

## Article

# Centrality of Religiosity among Select LGBTQs in the Philippines

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the salience of religion and the centrality of religiosity among select LGBTQs. Much consideration has been given to the identity categories of sex, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for the overall CRSi-20 score and its five subscales. The results show that the overall CRSi-20 score is 3.68 (SD = 0.89), which indicates that the select LGBTQs are “religious”. As for the core dimensions of religiosity, the ideology subscale received the highest mean score (M = 4.16, SD = 0.88) while the public practice subscale received the lowest mean score (M = 3.21, SD = 1.15). The overall reliability of the survey is computed at 0.96, while the rest of the subscales have alpha values ranging from 0.81 to 0.95. Study outcomes confirm the general religiosity of participants, particularly among older respondents. Of the five subscales, ideology and private practice emerge as dominant categories. In terms of sex distribution, men tend to self-describe as “highly religious” in relation to women, who identify largely as “religious”.

**Keywords:** religious education; inter-religious; human sexuality; gender; homosexuality; queer; youth; centrality of religiosity scale



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## 1. Introduction

In October 2020, news proliferated online concerning a statement by Pope Francis expressing clear support for civil unions. It was controversial as much for its content as its context—seemingly an advice given to a gay, partnered Roman Catholic who longed to raise his children in the church. Presumably, Francis affirmed the right of each person to family and its accompanying civil protection—“What we have to make is a law of civil coexistence, for they [LGBTQs] have the right to be legally covered” (Elie 2020). While the Pope had been known to utter similarly off-handed opinions in the past, the comment accentuated—yet again—the unwieldy interaction of sexuality and Christian teaching, theological application, to lived reality.

This study was conceived initially to address a ministerial concern. The researchers observed the lack of structural resources that attended to the lived realities of persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ). While literature on religious education and sexuality exists, few account for the experiences of Filipino LGBTQs, specifically their understandings of “religion”, “God”, “faith”, and questions of meaning. How can empirical data refine the assumptions of faith that churches uphold within the diverse landscape of human sexualities? To what extent do ministers and religious workers affirm and/or discount the religious experiences of Filipino LGBTQs when these fall outside the purview of institutional language? How do religious beliefs influence the subjective experience and behavior of Filipino LGBTQs?

To provide empirical grounding to these questions, the study utilized the interreligious form of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-20) (Huber and Huber 2012) to evaluate the extent to which religiosity occupies a central place in the life of select Filipino LGBTQs. By examining the boundaries at which articulations of “religion”, “faith”, “God”, and “meaning” interact and overlap, as well as mapping out the terrain of religious life among Filipino LGBTQs, the study hopes to offer quantitative data to conversations around human sexuality and lived faith in the Philippines.

## 2. The Need to Measure the Religiosity of Filipino LGBTQs

### *Religious Demography of the Philippines*

The Philippines is considered the numerically largest Christian nation in Asia (Bautista 2014) and the third-highest Catholic population in the world after Brazil and Mexico (World Population Review 2020). Christian ideology was introduced to the country in the year 1521 at the onset of the Spanish conquest and became deeply embedded into Filipino culture (del Castillo and Aliño 2020; del Castillo 2015; Goh 2005). The dominance of the Catholic religion in the Philippines, however, does not equate to a lack of religious diversity (del Castillo et al. 2020). Various religious groups and denominations are actively present in the religious sphere, namely, “Christian Churches, Evangelical, Church of Christ, and Philippine Independent Church. Additionally, roughly five percent of the population is Muslim”, (*Philippines: Society and Culture* 2011, p. 4). Chinese Buddhism, although a minority religion, also thrives in the country (Dy 2012). There is also a temple in Manila (capital of the Philippines) that serves as a religious center for Hindus (Hutter 2012). Additionally, “there are now religious denominations established and/or headed by members of the LGBT community in the country which include the Metropolitan Community Church, The Order of St. Aelred; and Ekklesia Tou Theou (Church of God)”, (USAID, UNDP 2014, p. 28).

Given that the majority of the population adheres to an institutional religion (USAID, UNDP 2014) with a mean age of 23 years old (World Health Organization 2015), the Philippines is an important locus of inquiry on the relationship between religion, age, gender, and sexuality. While there are quantitative studies on the religious profile and religiosity of select Filipinos (del Castillo et al. 2020; Social Weather Stations 2019; Baring et al. 2018; Agoncillo 2015; CBCP-ECY and CEAP 2014), there is a lack of studies that translates the lived reality of Filipino LGBTQs into material data that quantifies the correlation of their life with religiosity. A study of religion using the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (Huber and Huber 2012) that measures the psychological constructs behind the various religious ideologies, rituals, experiences and other expressions of faith life among select Filipino LGBTQs can significantly contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the salience of religion and the centrality of religiosity.

This study explores the centrality of religious meanings in the personality of select Filipino LGBTQs. This paper specifically answers the following questions: (1) Are select Filipino LGBTQs highly religious, religious, or non-religious? (2) What core dimension of religiosity is dominant among select Filipino LGBTQs? (3) How does religion influence the subjective experience and behavior of select Filipino LGBTQs? (4) How does the centrality of religiosity of select Filipino LGBTQs help illumine the current understanding of religious beliefs and practices?

## 3. Review of Related Literature

### *3.1. Global Trends in Homosexuality and Religious Belief*

In its latest survey concerning “The Global Divide on Homosexuality”, the Pew Research Center (PRC) noted trends in the increased acceptance of homosexuality (sic) over the past two decades (Poushter and Kent 2020). While more affluent societies showed higher acceptance levels—especially in Western European and North American contexts—other regions, like the Asia-Pacific, indicated split positions, informed by geographical, regional, and economic considerations. In addition, “religion and its importance in people’s

lives shape opinions in many countries. For example, those who are affiliated with a religious group tend to be less accepting of homosexuality than those who are unaffiliated (a group sometimes referred to as religious “nones”)” (Poushter and Kent 2020, p. 6).

