The Role of Religion in the Identity Construction of Adolescent Christians

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Abstract: **Adolescents have been of major interest to various scholarly studies. Seminal works by Erikson suggest that identity exploration predominantly takes place during adolescence. However, the link between religion and identity among adolescents still lacks scholarly attention. With that, the researchers aim to explain the phenomena by generating a new theoretical framework that utilizes Constructivist version of Grounded Theory by Charmaz (2006). In-depth interviews were conducted to 8 Adolescent Born Again Christians which aims to explore their experience of religion. Results indicate an emergent Processural Framework which elaborates the adolescent Christians' process of life transformation; (1) Latent Self, (2) Experience of Religion, (3) Acts of Negligence, (4) Phases of Adaptation and the dynamic cycle of their identity construction; (1) Extant Self, (2) Strategies, (3) Applied Reasoning, (4) Course of Identity. The study suggests that the role of religion had been evidently vital in the identity-construction of adolescents—especially among Born Again Christians.**

Keywords: **Adolescent Christians, Born Again, Grounded Theory, Religion, Identity Construction, Stable Phase, Unstable Phase.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 20th century, adolescents have been of major interest to various psychologists and scholarly studies for they were convinced that this period in a person's life was a significant time for religious development (Hall, 1905, p. 260). The emergence of numerous researches like that of Smith, Blanchard, Kools, and Butler (2016) have continued to confirm that this period is where the height of a person's sense of independence from his parents takes place, which results to the development of a more refined self-identity. In accordance to that, the researchers described adolescents as a group of people who are more inclined into self-discovery and are focused on understanding their realities, which is also related to the study of Ahmed (2004) where he discussed adolescence as the stage of active discoveries when it comes to religious experience.

The researchers viewed religion as a huge influence on a person's behavior, perceptions, and experiences; and it may possibly condition one's mind to think in a certain pattern unconsciously. These diverse experiences of religion may be seen as something of relevance in shaping the identity of adolescents. As Nelson (2009) mentioned, the relationship between identity and religion shows that one's experiences on religion may shape his identity formation.

Burke and Stets (2009, p. 3) stated that identity is a set of meanings and characteristics that identify an individual as a unique entity. The researchers defined identity as a self-conceived image of himself and his role in the society that he belongs in and that one's identity can be explained on how it was constructed through his experiences. To be more specific, the study characterized identity construction as an individual's integration to a religious institution's standards and practices through experience and how it leads into a refined course of identity. Timothy Wang (2015) added that religious identity formation is the process wherein a person strengthens his viewpoint and portrays those principles through the experience of religion.

Horney (1950) explained identity as the extent of being aware of one's self as solely a separate identity. Though recent studies, like that of Jenniina Sihvonen (2015), argued that the process of identity formation involves both personal and social orientations, and it is connected to the lifestyle of an individual, as those are the particular ways to define and express identity. She emphasized that identity construction is a process, and that identity flourishes dynamically during one's lifetime. The study wanted to affirm the latter statement by considering experiences of religion as an inclusion to the particular ways that were mentioned. Due to this, the study is centered on eliciting those experiences of adolescent Christians to give an explanation on how religion shapes an individual's identity. The researchers also focused on adolescent Christians in an attempt to prove that adolescence is the peak of changes in one's identity, in support of Erikson's (1968) proposed theory of Psychosocial Development wherein he claimed that adolescence is the stage where one notably explores his identity.

The whole concept of how religion taps one's identity still remains vague since Duriez and colleagues (Duriez et al., 2004 and Duriez and Soenens, 2006) insisted that the results of researches on the linkages between identity and experience of religion are difficult to interpret due to the lack of common theoretical framework on these phenomena. In consideration of the inadequacy of grand theories to give the groundwork for this matter, the researchers developed a theory which provided a substantial and descriptive framework that exhibits how identity construction transpires through one's experiences of religion.

II. BODY OF ARTICLE

Theoretical Framework:

The study used *Grounded Theory* by Kathy Charmaz (2006), and in the book Constructing Grounded Theory, it was discussed that the aim of the theory is to develop and to construct a new theory based on qualitative analysis and the data gathered from the participants. The researchers gained wider knowledge about the phenomenon being studied as they went through the data collection and analysis, which resulted to not only an answer to the formulated question, but also a more refined research question. Sheila Payne (2007) suggested that researchers should consider using the theory if there is a lack of theoretical framework about the specific topic and if the aim of the study is to give an explanation and understanding on how different experiences of the world influence people.

