

How religiosity correlates with Catholic beliefs regarding human sexuality: a theological-pastoral study of individuals associated with the Shalom center in Mitunguu, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the correlation between religiosity and understanding of human sexuality among a selected group of young Kenyan Catholics. Our research aimed to pinpoint the contingencies between these variables with a view to reaching some conclusions and offering suggestions for religious education and pastoral care of youth and families. The present research into religiosity made use of Huber's Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS). The respondents' understanding of human sexuality was studied with the use of a survey prepared by the authors. Our research shows that an understanding of human sexuality from a Catholic point of view increases alongside an increase in one's interest in religion, in religious convictions, and the centrality of religion in one's life. The analyzed correlations occurred more frequently and were stronger among men than women. There were most connections among the youngest group of respondents, younger than 20 and currently receiving education.

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1. Introduction

Human sexuality has been a subject of diverse studies undertaken within various scholarly disciplines, such as biology, psychology, medicine, ethnology, sociology, or cultural studies as well as of philosophical or theological reflections. As these disciplines develop, questions are posed about the social significance of sexual relations, the connection between sexuality and love, marriage, and parenthood, about the nature of human sexuality, justification of division into the masculine and the feminine, as well as about the foundation and normativity of various broadly accepted social roles and sexual behaviors. Contemporary intellectual and social trends postulate a substantial loosening of the link between sexuality and marriage and family.¹ The institution of the family, its social and cultural context lose significance, while individual freedom is emphasized,

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unencumbered by external prohibitions or cultural taboos. Human sexuality is centered on its ludic, erotic, creative, and affective dimensions, to the detriment of its procreative dimension.²

At the same time, the development of medicine, cultural anthropology, psychology, trends related to phenomenology, existentialism and personalism as well as the attempts to revive the Church in a biblical, patristic, and liturgical sense and the development of Catholic conjugal spirituality have led to a substantial deepening of the theological reflection on human sexuality. As a work of Catholic pastoral theology, this article takes the teaching of the Catholic Church as a reference point for its research and analysis. The renewed Catholic theology underscores the personal character of sexuality,³ as well as its connection with human autonomy, love, and the gift of self.⁴ The teaching of the Catholic church on human sexuality concentrates on human dignity and the community as well as on multidimensionality and significance of human love and the theology of the body.⁵ Sexuality fundamentally belongs to a person, their way of life, self-expression, communication, feeling, expressing and experiencing human love. It is not limited to the corporeal sphere but encompasses as well psychological and spiritual spheres.⁶

Religiosity has been a subject of research within various scholarly disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, religious studies or theology. Each of these disciplines approaches religiosity in its own way, which makes it difficult to come up with a definition that would be satisfactory to all.⁷ Theology concentrates primarily on one's belief in God. Thomas Aquinas defined religiosity as a virtue that is fair to God.⁸ The creation is bound to worship its Creator and to obey his commands.⁹ For this reason, the virtue of religiosity encompasses inner and outer acts of worship of God, such as piety, prayer, adoration, offerings, keeping oaths and promises, as well as respecting God's name.¹⁰ Transgressions against this virtue in turn include superstition, idolatry, divination, sorcery, magic, and profanity.¹¹ By contrast, from the psychological and sociological perspective, religiosity may be defined as certain attitudes or behaviors related to religious convictions and engagement. For this reason, Allport and Ross distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity, Glock and Stark indicate five dimensions of religiosity: experimental, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, and consequential, while Chumler enumerates the following aspects: subjective, cognitive, behavioral, social, and cultural.¹² In his psychological study, Huber in turn explores the centrality of religiosity through the focus on the following facets: intellectual dimension, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience.¹³

