

Enhancing Participant Involvement in Community Engagement Initiatives of a Private Institution in Cavite City

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Abstract

This study investigates the level of participant involvement in the community engagement initiatives of a private institution in Cavite City, particularly San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite. Guided by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, motivation to participate, institutional support, perceived benefits, and community impact. Using a quantitative descriptive-comparative design, the data were gathered from the community members in eight partner barangays through validated survey questionnaires. Descriptive statistics showed that participants strongly agreed with all five aspects, with awareness of engagement opportunities rated as the highest followed by the institutional support and motivation to participate, while community impact and perceived benefits got the

lower rating. Among the five aspects, the result of ANOVA revealed no significant differences, suggesting each factor influences community involvement similarly. Based on the findings, key strategies such as improved communication, more participatory planning, and stronger recognition system were proposed to significantly boost and sustain community engagement. The study provides practical recommendations for improvement of the institutional strategies to community involvement, with significant impacts in higher education practices, policy-making, and future research on sustainable outreach initiatives.

Keywords: institutional support, community engagement, motivation to participate, participant involvement

INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is recognized generally as the key for social inclusion, sustainable development, and collective problem-solving (Garcia-Lopez & Arizaga, 2022). Globally, its impact has significantly contributed to different sectors such as healthcare, education, disaster resilience, and environmental conservation (Bourke et al., 2023). The United Nations (2023) emphasizes its importance in



attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting equitable opportunities and inclusive growth. As noted by the OECD (2021), effective engagement needs commitment to institution, transparency in communication, and holistic approach to guarantee meaningful participation.

To enhance community engagement, countries worldwide have acquired various approaches such as integration of digital tools, collaborative partnership, and participatory governance (Kendall & Corbett, 2022). In the United States, higher education institutions promote engagement via civic participation, service-learning, and research-driven community approach (Hoffman & Blessinger, 2011). The United Kingdom, similarly, established policies promoting co-production (Arnott et al., 2024). In Southeast Asia, both Malaysia and Indonesia have implemented their organized community engagement programs aimed to focusing marginalized population through economic development and education (Lim & Yusuf, 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, community engagement is deeply rooted in cultural and institutional frameworks (Baconguis et al., 2022). This is evident in the Local Government Code of 1991, wherein participatory governance is institutionalized by encouraging citizen involvement in formulating local policies (DILG, 2023). Moreover, higher education institutions integrate outreach and service-learning programs in the curriculum to boost faculty and student engagement (Rosal & Panganiban, 2022). Despite these efforts, However, maintaining this engagement remains problematic due to inconsistent participation, limited resources, and lack of trust (Del Rosario et al., al 2021). In particular, private institutions struggle to balance their organizational priorities for long-term stakeholder engagement (Rosal & Guevarra, 2024).

Cavite City, a rapidly growing urban area, presents a mixed landscape of opportunities and obstacles for community engagement initiatives. Although private institutions have launched various outreach programs on health, education, and environmental sustainability, sustaining participation continues to be a major issue (Alcala et., 2023). Socio- Economic conditions, institutional support, and resource availability significantly impact engagement levels (Gonzales et al., 2023). While previous studies have explored engagement outcomes, little research has examined the long-term participation of individuals in Cavite City (Mendoza et al., 2021). There is a need for empirical analysis on how different engagement models influence sustained involvement, highlighting a crucial research gap that this study aims to address.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study employs a quantitative descriptive-comparative design. Descriptive statistics will identify the current level of participant involvement, while comparative analysis will determine significant differences across the five aspects. This design enable the researchers to evaluate the existing conditions and is crucial in the formulation of strategies based on evolving empirical findings.

Participants

This study takes place at San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite, a private higher education institution situated in Cavite City, Philippines. The said institution is recognize for its active commitment to community engagement with programs aiming to promote health, education, social development, and environmental sustainability. Through its outreach, San Sebastian college-Recoletos de Cavite maintains collaboration with eight barangays in Cavite City, which is currently use for its community extension location. The study primarily focus on these partner barangays, which provide the ideal context to evaluate the level of engagement of its members in the institutional engagement effort. The study specifically



targeting participants from these barangays who have been involved in the community programs led by the institution.

Instruments

This study utilized a structured survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument to assess the level of participant involvement in community engagement initiatives of a private institution in Cavite City. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part I focused on measuring the level of participate involvement based on five key aspects: awareness of engagement opportunities, motivation to participate, institutional support, perceived benefits, and community impact. Each aspect consisted of five statements rated using 4-point Likert scale: 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. These items were designed to capture the participants' perceptions and experiences with regard to community programs facilitated by the institution.