The researchers adopted this theory because the study focused on eliciting the experiences of adolescent Christians as they have gone through the process of the formation of their identity. The research not only described the religious experiences of these adolescent Christians, but also gave a theoretical explanation on how these experiences shape their identity. The theory directed the researchers in having a greater understanding on the key issues about the phenomena, since there are no grand theories that explain how the identity is constructed through experience of religion. This theory also guided the researchers in giving an explanation and formulating a new theoretical framework about the phenomenon.

Religion:

Scholars have started to understand religion as activities and a way of life, which are the modeling of distinct emotions, habits, practices, or virtues; of distinctive purposes, desires, passions, and commitments; and of distinctive beliefs and ways of thinking. Religion is also used as a language for discussing and explaining what an individual is doing and the reasons behind his actions (Dykstra, 1986).

According to Ambalu, Coogan, Feinstein, and Freedman (2013), religion has influenced human culture since prehistory, shaping everything from the politics of war and peace to notions of morality and issues of sex, reproduction, and family. On an individual level, it has also offered people a sense of meaning, purpose, and comfort, and even today, when science appears to offer answers to many of the world's mysteries, faith persists and many religions--including Christianity and Islam--are still growing. In fact, Dakhli, Dinkha, Matta and Aboul Hosn (2013) established that religion is found to be the most prominent coping strategy employed by both males and females.

Chuah, Gächter, Hoffmann, Tan (2016) proposed that religion impacts the ways on how individuals are socially identified and connected. Affiliation to the same religion may enhance group identity, may lend social identity, and in turn induce discrimination based on the similarity of interests of people. Thus, religious identities can serve as cues on the nature and degree of connectedness between interacting individuals.

James M. Nelson (2009) discussed in his book Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality that although Christianity is a diverse religious tradition, it still tends to have strong form of internal organization and highly emphasizes the agreements in belief as well as practice. As a result, Christianity has more of a central core of beliefs that are widely accepted in Christian organizations. These common beliefs would include the existence of a transcendent, personal God who created the universe, loves, and cares for it, and that humanity was created in the image of God and thus making an individual special and unique (p. 91).

An approximated 2.1 billion believers identify with Christianity around the globe. Today there are four broad divisions of Christianity, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Eastern, and Protestant; but within the category of Christianity, there are 11branches of Christianity's denomination, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Church, Anglican, Anabaptist, Baptist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Nondenominational, and United Church of Christ or Congregational. Evangelical, reformed and congregational churches are included in the United Church of Christ (McDarris, 2015).

Identity Construction:

According to Shahram Heshmat (2014), identity relates to our basic values which in turn, dictate the choices we make. This heavily implies that an individual's decisions on his lifestyle, relationships, and careers reflect who they are and what they value. In contrast to this, Hesmat also mentioned that only a few people choose their identities and instead merely internalize the values of their parents and or the dominant cultures. This may cause an individual with declined sense of identity to have uncertainties and feeling of discontentment. In order to avoid this issue, the study recommends that during early adolescence, an individual's major task for self-development is to differentiate themselves as a functional member of the society.

According to James E. Cote and Charles Levine (2002) in their book Identity, Formation, Agency, and Culture: A Social Psychological Synthesis, the process of identity formation has changed in significant ways for many young people who are attempting to make their way into adulthood. They had also found that this trend had caused an increase in identity-related problems. This could suggest that individuals actively pursue to look for their identities as preparations to being an adult, and that having a good grasp of who they are can help them amplify their construction of identity and make it more socially rewarding. However, adolescents who lack access to cultural resources may potentially have a less likely chance to have the same ideal identity formation.

As we grow older, one is more likely to seek out experiences and explanations that confirm, rather than challenge, our identity (Kristine Anthis, Feb. 2012). This could entail that individuals are more gravitated on searching for confirmation to their existing ideas of oneself and if it helps them conform to an idealistic self-image. Individuals much rather make sense of who they are and this may be because gaining an understanding of one's identity may lead to having a more coherent idea of their inner capabilities and potentials which can be instrumental to their growth. It was because of an argument that identity has components which include a sense of personal continuity and of uniqueness from other people (Net Industries, 2016).