Earlier research into the connection between religiosity and sexuality shows a frequent positive correlation between young people's sexual attitudes and behaviors and their religiosity.¹⁴ What is more, a link has been shown to exist between the interpersonal aspect of spirituality and a better functioning of the family¹⁵ and generativity.¹⁶ Research shows that religiosity leads to the postponement of the first sexual intercourse for women, with some studies admittedly failing to show this contingency. Religiosity has a less clear impact on sexual behaviors of men than of women studied.¹⁷ A higher level of religiosity is related to more conservative views on sexual practices.¹⁸ Research into the link between religiosity and opinions on sacramental marriage and conjugal morality carried out in Papua New Guinea shows that these opinions often had a positive correlation at an average level with the respondents' religiosity.¹⁹

Among the people of Kenya, attitudes to sexuality are shaped through the overlap of traditional beliefs and strong external trends, mainly from the Western world. On the one hand, the experience of sexuality is strongly linked to a variety of expressive cultural forms, while on the other hand, there are clear trends toward increasing permissiveness. Notably, there persists a clear asymmetry between the situation of women and men, as well as strong influences from extended family and local community. Marriage is seen as a long and complex dynamic process, while the sacramental union often follows many years of living together, accompanied at various stages by numerous and varied rituals. Such a situation translates into a relatively high level of acceptance of erotic relations outside the sacramental union, as well as a widespread rejection of purely civil unions.²⁰

Attitudes toward sexuality and sex education in the context of marriage and family life in Africa were the subject of a major ecumenical research project Churches' Research on Marriage in Africa (CROMIA) conducted between 1973 and 1976 with at least 2,500 respondents from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho and South Africa.²¹ Human sexuality, especially in the context of conjugal family life, is also a subject of numerous scholarly works.²² The empirical research conducted so far in the region (Kenya) has not aimed to verify the correlation between religiosity and understanding of human sexuality. What is more, the existing scholarship is of a sociological character, while the present study offers a theological-pastoral take. The results of our survey of a selected group of Kenyan Catholics may serve to formulate suggestions for the education of youth and adults and for the pastoral care of married couples and families in the Kenyan church.

Not surprisingly, as religious commitment increases among Catholics, their level of understanding and acceptance of the Catholic convictions on human sexuality also increase. However, the purpose of the research conducted was to identify more detailed correlations and determine exactly which dimensions of religiosity correlate most strongly with specific aspects of teaching on sexuality, as well as to point out gaps in the expected relationships between other areas of religiosity and attitudes toward sexuality. Such detailed analysis can help not only to carry out more effective pastoral actions, but also to develop more precise academic models, demands and programs of action.

2. Procedure and participants

Conducting empirical research within pastoral theology follows the model of research composed of three stages: the normative stage, the execution stage, and the praxeological stage. The description of the procedure and participants as well as the presentation and analysis of empirical research results correspond to the second of these, that is the execution stage.²³ In the context of sociological-pastoral studies, it may be claimed that

if the starting point of the research project is pastoral theology, an analysis containing all the elements of theological reflection is indispensable in order to maintain its specificity, autonomy and theological identity. Thus, the formulated indications remain in the theological sphere.²⁴

The present research comprised two parts. The first studied the respondents' religiosity from a psychological perspective with the use of Stefan Huber's Centrality of Religiosity

Scale (which measures the following aspects: intellectual dimension, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience). The second, strictly theological, part made use of a specially prepared survey to capture the respondents' understanding of human sexuality (with the questionnaire developed by the authors of this study). It comprised 13 close-ended questions (see Table 2). To check the adequacy and validity of the tool as well as its internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was established at 0.825, with average correlation between the statements at 0.293. The questionnaire was first put to use in 2021 to conduct research into understanding of sexuality, bringing interesting results.²⁵ During the meetings with the surveyors, the respondents were first asked to fill in Huber's CRS questionnaire and then to express their opinions on statements on human sexuality by indicating to what extent they agree or disagree with a given statement. The statements were assessed on the scale from -3 to 3, where the lowest number showed total lack of acceptance, while the highest - full acceptance of the statement (-3 - I definitely disagree, -2 - I disagree to a large extent, -1 - I rather disagree, 0 - It is hard to say, 1 - I rather agree, 2 - I agree to a large extent, 3 - I definitely agree). The data garnered in this way was then statistically processed to check the correlation between one's religiosity and understanding of sexuality. The study took into account the impact of independent variables (of sex and age) on the results. Statistical tests were deployed in this respect.