The PRC began its inquiry in 2002, followed by studies in 2007, 2011, 2013, and 2019. Of these, the Philippines participated in 2002, 2013, and 2019. The country has consistently placed among more accepting societies, especially notable given its profile as a religious country. As a whole, acceptance levels moved from 64%, in 2002, to 73% in both 2013 and 2019. While the PRC asserted lower acceptance levels to homosexuality among more religious societies, it noted an exception among Catholic Christians, especially as they “are more likely to accept homosexuality than Protestants and evangelicals”, (Poushter and Kent 2020, p. 14).

To the extent that attitudes towards homosexuality reflect social norms, we consider religion as a key container for the articulation of cultural norms. In this, it is helpful to reference the 2019 PRC study on “The Global God Divide”. The survey traced the interaction of morality, prayer practices, and belief in God. As expected, countries categorized as “emerging economies” exhibited stronger signifiers of religiosity (Tamir et al. 2020). While most western European nations indicated lower rates, on the whole, most of the 34 countries studied affirmed the importance of religion, with Indonesia (98%), the Philippines (92%), India (77%), and Turkey (71%) tending to conflate morality with belief in God. Of the emerging economies, the Philippines—again, along with Indonesia, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Brazil—hovered at roughly 98%, affirming the centrality of belief in God in shaping individual choices.

This correlation between religious values and social attitudes to homosexuality has long been used to explain the persistence of bias towards those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. This is presupposed as much among emerging economies—like the Philippines—as among those beyond Western European/North American contexts. In order to lend a more robust evaluation of context, the United Nations Development Programme—partnering with local affiliates—undertook a qualitative study of LGBTQ realities in Asia, resulting in the publication of several reports in 2014, such as “Being LGBT in Asia: The Philippines Country Report”, (USAID, UNDP 2014). This was followed by a legal and policy review addressing issues of gender recognition in 2018, this time in partnership with the Commission of Human Rights of the Republic of the Philippines (USAID, UNDP 2014).

More than offering statistics on the lived realities of LGBTQ individuals, these studies contextualized data within their cultural matrix, amplifying the gender universe specific to the Philippines. The 2015 Report, in particular, took account of indigenous gender expressions, tracing the roots of contemporary queer-ness to the precolonial babaylan, “religious functionaries” defined as much by social status as their feminine comportment (USAID, UNDP 2014). Their gradual incarnation into contemporary queer figures like the baylan, bayoguin, bakla, etc., attests to the enduring interaction of sexual identity and gender with religious function. It is for this reason that the 2014 study devoted an entire section to the place of religion in simultaneously promoting and hindering LGBTQ protections in the Philippine legal system (USAID, UNDP 2014).

As a predominantly Christian country—of which around 80% is nominally Roman Catholic (Philippines: Society and Culture 2011, pp. 3–4)—the Philippines remains a secular state. Indeed, the 1987 Constitution affirms the separation of Church and State, although it includes provisions protecting religious sensibilities that uphold cultural practices. It is at this juncture—where civil protections interact with religious norms—that LGBTQs find themselves sometimes pulled in opposing directions, signifying the price and promise of a “religious” nation determined to affirm diversity, secular values, and social progress.

### 3.2. Religious Sensibilities and LGBTQ Identities

In a seminal study of youth religiosity in the Philippines, Cornelio (2016) ascertained the everyday lives of Filipino Catholic youths. He interviewed 62 subjects, engaged

in immersive observations, and facilitated focus-group discussions to obtain qualitative information on individual conceptions of God, religious practice, and questions of meaning. Prompted by the election of the Argentine Jorge Cardinal Bergoglio to the papacy, [Cornelio \(2016\)](#) traced the boundaries at which the Christianity of the Global South interacted with the more institutional Christianity of the Global North. His focus on the youth is strategic, attentive to a demographic shift that increasingly saw a more youthful Christianity among the world's developing economies.

While [Cornelio's \(2016\)](#) study predicted the prominence of religion among his predominantly urban-based Catholic youth informants, the research exposed gaps between institutional fidelity and individual practice. Whereas the majority of his informants affirmed the Catholic church's position on sexual morality—e.g., marriage, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality—their dominant rationale drew from fidelity to family relationships and community. Increasing economic challenges further magnified individual commitment to traditional family structures, affirming conservative values centered around family obligations. For [Cornelio \(2016\)](#), the study exposes the cultural and epistemological contexts in which religious values are cultivated. While articulated through Catholic theological and pastoral language, his informants' religiosity tended to draw from one's place in the community. Thus, to the extent that personal values mirror one's belonging to a community, informants identify as Catholic because they are products of a culture informed by Catholic worldviews and mores. The institutional church, to put it simply, functions as a container to configure one's sense of self. Ultimately, religion among the youth is more "self-reflexive" than institutionally-oriented, emphasizing individual agency rather than ecclesial accountability ([Cornelio 2016](#)).

While there are studies about homosexuality and contemporary LGBTQ life in the Philippines ([Holmes 2005](#); [Garcia 1996](#); [Garcia and Remoto 1994](#)), few, if any, addressed the role of religious experience among queer youths. Of late, Cornelio, as well as Robbin M. Dagle, have been emerging as leading scholars in the field of "queer Christianities" in the Philippines. Their ground-breaking work—and public engagement for the passage of the "Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression Bill", (SOGIE) ([Abad 2019](#))—attests to the potential impact of a study on LGBTQ youth spirituality in popular discourse and civil protections. Mindful of these, this study thus seeks to define the parameters of religious experience, refine categories of "queer-ness", and trace the interaction of institutional religion with personal belief systems. In doing so, the authors hope to complement and extend the scope of current research on Catholic youth life by privileging the role of gender and sexual identity in the articulation of a religious self.

### *3.3. The Salience of Religion and Dimensions of Religiosity*

Religion can be conceptualized as "systems of significance that are grounded in beliefs about the sacred (individual aspect) and realized within broader religious context (institutional)", ([Talik 2013](#), p. 146). As shown by empirical studies, religion is very important to many people ([Hood et al. 2009](#)) and considered an integral part of human existence ([Koenig 2012](#)). While religion can be described as an organized, tradition-oriented social phenomenon, religiosity refers to the personal psychological trait about religion ([Streib and Hood 2016](#)).

