

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School



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ABSTRACT: "Ink into the skin: The lived experiences of Female students in a Catholic School" was a qualitative research study that explored the experiences of female students in a Catholic school who have tattoos. The study aimed to understand the experiences of these female students and how they were perceived and accepted within their school and respective communities. The study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather data from the participants and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. It examined how these students handled the expectations of their school, community, and the societal pressures to conform to the norm. The findings of this study revealed tattoo as an emblem of the owners' self-identity, adoption of tattoo culture, society's attitudes towards female students with tattoos, and the resiliency of the inner self. Still, ultimately the personal significance of the tattoos outweighed any societal stigma. The above findings can contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of female students with tattoos in a Catholic School setting. Lastly, it can add to the broader conversation around tattoos, self-expression, and the body.

KEYWORDS: Lived Experiences, Qualitative Research, Tattoo, Female Students, Catholic School.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tattoos have been a part of human culture for thousands of years, serving various purposes such as art, spirituality, and self-expression (Krutak, 2015). However, despite their increasing mainstream acceptance, individuals with tattoos may still face stigma and discrimination in their personal and professional lives (Farley, 2019). The morality of tattoos has long been a topic of discussion, with the Catholic Church issuing a religious directive prohibiting tattoos in 787 AD (Shoham, 2015). In recent years, there has been a growing body of research examining the relationship between tattoos and religion, with a focus on marginalized populations such as inmates, gang members, and reformed criminals (Morello, 2021). Public health scholars have also looked at tattoos as a deviant or unhealthy practice, noting differences in attitudes towards tattoos among different religious groups (Dougherty, 2019).

In the context of Catholic Schools, tattoos and body piercings are typically not permitted and must be covered or hidden (Villanueva, 2017; Days et al., 2020). This may be due to religious opposition or negative stereotypes associated with individuals with tattoos (Burkman, 2018; Wessely, 2013; Hawkes et al, 2004; Swami & Furnham, 2007). Women with tattoos may be particularly stigmatized, with research indicating that they are considered less physically attractive and more promiscuous than women without tattoos (Colbert, 2008; Dey et al, 2016; Harris, 2016). Furthermore, visible tattoos were not widely accepted in schools (Colbert, 2008). Detractors of this position cited religious opposition or a generally negative stereotype of the types of people with tattoos as a reason to restrict the visibility of any body art in school (Burkman, 2018).

The focus of this study was on the experiences of female students with tattoos in a Catholic School. As the abovementioned studies noted, women with tattoos faced unique challenges and stigmatization compared to men with tattoos, particularly in conservative and religious contexts. Catholic Schools, in particular, had traditionally held strict dress codes and moral guidelines that may have conflicted with the visibility and meaning of tattoos, making it difficult for female students with tattoos to manage their identity and social interactions within the school community and society as a whole.

The previous information provided only a scratch or surface understanding of the experiences of female students with tattoos in a Catholic School. Thus, there was a need for further exploration, which is why the present study was of interest to researchers. By delving into the personal perspectives and voices of participants, this study sought to illuminate the actual experiences of these tattooed female students within the Catholic School. Through an appreciation of the unique and individual nature of each participant's experience, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these students managed others' reactions to their tattoos.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

II. PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study aimed to examine the lived experiences of tattooed female students in a Catholic School. Specifically, it focused on answering the following questions:

1. What was the meaning of a tattoo for female students in a Catholic School?
2. What were the motivations behind acquiring a tattoo?
3. How did the female students from a Catholic School handle people's reaction to their tattoos?

III. METHODOLOGY

Design

This study used qualitative research design using the phenomenological approach. Qualitative research comprehends how people perceived the importance of human experiences and creates the possibility of improvement through increased awareness where living experiences are the primary concern of this type of research (Bhandari, 2022). It also explored and provided deeper insights into problems that are present in the real world while allowing participants to express how, why, or what they were feeling, thinking, and experiencing at a specific time or during an interesting experience (Tenny et al., 2022). Specifically, the phenomenological approach was used to introduce the experiences of tattooed female students. A face-to-face interviewing technique was employed as the data-gathering ring tool to give the best results in this study. In addition, the investigation of participants' interpretations of their experiences was the goal of this approach (Schuemann, 2014). In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participants (Lester, 1999).

Participants

The participants of the study were identified using the inclusion criteria. Chosen participants were found through a referral by an informant who knew the participants based on the inclusion criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Six (6) female tattooed students in a Catholic School were the primary participants in this qualitative study. They were determined using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is frequently employed in qualitative research. It is a non-probability technique that carefully selects subjects based on the study's goal and with the expectation that each participant contributed useful and initial information (Crossman, 2020). The inclusion criteria were set accordingly. In earlier studies and research, the topic of tattoos was examined about religion and gender, particularly in the context of women. Due to religious resistance and negative tattoo connotations, women have long been stigmatized for having tattoos, and Catholic schools have placed limitations on them (Days et al., 2020; Burkman, 2018; Hawkes et al., 2004). In line with this, the reason why some teenagers and college students are particularly fond of getting tattoos is that tattoos may offer a method to ground a sense of self in a society that seems to be changing and unstable at a time when young people are trying to assert their individuality (Kang & Jones, 2007). Also, according to Kay (2019), committees often appear to take a rigid stance towards the application of their ethical code, and contradictions in the age at which children and young people can consent to research are 18 years old. Moreover, one of the factors that limit the acceptance of tattoos is the judgment of visible tattoos on females (Ramion, 2012)

The number of participants was limited only to six (6). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), a research goal should include how to gauge when data saturation has been reached because a smaller study will do so sooner than a bigger one. When the ability to gather extra fresh information has been gained, when there is enough information to reproduce the study, and when additional coding is no longer practical, data saturation has occurred. Hereafter, the inclusion criteria were set, participants were bona fide female students in a Catholic School, falling within the range of 18 to 22 years, with the placement of the tattoo visible (lower arm), and willing to participate during the interviews.

Additionally, the use of purposive sampling in this study allowed the researcher to collect data from participants who were willing to speak openly about their experiences. This was important because the topic of tattoos and stigmatization can be sensitive and personal. Thus, the researcher made sure that the data collected were from participants who are willing and able to speak candidly about their experience.

Instrument

In this study, semi-structured, in-depth interview was the main approach used to collect data. According to Lauterbach (2018), numerous in-depth interviews were typically performed with a phenomenological approach to collect information about participants' past experiences. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) define semi-structured interviews as the most frequently used type of qualitative data source in studies. This approach usually entailed a conversation between the researcher and the participant, aided by a flexible interview methodology and enhanced by follow-up questions, inquiries into further information, and comments. The technique enabled the researcher to gather unstructured data, investigate participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs regarding a specific subject, and offer insight into delicate and sometimes intimate matters.

Furthermore, to thoroughly examine the participants' experiences, feelings, and viewpoints, the researchers employed semistructured, in-depth interviews as a qualitative research method. In this study, the researchers developed questions and

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

conversation starters to explore thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the experiences of a tattooed female student. Moreover, depending on how the interviewee responded, the interviewer asked additional questions to get a deeper understanding the main goal was to persuade the participants to speak in their terms, therefore questions in this study were not too detailed and it allowed space for a variety of possible answers. Also, it conceded the researcher to focus on the topic of the tattoos while still giving the autonomy to explore relevant ideas that came up during the interview.

Data Gathering Procedure.

In this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used in gathering the data. In conformity with the interview protocol, the researcher described the study's objectives, time frame, interview format (questions, confidentiality, consent, and recording techniques), and intended use of the collected data. The participants were given the chance to ask any questions they have before the interview started, and they were required to sign the written agreement to show that they agree to proceed.

The interview ended with a debriefing which re-iterated the purpose of the study and that the data were presented in the professional community. The researcher emphasized the observance of confidentiality regarding the interviewee's identity and responses. Finally, the researcher expressed their appreciation to the interviewees for their time and cooperation.

In this conjunction, to organize the topics after the interview, the researcher transcribed the data they collected. Transcribing further involves judgments on the level of detail to choose, data interpretation, and data representation (Bailey, 2008). Moreover, transcribed interviews were encoded and NVivo Software was used for analysis.

Data Analysis.

