

Religious affiliation and the elective abortion attitudinal variations among young adults

Don Antonio Velez (ORCID 0000-0002-0089-5954)

The College of Arts and Sciences, Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan (Philippines)

Clydesdale Tejero Angcla (ORCID 0009-0001-9831-0845)

The College of Arts and Sciences, Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan (Philippines)

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine if there is a significant difference in attitudes toward elective abortion as a social taboo among young adults when considering their religious affiliation and their extent of religious adherence by drawing from the Social Learning Theory and the Moral Communities Hypothesis. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing the diverse attitudes toward elective abortion among individuals within the predominantly Catholic Philippines. A self-administered online survey questionnaire was utilized in this study. A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed ensuring the major religious groups are represented. To examine whether an attitudinal variation exists when considering religious affiliation and the extent of religious adherence among the sample population of sixty ($n = 60$), a chi-square (χ^2) test of independence was employed. The same was done considering the classificatory variables of sex and marital status. The results showed that attitudes toward elective abortion varied significantly among respondents when considering their religious affiliations ($p < .001$), and when dichotomized into Catholic and non-Catholic groups, proportions still varied significantly ($p < .001$), with most of the Catholic respondents exhibited a pro-choice attitude. Conversely, most of the non-Catholic respondents exhibited a pro-life attitude. Likewise, attitudes toward elective abortion varied significantly among respondents when considering their extent of religious adherence ($p < .001$). Understanding this diversity is crucial for evidence-based policy recommendations and interventions related to bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive rights, as well as for promoting transparency and well-informed discussion on taboos such as abortion.

KEYWORDS

Religious affiliation, Religious adherence, Norms, Elective abortion

Introduction

Social norms are the informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory actions in a given group or society (Cialdini, Heise, 2018). Norms matter for sociologists because they are relevant to two fundamental issues in the discipline: order and inequality. It can discourage harmful behaviors such as violence and encourage constructive behaviors such as those that improve health. However, it can also maintain inequalities, cause destructive behavior, and exacerbate social conflict (Horne, Mollborn, 2020). Religion, on the other hand, is the "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1915: 47). Religion often influences an individual's behavior and attitude toward societal norms. For instance, religious beliefs may dictate that certain behaviors

are morally wrong, such as undergoing abortion. As a result, individuals who adhere to this belief may choose to abstain from such behavior and consequently, will be more likely to have anti-abortion attitudes.

Abortion has become a dominant and perplexing social-ethical issue in our culture, deeply shaped by religious beliefs and patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes about women and sexuality – attitudes that have often been inspired or promoted by religious doctrine (Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 6). It has been legally restricted and socially and culturally unaccepted in many places worldwide. Restrictive policies and negative norms concerning abortion serve as structural barriers (Loll, Hall, 2019).

Sociodemographic Characteristics. A growing literature has developed to identify the predictors of abortion attitudes. Much of this work initially focused on demographic cleavages in abortion support (Osborne et al., 2022), and religion is the factor that most strongly determines attitudes toward abortion (Stoklosa et al., 2021). In

this study, religious affiliation (categorical: Roman Catholic, Islam, and Protestant Christianity) was treated as one of the key independent variables. Additional variables were included as controls because previous research has found they are associated with abortion attitudes (Milewski, 2018, as cited in Adamczyk, 2022). These include sex (categorical: male and female) and marital status (categorical: single, married, and domestic relationship/live-in), as women's and men's abortion support is influenced not only by their religiosity but also by whether their intimate partners identify as religious (Osborne et al., 2022).

The Extent of Religious Adherence. It is noteworthy that previous research has consistently found that regardless of religious affiliation, more religiously engaged individuals are more likely to disapprove of abortion (Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Wu, Ida, 2018, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 107). Hence, respondents' extent of religious adherence was treated as one of the key independent variables of the study—consisting of three dimensions: religious practice, spiritual connection, and decision-making, and was measured through a 6-item checklist. The checklist includes the following statements: 'I participate in most religious rituals or ceremonies as required,' 'I observe most religious holidays or festivals,' 'I observe most prescribed religious dietary restrictions where and when applicable,' 'Praying is an important part of my day,' 'I am conscious of the role of the higher being in my life,' and 'Most of my decision-making is influenced by my religious beliefs.' Each checked statement contributes to the overall score of respondents' extent of religious adherence. Scores above the average suggest a high extent of religious adherence, and vice versa.

Attitudes Toward Elective Abortion. The key outcome variable is the respondents' attitudes toward elective abortion consisting of the pro-choice and pro-life stances. These dichotomous terms are often presented as the only options when conceptualizing how people identify their attitudes toward abortion (Jozkowski et al., 2018). People who identify as pro-choice in abortion attitudes often stress the rights of women seeking an abortion. In contrast, those who identify as pro-life stress the rights of the fetus (Rye, Underhill, 2020). Respondents' attitudes toward elective abortion were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale consisted of 9 statements for each stance. The pro-choice stance included statements such as 'I support the idea that abortion should be legal and accessible for all women, regardless of the circumstances,' 'I believe that abortion can be a valid solution for unwanted pregnancies,' and 'I believe that the pregnant woman should have the ultimate authority to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy.' Meanwhile, the pro-life stance included statements such as 'I believe that the legalization of elective abortion devalues the sanctity of life and promotes a culture of death,' 'I hold the belief that abortion is morally wrong, regardless of the reason,' and 'I believe that abortion should be regarded as killing an unborn person.' The response options on the scale ranged from 1 (very unlikely to be me) to 5 (very likely to be me).

