. This study is an attempt to discover and understand the transcendent aspect in the lives of the college students of a Central Visayan University in order to be able to address the possibility of assisting in their total growth and development. A survey was made through cluster sampling of students taking up the required religion classes in the first semester of 2015-16, with 427 students responding to the challenge. From the responses to the provided 5-page questionnaires, the results were gathered and analyzed. The results allowed the revelation of the existing values relating to religious and spiritual convictions of the students. The study revealed that students from a Central Visayan University have high levels of religious and spiritual consciousness and commitment. This offers the university personnel and faculty directly responsible for the conduct of classes and community programs to discover ways to more effectively contribute to the religious and spiritual growth of the students. The work was not an exhaustive project and can be seen as a springboard for further explorations in this area of student development, efforts that are highly encouraged and recommended.

Keywords: spirituality, religiosity, transcendence, values, church, education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Research and Development Center (RDC) of the Silliman University (SU) embarked on a project to determine the presence and manifestations of religious and spiritual awareness among its college students. Silliman University is a faith-based educational institution, the premiere Protestant university in the Philippines. By orientation however, Silliman University explicitly opts for an ecumenical and inter-religious approach. The aspect of “church” forms part of the 5 Cs of the quality education the university endeavors to provide to its constituency. The other four are the classroom, the cultural center, the (athletic) court, and the community. (Silliman University Website, Whole Person Education: The 5 Cs of Silliman Education, <http://su.edu.ph/page/262-whole-person-educati>, 2015).

The “church” component clearly refers to the explicit mission of the university to ground every educational experience on the Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Discovering the expressed or latent religious character of students can help the university officials to be more effective in facilitating the spiritual development of every student, albeit with an ecumenical or interreligious nuance as at times may be appropriate. Like most institutions of higher learning, Silliman University embraces a broad formative role towards students by focusing on a whole-person education that envisions students to be well integrated into the larger society and well-balanced in their personal lives.

Determining the religiosity and spirituality of college students comprise the main concern of this research. The survey questions sought to unearth the personal principles or innate convictions of students relating to their religious and spiritual life. The research endeavored to know whether students are preoccupied with religious and spiritual concerns. It inquired into students’ valuation of their inclusion in an institutional religion or church, the major influences that led them to such

membership, and the way they now express their compliance or allegiance to their faith community. Questions pertaining to the possible link between religion and spirituality were asked of the respondents. Inquiries were also made to determine the societal effect of spirituality among the students.

Filipinos are known and admired for their strong religiosity and lively faith. But young people are not perceived to share this enthusiasm and passion for religious or spiritual matters. Especially in college, students are expected to be primarily preoccupied with preparing themselves for a professional career. This paper is interested in discovering whether Silliman University college students possess and value the religious aspect of their lives and how they express this transcendent sense in college.

Theoretical Considerations

Traditional Concept of Religion

For many people, the distinction between the concepts of “religion/ religiosity” and “spirituality” is largely immaterial or simply blurred. This is because many people conveniently equate the word “religion” with “spirituality.” The thinking goes that if a person professes a belonging to a particular religion then that person must also be spiritual. A semblance of piety is construed as a sign of deep communion with a divine reality.

However, in the present and more complex social climate, a growing number of people contend with a marked chasm between the two concepts mentioned above. In the past, people easily identified themselves with a religion, which was understood in the sense of being an “institutional” faith or an “established” church. Religion was characterized by visible and communal presence and an internal relationship that was hierarchical and full of respect for authority.

However, the current religious landscape presents an altered reality. Social changes have also brought religious change. In a study on the individualization of experience in America, Robert Bellah in his book *Habits of the Heart*, described the shift of perspective regarding religion. Today, many people prefer to keep their religion private, patterned after their own ideas and values, far from religious commitment or membership to a church. (Robert Bellah, 1985, p. 222).

Whereas religion used to be seen in relation to public order, today religious adherence or experience operates with a novel stress on individual and voluntary association. Religious membership was no longer deemed important. However, the individual was expected to maintain self-respect and establish his own ethical commitments apart from any organized religious community.

Emergence of the Concept of Spirituality

In place of external religion, the alternative offered is “spirituality”. This word is an ambiguous term at best. It can be seen either from the point of view of religious tradition and can also be perceived in a vague sense outside of any tradition.

