

Motivational Factors and Participation of Senior High School Students in Attending Online Masses in Bacolod, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the suspension of face-to-face masses. This started the online masses used by schools, especially Catholics, to allow students to attend the sacraments virtually. This study investigated the degree of motivational factors and the level of participation of students in attending online masses and determined if a significant relationship exists between the two variables. Specific to motivational factors, this paper covered requirement, meaningfulness, liturgical celebration, and parental influence. The measurement of the factors and the level of participation was done using survey questionnaires. There were 298 sampled respondents in this study. The study revealed a moderate degree of motivational factors and a high level of participation in attending online masses among Senior High School students. Further, there were significant differences in motivational factors of meaningfulness and liturgical celebration and the level of participation. However, no significant differences were found in motivational factors of requirement and parental influence. The findings further revealed a significant relationship between motivational factors and participation in attending online masses. The study's results served as bases for formulating an enhanced Christian Life Formation Program to help students regain a high appreciation for the Holy Mass and the sacraments despite the modality. The results also suggested the need for collaboration between and among the Senior High School department, the Campus Ministry office, the institution, the parents, and the Diocese.

Keywords: Motivational factors, Participation in online masses, Senior High School students, Philippine Catholic education, Quantitative research

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Augustinian education is one of the primary conduits of the Catholic Church for the formation of the sense of values of the youth (Menes, 2020). One integral part of Augustinian education is our devotion to the Holy Eucharist. The Church is also a social institution (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991, as cited in Roberts & Yamane, 2016), and the Eucharist as the "source and summit of the Christian life" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1963, 10) is vital in the life of the Church and its members. It is the highest form of prayer for Catholics. While there are other prayers, such as personal prayers, novenas, and rituals, the Holy Eucharist or the Holy Mass is incomparable. As the Holy Eucharist commits the members to undertake initiatives to promote development,

justice, and peace (Arinze, 2006, as cited in Smith, 2019), the members should commit themselves to the Eucharist.

However, commitment and participation in the Holy Eucharist depend on one's motivational factors. For students, factors like requirements, meaningfulness, liturgical celebration, and parental influence, among others, affect their motivation (Dioso, 2014; Yanoria & Atienza, 2015). Undeniably, celebrating the Holy Eucharist is of utmost importance, especially during times of crisis (Tudy, 2020). Unexpectedly, at the beginning of 2020, liturgical life in many countries changed due to Covid -19 lockdowns or other measures related to the worldwide pandemic. While churches had to close their doors to the faithful, communities brought their Eucharistic celebrations online via Livestream or Zoom services (Parish, 2020).

The pandemic reached the country in February 2020. The first case of COVID-19 in Bacolod City was reported on March 20, 2020 (CNN Philippines, 2020). Days before, the President placed the whole country into lockdown, with Local Governments to follow. In compliance with the government's mandate, the Bishop of the Diocese of Bacolod suspended the public celebration of religious liturgies (Manilla Bulletin, 2020). Most of the sacred liturgies, including the Holy Eucharist, were held online to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Despite the limitations, the Bishop did not lift the dispensation from the duty to attend Sunday Masses. This gives more challenges to schools in encouraging students to attend online masses.

The recent developments in the modality of learning prompted the researchers to investigate, in the context of Senior High School students, how the online, blended learning scheme is enforced, in which students only access the Holy Eucharist via Livestream, on how motivated the Senior High School Students are in attending the online or live-streamed Holy Eucharist and how well they participate. The pandemic has created a novel way for students to experience the Holy Eucharist, and even though masses had been available via social communications, the recent pandemic highlighted the importance of social communications in the life of the Church.

Several studies on the importance of the Holy Eucharist (Yanoria & Atienza, 2015) and the spiritual needs of Filipino during the Covid-19 pandemic (Tudy, 2020) were conducted. Dioso (2014) also conducted a study specifying four aspects in which students' motivation to attend face-to-face masses can be measured in terms of requirement, meaningfulness, liturgical celebration, and parental influence. Since the conduct of online masses is a new phenomenon in universities and was only implemented because of the COVID- 19 pandemic, few studies were conducted in schools related to motivational factors and students' participation in online masses. Thus, this study is conducted to fill in the gap in the literature.

This study aims to determine the degree of motivational factors and level of participation among Senior High School students in attending online masses and determine if there exists a relationship between these two variables. The study's results served as bases for the Senior High School department and the Campus Ministry office in formulating an enhanced Christian Life Formation Program and activities to help students regain a high appreciation for the Holy Mass and the sacraments and thus develop their motivation and participation. Moreover, this study served as a basis for the possible programs the Diocese of Bacolod can design for Catholic institutions specific to motivational factors and participation of students in attending both the online and face-to-face masses. Guided by the findings, a possible collaboration between and

among the Senior High School department, the Campus Ministry office, the institution, the parents, and the Diocese can also be planned.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Research design. This paper utilized the quantitative research design using the descriptive, comparative, and correlational research approaches to determine the motivational factors and participation among students in attending online masses and to see if a relationship exists between the two variables. Santosh (2017) defines descriptive research design as a type of conclusive research study concerned with describing the characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals. Also, comparative and correlational designs were used to determine differences and associations between and among the variables explored (Baker, 2017).