Abortion in the Predominantly Catholic Philippines. In the Philippines, the criminal provisions on abortion do not contain any exceptions allowing abortion, including to save the life of the pregnant woman or to protect her health (Center for Reproductive Rights, n.d.). The sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in the country are limited particularly for women in marginalized communities, and this may cause a higher prevalence of unsafe

abortions that contribute significantly to preventable maternal mortality, yet remains the sole option for most Filipino women especially those in low-income, rural areas (Perez et al., 2020). This disparity has existed for decades as a result of the country's foremost Catholic institution (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines), which has forged strong political ties with government elites through its prominent role in Philippine politics and thereby, has held precedence in swaying legislation against modern deviations deemed as perpetuating "a culture of D.E.A.T.H" (divorce, euthanasia, abortion, total contraception, homosexuality) (Goncena, 2020).

For many years, there has been a debate about whether the right of the unborn fetus should be protected or whether the right to abortion should be a fundamental right of every woman (Stokłosa et al., 2021). The polarized debates around reproductive health had placed poor women at the center of the policy battle contested by the Catholic Church, the state, and women and health advocates (Natividad, 2018). According to Perez and colleagues (2020), 1.1 million induced abortions occur every year in the Philippines. Notably, studies have shown that countries that limit access to abortion do not decrease the demand for abortion, the number of unintended pregnancies, or improve women's health, and are more likely to have fewer safe abortions with more complications (Jacobs et al., 2023; Poolkumlung et al., 2023).

International organizations have persistently emphasized the urgency of addressing marginalized women's need for SRH services in the Philippines to address population growth, poverty levels, and gender inequality against the hegemony of Church doctrine (Goncena, 2020). In particular, the CEDAW Committee has recommended that the Philippines prioritize protecting women's SRH rights over any discriminatory religious norms that negatively impact their access to related services, commodities, and information (Upreti & Jacob, 2019). The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child also made recommendations in September 2022 to enhance adolescent SRHR education and access to abortion care. The UN Human Rights Committee followed in November, making law and policy recommendations to decriminalize abortion in the country (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2022).

Religious Affiliation on Abortion Attitudes. Not surprisingly the issue of abortion has come under scrutiny within religious traditions – Christian theology and Islamic theology all have insights to offer (Francis et al., 2019). In particular, Christianity has historically played a deep and abiding role in shaping negative moral attitudes toward abortion and in supporting the imposition of its legal restrictions – affecting all people, religious or not (Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 7), and sanctity of life seems to be the most likely moral foundation to connect conservative beliefs to opposition towards abortion (Lockhart et al., 2022, as cited in Osborne et al., 2022). According to Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir (2018), an important reason why Catholics and Protestants are so opposed to abortion is that they are more likely to view religious scripture as condemning it. For instance, Psalm 139:13-16 can be understood as God intentionally forming human beings in the womb, providing evidence that life begins at conception. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that not all individuals who self-identify as belonging to a religious affiliation are opposed to abortion. Some may be "true believers" who invariably support a woman's right to choose (Osborne et al., 2022).

In contrast to the stereotype that Islam prohibits abortion, there is a variety of opinions regarding the permissibility of abortion among the different Islamic law schools (Saadeh et al., 2021). The Holy Qur'an distinctly mentions the evaluation of the fetus that ends with ensoulment. Ulama (Muslim scholars) agree that after the ensoulment process, a fetus cannot be aborted, but because of the uncertainty of the exact time of the ensoulment process in the development of a fetus, some scholars accept the permissibility of abortion until 120 days, while others permit it before 40 days, and others forbid it at any time (Hatun, Yilmaz, 2020). Although some Islamic law schools allow the practice of abortion, they require a necessary reason to implement it; without a reason such as those mentioned in the P.R.I.M. (Prenatal diagnosis, Rape, Incest, Mother's life) justification framework which consists of the only morally acceptable reasons to end a pregnancy (Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 6), abortion is considered to be haram (forbidden) (Hatun, Yilmaz, 2020). Notably, the morally acceptable reasons to end a pregnancy are juridically authorized by Muslim scholars but not biblically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (Saadeh et al., 2021).

The Extent of Religious Adherence on Abortion Attitudes. Several studies have found that regardless of religious affiliation, more religiously engaged individuals are more likely to disapprove of abortion for any reason (Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Morales, 2018; Wu, Ida, 2018, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 107), and this is because attending religious services and related functions may result in more formal exposure to messages that discourage abortion, while the greater frequency of prayer may indicate more devoutness and the internal reflection on religious proscriptions may lead to more opposition towards abortion (Adamczyk, 2022). For instance, church-goers who strongly believe that the sanctity of life should prevail over the right to choose are more likely to have their attitudes reinforced by other members in the same institutions (Wu, Ida, 2018, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 107).

Within the sociology of religion, a lot of attention has focused on the moral communities hypothesis, which argues that when religious individuals are around other religious adherents, their own beliefs are more likely to influence their abortion attitudes (Adamczyk, 2022). Researchers presume that religious people living in predominantly religious areas are more integrated into a moral community than those living in irreligious areas. This approach negates personal connections between co-religionists that facilitate the expression and dissemination of social norms (Rivera et al., 2018).

