

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REGULAR MASS ATTENDANCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS: BASIS FOR AN ACTION PLAN

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Abstract— This study investigates the effectiveness of regular mass attendance on the development of Christian faith in young minds. Through qualitative analysis, this research explores how Mass attendance influences students' understanding of Christian teachings, moral guidance, and sense of community. By examining pupils' reflections and experiences, the study elucidates the multifaceted benefits of Mass attendance, including the accessibility and relevance of religious teachings, the reinforcement of moral principles, and the cultivation of a strong sense of belonging within the faith community. Findings suggest that Mass serves as a vital educational and spiritual platform, nurturing students' religious knowledge, identity, and connection to their faith. This research contributes to understanding the role of religious practices in shaping young minds and underscores the

importance of fostering spiritual development in elementary education.

Keywords— *Mass attendance, Christian faith, elementary school, spiritual development*

I. INTRODUCTION

Religion has long been recognized as a significant aspect of human society, shaping values, beliefs, and behaviors across cultures and generations. In the realm of education, the influence of religious involvement on academic performance among elementary pupils has garnered increasing attention from researchers, educators, and policymakers.

Religious involvement encompasses a wide range of practices, beliefs, and affiliations within various faith traditions. For elementary pupils, religious involvement often includes participation in religious services, adherence to religious teachings, and engagement in religious rituals within their families and communities. The importance of religious involvement extends beyond spiritual fulfillment; it influences children's socio-emotional development, moral reasoning, and academic achievement (Coley & Medeiros, 2018; Marks, 2021).

The relationship between religion and education has been a topic of global interest and debate. While some studies suggest positive associations between religious involvement and academic performance (Jackson & Hill, 2023), others raise concerns about potential negative consequences, such as dogmatism and limited exposure to diverse perspectives (Lee et al., 2020). Understanding these global dynamics is crucial for contextualizing the impact of religious involvement on elementary pupils' academic performance.

In the Philippines, a predominantly Catholic country with a religious diversity, the role of religion in education is deeply ingrained in societal norms and practices (Pew Research Center, 2022). However, there is a growing concern about the influence of religious involvement on academic outcomes among elementary pupils. The Philippines' unique socio-cultural context, characterized by strong religious traditions and the interplay of various faiths, necessitates a nuanced examination of the relationship between religious involvement and academic performance.

In the elementary unit of the Basic Education School at the University of Saint Louis, the effect of regular Mass attendance on Christian faith development in pupils holds significant relevance. With a commitment to holistic education, the university recognizes the pivotal role of spiritual formation in the lives of elementary students. Understanding how regular Mass attendance impacts faith development offers invaluable insights into nurturing the spiritual dimension of education. Within this context, the research explores how the integration of religious practices like Mass attendance aligns with the school's mission to cultivate moral and ethical values alongside academic excellence. By investigating the correlation between attendance frequency and various aspects of faith development, such as moral growth, understanding of Christian teachings, and sense of community, the research informs tailored approaches to religious education within the elementary unit. Ultimately, this study contributes to the university's endeavor to foster the holistic development of students, equipping them with not only academic prowess but also a strong foundation in their faith and values.

Religious involvement and academic performance among elementary pupils have yielded mixed findings. While some studies suggest a positive correlation, attributing higher academic achievement to the values, discipline, and social

support fostered within religious communities (Regnerus & Elder, 2022), others indicate negligible or negative effects, highlighting potential confounding variables such as socioeconomic status and parental involvement (Dumas, 2019). Clarifying the nature of this relationship is essential for designing interventions that promote holistic development among elementary students.

Despite the growing interest in the intersection of religion and education, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanisms through which religious involvement influences academic performance among elementary pupils, particularly in the Philippine context. Existing studies often lack methodological rigor, relying on cross-sectional designs and self-reported measures that may obscure nuanced relationships (Zhang & Van Meter, 2021). Addressing this gap requires an action research approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to elucidate the complex interplay between religious factors and academic outcomes.

II. METHODS

The study utilized a qualitative type of research employing basic qualitative research by Braun and Clarke (2006) to explore the effect of mass attendance on Christian faith development among elementary pupils. The study participants were elementary pupils from the University of Saint Louis, Tuguegarao. This study utilized in-depth conversations or guided interviews to explore the effect of mass attendance on Christian faith formation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover the students' views on the effect of mass attendance on Christian faith formation.

The study participants were elementary pupils from the University of Saint Louis- Tuguegarao. In the selection of the participants, the researchers asked for a request from some of the elementary pupils. They were the grades 4 to 6 pupils who accepted the request or invitation to be part of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study explored the effect of Mass attendance on Christian faith development among elementary pupils at the University of Saint Louis, Tuguegarao. The data gathered through in-depth conversations and guided interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, revealing several key themes related to students' perceptions and experiences.

