

Correspondence

(Filipino) people and religion, science and government: an interactive approach against COVID-19 pandemic

The existence of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic poses great damage and implications to every country. Governments' enactment of fundamental and initial health measures causes loneliness, stress and anxiety for most people.¹ In particular, some of the recent correspondences of the journal underline either the importance of transformational leadership, the new 3Rs (resilience, recovery and restructuring), or the intervention of the religious sector to provide some services like pastoral and spiritual care.^{2–4} However, this paper proposes that solving the wide-encompassing corollaries of the crisis should be addressed through an interactive approach: if the pandemic shapes the very own pattern of everything, then any solution should be framed based on the amalgamation and relationship of macro-level (e.g. religion, science and government) and the micro-level (e.g. people).

Apropos of such a concept, the Philippines is known as a religious nation. Different religious denominations play a vital role in strengthening the spiritual well-being of their followers—a way to lessen the psychological effect of fear and disturbance due to the pandemic. Likewise, highlighting the virtue of hope and placing one's mind in God is significant to experience calmness amid uncertainties. Believers themselves must, therefore, internalize the teaching of religion for the welfare of individuals and the general population. Nonetheless, within the institution of religion, people and religious leaders should still make some consideration when their actions, as guided by their beliefs, intersect with other macro scales such as science.

Though science may contradict religion in some aspects as argued by some thinkers, in times of global crisis, the two are directed toward the benefit of humanity. Although religion focuses on spiritual and even psychological issues, science (as a method) aims to produce a defense against the virus. At the individual level, Filipinos have to reject the idea that science is by itself harmful as well as its products (e.g. vaccine). Harm only happens when man detrimentally uses scientific invention or discovery. If believers trust their respective religions, science deserves trust and confidence from people too. The entire enterprise of science can be the

answer to everyone's prayer. What's more, it would be an inconsistent view for believers to wait for some miracle that could solve the global crisis while ignoring the offer of science (e.g. vaccine).

Lastly, among the three major macro scales, the government is the bridging institution between the two. Since government officials represent the citizens, they have to make a considerable effort to combine the approaches of religion and science by not compromising each other. For instance, the government must take immediate steps to ease vaccine hesitancy not to negatively affect the established religious hope and care. Thus, national officials have to be neutral and evidence-based in their decisions and actions bringing about political unity yet still giving importance to constructive criticisms to see the defects and strengths of the government's policies. Principally, Filipino people must be open to analysis—the goal is not for the good health and safety of the many but the whole constituents of the country.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this paper.

Authors' contribution

All authors contributed to all aspects of the manuscript.

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