In a study by Syed (2012), it was discussed that the current perspectives on identity target different aspects of this developmental process, and that these are both important to consider in understanding the matter of identity formation. His idea of identity promotes that because it's multifaceted; one should regard and focus on its multiple and varying components in different lenses and approaches. Understanding the issues of identity content, especially in reference to identity processes, is critical in gaining a fuller understanding of this developmental task.

Adolescent Christians:

Monica Pellerone (2015) stated that the term adolescence is coined from the Latin verb adolescere that implies "to grow into maturity". The stage of adolescence is the most crucial period as one has to settle a set of individual norms, values and beliefs and to define what goals to achieve in life. It is a period characterized by introspection, deep examination of self-consciousness, and the stage of great questions. An adolescent will first try to define his self and position himself relative to the world around him in order find his identity. The best way he can do this is by relating to others, to the society he lives in; to the school he studies in, to his close friends, and to the religion he is part of. (Vlaicu & Voicu , 2013).

Another matter is that the major growth responsibility among adolescence in society is forming identity and ego integrity. This means that they should be able to answer questions such as who am I? And where am I going? Searching for identity means that one can identify what matters most to him and also means that he or she can develop certain factors to assess and direct oneself and other's behavior (Adis Kraskian, Mujembari Hassan, Pasha Sharifi, and Majid Yoosefi Looyeh, 2011).

The relevance of the researches about the identity of adolescents is discussed in a recent study by Berdibayeva, Garber, Ivanov, Satybaldina, Smatova, and Yelubayeva (2016) where they also stated the importance of studying the mechanisms on the formation of the identity of adolescence; as the identity of the person determines life position in the process of upbringing and education, and adolescence as the age of intensive formation of value orientations that influence the formation of character and personality in general.

According to Tighe (2015), Born Again Christians negotiate and renegotiate who God is in their life. This connotes how individuals construct their identity through religion. The 'conversion' in the Born Again Christian context is when a person "… make[s] a personal decision to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, not as initiation into church membership" (Snider, 2015, p. 89).

Experience of Religion:

There are some people who adhere to have religiously inclined experiences not only for the good sake of their soul but for their well-being too; according to Pappas (2012), others actively participate in faith-based activities and routines because it is good not only for the soul, but to the mind and body as well. In agreement to Pappas' statement, a study published in 2012 by the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that the experience of religion can also make people feel happier than those who are non-believers. The happiness they feel comes from the social joy they are experiencing when they get along with others at a church they are attending, closer ties, and more importantly, the spontaneous life satisfaction they feel.

It is evident that in the Philippines, people manifest a profound belief in faith and it can be seen through their commitment in many familiar religious events, from the small gatherings up to such processions wherein majority of devotees attend. Charenteray (2016) stated that such commitments are appealing to young people because it gives them the idea that such experiences can help them build their identity. Due to this, an individual chooses to live sincerely with religion and value his religious experiences that nourish his spiritual self.

Sheker (2016) discussed that religion in the life of the world may also be the root cause of conflicts between people – religious conflicts that are still very inducing and can be experienced even at this point of time. This was elaborated by Singh in 2015, where he said that some of the raging religious conflicts occur not for the purpose of gaining societal benefits such as unification and social order but rather for control of the human mind, which is currently out of hand. In solution to this, it was suggested that religion can serve as one solution in shaping the peoples' comprehension of spirituality, and is the most convincing factor for personal and social transition, by means of encouraging good morals, values, and the practice of having positive approach in life.

Despite of all the current religious conflicts today's world have, Erickson (2016) stated that there are still adolescents who attend church more often, and are identified as the ones who have higher self-esteems, and may have a more positive perspective in life. Experiences of religion, such as worshipping and fellowship activities, can create communities of people who support each other, encouraging unity, love, peace, and hope.

Problem Statement:

Research Question 1: How does the experience of religion shape the identity of an adolescent Christian?

III.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

For this study, the researchers used the *qualitative approach* and utilized Constructivist version of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). A qualitative study may be inductive, which pertains to the formulation of a new theory, and it is also used to examine phenomena (Carbone, 2014). The goal of this research is to elicit a lived experience of a phenomenon, and this approach is specifically chosen by the researchers for they believe that this is the most suitable method in explaining the experiences of religion of the participants.

Research Locale:

The researchers selected 8 participants from National Capital Region and the province of Rizal, Philippines. The chosen setting constitutes various Christian congregations, and the participants came from these different institutions. The researchers conducted the interview at the agreed time and place, in accordance to the schedule of the participants.

