



**LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES ON RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ITS IMPLICATION ON
VALUES FORMATION PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

The descriptive-qualitative study determined the experiences of learners on religious instruction in public schools and their implications on values formation program in the Schools District of San Enrique during the school year 2022-2023. In-depth interview was utilized to gather data. Phenomenology was used as the research designed of the study. A validated researcher-made interview schedule was used as an instrument to gather data. Voice and video recorders were also used to gather and document participants' answers. Based on the results, it was found out that participants' view religious instruction as teaching about God, teaching right values, and teaching how to pray. Likewise, it was found out that their experiences on religious instruction were learning how to pray, learning more about God, strengthening faith to God, and changing values.

Keywords: *Religious Instruction, Public Schools, Values Formation Program*

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INTRODUCTION

Religious instruction is meant to provide opportunities for people to promote spiritual development through reflections on various religious topics such as the creation and origin of the universe, the concepts of good and evil, the faith in God, and the promotion of good values (Becker, 2022).

According to Legaspi (2000), the aim of teaching religion is not only to elucidate the doctrines of the church but also to inspire young minds to live up to their faith which can be manifested through their active involvement in the activities of the church especially during Sundays.

However, the teaching of religion has been a challenge to schools nowadays as learners and youths immerse more in temporal affairs and technology that consequently lead to them neglecting or escaping Sunday masses or any religious activities and worship.

This issue has become prevalent among learners that is why the state encourages the promotion of religious instruction to children in public schools in elementary and secondary within the regular class hours. The goal is to promote citizen values formation, particularly molding the youths (Roco, 2002).

According to Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools (2003), the church together with the educators have the responsibility to ensure that catechism is being taught in the public

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schools. However, this depend on the school’s context, as schools have different religious demographics.

Along with such concern, there is an immense need to have catechists who are competent, skillful and knowledgeable in handling religious instructions. The catechists should also respond to the needs of the time, foster deep faith and spiritually, and serve as witnesses of God.

As a response to this need, the Mary Help of Christians parish church has been forming and training their catechists and sending them to different public elementary schools in the Schools District of San Enrique.

In this light, the researcher conducted the research study to find out the experiences of learners in their religious instructions and their implications to the values formation program of the schools.

Schools District of San Enrique during the school year 2022-2023.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology, research design, participants of the study, data collection techniques, research tool, and data analysis that will be applied. The purpose of this study is to determine the experiences of learners on religious instruction in public

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schools and its implication on values formation program in the Schools District of San Enrique during the school year 2022-2023.

Research Method

The research method (Rudledge, 2020) utilized in the study was qualitative research using in-depth interview.

During the interview, the interviewee was allowed to choose a place in a distance which was convenient for her so that she could think better about the series of questions on a certain issue. The goal was to obtain the main or the necessary views of the participants in a certain issue in a social context through the responses of the participants to the questions.

Research Design

The study used phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was seen as a philosophical method for carrying out qualitative investigations. Phenomenology is the study of subjective interpretations of experience with the aim of understanding how others see the world and how their perspectives may differ from popular ones. Phenomenology is widely utilized in disciplines including psychology, sociology, and social work. It involves interviewing subjects to find out about their impressions.

Phenomenology, according to Smith (2013), is the study of consciousness structures as perceived from a first-person perspective. Since an experience is an encounter with or knowledge of an object, its intentionality and direction toward something constitute its fundamental

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structure. By virtue of its meaning or content (which symbolizes the object) and the proper enabling conditions, an experience is directed toward an object.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were twenty (20) learners, eleven (11) of which were male and nine were female. They were purposely selected according to their willingness to participate in the study and their availability as agreed among the parents of the learners with the researcher. The twenty (20) learners were within the two schools of the Schools District of San Enrique; were ten (10) learners from Bantayan Elementary School and another ten (10) learners from Cubay Elementary School.

Sampling Design

The study used a purposive sampling design. A non-probability sample chosen with consideration for the study's purpose and population characteristics is known as a purposive sample. Judging, selecting, or subjective sampling are other names for purposeful sampling.

The researcher chose the potentials participants through the helped of their respective adviser from grades four to grade six of two selected schools in the Schools District San Enrique.