The research was carried out among individuals associated with the Catholic Shalom Center in Mitunguu in central Kenya²⁶ in March 2022. The Shalom Home Pastoral Center was established in 2011 in the village of Matetu in the Meru County area near the equator in central Kenya. It is part of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Mitunguu. Its director and founder is the pastor of this parish, Rev. Francis Gaciata. The center includes a center for orphaned or abandoned children, a primary school, a secondary school and a vocational school. Residents of neighboring communities also attend the educational facilities. In addition to the children, teachers and staff, the Shalom Center's community is made up of alumni and relatives of the students, who sometimes participate in various activities organized by the parish or by the Shalom Center. At present, in 2023, the center encompasses some 500 wards, ranging in age from about 3-25, and 50 teachers and staff, including two missionary volunteers and seven religious. Two Italian charities, 'Mela-mango' and 'Val di Sole,' contributed to the establishment of the Shalom Center. Currently, the Center is supported by the Diakonia for Missions of The Light-Life Movement, founded in Poland.²⁷

The respondent group was selected in accord with the project's theological-pastoral goal. The group comprised 156 individuals professing Catholic faith, and its relatively small number was due to the pioneering character of the research conducted with a view to developing a bigger project. Among the respondents, 51.3 percent were men (80 individuals), and 48.7 percent women (76 individuals). 38.5 percent of the respondents were aged 21-25, with 32.0 percent over 25 and 29.5 percent under 20. Inhabitants of towns added up to 55.1 percent of the group, those living in the countryside - 30.8 percent, and city-dwellers - 14.1 percent. Half of the respondents declared themselves to be religious (50.0 percent), 41.0 percent as very religious, with only 9.0 percent being weakly religious or religiously indifferent. 62.5 percent of the respondents were raised in complete families, with both parents present, while the remaining part came from various types of incomplete families, polygamic families, and others. 84.6 percent

of the respondents were single, one in tenth was married (whether in a Catholic or a civil marriage), and 3.8 were in informal relationships. In light of the selection of the respondent group in accord with the theological-pastoral aim of research, the group is not representative and does not reflect the distribution of socio-demographic features in larger society. For this reason, one needs to exercise caution in extrapolating the results of the present research.

The study is based on the analysis of the understanding of human sexuality, not on actual sexual choices and behaviors. Although in principle choices and behaviors are shaped by understanding, it would be wrong to assume that beliefs and norms automatically translate into decisions consistent with them, especially in a sphere as delicate as human sexuality. Although, given the theological context of the research conducted and the specificity of the people involved, the risk of the respondents' giving desirable answers cannot be completely ruled out, the study retains an important cognitive value, thanks to the great detail of the questions posed and the focus on correlations between various aspects of religiosity and opinions on sexuality.

3. The respondents' religiosity and their understanding of human sexuality

As the general results presented in [Table 1](#) make it clear, one's understanding of human sexuality in accord with the teachings of the Catholic church positively correlates – at a statistically significant average level – with the following core-dimensions of religiosity: ideology ($r = 0.33$; $p < 0.05$) and intellectual dimension ($r = 0.32$; $p < 0.05$). At a lower level (but also statistically significantly), it correlates positively with the centrality of religiosity ($r = 0.22$; $p < 0.05$). This means that with an increase in intellectual dimension, ideology, and the centrality of religiosity, one's understanding of human sexuality in accord with the Catholic worldview also increases. A reversed contingency is also plausible. The results are presented in [Table 1](#) below.