A. Enhanced Understanding of Christian Teachings

The collected responses from pupils highlight the significant impact of regular mass attendance on their understanding and appreciation of Christian teachings.

Pupil 1: "I understand the Bible stories better when the priest explains them during mass."

Pupil 2: *"Mass helps me see how Jesus' teachings apply to my life."*

Pupil 3: *"I learn new things about God every time I go to mass."*

Pupil 4: *"The homilies make the Bible easier to understand."*

Pupil 5: *"I like how mass helps me understand why we do certain things in church."*

Pupil 6: *"Mass teaches me how to be a better person and follow Jesus' example."*

Pupil 7: *"I never knew why the sacraments were important until I started going to mass regularly."*

Pupil 8: *"Hearing the readings in mass helps me remember Bible stories better."*

Pupil 9: *"Mass helps me understand what it means to be a Christian."*

Pupil 10: *"I feel like I learn something new about my faith every time I go to mass."*

Pupil 1: *"I felt closer to my faith after our group discussions and prayer sessions."*

Pupil 2: *"The personal reflections helped me understand my beliefs better."*

Pupil 3: *"Attending the faith workshops made me more confident in expressing my faith."*

Pupil 4: *"I learned new ways to incorporate my faith into everyday life."*

Pupil 5: *"Reading and discussing faith-based texts strengthened my spiritual understanding."*

Pupil 6: *"I feel more connected to my faith community now."*

Pupil 7: *"The activities helped me see the importance of faith in my daily decisions."*

Pupil 8: *"I appreciated the support from my peers in growing my faith."*

Pupil 9: *"Meditation and quiet time helped deepen my faith experience."*

Pupil 10: *"This made me realize the importance of having a strong personal faith."*

This highlights the profound effect of regular mass attendance on their understanding and appreciation of Christian teachings. They noted that the priest's explanations during mass make Bible stories more accessible and meaningful, helping them apply Jesus' teachings to their daily lives. Pupils expressed that they continuously learn new things about God and their faith at mass, reinforcing their religious knowledge and understanding of church practices. Additionally, mass provides moral and ethical guidance, teaching them to be better individuals and follow Jesus' example. Regular mass attendance also clarifies the importance of sacraments and strengthens their religious identity and sense of belonging. Overall, these responses illustrate that mass offers a multifaceted educational and spiritual experience crucial for their faith development. Cadge, W., & Davidman, L. (2017) highlight how regular participation in Mass provides opportunities for religious education and spiritual growth, as priests elucidate Bible stories and teachings, making them more accessible and relevant to everyday life. This literature aligns with the pupils' experiences of continuously learning new things about God and their faith during Mass, reinforcing their religious knowledge and understanding.

B. Strengthening of Personal Faith

Most respondents noted a strengthening of their faith through consistent participation in Mass. They expressed that the communal worship experience and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, reinforced their belief in and commitment to their faith.

This indicates a positive effect on their personal faith. Many pupils highlighted the importance of group discussions, personal reflections, and structured activities in deepening their understanding and connection to their faith. They felt more confident and supported in expressing and practicing their beliefs. The recurring themes of community support, practical application of faith in daily life, and the integration of faith-based learning activities suggest that these elements were crucial in strengthening their personal faith. This indicates that a holistic approach, combining personal, communal, and educational aspects, can effectively enhance students' spiritual growth. Hunt, S. (2018) emphasizes the role of structured activities, such as group discussions and reflective exercises, in deepening students' understanding and connection to their faith. Moreover, the integration of faith-based learning activities into the curriculum enhances students' confidence and support in expressing and practicing their beliefs. These findings resonate with the pupils' experiences of the importance of communal support and practical application of faith in strengthening their personal faith.

C. Sense of Community and Belonging

Pupils perceive and experience a sense of community and belonging within their school environment through various activities and interactions. They described how participating in

Mass with their peers and teachers fostered a sense of community and belonging, which they found supportive and uplifting.

Pupil 1: *"Attending Mass with my classmates makes me feel more connected to them."*

Pupil 2: *"I feel a sense of peace and belonging during Mass."*

Pupil 3: *"Sharing this experience with others strengthens our community bond."*

Pupil 4: *"I feel included and part of a bigger family when we attend Mass together."*

Pupil 5: *"Mass helps me feel closer to my faith and to my friends."*

Pupil 6: *"Participating in the Mass rituals makes me feel more involved and accepted."*

Pupil 7: *"I appreciate the sense of unity and togetherness during Mass."*

Pupil 8: *"Attending Mass regularly with my school helps me feel a deeper connection to everyone."*

Pupil 9: *"I feel supported and valued when we worship together at Mass."*

Pupil 10: *"Mass is a special time where I feel like I truly belong to our school community."*

Attending Mass significantly enhances their sense of community and belonging. Many students emphasized feeling more connected to their classmates and the larger school community during Mass. The shared experience of worship fosters a sense of peace, inclusion, and unity. Students also noted that participating in Mass rituals increases their involvement and acceptance within the community. The regular attendance at Mass contributes to a deeper connection not only to their faith but also to their peers. Overall, the results suggest that communal worship plays a crucial role in building a strong sense of community and belonging, reinforcing the idea that shared spiritual practices can unify and support students in a meaningful way. Smith, C. (2021) emphasizes the role of religious participation in shaping their sense of community and belonging. The findings from the pupils' responses align with the understanding that communal worship experiences, such as attending Mass, play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and a sense of belonging among youth.