Participants and sampling technique. The study utilized 298 sampled Senior High School students in a Catholic School for the School year 2021-2022 from the total population of 1295 officially enrolled students. The sample size was determined using an online sample calculator with a 5% margin of error. The participants of the study were determined using simple random sampling.

Research instrument. This study utilized a modified research questionnaire from Dioso (2014) on the motivational factors of high school students attending masses. The modified questionnaire evaluated the student's motivational factors on meaningfulness, requirement, liturgical celebration, and parental influence, as well as the level of participation of students, but this already focused on online masses. The modified questionnaire underwent jury validation with five experts in the field. Reliability testing was also done to ensure its reliability which resulted in a coefficient of 0.75 using Cronbach's alpha and was interpreted as reliable (Cronbach, 1951).

Data collection procedure. Upon the approval of the gatekeepers, the Basic Education Director, and the principal, the researchers then identified the participants of the study. Orientation was conducted to inform the participants about the study before securing informed consent and parents' ascent for voluntary participation. The data were collected online with the virtual presence of the researchers. The participants were given enough time to answer through an online survey platform. After the data were gathered, a series of tabulations and analyses were done employing the statistical tools appropriate for the research questions.

Data analysis procedure. Descriptive, comparative, and correlational analysis were the methods for the variables in this study to analyze the data gathered. The researchers used Mean for descriptive analysis, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for comparative analysis, and Pearson r (Pearson correlation coefficient) for correlational analysis.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Degree of Motivation and Level of Participation of Senior High School Students in Attending Online Masses

Table 1. Degree of Motivation and Level of Participation of Senior High School Students as a Whole

Variables	n	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Degree of Motivation				

Requirement	298	3.25	0.47	Moderate
Meaningfulness	298	3.42	0.55	Moderate
Liturgical Celebration	298	3.29	0.51	Moderate
Parental Influence	298	3.09	0.59	Moderate

Level of Participation

Level of Participation	298	3.92	0.71	High
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Note: the difference in the means is significant when $p < 0.05$

The sample mean was used to determine the degree of the motivational factors and the level of participation of the Senior High School students. Table 1 shows that the degree of motivational factors in attending online masses is moderate, with moderate results in all aspects. This moderate result may be attributed to their knowledge and understanding of the meaning and significance of the Holy Eucharist, the reinforcement of home, school, and local faith community, and their awareness of their spiritual responsibility while attending the online mass. This is supported by Raharjo et al. (2021) in their findings that the formation of habit and understanding can be possible through modeling attitudes and behaviors that are easy to imitate from teachers and peers and by optimizing the role of parents to assist students in distance learning patterns, learning from home, or online learning.

Moreover, the study found a high level of participation [$M = 3.92$] among students attending online masses. This means that students participate in online masses, which started as compliance with the requirements and because of the reward in the form of points incentives given by the school as part of their performance task (Petalla & Doromal, 2021). Eventually, it became a habit. This is supported by the theory of operant conditioning, in which behaviors or habits are formed because of rewards (McLeod, 2018). Online masses are an academic requirement in CLF classes, in which attendance is considered a minor performance task. Thus, participation is considered a requirement for a reward (favorable academic grade). Therefore, the participation of students is high because they are rewarded with satisfactory grades afterward.

The Difference in the Degree of Motivational Factors when Grouped according to Sex

Table 2. The Difference in the Degree of Motivational Factors when Grouped according to Sex

Variables	Sex	n	Mean	t	df	p
ON REQUIREMENT	Male	102	3.22	0.707	296	0.480
	Female	196	3.26			
ON MEANINGFULNESS	Male	102	3.32	2.321	296	0.021*
	Female	196	3.26			

	Female	196	3.47			
ON LITURGICAL CELEBRATION						
	Male	102	3.16	3.093	296	0.002*
	Female	196	3.35			
ON PARENTAL INFLUENCE						
	Male	102	3.08	0.159	296	0.874
	Female	196	3.09			

Note: the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

T-test independent samples were used to determine the significant difference in the degree of motivational factors in terms of "meaningfulness" and "liturgical celebration" when grouped according to sex. Table 2 shows a significant difference in the degree of motivational factors in attending online masses in terms of "meaningfulness" [$p = 0.021$] and "liturgical celebration" [$p = 0.002$] when grouped according to sex.

The results show that sex matters in students' degree of motivational factors. Women were more motivated than men to attend online masses in terms of meaningfulness and liturgical celebration. The liturgical celebration of the mass motivates women more than men because they associate meaning with it. Knowing how women are more motivated because they find meaning in the mass. Moreover, since they find meaning in the mass, they would easily be motivated in the liturgical celebration because the liturgical celebration is what we do in the mass. They tend to find more meaning than men.

