

Spiritual Well-Being of Selected Filipino Adolescence: Relevance to Religious Education

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Abstract – This study discussed the spiritual well-being vis-à-vis spirituality of adolescents in the Philippines. Two hundred (200) Filipino adolescents, ages thirteen to eighteen, responded to the survey. Using the Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM) of John Fisher, the data results were analyzed in the lenses of the interpretative approach of Philip Sheldrake. SHALOM data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative analysis discussed the Filipino adolescents' spiritual well-being as exhibited in their experiential relationship with themselves, others, the environment, and the transcendent. This related to the religious experience of ascetical-monastic, mystical, active-practical, and prophetic-critical. In general, Filipino adolescents' spiritual well-being is positive. They live in harmony within their relationships in the personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains. The differences between the four domains are not too far from each other, except for the transcendental domain, which is remarkably high. It was also found out that adolescents without behavioral problems have a deeper and more encompassing understanding of the ideal and lived spiritual well-being than adolescents with behavioral issues. The results show that there is a relationship between school behavioral problems and spiritual well-being. This study hopes to contribute to the vast literature on spirituality and well-being.

Keywords – adolescents experiences, behavioral problems, spiritual well-being, SHALOM

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that increased levels of spiritual well-being can cause increased life satisfaction and happiness among adolescents, improved quality of life [1]-[3]. Increased spiritual well-being among adolescents is a possible way to decrease or prevent destructive behaviors. Wherever there is learning, the adolescents are always subject to adopt spirituality or the violence manifested.

The Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure or SHALOM elicits the "ideals" people have for spiritual health (SH) in four sets of relationships: self, others, environment, and God. The Spiritual Health Measure (SHM) reflects on the actual experiences or the feelings attributed to their personal experiences. According to Fisher, spiritual well-being can be measured on four domains based on a person's relationship with self or intra-personal (personal), relationship with others (communal), relationship with nature (environmental), and relationship with God (transcendental) [4].

Sheldrake explains spirituality as the deepest values and meaning by which people seek to live, based on a vision of the human spirit and what will enable it to

achieve its full potential. He adds it is a quest for ultimate meaning and fulfillment. He categorized it into four types of spirituality- ascetical-monastic, mystical, active-practical, and prophetic-critical. Each type is characterized by a broad worldview based on Catholic assumptions [5].

This study interprets SHALOM survey results and the Types of Spirituality. Both ideologies explain the existence and experience of the spiritual well-being of humans. For this paper, the analysis of the instruments will be used on young people who experienced school behavioral problems and those who did not. The relationship between these variables will be analyzed and interpreted to learn the relevance of such findings to Catholic education.

The respondents of this study are selected Filipino adolescents who experienced behavioral problems and those who did not. Behavioral problems refer to rule-breaking behaviors, aggressive behaviors, and nonconformity from specific pre-set rules and regulations. Many young people, whether by force or lack of alternatives, live by committing and experiencing crimes and acts of violence, such as kidnapping, extortion, organized crime, human

trafficking, slavery and sexual exploitation, rape, terrorism, and others [7]. As a result, their relationships become unenthusiastic, half-hearted, and insincere. Some adolescents struggle to find their place in society and lose their faith and question their spirituality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to examine the spiritual well-being of selected Filipino adolescents to understand their spiritual experiences and needs. An in-depth study of each SHALOM domain may enhance the delivery of Catholic education and values to classrooms. At the same time, it aims to prove a relationship between school behavioral problems and spiritual well-being. If the hypothesis is correct, then there will be a decrease in schools' number of behavioral problems by using the spiritual well-being lens in approaching these adolescents.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods research design. It involved “collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in studies that examine a similar phenomenon [7].” The idea is that the “use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding of research problems than either using one approach only” [8].

Quantitative research deduces, objectifies, and generalizes data. It involves procedures such as predetermination of design, separation of data collection and analysis, detachment and distance from data, reliance on standardized protocols, uses statistical controls, and works across a large number of cases [9]. The data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test (Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test), an alternative to the independent-measures t-test through SPSS Statistics 22.0. The test uses the data from two separate samples to test for a significant difference between adolescents with behavioral problems and those who do not have behavioral issues.