Ethical considerations were taken into account, and the study underwent rigorous data analysis to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The data analysis for the group data is based on Lichtman's man three Cs of analysis from coding to categorizing concepts Lichtman (2006). In addition, the following steps were followed in conducting data analysis based on Lichtman's (2006) Three Cs: codes, categories, and concepts. First, the researcher made an initial coding answering from the responses to some central idea of the responses. Then, revise the initial coding. Next, develop an initial list of categories or central ideas. Hereafter, modifying the initial was based on additional rereading. Next, revisit the categories and subcategories. Lastly, moving from categories into concepts (themes).

IV. RIGORS OF THE FINDINGS

Credibility

It referred to the accuracy of the data or the participant viewpoints, as well as the researcher's interpretation and representation of them (Polit & Beck, 2012). Thus, the researcher used member-checking and participant-debriefing techniques to establish credibility in this study. This entailed giving the interview transcripts back to the participants and allowing them to review the transcripts to ensure that their experiences are effectively recorded.

Transferability

It referred to the results that can be used with different settings or groups (Houghton, 2013). As used in this study, the researcher employed thick descriptions to analyze and described the participants lived experiences and their conception of tattoos. Hence, the thick description was a style of writing that includes describing and observation of the subject matter, usually human behavior (Ponterotto, 2006).

Dependability

It is the level of recorded research techniques and the consistency and reliability of the study findings (Sandelowski, 1986). For the research findings to be dependable, the researchers used the code-recode system to ensure that precise procedures were employed for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Confirmability

It referred to the objectivity of the research process throughout data gathering and processing (Polit & Beck, 2012). Furthermore, to achieve confirmability, researchers demonstrated that the conclusions and results were directly related in a way that was understandable and repeatable (Moon and Blackman, 2014). As used in this study, the researchers employed the bracketing technique to separate their own experiences, opinions, and biases from what is being studied to analyze the data collection. Other methods of establishing confirmability that the researchers used were conversational interviews, taking down notes, and voice records.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion supported by the response of the participants according to the problems presented in this study and those observed from other studies by other researchers.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

Theme 1: Tattoo as an Emblem of the Owners' Self-identity

Tattoos have been used for diverse purposes and have distinct meanings throughout history. (Schmid, 2013). Tattoos serve the purpose of "anchoring the self" in a world where change is continual. Tattooing is one of the practices used to create an identity and is considered to be a part of the self (Sweetman, 1999). The theme of tattoos as an emblem of the owner's self-identity refers to the idea that tattoos can be used to express one's personal beliefs, values, and experiences. Under this theme, there are two subthemes, (1) tattoo representation and (2) tattoo dimension. The sub-theme of tattoo representation refers to the specific symbols, designs, or images used in a tattoo and how they reflect the individual's identity. The sub-theme of the tattoo dimension refers to the physical and aesthetic aspects of the tattoo, such as size and placement. Both sub-themes were connected to the overall theme in that they both play a role in how a tattoo represents an individual's self-identity.

Tattoo representation. Hall (2013) defines representation as the production, circulation, dissemination, and 'consumption' of meaning through language, signs, and images. He argues that representation plays a crucial role in the way meanings are created and shared among members of a culture. and that it involves the use of language, signs, and images which stand for or represent things. Participants repeatedly referred to their tattoos as body art. They saw tattoos as intrinsically visual. For Jane and Rose, they stated that:

"A tattoo is a form of body art kung бага art lang gid sya ya nga sample gusto mo e express bala through tattoo haw, kaso daw ka permanente lang gid sya ya nga daw gusto mo gid like... may meaning gid personally sa imo..." ("A tattoo is a form of body art, like a form of art that you want to express through, but it's only permanent; that's why it has a personal meaning to me.") (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

"Same man sa ginhmbal ni. nga it is a way of once ano self-expression bala kg it is the form of body modification amu na" (It is similar to what is being said that it is a way of self-expression, and also, it is a form of body modification, that's all) (Rose, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Kim echoed a similar notion when she talked about her love and the connection she believed existed between the art of tattooing and her studies in an art school. According to her:

"For me, ang meaning ka tattoo since ara ko sa art school is another form of art kag it is also another form, another way nga mag express ang isa ka tawo" (For me, the meaning of tattoo since I am in art school is another form of art and it is also another form, another way that a person can express themselves.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Participants in this study acknowledged the personal meanings their tattoos represented for them. For the majority, getting a tattoo meant having something meaningful permanently inked onto their skin. One topic came up repeatedly in the conversations with the participants. Most participants said that tattoos needed to have personal meaning for the owner, regardless of design. Jane stated that: "kaso daw ka permanente lang gid sya ya nga daw gusto mo gid like may meaning gid personally sa imo" (But it is only permanent, so you really have to like it, and it should have a personal meaning for me) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa said that her tattoo serves as a constant reminder of her strength or suggests that her tattoos revealed her identity: "ang ga symbolize as a, sang akon nga tattoo hmm... gusto ko lang i-prove nga I am like ano... like isog, strong, a strong person bala" (The symbol that my tattoo represents is...I want to prove that I am, like, strong, a strong person.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Kim commented that her tattoo personally means that it is her way of expressing herself:

"Personally feel ko kay... besides nga namian man ko mag tulok bala... nga ara sakon, ng amo man na siya ang akon isa man ka way nga mag express man art sa akon self" (Personally, besides I like to look my tattoo, having a tattoo on me is also my way of expressing my art through myself.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Tattoos have become a symbol of empowerment for women. Women who have a lot of tattoos have a deep connection to their body art and it can be transformative for them (Smith, 2019). The term "body art" refers to methods of decorating or ornamenting the body, such as tattooing (Lodder, 2010). Body art is no longer seen as a rebellious or unconventional art form; it is now widely accepted by society (Govier, 2011). The participants in this study viewed tattoos as a form of body art and self-expression. They saw tattoos as intrinsically visual and as a way to express themselves through permanent imagery on their bodies. The participants in this study also acknowledged the personal meanings their tattoos represented for them. They believed that tattoos needed to have a personal meaning for the owner, regardless of design.

Participants acknowledged that tattoos as a form of body art that they wanted to express through, but also acknowledged that it was only permanent, that's why it had a personal meaning for them. Kim, who was a student of art school, viewed tattoos as another form of art and also another way that a person could express themselves.

Also, participants saw tattoos as a constant reminder of their strength and commented that their tattoos personally meant that it was their way to express themselves. This emphasized that tattoos held personal significance and meaning for the individual and served as a form of self-expression and representation of personal identity.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

In summary, the participants in this study viewed tattoos as a form of body art and self-expression and acknowledged the personal meanings their tattoos represented for them. They viewed tattoos as a way of expressing themselves through permanent imagery on their bodies and believed that tattoos should have personal meaning for the owner, regardless of design.

Tattoo dimensions

One of the factors that limit the acceptance of tattoos is the judgment of visible tattoos on females, the size of tattoos on people, and the way tattooed women are perceived (Ramion, 2012). The size of tattoos can also play a role in how they are perceived; smaller tattoos tend to attract less attention and scrutiny than larger tattoos (Hill, 2016). In line with this, a smaller tattoo requires less surface area. Design consideration, as well as size consideration, posed issues for Anne:

“I decide it because I don't like big tattoos and I want it to be small so that everyone can fit in like the designs that I want it too” (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Jinnie echoed the same consideration about the design and the size:

“Actually, wala man gid nadedicid na kung ano ang size ka tattoo pero basta depende man bi sa design, pero mga dagko nga tattoo kay ari nasa sa mga competition bala nga big piece gid” (Actually, I haven't decided on the size of the tattoo but it depends on the design, but large tattoos are for competitions or big pieces.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa wanted to begin with a small tattoo before attempting to broaden it too soon:

“I have a minimalist lang nga ano nga tattoo, it's not really big naman, uhm... the reason why nga amu lang ni ang size maybe because ano uhm... I want it na ano lang danay, to start with bala nga gamay lang danay, and then, maybe, someday or next week, next month, I'll get the bigger tattoo na, if, if, pasugtan or possible man.” (I have a minimalist kind of tattoo, it's not really big, the reason why the size is small maybe because I want it to start small and then, maybe someday or next week, next month, I'll get a bigger tattoo if it's possible.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Many factors influenced the participants' decisions about where to locate or place tattoos on their bodies. Most participants decided to place their tattoo(s) in locations where they were able to show or be visible to others, specifically in their lower arm. Kim commented that:

“Halin before may ara na gid ko ya urge nga mag butang di kay feel ko daw ka... daw ka useless bala sang... Daw may ara ko thought that time nga daw ka useless mag sige, example... Ah, mag pa tattoo bala if Indi kitaon, teh amo na nag decide na lang gid ko mag try, miskan Isa lang... sa arm nga part” (Before, I had a strong urge to get a tattoo because I felt like I needed it. But it is useless to have a tattoo if it is not visible, so I decided trying to put one in my arms part) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Rose had the same reason to put her tattoo on her lower arm:

“dali lang nang wala lang dira lang sya (laughing) nang dali lang sya bala ma amu amu ko na makita (lift her arm to see her tattoo)” [It's easy, it's just there (laughing) it's easy to see, I can easily see it (lifting her arm to see her tattoo)] (Rose, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Jinnie is free to do as she pleases without any restrictions, including choosing where she wants her tattoo to be visible:

“nang gin pili ko magkatattoo sa arm kay daw... ka okay man lang sakon nga biskan ga gwa sa bala sa panit kay iban na usually gusto nila nga mga tago lang kay indi man like wala man ko bala gin kigan like ano or nd pwede, daw wala man ko gin gaan limit nga amo na so amo na sa arm lang ko nag pa tattoo” (I chose to get a tattoo on my arm because it's okay for me, even if it is visible. Others usually want to keep it hidden, but I don't mind it being seen, I don't have any limits that's why I got it on my arm.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

When a person decides to get a tattoo, placement, size, and design are important factors to consider (Hennessy, 2011). The tattoo artist must often remind customers that there are limitations on size, detail, and orientation due to the unique contours of the body (Riley, 2012). The visibility of a tattoo can depend on the location and size of the tattoo. A person's level of self-consciousness in public can also affect their decision on the visibility of the tattoo (Doss, 2005). The dimension of tattoos, specifically size, and placement, played a role in how a tattoo represented an individual's self-identity. As seen in the participants' statements, size consideration was important for some, as they wanted their tattoos to be small so that they could fit in with the design they wanted, while others preferred large tattoos for competitions or big pieces. This suggested that the size of the tattoo could be used to express different aspects of an individual's identity, whether it be a desire for a more subtle or understated expression or a bold and striking one.

Similarly, the placement of the tattoo also played a role in how it represented an individual's self-identity. Many participants in the study chose to place their tattoos in visible locations, such as their lower arm, to show or be visible to others. This suggested that the visibility of the tattoo was an important aspect of self-expression for these individuals and that the location of the tattoo could be used to communicate different aspects of their identity, whether it be a desire for privacy or a desire to publicly display their tattoos as a form of self-expression.

In summary, the dimension of tattoos, specifically size, and placement, played a role in how a tattoo represented an individual's self-identity. The size and placement of tattoos could be used to express different aspects of an individual's identity and communicate their values, beliefs, and experiences through the physical and aesthetic aspects of the tattoo.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

Theme 2: Adoption of Tattoo Culture

The reasons for getting tattoos are highly personal and varied, as are the individuals themselves (Feeney, 2016). Although the process of getting a tattoo has remained relatively unchanged, the motivations behind getting them have evolved. One common reason is using it as a form of rebellion against conservative and uptight societal norms (Govier, 2011). Additionally, Govier (2011) also states that some young people may get tattoos to fit in with a certain group or crowd. The main theme of "Adoption of Tattoo Culture" examined the process by which female students adopt and incorporate tattoo culture into their identity. This theme is centered on understanding how tattoo culture shapes and influences the self-concept and identity of female students. The study would explore the motivations and reasons behind the decision to get a tattoo, and how the adoption of tattoo culture is integrated into the individual's sense of self. Two sub-themes, "Female interest" and "External influences" are included to provide a more detailed examination of the main theme. Participants offered a variety of reasons for getting their tattoo(s). They cited such reasons as their passion, and they were influenced by having a tattoo.

Female interest.

During conversations with participants, their excitement and enthusiasm for tattooing were evident. Their passion for tattoos manifested itself in changes in body language and animated facial expressions when they talked about their tattoo(s). According to the findings of the study conducted by Gul et al. (2022), the motivations for obtaining a tattoo among participants varied, with some individuals citing the desire to commemorate significant life events, others expressing a fondness for the physical act of tattooing, and still others expressing a passion for the art form itself. Participants displayed a passion for having a tattoo as a body art and an everlasting visual. Jinnie stated that:

“Ti daw ikaw buligan mo man bala ang artist mo nga (Thingking) gusto mo ang ila art, kay unlike ya sa mga gallery ya example bi kung mabakal mo bi ang artwork ka artist wala saya sa lawas mo, pero kung tattoo ya nang ara sa lawas mo...mas lawig saya, akon lang gd ya hilig” (You should also help your artist by letting them know what you like about their art, because unlike buying artwork from a gallery, where the artwork is on display and not on your body, with a tattoo, it's on your body for a long time, it's just my passion.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Because of their permanence and uniqueness, tattoos provided the participants with constant reminders about their aspirations. Jane and Kim, for example, shared a life dream and the hidden meaning behind it. Both women reported that their tattoos served as a reminder of where they have been and where they hoped to feel. Kim commented:

“Actually, ah, ang akon... goal permi ma ngita ko design bala or mag ubra, hopefully design nga eh pa tattoo is (Thinking) wala lang daw ka something bala nga pwede ko tawaan sa ulihi, tawaan ukon ma tandaan nga sang amo ni nga time amo ni ginaagyan ko teh amo ni ang akon gin pa tattoo that time, daw amo na, amo na” (Actually, my goal is always to find a design or artwork that I can look at and laugh or remember in the future. Hopefully, the design I choose for my tattoo will be something that I can look back on and remember the time I got it, that's it.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Jane commented that the creativity required of her when she designed her own tattoos and the uniqueness of her designs influenced her thinking regarding tattoos as art:

“Kay sakon bi kung gusto ko man gid mag pa tattoo like ndi ko gusto like ang typical gid bala like gusto ko personal gid nga ako lang makainchindi kung ano na sya” (For me, if I want to get a tattoo, I don't want it to be typical, I want it to be personal, something that only I can understand what it means.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Some people get tattoos as a way to express love (Wessely, 2013). It is also common for individuals to get tattoos that reflect their interests and hobbies (Thompson, 2018). Additionally, for many individuals, their passion for tattoos motivates them to constantly improve and evolve their tattoo collections (Stevens, 2021). Being passionate was the reason why the participants had their tattoos. It also highlighted the passion of the participants for tattoos as a form of body art. All participants expressed a strong interest and excitement for tattoos, viewing them as a unique and permanent form of self-expression. Most participants reported a "natural" affinity for tattoos.

Through this passion, participants were able to express themselves through body art. Their views showed a positive outlook on being passionate about body art or tattoos. Also, because of their permanence and uniqueness, tattoos provided the participants with constant reminders about their aspirations and passion for tattoos.

External influences.

