Students' Views on Morality: A Case of a Philippine Higher Educational Institution

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ABSTRACT

Man continuously attempt to define what is good and bad and right and wrong about their thoughts and actions because it will eventually define who he is. That is why the concept of morality still holds true at present despite of the technological advancement. Man still seeks the presence of a Supreme Deity to govern him and for him to adore. The descriptive survey design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative data, was used to determined the level of morality, the extent and how respondents view these concepts in their lives. The result reveals that the power of media, side by side with one's educational attainment can be influential to a person's morality. Despite the varying views among the respondents, it was found out that there is a significant relationship among the three variables specifically on factors such as family, social spectrum and the perceived moral effects of the chosen media.

Keywords: *Morality, Perspective, Society, Grounded theory approach, Descriptive-survey design.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of technological development and advancement, the Filipino society and the world as a whole is continuously changing. Every minute, new ideas, new mode of production, new way of life, new lifestyles and even new views sprout. The government for example, is constantly beset by ethical problems due to the scandalous acts orchestrated by no less than the elected leaders of the land. For instance, some politicians are accused and charged in court with plunder and graft for allegedly embezzling their Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) in collusion with a certain businesswoman. Most of these local government officials are also accused of accumulating wealth using their vested powers. This is characterized by malpractices such as bribery, nepotism and misappropriation of public resources for private use which are not in accord with established rules. This phenomena is commonly called graft and corruption which is considered as the deviation or impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle of government officials, either elected or selected, from the norm prevalent or what prevails at a given time (Salcedo, 2002).

In the name of respecting individual rights, the traditions, values, religious beliefs and morals are prone to being violated. Television shows today are sometimes conceived as mind conditioning tool to help people accept new ideas, such as being normal for a girl to be a solo parent, or be impregnated, or choose whether or not to continue the conception of the child in her womb or accept divorce. Other ideas are accepting as normal for a man to have a number of wives, impregnate their girlfriends, become a solo parent too and apply for legal separation, divorce or annulment when marriage goes sour. Another idea that is also being peddled by mass media, is that it is just normal and ordinary to be unfaithful to one's spouse,

especially when there is a new one who is much better than the first wife. A more controversial idea being introduced to the Filipino society today is the acceptance of the same sex couples. The old ideas contrary to these new ones are considered double standard and need to be changed.

People now tend to believe that as long as it is acceptable by society, it is good. What is happening to the Filipino society? Is there a breakdown of its social moral fiber?

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), has offered a plan for a Moral Recovery Program for the building of a people and of a nation sometimes in 1994 (Panopio, 2002). It is grounded on the rational understanding that the Filipino people are human beings who are both moral and religious. The individual Filipino plays an important role in shaping his society. As a moral being, he or she is endowed with the faculty of freely choosing and loving, therefore, they must go out to others and express genuine love. As a spiritual being, he or she is capable of higher concerns and of raising above the material. They must cultivate therefore, a higher sense of spirituality in consonance with his or her nature and respond to God in faith.

Why is it necessary to have a moral recovery program? Indeed, the breakdown of its social moral fiber has been in existence early on. Programs that were set by the government in improving the social moral awareness of its people simply did not materialize. How important then is the so called moral recovery? How important is morality that it needs to be reinforced and recovered? How morality affect man's performance in society?

Morality is that quality of human acts whereby it either measures up to what it should be as a step towards the objective of human action (Babor, 1999). It is playing an important role in regulating human behavior. When a person does something good he does something called moral, but when he does something evil it is not moral. It is immoral. However, one's action alone is not the sole basis of telling whether one is good or evil. One's goodness is subjective and dependent on the doer. This does not mean that there is a written rule or specific code of conduct established by society as it is defined by descriptive theory of morality but it is more on a universal code of conduct that all rational beings would put forward in governing the behaviour of all moral agents. These codes of conduct are not written by society but are based on the natural law as defined by the normative theory of morality (Abun, 2012). Morality is both experienced and practiced. Moral experience arises out of the practice of morality wherein man witnesses himself as the authentic cause of moral good and evil (Mondras, 2000). Man's action should not only be good, in so far as he is concerned, but it should conform proximately with his right reason, because if such is the case it conforms ultimately with the Divine Reason.

