

## Religious practices and the service engagement of catholic senior high school students

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**Received:** 24 February 2026  
**Available Online:** 2 April 2026

**Revised:** 27 March 2026  
**DOI:** 10.5861/ijrsm.2026.26016

**Accepted:** 30 March 2026



ISSN: 2243-7770  
Online ISSN: 2243-7789

OPEN ACCESS

### **Abstract**

This study determined the relationship between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic Senior High School students of Divine Word College of San Jose during the Academic Year 2024-2026. Using a descriptive correlational design, data were collected from 168 out of 412 students through a validated 25-item questionnaire rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The findings revealed a Very High level of religious practices in recollection activities and Mass attendance, indicating that students consistently and actively participate in spiritual formation programs and religious celebrations. Retreat participation was rated High, indicating that students generally engage in retreats, though slightly less consistently than in other religious activities. Service engagement was also rated Very High in community extension activities and donation drives, demonstrating that students frequently involve themselves in outreach efforts and willingly offer their time, effort, and resources to assist others. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient revealed a strong, highly significant positive correlation between religious practices and service engagement, indicating that greater involvement in religious activities is closely associated with greater participation in service-related initiatives. These results suggest that sustained engagement in religious formation activities contributes to students' active involvement in community service and outreach programs. Thus, this study recommends that the student council and other student organizations may take active roles in planning and leading community extension and donation drive activities. Moreover, the school may establish regular, consistent service programs to maintain

students' high level of participation in community service.

**Keywords:** religious practices, service engagement, catholic education, faith-based education, participation in community

## Religious practices and the service engagement of catholic senior high school students

### 1. Introduction

Religion is a broad cultural system that encompasses rituals, prayers, and worship to connect with the divine and express faith. This also addresses the moral and ethical principles that guide behavior and decision-making. (Liyanapathirana & Akroyd, 2023). In a school setting, religion is expressed through religious practices, which helps students form their sense of service. The study "Local Beliefs and Religious Practices of Parmalim in North Sumatra" by Marahuddin et al. (2025) reveals that religious practices are not merely cultural traditions but meaningful expressions of faith that shape members' values, attitudes, and behaviors. Religion plays a vital role in forming identity, strengthening responsibility, and fostering a strong sense of community belonging. Moreover, the study emphasizes that consistent participation in religious practices reinforces commitment to shared values and promotes active involvement within the community.

Community extension activities are programs and initiatives that enable individuals to apply religious values in practical ways that benefit the wider community. The study by Agustina and Saona (2025) highlights how religious extension workers influence the development of religious moderation through community outreach and educational programs. These efforts help individuals cultivate values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and social responsibility. Continuous involvement in such activities encourages active participation in service-oriented initiatives, demonstrating how religious practice can translate into meaningful action. At Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ), students' engagement in community extension programs reflects the integration of religious values with concrete efforts to serve and support the community.

According to the news article by Divine Word College of San Jose (2024), senior high school students (SHS) engage in religious practices or faith-related activities such as recollections and masses as well as community services, or the tasks carried out by the students to benefit the local community, such as donation drives, clean-up drives, and outreach programs that allow the students to be involved and contribute not only inside the school but also outside the school premises or in the larger community. These activities contribute to the formation of students' sense of service. The SHS students of DWCSJ are a meaningful group to study because their development goes beyond academics. The values also shape their growth and the school's experiences (Divine Word College of San Jose, 2024). As one of the Catholic institutions in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, DWCSJ emphasizes spiritual formation for senior high school students through activities such as recollections that allow students to reflect and develop a closer relationship with God, and masses that strengthen students' service engagement by nurturing values of faith and community. At the same time, the school keeps the importance of service engagement, or the student's involvement in acts of service, by encouraging participation in outreach programs where the students extend help to individuals, groups, or communities; donation drives where the students gather goods, supplies, or resources to share with those in need; and environmental clean-up drives where students help clean and maintain school community surroundings. This study seeks to examine whether there is a significant correlation between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at the Divine Word College.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the correlation between religious practices and service engagement of senior high school students from Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of religious practices observed by the SHS students, as assessed by the frequency of their participation in recollection activities, attending mass (e.g., Sunday or First Friday Mass), and retreat? (2) What is the level of Service Engagement demonstrated by the SHS students, as quantified by their involvement in terms of community extensions and donation drives? (3) Is there a significant correlation between the students' level of religious practices (recollection activities, attending mass, retreats) and their level of service engagement (community extension activities and donation drive activities)?