The reasons that people choose to obtain tattoos are as varied as the backgrounds of the people who had tattoos. Participants were primarily influenced to get a tattoo by their environment or community. In line with this, Jinnie stated:

“sugod sugod ay sang una sang wala pako tattoo nang sang bata ko gusto ko gid ya magkatattoo kay sa palibot ko bala aw may tattoo.” (Ever since I was a child, I've always wanted to get a tattoo because many people around me had tattoos.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022). and she added that she is exposed to a tattoo community that greatly influenced her to have a tattoo:

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

“Oo, tapos ang iban galing panglawig na bala ara ka sa tattoo community, ti damo ka makilala nga tattoo artist” (Yes, and some of them have been in the tattoo community for a long time, so you get to know many tattoo artists.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa echoed a similar notion, she stated:

“Kay at first sang Uhm... wala pa ko tattoo ang akon nga impression pag may makita ko nga inked nga mga person, uhm... hala ka strong sa ila uhm... ka isog sa ila, amu ni, amu na, kay they conquer gani nga like tusukon sang dagom, amu ni, amu na, and then for me, it ano hmm... (thinking), ga express sang personality” (At first, when I didn't have any tattoos, my impression of people who were inked was that they were strong and confident. They were able to conquer the fear of needles, and for me, it was a way for them to express their personality.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

In some cases, family members have a strong influence on the participant's decision to get a tattoo. Jinnie mentioned that her mum has had a tattoo, so her mum is not restricted for her to have a tattoo, she stated that:

“Amo na sa kay influence, akon mama bi may tattoo naman saya nga daan amo na nga daw ka ok lang siya ya” That's also an influence, my mom also has a tattoo and it's not a problem for her for me having a tattoo also.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Furthermore, Anne said that the problem in her family has prompted her to obtain a tattoo to deal with her problem: “Very personal but. I would like to share it kay I used to self-harm just a warning (lowering her voice) it's about a problem sa akon family and some of that I started wound cuts. So, I decided na lang mag tattoo nalang so that ang art bala ma-appreciate “you get to feel the pain” (It's very personal but I would like to share it because I used to self-harm as a way of coping with problems in my family. I started doing wound cuts, so I decided to get a tattoo instead so that the art can be appreciated and I can feel the pain more positively.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

The participant also considered peers as having influenced their decision to get a tattoo. Rose commented that it was an impulsive decision to have a tattoo with her peers; she stated: “An impulsive decision (person laughing beside her) mga sabay sabay lang sa barkada amu na” (It was an impulsive decision, (person laughing beside her) it was a group decision with friends.) (Rose, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

However, she regrets to have a decision like that, therefore she wants to cover up her tattoo with some design that has a personal meaning for her:

“wala sya meaning actually (laughing) kay nag ahh nagsabay ko sakon barkada nagsulod sila sa ano gapang tattro na bala hw te hambal nila pa tattoo ta te sige G (laughing) tapos sang ara na kami to amu to pagpili ko sang design pero actually wala gid sya meaning, pero may plan ko nga ipa cover up siya nga my meaning na ahmm sa next nga tattoo” (It doesn't actually have a meaning (laughing) because I went with my friends to get a tattoo, they said "Let's get a tattoo" and I said "Ok" (laughing) and then when we were choosing the design, it doesn't actually have a meaning but I have a plan to cover it up with a new tattoo that has a meaning.) (Rose, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Kosut (2006), argued that the tattooed body is distinctively communicative. It has a great deal to say, not only about the identity of the wearer but also about the culture in which she lives. Additionally, tattoos can be obtained for feelings of love or motivations internalized to the self or external influence of other people (Wessely, 2013). Similar and positive demographic characteristics, family, friends, identity, and image seem to be the major influences for obtaining tattoos (Armstrong et al., 2002). In line with this, this sub-theme suggests that the reasons participants chose to get tattoos varied and were influenced by a variety of factors, including their environment or community, family members, and peers. For example, one participant mentioned that many people around her had tattoos, which influenced her desire to get a tattoo. Another participant cited the influence of family members, including a mother who also had a tattoo. Additionally, some participants mentioned that their decision to get a tattoo was influenced by their peers, as they decided to get tattoos as a group. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that their tattoos may have had a personal and emotional meaning, such as self-expression, a coping mechanism, and a way to deal with a personal problem.

It is also worth noting that the passage suggests that some participants may have regretted their decision to get a tattoo, particularly if it was an impulsive decision or one influenced by their peers. They may have chosen to cover their tattoo with a design that had a personal meaning for them, which can be seen as a way to reclaim agency over their body and personal expression. In conclusion, the passage highlighted how an individual's engagement with tattoo culture was influenced by a complex interplay of personal, social, and cultural factors and how tattoos can serve as a powerful means of self-expression, coping mechanism, and personal identity.

Theme 3: Society's Attitudes towards Female Students with Tattoos

Tattoos became an important part of identity, thus judgments from others were considered judgments of identity (Kay & Brewis, 2016). Within modern Western societies through the 1970s, tattoos represented a cultural taboo, typically associated with that outside of the mainstream such as soldiers, incarcerated criminals, gang members, and others belonging to marginalized and counter-cultural groups (Roggenkamp et al., 2017). The country is starting to recognize tattoos as an art and a form of self-expression. Furthermore, the control group was in favor of tattoos and scored high in the level of acceptance (Oleza et al., 2020). Even though

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

more females are getting tattoos and female tattooing is becoming more accepted, some negative stereotypes persist (Wessely, 2013). People with a tattoo have an important contribution to society to show that having a tattoo doesn't prevent a person to do good things and being successful in life (Oleza et al., 2020). This theme refers to how society views and responds to female students who had tattoos.

Specifically, it looks at how societal attitudes and reactions may vary based on an individual's gender and how tattoos are perceived in different contexts and settings. The first sub-theme is "Acceptance and understanding towards female students with tattoos". This sub-theme focuses on the general societal attitudes towards individuals with tattoos and how these attitudes may vary based on an individual's gender. It examines how tattoos are perceived by society at large and the level of acceptance and understanding toward those who had tattoos. The second sub-theme is the "Persisting stigma associated with tattoos". This subtheme highlighted the ongoing negative attitudes and beliefs that society holds towards female students with tattoos. This subtheme emerged from the participants' narratives, which described how they felt stigmatized and judged for having tattoos. The third subtheme is "Catholic School attitudes". This sub-theme focuses on the attitudes and actions of institutions, specifically in a Catholic school, towards individuals with tattoos. It examined how tattoos are perceived within these settings and how they may affect an individual's access to education.

Acceptance of tattoos among female students.

Tattoos have recently become more accepted to a certain degree, dependent on several factors, including the fine line between an individual who has a few visible tattoos (Morin, 2018). In part, it's a predominantly positive view of body art and shows that stereotypes are slowly changing to acceptance (Rao, 2018). Participants commented that they are merely accepted by their respective societies. Jane stated that:

"may ara gyapon amu na pero subong daw indi na gid harsh katama ang society sa mga tattoo... mga tao nga may tattoo" (Nowadays, society is not as harsh towards people with tattoos as it used to be.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022, Lines 31-32). and she shared that the society or the tattoo community is more open now:

"daw ka subong daw okay na kay ang tattoo community bala subong daw, ano na open na katama" (Now, it's okay because the tattoo community is more open now.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022, Line 27).

With the same notion, Lisa shared that even her family and friends are also accepted her without any doubts or harm: "talking about my family naman with them knowing I have tattoo... and sa mga friends ko or sa akon nga community nga gina live in, uhmm (thinking) wala man, siguro okay man lang sa ila, wala man ko may nagakabatian nga...bad things bala nga ginahambal nila, just because I have tattoo uhmm, they don't see me as ano... less a person amu na, indi, uhm...du ka okay man lang, wala man ko may gakabatian nga ano... I feel accepted and understand knowing that I have tattoo gani and yahh... may mga dason pa nga mga tattoo sa lawas ko" (When it comes to my family, friends, and community, I don't think they have any issues with me having a tattoo. I haven't heard any negative comments from them and they don't see me as any less of a person because I have a tattoo. I feel accepted and understood knowing that I have a tattoo and I plan on getting more in the future.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022). Moreover, some academic programs also accepted students with a tattoo, like for example, Kim is a student studying in the field of building design and construction, and they were accepted:

"Pero eventually sang nag sulod man ko sa (mentioned program), kag gin explain ko nga daw amo lang na bala ang way man or expressing art na inchindihan man nila, te ga dugang lang nga ga dugang" (But eventually, when I entered (mentioned program) and explained to them that this is just my way of expressing art, they understand it and it only added to their understanding.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

The same with Jinnie, she stated that: "Kung (mentioned program) ka, baton kaya ka mga tawo" (If you are a (mention program), you are accepted by the people.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Also, stigma and judgment in the workplace are very much alive for tattooed individuals and will continue to affect their job prospects in the short-term (Morin, 2018). In contrast, participants in this study considered themselves accepted even when they had a visible tattoo. Anne stated that:

"Yeah. Yes, I had a job actually, I am a dancer sa isa ka organization and my manager think that it was cool so gin gin ano ya ko gin support and she was like messaging all of his friends nga...oh dri kamo pa tattoo kay Anne". (Yeah. Yes, I had a job actually, I am a dancer in an organization and my manager thinks it's cool so she supported me and she was messaging all of her friends saying "Come see Anne's if you want a tattoo".) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa and Rose have the same notion, both of them were able to have or do on-the-job training (OJT):

"Yeah, not really totally a job, it's more like an OJT but it doesn't affect man my ano, my whole process getting the ano... getting the opportunity nga makwa ko sa amu na nga establishment just because may, I have a tattoo, amu na" (Yeah, it's not really a job, it's more like an OJT, but it doesn't affect my opportunity to work in that establishment just because I have a tattoo.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

“Ahmm daw ang sa Grade 12 na bala daw OJT amu na, pero okay man lang nga may tattoo depende sa...depende guro sa status mo” (In Grade 12, it's more like an OJT, but it's okay to have a tattoo depending on your status) (Rose, personal communication, November 4, 2022, Line 19-20).

