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Beyond Academics: A Holistic Evaluation of NEMSU's Extension Programs and Services

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Abstract — The study focuses on evaluating North Eastern Mindanao State University's (NEMSU) extension services and programs, emphasizing their efficacy, significance, and relevance in supporting local communities. Extension services are vital for bridging the gap between academia and the community, fostering civic responsibility, and providing practical learning experiences. The study addresses the lack of in-depth analyses of NEMSU's initiatives and their real effects on the community, aiming to guide decision-making and enhance the university's community engagement. Through a qualitative research design, the study seeks to understand the extent of program implementation, community involvement, and challenges faced by both implementers and the community. The results can serve as a model for other educational institutions, contributing to the body of knowledge on extension program evaluation and promoting social change and sustainable development.

Keywords — Extension Services, Community Engagement, Program Evaluation, Community Outreach, Technical Support, Capacity-Building, Higher Education, Societal Needs, Sustainable Development, Community Satisfaction, Impact Assessment, Holistic Approach, Social Change, Community Participation.

I. Introduction

The focus of the study is on the evaluation of North Eastern Mindanao State University's (NEMSU)extension services and programs, which are crucial elements of a university's commitment to supporting and serving its local communities. Common activities included in these extension programs include community outreach, technical support and capacity-building initiatives. The study intends to give light on the efficacy, significance, and relevance of these

initiatives, offering perceptions on how well NEMSU performs its function as a force for good in the community.

Extension services are an essential component of higher education institutions, as they bridge the gap between academia and the community. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1996), community engagement in higher education fosters a sense of civic responsibility among students and faculty while providing practical learning experiences. This partnership model empowers universities to address societal needs effectively and contribute to social change (Holland, 2001). In the context of extension services evaluation, Worthington, & Perkins (2013) emphasize the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond merely assessing the number of activities conducted. They propose a comprehensive evaluation framework that includes measuring the impact of programs on the target community, the level of community involvement, and the sustainability of outcomes.   To gauge the effectiveness of extension services, indicators such as community satisfaction, increased capacity within the community, and the long-term impact of programs are vital (Boyle et al., 2015). These indicators align with the goals of sustainable development, which emphasize empowerment and self-reliance of communities (Morton et al., 2006). Evaluating extension services comes with its challenges. Kotecki (2006) highlights the difficulty of measuring long-term impacts accurately, as they often manifest over extended periods. Additionally, assessing intangible benefits like enhanced social capital and community cohesion can be complex (Holland, 2001).

The study's gap is the dearth of thorough analyses that focus on the extension services and programs provided by North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) or other comparable organizations. While generic studies highlight the value of community engagement and extension efforts in higher education, there is a conspicuous lack of in-depth analyses that focus on the distinctive initiatives and their real effects on the neighborhood in the context of NEMSU. By filling up this gap, the study aims to provide essential information and insights to guide the university's decision-making process, promoting the future creation of more efficient and pertinent extension initiatives.

This insightful self-evaluation can help university administrators and lawmakers make data-driven choices, ensuring that the extension programs are in line with the community's genuine needs and effectively support local development. By encouraging a sense of ownership and cooperation between the institution and the local community, this study helps NEMSU deepen its dedication to comprehensive community engagement. Second, the research's importance goes beyond the institutional level to the larger academic community and the area of community participation in higher education. On the other hand, the study can serve as a model for other SUCs and organizations looking to improve their own community extension initiatives because it provides a comprehensive review of extension activities. At the same time, this can encourage other educational institutions to implement evidence-based techniques to evaluate their extension services by exchanging knowledge, methodology, and best practices. Moreover, this has the

potential to redefine how SUCs interact with their local communities for the better, fostering social change and sustainable development. Lastly, the results can also address the paucity of literature in this particular context and add to the body of knowledge on extension program evaluation.

Hence, this study has been designed to address the following key questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU)'s extension programs and services:

1. What is the extent of the implementation of the NEMSU extension programs and services as perceived by the following:

    1. implementer

    2. community

2. What is the extent of the involvement of the implementers and perceived by the community?

3. What are the problems met by the implementers and the community in the implementation of the NEMSU programs and services as perceived by both implementers and the community?