Qualitative research induces, subjectifies, and contextualizes data. The spiritual well-being data were descriptively explained using the Types of Spirituality by Philip Sheldrake [10]. This study employed a survey method through questionnaires in gathering the data needed. It is the collection of data from a group of individuals through their responses to standard questions [11].

The study applied the explanatory sequential design, a mixed-method research type. Its goal is to use

a qualitative approach in explaining quantitative results. It answers the question, “In what ways do the qualitative data help explain the quantitative results?” It has two phases wherein the quantitative data collection is the priority, while the qualitative interpretation depends on the gathered figures.

Research Sampling

There were two hundred (200) Filipino adolescents respondents ages thirteen to eighteen. One hundred (100) respondents came from a Catholic school and another one hundred (100) from a secular school. Each school has fifty (50) students with recorded violations of school rules and regulations and fifty (50) who have no school violations. For tabulation, students with documented violations were named adolescents with behavioral problems, and those with one were called adolescents without behavioral problems. The respondents were identified and chosen through purposive sampling.

The data was gathered through the administration of the survey questionnaire Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measure to Filipino adolescents. The permission to conduct a study was secured from the participating educational institutions. The parents/guardians received a parental consent that discusses the anonymity and confidentiality of the minor respondents. Full consent was obtained from the participants and their parents/guardians prior to the study.

Research Instrument

The spiritual well-being of adolescents was measured using the SHALOM. The instrument has two components, the Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measure. The first indicates personal experiences and feelings while the latter points to a person's ideal spiritual health. SHALOM has four domains: personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domain. SHALOM scale uses the concept of "idea-feel" in dissonance, the fairest measure of the quality of relationships. It measures how significant the areas are for an ideal SWB and how the items reflect individual feelings. Using a Likert scale of 1-5, the level of agreement was interpreted as 'very low' to 'very high.' A higher score indicates higher spiritual well-being. SHALOM takes 10 to 12 minutes to complete. The Cronbach's alpha values of SHALOM for personal, transcendental, environmental, and communal domains were 0.89, 0.86, 0.76, and 0.79, respectively, and this was 0.92 for all items together (Gomez &

Fisher, 2003). SHALOM has shown validity in terms of construct, concurrent, discriminant, and predictive” [12]. Data were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U Test (Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test), an alternative to the independent-measures t-test. This non-parametric test uses two separate samples to test for a significant difference between two treatments or two populations.

RESULTS

The SHALOM survey results indicate personal experiences and feelings, while the latter points to a person's ideal spiritual health. The personal domain deals with how a person intra-relates with oneself about meaning, purpose, and values in life. The communal domain is expressed in the quality and depth of inter-personal relationships between self and others. The environmental domain deals with enjoyment, care, and nurture for the physical and biological world. The transcendental domain deals with the relationship of the self with some-thing or some-one beyond the human level, such as a cosmic force, transcendental reality, or God [13].

The mean and mode scores in each domain are presented while considering the Catholic experience, affiliation of the respondents, and the behavioral experience.

Table 1. SHALOM Survey Results of Catholic Adolescents

Shalom Domains	Adolescents WITH Behavioral Problems in Catholic schools		Adolescents WITHOUT Behavioral problems in Catholic schools	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
Personal	4.209	5	4.304	5
Communal	4.181	5	4.283	5
Environmental	4.133	5	4.253	5
Transcendental	4.307	5	4.611	5
Total	4.208	5	4.363	5

Table 1 shows that adolescents with behavioral problems have lower spiritual well-being scores than adolescents without behavioral problems in Catholic schools.

Similar to the previous findings, Table 2 shows that adolescents with behavioral problems have lower spiritual well-being scores than adolescents without behavioral problems, even in secular schools.