Aim of the Study. Traditional attitudes and religious beliefs are likely to represent specific challenges to sexual and reproductive health education (Selebal-Bereng, Patel, 2018), as well as reproductive healthcare access and services. Additional research focused on abortion is important to our understanding of how religion and norms influence women's reproductive health behaviors (Bird et al., 2018), and researching attitudes toward abortion can provide insights into the foundations of citizens' judgments, serving as a starting point for taking concrete steps toward adopting a new law that will, to some extent, respect the voices of the citizens (Perkovic et al., 2019).

To date, there are no available studies of attitudinal variation toward abortion in the Philippines, especially when considering the prevailing religious affiliations in the country. This study aims to determine if there is a significant difference in attitudes towards abortion among young

adults in Cagayan de Oro City when considering their religious affiliation and their extent of religious adherence. Particularly, the study focuses on elective abortion which refers to the decision to have an abortion for any reason, such as financial difficulties or the individual not wanting to carry the pregnancy to term (Clarke et al., 2023). The study's alternative hypothesis posits a significant difference in attitudes toward elective abortion among young adults considering their religious affiliation and extent of religious adherence.

Research methods

The study employed a quantitative approach to examine abortion attitudes (Adamczyk et al., 2020). The researcher collected numerical data from individuals of reproductive age (18-25 years old) regarding their sociodemographic characteristics, their extent of religious adherence, and attitudes toward elective abortion, and utilized statistical techniques for data analysis, interpretation, organization, and presentation of data (Sheard, 2018). A descriptive research design was used to observe and describe the characteristics of the sample without manipulating any of the variables (Siedlecki, 2020), which allowed for data collection systematically and objectively.

A self-administered online survey questionnaire distributed using Google Forms was utilized in this study. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used wherein the researcher took samples from a large group of an accessible population (Selebal-Bereng, Patel, 2018), ensuring the religious affiliations of Roman Catholic, Islam, and Protestant Christianity were represented in the study. The survey link was shared among potential respondents on Messenger. Study participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no incentives were provided to respondents (Bird et al., 2018). All respondents have provided informed consent for their participation in the online survey. The data were collected between June and July 2023.

The study focused on individuals of reproductive age between 18 and 25 years old from Cagayan de Oro City who self-identify as Roman Catholic, Muslim, or Protestant Christian. The religion category was based on the "Religious Affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)" (Mapa, 2023). The age was specified between 18 and 25 years old because individuals within this age range start to question their assumptions about their faith tradition and the authority structures of their faith. Greater maturity is gained by affirming some parts of their faith and rejecting others (Unitarian Universalist Association, n.d.). In the analysis, respondents who were non-residents, younger or older than the specified age range, and did not give consent to participate in the study were excluded from the final sample population of sixty (n = 60). Data were analyzed using Jamovi version 2.3.38. The study used descriptive statistics to describe the sample and summarize abortion attitudes. The student's t-test for independence was utilized to examine differences in abortion attitudes (Loll & Hall, 2019), considering the independent variable of religious affiliation. Additionally, the Student's t-test for differences was used to examine variation in the scores describing attitudes toward elective abortion.

Results

It is worth noting that Roman Catholicism is the strongest determinant of abortion attitudes compared to other religious affiliations (Stoklosa et al., 2021; Osborne et al., 2022), and Catholics are generally less supportive of abortion (Francis et al., 2019). Thus, the study also examined

attitudinal variation when religious affiliation is dichotomized into Catholics (n = 26) and non-Catholics (n = 34) to provide a more straightforward interpretation of the influence of religious groups on attitudes toward elective abortion.

Characteristics of the Sample. The sample consisted of an equal distribution of sex, with 30 males (50 percent) and 30 females (50 percent). All participants (n = 60) were single (100 percent) at the time of data gathering. The Ro-

man Catholic group comprised the largest chunk (43.3 percent) of all respondents when considering religious affiliations. Respondents adhering to Islam (30 percent) and Protestant Christianity (26.7 percent) comprised the remainder. The majority of the respondents (61.7 percent) exhibited high religious adherence and identified as pro-life (51.7 percent). Conversely, a smaller proportion of participants exhibited low religious adherence (38.3 percent) and identified as pro-choice (48.3 percent) across all religious groups considered in the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Population

Category	Counts	% of Total
Sex		
Male	30	50.0 %
Female	30	50.0 %
B. Marital Status		
Single	60	100.0 %
C. Religious Affiliation		
Roman Catholic	26	43.3 %
Islam	18	30.0 %
Protestant Christian	16	26.7 %
D. Extent of Religious Adherence		
Low Extent	23	38.3 %
High Extent	37	61.7 %
E. Attitude Toward Elective Abortion		
Pro-Life	31	51.7 %
Pro-Choice	29	48.3 %

Attitudinal Variations Based on Sociodemographic Characteristics and Religious Adherence. Given that all participants in the study identified as single (See Table 1), it was not feasible to test for variation considering marital status. Attitudes towards elective abortion did not vary considering sex ($\chi^2 = 0.0667$, $p = 0.796$), but varied significantly among respondents across the different religious affiliations ($\chi^2 = 19.4$, $p < .001$). Most of the respondents adhering to Islam and Protestant Christianity are seen to have a high pro-life attitude towards elective abortion (23.3 percent and 20 percent, respectively), while the remainder have a pro-choice attitude (6.7 percent for both religious groups). Conversely, many of the respondents adhering to Roman Catholicism have a high pro-choice attitude towards elective abortion (35 percent), while the remainder have a pro-life attitude (8.3 percent).