In general, spirituality can be described as a way or path that a person chooses in his desire to advance in the experience of self-transcendence. The Chinese see spirituality as a way leading to inner peace and harmony. The Japanese view spirituality as a path consisting of disciplines that result in internal harmony in the midst of a noisy world. There is also a specifically Christian way of understanding spirituality. It is the way of following Christ as his disciple in the world. (Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon, 1995, p. 10).

Spirituality can also refer to ideals stemming from New Age movements that offer new experiences and fresh approaches to people in search of personal bliss or harmony in life. In this sense, spirituality is an impetus that comes from outside the established religious traditions. (Reid Locklin, 2005, p. 3).

At variance with religion, which is construed as organized, the concept of spirituality is that it is unattached to any group or establishment. Pursuing the path of spirituality implies personal freedom and individual quest. Influence by an institution is seen as having no purpose and if pursued, can only become a destructive force, rather than helpful or constructive initiative. (Reid Locklin, 2005, p. 3).

Conflict between Religiosity and Spirituality

For a long time, the preferred byword of the spiritually-inclined has been the aphorism “spiritual but not religious”. This is usually abbreviated as SBNR. Religion is thus seen not only in distinction from but in contrast to spirituality. (James Martin, 2010, p. 44).

Here there is a growing sense of incompatibility between religion or religiosity and spirituality. Religion is external while spirituality is internal. Religion is not fashionable, while spirituality is in vogue.

Those in the “spiritual” camp or the religious individualists commonly practice a string of criticisms aimed at the institutional church or organized faith community, which they brand as “hypocritical” or unable to put into practice its own teachings. Because of this, the individualists would rather enter into personal relationship with God, which is able to save, than to enter the roster of an organized faith community, which is not a guarantee of salvation. (Robert Bella, 1985, p. 234).

Martin reveals other incisive attacks on religion by the so-called spiritual people. The spirituals assert that the religious abide by antiquated rules and strict dogmas. Furthermore, religion, because it is an institution, becomes the tool of oppression by incapacitating people’s freedom to think for themselves. There are also those who maintain that religion is the root of the most despicable evils in the world like wars and other human conflicts. (James Martin, 2010, p. 44).

Spirituality is hailed as superior to religiosity, not only because it is a more internalized experience of faith. It also affords man or woman the chance to be free to be himself or herself before God. Spirituality gives a person the chance to choose from a variety of beliefs or practices that he finds relevant to his life. And only these can be integrated into his own system. (James Martin, 2010, p. 46).

Breach or Bridge

In this climate of appreciation for spirituality and disparagement of religiosity, it may seem difficult to find a connection between the two concepts. For many adherents from either camp today, a hardened preference for their position has already developed and it might seem irreconcilable to accept an opening of one towards the other.

However as these concepts are but two ways of expressing the transcendent values of humanity, it is possible to find that in some ways they are interrelated. A flexible treatment of the two concepts may be made rendering them not mutually exclusive of or hostile to each other.

Religiosity conveys the idea of external control or authority. Spirituality emphasizes personal freedom. But we cannot merely conclude that all religious experience is authoritarian. And for that matter that all spiritual experience is liberating.

While religiosity is closely connected to external authority, it can offer a certain freedom to its adherents, a solace from the internal chaos and external confusion in the world. Thus, religiosity can provide space for personal autonomy and independence as viewed from the lives of the saints (James Martin, 2010, p. 45). And spirituality, which highlights radical individualism if often portrayed as genuinely benevolent and harmonious with others and with the world, and thus not necessarily preoccupied only with the self. (Robert Bella, 1985, p. 236).

Martin insists that while being spiritual has its advantages, one must not forget the balancing role of membership in a faith community, the contribution of religion. He sees religion as corrective of the many tendencies that form the risks of being merely spiritual.

“While ‘spiritual’ is obviously healthy, ‘not religious’ may be another way of saying that faith is a question between you and God. And while faith is a question of you and God, it’s not just a question of you and God. Because this would mean that you, alone, are relating to God. And that means there’s no one to suggest when you might be off track.” (James Martin, 2010, p. 46).

SBNR is now challenged in many quarters, and a possible mutual opening can be explored and deepened. Both religiosity and spirituality are expressions of the human being’s desire for God and for personal wholeness. Neither is truly independent of the other but each can be enriched, strengthened or challenged by the other.

“Religion without spirituality can become a dry list of dogmatic statements divorced from the life of the spirit. This is what Jesus warned against. Spirituality without religion can become a self-centered complacency divorced from the wisdom of a community. That’s what I’m warning against.” (James Martin, 2010, p. 50).