All participants shared their positive emotions as a result of having a tattoo. Jane and Lisa stated that there are still stigmas or negative connotations associated with getting a tattoo, but he refuted this by saying that society's perception of tattoos has changed: “may ara gyapon amu na pero subong daw indi na gid harsh katama ang society sa mga tatt... mga tao nga may tattoo.” (There are still some, but now society is not as harsh towards people with tattoos.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

“It's just that ang impression sang iban nga tawo sa akon, amu na, somehow it changes man kay... kay before they see me, as a sweet little girl, something amu na, they see me as a crybaby, amu na, uhm... but right now, uhm... I think they see me as a strong, and an expressive kind of person and... an open-minded kind of person and yah... that's all.” (It's just that the impression of other people towards me has changed, before they see me as a sweet little girl, a crybaby, but now they see me as a strong, expressive, and open-minded kind of person. That's all.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Kim, Lisa, and Jinnie have surrounded by open-minded people like their friends and family. They stated that:

“Actually, none man kay most ahh most of the people nga ga surround sakon like du ka openminded and then expose na sila sang mga amu na nga bagay bala and somehow, most of the time” Actually, none, because most of the people who surround me are open-minded and exposed to different things, so most of the time) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022, Lines 19-20) “sa side ka mga friends ko kag iban nga tawo wala gid ko ka sugata pa nga nag give negative comments” (With regards to my friends and other people, I haven't received any negative comments.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022, Line 24). “pero sa feeling ko daw gahambal lang na sila kay may ara ko lola nga gahambal sakon nga basi e degrade ko ka iban nga tawo. Ga care lang sila sakon nga amo na bala nga basi ano paminsaron sang iban nga tawo...” (But in my feeling, maybe they just keep saying that, because I have a grandma who tells me that maybe I will degrade other people. They just care about what others might think about me.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022, Lines 72-74).

Anne and Jinnie noted their experience in school and society, they commented that:

“Ah, sa school... ahm... sa akon experience since highschool ay highschool... ahm...(Thinking) sa diri sang senior high ahm... daw wala man pero some of my classmates thought that it was like ahm... a joke ang pentel na bala haw” (In my experience in high school, specifically in senior high, there were no negative comments but some of my classmates thought that getting a tattoo was like a joke or a fad.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

“Bali sa society namn ya nga mga ya kung maglakat gid ko sa downtown like tulokon gid ko nila, daw sang una nahuya pako pero sang nag usually daw sang nagdamo nagid bala ang tattoo aw daw mas biskan wala na ga matter ang napaminsar nila pero daw napaminsar ko samtang galakat ko sa downtown nga daw makita ko nila, gatulok sila daw nagpaboost sa self-confidence ko kay amo na kay sang una indi pagid ko confident sang wala pako ya tattoo.” (In the society, when I walk around in the downtown area, at first, I felt uncomfortable when people stare at me, but now that tattoos are more common, it doesn't matter as much what people think of me. However, when I walk around downtown and people stare at me, it actually boosts my self-confidence because I wasn't confident before I got my tattoos.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Acceptance of women with tattoos depends at least in part on interactive relationships between the gender of the person making the judgment, tattoo ownership, size and visibility of the tattoo, as well as general attitudes toward women (Hawkes et al., 2004). Average and high levels of acceptance towards people with tattoos can be proof that people with tattoos are now being accepted in our society (Oleza et al., 2020). Moreover, many companies hired employees with visible body art although with a strong focus on hygiene and aesthetics. It reveals some positive views of body art and shows that stereotypes are slowly changing to acceptance (Miroński & Rao, 2019). This theme highlights that society's attitudes towards individuals with tattoos have become merely accepting and understanding. Participants in this study reported that they felt accepted by their community, family, friends, and even in academic programs and workplaces. They also shared that their tattoos are considered a form of self-expression and art, which is accepted by the people around them.

According to Morin (2018), stigma and judgment in the workplace are very much alive for tattooed individuals and will continue to affect their job prospects in the short term. In contrast, the participants in this study reported that they were accepted in their workplaces, even when they had visible tattoos. They also were able to have on-the-job training (OJT) and experienced no difficulty to get the opportunity to work in an establishment because of their tattoos.

The persisting stigma associated with tattoos.

Tattooed persons may be perceived as having more negative character and as more deviant than people without tattoos (Broussard & Harton, 2018). Not all individuals encountered by participants reacted positively to their tattoo(s). Aside from the positive feelings that having a tattoo may evoke, it may also cause participants to experience unfavorable feelings. the issue of conservative stigma against women with tattoos in certain cultures. According to DeMello (2014), in some conservative societies, tattoos are considered to be a form of taboo, particularly for women. Where women with tattoos were historically associated with prostitution and criminal activity and therefore stigmatized. Every participant in this study has had a negative experience or been stereotyped. Some of their

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

relatives don't accept them because of their tattoos. They are judged negatively because their family adheres to the traditional or conservative aspects of Filipino culture. Jinnie, Lisa, and Kim stated that: "Sa mama ko, baton siya pero, sa papa ko ya kay since sa daw mga sa bukid sila bala gaestar, gina tago ko gid ya kay kis a gahambal gid na sila ya nga "indi ko da ya mag ano sa ano namon nga isa ka relative nga may tattoo" (My mother is fine with it, but my father is not since they come from a rural background. I have to hide it from them because they would say that "I don't want to be like one of our relatives who has a tattoo".) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022, Lines 60-61).

"Actually meron, like my mom. uhm... her ano, first reaction, before ko pa ginhambal sa iya may tattoo na ko nga daan, "Mom, I got a tattoo" amu na syempre first nangakig, "Ngaa nagtatoo ka?" amu ni, amu na, "Sin-o naghambal sa imo nga ma tattoo ka?" , "Din ka nagtatoo?" uhm... "Ano nang safe ang ginpatattooan mo?", du ka amu na, tapos naghambal dayon nga, "Ano ga rebelde ka?", du ka amu na first impression. Sa una nangakig ang akon mama pero nag at some point after nagambal nga "Last mo nana nga tattoo ha" pero which indi (laughing) indi ta sure..." (Actually, there is, like my mom. Her first reaction, before I even told her that I already have a tattoo, was "Mom, I got a tattoo" Of course, her first reaction was "Why did you get a tattoo?" "Who told you to get a tattoo?" "Is it safe what you got tattooed?" "Are you rebelling?" Those were her first impressions. At first, my mom was shocked but at some point, she told me "That's your last tattoo" but I'm not sure if she was joking" (laughing) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022, Lines 25-30).

"Ang nag...nakahatag lang guro negative comments is ang family ko kay (thinking) amo mn na ng... daw tam'an sila ka traditional nga ga say man bala nga, indi nami sa Isa ka babaye nga may ara amo na" (The only people who have given negative comments are my family because they are very traditional and they don't see it as something fitting for a woman to have tattoos.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022, Line 25-26).