**Significance of the Study** - This scientific investigation examined how religious practices instigated by Divine Word College of San Jose influence the participation of Senior High School Catholic Students of the said institution in community service. The study could help students see that attending Masses and participating in recollections and retreats are not only requirements for graduation but also opportunities to build their values and sincerely learn and grow in service to others. Also, the study may guide teachers in connecting lessons with values such as compassion, responsibility, and service, allowing them to encourage students to apply what they learn in class to real-life community involvement. In addition, the study may help the school administration understand how the school's religious practices influence students' involvement in service activities. It may also serve as a basis for improving or strengthening programs that promote the school's mission of forming students who live out faith, service, and responsibility in the community. The study and its results may inspire collaboration between students and community organizations. The research may also support students in developing empathy and compassion to address some of the unmet needs of people in their communities. Thus, the study may help Catholic institutions understand how religious practices can encourage students to become more involved in service and outreach activities. It may also serve as a basis for strengthening faith-based programs that promote compassion, responsibility, and active service to others, especially among the youth. Lastly, this study may serve as a guide for future researchers seeking to explore the connection among religion, compassion, and community service.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study aimed to determine if there is a correlation between religious practices and service initiatives among Senior High School students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Researchers gathered information by administering a survey questionnaire to respondents about their religious practices (participation in Mass, prayer, recollection, and other faith-based activities) and their involvement in service initiatives (Donation drives, outreach cleanup drives, and other community involvement). The study was conducted during the Academic Year 2025-2026. The information collected from the students was the basis for the researchers' further conclusions. The conclusions drawn from this study will not set the global standards of how religious practices correlate with service initiatives. Furthermore, their responses were based on perceptions of the relationship between these two variables among Divine Word College of San Jose's Senior High School students. Moreover, the questionnaires used for this study were administered face-to-face by the researcher. The study used a Likert-type questionnaire to solicit information. The study is limited to Senior High School students currently enrolled at Divine Word College of San Jose during the 2025-2026 academic year who are Catholic.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, a non-experimental quantitative approach used to describe variable characteristics and examine naturally occurring relationships between them without manipulating the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, a descriptive design was used to describe the levels of religious practices and service engagement. Moreover, a correlational design was used to determine the significant relationship between the two variables.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of the study were the catholic senior high school students of Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level (Ellen, 2022), the computed sample size from a total population of 412 students was 168. The respondents were chosen using simple random sampling to avoid biases.

**Research Instrument** - The study used a researcher-made questionnaire based on the researchers' readings. A 4-point Likert scale of Level of Agreement was applied: (4) strongly agree, (3) agree, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree. To ensure the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaires, the researchers used expert validation. Three faculty members of Divine Word College of San Jose, particularly from the Senior High School Department, were involved in the validation. They examined and checked the statements under the variables, which are (a) Religious Practices and (b) Service Engagement. The three experts, together with the research adviser, evaluated the clarity, appropriateness, and reliability and validity of each item in the questionnaire to ensure that the instrument is suitable and accurate for the study. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the