Research results vary when the independent variables of the respondents' sex and age are taken into consideration. With respect to the former, statistically significant positive correlations at an average level between one's views on human sexuality and religiosity occur more frequently for men than for women. Among men, statistically significant correlations occur between their views on sexuality and intellectual dimension ($r = 0.37$; $p < 0.05$), centrality of religiosity ($r = 0.31$; $p < 0.05$), religious experience ($r = 0.26$; $p < 0.05$), and ideology ($r = 0.24$; $p < 0.05$). For women, similar correlations occur only between their understanding of sexuality and ideology ($r = 0.36$; $p < 0.05$) and intellectual dimension ($r = 0.27$; $p < 0.05$) – see [Table 2](#).

Among male respondents, the strongest correlations with religiosity occur with respect to five statements on sexuality. They are present most frequently between the belief that a sexual intercourse of a man and a woman may occur only if the couple feels love and responsibility for each other (11) and four core-dimensions of religiosity ($p < 0.05$) and the belief that the human body is a dwelling place of the soul (6) and three core-dimensions of religiosity ($p < 0.05$). In both cases, men's opinions correlate in a statistically significant way with religious experience, private practice, and centrality. Positive correlations of a similar value occur among men also between the belief that love of a man and a woman serves procreation (10) and

Table 1. The value of correlations (r) between the respondents' religiosity and opinions on human sexuality.

Core-dimensions of religiosity according to S. Huber (CRS)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Intellectual dimension	-0.04	0.21	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.14	0.28	0.24	0.18	0.10	0.10	-0.05	0.26
Ideology	0.16	0.35	0.14	0.22	-0.02	0.25	0.21	0.14	0.16	0.25	0.13	0.24	0.13
Private practice	0.04	0.12	-0.18	0.05	-0.17	-0.02	0.07	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.10	-0.13
Religious experience	-0.15	0.10	-0.12	0.11	-0.02	0.05	-0.01	0.27	0.18	0.08	0.10	-0.03	-0.08
Public practice	-0.13	0.17	0.03	-0.14	-0.10	0.04	0.04	0.12	0.08	0.04	-0.02	0.12	0.07
Centrality	-0.06	0.21	-0.05	0.02	-0.06	0.11	0.16	0.21	0.18	0.12	0.09	0.06	0.04

The results relate to the Spearman Correlation Test (r). Statements about human sexuality: (1) A human being is created and called by God to love; (2) Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity; (3) Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage; (4) A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object; (5) Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other; (6) The human body is a dwelling of the soul; (7) Love is a selfless gift of oneself; (8) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them; (9) Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman; (10) Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children; (11) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other; (12) Love is primarily a feeling; (13) True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage.

Table 2. The value of correlations (r) between the respondents' religiosity and opinions on human sexuality taking into account the variable of sex.

Core-dimensions of religiosity according to S. Huber (CRS)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Men													
Intellectual dimension	-0.09	0.18	0.16	0.09	0.07	0.12	0.33	0.16	0.22	0.16	0.23	-0.07	0.29
Ideology	-0.23	0.13	0.07	0.19	-0.16	0.15	0.06	0.12	0.02	0.46	0.12	0.11	0.11
Private practice	-0.04	0.04	-0.10	0.13	-0.03	0.36	0.08	0.08	-0.01	0.04	0.23	-0.21	-0.11
Religious experience	-0.20	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.20	0.35	0.11	0.34	0.23	0.20	0.35	-0.18	-0.12
Public practice	-0.23	0.10	0.29	-0.22	-0.20	-0.14	-0.10	0.08	0.19	0.06	0.01	0.12	0.13
Centrality	-0.22	0.12	0.17	0.02	0.05	0.23	0.22	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.25	-0.06	0.05
Women													
Intellectual dimension	0.02	0.25	-0.14	0.06	-0.02	0.19	0.25	0.34	0.14	0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.20
Ideology	0.41	0.50	0.18	0.20	0.07	0.28	0.30	0.13	0.26	0.08	0.11	0.38	0.12
Private practice	0.13	0.20	-0.21	0.00	-0.28	-0.27	0.10	-0.07	0.05	-0.05	-0.28	-0.01	-0.18
Religious experience	-0.11	0.13	-0.25	0.15	-0.21	-0.16	-0.11	0.24	0.14	-0.04	-0.15	0.12	-0.08
Public practice	-0.05	0.23	-0.19	-0.10	-0.02	0.18	0.14	0.12	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.11	0.01
Centrality	0.07	0.30	-0.21	0.00	-0.14	0.04	0.10	0.18	0.14	0.03	-0.08	0.19	0.01