DeMello (2014) discussed the gender role stigma that persists in many societies, which can lead to negative attitudes toward women with tattoos. She notes that some people view tattooed women as "deviant" or "promiscuous". Gender or gender roles are another reason why participants in this study could feel bad about getting a tattoo. They face discrimination or judgment because they are women with visible tattoos. Anne and Lisa made the following remarks:

"That's what they said to me and some people ga hambal nga "you're a girl kanugon sang imo skin cause nag pa-tattoo ka." (That's what they said to me and some people said, "You're just ruining your skin as a girl because you got a tattoo.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

"du nagakashock lang sila, wala sila ga, wala sila ga expect nga sa akon nga apperance nga like du ka sweet, amu na kuno, nga du ka, du ka buot nga girl, amu na may tattoo, amu na.kay sang una diba traditional nana sa aton or normal impression na na sa aton nga pag may tattoo ka nga du (thinking) you represent, du ka rebel sa imo sa person, du ka amu na, pero sa amon du indi man." (They were shocked because they did not expect someone like me, who appears to be sweet and innocent, to have a tattoo. In our traditional or normal understanding, having a tattoo represents being a rebel or nonconformist, but for me, that is not the case.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022). Moreover, the participant was also criticized for having a revealing tattoo at an institution or school. The participants have had unpleasant feelings toward both teachers and students. Anne shared her experience: "As I've known of... it is just that the thing that at school, I don't think that... ahm...(thinking) maybe sometimes they would say na ahm... (thinking) "why did you get a tattoo? Do you know that you can't go outside in the Philippines because you have a lot of tattoos and it's also revealing"? (As I've known of... it's just that at school, I don't think that... maybe sometimes they would say why did you get a tattoo? Do you know that you can't go outside in the Philippines because you have a lot of tattoos and it's also revealing.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Jane has the same notion, she stated:

"kay sang una ya sang una amu na eh daw Kadam pa mag judge Bala biskan teachers," (In the past, a lot of people, including teachers, used to judge and criticize me for having tattoos.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Furthermore, participants who have tattoos are judged or stereotyped because some believe that such tattoos prevent them from getting a job or working, or going outside the Philippines. Anne commented: "The negative opinions of having a tattoo that I heard or received ahhh risk thing that I said again naahh I can't go outside the Philippines, I can't have decent work. Ahm...(thinking) I look like...(thinking) and it is just a dirty kano sa akon skin and yeah etc. there's a lot of ahm...(thinking) negative opinion that I've received of having a tattoo. That's like the common thing that everyone said to me". (The negative opinions about having a tattoo that I have heard or received include the risk of not being able to go outside the Philippines or not being able to find decent work. Some people also say that tattoos make me look my skin dirty and there are many other negative opinions about having tattoos that I have heard. This is a common thing that people have said to me.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Negative stereotypes held by the general public about a stigmatized group that informed negative feelings and prejudicial behavior toward that group were greater when the stigmatized person could be held responsible for his/her situation (Reeder & Pryor, 2007). The stigma linked to tattooed students defined them as bad people who inspired negative feelings. Having tattooed friends and family members undermined the stigma against tattooed persons while beliefs about the negative side effects of tattooing reinforced stigma assignment (Dickson et al., 2014). As highlighted in the subtheme, some participants in the study experienced

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

negative reactions from their family members due to adherence to traditional or conservative aspects of their culture. This showed how cultural beliefs and values could impact one's perception of tattoos and influence their attitude toward people with tattoos.

Gender roles also played a significant role in the stigma associated with tattoos. The study found that individuals who endorsed more traditional gender roles tended to have more negative attitudes toward women with tattoos (Hawkes et al., 2004). Women with visible tattoos may have faced discrimination or judgment due to societal expectations of femininity and beauty standards (Musambira et al., 2016). Participants in the study were criticized for having tattoos as women and were told that they were "ruining their skin" or going against the expected norms of femininity. This showed how gender roles and expectations could impact the way people viewed tattoos.

Additionally, the participants in the study also experienced criticism for having revealing tattoos in institutional settings such as schools. This highlighted how tattoos were still stigmatized in professional or formal settings and could lead to negative perceptions of individuals with tattoos.

Catholic School and Tattoos

Tattoos and body piercings are not permitted at Saint Pedro Poveda College Catholic School on any part of the body (Villanueva, 2017), Tattoos must always be covered to keep them hidden at Newman Catholic School, a Catholic school in the Diocesan (Days et al., 2020). While in the Diocese of Peoria's Catholic schools, tattoos are permitted but cannot be seen throughout the day (Shaughnessy, 2018). Religious opposition or a generally negative stereotype of the types of people with tattoos is a reason to restrict the visibility of any body art at school (Burkman, 2018). Therefore, the attitude and actions towards individuals with tattoos within a school setting will depend on the specific policies and culture of the school. In line with this, the participants' institution has a different approach for the student who has a tattoo. Jane commented that the school cannot control the student for having a tattoo therefore, they put a limitation on the number of tattoos that can a student have, and also the tattoo should be required to be registered, she stated that:

"May ara pero subong daw ginastugtan na lang nila kay indi man nila ma control ang students, pero amu na dapat ipa register mo sa ano sa... sa school ang imo tattoo kag kung maka pa register ka na indi ka na magdugang dapat amu lang gid na sya" (There are rules, but now they just allow it because they can't control the students, but you should register your tattoo with the school and once it's registered, you should not add any more tattoos.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Jinnie also stated that she would register her tattoo since it was over the limited number of tattoos, and she cannot add any more tattoos:

"Gahambal sila eh nga... Actually ang mga iban nga dutay lang daw wala lang bala ya, pero akon bi kay daw kag damo nagid, ti daw ginhambalan ko nang damo nana bi pero daw kinanalan nagid na nana e register dapat, kay para gani bala samtang gaeskwela ka sila, sa sa example diri sa (mentioned school), kung ga eskwela kadi dapat di ka pwede lang ka padugang tattoo, especially kung gagwa bala sa uniform, ti indi siya maano gid indi daw gina gaan nila limit bala nga dapat since may tattoo kana nga daan pageskwela mo da okay lang pero nd mana siya pwede madugangan daw amo na..." (They say that, for some people it's just a trend, but for me, I have many tattoos. They told me that I should register my tattoos with the school, especially while you are studying, for example in (mentioned school), while you are studying, you can't add more tattoos, especially if it's visible on your uniform. They don't have strict limits on having tattoos while studying, as long as you don't add more tattoos during your time in school.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

As a transferee, Kim also commented that the approach of the school towards tattoos was restricted:

"Bali ng ang sa na bal'an ko antis nag transfer da, kay... ang only nga course nga gina pasugtan is ang iya ka (mentioned program), so wala na sila gina bawalan nga mag... Bali ang mga basic school rules bala wala mayo ga apply sa (mentioned program) so ang may ara mga tattoo na daw, gina kwaa lang na sila... sang kung pictures bala kung ano bala ila mga tattoo kag kung pila ka bilog. Amo lang na ang rules da sa ila" (But when I transferred, the only course that was allowed is (mentioned program) so they don't prohibit people from having tattoos. The basic school rules don't apply to (mentioned program) so those with tattoos are just asked to show pictures of their tattoos and how many tattoos they have. Those are the only rules in place for them.) (Kim, personal communication, November 4, 2022).

Attitudes toward women with tattoos will become increasingly more important as more and more young women acquire tattoos in the future (Hawkes et al, 2004). However, visible tattoos and body piercing will not be widely accepted in schools (Colbert, 2008). Detractors of this position cited religious opposition or a generally negative stereotype of the types of people with tattoos as a reason to restrict the visibility of any body art at school (Burkman, 2018). The participants in this study discussed the approach of their institution towards tattoos in the past. They mentioned that there were rules in place that regulated the number of tattoos that a student could have and that tattoos had to be registered with the school. This suggested that the institution recognized that tattoos were becoming more prevalent among students and that they were attempting to manage this trend by implementing policies and guidelines.

This approach towards tattoos reflected a shift in societal attitudes towards tattoos, moving away from traditional stigmatization to increasing acceptance. As tattoos became more common, institutions such as schools began to adapt their policies to reflect this change.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

It is also worth mentioning that some of the participants noted that the school's approach towards tattoos was not strict and that they were only required to register their tattoos and were not prohibited from having tattoos at all, which could have been a sign of a further shift towards acceptance of tattoos as a form of self-expression.

Overall, the participants in this study revealed that institutions began to adapt their policies and attitudes towards tattoos, reflecting a shift in societal attitudes towards tattoos as they became more prevalent and accepted. However, there was still variation in institutional policies towards tattoos, which could have been the result of different perspectives and attitudes towards tattoos among different institutions.