II. METHODOLOGY

The respondents were selected by cluster sampling from among those enrolled in the Religion classes in the first semester of school year 2015-16. Twelve sections were chosen to participate in the survey prepared by the research team. The participants were currently enrolled that time in the following specific subjects: Religion 11 (four sections), Religion 22 (four sections), and Religion 61 (four sections).

The represented subjects were regular, mandatory courses in the collegiate level and are distributed evenly within the duration of their stay in the university. Therefore in each class, there was a mixture of students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors) from different year levels in college and from various areas of academic concentration.

A total of 626 survey forms were issued to the participating classes. Of these, 427 were accomplished and returned. The research was done during the regular class hours and administered by the professors handling the classes, at a time most convenient to both the professors and their students.

The survey material consisted of the following parts: a preliminary segment for the personal information of the respondent; questions pertaining to community activities that promote religious and spiritual awareness among students in the university, college and dormitory levels; questions referring to the experience of religion and spirituality in the academic and co-curricular activities of college students; and finally questions for personal assessment of the student on his/ her religious or spiritual qualities. This paper is concerned with this last part of the research instrument, as the other parts of the research instrument will be made in a separate presentation.

The research was conducted from September 8–10, 2015. Some of the completed questionnaires were returned to the office within a week after the survey was conducted, while others took longer, due to the busy schedules of the classes preceding the final examinations of the semester.

Among the limitations of the research were the following: in the desire to respect privacy, students were given the option whether or not to identify themselves, (many preferred not to write their names), so later confirmation or follow-up was not possible; many of the students happened to be in the first two years of university studies, as they were the ones enrolled in the Religion classes selected in random sampling; and while opportunity for open remarks were given for some questions, most accomplished survey forms did not provide substantial contributions to these open remarks.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Profile of Students

Included in the survey were 427 students, 41 percent males and 55 percent females. But 4 percent failed to answer the question identifying their sex. The breakdown of sexes by year level can be seen in the following table. (Table 1). The average age of the students is 18 years.

The students came from various year levels of college education. Note that there were more freshmen and sophomores. The first year students account 44 percent while the second year students constitute 41 percent of the respondents. Eight percent are in their third year and about 4 percent both for fourth and fifth years of study.

Majority of the respondents, 69 percent of them, were raised as Roman Catholics. A significant number are affiliated with Mainline Protestantism, with 15 percent, and followed by the Pentecostals at 7 percent. Those belonging to other Christian communities account for 4 percent of the total respondents. There is less than 1 percent each for those claiming membership in Iglesia ni Cristo, Aglipayan, and from other great religions. Two percent of respondents expressed they have no religion while about 3 percent did not answer the question.

Table 1: Student Profiles

Profile	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
Academic Year				
First	84 (47.73)	103 (44.02)	2 (11.76)	189 (44.26)
Second	70 (39.77)	102 (43.59)	3 (17.65)	175 (41.00)
Third	13 (7.39)	18 (7.69)	2 (11.76)	33 (7.72)

Fourth	6 (3.41)	9 (3.85)	-	15 (3.51)
No Answer	3 (1.70)	2 (0.85)	10 (58.82)	15 (3.51)
Total	176(100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
Religious Affiliation				
Roman Catholic	132 (75.00)	154 (65.81)	8 (47.06)	294 (68.85)
Mainline Protestant	18 (10.23)	44 (18.80)	-	62 (14.52)
Pentecostal	8 (4.55)	19 (8.12)	1 (5.88)	28 (6.56)
Other Christian Groups	7 (3.98)	3 (1.28)	2 (11.76)	12 (2.81)
Aglipayan	1 (0.57)	3 (1.28)	-	4 (0.94)
Other Great Religion	1 (0.57)	1 (0.43)	-	2 (0.47)
Iglesia ni Cristo	-	1 (0.43)	-	1 (0.23)
No Religion	8 (4.55)	4 (1.71)	-	12 (2.81)
No Answer	1 (0.57)	5 (2.14)	6 (35.29)	12 (2.81)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17(100.00)	427 (100.00)

Indicators of Religious Values

Religious values

The most basic barometer of religiosity is belief in the existence of God. When this question was posited to the students, an overwhelming majority affirmed their positive conviction regarding God's existence (93.91). (Table 2). Less than 1 percent denied this position. However, 3 percent expressed uncertainty about the matter while another 3 percent did not provide a reply. Of those who disagreed with the statement, it is noticeable that none of them were females. This is also true with those who expressed an uncertain response.