Religiosity can originate from five dimensions, namely the intellect, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience. The intellect dimension refers to the social expectation regarding people who believe in the transcendent or ultimate truth/reality to have some knowledge of religion as well as explain their views on transcendence, religion, and religiosity. The dimension of ideology refers to the social expectation that religious individuals believe in the existence of a transcendent reality and the relationship between the human and the divine. The dimension of public practice refers to the social expectation that religious persons are affiliated with religious communities and manifest their beliefs through religious rituals and communal activities. The dimension of private practice refers to the social expectation that religious individuals devote themselves to

the transcendent or ultimate truth/reality by engaging in activities and rituals in private space. Lastly, the dimension of religious experience refers to the social expectation that religious individuals communicate or have some kind of direct contact with ultimate reality (Huber and Huber 2012). “From a psychological perspective, the five core-dimensions can be seen as channels or modes in which personal religious constructs are shaped and activated”, (Huber and Huber 2012, p. 710). Additionally, it is when a person’s “religious construct-system is situated in a central position that religious beliefs can be powerful enough to influence subjective experience and behavior”, (Huber 2007, p. 211).

The importance of Christian ideology to many Filipinos is demonstrated in their strong beliefs on God’s role in health and well-being (Patinio 2020). For a significant number of older Filipinos, the Christian faith serves as a source of strength and a protective buffer to stress and suffering. As such, many Christians demonstrate their religiosity in public, such as going to church regularly and attending church activities and religious gatherings (Buenaventura et al. 2020). The Filipino youth, whose age ranges from fifteen (15) to thirty (30) years old (Youth in Nation Building Act 1995), constitute around 30% of the total population (Arceo 2018, p. 1). Among select Filipino youths, the religious construct-system occupies a central position. They demonstrate religiosity as constituted by the core dimensions of religiosity most expressed by the ideology and private practice dimensions. Since the religious beliefs of select Filipino youths are powerful enough to influence subjective experience and behavior, religion can be expected to be relevant in all the domains of their life (del Castillo et al. 2020). Additionally, many Filipino youths communicate with God through personal prayers, especially during trying times (del Castillo and Aliño 2020).

### 3.4. Multifaceted Expressions of Religiosity among Select Filipino LGBTQs

The Family Code of the [The Family Code of the Philippines \(1987\)](#) stipulates that “marriage is a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life [ . . . ]”, (Article 1). As such, marriage, as conceived in the current laws in the Philippines, hews to the heteronormative model ([Supreme Court of the Philippines 2019](#)). In 2020, the Supreme Court of the Philippines reiterated its dismissal of a petition to redefine marriage in the country to include same-sex couples ([Guerra 2020](#)). One of the reasons for the decision is that Filipino lawmakers should first enact laws to make same-sex unions legal so that LGBTQs and their life partners can have legal protections ([Supreme Court of the Philippines 2019](#)). The Supreme Court also mentioned that, “Often, public reason needs to be first shaped through the crucible of campaigns and advocacies within our political forums before it is sharpened for judicial fiat” ([Supreme Court of the Philippines 2019](#), p. 2). Interestingly, [Ochoa et al. \(2016\)](#) note that “it is possible that the concept of marriage and sexuality in the Philippines is seen more as a church-related rather than a secular issue, that the messaging of church leaders about the sanctity of marriage tends to have a greater impact on [same-sex marriage] attitudes”, (p. 166). Despite same-sex or LGBTQ “weddings” having no legal basis in the country, there are same-sex couples and LGBTQ in the Philippines who undergo the “Rite of Holy Union”. It is “a wedding ceremonial ritual for two consenting adults that promise to live together for the rest of their lives, in building their own family suited and fitted for their desire based on love, responsibility and communion with God”, ([Agbayani 2017](#)).

The importance of religion to numerous Filipino Catholics is also demonstrated in the celebration of religious feasts. In Aklan, one of the highlights is the Ati-Atihan festival, which is a carnivalesque street-dance. The Ati-Atihan festival, for a certain time, provided an opportunity for a transgender person named “Tay August” to “show devotion to the Christ Child, claim membership in the Roman Catholic community, and negotiate the Catholic Church’s institution of heterosexuality”, ([Alcedo 2007](#), p. 107).

Another example of the affection of many Filipino Catholics for Mary is demonstrated in a traditional Marian celebration called Flores de Mayo (i.e., flowers of May), often

connected with the Santacruzán (Holy Cross of Jesus) (Rosales 1975). The Santacruzán is celebrated every month of May, wherein children, young men, and women dressed in fine clothes, parade through the streets to commemorate Queen Helen and Prince Constantine's discovery of the cross of Jesus (Skinner 2011). Although the sagala (maidens) in a Santacruzán ritual are presumably straight females, there are also many LGBT groups in partnership with local governments who organize parades and empower gay people to be "sa-gay-la", (a portmanteau of sagala and gay) (Reyes 2015). In 2016, members of the LGBT community in partnership with the barangay (the basic political unit in the Philippines) in Zamboanga City expressed their Marian devotion through the Parada de Flores (Parade of Flowers). In choosing not to use the religiously loaded term "Santacruzán", the members of the LGBT community conveyed that the parade was also meant to increase awareness about LGBT people and increase the participation of LGBT constituents in the community (LGBT Community in Zamboanga City Hosts 'Parada de Flores' 2016).

In the Philippines, All Saints Day and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day) are usually non-working holidays that provide the living, whether religious or not, the opportunity to visit (usually the cemetery), and pray for relatives and friends who have passed on. Interestingly, in 2015, a cemetery in Cavite (a province in the Philippines located in Luzon) was dedicated by the local government to members of the LGBTQ community. Conceived as a "safe space" for LGBTQs to honor the dead and pray, the apartment-type tombs in the cemetery are either painted pink (for deceased gay men) or in rainbow colors (for deceased lesbians and other LGBTQs). Additionally, the grave markers do not only contain the legal name of the deceased LGBTQ but also their alias, or "gay" name. However, in 2019 the cemetery lost its exclusivity because even non-LGBT people have been buried there (Abrina 2019).