Theme 4: The resiliency of the inner self

Immediately after getting the tattoo, both men and women reported reduced anxiety and less dissatisfaction around their appearance (Roggenkamp et al., 2017). Both women and men had significantly lower appearance anxiety and dissatisfaction immediately after obtaining their tattoos, and significantly higher body appreciation, distinctive appearance investment, self-ascribed uniqueness, and self-esteem (Swami, 2011). In contrast, tattooed persons may be perceived as having more negative character and as more deviant than people without tattoos (Broussard & Harton, 2018). Being tattooing may contribute to wellbeing, through the physical sensations, emotions produced, and development of self (Kay & Brewis, 2016). This theme refers to the various emotional, psychological, and personal effects that individuals experience as a result of getting tattoos. These effects can be positive or negative, and they can vary depending on the individual's personal beliefs, cultural background, and social context. Three sub-themes emerged (1) self-efficacy, and (2) Empowerment impact. Self-efficacy refers to the feeling of strength or confidence and control that individuals may experience as a result of getting tattoos. Empowerment impact refers to the sense of control and self-determination that participants felt when they decided to get a tattoo. It highlights the idea that getting a tattoo is a personal choice and an act of self-expression, which can make the participants feel empowered and in control of their bodies and identities may experience as a result of getting tattoos.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to control their actions and the events in their environment (Feist & Feist, 2014). According to a study by Clerge (2019), personal accomplishments, such as achieving goals or being recognized for their efforts, can serve as a source of self-efficacy. The study found that participants who had experienced success were better able to make positive changes in their lives, even in the face of adversity, which helped to build their self-efficacy. Additionally, research by Pratiwi & Hayati (2020) suggests that individuals who develop positive feelings about their self-efficacy are more likely to achieve their goals, have more confidence in their abilities, be more motivated, and take on more challenging tasks. The majority of participants in this study reported that having tattoos had a positive impact on their motivation.

They stated that they felt proud of their tattoos and that the tattoos helped to boost their confidence. Jane getting a very visible tattoo empowered her with her passion for the tattoo, she stated that:

“Nakita yaman (her mom) bala nga ga strive ko sa art bala haw kag sa passion ko ti daw nagsugot na lang sya kay hambal ya form of expression man” (My mother saw that I am striving in the art field and that it is my passion, so she eventually agreed to it as she sees it as a form of expression.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa shows that her tattoos had an impact on how she feels about herself. She marks herself with a visible tattoo to serve as her motivation to fix herself and start a new beginning, she commented that: “they don't see me as ano... less a person amu na, indi, uhm... du ka okay man lang, wala man ko may gakatian nga ano... I feel accepted and understand knowing that I have tattoo gani and yahh... may mga dason pa nga mga tattoo sa lawas ko” (They don't see me as less of a person now, it's okay for them. I haven't heard any negative comments from them. I feel accepted and understood knowing that I have a tattoo and there will be more tattoos on my body.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022) “during those time bala before I decided to get my tattoo, amu na, uhm... it's just ano ang a mark sang amu na nga day, uhm... kay during those times before na daw I had a very hard time gid ya, during my Senior High School, and then after na, pagbirthday ko, before sang birthday ko, I want to ano bala like mark the day nga mastart ko nga like kay-uhon akon self, uhm... indi nako magstay sang amu na nga situation bala nga daw gakaubong ko, amu na uhm... amu tu, nagdecide ko nga, na timing man nga pakadto ang birthday ko, hambal ko sa amu na nga birthday ko I try my best nga kay uhon akon self, with those time nga amu na feeling ko kinanlan ko lang gid, ano... magstart bala, so amu na ginmarkahan ko akon self through having a tattoo” (During that time, before I decided to get my tattoo, it was just a way to mark that day, because during those times before, I had a very hard time. During my Senior High School, and then after, before my birthday, I wanted to mark the day as a start of self-improvement. I couldn't stay in that situation, so I decided that the timing, on my birthday, I would try my best to improve myself. So, I marked myself through having a tattoo.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

Anne feels motivated towards her job. Her manager thinks that her tattoo looks cool and motivates her by advertising her passion for tattooing: “Yeah. Yes, I had a job actually, I am a dancer sa isa ka organization and my manager think that it was cool so gin gin ano ya ko gin support and was like messaging all of his friends nga... oh dri kamo pa tattoo kay Anne” (Yeah, I had a job as a dancer

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

in an organization and my manager thought it was cool and supported me. She even sent messages to her friends saying “get your tattoo here with Anne.” (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

The majority of participants also mentioned how getting a tattoo helped them feel more confident. Jinnie said as much: “kag sang wala pako tattoo indi pa gid ko mayo confident sakon self, pero sang nag pa tattoo ko ya nag ano gid ya nag ano” (And before I got a tattoo, I was not very confident in myself, but after I got it, it changed something for me.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

“Bali sa society namn ya nga mga ya kung maglakat gid ko sa downtown like tulokon gid ko nila, daw sang una nahuya pako pero sang nag usually daw sang nagdamo nagid bala ang tattoo aw daw mas biskan wala na ga matter ang napaminsar nila pero daw napaminsar ko samtang galakat ko sa downtown nga daw makita ko nila, gatulok sila daw nagpaboost sa self-confidence ko kay amo na kay sang una indi pagid ko confident sang wala pako ya tattoo.” (But in society, when I walk around downtown, people would stare at me before, but now it doesn't matter as much because I see more people with tattoos. But I still notice people staring, but it boosts my self-confidence because before I wasn't confident without my tattoo.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa added that she changes from a cute, crybaby, to a strong woman in appearance: “kay before they see me, as a sweet little girl, something amu na, they see me as a crybaby, amu na, uhm... but right now uhm... I think they see me as a strong, and an expressive kind of person and... an open-minded kind of person and yah... that's all” (Before, people saw me as a sweet little girl, but now they see me as a strong, expressive, and open-minded person.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022, Lines 68-70).

Tattoos can serve as symbols of personal transition, representing change or serving as a reminder to leave negative aspects of oneself behind (Kay & Brewis, 2016). The motivations behind getting a tattoo can be diverse, ranging from emotional to practical. One tattoo may be the result of multiple motivations (Wessely, 2013). The act of getting a tattoo can also be closely connected to a transformation of the self. As individuals come to accept their bodies through the process of tattooing, it can have a positive impact on self-esteem (Kay & Brewis, 2016). Through tattooing, individuals can transform their bodies and sense of self, moving toward their desired identity (Kay & Brewis, 2016). However, even though the participant experienced negative and positive feelings, the effect of having tattoos on the participants was more pleasing. The majority of participants in this study reported that having a tattoo had a positive impact on their self-confidence. They stated that getting a tattoo helped them feel proud of themselves and that it boosted their confidence. They also mentioned that their tattoos had a powerful personal significance for them and serve as a form of self-expression and motivation.

Additionally, some participants reported that their tattoos helped them overcome difficult situations or helped them to start anew and that they served as a powerful reminder of their strength and resilience. Furthermore, some participants also noted that their tattoos had an impact on their job, with their managers thinking that their tattoos look cool and motivated them by advertising their passion for tattooing.

In conclusion, the majority of participants in this study associated tattoos with positive feelings and reported that tattoos had a positive impact on their self-confidence, helping them to feel proud of themselves and boosting their confidence. They also reported that the tattoos had a powerful personal significance for them, serving as a form of self-expression, and motivation, and as a powerful reminder of their strength and resilience.