final copy of the instrument.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - Before conducting the survey, the researchers asked permission from the research adviser, the Senior High School Academic Coordinator, and the Basic Education Principal of Divine Word College of San Jose to distribute the survey questionnaires to Senior High School Catholic students. After receiving approval, the researchers coordinated with class advisers and presidents to schedule the proper time for data collection. The tool used in this study is a paper-based survey questionnaire prepared by the researchers and reviewed by their adviser. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) and had two parts: the first focused on religious practices, while the second focused on service engagement. The researchers personally distributed the survey forms to respondents and collected them 2 days later. Respondents were given enough time to answer, and the forms were collected immediately after completion. The gathered data were organized, tallied, and analyzed using simple descriptive and correlational analyses to compute means and assess the relationship between the two variables. All participants were asked to answer the survey honestly and sincerely. All information was treated with confidentiality and only used for academic research purposes.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - To analyze the data, the researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of religious practices and service engagement among the students; thus, the weighted mean was computed. Moreover, inferential statistics were used to test the significant relationship between the two variables. In this study, Pearson’s R Moment Correlation was applied.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers assumed that the respondents answered the survey questionnaire honestly and sincerely, based on their actual practices and experiences. The respondents’ participation in the study was voluntary; therefore, the respondents also had the freedom to decline or withdraw at any time without consequences. The confidentiality of the respondents was strictly observed; no personal names or identifying information was requested or recorded in the survey. All data collected was used solely for academic purposes and was treated with utmost respect and privacy. The researchers also ensured that the questions included in the survey do not cause harm, discomfort, or offense to the participants, as they pertain only to specific religious practices and service-engaged activities commonly experienced by the SHS Catholic students of DWCSJ.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Religious Practices in terms of Recollection Activities, Attending Mass, and Retreat*

Indicators (Recollection Activities)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I actively participate in recollection activities organized by the school.	3.22	High
2. Recollection activities help me reflect on my faith and personal values.	3.33	Very High
3. I take recollection activities seriously.	3.25	High
4. The lessons from recollection activities motivate me to help others.	3.30	Very High
5. I find that the quiet time during recollections allows me to understand my purpose in life better.	3.40	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.30	Very High
Indicators (Attending Mass)		
1. I regularly attend school masses.	3.46	Very High
2. Attending mass strengthens my faith.	3.48	Very High
3. I participate attentively during the Mass.	3.42	Very High
4. Attending Mass encourages me to serve others.	3.27	Very High
5. I find that the homilies (sermons) during Mass provide practical guidance on how to live a life of service.	3.46	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.42	Very High
Indicators (Retreat)		
1. I actively participate in school retreat activities.	3.15	High
2. Retreat activities help me grow spiritually.	3.16	High
3. I feel closer to God after attending a retreat.	3.22	High
4. My retreat experiences inspire me to become more helpful to others.	3.20	High
5. The spiritual atmosphere of a retreat makes me more aware of the needs of the marginalized in society.	3.23	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.19	High
OVERALL MEAN	3.30	Very High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of religious practices, including recollection activities, attendance at Mass, and retreats, with an overall mean of 3.33, interpreted as high. The composite mean of 3.30 for recollection activities, interpreted as Very High, indicates that students actively participate in recollection activities. The results indicate that recollection plays an important role in students’ spiritual lives. This finding aligns with Yusuf and Razak (2023), who found that students who regularly participate in religious activities exhibit stronger moral awareness and positive behavior. Moreover, the highest mean of 3.40 indicates that students reflect deeply on their life purpose and personal values during recollection. This suggests that recollection helps students think seriously about their actions and decisions. The findings interpreted are parallel with Latifah and Nurhikmah (2024), who explained that guided spiritual reflection strengthens self-understanding and responsible behavior. This supports the significant finding that recollection promotes self-awareness among students.

Regarding attending Mass, the indicators had a composite mean of 3.42, interpreted as Very High. This shows that students consistently attend Mass and actively participate in religious services. The result indicates that Mass is a strong part of their faith practice. This finding is identical to Aksoy et al.’s (2024) statement that regular participation in religious services strengthens faith commitment and encourages positive moral behavior among young people. The highest mean indicates that students listen carefully to the homily and apply the lessons in daily life. This suggests that students not only attend Mass but also practice what they learn. This finding aligns with Calimag et al. (2024), who explained that participation in religious gatherings fosters discipline and social responsibility.