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Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule based on the learners' experiences on religious instruction in public schools and its implication on values formation program.

The interview schedule has three (3) questions focusing on the purpose of study.

With the participants' consent, voice and video recorders were also employed for data collection and recording.

Validity of the Research Instrument

A panel of jurors, chosen for their qualifications in science, testing and assessment, and research, was asked to validate each question for revision and review before the validity of the interview schedule created by the researcher, adviser, and Graduate School Dean was determined.

The appropriateness, meaningfulness, accuracy, and utility of the conclusions a researcher draws are all considered aspects of validity. The substance and format of content-related evidence of validity must match the definition of variables and the sample of subjects to be measured. It also aids in the validation of the questionnaire's items (Good & Scates, 2002).

Using the appropriate Good and Scates form (Appendix A), the panel of validators' comments, changes, and suggestions about the interview schedule were taken into consideration.

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Data Gathering Procedures

To conduct the study, the researcher got permissions from the adviser, the Graduate School Dean, the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Office of the District Supervisors, school heads, and individual participants. To conduct the interviews, the researcher personally visited the communities, schools, and locations that were convenient for the participants.

The researcher conducted an interview to the participants but prior to this, the researcher encouraged the participants to sign a waiver of permission relative to the conduct of the study.

Using in-depth interview, in order to fully record the interviewee's words, voice and video recorders were offered. After conducting several interviews, the researcher combined all of the data that was gathered. After that, the data was collected and subjected to thematic analysis.

Data Analyses

A thematic approach was used to analyze the collected data.

Finding patterns or themes in qualitative data is known as thematic analysis. The purpose of a thematic analysis, according to Maguire & Delahunt (2017), is to identify themes, or noteworthy or captivating patterns within the data, and then use those themes to explain the findings or make a point. This involves compiling, evaluating, and interpreting the collected data to make sense of it.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated the experiences of twenty learners in the Schools District of San Enrique during the school year 2022-2023. The research used a qualitative method with in-depth interviews to gather data and a phenomenological design. The participants were selected based on their willingness and availability. Data was collected using a researcher-made interview schedule, and voice and video recorders were also used. The questionnaire underwent content validation by a panel of experts.

The following are the findings of the study:

The learners' views on religious instruction were teaching about God, teaching right values and teaching how to pray. The learners' experiences on religious instruction were learning how to pray, learning more about God, strengthening faith to God, changing values and going to church.

The implications of religious instruction on the values formation program focus on helping the learners grow spiritually and create a close relationship with God as a result of the experiences they had during religious instruction. This allows for a positive impact on how values are developed by shifting the learners' values in the direction of goodness. Further, they came to understand the benefit and significance of prayer in their lives. They also gained knowledge of religious teaching; their faith started to deepen, which had a highly favorable impact on the development of moral principles.

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Insights

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The integration of religious instructions in the public school curriculum has numerous benefits in the lives of the learners especially in nurturing their spiritual development, making the learners who value God's involvement in their daily endeavors.

Given the insights, the need to continue holding religion classes may become a great way to develop learners who do not just nurture academics but also value good manners that may help them survive through the rigorous academic demands.

The religious instructions can also be an avenue for learners to share their insights with their fellow learners so that they may become catalyst of good behavior, thereby making them good influence to their fellow youths.

Immersing learners through the teaching of Christ may also positively affect them through time, which may lead them in the right path towards fulfilling their dreams.

Because religious instructions have positive effect on learners, the need for proper training for religious instructions may be highlighted, so that effective integration is achieved. Thus, religion classes may become a potent force in nurturing potential individuals who champion good values.

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CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings and insights arrived in the study, the following recommendations were forwarded:

The teaching of religious instruction in school should be institutionalized and supported by all teachers, if possible, by providing an avenue and best place during the class.

Religious instruction even though optional should be encouraged to have an active participation of the learners in schools.

Religious instruction should also be collaboratively done not only by the volunteer teacher teaching the religious instruction but also the parents of the learners.

Financial and material support should also be extended to religious instruction by the school through providing a regular financial support from the MOOE of the school and be reflected in the School Improvement Plan and Annual Implementation Plan.

A similar study is also encouraged to be conducted in the future which considers other variables not used nor mentioned in the study.

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