The problems confronting our present society can be attributed to the morality of individuals. This problem is not purely organizational but societal in nature (Jocano, 1997). The school as one of the important agency of socialization, plays a vital role. The educational institution form, transform and enhance the character of people. They engaged in the formation of persons towards becoming a good citizen and a professional worker of the state. They likewise look forward to producing the best product as it could possibly do. The morality therefore, of those who are tasked to train these individuals is of primary importance. Since the personal notion of values of the individuals dictates its effects on their personal life and actuation towards their personal action. Thus, there is a need to determine the personal

conception of the students with regard to morality and analyze if their ideas are in conformity with the well-founded notions as written and explained in the different schools of thought or religious denominations. This step would create a unified notion that would propel the university to a strong promotion of morality in the university. This would naturally be the right step in preventing negative societal traits from striking the mission of the university, thereby enhancing the moral and ethical traits of its employees in answer to the expectations of its stakeholders, its clients and the society at large. Seeing the urgency of shedding light on this problem, the researcher was prompted to conduct this study for the benefit of the university, the students and the stakeholders.

This study is anchored on the following theories: the Psychological Foundation of Education of Jean Piaget (McLeod, 2009 &Dasen, 1994), Social Influences in Cognitive Development of Vygotsky (McLeod, 2007 &Shaffer, 1996), the Social Learning theory of Bandura (McLeod, 2011) and the concept of Cognitive Dissonance as coined by Leon Festinger (Mcleod, 2008).

Piaget believed that learners discover their individual talents and abilities according to the stimuli that stir their curiosity and interest. The teacher guides the learners' own discovery and knowledge (McLeod, 2009). Every teacher should aim to bring about changes for the better in the light of the principle involved in the learning experiences of the individual student inside and outside the classroom. As guides, the moral turpitude of the teachers play a vital role. Learners' behavior changes as a result of observing other behaviors and consequences. Learners usually follow and imbibe the things they observe. Through observation, learners create ideas or concepts on how behavior is limited and performed to serve as guides of any action.

Vygotsky, like Piaget, believed that young children are curious and actively involved in their own learning and the discovery and development of new understandings/schema (McLeod, 2007). He believed in social transmission as an important factor for cognitive development of the child learner. Much important learning by the individual occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. The tutor may model behaviors and/or provide verbal instructions for the learner. Vygotsky referred to this as co-operative or collaborative dialogue (Shaffer, 1996). In it, the learner seeks to understand the actions or instruction provided by the tutor often, the parent or teacher, and then internalizes the information, using it to guide or regulate his own performance. This theory is utilized to know how the faculty members were able to come up with those ideas about morality. Were they influenced and shaped by the people and social environment around them? Was it the organizational culture that sanctioned them?

Bandura's theory comparably stated that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Learner observe the people around them behaving in various ways (McLeod, 2011). In this theory, learners observe people around them, who they call models. These models who surround them include parents within the family, television characters, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models provide examples of behaviors that are observed and can be imitated. Learners most of the time pay attention to these models and copy their behaviors. At the later time they may imitate those observed behaviors regardless of whether they are appropriate or not.

Some models existing around the leaders do sometimes respond to the behavior that is being imitated with either reinforcement or punishment. If the learner imitates a model's behavior and its consequence is rewarding, then most likely the same will continue to perform the said behavior repeatedly. In this manner the said behavior is said to have been reinforced. Reinforcement can either be positive or negative that will usually lead to a change in a person's behavior.

This study used this theory to get the idea on how the Leyte Normal University faculty promote morality because they exist as models to the students. The LNU faculty play a vital role in the formation of the students. They have a significant influence on the individual behavior of the students. The behavior of each LNU employee reinforces the student's idea about things. What the students will do or act sometimes depend on what they imbibed from what they have observed and believed.

In the process of learning and development, sometimes man is confronted with two or more conflicting cognitions such as ideas, values, beliefs or emotional reactions. These produce a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance. Such theory is called cognitive dissonance theory coined by Leon Festinger (McLeod, 2008). He believed that, to be able to cope up with such a feeling, man must focus on more supportive beliefs or behaviors that outweigh the dissonant one existing in him. Man must also reduce the importance of the conflicting beliefs and change the same so that it would be consistent with other beliefs and behaviors.

This theory somehow supports the study conducted by Bulatao (1966), on Split-level Christianity, wherein Filipinos tend to join religious activities yet commit cultural practices which are deemed as unethical in the context of public office. In a sense, only those who view the continuity between the religious and the secular realm manifest consistency of morality.

The theories mentioned above support the beliefs that man's nature is highly influenced by the kind of society or environment where he is in. Individuals choose the kind of life they wanted to follow with the idea that such choice would give them the goodness that they wanted to attain.

With closer observation, it may be deduced from this fact that individuals who were exposed to religious and moral education are at an advantage of understanding the philosophy, the theoretical concept, and the connection of religious education with what is moral. These place them at a higher and better chance of practicing what is known to them such as religious and moral, in society. In Latin the saying is "nemo datqoud non habit" which means, nobody gives what he/she does not have. However, what is moral can still be understood and put into practice by every learner striving to be the best in their chosen field of profession.