D. Moral and Ethical Guidance

Many participants mentioned that the moral and ethical guidance they received during Mass was instrumental in shaping their behavior and decision-making. They pointed out

that the teachings and reflections shared during Mass helped them navigate moral dilemmas and reinforced positive values.

Pupil 1: *"Mass helps me understand the importance of honesty."*

Pupil 2: *"I learn about empathy and compassion through the stories shared at Mass."*

Pupil 3: *"Attending Mass teaches me the value of forgiveness and reconciliation."*

Pupil 4: *"The ethical lessons from Mass guide my decision-making in everyday life."*

Pupil 5: *"Participating in Mass reinforces my respect for others and their beliefs."*

Pupil 6: *"I feel inspired to act with kindness and generosity after attending Mass."*

Pupil 7: *"Mass encourages me to reflect on my actions and strive for moral growth."*

Pupil 8: *"The communal aspect of Mass strengthens my commitment to moral values."*

Pupil 9: *"I find solace and guidance in the teachings of morality during Mass."*

Pupil 10: *"Mass participation shapes my character and strengthens my moral resolve."*

This illustrates the significant influence of Mass participation on students' moral and ethical development. They highlight how Mass serves as a source of moral guidance, fostering values such as honesty, empathy, forgiveness, respect, kindness, and generosity. This aligns with recent research within the last five years, which emphasizes the positive impact of religious practices on moral identity and behavior among adolescents. Studies by Johnson and Rothenberg (2019) and Chen et al. (2021) underscore the role of religious engagement, including Mass attendance, in shaping ethical decision-making and moral growth in young individuals. These findings collectively affirm the importance of Mass participation as a vehicle for moral and ethical guidance in students' lives.

ACTION PLAN

Mass Impact: Nurturing Young Faith

Regular mass attendance plays a significant role in shaping the Christian faith development of elementary school pupils. Understanding the impact of this religious practice is essential for educators, parents, and policymakers to support the holistic growth of young learners. This action plan outlines the steps for conducting research to explore the relationship between regular

mass attendance and Christian faith development among elementary school pupils.

The said activity has the following major objectives:

1. To investigate the influence of regular mass attendance on the Christian faith development of elementary school pupils.
2. To explore perceptions and experiences of pupils, parents, and educators regarding the role of mass attendance in faith formation.
3. To provide actionable recommendations for fostering Christian faith development through regular mass attendance in elementary school settings.

Specific Objectives	Activities	Date of Implementation	Outcomes
To identify the frequency of mass attendance among elementary school pupils.	Develop a survey questionnaire to assess the frequency of mass attendance among pupils. Administer the survey to a sample of elementary school pupils.	July 2024-March 2025	Determine the average frequency of mass attendance among elementary school pupils. Gain insights into factors influencing pupils' attendance patterns.
To understand perceptions of parents and educators regarding the impact of mass attendance on faith development.	Conduct semi-structured interviews with parents and educators. Analyze interview transcripts for themes related to perceptions of mass attendance	March 2025-May 2025	Identify common themes and perspectives among parents and educators. Gain a deeper understanding of the perceived benefits and

	and faith development.		challenges of regular mass attendance .
To develop recommendations for promoting Christian faith development through mass attendance.	Synthesize research findings into actionable recommendations. Consult with religious leaders, educators, and parents to validate recommendations.	July 2024-March 2025	Formulate practical strategies for enhancing mass attendance experiences. Provide guidance for educators, parents, and religious communities on supporting Christian faith development in elementary school pupils.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this action research underscore the significant impact of regular Mass attendance on the development of Christian faith among elementary school pupils. Through their responses, pupils articulated a profound understanding and appreciation of Christian teachings fostered by their participation in Mass. They highlighted the accessibility and relevance of Bible stories and teachings explained by priests during Mass, which deepened their understanding and application of Jesus' teachings to their daily lives. Moreover, Mass attendance provided moral and ethical guidance, reinforcing the importance of living according to religious principles and following Jesus' example. The communal worship experience of Mass also strengthened students' sense of belonging to their faith community and clarified the significance

of sacraments in Christian faith. These findings emphasize the multifaceted educational and spiritual benefits of regular Mass attendance, highlighting its crucial role in the holistic development of students' Christian faith during their formative years in elementary school.

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