The aforementioned literature (although incomprehensive) shows the importance of religion to many LGBTQ Filipinos and how they manifest religiosity outside the purview of institutional religious language. The literature also revealed that there is a research gap on the core dimensions of Filipino LGBTQ religiosity. Measuring the centrality of religiosity of select Filipino LGBTQs can open the door to a comprehensive understanding of how religion affects their personal lives and vice versa.

### 3.5. The Centrality of Religiosity Scale and Applications in the Philippines

The Centrality of Religiosity Scale or CRS is an instrument that measures the "centrality, importance or salience of religious meanings in personality", (Huber and Huber 2012, p. 711). The religious life is represented in five core dimensions, namely ideology, intellect, public practice, private practice, and religious experience (Huber and Huber 2012). "From a psychological perspective, the five core dimensions can be seen as channels or modes in which personal religious constructs are shaped and activated. The activation of religious constructs in personality can be regarded as a valid measure of the degree of religiosity of an individual" (p. 710). The CRS rests on two assumptions: "(1) The measurement of the general intensity of the five core dimensions allows a representative estimation of the frequency and intensity of the activation of the personal religious construct system and (2) The probability of a central position of the religious construct system in personality increases with the overall intensity and frequency of its activation", (Huber and Huber 2012, p. 715).

The CRS has three Abrahamic forms suitable for Abrahamic religions: 15 items (CRS-15), 10 items (CRS-10), and 5 items (CRS-5). There are also three interreligious forms composed of 20 items (CRSi-20), 14 items (CRSi-14), and 7 items (CRSi-7), which reflect openness for polytheistic concepts and practices.

The CRS index refers to the composite score based on the average of all items in the scale, which ranges from 1 to 5. Individuals whose CRS index is higher than 4.0 are "highly religious". As such, they have a profound religious life and faith likely plays a central role in their life. Individuals whose CRS index is between 2.0 and 4.0 are categorized as "religious". This means that while religion is present in their life, it does not play an

important role in their decisions. As for individuals whose CRS index is lower than 2.0, they are categorized as “non-religious”, which means that religion is of little value or influence in their life (Huber and Huber 2012).

The CRS has been used in various studies in the Philippines. Batara (2018) utilized the CRS-15 to investigate what dimension of religion best predicts helping behavior. The researcher concluded that “among the dimensions of religion, it is the public practice that mostly facilitates helping behavior”, (Batara 2018, p. 78). To determine if religiosity and gender role beliefs predict attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, Reyes (2019) used the CRSi-14 along with the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale—Revised (Herek 1994) and The Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS)—Short Version (Kerr and Holden 1996). The study revealed that “religiosity, gender-role beliefs, and attitudes toward lesbians and gays are significantly related. The more religious a person is, the more traditional their gender-role beliefs are. Furthermore, the more an individual adheres to nontraditional roles, the less rejecting they are of lesbians and gays” (Reyes 2019, pp. 567–68). Examining an adequate assessment tool for the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in Philippine society, del Castillo et al. (2020) validated the three versions of the interreligious forms of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-7, -14, and -20) among select Filipinos. The study revealed that the models of CRSi-7, -14, and -20 show a good global fit. However, the researchers defer to the CRSi-20 model with correlated factors since it is a simpler model. As such, “all versions of the CRSi demonstrate a valid and reliable measure for the centrality of religiosity in the Philippines and support the usefulness of the CRS for the study of religiosity”, (del Castillo et al. 2020, p. 11).

#### 4. Method

##### 4.1. Some Considerations on Identity Categories and Religion

Since this paper investigates the salience of religion and the centrality of religiosity among select LGBTQs, much consideration has been given to the identity categories of sex, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. While the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and the acronyms, LGBTQ and SOGIE are widely used among Filipino millennials, the study acknowledges the limits of language in fully capturing the nuances of the Filipino gender universe (Quero et al. 2014; Campos 2012). As such, definitions were incorporated into the survey under Sex and Gender identities to differentiate biological characteristics from psycho-spiritual notions of self. While these categorical distinctions may be obvious to some—especially given broad access to social media—cultural nuances tend to get lost in any attempt to translate “global” gender categories to Filipino contexts.

In the survey, the term “sex” refers to “one’s biological characteristics, often assigned at birth”, such as male or female. In consonance with the United Nations Development Programme—Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (United Nations Development Programme, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines 2018), the sex category “intersex” is included, referring to “people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male and female bodies”. The option “not listed” is also included.

The survey operationalizes the term “gender identity” as the “internal sense of being a man, a woman, a third or some alternative gender regardless of the sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is reflected in gender expression, or specific ways of communicating masculinity or femininity (or both or neither) externally” (United Nations Development Programme, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines 2018). Under the gender identity category, “transgender” refers to “an umbrella term describing people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth”, (United Nations Development Programme, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines 2018). Again, the option “not listed” is added to the choices.

The survey also asked for the sexual orientation of respondents, describing “an individual’s emotional, physical, and sexual attraction to other people”. Among obvious choices were “gay”, referring to a “person who identifies himself as man but attracted

to another man”, and “bisexual”, which refers to “a person who is attracted to multiple gender identity and expression”, (USAID, UNDP 2014). While “lesbian” as a distinct category conventionally referring to female-bodied persons sexually attracted to other female-bodied persons, its deployment in the Philippine gender universe is a little more complex (USAID, UNDP 2014). To offer as wide a berth as possible, gender categories included the Filipino term “bakla”, which is “a sexual/gender category that refers to biological males who exhibit, or are suspected of exhibiting, sexual and gender non-normative behavior” (Manalansán 2015), and “tomboy”, which is “loosely equivalent to the butch dyke in western societies. The tomboy is constructed as a man trapped in a woman’s body”, (Tan 2001, p. 122). “Queer” is also included, which refers to “an umbrella term that individuals may use to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms”, (American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists 2015). The Filipino term “diretso” (USAID, UNDP 2014) or heterosexual is also included, as well as the option “not listed”.