The results relate to the Spearman Correlation Test (r). Statements about human sexuality: (1) A human being is created and called by God to love; (2) Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity; (3) Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage; (4) A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object; (5) Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other; (6) The human body is a dwelling of the soul; (7) Love is a selfless gift of oneself; (8) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them; (9) Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman; (10) Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children; (11) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other; (12) Love is primarily a feeling; (13) True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage.

ideology ($r = 0.46$; $p < 0.05$) and centrality ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$); between the belief that sexual intercourse aims to forge a psychological and spiritual bond between the partners (8) and religious experience ($r = 0.34$; $p < 0.05$) and centrality ($r = 0.24$; $p < 0.05$); and between the conviction that mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one woman and one man (9) and religious experience ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$) and centrality ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$).

Among women, in turn, positive correlations are present most often between the idea that each human being is a person with an inviolable dignity (2) and ideology ($r = 0.50$; $p < 0.05$), centrality ($r = 0.30$; $p < 0.05$), intellectual dimension ($r = 0.25$; $p < 0.05$), and public practice ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$). Less frequent are the correlations between the belief that love is a selfless gift of oneself (7) and ideology ($r = 0.30$; $p < 0.05$) and intellectual dimension ($r = 0.25$; $p < 0.05$) – see [Table 2](#).

For the respondents aged below 20 and between 21 and 25, statistically significant positive correlations of an average level occur especially between their opinions on human sexuality and ideology ($r = 0.43$; $r = 0.49$ – $p < 0.05$), intellectual dimension ($r = 0.32$; $r = 0.36$ – $p < 0.05$), and centrality of religiosity ($r = 0.30$; $p < 0.05$), while for the respondents over 25 years of age the correlations are most frequent between understanding of sexuality and public practice ($r = 0.29$; $p < 0.05$). For the youngest group of respondents – below 20 – the strongest statistically significant correlations occur with respect to four opinions on sexuality, especially the belief that sexual intercourse of a man and a woman serves to build a psychological and spiritual bond (8), which has a positive correlation of an average level with almost all core-dimensions of religiosity ($p < 0.005$). Similar positive correlations of an average level occur for the beliefs that love is primarily a feeling (12), which correlates with four core-dimensions of religiosity, and the conviction that love is a selfless gift of oneself (7), which correlates with ideology ($r = 0.46$; $p < 0.05$), intellectual dimension ($r = 0.39$; $p < 0.05$), and centrality of religiosity ($r = 0.35$; $p < 0.05$). The belief that each human being is a person and has an inviolable dignity (2) likewise correlates with these three core-dimensions of religiosity – see [Table 3](#).

The results are somewhat different for the respondents aged from 21 to 25. For this group, the strongest statistically significant correlations occur with respect to three opinions on sexuality. The belief that each human being is a person with an inviolable dignity (2) correlates with ideology ($r = 0.55$; $p < 0.05$), public practice ($r = 0.28$; $p < 0.05$), and centrality of religiosity ($r = 0.26$; $p < 0.05$). The conviction that sexual intercourse may occur only if a man and a woman feel love and responsibility for each other (11) correlates with ideology ($r = 0.36$; $p < 0.05$), religious experience ($r = 0.35$; $p < 0.05$), and intellectual dimension ($r = 0.27$; $p < 0.05$). Further, the belief that true love of a man and a woman requires an indissoluble marriage (13) correlates with intellectual dimension ($r = 0.34$; $p < 0.05$) and ideology ($r = 0.32$; $p < 0.05$). At the same time, the opinion that love is a rational decision of the couple to live together in marriage (3) shows a negative correlation with religious experience and private practice: an increase in sharing this belief is related to the weakening of these core-dimensions of religiosity or the other way round – their weakening leads to the stronger acceptance of the belief on love and marriage (3).