Key Informant Selection:

Purposive sampling was used in this study; Saunders and Thornhill (2012) said that it represents a non-probability sampling technique, and can be effective in explaining the experiences of an individual. This sampling technique was utilized by the researchers because it allowed them to select and limit the participants who are most fitting in the determined criteria. The criteria for the participants are: An Evangelical Born-again Christian for 12 years or more, aged 18 and 19 to elicit how their experiences of religion influenced the entirety of their adolescent years, and a current member of a Christian congregation. Individuals who are or have been married, and have had children are not in the scope of the study.

Research Ethics:

A set of guidelines was observed by the researchers to ensure that the study is aligned with research ethics. First, the researchers observed the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality. The researchers have deleted the audio recordings of the interviews preceding the completion of the study to avoid leakages and disclosure of information. Principle of Justice was also observed to not only protect the dignity of the participants as they share their personal experiences, but also to respect their individual and religious differences. Non-maleficence, the interview will stop, and the researchers will also seek professional guidance if there would be an emotional disturbance from the participant. Additionally, the principle of integrity was observed. This was followed especially during the face-to-face interviews to secure honesty, and communications that are open and accurate.

Research Instruments:

The researchers conducted a *semi-structured interview* using a validated questionnaire consisting of 24 questions that enabled the participants to comfortably and transparently share their experiences. According to Glaser (1992), researchers should avoid using direct interview questions, as it may formulate biased data, and the researchers followed this principle in constructing questions for the in-depth interview. This *in-depth interview* is also the most suitable method of collecting elicited data for Grounded theory analysis, as it may build the structure of the newly formulated theory. The questionnaire used for the interview was validated by three (3) professionals who majored in Psychology.

Data Collection:

In obtaining elicited data, the researchers (a) briefed the participants to adequately inform them about the study. Then, it was followed by the (b) semi-structured interview, which allowed the researchers not only to acquire answers for the validated questions, but also to attain spontaneous and rich data that will support the formulation of a new theory. The method also allowed the generation of in-depth explanatory accounts of data. Following that is the (c) debriefing of the participants, to avoid deception and confusion on their behalf. (d) Testing the validity of the data, Creswell (2014, p.251) suggested several validity strategies such as to Triangulate or to connect the data sources of information from the perspective of the participants and to clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study by having reflectivity; this is for open and honest narrative that will resonate well with the readers. Finally, the researchers began the (e) transcription of data, to classify analytical explanations and this allowed them to develop familiarity, as they went along the analysis of the collected data.

Data Analysis:

The study utilized procedures that were formulated by Kathy Charmaz (2006) in her book Constructing Grounded Theory. After the collection and transcription of data, the researchers began the (a) coding in developing the initial categories using strategies. Next to that is the (b) Memo-writing in formulating initial insights and interpretation about the categories (c) Theoretical Sampling, Saturation, and Sorting in getting the most necessary data together with its in-depth meanings and in testing and developing categories. This also identified the core category, which in turn determined the study's theoretical framework. The researchers then (d) reconstructed the theory, to examine the categories and the possibility of

ISSN 2394-9694

International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences
Vol. 4, Issue 4, pp: (7-18), Month: July – August 2017, Available at: **www.noveltyjournals.com**

the emergence of a process by using *processural analysis*. Next is the (e) writing of the draft, to see clearer connections and implications between the categories and the process. (f) Reflecting on the research process is considered as the final stage of data analysis, and this is where the researchers validated the formulated theory by reviewing the collected data. This will also test the credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness of the newly formulated theory.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Processural Analysis and Categories:

The researchers interpreted the data gathered by utilizing the *constructivist point of view* of grounded theory which emphasizes both data that were collected from the participants and the researchers' analysis. The researchers analyzed the data through coding in accordance to Charmaz (2006, p. 131), who stated that the theory will depend and cannot stand outside of the researcher's views. The following are the categories that were produced from the codes and processural analysis.
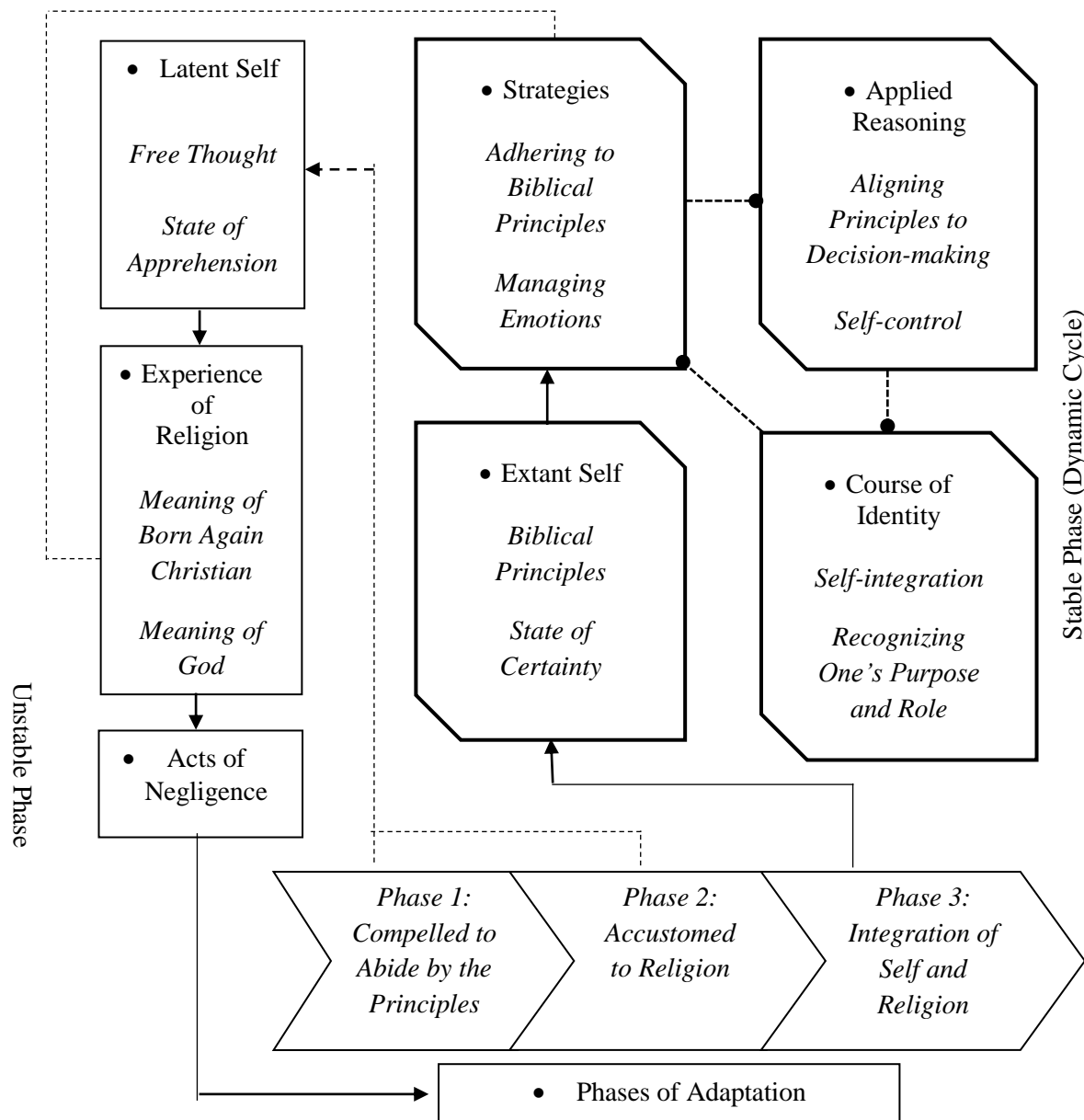
Processural Framework:

Figure 1: CASE ID Framework

Unstable Phase

Stable Phase

Phases of Adaptation

----------● Interchanging Categories

Unstable Phase:

This phase pertains to the onset process of life transformation of an adolescent Christian. The role of religion is evidently significant and crucial in this phase due to the conflicts adolescents had gone through while their identity is being constructed. This phase includes an adolescent's (1) Latent Self, (2) Experience of Religion, (3) Acts of Negligence, and (4) Phases of Adaptation.

In an attempt to recognize the meaning of religion and engage in a more intimate relationship with God, adolescents begin to immerse themselves and experience their religion through various activities; though in earlier developments of this phase, an individual may already encounter religion but fail to fully grasp its meaning. Acts of negligence can still occur in this phase due to the conflicts between the religion and one's beliefs.