In terms of religious categories, this paper operationalizes religion as “an organized system of beliefs, practices, and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the transcendent and (b) to foster an understanding of one’s relationship and responsibility to others in living together in a community”, (Koenig 2012, pp. 2–3). However, to the extent that the study seeks a more expansive definition of religious experience, the “religion” identity category incorporated atheist, spiritual (but not religious) and agnostic, alongside diverse Christian subsets and world religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. The incorporation of broader “Christian categories” exposes the study’s bias towards predominantly urban-based Christian youth contexts.

#### 4.2. Demographics and Religiosity of Select LGBTQs

The demographics of select LGBTQs are shown in Table 1. The total sample comprised 59 Filipino LGBTQs. The age range of the respondents was 18 to 42 years old ( $M = 22.42$ ,  $SD = 5.87$ ). The majority of the participants live in urban settings ( $n = 54$ , 92%). The participants’ biological gender, which was assigned at birth, was represented as male ( $n = 26$ , 44%), female ( $n = 32$ , 54%) or not listed ( $n = 1$ , 2%). No respondent was “intersex”. The gender identities, which describes the participants’ internal sense, were as follows: male (41%); female (44%); transgender (3%), and not listed (12%). Participants’ sexual orientations, which describes their emotional, physical and sexual attraction to other people, were categorized as lesbian (14%), gay (29%), bisexual (39%), queer (3%) and not listed (15%). Most of them were Christians and were represented in the following denominations: Roman Catholic ( $n = 31$ , 53%); mainline Protestant ( $n = 10$ , 17%); Evangelical Christian ( $n = 3$ , 5%); Jehovah’s Witness ( $n = 1$ , 2%). The other affiliations were as follows: Spiritual ( $n = 3$ , 5%); Agnostics ( $n = 5$ , 9%); Atheist ( $n = 1$ , 2%); Buddhist ( $n = 3$ , 5%); and Not listed ( $n = 2$ , 3%).

Table 1 also shows the centrality of religiosity among the selected LGBTQs vis-à-vis their demographics. Among the respondents, the highly religious individuals were from urban areas, male in sex, male in gender identity, gay in sexual orientation, and adhered to Roman Catholicism. Those who are religious came from urban areas, were female in sex, female in gender identity, bisexual in sexual orientation, and adhered to Roman Catholicism. The non-religious individuals came from urban areas, were female in sex, female in gender identity, bisexual in sexual orientation, and were non-Christians.

**Table 1.** Selected LGBTQ demographics and levels of religiosity.

Variables and Sub-Categories	Total		Highly Religious		Religious		Non-Religious	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Location								
Urban	54	92	19	91	32	94	3	75
Rural	5	9	2	10	2	6	1	25
Total	59	100	21	100	34	100	4	100
Sex								
Male	26	44	13	62	12	35	1	25
Female	32	54	8	38	21	62	3	75
Intersex	0							
Not listed	1	2			1	3		
Total	59	100	21	100	34	100	4	100
Gender identity								
Male	24	41	12	57	11	32	1	25
Female	26	44	7	33	17	50	2	50
Transgender	2	3	1	5	1	3		
Not listed	7	12	1	5	5	15	1	25
Total	59	100	21	100	34	100	4	100
Sexual orientation								
Lesbian	8	14	3	14	5	15		
Gay	17	29	8	38	9	27		
Bisexual	23	39	6	29	14	41	3	75
Queer	2	3	1	5	1	3		
Not listed	9	15	3	14	5	15	1	25
Total	59	100	21	100	34	100	4	100
Religion								
Christian (Roman Catholic)	31	53	13	62	18	53		
Mainline Protestant	10	17	4	19	6	18		
Christian (Evangelical)	3	5	3	14				
Jehovah's Witnesses	1	2	1	5				
Spiritual (Religious and unaffiliated)	3	5			3	9		
Agnostic	5	9			4	12	1	25
Atheist	1	2					1	25
Buddhist	3	5			2	6	1	25
Not listed	2	3			1	3	1	25
Total	59	100	21	100	34	100	4	100

Note. Total *n* = 59, highly religious *n* = 21, religious *n* = 34, and non-religious *n* = 4.

#### 4.3. Procedure

Data were collected from November 2020 to December 2020 through an online survey using Qualtrics survey software. Snowball sampling was applied. The respondents received a link to the study through email. The respondents were assured that their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and were asked for consent before answering the 20-item interreligious form of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-20) (Huber and Huber 2012). A total of 89 participants responded to the online survey. After cleaning the data, only the responses of 59 respondents were considered in the study.

#### 4.4. Instrument

The full English version of the 20-item interreligious Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-20) was used in this study with permission from the author. The CRSi-20 assumes that "(1) The measurement of the general intensity of the five core dimensions of religiosity [ideology, intellect, public practice, private practice, and religious experience] allows a representative estimation of the frequency and intensity of the activation of the personal religious construct system and (2) The probability of a central position of the religious construct-system in personality increases with the overall intensity and frequency of its activation", (Huber and Huber 2012, p. 715). Thus, if religiosity is "placed in a central

position, personal religious constructs have an intense and broad influence on experience and behavior", (Huber 2007, p. 213).

A person can demonstrate his or her religiosity in various ways. On the intellectual and ideological dimensions, religiosity is operationalized by believing in God or something divine, thinking about religious issues, learning about religious topics, and keeping abreast with religious questions. A religious person can also demonstrate his or her religiosity on the public and private practice dimension by taking part in religious services, being a member of a religious community, and praying. Furthermore, when a religious person feels the presence or intervention of God (or something divine), then he or she is having a religious experience (Huber and Huber 2012).