A number of statements were meant to test the students' understanding of religion and its role in an individual's life. To these statements, the respondents provided a generally positive answer. It seemed from the replies that most of the respondents view religion as beneficial either for themselves, for other, or for the larger society. This is not surprising since the majority of respondents acknowledged membership to religion through a church or religious community, as can be seen above.

The majority of students, 75 percent, agreed that people do indeed encounter God through a church or religion. However, over 10 percent disagreed that church or religion can be instrumental for a divine-human encounter. A small number registered an unsure answer at just 8 percent, while a fragment, 4 percent failed to respond.

The personal importance of belonging to a religion or having a church affiliation was surprisingly upheld by a majority of the college students, at 90 percent, giving a score almost close to that of belief in God. Those who disagreed with this formed a tiny minority at 4 percent. The unsure respondents registered a mere 4 percent. Females showed very high agreement with the statement, 98 percent, compared to the males, 81 percent.

How is this personal value of religion translated into the experience of the respondents? Eighty-eight percent affirmed that religion is for them, a source of guidance, strength and support. Those who disagreed composed a mere 1 percent of respondents. Those who were unsure of the statement were less than 10 percent. Here, again, the females registered a higher agreement with the statement, 93 percent than the males, 84 percent. The answer confirms the veracity of the high rate of appreciation for religion or church in the lives of the college students of Silliman University.

Table 2: Indicators of Religious Values

Statements	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
God exists.				
Agree	157 (89.20)	231 (98.72)	13 (76.47)	401 (93.91)
Disagree	2 (1.14)	-	-	2 (0.47)
Not Sure	12 (6.82)	-	-	12 (2.81)
No Answer	5 (2.84)	3 (1.28)	4 (23.53)	12 (2.81)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
Religion fosters encounter with God				
Agree	128 (72.73)	184 (78.63)	10 (58.82)	322 (75.41)
Disagree	21 (11.93)	34 (14.53)	2 (11.76)	57 (13.35)

Not Sure	22 (12.50)	10 (4.27)	1 (5.88)	33 (7.73)
No Answer	5 (2.84)	6 (2.56)	4 (23.53)	15 (3.51)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
Religion is personally important				
Agree	143 (81.25)	229 (97.86)	13 (76.47)	385 (90.16)
Disagree	12 (6.82)	3 (1.28)	-	15 (3.51)
Not Sure	17 (9.66)	2 (0.85)	-	19 (4.45)
No Answer	4 (2.27)	-	4 (23.53)	8 (1.87)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
Religion is source of guidance				
Agree	147 (83.52)	217 (92.74)	12 (70.59)	376 (88.06)
Disagree	4 (2.27)	2 (0.85)	-	6 (1.41)
Not Sure	21 (11.93)	9 (3.85)	1 (5.88)	31 (7.26)
No Answer	4 (2.27)	6 (2.56)	4 (23.53)	14 (3.28)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)

Church Practice and Religious Attachment

On the question of religious practice while in college (Table 3), a great majority of the respondents expressed agreement that it is indeed a beneficial action. Ninety percent agreed with this while only 5 percent disagreed with the statement. The undecided did not reach 1 percent. It seemed that for the students, practicing religious customs and traditions are a valid component of college life. Females, at 94 percent, believed in practicing one's faith in college more than the males, at 87 percent, did.

Prescinding from ideals into actual practice of faith, the students were tested as to the tenacity of their allegiance to particular elements of their religious life. Asked if they should be faithful to religious or church teachings, the replies showed lower conviction than previous answers. The respondents who were unsure rose up to 10 percent. Those who believed in this fidelity to church doctrines formed 80 percent while 7 percent volunteered disagreement.

The students revealed a surprising answer to the statement regarding actual doubt on some facets of their church or religious teachings. Those who said they never entertained doubt dropped to only 50 percent, while those who admitted they sometimes entered into doubt, rose to 29 percent, so far the highest percentage on the side of a negative response. More males (36.93) were prone to doctrinal doubt than females (23.08).

Surprisingly though, when asked about entertaining the thought of abandoning their religion or church, appreciation and esteem for religion prevailed again. Seventy-six percent stressed that they did not contemplate leaving their church. But a noticeable 12 percent honestly admitted thinking of this idea. The males (15.91) thought about it more than the females (8.55).