Empowerment impact. Tattoos can serve as a powerful tool for empowerment by allowing individuals to take control of their experiences of stress and trauma. The process of getting a tattoo can serve as a mechanism for re-scripting difficult events and reinforcing one's identity and self-acceptance. By acknowledging past difficulties and turning them into positive symbols, tattoos can also help to increase inner motivation and positive thinking, which can catalyze healing and recovery (Membery, 2015). Tattoos for women have become a symbol of empowerment. The relationship between heavily tattooed women and their body art is something that runs deep and can be transformative for women (Smith, 2019). This passage suggests that the act of getting a tattoo allowed the participant to feel empowered and in control of their bodies and self-expression, without being swayed or affected by the opinions of others. This sense of empowerment enabled participants to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment and satisfaction in their choices, regardless of what others may have thought. Jinnie said that she wanted to achieve or fulfill her aspirations and she is satisfied that everything went as expected: “Akon na feel sang first time ko nagkatattoo daw na fullfill bala ang akon gusto ubrahan before, kag biskan bala sakit siya kag nakulbaan ko Kay basi kigan ko, kag actually wala ko panapaminsaran sang amo to nga time kung hambalon sang iban tawo, pero amo to, happy gid ko nga naubra ko na ang akon gusto”. (My first time getting a tattoo was fulfilling what I wanted to express before, and even though it was painful, took a lot of effort, and scared. I didn't really care about what other people would think. I was just happy that I was able to achieve what I wanted.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Lisa echoed the same notion, she claimed that despite how painful the tattooing procedure is, she still feels relieved after dealing with her burden through her tattoo, which made her want another one or she is satisfied with having a tattoo:

“Sakit (smiling). sakit sya honestly for a first-timer like me. Kay knowing nga I'm afraid of needles, if medical purposes I'll be gone hysterical para lang indi makwa ang dugo or something, pero sang amu tu nga time, I felt ano... strong (smiling) cause imagine having ano multiple of needles, grabe! pero okay man lang sya sakit sya tuod pero I got burden and that's why I feel uhm...

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

strong na somehow and I promise to have more tattoos soon” (It hurts (smiling). it hurts honestly for a first-timer like me. Knowing that I'm afraid of needles if it's for medical purposes I'll be gone hysterical just to avoid bleeding or something, but during that time, I felt...strong (smiling) because imagine having multiple needles, it's intense! but it was okay, it hurts but I got through it and that's why I feel uhm...strong somehow and I promise to have more tattoos soon.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022). She also mentioned that she had already made an appointment for a new tattoo session, she stated that: “Actually yes, there's a big chance gid ya nga, last week lang I have decided nga I will get a new tattoo pero next week pa maano naka set ang akon nga appointment sa amu na nga di lang sa Lacson ayon” (Actually, yes, there is a big chance that I will get a new tattoo soon. I decided last week that I will get a new tattoo but my appointment is set for next week only at Lacson.) (Lisa, personal communication, November 3, 2022, Line 72-73).

Jinnie is satisfied with her tattoo as a work of art or as a piece of body art and with the work of her tattoo artist: “Ti daw ikaw buligan mo man bala ang artist mo nga (Thinking) gusto mo ang ila art, kay unlike ya sa mga gallery ya example bi kung mabakal mo bi ang artwork ka artist wala saya sa lawas mo, pero kung tattoo ya nang ara sa lawas mo...mas lawig saya” (You should also help your artist by letting them know what you like about their art because unlike buying artwork from a gallery, where the artwork is on display and not on your body, with a tattoo, it's on your body for a long time.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Participants also mentioned that they are not worried or unconcerned about how other people would regard them as women with visible tattoos in addition to being satisfied. Jane stated that she doesn't tolerate negative opinions from others, she commented that: “Daw okay man lang bi kay ila man na bi opinion sa akon te ang importante sakon ya ang akon gid ya ngagina.. ang akon lang gid bala self haw nga kung diin ko ya mas ma express ko self ko dira ko, wala na ko labot ma judge ko bala haw” (It's okay if others have their own opinions about me because what's important is that I know myself well. My only concern is how I can express myself and where I can be myself without worrying about being judged.) (Jane, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Jinnie noted that she did not care about other people's opinions as long as she got what she wanted for herself, even if she was a Catholic and they didn't tolerate tattooing: “So, amo gid ni usually kung may tattoo ka, amo gid na ginahambal simo nga babayi kapa namn tapos attooan kapa tas daw ginahigkuan mo lang imo panit, kag damo gid ya opinion ang iban nga tawo about simo nga may tattoo ka kay sa Catholic bi daw I think Indi nila gusto nga amo na kay indi aton ang aton lawas tapos basta mga amo na ang ginahambal nila, pero sakon wala mana gamatter ang mga amo na kay Akon lang bi kung ano lang ang gusto ko para sakon kaugalingon” (So, usually when you have a tattoo, people would say that you're just a girl and then you got tattooed, and then you're putting dirt on your skin. And a lot of people have opinions about people who have tattoos because, in Catholicism, I think they don't like it because they believe that we should not alter our bodies, but for me, it doesn't matter what they say because I only care about what I want for myself.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

“pero amona feeling ko bi kung ang tattoo is indi mana opinion nila or indi bala importante opinionnila simo, kay sakon mana ya kaugalingon, ako mani ya nagdesisyon, bisan gahambal sila nga “kung mag tigulang kaya gadgad mo na kay syempre kay tigulang man ang tattoo” amo na, pero akon ya indi gid ko ya mag gadgad” (But in my opinion, if the tattoo is not their opinion or not important to their opinion for me, because it's my own decision, even if they say "if you grow old, you'll regret it, because tattoos fade when you grow old", but for me, I don't think I'll regret it.) (Jinnie, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Moreover, Anne is also unconcerned about the comments that were made about her having a visible tattoo, she stated that:

“Syempre daw ano e ahm... (Thinking) daw ka “ara naman ta sige si sulit sulit nalang “but in the end, it is just like people's opinion for me, and I don't really care about it” (Of course, some people would say "Well, since you already have it, might as well make the most of it" but in the end, it's just people's opinions for me and I don't really care about it.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022, Line 35-36). “I... (thinking) deal with those people doesn't know me that judge my tattoo. I just laughed it off and shrugged it off. Kay... (thinking) they don't know me and they don't know all the story about it. So, it doesn't matter what's their opinion as long as I know my...” (I deal with those people who don't know me that judge my tattoo. I just laughed it off and shrugged it off. They don't know me and they don't know the whole story about it. So, it doesn't matter what their opinion is as long as I know my reasons and why I got it.) (Anne, personal communication, October 25, 2022).

Getting tattoos can be an empowering experience that leads to a sense of achievement and satisfaction, as well as an improvement in self-esteem (Roggenkamp et al., 2017). The studies by Kay and Brewis (2016) revealed that participants felt empowered by the process and completion of their tattoos, as it enabled them to actualize their ideas and needs, resulting in heightened positive emotions and a subsequent inclination towards acquiring more tattoos. The passage describes the experiences of individuals who have gotten tattoos. It suggests that the act of getting a tattoo allows them to feel empowered and in control of their bodies and self-expression, without being swayed or affected by the opinions of others. This sense of empowerment enables them to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment and satisfaction in their choices, regardless of what others may have thought.

The individuals mention that getting a tattoo was a fulfilling experience, despite the pain involved. They express that the tattooing procedure is painful, but the sense of relief after dealing with the burden through their tattoo makes them want another one or they are satisfied with having a tattoo. They also mentioned that they had already made an appointment for a new tattoo session, showing that they want to continue this experience.

Ink Into the Skin: The Lived Experiences of Female Tattooed Students in a Catholic School

Additionally, the participants expressed a desire to get more tattoos in the future, which suggests they were excited and happy with their tattoos. They also mentioned that they were not concerned about the opinion of others towards their tattoos, this shows that they were comfortable and confident with their tattoos.

The study of Kang and Jones (2007) highlighted that getting tattoos and the tattooing experience make young people feel like they have more power and control over their own lives. In line with this, the participants mention that they are not overly concerned about how other people would regard them with visible tattoos. They express that they don't tolerate negative opinions from others and they use it as a coping mechanism to deal with any reactions they may get from other people. They understand that tattoos may not be accepted by everyone and they have come to terms with it. They have learned to not let the opinions of others affect their choices and self-expression.

They also mentioned that they were aware of the negative views towards tattoos in certain religious beliefs, but they had made the decision to get a tattoo and it was their own body. They didn't see any reason to regret getting a tattoo and they didn't care about what other people thought as long as they were happy with their tattoo. They also mentioned that they dealt with people who judged their tattoos by laughing them off and shrugging them off, as they believed that those people didn't know them and didn't know the story behind their tattoos. The participants were confident and comfortable with their tattoos, and they didn't let the opinions of others affect their decision or how they felt about their tattoos.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on prior findings, it had been determined by the researchers that most of the participants described a tattoo as a piece of body art with a profound meaning that was permanently inscribed on their bodies. Moreover, they maintain an indifferent attitude as a coping mechanism for the underlying stigma. In conjunction with this, the participants' varied reasons for getting tattoos outweigh the stigma they endure, and in the end, it is up to them to decide whether to get inked or not.

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