Adolescent Christians may find adjusting to the demands and belief system of religion initially challenging. From this, the phases of adaptation arise wherein they might primarily perceive religion as an obligation, but gradually engage into it. However, the potential shift wherein the adolescents return to their latent selves is still a possibility. Upon surpassing the initial phases, they can proceed to the preceding phase where self and religion integrate. The researchers presented a vital process of transformation on how adolescent Christians adapt to and internalize religion.

Latent Self:

This pertains to one's state before the immersion into the religion and its practices. In the latent self, there is also an adverse perception of one's self.

Free Thought. This is the tendency to limit an individual's decisions solely on one's accord. The individual's judgments center around what one thinks and feels is right; decisions are made without any basis, and an inconsistency with one's beliefs and behavior is apparent. This tendency generates impulsivity, which often leads to malpractices and unwarranted aggression.

State of Apprehension. Expressing uncertainties brought about by an adverse perception of one's self. This often leaves a feeling of discontentment with one's religion, unsettlement about his salvation, as evident in one's pessimistic outlook of life. Various forms of distress are also felt if the individual disregards one's religious principles.

 "Kunwari nagsimba ako ngayon. Tapos pagbalik ko, yosi dito, bisyo dito, mura dito." (For example, I'll attend mass today. Then when I return after church, I'd smoke, engage in vices, and curse everywhere.) – R1

"dati kasi sobrang dati nag-aano kami syempre open forum sa church parang, dati yung ano sakin sobrang immature ako, sobrang sensitive ganyan tas biglang parang ngayon kunyari nag open-forum kami ngayon tas yung parang na le-less na yung sinasabi nila sayo kasi nga nagi-improve ka na, nag ma-mature ka na yun." (We had open forums in Church before and I was told I'm very immature, sensitive but when we have those forums now people tell me I have improved and matured instead.) – R6

Experience of Religion:

This is viewed as the root of the different strategies in adhering to biblical principles; it causes a person to immerse one's self to various religious activities and thus, leading to the shaping of one's identity. The application of the religious beliefs on the person's actions becomes evident in one's experiences. One does not only view religion as an existing idea, but there is already the practical contact to it and its principles.

Meaning of Born-Again Christian. Being a Born-Again Christian pertains to one's membership and a sense of belongingness to a certain congregation. This also points to how one complies to the existing religious practices and principles, and being a Born-Again Christian allows one to perceive religion as an explanation to questions and resolution to doubts during the state of apprehension.

Meaning of God. As an individual experiences religion, one simultaneously constructs a personal image of God, and this constructed image serves as a basis for one's actions. The development of an intimate relationship also roots from perceiving God as a paternal figure, which is discerned as a source of salvation, thus strengthening one's commitment and devotion to the religion.

"Religion? Kasi ahh. Ayun yung road natin to salvation eh, to eternal life." (Religion? Religion is our road to salvation, and to eternal life.) –R1

"Dapat i-apply mo sa buhay mo. Kaya ka nga Kristiyano, kasi para mai-apply mo sa buhay mo at para mai-share mo pano ka makaka-akay ng iba." (You should apply it in your own life. That's exactly why you're a Christian, so that you can apply these to your own life and so you could share how you'll be able to invite others in.) –R1

"Kasi you know na… there's a God in your life and that you represent that God, and ayaw mo na pumangit yung tingin ng ibang tao sa God na yun, kasi you represent God na eh, so parang pag gumawa ka ng masamang bagay, you also… parang dinumihan mo na din yung image ni God na sine-serve mo." (You are aware that there's a God in your life and that you represent that God; of course, you don't want other people to see your God negatively. So, if you do a wrong act or a bad thing, it's like you tainted the image of God you serve since you represent Him.) – R3

Acts of Negligence:

Since one's commitment to religious activities might be inconsistent, the individual struggles to properly abide by these principles. This is a stage wherein one's free thought and biblical concepts are conflicting, which results to behavioral inconsistencies.

"kasi leader na ko nun eh. Ano, may mga ginagawa pa rin ako na parang eh.. Hindi ko pa rin inaano si Lord. Lagi kong sinasabi sa iba na ganto ganyan dapat, pero ako mismo hindi ko ginagawa. Tapos sobrang unfaithful ako kay Lord nun. Pero leader na ako nun ha." (I was already a leader at that point. I was always telling people to do this and that, but I myself do not abide them. I was very unfaithful to the Lord even despite my position in Church.) – R8

Phases of Adaptation:

A gradual yet crucial process of development that occurs when the state of apprehension arises, and adjustments are made in attempt to minimize this. These phases are considered as the most significant in constructing one's identity, as it is a long-term process and are considered instrumental in challenging one's commitment to religion before transitioning to a more secured identity.