The foregoing results showed that while the students have formed an attachment to their religion, they were also exercising independent thinking when it came to believing doctrines or teachings. While they were not willing to easily turn their backs on their religion, they were not to easily accept the teachings without putting it under examination or scrutiny.

Table 3: Indicators of Church Practice and Religious Attachment

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
It is good to practice my religion in college.				
Agree	153 (86.93)	221 (94.44)	12 (70.59)	386 (90.40)
Disagree	3 (1.70)	2 (0.85)	-	5 (1.17)
Not Sure	13 (7.39)	6 (2.56)	1 (5.88)	20 (4.68)
Invalid	-	1 (0.43)	-	1 (0.23)
No Answer	7 (3.98)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	15 (3.51)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
I must be faithful to the teachings of my religion/ church.				
Agree	131 (74.43)	196 (83.76)	13 (76.47)	340 (79.63)
Disagree	14 (7.95)	15 (6.41)	-	29 (6.79)

Not Sure	24 (13.64)	19 (8.12)	-	43 (10.07)
No Answer	7 (3.98)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	15 (3.51)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
I sometimes doubt the teachings of my religion/ church.				
Agree	65 (36.93)	54 (23.08)	5 (29.41)	124 (29.04)
Disagree	71 (40.34)	134 (57.26)	5 (29.41)	210 (49.18)
Not Sure	34 (19.32)	40 (17.09)	3 (17.65)	77 (18.03)
Invalid	-	5 (2.14)	-	5 (1.17)
No Answer	6 (3.41)	1 (0.43)	4 (23.53)	11 (2.58)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
I sometimes think I want to leave my religion/ church.				
Agree	28 (15.91)	20 (8.55)	2 (11.76)	50 (11.71)
Disagree	119 (67.61)	196 (83.76)	10 (58.82)	325 (76.11)
Not Sure	20 (11.36)	15 (6.41)	1 (5.88)	36 (8.43)
No Answer	9 (5.11)	3 (1.28)	4 (23.53)	16 (3.75)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)

Frequency of Religious Practice and Mode of Practice

It was mentioned above that the consensus of the majority of respondents points to the favorable stance on regular religious practice or participation. But how many of young people actually practice their faith in college?

The survey revealed that more than half of the students were active participants in their church or religion when they were younger, before college (57.95). (Table 4). Religious practice dropped after they entered college, with only 32 percent saying that they are still active in their church or religion. This was equally true for males and females.

The reasons for this drop in attendance, practice or participation were not asked and so they were not indicated. It might be good to know the reasons behind the slackening of religious participation in college, since the conviction or desire for it is still intense. This can be done in the form or future follow-up on this study. Students are generally deterred from their previous routines in high school by adjustment to a new environment, the influence of new contacts in campus, the distance from parents or family, or preoccupation with college studies and activities.

Table 4: Frequency of Religious Practice in College

	In College (%)	In High School (%)	Both (%)	No Answer(%)	Total (%)
Male(%)	57 (32.39)	102 (57.95)	10 (5.68)	7 (3.98)	176(100.00)
Female(%)	89 (38.03)	110 (47.01)	27 (11.54)	8 (3.42)	234(100.00)
Unidentified(%)	5 (29.41)	7 (41.18)	1 (5.88)	4 (23.53)	17 (100.00)
Total	151(35.36)	219(51.29)	38 (8.90)	19 (4.45)	427(100.00)

For most of the students who were more observant of church or religious traditions, they express their religiosity in college through a combination of many pious actions (66.98) For those who chose only one option, the single most significant expression is churchgoing, with 13 percent preferring to adopt this means of expressing faith. It was surprising to see that the males (13.64) were slightly above the females (12.82) in going to church. Personal prayer came next with 9 percent keeping up the practice. There are also those who admit to having a predilection for Scripture reading (3.28) and attend lessons provided by their church (1.17).