This agrees with what Murphy (2016) has written about the gender gap in religiosity. She writes that generally but not universally, women are more religious than men, especially in Christianity, and that women involve themselves more in religious activities.

The Difference in the Level of Participation in Attending Online Mass of the Senior High School Students

Table 3. The Difference in the Level of Participation in Attending Online Mass of the Senior High School Students when Grouped according to Sex

Variable	Sex	n	Mean Rank	t	df	p
Level of Participation						
Sex	Male	102	3.78	2.363	296	0.019
	Female	196	3.99			

Note: the difference in the means is significant when $p < 0.05$

T-test independent samples were used to determine the significant difference in the degree of motivational factors in terms of "participation in online masses" that affect the online mass attendance of the Senior High School Students when grouped according to sex. There is a significant difference in the degree of motivational factors in terms of "participation in online masses" that affect the online mass attendance of Senior High School Students when grouped according to sex [$p = 0.019$].

Based on the results, women tend to participate more in the mass than men. This also reflects the previous results because women are more motivated by meaningfulness and liturgical celebration. This is indicative of the trend that women are more participative not just in online masses but overall in the life of the Church. The results are supported by Dillon (2018) when she reported a refreshed sense of enthusiasm among US Catholic women regarding their participation in the sacramental and communal life of the Church. The survey is consistent with the past, in which the trend is the same in general, that women participate more in the Church than men.

The Relationship between Motivational Factors and Participation in Attending Online Masses

Table 4. The Relationship between Motivational Factors and Participation of the Senior High School Students in Attending the Online Masses

Variables	r	df	p
Motivational Factors x Level of Participation	0.642	296	0.000

Note: the difference in the means is significant when $p < 0.05$

Pearson's r was used to determine the significant relationship between motivational factors that affect the online mass attendance of Senior High School students and their participation during the online masses. There is a significant relationship between motivational factors that affect the online mass attendance of Senior High School Students and their participation during the online masses ($p = 0.000$).

Therefore, motivational factors play a significant role in participation in online masses. This affects the attendance of students during online masses. The degree of motivational factors of students attending online masses affects the level of participation and the quality of students' attendance during online masses. This significant relationship is supported by Tagle (2016) when he said that young people are looking for a credible, believable, and authentic manifestation of Jesus. Students' motivation in attending online masses, which has a great correlation to their participation, should be taken as a manifestation that students, if motivated, would participate actively in the celebration of the virtual masses.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The results of the study suggest that motivational factors affect the participation of students in attending online masses. Students are more likely to participate fully, actively, and consciously when highly motivated. As reflected from the results, despite a moderate level of motivation common among the four given factors, the student's level of participation could be considered high in general. Therefore if the students manifest a deeper sense of appreciation of the mysteries of the Catholic faith that is being unfolded before them every time they participate in the liturgical celebration of the mass, we could expect that their full, active, and conscious participation springs forth not just only from mere compliance to a requirement but from a profound knowledge of the paschal mystery and an immense desire driven by love and responsibility to be in full communion with the members of the mystical body of Christ and more so to be one with Him, the spiritual Head, as the entire faithful commemorate the holiest and pleasing sacrifice before God the Father and as they partake of Him in the Holy Eucharist.

It is also imminent that due to the requirement of the school for students to attend and participate in the mass that may seem to be routinary at first, it gradually turns out to be a habit of commitment and reinforced responsibility and which eventually instills in them the awareness and understanding of the meaning and purpose of their participation in the liturgy and the appreciation of what they are partaking of in the holiest sacrifice of the mass. We also acknowledge that students with a strong religious orientation and doctrinal foundation from home and their local faith community were more highly motivated and engaged.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested:

- (i.) The Campus Ministry Office may communicate to the Diocese of Bacolod regarding the need to assertively reinforce the students' religious orientation and doctrinal foundation both at the home and parish level to encourage students' motivation and participation in attending masses online or face-to-face.
- (ii.) The Diocese of Bacolod may prescribe uniform and standardized Religious Education contents specific to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to be delivered by the CLF or Religious Education Teachers in their teaching.
- (iii.) The Senior High School Department may collaborate with the Campus Ministry Office to organize activities for the students to deepen their awareness and understanding of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to increase their motivation and participation in attending masses.
- (iv.) The institution may involve the parents in religious activities to allow themselves and their children to grow spiritually. They must also encourage and accompany them in their doctrinal formation by guiding them in choosing the right materials and platforms to further their knowledge about their Catholic Faith for them to appreciate the importance of the sacraments.
- (v.) Future researchers may conduct further research on the topic utilizing other variables like age, socio-economic status, availability of technology, and connectivity, among others. They could also utilize other motivational factors to validate the findings of the study. Further, replication of the study is also recommended for other Catholic schools to verify the result of this study. A qualitative inquiry can also be conducted to confirm the findings of the study.

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Ethical Approval:

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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