Compelled to Abide by the Principles. This is the phase wherein one perceives religion as an obligation rather than a personal choice. There is inadequate effort and willingness to understand the true essence of their religion as it is imposed to the individual.

Accustomed to Religion. This is the phase wherein the individual begins to immerse into religion. However, this particular stage can mislead a person; the individual may seem to have a consistent set of principles and beliefs to adhere but are not evident in one's actions. One could view this phase as the concluding stage of having a secured identity, and failure to overcome this phase may direct the person to retreat to his latent self.

Integration of Self and Religion. This phase is where an individual becomes firm on religion and consistently applies it to one's behavior. Individuals in this phase view religion not as a factor to change holistically, but rather as a motivation for self improvement; thus the balance between one's notions and principles from the bible are met and realigned. Reaching this phase may allow the individual to develop the stable course of identity.

"Tas ano yun, di ako makakapagsimba? Diba parang ano naman.. Pero dati talaga, sapilitan lang yun. Napipilitan lang ako." (I don't really attend Church before. If I were, It'sbecauseI was forced to.) – R1

"It's more of naging mahal mo na din yung ganun. Kasi pag nakasanayan, mamahalin mo na rin talaga yung ginagawa mo eh. Parang, devoted ka na dito. Bakit ka pa aalis, diba?." (I've come to love it. I got used to it enough that I began to really like what I was doing. I've become devoted. Why would I leave?) – R1

"Pag nagwo-worhip, syempre masaya, tapos alam mo yun parang walang problema, actually wala nang problema talaga pag andun. Kumpleto, secured yung identity mo. Parang di mo na kailangang maging people pleaser ganun."(It's fun to worship .It makes one feel like you have no problem. Actually, all your problems do go away because you're already complete your identity is secured. You.don't have to please anyone.)– R2

Stable Phase:

The phase of stability does not only show the process of the involved categories, but the connection on how these can dynamically interchange throughout the cycle; (1) Extant Self, (2) Strategies, (3) Applied Reasoning, and (4) Course of Identity.

This is the adolescents' phase of developing a sense of security with their religion, actions, and selves. The strategies and its application for the management of their behavior lead to the adolescents' more intact identity. The individual's course of identity is a dynamic cycle along with the strategies and applied reasoning. Though the categories in this phase can interchange, its stability is still retained and may be strongly integrated.

Extant Self:

A phase wherein there is an evident change in the individual's actions and viewpoints as a result of one's experience of religion. A more refined set of beliefs are reflected in the individual's consistent behavior and the development of an improved perception of self is apparent.

Biblical Principles. These biblical principles serve as the basis of the actions one performs and the decisions he makes. One's adherence to these principles results to a more managed lifestyle and emotional stability.

State of Certainty. One's assured sense of self develops due to gaining certainties and resolving doubts from religion and from within. This state also enables one to attain an ensured sense of salvation.

"Kapag sinabi ng bible na mali, mali. Pag sinabi ng bible na hindi, hindi. At kapag sinabi ng bible na yes, yes, at pag sinabi ng bible na tama, tama." (If the bible says it's wrong, it's wrong. If the bible says no, it's no. And when the bible says yes, then yes. And when the bible says that it's right, it's right.) –R1

"I'm free to do things. Also, I'm secured Secured ako kasi alam mo yun, kahit ilang beses mag-fall short, you are still loved. You are loved beyond measures." (I'm free to do things. Also, I'm secured because I know that no matter how many times I fall short, I am still loved. I am loved beyond meausres.) – R5

Strategies:

Actions rooted from the experiences of religion. These also serve as another basis for decision-making. One's consistent behavior reflects these strategies as it simultaneously strengthens his secured identity.

Adhering to Biblical Principles. Considered as the foundation of these strategies, these principles strengthen one's beliefs and serves as an affirmation for one's actions. However, these principles can be interpreted differently at times, which may result to conflicting ideas.

Managing Emotions. A technique that relies on adhering to biblical principles to control an individual's emotions and which will follow one's constructed image of God.