When religious affiliation is dichotomized into Catholic and non-Catholic groups, proportions still vary significantly ($\chi^2 = 19.3$, $p < .001$). Most of the respondents adhering to Roman Catholicism have a pro-choice attitude (35 percent), while the majority of respondents who adhere to other religious affiliations have a pro-life attitude (43.3 percent).

Furthermore, attitudes toward elective abortion varied significantly considering the extent of religious adherence ($\chi^2 = 13.4$, $p < .001$). The majority of the respondents who have a high extent of religious adherence are seen to have a pro-life attitude towards elective abortion (43.3 percent), while the remainder have a pro-choice attitude (18.3 percent). Meanwhile, the majority of the respondents who have a low extent of religious adherence are seen to have a pro-choice attitude (30 percent), while the remainder have a pro-life attitude (8.3 percent) (See Table 2).

Table 2. The Distribution of Study Population Across Attitudes Towards Abortion

Category	Pro-Choice	Pro-Life	Value	p-Value
A. Sex				
Male	25.0 %	25.0 %	0.0667	0.796
Female	23.3 %	26.7 %		
B. Religious Affiliation				
Roman Catholic	35.0 %	8.3 %	19.4	< .001
Islam	6.7 %	23.3 %		
Protestant Christian	6.7 %	20.0 %		
C. Extent of Religious Adherence				
Low Extent	30.0 %	8.3 %	13.4	< .001
High Extent	18.3 %	43.3 %		
D. Religious Affiliation				
Catholic	35.0 %	8.3 %	19.3	< .001
Non-Catholic	13.3 %	43.3 %		

Differences in the Mean Score of Respondents' Attitudes Toward Elective Abortion. The one sample t-test showed that attitudes toward elective abortion scores differed significantly ($MD = 3.52, p < .001$). This suggests that on average, respondents hold attitudes that are significantly above or below the mean attitude scale. The significant difference highlights the presence of a variation among respondents' attitudes toward elective abortion.

The independent sample t-test revealed that the respondents' pro-choice scores varied significantly when considering a dichotomized religious affiliation ($MD = 1.111, SD = 0.232, p < .001$). The mean difference in the score suggests that there is a substantial difference in attitudes between Catholic and non-Catholic respondents, while the

small standard error difference suggests that the mean difference is relatively reliable. The high p-value reinforces the idea that this difference is not due to random chance but is indeed associated with their religious affiliation.

Likewise, respondents' pro-life scores varied when considering a dichotomized religious affiliation ($MD = -0.697, SD = 0.208, p = .001$). Despite having a negative mean difference, it suggests that while the difference might not be as pronounced as in the pro-choice score, there is still a distinction between the pro-life attitudes of Catholics and non-Catholics, reinforcing the idea that religious affiliation continues to be a key factor in influencing attitudes toward elective abortion, even if the magnitude of the difference is relatively smaller (See Table 3).

Table 3: Attitudinal Scores Toward Elective Abortion

Category	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference	p-Value
A. Attitude Score	3.52	–	< .001
Pro-Choice Score	1.111	0.232	< .001
Pro-Life Score	-0.697	0.208	0.001

Discussions

All participants in the study were found to be single (See Table 1), rendering it impractical to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the coefficient variation of attitudes toward elective abortion when considering marital status. Future research with a more diverse sample in terms of marital status could provide further insights into how this variable influences attitudes toward elective abortion.

Interestingly, attitudes toward elective abortion did not vary significantly based on sex (See Table 2).

The finding suggests that both male and female respondents held relatively similar attitudes, implying that sex may not be a significant predictor of abortion attitudes. For example, Huang and colleagues (2014) found that there were no sex differences in support for elective abortion among a random sample of adults (Osborne *et al.*,

2022). Research on sex and abortion attitudes have reported inconsistent results. Several studies found women to be more likely to support abortion; however, studies also found women to be very polarized, resulting in no significant difference between the identified sex or just no association at all (*Fetterolf, Clancy, 2023; Morales, 2018; Osborne et al., 2022; Pew Research Center, 2022*).

One of the main measures that researchers have found to shape abortion attitudes is religious affiliation (*Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Stokłosa et al., 2021*). This study found that there is a significant difference in respondents' attitudes toward elective abortion when considering religious affiliation (See Table 2), and when dichotomized into Catholic and non-Catholic groups, the attitudinal variation persisted (See Table 2).

The Pro-Choice Attitude Among the Majority of the Catholic Respondents. The study's intriguing finding that the majority of the Catholic respondents exhibited a high pro-choice attitude towards elective abortion (35 percent) compared to non-Catholic respondents (13 percent) challenges the traditional assumption that Catholics are generally less supportive of abortion than other religious groups (*Francis et al., 2019*). Despite the Philippines being predominantly Catholic, with 78.8 percent of the population identifying as Roman Catholic (Mapa, 2023), many individuals may not necessarily echo the sentiments of the Catholic Church. Studies found that higher levels of complexity exist among Catholics (*Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018*), than among those who identified as belonging to another religious affiliation (*Jozkowski et al., 2018*), and complexity of attitudes may be the case that individuals who ascribe to a particular religious institution do not completely embody the doctrines of the institution (*Jozkowski et al., 2020*). For instance, while the Catholic Church has played a powerful role in influencing legislation that has limited access to SRH services intended for low-income women in the Philippines, for the most part, low-income women make reproductive decisions with minimal regard for Catholic ideals (*Goncena, 2020*). The impact of religion on people's views toward abortion is apparently strong but not absolute (*Wu, Ida, 2018, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 107*).