The CRSi-20 uses a subjective five-point frequency (very often, often, occasionally, rarely, and never) and intensity (very much so, quite a bit, moderately, not very much, and not at all) response scale, and eight- or seven-item objective frequency scales for the assessment of private and public practice, respectively (Huber and Huber 2012). The answer options for the private practice are "several times a day", "once a day", "more than once a week", "once a week", "one or three times a month", "a few times a year", "less often", and "never". Accordingly, the answer options for the public practice are "more than once a week", "once a week", "one or three times a month", "a few times a year", "less often", and "never". To guarantee the compatibility of the answer scales, the authors propose a re-coding procedure for the eight- and seven-level answers to five-level. The principles are described in Huber and Huber (2012, p. 720, Table 3). We follow the re-coding suggestions of the authors. Thus, the final data result in a uniform range of 1 to 5, with 1 being the minimum and 5 the maximum expression on the scale.

Two of the core dimensions (private practice and religious experience) were assessed with the use of two items that represent different religious patterns; interactive and participative (Huber and Huber 2012, p. 719). An example for the private practice is "How often do you pray?" and "How often do you meditate". Only the higher value of the two alternative items was used for the calculation of the scale and its reliability. It is important to differentiate between the number of the items in the questionnaire and the number of items in the scale. The CRSi-20 needs twenty items in the questionnaire. However only 15 measures are included in the scaling, and three for each dimension.

#### 4.5. Data Analysis

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for the overall CRSi-20 score and its five sub-scales. In addition, the measures of skewness and kurtosis were also computed to describe how the sub-scales are distributed. Cronbach's alpha is calculated for each of the subscales to establish internal consistency. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with post-hoc tests was conducted to determine the relationship among the subscales and the participants' background demographics. For the comparison between the different levels of religiosities, several independent sample *T*-test were also computed. All analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 20 at loan from one of the researcher's institution (IBM 2011; Arbuckle 2011).

### 5. Results and Discussion

The descriptive statistics of the overall CRSi-20 score and its five subscales are shown in Table 2. The results show that the overall CRSi-20 score is 3.68 (SD = 0.89), which indicates that the select LGBTQs are "religious". As for the core dimensions of religiosity, the ideology subscale received the highest mean score (M = 4.16, SD = 0.88), while the public practice subscale received the lowest mean score (M = 3.21, SD = 1.15). Regarding measures of skewness, all of the values are negative (−0.04 to −1.25), which suggests that the subscales are mostly concentrated on the higher scores. Additionally, the kurtosis of the data ranges from −1.16 to 1.21. Kurtosis with negative values signifies that the distribution is less peaked and has a lighter tail as compared to positive ones, which are more peaked and have a heavier tail (Cohen 1988).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for CRSi-20 and its subscales.

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
CRSi-20 total	3.68	0.89	−0.71	−0.09	0.96
Intellect	3.41	0.97	−0.23	−0.58	0.85
Ideology	4.16	0.88	−0.94	−0.31	0.81
Public Practice	3.21	1.15	−0.04	−1.16	0.87
Private Practice	4.03	0.98	−1.25	1.21	0.95
Experience	3.58	1.16	−0.53	−0.67	0.95

Note. N = 59. M = mean, SD = standard deviation.

Cronbach’s (1951) alpha values were also calculated to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the CRSi-20. The overall reliability of the survey is computed at 0.96, while the rest of the subscales have alpha values ranging from 0.81 to 0.95. These values, according to Bryman and Cramer (1990), denote that the CRSi-20 is a reliable instrument.

Correlational analysis was also conducted to determine the relationship among the subscales. Table 3 shows that all of the subscales are correlated with each other. Additionally, the participants’ age is positively correlated with all of the subscales (including the overall CRSi-20 score). This lends evidence to the link between age and religiosity.

**Table 3.** Correlation matrix of the respondents’ age, CRSi-20 total score, and its subscales.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Age						
2 Intellect	0.437 **					
3 Ideology	0.299 *	0.549 **				
4 Public Practice	0.449 **	0.815 **	0.587 **			
5 Private Practice	0.404 **	0.633 **	0.790 **	0.696 **		
6 Experience	0.398 **	0.609 **	0.775 **	0.653 **	0.850 **	
7 CRSi-20 total	0.460 **	0.830 **	0.840 **	0.870 **	0.910 **	0.897 **

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$  and \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Several independent sample T-tests were computed to compare the different levels of religiosities. Table 4 shows that all participants’ who have religious beliefs (Column “Yes”) scored significantly higher in each of the subscales as opposed to those participants without religious beliefs (Column “No”). Additionally, the “effect sizes” for all the comparisons are quite large, as denoted by Cohen’s (1988)  $d$  values 2.33 to 4.82 (note that values below 0.20 = very small, 0.20 to 0.49 = small, 0.50 to 0.79 = medium, 0.80 to 1.39 = large, and values above 1.40 are considered very large effect sizes).

**Table 4.** Comparison of the religious and non-religious respondents.

Variables	Religious Belief				Religious Intensity		
	Total	Yes	No	Cohen’s $d$	Religious	Highly	Cohen’s $d$
CRSi-20	3.68 (0.89)	3.79 *** (0.76)	1.56 (0.25)	3.94	3.29 *** (0.55)	4.52 (0.31)	2.77
Intellect	3.41 (0.97)	3.50 ** (0.89)	1.67 (0.67)	2.33	3.01 *** (0.75)	4.20 (0.54)	1.83
Ideology	4.16 (0.88)	4.26 *** (0.79)	2.33 (0.33)	3.19	3.91 *** (0.81)	4.77 (0.38)	1.36
Public Practice	3.21 (1.15)	3.32 *** (1.08)	1.22 (0.19)	2.71	2.64 *** (0.74)	4.30 (0.63)	2.42
Private Practice	4.03 (0.98)	4.18 *** (0.77)	1.33 (0.33)	4.82	3.77 *** (0.72)	4.77 (0.31)	1.81
Experience	3.58 (1.16)	3.71 *** (1.04)	1.22 (0.19)	3.31	3.13 *** (0.92)	4.54 (0.52)	1.87

Note. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , yes (participants with religious belief)  $n = 56$ , no (participants with no religious belief)  $n = 3$ , religious ( $n = 33$ ), and highly religious ( $n = 23$ ).