RELATED LITERATURE

Sociologists and psychologists of religion have been looking for ways on how to measure morality and moral commitment. Wearing and Brown (1972) pointed out that the question of dimensionality remain as a persistent question in the psychological analysis of religious beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Morality is viewed differently by different people. People perceive and understand morality by using different social and cultural contexts and mindset.

Even with the same religious affiliation and tradition, views and interpretations as to its meaning and relevance vary from one person to the other.

A study conducted by Pratt M.W., Golding G and Hunter W.J., (2009) revealed that as men increases in age and eventually matures, his perception changes and broadens. Moral judgement of man becomes more organized and consistent as he grows older. Consistency between moral stages produced and those preferred by man and the consistency of moral orientation usage increases markedly with age. This findings greatly support the hypothesis of increasing philosophical reflectiveness with maturity. As man grows older he becomes wiser.

Peer Scheepers, et al, (2002) of the University of Nijmegen the Netherlands, present a study to answer three research questions on moral attitudes. They found out as a result of their study that parental and individual religiosity, as well as individual educational attainment, have strong effects on moral attitudes. Effects of individual religiosity on moral attitudes appear to be stronger in more religious countries and weaker in more secularized countries. Effects of individual education are stronger in more religious heterogeneous countries and weaker in more religiously homogeneous countries. The effects of education on moral attitudes are weaker in short-standing democracies than in long-standing ones.

Another factor that also affects the moral point of view of individuals is mass media. It is communication, whether written, broadcast or spoken, that reaches a large audience. This includes, television, radio, advertising, movies, the internet, newspapers, magazines and so forth. It is a significant force in modern culture or the present era of globalization, wherein, communities and individuals are bombarded constantly with messages from multitude of sources. The connection between the mass media and morality is almost taken for granted. Plato for example, banished all storytellers from his imagined Republic except those whose tales were in accordance with the patterns he laid down, because listeners or viewers would, think, admire and imitate characters' bad behavior. Media exposure therefore, can influence our moral development either positively or negatively. All moral behaviors are learned, and much of what are learned about the environment and the world comes from media (Johnson, 2013). Focus on the Family, as cited by Laci Post (2013), said that extensive viewing may be to blame for aggressive or violent behavior, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality, obesity and substance abuse. Aside from all these concerns, the most dangerous thing that media can do is alter our ethical, religious and moral views. Consistently consuming entertainment with false ideas will inevitably distort one's view of the world.

Heiar, SVD, said that behavior is inherent among normal individuals. Interpretation is also common to all people. The actions of people affect others and leave consequences in their lives. What they fail to do also affects other people and leave consequences in their lives. The reason is that they fail to relate common truths to their common experience as persons.

METHODOLOGY

A three-part self-made questionnaire was utilized as an instrument in data gathering. The said questionnaire was patterned after several approaches available that were developed by credible contemporary scholars such as, Gerhard Emmanuel Lenski, who came up with his four-dimensional orientation model and Charles Y. Glock, who proposed the so called five core dimensions of religiosity.

The said questionnaire was validated and subsequently improved by conducting a dry run.

To fill-in unanswered items in the questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with grounded theory approach, an inductive way of analyzing data, to selected LNU students to determine their individual inputs with regard to morality.

This study used the descriptive survey design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative aspect of this study refers to the holistic view of the respondents regarding morality through statistical inquiry, while the qualitative aspect of this study pertains to the expository descriptive analysis of the concept of morality and religiosity. Library research, more particularly on the different principles and ideas about religiosity and morality was employed. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with grounded theory approach, an inductive way of analyzing data was employed.

In order to obtain a holistic data on of the respondents' views on morality, the study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To determine significant relationship or association between demographic and personal factors and morality, respectively, the contingency coefficient was used. This is a chi-squared based statistics measuring the degree of relationship or association of dependence of the classifications in a frequency table.

In this study, the respondents were the students, of LNU, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines. Their where 6,230 students enrolled, however, only 623were chosen to answered the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the data, it conveys that majority of the respondent positive views on morality. Although it was not absolute, the 4 respondents who are uncertain on the issue that the practice of homosexuality is always wrong does not greatly affect the general characteristics. The data also reveals that majority of the respondents put into practice what they know and believe, however, a good number of them were probably influenced by what the secular world provides which explains why they don't practice their faith firmly. The staid result is not alarming either since, they prefer the moderately agreeable statements. Students being young and exposed to new ideas and practices of the secular world are probably still not aware about the gravity and culpability of their actions. While there always will be exceptions, the general truth is that, those who believe in God are much more likely to have respect and concern for their fellows than those who do not (Agaton, 2010).