Adolescents from secular schools without behavioral problems have a mean of 4.377, having four

as the rating that appeared most often, is the highest scored group. While adolescents from Catholic schools with behavioral problems have a mean of 4.208, having 5 as the rating that appeared most often, is the group with the lowest score.

Table 2. SHALOM Survey Results of Secular Adolescents

Shalom Domains	Adolescents WITH behavioral problems in secular schools		Adolescents WITHOUT behavioral problems in secular schools	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
Personal	4.181	4	4.304	4
Communal	4.129	4	4.229	4
Environmental	4.011	4	4.150	5
Transcendental	4.527	4	4.825	5
Total	4.212	4	4.377	4

The personal domain has an overall mean of 4.250 and a mode of 4. The communal domain has an overall mean 4.206 and a mode of 4. The environmental domain has an overall mean 4.137 and a mode of 5. The transcendental domain has an overall mean of 4.568 and a mode of 5. The spiritual well-being mean score of Filipino adolescents is 4.290 and a mode of 4.

The results show that adolescents from secular schools without behavioral problems have the highest spiritual well-being. In contrast, adolescents from Catholic institutions with behavioral problems have the lowest spiritual well-being. This means that the Catholic experiences of adolescents do not guarantee high spiritual well-being. However, in this case, there is a relationship between the variable behavioral experiences and spiritual well-being. The results also point that generally, Filipino adolescents have high spiritual well-being and a robust transcendental characteristic.

Below is the summary of the data gathered. The results were statistically treated using Mann-Whitney U Test (Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test), an alternative to the independent-measures t-test. The test uses two separate samples to test for a significant difference between two treatments or two populations. Below are the differences between the variables of the study.

Table 3 shows that when the relationship between groups was statistically treated, there is no significant difference between the spiritual well-being of adolescents from secular and Catholic schools with behavioral problems.

Table 3: SHALOM Mann Whitney U-Test Results

Test Statistics	Z	p-value
Without Behavioral Problem Catholic & With Behavioral Problem Catholic	-5.433*	.000
Without Behavioral Problem Secular & With Behavioral Problem	-9.582*	.000
With Behavioral Problem Secular & With Behavioral Problem Catholic	-1.208 ^b	.227
Without Behavioral Problem Secular & Without Behavioral Problem Catholic	-2.649*	.008

*Sig at $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The computed value of -1.208 is interpreted as a negative correlation and has a p-value of .227, which is more than the 5% level of significance. The results also show a significant difference between the remaining three groups having the p-value of .000, .000, and .008, which is less than the 5% level of significance. The behavioral problem variable affects the spiritual well-being variable.

Table 3 also shows that spiritual well-being is higher among adolescents from secular schools than those from Catholic schools. However, there is no relationship found between adolescents' spiritual well-being from secular and Catholic schools with behavioral problems. Spiritual well-being has nothing to do with the schools' Catholic orientation.

Table 4: Mann Whitney U-Test Results of Adolescents with and without Behavioral Problems

Test Statistics	Without Behavioral Problems – With Behavioral Problems
Z-value	-10.502*
p-value	.000

*Sig at $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows that when the relationship between groups was statistically treated, there is a significant difference between the spiritual well-being of adolescents with and without behavioral problems having the computed value of -10.502 interpreted as negative correlation and has a p-value of .000 that is less than the 5% level of significance.

The table revealed that behavioral problems affect spiritual well-being. Those adolescents without behavioral problems have a more stable spiritual well-being than those with behavioral problems.

Table 5: Mann Whitney U-Test Results of Catholic and Secular Adolescents

Test Statistics	Catholic-Secular
Z	-.777
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.437

*Sig at $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows that when the relationship between groups was statistically treated, there is no significant difference between Catholic adolescents' spiritual well-being and secular adolescents having the computed value of -.777 interpreted as negative correlation and has a p-value of .437 which is more than the 5% level of significance.

Contrary to the interpretation using the mean and mode scores, the figures revealed that the school's Catholic orientation does not affect spiritual well-being. Adolescents from Catholic and secular schools can both have healthy spiritual well-being with or without the school's intervention.