Additionally, the religious intensities among the select LGBTQs were compared. As shown in Table 4, the “highly religious” participants scored significantly higher in all of the subscales. Again, the “effect sizes” for all the comparisons are quite large, as denoted by Cohen’s (1988)  $d$  values 1.36 to 2.77.

Table 5 shows the CRSi-20 items’ means and standard deviations for the different levels of religiosity. The data reveal that older participants have higher levels of religiosity.

**Table 5.** CRSi-20 means and standard deviations for the different levels of religiosity.

Variables	Items	Total		Highly Religious		Religious		Non-Religious	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age		22.42	5.87	25.04	6.20	20.94	5.24	18.67	1.16
CRSi-20		3.68	0.89	4.52	0.31	3.29	0.55	1.56	0.25
Intellect	1. How often do you think about religious issues?	3.51	0.95	4.04	0.77	3.27	0.84	2.00	1.00
	6. How interested are you in learning more about religious topics?	3.59	1.16	4.57	0.66	3.09	0.91	1.67	0.58
	12. How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?	3.12	1.18	4.00	0.67	2.67	1.05	1.33	0.58
	Intellect total	3.41	0.97	4.20	0.54	3.01	0.75	1.67	0.67
Ideology	2. To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?	4.20	1.05	4.91	0.29	3.91	0.98	2.00	1.00
	7. To what extent do you believe in an afterlife—e.g., immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead, or reincarnation?	4.05	1.04	4.65	0.57	3.76	1.03	2.67	1.53
	12. In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?	4.24	1.01	4.74	0.69	4.06	0.90	2.33	1.53
	Ideology total	4.16	0.88	4.77	0.38	3.91	0.81	2.33	0.33
Public Practice	3. How often do you take part in religious services?	3.02	1.15	3.87	0.92	2.58	0.90	1.33	0.58
	8. How important is it to take part in religious services?	3.24	1.30	4.48	0.79	2.55	0.83	1.33	0.58
	13. How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?	3.39	1.34	4.57	0.59	2.79	1.05	1.00	0.00
	Public practice total	3.21	1.15	4.30	0.63	2.64	0.74	1.22	0.19
Private Practice	4. How often do you pray?	4.08	1.24	4.87	0.34	3.76	1.25	1.67	0.58
	4b. How often do you meditate?	3.39	1.27	3.96	1.19	3.21	1.08	1.00	0.00
	Calculated Indicator: Higher Value of 4 and 4b	4.29	0.98	4.91	0.29	4.09	0.84	1.67	0.58
	9. How important is personal prayer for you?	4.03	1.22	4.91	0.29	3.67	1.11	1.33	0.58
	9b. How important is meditation for you?	3.90	1.21	4.48	0.79	3.76	1.09	1.00	0.00
	Calculated indicator: Higher value of 9 and 9b	4.31	1.02	4.91	0.29	4.15	0.83	1.33	0.58
	14. How often do you pray spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?	3.36	1.27	4.30	0.64	2.91	1.13	1.00	0.00
	14b. How often do you try to connect to the divine spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?	3.19	1.27	4.13	0.76	2.73	1.10	1.00	0.00
	Calculated indicator: Higher value of 14 and 14b	3.51	1.26	4.48	0.59	3.06	1.09	1.00	0.00
	Private practice total	4.03	0.98	4.77	0.31	3.77	0.72	1.33	0.33
Experience	5. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life?	3.63	1.20	4.57	0.59	3.18	1.01	1.33	0.58
	5b. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are in one with all?	3.27	1.19	4.04	0.88	2.94	1.00	1.00	0.00
	Calculated indicator: Higher value of 5 and 5b	3.73	1.14	4.61	0.50	3.33	0.96	1.33	0.58
	10. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine wants to show or reveal something to you?	3.49	1.28	4.39	0.66	3.09	1.16	1.00	0.00
	10b. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are touched by a divine power?	3.27	1.28	4.26	0.75	2.79	1.08	1.00	0.00
	Calculated indicator: Higher value of 10 and 10b	3.63	1.27	4.52	0.67	3.24	1.12	1.00	0.00
	15. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine is present?	3.39	1.23	4.48	0.59	2.82	0.95	1.33	0.58
Experience total	3.58	1.16	4.54	0.52	3.13	0.92	1.22	0.19	

Note. Total N = 59, highly religious n = 23, religious n = 33, and non-religious n = 3.

Independent sample *T*-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVA) with post-hoc tests were accomplished to determine if there are any significant differences between the demographics of the select LGBTQs and overall religiosity. The results showed that there are no significant differences between the participants' location (urban and rural), biological gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, with overall CRSi-20 score and sub-scales.

Table 6 shows the differences in the centrality of religiosity between select LGBTQ Christians and non-Christians. The results of the independent sample *T*-test showed that there are significant differences with very large effect sizes (1.00 to 1.36) (Cohen 1988) on the religiosity of participants who are affiliated with the Christian religion (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Jehovah's witness) and those who identified as non-Christians (Spiritual, Agnostic, Atheist, Buddhist, and not listed).

**Table 6.** Comparison of centrality of religiosity between selected LGBTQ Christians and non-Christians.

Variables	Christians		Non-Christians		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
CRSi-20	3.95 **	(0.68)	2.81	(0.96)	1.36
Intellect	3.64 **	(0.85)	2.67	(0.96)	1.07
Ideology	4.38 **	(0.70)	3.48	(1.06)	1.00
Public practice	3.50 ***	(1.04)	2.31	(1.04)	1.14
Private practice	4.33 **	(0.66)	3.07	(1.22)	1.29
Experience	3.90 ***	(0.92)	2.55	(1.26)	1.23

Note. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , Christian  $n = 45$ , non-Christian  $n = 14$ .