The correlations between one's understanding of human sexuality and religiosity occur least frequently among respondents over 25 years of age. For this group, positive statistically significant correlations of an average level occur with respect to the belief that

Table 3. The value of correlations (r) between the respondents' religiosity and opinions on human sexuality taking into account the variable of age.

Core-dimensions of religiosity according to S. Huber (CRS)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Under 20													
Intellectual dimension	0.20	0.33	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.19	0.39	0.19	0.33	0.28	0.09	0.30	0.46
Ideology	0.04	0.36	0.19	0.22	-0.03	0.34	0.46	0.32	0.20	0.42	0.09	0.51	0.04
Private practice	0.30	0.25	-0.13	0.04	-0.15	0.28	0.25	0.46	0.03	0.13	0.30	0.14	0.05
Religious experience	0.02	0.24	-0.03	0.26	-0.02	0.17	0.04	0.40	0.19	0.19	0.10	0.33	0.16
Public practice	-0.23	0.14	-0.10	-0.14	-0.23	0.07	0.13	0.36	0.06	0.10	-0.12	0.21	0.12
Centrality	0.06	0.32	0.00	0.09	-0.02	0.22	0.35	0.44	0.18	0.29	0.11	0.40	0.21
From 21 to 25													
Intellectual dimension	-0.09	0.16	0.01	-0.08	-0.10	-0.02	0.13	0.21	0.11	0.18	0.27	-0.15	0.34
Ideology	0.29	0.55	0.21	0.18	-0.01	0.47	0.21	0.29	0.20	0.28	0.36	0.15	0.32
Private practice	-0.02	0.09	-0.26	0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.06	0.00	0.06	-0.07	-0.18	-0.18
Religious experience	-0.31	0.01	-0.30	-0.03	0.06	0.18	-0.23	0.23	0.26	0.21	0.35	-0.20	-0.09
Public practice	-0.06	0.28	0.14	-0.25	-0.26	-0.01	0.05	-0.05	0.02	-0.05	-0.03	-0.14	-0.01
Centrality	-0.06	0.26	-0.06	-0.15	-0.12	0.17	0.04	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.20	-0.20	0.02
Over 25													
Intellectual dimension	-0.18	0.10	-0.10	0.18	0.09	0.24	0.38	0.37	0.20	-0.11	-0.02	-0.17	-0.04
Ideology	0.12	-0.02	0.02	0.22	0.03	-0.15	-0.11	-0.08	0.11	0.04	-0.13	0.10	-0.13
Private practice	-0.04	0.06	-0.07	0.04	-0.33	-0.25	-0.07	-0.33	0.05	-0.18	-0.13	-0.18	-0.32
Religious experience	-0.05	0.10	0.09	0.10	-0.12	-0.18	0.14	0.32	0.14	-0.18	-0.09	-0.11	-0.41
Public practice	-0.17	0.04	0.06	0.03	0.18	0.08	-0.05	0.10	0.21	0.23	0.09	0.42	0.15
Centrality	-0.13	0.04	-0.03	0.12	0.03	-0.03	0.17	0.20	0.30	0.01	0.04	0.13	-0.17

The results relate to the Spearman Correlation Test (r). Statements about human sexuality: (1) A human being is created and called by God to love; (2) Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity; (3) Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage; (4) A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object; (5) Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other; (6) The human body is a dwelling of the soul; (7) Love is a selfless gift of oneself; (8) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them; (9) Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman; (10) Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children; (11) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other; (12) Love is primarily a feeling; (13) True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage.

sexual intercourse serves to build a psychological and spiritual bond between the partners (8), which correlates positively with intellectual dimension and religious experience, and negatively with private practice. The conviction that true love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage (13) correlates negatively in a statistically significant way of an average level with religious experience and private practice (see Table 3).

