



<b>Manuscript Title:</b>	Experiences of Gender-Based Violence among Former Filipina Women Church Devotees
<b>Type of Article:</b>	Original Article

**FIRST ROUND**

**Editor**

**General Comments and Recommendations**

The reviewers find the manuscript promising but recommend revisions to further improve its overall clarity, rigor, and contribution. The authors are encouraged to carefully consider and address all the reviewers' comments and suggestions in revising the manuscript.

**Reviewer 1**

**General Comments and Recommendations**

This paper addressed an important and sensitive topic and the narratives have potential value. My main concern, however, is not the topic itself but the strength of the evidence in relation to the claims being made. At present, the paper sometimes makes broad conclusions about church institutions, church beliefs, and gender-based violence, but these conclusions seem too wide for the very limited dataset and the way the findings were analyzed. This weakens the credibility of the manuscript even if the issue being raised is indeed important.



**Specific Comments and Recommendations**

The title, introduction, results, and conclusion suggest a broad argument about gender-based violence in church institutions, yet the study relied on only two former informants and some parts of the narratives are still vague, indirect, or based on recalled accounts rather than clearly documented firsthand experiences. Because of this, the manuscript needs to narrow its claims and stay closer to what the data can really support. It would be better if the authors frame the study as an exploration of two former devotees' narratives of perceived violence, control, and harm within a specific religious context, rather than presenting it as evidence for church institutions more generally.

The same issue appears in the results and discussion. Some interpretations already move too fast from participant accounts to large statements about catholicism, church beliefs, or a system that generally justifies violence. With only two narratives, the paper should be more careful and more grounded in the actual interview material. I suggest the authors deepen the analysis of the participants' lived experiences, show more clearly how each theme was derived from the interviews, and separate what was directly said by participants from what is the researcher's broader interpretation. This will make the paper more convincing and fairer to the data.

**Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.**

**Decision**

	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.



Reviewer 2

**General Comments and Recommendations**

I commend the authors for taking on a very brave and highly relevant topic. Exploring gender-based violence (GBV) within the context of religious devotion is a sensitive but necessary endeavor, and the narratives gathered from your informants are compelling.

**Specific Comments and Recommendations**

Your introduction heavily critiques mainstream Catholicism, specifically citing the Catholic faith and ritual of the confessional as having a damaging effect on women and referencing sexual abuse allegations against Catholic priests. However, your Results section discusses highly specific sect practices. For instance, you detailed Pagluhod wherein devotees wear a long glossy dress and yellow belt to praise the Nazarene, and a practice called Pagsalba where daughters are dedicated to serve in the Kabundukan ng Pagsalba and are never seen by their families again. These findings strongly point to a specific, localized religious sect or cult, not the general Catholic Church or broad church institutions. It is academically misleading to use mainstream Catholicism to frame your introduction when your data clearly revolves around a fringe group. You must explicitly define and contextualize the specific type of religious group your respondents belonged to. Reframe the entire paper as a case study of this specific group's practices rather than a general study on Filipina church devotees.

The methodology explicitly states that there are only two participants in this study. While a narrative approach can certainly be done with a small sample size, it is highly problematic to claim that you were able to see a saturation of the data after just one or two interview sessions with only two people. Furthermore, based on these two accounts, the paper makes sweeping conclusions about how societal structures and church institutions "reinforce violence." I suggest you remove the claim of data saturation, as it is nearly impossible to achieve true thematic saturation with a sample size of 2 in this context. Instead, own the narrative design. Frame this strictly as an in-depth exploration of two individual lived experiences. You must drastically scale back your conclusions. Avoid generalizing your findings to all women in church institutions and focus strictly on what these two specific narratives tell us about localized religious abuse.

Throughout the manuscript, the writing leans heavily towards advocacy rather than objective scientific inquiry. For example, the abstract immediately states a troubling connection, and the introduction claims that churches have been a ground for the propagation of violence. The text implies that the researcher approached the study with a preconceived conclusion that religious institutions normalize violence. The narratives of the women are powerful enough on their own; you do not need to pre-judge the institutions in your text. Revise the manuscript to ensure that your findings and themes emerge strictly from the data rather than the researcher's personal advocacy or assumptions.

The introduction spends a significant amount of time discussing global GBV statistics and cases of violence in Islamic countries, South Africa, and Brazil. While this shows the global scale of GBV, it does very little to ground the actual findings of your study, which are hyper-localized to specific Filipino cultural practices like Pagsuot ng Belo and Pagsalba. I highly suggest trimming the global statistics and refocusing your literature review on the sociology of religion within the Philippine context. Discuss local sects, the psychology of fanaticism, or how indigenous/localized religious practices in the Philippines sometimes deviate from mainstream doctrines to the detriment of vulnerable members. This will provide a much stronger academic foundation for your actual results.



Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

**SECOND ROUND**

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Editor</u>	<u>Reviewer 1</u>	<u>Reviewer 2</u>
Accept the manuscript for publication.	/	/	/
Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.			
Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.			