To conclude, adolescents without behavioral problems have a deeper and more encompassing understanding of the ideal and lived spiritual well-being than adolescents with behavioral issues. The figures show that there is a relationship between behavioral problems and spiritual well-being. It was also found out that the school's Catholic experiences and orientation do not affect spiritual well-being. Adolescents from Catholic and secular schools can both have healthy spiritual well-being. The results show strong transcendental spiritual well-being rather than environmental, communal, and personal spiritual well-being. In general, Filipino adolescents have a "high" spiritual well-being.

DISCUSSION

The Filipino adolescents, as Moberg explains, have a healthy totality of their inner resources. Their relationship with God, oneself, the community, and the environment are affirmative and celebrates wholeness [14]. The SHALOM instrument measures spiritual well-being expressed in the quality and harmony of the respondents' relationships to the four domains. It is also called the "spiritual thermometer" which indicates the person's spiritual self-assessment, not exhaust.

In the results section, it was concluded that Filipino adolescents have a "high" spiritual well-being. They live in harmony within their relationships in the personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains. The differences between the four domains are not too far from each other, except for

the transcendental domain, which is remarkably high. These results must be debated and utilized to expound, correlate, and create new knowledge and contributions concerning spirituality, spiritual well-being, and Catholic education. This study attempts to interpret SHALOM results using the Types of Spirituality of Philip Sheldrake [5]. While the SHALOM instrument is indicative, the Types of Spirituality is action-oriented. The analysis of these two concepts hopes to develop a comprehensive discussion of Filipino adolescents' spiritual well-being as exhibited in the relationships with oneself, the environment, others, and the transcendent to aid the least recognized areas of spiritual well-being.

Fisher came up with four spiritual well-being domains, namely personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains. Sheldrake also proposed four types of spirituality, which are analogous to the SHALOM domains. These are the active-practical, prophetic-critical, ascetical-monastic, and mystical types. The personal domain and the active-practical type regard personal experiences and values in life. The communal domain and the prophetic-critical type explain that healthy spirituality involves caring for society members. The environmental domain shares the value of nature and the world in human contemplation with the ascetical-monastic type. The transcendental domain is similar to the mystical-type wherein it encourages people to grow in knowledge about God.

The section below further illustrates the parallelism of the four spiritual well-being domains and the four types of spirituality. It will also discuss the parallelism's implication to spiritual well-being, Catholic education, and the Church.

Personal Domain and Active-Practical Type

The personal domain is characterized by the intra-relation of the self in the meaning, purpose, and values in life [4]. Self-awareness is the driving force, inspiration, or transcendent aspect of the human spirit. It is expressed in internal joy, peace, patience, identity, and self-worth. The active-practical type of spirituality sees everyday life as the principal context for the spiritual path and a quest for authenticity [10]. It seeks to find spiritual growth through the medium of ordinary experiences, commitments, and activities. Both ideas emphasize the value of loving oneself through the freedom of making their own choices and decisions confidently.

Human desires are the real experiences of selves, in all the complexity and depth, concerning people and

things around [15], only by attending to our desires that we may encounter our deepest self, the image of God, within. God is operating in us and gifting us with a holy dissatisfaction with anything transitory or less than all. Thus, becoming healthy in the personal domain of spiritual well-being is not merely identifying where a person is headed and making major impactful decisions in life. The active-practical type of spirituality requires spiritual mindfulness even in the circumstances that the least matters. It is standing before God in the context of our everyday lives. There is a need to attain a sufficient degree of rootedness in ourselves before we can move outward to others in a non-abusive way [15].

The SHALOM results revealed that Filipino adolescents with behavioral problems are the most unlikely to have peace of mind, while adolescents without behavioral problems value their self-identity the least. It must be realized that self-entitlement and self-love are gifts and a spiritual responsibility that grants internal peace. There is the call to committed love in the search for self-transcending love. However, too much absorption with the self is endemic to human nature.