## 6. Conclusions and Outlook

At its inception, the study sought to explore the correlation of religiosity with the lived realities of Filipino LGBTQ youths. The authors assumed a tension between respondents' sex/gender identities and affiliation with religious institutions. It is also a tension that presumably traverses private and public aspects of life.

The study outcomes confirm the general religiosity of participants, particularly among older respondents. Of the five subscales, ideology and private practice emerge as the dominant categories through which religiosity is articulated, practiced, and lived. Public service, intellect and experience follow. In terms of sex distribution, men tend to self-describe as "highly religious" in relation to women, who identify largely as "religious". To the degree that women respondents outnumber men, a higher number of total respondents—regardless of sexual orientation—are inclined to be "religious".

The data resonate with previous research by del Castillo et al. (2020) among Filipino youths. Drawn from a significantly larger pool, the results affirmed a pervasive religiosity defined also by ideology and private practice. Because this study focuses on a subset of Filipino youths, resonant levels seem to evoke a characteristic religiosity general to Filipino culture, rather than one informed by age, sexuality, and gender.

It is noteworthy to highlight differences across categories of sex, gender, and orientation. While there is a clear distinction among respondents who organize themselves according sex (male, female, intersex), a slight shift occurs under gender, with two respondents self-identifying as "transgender" and another opting not to list. Under sexual orientation, there is more diversity, with a number of respondents self-identifying as "bisexual", followed by "gay", "not listed", and "lesbian" in diminishing frequency.

Overall, trends signify a minimal correlation between religiosity and sex/gender. The prominence of ideology and private practice as defining characteristics of religiosity echoes the kind of "reflexive" faith that Cornelio found among his respondents (Cornelio 2016, pp. 26–27). Religious institutions—expressed through dogmatic and official teachings—seem to bear minimal influence on respondents' personal faith. Religiosity resides primarily within the private domain; for Cornelio (2016), more specifically, personal religiosity reflects the nature of one's relationships with immediate and extended family members.

### 6.1. Examining Assumptions around Filipino Culture Vis-a-Vis Personal Religiosity

Because the Philippine religious landscape is infused with Catholic ideology, several questions regarding this study, its working definition of “religion” vis-a-vis “culture”, and its method of data-gathering emerged. As the most obvious, the authors raise the possibility that respondents may overlook the correlation of one’s cultural values and habits with personal religiosity. To the extent that survey questions tended to describe religiosity as a personal, internal capacity for meaning-making, might the study have inadvertently diminished the role of culture—and other forms of public practice—in shaping individual religiosity?

Furthermore, the expected tensions between LGBTQ individuals and religious institutions have proven to be a non-issue among respondents—at least to the extent that personal contexts seem to minimally influence the quality of one’s religiosity. However, authors have also noted studies that describe the ubiquity of the bakla in religious rituals (Campos 2012; Alcedo 2007). In the United States, in fact, Jay Gonzalez and Martin Manalansán also traced the utility of religious rituals, such as the Santacruzán and Flores de Mayo, in scaffolding a Filipino diasporic identity, exposing the ways migrants employ religious discourse to assert political action (Gonzalez 2009) and/or negotiate transnational gender identities (Manalansán 2003). To the extent that this study seems to indicate a negligible correlation between culture and religion, the authors offer the following observations for consideration:

- To what extent is Filipino religiosity—as the product of Spanish Catholic and American Protestant colonization—a specific expression of culture?
- To what extent is Filipino religiosity shaped only by domestic relationships rather than any perceivable accountability to religious institutions?
- To what extent does the CRS questionnaire explicitly address the correlation of culture with religious practice?

### 6.2. Examining Assumptions around Gender Identities within the Filipino Context

In terms of gender and sexuality, the authors also noted questions around the consistency of gender signifiers among respondents. Whereas “gay” or “lesbian” and “transgender” embody specific identities in the West, “gay” may not necessarily mean the same as bakla; “lesbian” may be assumed as much by females attracted to other females as by hyper-effeminate bakla who enter into sexual relationships with other gay men (USAID, UNDP 2014). While Filipinos are generally steeped in English, levels of fluency among respondents will inevitably differ (Esquivel 2019). Western gender terminologies thus tend to slip in through, and alongside, indigenous signifiers such as bakla, bayot, lesbyana, tomboy, binabae, etc. (Espeño-Rosales 2019). Taking this into consideration, to what extent has the study assumed some level of acceptable consistency among respondents’ comprehension of gender signifiers?

### 6.3. Examining Assumptions around the Nature of Religiosity as “Personal” or “Internal”

The diminished relevance of church institutions among youth respondents raises larger questions around an emerging secularization since the Enlightenment that Charles Taylor (2007) describes as “disenchantment”. Rather than an antithesis to the religious worldview, secularism disengages religious practice to the “personal”, away from institutional churches. The democratic emphasis of post-Enlightenment societies encourages individual political participation. Thus, the “religious”—as a vehicle for meaning-making and transcendent sensibility—tends to be conflated with the “political”. Personal faith is absorbed into political action, reorienting the transcendent to the immanent (Taylor 2007).

This modernist sensibility would explain, in part, the turn of religiosity to the personal. Returning to the Pew report on the God divide, perhaps this growing emphasis on interior religiosity signifies a larger, cultural shift towards secularization that is typical of emerging economies like that of the Philippines. With these in mind, the authors propose that we consider the study as a starting point for future studies that will do the following:

- Reconsider the scope of “religiosity” as both a personal/private/interior and public/political phenomenon. Might there be value in expanding this working definition beyond the interior space?
- Incorporate questions that invite respondents to qualify the role of their gender and/or sexual identity in public engagement;
- Strategically expand the scope of the sample set beyond urban, largely religious, contexts;
- Pay attention to the role of the big five personality traits in their link with religion;
- Examine how the psychological stress of being part of the LGBTQ+ community in a social setting that forefronts heterosexual norms can account for the interest in religion’s soothing aspect.

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