Table 5: Mode of Practice in College

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total
Going to Church	24 (13.64)	30 (12.82)	3 (17.65)	57 (13.35)
Reading Bible	7 (3.98)	7 (2.99)	-	14 (3.28)
Praying	22 (12.50)	14 (5.98)	4 (23.53)	40 (9.37)
Lessons	4 (2.27)	1 (0.43)	-	5 (1.17)
Combination	103 (58.52)	177 (75.64)	6 (35.29)	286 (66.98)
Other	2 (1.14)	-	-	2 (0.47)
No Answer	13 (7.39)	3 (1.28)	4 (23.53)	20 (4.68)
Invalid	1 (0.57)	2 (0.85)	-	3 (0.70)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)

Influences to Religiosity

The students were offered to choose among possible early-life influences that made them attached or attracted to pursue a religious path. The options provided ranged from close kin to academic mentors and their own contemporaries.

More than half of the students chose a combination of influences that affected their choice or attachment to their church or religion (59.72). The single biggest influence cited was the family, accounting for 34 percent of the responses. Other factors, like peers, lessons or studies are of minimal impact in their religiosity.

Table 6: Influences to Religious Membership

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
Family	66 (37.50)	75 (32.05)	4 (23.53)	145 (33.96)
Peers	2 (1.14)	4 (1.71)	-	6 (1.41)
Lessons/ Studies	-	2 (0.85)	-	2 (0.47)
Combination	100 (56.82)	146 (62.39)	9 (52.94)	255 (59.72)
Other	1 (0.57)	3 (1.28)	-	4 (0.94)
No answer	7 (3.98)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	15 (3.51)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)

Indicators of Spiritual Values**Personal Appropriation of Religious Experience**

Indicators of spiritual principles and experiences comprised the next set of questions. Here the students were asked about how they internally absorb and integrate their faith, beyond mere membership in a formal religious organization or traditional performance of religious functions. (Table 7).

Many of the students indicated that they believed in the importance of a personal relationship with God (92.04%). Those who explicitly disagreed with this proposition ran short of 1 percent. More females (97.44) espouse this principle than did the males (86.93).

Personal relationship with God takes a whole lifetime to establish. It is not born from a single conversion moment nor is it a one-off experience. Eighty-eight percent of students find this a sensible proposition and wholeheartedly affirm it. Only 2 percent reject the idea as untrue. Females, at 95 percent, outnumber the males, 82 percent, in confirming this principle.

Does the church or religion have anything to do with deepening one's rapport with God? The majority of the students, 89 percent, believe in the constructive role of the church towards fostering and nurturing one's spirituality. Only 1 percent deny this link and about 5 percent are unsure of the connection between church and spirituality. More females, 94 percent, noticed this connection between religion and spirituality than males, 84 percent. So far, the students have been consistent in upholding a positive view of church or religion.

While the church is deemed important in the spiritual quest, 86 percent of the students also believed that it is crucial to have their own personal principles on their faith. Only a tiny minority, at 3 percent, disagreed with this. Again, the females (90.60) outnumber the males (81.25) in affirmative answer.

Table 7: Personal Appropriation of Religious Experience

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
It is important to have a personal relationship with God.				
Agree	153 (86.93)	228 (97.44)	12 (70.59)	393 (92.04)
Disagree	2 (1.14)	1 (0.43)	-	3 (0.70)
Not Sure	15 (8.52)	2 (0.85)	1 (5.88)	18 (4.22)
No Answer	6 (3.41)	3 (1.28)	4 (23.53)	13 (3.04)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)

Relationship with God is life-long process.				
Agree	144 (81.82)	222 (94.87)	11 (64.71)	377 (88.29)
Disagree	3 (1.70)	4 (1.71)	2 (11.76)	9 (2.11)
Not Sure	21 (11.93)	4 (1.71)	-	25 (5.85)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	16 (3.75)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
My religion/ church helps to deepen my relationship with God.				
Agree	148 (84.09)	220 (94.02)	13 (76.47)	381 (89.23)
Disagree	5 (2.84)	1 (0.43)	-	6 (1.41)
Not Sure	15 (8.52)	9 (3.85)	-	24 (5.62)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	16 (3.75)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
It is important to form my own religious principles.				
Agree	143 (81.25)	212 (90.60)	12 (70.59)	367 (85.95)
Disagree	9 (5.11)	2 (0.85)	-	11 (2.58)
Not Sure	14 (7.95)	14 (5.98)	1 (5.88)	29 (6.79)
No Answer	10 (5.68)	6 (2.56)	4 (23.53)	20 (4.68)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)

Belief in the Purpose of Life

Essential to a healthy spirituality is to believe in a life purpose or personal mission that is divinely ordained. Ninety percent of the students affirm that God has designed a bigger purpose for their lives. (Table 8). Less than 1 percent directly disagreed with this statement. While males believe in God's design for life (84.66), the females overwhelmingly accepted it (96.15).