Lastly, regarding retreat, a composite mean of 3.19 (interpreted as High) indicates that students actively participate in retreat activities. This means retreats help students reflect on their lives and grow in their faith. The findings show that retreats support personal development and increase students’ awareness of others. This finding is similarly aligned with the study by Ben-Namer and Zion-Waldoks (2025), who explain that real spiritual experiences help individuals develop a deeper sense of meaning and become more caring toward others. The highest mean shows that students become more aware of the needs of marginalized groups. This means retreats help students develop empathy and understanding of others, support personal development, and increase students’ awareness of others. This finding correlates with Shariff et al. (2015), who explained that religious involvement is associated with helping behavior and moral awareness, and with Marahuddin et al. (2025), who explained that religious practices help strengthen moral values and community-oriented behavior.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Service Engagement in terms of Community Extension and Donation Drive*

Indicators (Community Extension)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I willingly participate in community extension activities organized by the school.	3.32	Very High
2. I feel motivated to join community extension activities because of my religious values.	3.25	High
3. Community extension activities help me become more compassionate toward others.	3.31	Very High
4. I believe that my faith influences my willingness to help the community.	3.38	Very High
5. I prioritize joining community extension programs because I see them as a way to live out my Christian identity as a student of DWCSJ.	3.29	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.31	Very High
Indicators (Donation Drive)		
1. I participate in donation drives organized by the school.	3.34	Very High
2. My religious beliefs encourage me to donate or help during donation drives.	3.36	Very High
3. Donation drives allow me to practice the values I learn from religious activities.	3.32	Very High
4. I believe that my participation in religious practices influences my involvement in donation drives.	3.37	Very High
5. I am more willing to share my resources in donation drives when I realize that giving is a central part of my religious devotion.	3.44	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.37	Very High
OVERALL MEAN	3.34	Very High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2 presents the mean level of service engagement in terms of community extension and donation drives, with an overall mean of 3.34, interpreted as very high. The composite mean of 3.31 for “Community extension activities help me become more compassionate toward others” indicates a very high level, suggesting that students strongly participate in community extension programs. This indicates that students actively engage in community

outreach and develop a sense of responsibility and social awareness. This result is consistent with the findings of Bird et al. (2016), who explained that volunteering helps students develop responsibility and personal growth through service experiences. The 3.38, interpreted as the highest mean, revealed that students' willingness to help the community is influenced by their faith, meaning they participate because of personal values rather than solely because it is required. This finding is aligned with Agustina and Saona (2025), who explained that religious outreach encourages socially responsible behavior. Moreover, the findings also show that community service helps students become more compassionate and socially aware. This aligns with Fernandez-Martin and Ayllón-Salas (2026), who found that service-learning strengthens helping behavior and civic awareness among students.

Additionally, for donation drives, the composite mean of 3.37 indicates a very high level. This implies that students demonstrate strong service engagement in donation drives and actively participate in charitable activities. This shows that donation drives are meaningful to them and that they willingly share their time and resources to help others. Their strong engagement suggests that charitable activities are not merely school requirements but are connected to their internal values and sense of responsibility toward the community. This finding aligns with the Pew Research Center (2016), which stated that individuals who regularly attend religious services are more likely to donate money and participate in volunteer activities because religious teachings encourage kindness, generosity, and helping those in need. This relates to the present findings because students exposed to religious practices may similarly be influenced to participate in donation drives as an expression of compassion and responsibility shaped by faith-based teachings. The highest mean (3.44) was recorded in the statement, "I am more willing to share my resources in donation drives because I view giving as a core expression of my faith." This indicates that students directly connect donation drives to their religious beliefs and see giving as a concrete way to live out their faith. This is supported by Xie et al. (2020), who found that religious belief significantly influences charitable behavior, as individuals who actively practice their faith tend to feel a stronger moral responsibility toward those in need. Their study supports why students associate giving with faith expression. Similarly, the study by Mejia and Tindale (2025) found that engaging in one prosocial behavior, such as volunteering, often encourages additional helping behaviors, such as donating, creating a cycle of positive action. This connects to the present result because students who are already involved in service-related activities may be more inclined to continue helping through donation drives. Furthermore, Henderson et al. (2025) observed that adolescents who participate in volunteer and service programs tend to exhibit stronger social engagement and responsibility, which helps explain why students demonstrate very high participation in donation-related initiatives.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing ( $H_0$ )*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Religious Practices (Recollection Activities)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.647	0.419	1.976	10.933	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Attending Mass)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.641	0.411	1.976	10.760	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Retreat)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.560	0.313	1.976	8.709	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices → Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.733	0.537	1.976	13.884	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Recollection Activities)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.566	0.321	1.976	8.846	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Attending Mass)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.625	0.390	1.976	10.316	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Retreat)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.469	0.220	1.976	6.842	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Practices)	0.655	0.429	1.976	11.168	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 summarizes the correlation coefficients, effect sizes, computed t-values, and p-values to determine the significance of the relationship between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. The overall correlation coefficient,  $r = 0.755$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicates a highly significant positive relationship between religious practices and service engagement. This means that students who actively participate in recollections, Mass, and retreats tend to demonstrate stronger involvement in community extension and donation drives. Specifically, the relationship between recollection and community extension ( $r = 0.647$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) indicates that students who actively participate in recollection activities tend to engage more in outreach programs. This finding supports the findings of Yusuf and Razak (2023), who reported that religiosity is positively associated with prosocial behavior because religious involvement encourages empathy and moral responsibility. Likewise, the correlation between attending Mass and community extension ( $r = 0.641$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) aligns with Aksoy et al. (2024), who demonstrated that frequent participation in religious services strengthens community engagement and volunteering by fostering social bonds and civic responsibility.