Part II of the questionnaires gathered feedback on proposed strategies to enhance participant involvement, using the same Likert scale to gauge agreement with suggested improvements such as digital platforms, recognition systems, onboarding efforts, and engagement, and a pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the items for the target respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure began with securing formal approval from the research ethics committee of San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite, as well as from the eight partner barangays in Cavite City. Upon approval, the researchers coordinated with the institution's community extension office and barangay officials to identify and reach out to eligible participants who had previous involvement in community engagement initiatives. A brief orientation was provided to explain the purpose of the study, ensure informed consent, and guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of responses.

The survey questionnaires were then distributed either in printed form or via a secure online platform, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and accuracy before proceeding to data encoding and analysis. The entire data collection process was conducted with adherence to ethical standards, prioritizing voluntary participation and respect for participants' privacy.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the structured survey questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, aligned with the three research questions of the study.

To answer research question 1, which seeks to determine the level of participant involvement in community engagement initiatives I terms of awareness of engagement opportunities, motivation to participate, institutional support, perceived benefits, and community impact, the study employed descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations. These were used to summarize and interpret participant responses on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The computed mean scores provided an overview of the general level of agreement for each aspect of involvement, identifying which areas showed high or low levels of engagement.

To address research question 2, which explores whether there are significant differences in the level of participant involvement across the five identified aspects, the study used inferential statistics, particularly the analysis of variance. This test determined whether there were significant differences in the participants' ratings among the five components of engagement.

To answer research question 3, the researchers are interested in developing strategies for enhancing participant involvement and utilizing the mean scores and standard deviations in the analyzation of their responses. High-scored strategies were determined as strength to be reinforced and those with low-scored strategies are areas that required attention or improvement. These analyses were crucial in formulating the recommendations that reflects the identified strength and weaknesses in the present practices of community engagement in San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite.

Results and Discussion

In this section presents the result of the study concerning participant involvement in community engagement initiatives of a private institution in Cavite City. We analyzed five key aspects: awareness of engagement opportunities, intuitional support, motivation to participate, perceived benefits, and community impact. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequency counts, percentage and standard deviations to determine the overall level of involvement. In light of the study's objectives, the discussion interprets these findings, featuring areas of strength as well as aspects that is essential for further notice to enhance community engagement initiatives.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics on the Level of Participant Involvement in Community Engagement Initiatives.

Aspect of Involvement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Awareness of engagement opportunities	3.33	0.52	Strongly Agree (High awareness)
Motivation to participate	3.31	0.39	Strongly Agree (High motivation)
Institutional support	3.32	0.48	Strongly Agree (High support)
Perceived benefits	3.28	0.49	Strongly Agree (High benefits)
Community impact	3.28	0.50	Strongly Agree (High Impact)

Table 1 This section details presents the descriptive statistics highlight a consistently high level of participant involvement in community engagement initiatives in community engagement initiatives, focusing on five key aspects: awareness of engagement opportunities, motivation to participate, institutional support, perceived benefits, and community impact. Across all five measured aspects which includes awareness of engagement opportunities, institutional support, motivation to participate, perceived benefits, and community impact, the mean scores exceeded 3.26, indicating strong agreement (within the 3.26-4.00 range) regarding their participation.

The highest mean score was observed in the aspect of highest Awareness of Engagement Opportunities ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.52$), suggesting that the majority of respondents felt well-informed about the institution's community programs. Close following were Institutional Support ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.48$) and Motivation to Participate ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.39$), suggesting the institution proactive role in fostering engagement and the participant's internal drive to contribute. Furthermore, the aspects of Perceived Benefits. Community Impact both yielded a mean of 3.28, participants implying that participants not only recognized personal growth from their involvement but also perceived their participation as making a tangible difference in the community.

These findings align with recent literature emphasizing the importance of crucial role of institutional support and clear communication in enhancing community engagement. According to Ismail et al. (2022), participants are more likely to engage meaningfully when they are aware of opportunities and perceive



strong backing from the institution. Moreover, sustained participation often stems from individuals experiencing personal growth and seeing positive community changes.

Table 2

ANOVA Results on the Difference in Participant Involvement Based on the Five Aspects Identified.

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Between Groups	0.22	4	0.05	0.23	0.92	2.38	No Significant
Within Groups	174.42	755	0.23				Difference Exist
Total	174.63	759					

The ANOVA results in Table 2 indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of participant involvement across the five identified aspects of community engagement (Awareness of Engagement Opportunities, Institutional Support, Motivation to Participate Perceived Benefits, and Community Impact).

This is evidenced by the computed F-value of 0.23, which is significantly lower than the F-critical value of 2.38, and a p-value of 0.92, which is far above the threshold of 0.05. These results suggest that participants consistently report high involvement, indicating a balanced implementation of community engagement initiatives within the institution.

This finding supported by the study of Sibanda and Maringe (2021), who found that when institutions provide clear and equitable engagement structures, participants tend to experience a uniform level of involvement across multiple engagement dimensions. Their research highlighted how comprehensive institutional strategies promote equal access and support, fostering uniform participant experiences.