Believing thus, students expressed willingness to embark on a discovery of their life purpose. Eighty-eight percent showed enthusiasm in this journey of discovery and just almost 1 percent expressed dissent.

Table 8: Personal purpose or personal mission in life

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
God has bigger purpose for my life.				
Agree	149 (84.66)	225 (96.15)	13 (76.47)	387 (90.64)
Disagree	2 (1.14)	1 (0.43)	-	3 (0.70)
Not Sure	16 (9.09)	4 (1.71)	-	20 (4.68)
No Answer	9 (5.11)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	17 (3.98)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)
I have a personal quest to discover the purpose of my life.				
Agree	149 (84.66)	217 (92.74)	13 (76.47)	379 (88.76)
Disagree	1 (0.57)	3 (1.28)	-	4 (0.94)
Not Sure	18 (10.23)	9 (3.85)	-	27 (6.32)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	5 (2.14)	4 (23.53)	17 (3.98)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427 (100.00)

Spirituality, Others and the World

Spirituality, if it is genuine, is not self-enclosed but effusive and all-embracing. The students were asked to affirm this social effect of their spirituality. (Table 9). Ninety-one percent of the respondents admitted that their faith inspires them to do beneficial things to other people. Females (94.87) affirm this more than the males (86.36). And less than 5 percent contradict the statement given in the survey.

The encouragingly positive societal force originating from the students' spiritual idealism about their future is evidenced by the significant numbers that rate "doing good to others" (90.63%), and becoming "a responsible citizen" (89.23) as important if not essential goals in their future. This vision also includes a concern for the good of creation, to which many respondents subscribed (91.80).

Table 9: Spirituality and its effect on society and the world

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unidentified (%)	Total (%)
My faith inspires me to do good to others.				
Agree	152 (86.36)	222 (94.87)	13 (76.47)	387 (90.63)
Disagree	3 (1.70)	1 (0.43)	-	19 (4.45)
Not Sure	13 (7.39)	6 (2.56)	-	4 (0.94)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	5 (2.14)	4 (23.53)	17 (3.98)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
My faith inspires me to become a responsible citizen.				
Agree	143 (81.25)	224 (95.73)	13 (76.47)	380 (88.99)
Disagree	5 (2.84)	1 (0.43)	-	6 (1.41)
Not Sure	20 (11.36)	5 (2.14)	-	25 (5.85)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	16 (3.75)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)
My faith inspires me to value and respect creation.				
Agree	153 (86.93)	226 (96.58)	13 (76.47)	392 (91.80)
Disagree	3 (1.70)	1 (0.43)	-	4 (0.94)
Not Sure	12 (6.82)	3 (7.69)	-	15 (3.51)
No Answer	8 (4.55)	4 (1.71)	4 (23.53)	16 (3.75)
Total	176 (100.00)	234 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	427(100.00)

IV. DISCUSSION

Religious Values

From the aforementioned results, it is clear that Silliman University college students possess strong religious convictions. (Table 2). They show a remarkably high degree of faith in the existence of God. The results barely reflect the presence of an atheistic bent among the students. The students come to the university with faith in a personal God.

The results also revealed that college students have a positive and high valuation of religion or church. They believe that a religious community is a means towards developing a rapport with the divine. Although there is a disagreement from a tenth of the respondents, still the majority view religion as a gateway to a supernatural experience.

The students further prove their appreciation of religion by claiming that it is an important component of their personal lives. It is from their religious background that they derive some form of guidance for life, inspiration in distress, and support in struggles.

The female students appear to be more religious than the male students, as they showed higher percentage of agreement with the statements on the merits and importance of their religion.

The students are idealistic with regard to religious compliance. They suppose for example that it is worthwhile to continue religious practice while pursuing college studies. (Table 3). Verifying this with their actual performance of religious duties in college however, the data revealed that students were more participative in religious activities when they were in high school. (Table 4). There was a drop in religious practice once they entered college, a deviation from the ideal they seem to endorse and uphold.

While the respondents continue to be idealistic in terms of attachment to their religion, an increasing number are more cautious in following or obeying tenets of their faith. (Table 3). Fidelity to church teaching was affirmed by just about 80 percent. Those who were unsure of the answer rose to 10 percent.