Additionally, among the Christian denominations, several decades of research indicate a shifting attitudinal gap between Roman Catholics and Protestant Christians. Protestants have now surpassed Catholics as the group most likely to oppose abortion (*Bartkowski et al., 2012, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 98; Holman et al, 2020; Osborne et al., 2022*). For instance, in the United States, among religious groups, opposition to the legality of abortion is largely confined to white evangelical Protestants and other smaller conservative Christian groups (*Jones et al., 2019, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 94*), and this may be because Protestant Christians have relatively high levels of religious engagement that bolster the group's disapproval of abortion (*Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018*).

The Pro-Life Attitude Among the Majority of the Non-Catholic Respondents. Conversely, the study found that the majority of the non-Catholic respondents exhibited a higher pro-life attitude (43.3 percent) compared to Catholics (8.3 percent). Sanctity of life seems to be the most likely moral foundation to connect conservative beliefs to opposition to abortion (*Lockhart et al., 2022, as cited in Osborne et al., 2022*). The Christian teaching appeals to the notion that life is a sacred gift from God (*Francis et al., 2019*), and therefore elective abortion becomes a deliber-

ate rejection of the gift of life. Similarly, in Islam, life is sacred as the Holy Qur'an distinctly mentions the evaluation of the fetus that ends with ensoulment (*Hatun, Yilmaz, 2020*). The preservation of life is also one of the basic necessities (Maqasid) in Islamic law (*ANIC, 2019*). However, contemporary Muslim scholars accept that abortion may be permitted in certain cases invoking the well-established legal maxim in Islamic law suggesting that sometimes 'necessities in life render the unlawful lawful', such as when the mother's health is in danger or when the pregnancy is caused by rape (*Francis et al., 2019; Hatun, Yilmaz, 2020*).

According to several studies, individuals would generally support traumatic abortion (e.g., when the woman's life is endangered, the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest) compared to elective abortion where the woman wants an abortion regardless of the reasons (*Clarke et al., 2023; Jozkowski et al., 2018; Osborne et al., 2022; Poolkumlung et al., 2023*). The study's finding that the majority of the respondents who adhere to Islam are more likely to be pro-life (23.3 percent) than those who adhere to Protestant Christianity (20 percent) aligns with Student data from South Africa that shows that Muslims support elective abortion less, but traumatic abortion more than Christians (*Selebalo-Bereng, Patel, 2019*).

Predominant Attitude Toward Elective Abortion Among the Respondents. The high pro-life attitude among the majority of the respondents (51.7 percent vs. 48.3 percent) may exist based on the general belief that most people disapprove of abortion. In Cagayan de Oro City, in particular, 80.6 percent of the population identified as Roman Catholic (*Aves, 2020*), and Catholics are generally less supportive of abortion than other religious groups (*Francis et al., 2019*). The dominant religion or overall level of religious salience in an area is seen as capable of shaping the attitudes of every individual, even those who are not personally religious (*Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018*). This is supported by a study that has found that in areas where a greater share of people say religion is at least somewhat important to them, much smaller shares think abortion should be legal (*Fetterolf, Clancy, 2023*). Nonetheless, even those who say that religion is minimally important may be affected to the same extent by what their neighbors think the Gods require (*Adamczyk, 2022*).

According to Social Learning Theory (SCT), people learn from one another through direct experience, observation, imitation, and modeling. In this learning process, people employ self-reinforcement, external reinforcement, and vicarious reinforcement to enhance their behaviors (*Bandura 1977, as cited in Song et al., 2018; Carvalho, Ossorio, 2021*). In particular, vicarious reinforcement is derived from observing others' behavior either being reinforced or punished (*Carvalho, Ossorio, 2021*).

Individuals can either learn to replicate the observed behavior and reap the benefits, or they can learn not to imitate it and avoid the disagreeable (*Manik et al., 2022*). Those who adhere to the general belief that abortion is morally wrong may receive social approval (reinforcement), while those who deviate from it may face social ostracization (punishment), and therefore, people may be more motivated to adhere than deviate to avoid punishment. For instance, individuals within communities where most religious groups explicitly denounce abortion may feel compelled to conform to this belief to avoid stigma (*Frohwith et al., 2018*), and this highlights the power of social influence, where individuals may align their attitudes

with the perceived expectations of their neighbors in a broader religious community.

The Extent of Religious Adherence on Attitudes Toward Elective Abortion. Furthermore, respondents' extent of religious adherence also played a significant role in influencing their attitudes toward elective abortion (See Table 2). The study found an attitudinal variation toward elective abortion when considering the extent of religious adherence. The finding reaffirms studies that have found that regardless of religious affiliation, more religiously engaged individuals are more likely to disapprove of abortion (Adamczyk, Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Wu, Ida, 2018, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 107). In this study, the majority of the respondents with a high extent of religious adherence were more likely to hold a pro-life attitude (43.3 percent vs. 18.3 percent), while those with a low extent of religious adherence were more likely to hold a pro-choice attitude (30 percent vs. 8.3 percent). This finding was consistent with the study's expectation that network integration would be vital to the reinforcement of religious schemas and consequently, would strengthen anti-abortion attitudes (Bartkowski et al., 2012, as cited in Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 104). Schemas are defined by Bartkowski and colleagues (2012) as "cognitive frameworks that at once enable social actors to interpret the worlds they inhabit and provide recipes for appropriate action" (Kamitsuka, Peters, 2022: 100).