Furthermore, the relationship between retreat and community extension ( $r = 0.560$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) further supports this finding, as retreat experiences provide opportunities for reflection and value formation that deepen students' sense of purpose and social responsibility. In addition, the donation drive component also exhibits significant relationships with religious practices. For instance, the correlation between recollection and donation drive ( $r = 0.566$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) suggests that students who reflect on religious values are more inclined to participate in charitable activities. This finding is supported by the study of Xie et al. (2020), who explained that religious belief strengthens moral responsibility toward individuals in need and influences charitable behavior. Similarly, the relationship between attending Mass and a donation drive ( $r = 0.625$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) aligns with the idea that religious teachings encourage generosity and helping behaviors, thereby reinforcing students' willingness to contribute to donation programs. Moreover, the correlation between retreat and donation drive ( $r = 0.469$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) further supports this interpretation, as retreat experiences foster reflection and value formation that may motivate students to engage in charitable activities. Overall, these results are consistent with Liyanapathirana and Akroyd (2023), who found that youth involved in religious communities demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior because religious principles guide actions that benefit society.

#### 4. Conclusions

The following conclusion was drawn from the study's findings: students were moderately active in religious practices. They participated in recollection activities, attended masses, and joined retreats, making religious activities a regular part of their school life. Among these, attending Mass was the most common practice. The analysis revealed that students were also moderately involved in service activities. Their participation in community extension programs and donation drives reflected their willingness to help others when given the opportunity. The study demonstrated a connection between religious practices and service engagement. Students who participated more in religious activities were also more active in helping activities, showing that religious involvement encouraged service to others. Regarding the level of service engagement among students, the evidence identified attending Mass as the religious practice with the strongest influence on students' service engagement. This suggested that regular participation in Mass helped encourage students to take part in community service. Overall, the investigation suggested that religious practices helped shape students' values and encouraged them to care for others. Through recollections, Mass, and retreats, students became more willing to help people in need and participate in service activities. Therefore, the results indicate that religious practices among students of Divine Word College of San Jose significantly influence their engagement in service-related activities. The strong positive relationship indicates that students who are more active in recollections, Mass attendance, and retreats are also more involved in community extension and donation drives. This suggests that religious involvement helps develop their sense of responsibility and willingness to serve others.

**Recommendations** - After collecting data and determining the relationship between religious practices and

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service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose, the following recommendations are made: The school administration may strengthen the connection between religious practices and service activities by organizing follow-up outreach programs after Mass, recollections, and retreats. The Campus Ministry Office may improve retreat activities by adding more interactive and reflective sessions that encourage students to apply what they learn. In addition, the school administration and the Campus Ministry Office may consider conducting retreats twice during the school year, one at the beginning and another at the end, to evaluate students' spiritual growth and service engagement over time. Teachers may also continually remind students that service engagement is an important way to live out their faith. Furthermore, the Student Council and other student organizations may take a more active role in planning and leading community extension and donation drive activities. The school may create regular, consistent service programs to maintain students' high level of participation in community service. Lastly, future researchers may conduct similar studies in other Catholic schools to further understand the relationship between religious practices and service engagement.

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