Table 3

Proposed Strategies to Enhance Participant involvement based on identified strengths and weaknesses.

Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Inform stakeholders about upcoming community activities and their significance by developing a sustained, multi-platform campaign. Consistently update stakeholders on upcoming community activities and highlight why they matter.	3.32	0.73	Strongly Agree
Create a dedicated digital platform or mobile app where all community engagement opportunities are posted, including event details, goals, registration, and feedback mechanisms.	3.21	0.6	Agree
Introduce new students and employees to the institution's community engagement efforts as part of their onboarding or orientation, emphasizing its importance and ways to get involved.	3.32	0.6	Strongly Agree
Appoint student or staff "Community Engagement Ambassadors" who actively promote involvement by sharing their positive experiences and encouraging peer participation.	3.32	0.46	Strongly Agree
Provide incentives such as certificates, tokens, food, event souvenirs, or digital badges.	3.47	0.5	Strongly Agree



Highlight participants' contributions in newsletters, bulletin boards, and institutional ceremonies.	3.42	0.5	Strongly Agree
Communicate the purpose and tangible outcomes of each engagement program clearly to make participants feel their involvement is meaningful and impactful.	3.42	0.6	Strongly Agree
Design programs that allow participants to develop specific skills such as leadership and problem-solving, public speaking, making the experience personally and professionally rewarding	3.26	0.78	Strongly Agree
Conduct and share impact studies or success stories of previous initiatives to demonstrate results. This reinforces belief in the program's success, driving further engagement.	3.16	0.74	Agree
Involve students, staff, and community stakeholders in planning and decision-making. This participatory approach increases a sense of ownership and relevance.	3.32	0.46	Strongly Agree

The data in Table 3 highlights the respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of various proposed strategies to enhance participant involvement in community engagement programs. The overall mean scores, ranging from 3.16 to 3.47, indicate a strong level of agreement on the relevance and usefulness of these strategies. The highest-rated strategy, with a mean of 3.47, involves providing incentives such as certificates, tokens, food, event souvenirs, or digital badges, suggesting that tangible rewards serves as strong motivators for participation. Other highly rated strategies, all with means scores of 3.42 or higher, include recognizing participant contributions through newsletters and ceremonies, as well as clearly communicating the purpose and expected outcomes of each programs. These findings underscore the importance of recognition and meaningful communication in fostering participant engagement.

Additionally, several strategies received a mean score of 3.32, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," including launching a sustained multi-platform awareness campaign, integrating community engagement in onboarding processes, appointing student or staff ambassadors, and involving stakeholders in planning and decision-making. These research results shows that participants strongly favor strategies that enhance involvement in community engagement programs. Meanwhile, strategies such as developing a digital platform for engagement opportunities ($M = 3.21$) and conducting impact ($M = 3.16$) received slightly lower, yet still positive, evaluations, potentially due to perceived implementation challenges.

These studies are aligned with the findings of Manzano-Sanchez and Valentine (2022), which also found that transparent communication, recognition, and peer influence significantly contribute to increased student participation in school activities. Their research demonstrated that when students are acknowledged, clearly informed, and led by peers or role models, they are more likely to engage actively in programs, reinforcing the strategies highlighted in this study.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that participants strongly favor strategies that enhance involvement in community engagement programs. Participants strongly valued incentives such as certificates, tokens, and digital badges. Aside from this, participants also strongly value recognition for their contributions suggesting that extrinsic rewards can significantly boost motivation to participate. Other strategies such as recognizing participant contributions, clearly communicating program outcomes, and offering skill development, using multi-platform campaigns, were also highly rated, emphasizing the importance of appreciation, and personal growth. Moreover, strategies like multi-platform campaigns, ambassador involvement, and inclusion of community engagement in onboarding programs, underscoring

the desire for consistent communication and peer-led initiatives. Although strategies involving digital platforms and impact studies received slightly lower scores, they still reflected positive feedback, suggesting they are viable but may require further development or support. Overall, the findings suggest that a comprehensive and inclusive approach by combining recognition, communication, leadership, and incentives, can effectively enhance stakeholder participation in community engagement efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance participant involvement in the community engagement initiatives of San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite:

1. Utilize digital tools (e.g., social media, SMS alerts) and community bulletin boards to disseminate timely and accessible information about engagement opportunities.
2. Develop a structured framework for community partnership, including regular coordination meetings with barangay leaders, clear role assignments, and logistical support for activities.
3. Create non-monetary reward systems such as certificates, appreciation events, and feature stories to acknowledge participant contributions and increase motivation.
4. Involve community members in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs to ensure relevance, foster ownership, and build trust.
5. Conduct pre-engagement orientation sessions for new participants to ensure they understand the objectives, expected outcomes, and processes of community initiatives.
6. Establish feedback mechanisms and periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjust as needed.

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