4. Conclusions and pastoral suggestions

- (1) The general research results enable a conclusion that for the respondent group the understanding of human sexuality in accord with the Catholic worldview increases alongside an increase in intellectual dimension, ideology, and centrality of religiosity. This may indicate that the education and formation that the Catholics surveyed in this project have received in the Shalom Center have led to their understanding human sexuality and developing moral attitudes in this respect in accord with the Catholic faith. A theological-pastoral conclusion may thus be reached that enhancing religiosity – especially as regards its centrality, interest in religion, and religious convictions – may contribute to the formation of Catholics with respect to sexuality. This is a significant postulate for the pastoral care of families in the Kenyan church.²⁸
- (2) For men, some beliefs on human sexuality correlate positively in a statistically significant way of an average level with several core-dimensions of religiosity, most often with religious experience and centrality. For women, however, opinions on sexuality rarely correlate positively in a statistically significant way with the core-dimensions of religiosity studied. Symptomatic positive correlations occur exclusively with respect to ideology and negative – with respect to private practice. This shows that it is only among men that there are clear contingencies between religiosity and Catholic opinions on human sexuality and its realization through mutual, responsible love, on building a psychological and spiritual bond between a man and a woman, on a relationship of one man and one woman, and on the passing of life. This may stem from women's limited access to education, as a result of which they do not possess necessary knowledge. This may be the reason why women link their religiosity mostly with submission to rules operative in a given community. Thus, it seems imperative to offer education and formation to women, especially with a view to integrating their religious lives with their experience of femininity and convictions on their sexuality.²⁹
- (3) For the youngest respondents (below 20 years of age), convictions on human sexuality most often correlate positively in a statistically significant way of an average level with ideology, intellectual dimension, and centrality of religiosity. The results may stem from the fact that this group comprises to a large extent current and past wards and students of the Shalom Center in Mitunguu. This may indicate that the education and formation they receive there aids young people in understanding human sexuality in a way harmonious with their Catholic faith.³⁰ For this reason, it seems important to teach Catholic couples and parents how to convey the religious principles to their children as well as to enhance institutions that help parents in the Catholic upbringing of children and youth.³¹

- (4) The results for the age group of 21–25 differ from the youngest group of respondents inasmuch as the correlations in the former pertain mostly to ideology. What seems puzzling is a clear lack of correlation between religious experience and private practice with the belief that love is a rational decision of a couple to live together in marriage (3). For the group of respondents over 25 years of age, significant positive correlations occur rarely and pertain to public practice and intellectual dimension. At the same time, similarly to younger respondents, one may wonder why religious experience and private practice do not correlate with the Catholic conviction that true love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage (13). This may point to a tendency that with age personal religiosity gets severed from opinions on sexuality. This may also be related to excessively affective religiosity, with weaker intellectual foundations, or to personal sexual experiences of the respondents that are at odds with the moral precepts of their professed faith. The results show the necessity of religious formation in accord with the recipients' age and the dynamics of their faith's development, so that a solid balance may be achieved between the intellectual, volitional, and emotional components of religious foundation, as indicated also by other studies.³²