Majority of the respondents have a moderately high level which is 334 or 53.61% and 260 or 41.73% represent those with high category level and only 29 or 4.65% were uncertain.Abun, SVD, (2012) found out that the more religious the students are, the higher their morality is. His study further concluded that all religions help the formation of the morality of students. Religion enhances moral awareness of the students and religion is important for moral development in the Philippine context. Most respondents showed high sense of morality in their respective lives and only few have expressed uncertainty.

Table 1
Respondents Level of Morality

Level of Morality	Student Respondents	
	n	%
High	260	41.73
Moderately High	334	53.61
Moderate	0	0
Low	0	0
Undecided	29	4.65
TOTAL	**623**	**100.00**

With regard to the morality of the students, 53.61% have moderately high morality and 41.73% said they have a high morality level. This is to say that they still exercise a certain degree of morality. Hence, it appears that they are highly religious on one hand and moderately moral on the other. Wojtywa (1969) stressed that man must ceaselessly unravel his mysteries and strive for a new and more mature expression of his nature. The author sees this expression as an emphasis on the significance of the individual living in the community and on the person in the process of performing an action.

Data also reveal that factors such as sex, parents' education, parents' moral conviction, place of residence, frequent access to newspaper, classification of program, movies, reading materials and, perceived moral effects of the chosen media have a highly significant influence to the morality of the student respondents. While factors such as age, previous school enrolled in, and radio have significant relationship to the respondents.

Age mattered here because most respondents are young, and believed to be care-free about morality. Pratt (2009) said that moral judgement of man would become more organized and consistent as he grows older. Sadly, prior school attended also mattered since some of them must have attended a school where values formation was not catered to. Radio mattered likewise because some of the respondents reside in rural areas where radio is the primary and probably the only source of acquiring information.

The student respondents are young and mostly dependent on their parents that factors like parent's education, father's and mother's moral convictions, place of residence, newspaper, and classification of movies have high significant relationship. Parents therefore should not only teach their children good things but also show them that they do what they teach. It is ironical for parents to demand from their children to always do what is right when they themselves fail to deliver morally good deeds.

Table 29
Relationship between Morality and Demographic and Personal Factors of Students

Demographic and Personal Factors	Contingency Coefficient	Pearson chi-square value	df	Significance
Sex	.128	10.549	2	.005**
Age	.129	10.484	4	.033*
Civil Status	.085	4.525	4	.340
Religion	.069	3.023	2	.221
Parents' Education	.214	30.026	8	.000**
Parents' Occupation	.056	1.945	4	.746
Family's Social Spectrum	.128	10.422	6	.108
Fathers' Moral Conviction	.259	44.829	8	.000**
Mothers' Moral Conviction	.316	69.013	8	.000**
Previous School Enrolled In	.101	6.441	2	.040*
Place of Residence	.227	33.877	6	.000**
Frequency of Access to				
Newspaper	.223	32.548	8	.000**
Radio	.168	18.035	8	.021*
TV	.069	2.892	8	.941
Internet	.093	5.440	8	.710
Classification of Program, Movies, Reading Material Resorted to	.282	53.434	10	.000**
Perceived Moral Effect of the chosen media	.186	22.192	8	.005**

*α<.05 Significant   ** α< .01 Highly Significant

The above results are good revelation of the quality of LNU students. Siddhartha Gautama said, that the ship is stable and in good condition if its crew work harmoniously with each other (Boeree, 1999). With a university giving high regard for morality, chances are, students will tend to be equally moral.

CONCLUSION

1.   Leyte Normal University being a center of excellence caters to the educational need of those who belong   to the middle class, lower middle class and the working class strata of society.

2.   Majority of the respondents believe that God exists. They are aware of His divine teachings and laws.

3.   Having accepted and practiced the doctrines of the church to which they belong, majority of the respondents imbibe distinctive characters that radiate the goodness that they possess. Majority of the respondents cherish their strong belief in God that they adhere to His laws and teachings.

4.   Majority of the respondents put into practice what they believe, as evident on the result. In everything they do, the presence of God is always felt.

5.   The students of the university are exposed to different ideas and practices that sometimes it is difficult for them to discern which of these ideas are acceptable and which are contrary to their faith. That is why, their individual views about morality vary.

7.   Factors such as sex, parents' education, both parents' moral conviction, place of residence, frequent access to newspaper, classification of program, movies, reading materials, and perceived moral effects of the chosen media have highly contributed to the morality of student respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions presented, the following are thus recommended:

1.   The university may consider enhancing its curriculum program. Values Education can be integrated as a subject on certain disciplines.

2.   The university must continually enhance the morality of both the faculty and staff of the university since they have direct contact with the students.

3.   The faculty must integrate values in every subject taught, as it is imperative in promoting desirable qualities of learners alongside their technological and conceptual life skills.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Page : 103

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