"…pero kasi nakalagay sa bible, which is masama lang is pagmumura at pagsisinungaling.. Di mo dapat gawin yun kasi nakalagay sa bible yun" (It's already stated in the bible that cursing and lying are wrong. You shouldn't do those since it says in the bible that you shouldn't.) – R1

"And then yung emotion, kapag sobrang lungkot mo diba… parang… I tend to pray din… na God will help me, and I think naman na it's really helpful…" (When it comes to emotions, there are times that you're just sad. I tend to pray to God so He'd help me, and I think that's it's helpful for me.) – R4

Applied Reasoning:

The state where one applies strategies to decision-making; this reflects on one's actions, and one's course of identity is established further. This applied reasoning is also based on the strategies for having a consistent behavior of the individual.

Aligning Principles to Decision-making. In the process of decision-making, individuals tend to rely on the biblical principles for discernment and affirmation for one's behavior.

Self-control or Discipline. Improved and managed behavior is more evident, and it is further reinforced through various form of self-discipline. An individual displays resilience and to be held accountable for one's actions.

"Hindi ko alam gagawin ko, pwede ka mag seek ng counselling tapos matutulungan ako ng religion sa decision-making kasi yun lang kasi yung word ni God laging parang nag riring-out lang sa heart ko ng paulit- ulit. Kasi ang hirap naman mag rely lang sa sarili ko. Kasi diba syempre yung nature natin may… you know kakaiba naman." (I don't really know what I'd do. You can seek counseling and then your religion will also help in decision-making. God's Word is what always rings out repeatedly in my heart. It'd be difficult if I only rely on myself, since we all know that human nature is quite bizarre.) – R2

"Ayun nako-control ako agad, naka-calm down ako agad. Parang oo magagalit ako pero di na tatagal yun. Parang ako narin mismo nagre-remind sa sarili ko, tas Lord ano ba? Pag nag- pray na ko, okay na. Kasi pag nag-pray ako, parang ire-remind sakin ng holy spirit, lahat ng verses or anything na applicable dun sa sitwasyon na yun. Kaya ayon." (I can control it, I can calm down immediately. Yes, I will get mad, but I won't allow it to last long. I remind myself and then ask help from God. Once I've prayed, things become okay. This happens because when I pray, it's like the Holy Spirit reminds me of all the biblical verses that are applicable to that exact situation. That, solely, is enough to help me control my emotions.) – R2

Course of Identity:

Stability becomes apparent in the course of identity. This is the process wherein one considers the various strategies to be utilized in managing one's actions. The course of identity is dynamic; it can interchange along with the other categories in the cycle.

Self-integration. Having contentment, satisfaction, security, and integrity with one's religion and one's self. After the acceptance of the biblical principles and consistently applying it to actions, an individual may perceive one's self as whole and intact.

Recognizing One's Purpose and Role. Acknowledgement of one's purpose contributes to the role and responsibilities that an individual portrays as a Born-again Christian. These responsibilities are anchored to biblical principles and to the constructed image of God. Sharing the experience of religion is also essential in embodying one's principles.

"So ayun pag sa decision making, alam mo na eh. Aware ka na sa kung sino ka na, aware ka na sa identity mo. Parang alam mo na agad gagawin." (When it comes to decision-making,. it's like you already know. You're aware of who you are, of your identity).– R8

"Secured yung identity ko ayun, kasi nga diba sinabi ni Lord na you're my daughter, you're an apprentice. So pag sinabi mo yun tanggal lahat ng insecurities, na parang kailnagan ko ng ganito para ma-please ko si ganito, para makapag- show off sa ganito, para maano sila sakin. Nawala lahat, as in nakuntento lang ako" (My identity is secured because the Lord said that you're my daughter, you're an apprentice. When I heard that, all my insecurities vanished. Before, I felt like I needed to do this and that to please whoever, to show myself off, to draw people to me. But when I heard those words from God, all of those things disappeared. I just felt contented.) —R2

V. CONCLUSION

Religion is not the outset of identity construction, but it evidently served as a basis in the shaping of adolescent Christians' identity. Adolescent Christians' subjectively adapt their experiences through religion; though these elicited experiences vary, these collectively point to the same process of identity formation. The role of religion in shaping the identity is not only dependent on its principles and ideologies, but mainly through the direct experience of it. Adolescent Christians' experience of religion resulted to various strategies which they utilized in the course of their identity.

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