Drawing upon Durkheim's observations about religion's ability to produce conformity, within the sociology of religion a lot of attention has focused on the moral communities hypothesis, which argues that when religious individuals are around other religious adherents, their own beliefs are more likely to influence their abortion attitudes (Adamczyk, 2022). Researchers presume that religious people living in predominantly religious areas are more integrated into a moral community than those living in irreligious areas. This approach negates personal connections between co-religionists that facilitate the expression and dissemination of social norms (Rivera et al., 2018). According to Stark (1966), religion is empowered to produce conformity to the norms only as it is sustained through interaction and is accepted by the majority as a valid basis for action. Even in ecological settings where religious indifference is rife, if religious individuals are part of a very isolated and integrated subgroup of believers, then religious effects on conformity should appear among them.

The findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of religion and norms that shape attitudes toward elective abortion. The findings challenge traditional assumptions that Catholics are generally less supportive of abortion than other religious denominations, which highlights the need for further studies to better understand the nuances in abortion attitudes within different religious groups and across diverse cultural contexts. The study underscores the need for more in-depth research on the relationship between religion, norms, and abortion attitudes in the Philippines, as attitudes toward abortion can be increasingly complex and may depend on contextual factors.

Understanding the underlying mechanisms and factors that influence these attitudes is crucial for evidence-based policy recommendations and interventions. The study suggests that interventions should not only be sensitive to the cultural and religious context of the country but should be tailored to the specific needs and experiences of the Filipino people, and this includes addressing the unique challenges and barriers they face concerning SRH rights and services. Moreover, interventions should not be limited to policymakers and religious leaders; a broader range of

stakeholders should be included such as community members, especially young adults, and sexual and reproductive health advocates to ensure that interventions are comprehensive and sustainable.

While the study focused on attitudinal variation toward elective abortion, it is noteworthy that attitudes may vary depending on the circumstances. With this being said, the study may have misrepresented respondents' abortion attitudes. Future studies should adopt a broader approach and consider all aspects of abortion. Moreover, the dichotomization of attitudes into pro-choice and pro-life stances may have oversimplified the complexity of abortion attitudes (Rye, Underhill, 2020). For instance, in a study by Perkovic and colleagues (2019), among Canadian Muslims from 17 countries, abortion attitudes were so different that it was impossible to get a single stand. Therefore, future studies should explore more nuanced measures that consider a spectrum of abortion attitudes.

While sex may not be a significant predictor of abortion attitudes, studies have found that those who identify with traditional gender roles, especially women who do not work outside the home, are more likely to oppose abortion (Jacobs et al., 2023; Morales, 2018). Thus, future research should focus on the underlying factors that influence abortion attitudes within each sex, not merely as binary female or male categories. Additionally, further exploration of attitudinal variation toward abortion should consider the extent of religious adherence of both male and female respondents to better understand the complexities of abortion attitudes when considering the variable of sex.

The study offers valuable insights into attitudinal variation toward elective abortion among single individuals, future research should aim for a broader spectrum of marital status to gain a more comprehensive understanding of abortion attitudes within different relationship contexts. It is noteworthy that women's and men's abortion attitudes are influenced not only by their religiosity but also by whether their intimate partners identify as religious (Osborne et al., 2022). Therefore, future research should examine the interplay between marital status (i.e., married and in domestic relationship/lived-in), and partner's extent of religious adherence to unravel the complexities surrounding abortion attitudes within varied relationship dynamics.

Conclusion

Despite limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of religion, norms, and attitudinal variation toward elective abortion among young adults in Cagayan de Oro City when considering their religious affiliation and their extent of religious adherence. The study found that religious affiliation and the extent of religious adherence were significant predictors of attitudinal variation toward elective abortion. Most of the young adults who were Catholics and had a low extent of religious adherence were more likely to have a pro-choice attitude, while the majority of those who were non-Catholics and had a high extent of religious adherence were more likely to have a pro-life attitude. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing the diverse attitudes toward elective abortion among individuals within the predominantly Catholic Philippines. Understanding this diversity is crucial for evidence-based policy recommendations and interventions related to bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive rights, as well as for promoting inclusivity and well-informed discussion on taboo topics such as abortion.

REFERENCES

Adamczyk, A. (2022). Religion as a Micro and Macro Property:

- Investigating the Multilevel Relationship between Religion and Abortion Attitudes across the Globe. *European Sociological Review*, 38(5), 816-831. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcac017>
- Adamczyk, A., Kim, C., & Dillon, L. (2020). Examining Public Opinion about Abortion: A Mixed-Methods Systematic Review of Research over the Last 15 Years. *Sociological Inquiry*, 90(4), 920-954. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12351>
- Adamczyk, A., & Valdimarsdóttir, M. (2018). Understanding Americans' abortion attitudes: The role of the local religious context. *Social Science Research*, 71, 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.12.005>
- Aves, J. C. (2020). Special Release - Men and Women Statistics - Misamis Oriental. Philippine Statistics Authority. Retrieved from <https://rsso10.psa.gov.ph/article/special-release-men-and-women-statistics-misamis-oriental>
- Bird, M., Begun, S., & McKay, K. (2018). Religiosity and Personal Beliefs Regarding Abortion: Results from a Survey of Social Work Students in the United States. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 5(2), 117-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23293691.2018.1463742>
- Carvalho, J. de, & Ossorio, D. F. (2021). A Comprehensive Analysis of Social Learning Theory Linked to Criminal and Deviant Behavior. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.30845/aijcr.v11n2p2>
- Cislaghi, B., & Heise, L. (2018). Theory and practice of social norms interventions: eight common pitfalls. *Globalization and Health*, 14(1), 83. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-018-0398-x>
- Clarke, E. V., Sibley, C. G., & Osborne, D. (2023). Examining Changes in Abortion Attitudes Following the Transition to Parenthood. *Sex Roles*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-023-01408-3>
- Durkheim, É., & Wellesley College Library. (1915). *The elementary forms of religious life, a study in religious sociology*. Wellesley College Library.
- Facts on Abortion in the Philippines: Criminalization and a General Ban on Abortion*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicaactions.net/files/documents/pub_fac_philippines_1%2010.pdf
- Fetterolf, J., & Clancy, L. (2023). Support for legal abortion is widespread in many countries, especially in Europe. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/support-for-legal-abortion-is-widespread-in-many-countries-especially-in-europe/>
- Francis, L. J., McKenna, U., & Sahin, A. (2019). Religion, Human Rights and Matters of Life and Death: Exploring Attitude Toward Abortion and Euthanasia Among Adolescents in England and Wales. *Religion and Human Rights*, 139-159. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98773-6_6
- Frohwith, L., Coleman, M., & Moore, A. M. (2018). Managing Religion and Morality Within the Abortion Experience: Qualitative Interviews With Women Obtaining Abortions in the U.S. *World Medical & Health Policy*, 10(4), 381-400. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.289>
- Goncena, A. (2020). Reproductive Health in the Philippines: Poverty, Religiosity, and Navigating Reproductive Choices. Chapman University Digital Commons. <https://doi.org/10.36837/chapman.000195>
- Handout 1: Stages of Faith Development. (n.d.). Unitarian Universalist Association. Retrieved from <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop2/handout1-stages-faith-development>
- Hatun, D., & Yılmaz, M. (2020). Religiosity and Public Attitudes toward Abortion among Turkish Adults: From an Islamic Perspective. *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 433-456. <https://doi.org/10.17335/sakaifd.784869>
- Holman, M., Podrazik, E., & Silber Mohamed, H. (2020). Choosing Choice: How Gender and Religiosity Shape Abortion Attitudes among Latinos. *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 5(2), 384-411. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2019.51>
- Horne, C., & Mollborn, S. (2020). Norms: An integrated framework. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46(1), 467-487. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054658>
- Jacobs, R. J., Kane, M. N., & Fritz, K. (2023). Predictors of Abortion Attitudes in Medical Students After the Reversal of Roe v. Wade. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.35421>
- Jozkowski, K. N., Crawford, B. L., & Hunt, M. E. (2018). Complexity in Attitudes Toward Abortion Access: Results from Two Studies. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(4), 464-482. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-018-0322-4>
- Jozkowski, K. N., Crawford, B. L., & Willis, M. (2020). Abortion Complexity Scores from 1972 to 2018: A Cross-Sectional Time-Series Analysis Using Data from the General Social Survey. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 18(1), 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00439-9>
- Kamitsuka, M. D., & Peters, R. T. (2022). *T&T Clark Reader in Abortion and Religion: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Loll, D., & Hall, K. S. (2018). Differences in abortion attitudes by policy context and between men and women in the World Values Survey. *Women & Health*, 59(5), 465-480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03630242.2018.1508539>
- Manik, S., Sembiring, M., Padang, I., & Manurung, L. (2022). Theory of bandura's social learning in the process of teaching at sma methodist berastagi kabupaten karo. *Jurnal Visi Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 3(2), 85-96. <https://doi.org/10.51622/pengabdian.v3i2.729>
- Mapa, D. (2023) Religious Affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing). *Philippine Statistics Authority*. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
- Morales, E. (2018). Predictors of Medical Students' Attitudes Towards Abortion and Their Changes Overtime. *Sociology & Criminal Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.25777/na71-3q97>
- Natividad, M. D. F. (2018). Catholicism and Everyday Morality: Filipino women's narratives on reproductive health. *Global Public Health*, 14(1), 37-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2018.1471145>
- Osborne, D., Huang, Y., Overall, N. C., Sutton, R. M., Petter-son, A., Douglas, K. M., Davies, P. G., & Sibley, C. G. (2022). Abortion Attitudes: An Overview of Demographic and Ideological Differences. *Political Psychology*, 43, 29-76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12803>
- Perez, J. R. M., Monteagudo, G. R. S., Nebrada, P. J. C., Arevalo, M. V. P. N., De la Paz, E. P., Ho, F. D. V., & Padilla, C. R. A. (2023). The spectre of unsafe abortions in the Philippines. *The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific*, 32, 100655. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2022.100655>
- Perković, R., Hrkać, A., Dujić, G., Ćurlin, M., & Krišto, B. (2019). The Influence of Religiosity and Personality Dimensions on the Attitudes about Abortion. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 31(Suppl 5), 805-813. PMID: [32160176](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32160176/)
- Poolkumlung, R., Rongkapich, R., Sinthuchai, N., Santibenachakul, S., Meevasana, V., & Jaisamrarn, U. (2023). Knowledge, attitude, and intended practice of abortion among medical students in Thailand after the amendment of the Thai abortion law. *Contraception*: X, 5, 100091. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conx.2023.100091>
- Public Opinion on Abortion. (2022). *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/>
- Rivera, C. J., Lauger, T. R., & Cretacci, M. A. (2018). Religiosity, Marijuana Use, and Binge Drinking: A Test of the Moral Community Hypothesis. *Sociology of Religion*, 79(3), 356-378. <https://doi.org/10.1093/soarel/srx071>