Notes

1. Cf. Kowalski, "Odrzucenie praw Stwórcy," 256–62.
2. Cf. Faggioni, *Sessualità matrimonio famiglia*, 107–8; Colombo, "Sessualità: l'oggetto intellegibile", 882–3.
3. Cf. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1, 3.
4. Cf. *Male and Female he Created them*, 35.
5. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 47–52; *Familiaris Consortio*, 11–16; *Humanae Vitae*, 7–9; Faggioni, *Sessualità matrimonio famiglia*, 132–3.
6. Cf. *Education Guidance in Human Love*, 4, Kobak, "Anthropological Foundations", 115.
7. Cf. Holdcroft, "What is Religiosity?" 89.
8. Cf. *S. Thomae Aquinatis summa theologica*, II-II, q. 81, a. 4-6, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* henceforth CCC, 1807.
9. Cf. *ibid.*, 2095, Wichrowicz, "Cnota religijności," 138–9.
10. Cf. CCC, 2096–2103, 2135, 2144, Słomkowski, *Teologia życia duchowego*, 151.
11. Cf. CCC, 2100–2122.
12. Cf. Holdcroft, "What is Religiosity?" 89–91.
13. Cf. Huber and Huber, "The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)," 710–24.
14. See Weeden and Sabini, "Subjective and Objective Measures of Attractiveness," 79–88.
15. See Brelsford and Mahoney, "Spiritual Disclosure between Older Adolescents and their Mothers," 62–70.
16. See Brelsford et al., "Generativity and Spiritual Disclosure," 150–61, Rzepka, "Regulacja poczęć a cykl życia rodziny," 193–207.
17. See Rostosky et al., "The Impact of Religiosity on Adolescent Sexual Behavior," 677–97.
18. See Hardy and Raffaelli, "Adolescent Religiosity and Sexuality," 731–9, Lefkowitz et al., "Religiosity, Sexual Behaviors", 150–9, Beckwith and Morrow, "Sexual Attitudes of College Students," 357–66, Penhollow et al., "Relationship between Religiosity and "Hooking Up" Behavior," 338–45, de Visser et al., "Associations Between Religiosity and Sexuality in a Representative Sample of Australian Adults," 33–46, Burris, et al., "Relations among Religiousness, Spirituality, and Sexual Practices," 282–9, Luquis et al., "Religiosity, Spirituality, Sexual Attitudes," 601–14.
19. See Niścigorski, *Religijność a przekonania dotyczące małżeństwa sakramentalnego*, 183–300.

20. Cf. Manderson and Block, “Relatedness and care in Southern Africa and beyond,” 206, Baral et al., “Marriage as a Connector,” 5, Bunting et al., “Something Old, Something New?”; Cotton, “Do Equality and Non-discrimination Apply”.
21. Cf. Benezere et al., *African Christian Marriage*, 11–18.
22. See Barasa and Nzangi, “Counselling and Marital Issues”; Duflo et al. “Education, HIV, and Early Fertility,” Harari, “Women’s Inheritance Rights and Bargaining Power,” Ikamari, “The Effect of Education on the Timing of Marriage in Kenya”; Kitembo et al., *African Christian Marriage*.
23. Cf. Kamiński, “Pastoral Care of the Family,” 35–36.
24. Szymczak, “Interdisciplinarity in Pastoral Theology,” 523.
25. Cf. Goleń and Kobak, “Assessing Kenyan Catholics’ Understanding of Human Sexuality,” 241–5.
26. Cf. *Schools – Catholic Diocese of Meru*. <https://catholicdioceseofmeru.org/schools/> [accessed: 30.04.2022].
27. Cf. *La Loro Storia*, <https://melamango.wordpress.com/la-nostri-storia/> [accessed: 1.04.2023], Interview conducted on 19 November 2022 by the authors with the volunteers of the Diakonia for Missions of the Light-Life Movement [archived by authors].
28. Cf. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian Conscience in Modern Africa*, 85–90.
29. Cf. Magesa, “The Challenge of African Woman,” 88, Bujo, *Plea for Change of Models for Marriage*, 49–54.
30. Cf. Levand and Ross, “Sexuality Education as a Moral Good,” 182; Nambiri, “Teaching and Learning Space.”
31. Cf. Churu, “Foreword,” 12–13; Phiri, *African Traditional Marriage*, 29–33.
32. Cf. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian Conscience in Modern Africa*, 119–27; Nyaundi, “The Contemporary African Family”, 73–84.

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