Less than 50 percent maintained that they never doubted church teachings or religious tenets. Those who were unsure of the answer rose to almost 20 percent. And the thought of leaving their church occurred to 12 percent of the respondents.

This trend shows that while appreciation for religion is high, and religious practice is ideal, blind obedience or fidelity to one's religion is not easily given. The young people manifest the power to scrutinize, question, or ponder on the teachings passed on to them. This shows a tendency towards individualization of religious experience instead of mere unquestioning obedience.

Already mentioned is the tendency of the students to relax on religious observance, compared to their participation in religious activities in their high school years. (Table 4). For those who continue to keep up with observance of religious duties, the question was asked as to the mode of religious activities they engage in. Expressions of faith in college comprise a host of activities that range from attendance at Sunday worship to private prayer. The majority of respondents do not choose just one but a variety of religious rituals to practice. There is a balance between public worship and individual exercise of adoration and praise to God.

When asked about the influences to their religiosity, the majority picked a combination of many factors that led them to their church or religion and to the practice of their faith. The family however remains the single most crucial instrument for the embrace of a church or religion. (Table 6). This points to the fact that the family provides the initial and most basic formation and education of a person and gives guidance on the most important choices, even those that refer to faith or transcendence.

Spiritual Values

Just as the students showed a high level of religiosity by their ideals and their voluntary practice of church rituals and obligations, the responses on questions pertaining to spirituality likewise exhibit promising possibilities.

The students believe in a “personalized” experience of faith and not just in a faith marked by following corporate movements or convictions. (Table 7). Since this is a personal experience, it entails a continuing journey through life. Relationship with God grows through time and through multifarious events that evoke or infuse a sense of the divine. The students seem to be drawn towards the exploration and deepening of their religious experience.

Even in the sphere of spirituality, the students credit religion or church as having a positive impact. They consider religion or church, understood as “institutional” or “organized” as helpful in fostering a deep relationship with God, which is considered “personal”. In the research, religiosity and spirituality do not seem to be in opposition to one another in the minds of the respondents. While religiosity has, most of the time, been denigrated when compared to spirituality, the survey participants have consistently shown a high degree of appreciation for the role religion plays in their lives.

And while regarding religion or church in high esteem, the majority of respondents decide that forming their own religious principles will be a good move. This shows that while being willing to identify themselves with a religious tradition, the students relish initiatives that express their independence from mere conformity with rules or laws designed for them by others.

This independence flows through a consideration of one’s purpose in life. Many of the students are convinced that their lives have a bigger purpose than they now see it. And God has a role to play in determining the purpose of life. (Table 8). As a consequence, the respondents decide to know this purpose more, to discover what it is and what it entails for them.

Spirituality affects not only the person living or experiencing it. Its effects extend to other people in society and even in the world. The test of a genuine spirituality is its beneficial effect on others and the cosmos. Many of the students believe that because of their journey of faith, they are inspired to treat other people with kindness. (Table 9). They are also led to do their part as conscientious citizens of the nation. This sense of responsibility flows into the way they regard the entire creation with respect.

In the aspect of spiritual values, the female respondents have consistently shown higher scores than the male respondents. This may lead us to conclude that the females are more adapted to spirituality than the males.

V. CONCLUSION

Research on the religious and spiritual values of college students is a rewarding venture. The research disclosed an unfamiliar facet of the life of young people in the university, their appreciation for and pursuit of transcendent values. These values, though unarticulated for the most part, are crucial components of their time spent in college and of their future as persons who will engage the wider world through their careers.

It is very encouraging to discover the innate transcendent values of young people who entrust to the university their professional and technical training. College students who enter college are steeped in values of religiosity and spirituality. In a way, they seek in a faith-based institution the enhancement and furtherance of their religious and spiritual experiences.

A very high regard for religiosity can be seen in the results of this research. Young people are willing to embrace their religion and are proud of identifying themselves with it. Aside from belonging to a church or religion, the students are also determined to achieve a deep and personal faith. They are enthusiastic in developing a spirituality that will affect their relationship with self, others and the world. But college students will not merely follow rules or tenets that they do not personally understand or approve of. They exercise a sense of autonomy in deciding for themselves the form the direction of their life of faith.

Getting to know these aspects of the life of college students, the faculty and the concerned university offices can better serve the needs of the students to grow and develop their faith. Both the academic and campus life can provide meaningful experiences that will invite the students to reflect, articulate and deepen their sense of religiosity and spirituality.

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