- Rye, B. J., & Underhill, A. (2020). Pro-choice and Pro-life Are Not Enough: An Investigation of Abortion Attitudes as a Function of Abortion Prototypes. *Sexuality & Culture*, 24(6), 1829-1851. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09723-7>
- Saadah, R., Alfaqih, M., Odat, A., & Allouh, M. Z. (2021). Attitudes of Medical and Health Sciences Students towards Abortion in Jordan. *BioMed Research International*, 2021, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/6624181>
- Selebalo-Bereng, L., & Patel, C. J. (2018). Reasons for Abortion: Religion, Religiosity, Spiritually and Attitudes of Male Secondary School Youth in South Africa. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58(6), 2298-2312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0547-1>
- Sheard, J. (2018). Quantitative data analysis. *Research Methods*, 429-452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-102220-7.00018-2>
- Siedlecki, S. L. (2020). Understanding Descriptive Research Designs and Methods. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 34(1), 8-12. *Research Gate*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/nur.0000000000000493>
- Song, J., Notice, M., & Robertson, J. (2018). Punishment in Social Learning Theory. *Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*, 1-3. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15877-8_51-1
- Stark, R. (1996). Religion as Context: Hellfire and Delinquency One More Time. *Sociology of Religion*, 57(2), 163. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711948>
- Stokłosa, M., Stokłosa, I., Porwolik, M., Bugajski, M., Więckiewicz, G., Męcik-Kronenberg, T., Piegza, M., Pudło, R., & Górczyca, P. (2021). Mercy Procedure or a Nightmare? Attitude towards Pregnancy Termination among Polish University Students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(1), 213. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010213>
- The Islamic position on abortion. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.anic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/THE-ISLAMIC-POSITION-ON-ABORTION.pdf>
- UN Treaty Bodies Call for the Philippines to Decriminalize Abortion and Protect Adolescents' SRHR. (2022). *Center for Reproductive Rights*. Retrieved from <https://reproductiverights.org/un-treaty-bodies-pilippines-abortion-adolescents-srhr/>
- Upreti, M., & Jacob, J. (2019). The Philippines' Criminal Restrictions on Abortion and the CEDAW Committee's Role in Strengthening Calls for Reform. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 33(1-2). Retrieved from <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/3775>

Релігійна приналежність і ставлення до планового абортів серед молоді

Дон Антоніо Велес (ORCID 0000-0002-0089-5954)

Коледж мистецтв і наук, Університет Ксав'є-Атенео де Кагаян (Філіппіни)

Клайдсдейл Техеро Ангкла (ORCID 0009-0001-9831-0845)

Коледж мистецтв і наук, Університет Ксав'є-Атенео де Кагаян (Філіппіни)

Це дослідження має на меті визначити, чи існує значна відмінність у ставленні до абортів як соціального табу серед молодих людей з огляду на їхню релігійну приналежність і ступінь прихильності до релігії. Методологічною основою дослідження є теорія соціального навчання та гіпотеза моральних спільнот. Отримані дані підкреслюють важливість визнання різноманітного ставлення до абортів за бажанням серед людей на переважно католицьких Філіппінах. У цьому дослідженні було використано онлайн-анкету для самостійного заповнення. Для забезпечення представності основних релігійних груп використовувався неімовірнісний метод зручної вибірки. Щоб перевірити, чи існує варіація ставлення при розгляді релігійної приналежності та ступеня релігійної прихильності серед вибірки з шістдесяті (n = 60), було використано тест хі-квадрат (χ^2) незалежності. Те саме було зроблено з урахуванням класифікаційних змінних статі та сімейного стану. Результати показали, що ставлення до планових абортів суттєво відрізнялося серед респондентів з огляду на їхню релігійну приналежність ($p < 0,001$), а якщо розділити на групи католиків і некатоликів, пропорції все ще суттєво відрізнялися ($p < 0,001$), причому більшість респондентів-католиків висловились на користь вибору. І навпаки, більшість респондентів, які не є католиками, висловили позицію захисту нового життя. Подібним чином, ставлення до абортів за бажанням суттєво відрізнялося серед респондентів, враховуючи ступінь їх релігійної прихильності ($p < 0,001$). Розуміння цього розмаїття має вирішальне значення для науково-обґрунтованих політичних рекомендацій і втручань, пов'язаних із тілесною автономією, сексуальними та репродуктивними правами, а також для сприяння прозорості та обґрунтованому обговоренню таких табу, як аборт.

Ключові слова: Релігійна приналежність, віросповідання, норми, плановий аборт.

Received (Надійшла до редакції): 22.02.2024,

Accepted (Прийнята до друку): 10.03.2024

Available online (Опубліковано онлайн) 30.06.2024