Communal Domain and Prophetic-Critical Type

The communal domain is manifested in the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships between self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion [4]. These are expressed in forgiveness, justice, love, trust, hope, and faith in humanity. The prophetic-critical type of spirituality goes beyond the simple, practical service of other people in the direction of an explicit commitment to social transformation and social justice as a spiritual task [10]. It emerged fully during the twentieth century in response to certain critical social and political situations. Both ideas see the beauty of interconnectedness and diversity moving towards social concern to attain the common good. To love and care for others is to become spiritual [17]. No spirituality can be practical without being rooted in social compassion.

A spirituality that is truly incarnational and includes a Gospel-centered call to be with Christ in preaching and spreading the Kingdom of God involves an explicitly social dimension. As Christians, we are called not merely to be a community ourselves but to preach and offer community to the world [10]. There can be no genuine return to the love of God unless it also involves the love of people and, therefore, a response to the demands of justice.

A spirituality of social compassion necessarily draws us into a confrontation with the major issues of our day: social division, economic colonialism and exploitation, international conflict, and the oppression of minorities [10]. It is essential that Christians and Christian spirituality show to those who work for peace and justice without the explicit Catholic commitment that faith is not the 'opium of the people' but rather a responsibility to change the world and to make it a present sign of the new heaven and the earth.

Thus, becoming healthy in the communal domain of spiritual well-being is dwelling in the sincerity of our interpersonal relationships that are free from discrimination and hatred. The prophetic-critical type of spirituality seeks the transformation of our relationships. It must manifest a tendency not to be self-serving but rather non-possessive, non-oppressive, and non-hierarchical.

SHALOM results show that Filipino adolescents highly respect others as a reflection of their communal spiritual commitment. They are social enough to imbibe concern and participation in the community in a voluntary and unsolicited manner. The results also show that Filipino adolescents do not easily trust other people, despite being naturally social, which is a practical choice nowadays. For all excessive human love can come to an end. It may deceive, is partial, is not totally, and finally reliable. Yet, the capacity and need for intimacy is a call to find within this risk of human loving the love of God that is total, constant, and faithful [15].

Environmental Domain and Ascetical-Monastic Type

The environmental domain cares and nurtures the physical and biological, to a sense of awe and wonders with nature [4]. For some, it is the notion of unity and connectedness with the environment. The ascetical-monastic type prescribes special places such as the wilderness or the monastery [10]. It describes practices of self-denial, austerity, and abstention from worldly pleasures as the pathway to spiritual growth. Humans are called to contemplation by nature. Both ideas appreciate the mystery, appeal, and sense of warmth that nature brings to humans. We see the mysterious power we call beauty, truth, and goodness in human beings and nature. We see God with and through the shape of a rose, and the movements of the stars, and the image of a friend [10, 17]. Through nature, humans can experience a companionship where unity and simplicity are acknowledged without judgment.

Filipino adolescents are low in the environmental domain of spiritual well-being. They have difficulty practicing self-denial and contemplation by nature. This is not surprising at all given the adolescents' active participation on social media, which enables them to create another environment, their virtual world, instead of appreciating the beauty of nature itself. It is difficult for them to abstain from worldly pleasures, especially for adolescents with behavioral problems. The adolescents have to be drawn again to the Church, the community of believers like them, the place of the Risen Jesus extended throughout human areas and human history [18]. However, spirituality cannot be contained in any limited geographical spot. The teachings of Jesus drive us beyond. The holiness of the person of Christ is shared, exteriorized, and communicated without spatial limits [19].

Transcendental Domain and Mystical Type

The transcendental domain is the relationship of the self with some-thing or some-One beyond the human level [4]. This involves faith towards, adoration, and worship of, the source of Mystery of the universe. The mystical type of spirituality desires for an immediacy of presence to God frequently through contemplative practice. It is associated with intuitive 'knowledge of God' beyond discursive reasoning and analysis [10]. Both ideas point to the personal relationship with God as the center of faith. More than that, the ideas inspire humans to operate with devotion and growing knowledge about God. It is important for the image of God that people have in mind, is what they affirm to live.

Filipino adolescents have a strong transcendental domain of spiritual well-being and can be considered as mystical types. They desire God's immediate presence through their contemplative practices. Literature supports that Filipino adolescents are indeed personal and individualistic when relating to the Transcendent. However, adolescents have to be careful when their experiences of human relationships delimit the relationship with God or the Transcendent. It is detrimental to spirituality if it is not rooted and can effortlessly be influenced by external factors. For unless we come to desire God's will in our very roots (and not merely accept it reluctantly) we cannot be wholehearted in our prayer and actions [15].

Catholic education believes that young people today embrace freedom and responsibility for constructing their identity and beliefs. Young people from diverse cultures and experiences come together and express a

myriad of views, seeking to understand themselves, others, and the religiosity and spirituality that lies at the heart of faith expression [20]. Similarly, Catholic educators need to adapt to the open-mindedness of the adolescents while encountering those who are spiritually attuned, have no spiritual awareness, or have different spiritual expressions that may or may not relate to Catholic affiliation. Befriending this diversity creates a context for rich dialogue that can open up questions of meaning, identity, faith, and spirituality.

Catholic education, amid interfaith dialogues, has to observe the dimensions of faith in the delivery of the Catholic belief. The doctrine continuously emphasizes morality as the positive response to Christ, who calls humans to a holy life. While living a moral life as disciples of Christ committed to following him. And putting Christ's liturgy as the center of an adolescents' faith.

Therefore, spiritual well-being reflects one's Catholic and spiritual beliefs manifested in the experiences shared with oneself, others, the environment, and the transcendent. It suggests an introspection on witnessing and discerning spirituality outside the Catholic and holy places. The quality and depth of the relationships that people have with the entire creation determine the state of their spiritual well-being. Active and constant participation in the Catholic tradition and spiritual activities do not automatically imply its nature, which is holistic. It is shown how worthy oneself is being treated. It participates in the conversations and services rendered to others and the community. It is finding peace in merely looking at the beauty of nature. It sustains the commitment to believe and worship the transcendent fervently. To put it simply, spiritual well-being maintains the balance among the relationships people are experiencing, and failure to manage any of these means becoming spiritually unhealthy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In general, Filipino adolescents have positive spiritual well-being. They live in harmony within their relationships in personal, communal, environmental, and transcendent domains. The differences between the four domains are not too far from each other, except for the transcendent domain, which is remarkably high. Looking at the SHALOM scores, the environmental domain of spiritual well-being is the least recognized area of spiritual well-being. In Sheldrake's language, they are mystical types but are far from being ascetical-monastic types. It was found

out that adolescents without behavioral problems have a deeper and more encompassing understanding of the ideal and lived spiritual well-being than adolescents with behavioral problems. The tables show that there is a relationship between school behavioral problems and spiritual well-being. The religious preference of the school does not affect spiritual well-being. Adolescents from Catholic and secular schools can both have healthy spiritual well-being with or without the school's intervention. Filipino adolescents have strong transcendental spiritual well-being than environmental, communal, and personal spiritual well-being.

Spiritual well-being is adolescents' reflection of their Catholic and spiritual beliefs manifested in their experiences with themselves, others, the environment, and the transcendent. It suggested an introspection on witnessing and discerning spirituality outside the Catholic and holy places. The quality and depth of the relationships the adolescents have with the entire creation determine the state of their spiritual well-being. Filipino adolescents must receive support from educational institutions and the Church to strengthen their spiritual well-being. For instance, schools should promote a God-centered academic environment and instill environmental and social concern in cooperation with the adolescents' respective churches. In working resourcefully and saving energy, the educational institutions teach by example that protecting the environment is a spiritual task that can be found in the books and must be observed.

On the other hand, social concern brings a sense of God in fulfilling selfless love and service. The Church, through its teachings such as *Laudato Si*, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* intensifies the initiative of the adolescents to be involved in valuing nature and community. Through its inclusivity and consistency, the venture to have healthy spiritual well-being becomes not only a particular task but a blessed contribution to humanity and the rest of the creation.

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