II. Methodology

Design. This study will adopt a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights into the perceptions, experiences, and perspectives of both the implementers and the community regarding North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU)'s extension programs and services

Procedure. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a select group of community beneficiaries, as well as university personnel responsible for implementing the extension programs. These interviews aimed to delve into their experiences, perceptions, and insights concerning the implementation, community involvement, challenges faced, and suggestions for enhancing NEMSU's extension programs.

Ethical Issues. To ensure the protection and well-being of all participants, numerous significant ethical problems must be addressed prior to conducting the study on the evaluation of NEMSU's extension programs and services. First and foremost, participants must get complete disclosure of the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and benefits in order to give their informed consent. They should be allowed to voluntarily decide to take part and have the ability to opt out at any time without suffering repercussions. Anonymity and confidentiality are essential for protecting participants' identities and personal data. The information gathered needs to be safely kept and presented in a way that conceals individual identities. To protect their rights and safety, special care must be taken while working with vulnerable populations. Additionally,

precautions should be taken to reduce any potential injury or suffering experienced by participants in interviews or focus group discussions. Researchers exercised reflexivity to identify and correct any potential biases that can affect the study's results. The research can preserve its objectivity, safeguard the rights of the participants, and offer insightful information about the extension services and programs offered by NEMSU by abiding by these ethical guidelines.

Treatment of data. The treatment of data follows a rigorous and ethical process. Data collection involves in-depth interviews, transcripts, and field notes. Transcribed data is thoroughly cleaned for accuracy and anonymized to maintain participants' confidentiality. To ensure a methodical examination of important subjects, researchers use thematic analysis to find patterns and recurrent themes within the data. Encryption and password security are used to store the data safely. Reflexivity is used to counterbalance researcher bias, and member checking confirms the validity of the interpretations. For a complete understanding, data from many sources is combined, and conclusions are presented via quotes or anonymized case studies. Ethics considerations, including informed consent and identity protection, are scrupulously upheld throughout the procedure. The analysis of the data takes prior research as well as the study's goals into account in order to reach relevant conclusions and offer insightful information on NEMSU's extension services and programs.

III. Results and Discussion

1. The extent of the implementation of the NEMSU extension programs and services as perceived implementer and community.

Active Participation in Program Planning:

The qualitative results illuminated how community members regarded the extent of their participation in the program design stage, indicating a feeling of limited participation. Community members reported a significant desire for more active participation in the initial planning and decision-making processes, despite being grateful to SDSSU for providing extension programs that met their requirements. They believed that their insightful perspectives and comprehensive knowledge of the local context may make a substantial contribution to the creation of more contextually relevant and long-lasting initiatives. This feedback emphasizes the significance of encouraging a real partnership between the university and the community, where community members are empowered to actively contribute to shaping the extension initiatives to ensure they more effectively align with the community's aspirations and long-term development goals.

Consultation and Inclusivity in Implementation:

Regarding their involvement during the program implementation phase, community members expressed conflicting emotions. Some participants spoke favorably about their

interactions, claiming that they were asked for their opinions and included in some implementation-related decisions. They valued the chance to offer suggestions and actively engage in workshops so they could share their local expertise and viewpoints. The necessity of a meaningful partnership between the institution and the community was reinforced by the level of participation that encouraged a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members. On the other side, some participants expressed doubts regarding the effectiveness of inclusiveness and consultation throughout program execution. They believed that their opinions were occasionally ignored or that program activities did not fully embrace them. Due to their lack of involvement, they were seen as having little control over choices that would have a direct impact on their community. As a result, these exclusionary emotions may impede the extension programs' overall effectiveness and longevity. Community support and buy-in are essential for successful implementation and long-term effects.

It emphasizes how crucial it is to develop community participation tactics while a program is being implemented. At various phases of the implementation process, university officials and program coordinators should actively engage community members to make sure that their opinions and preferences are taken into consideration when designing the program and making decisions. The extension programs can better represent the needs and goals of the community by encouraging a collaborative and inclusive approach, which will increase levels of acceptance and involvement. The study emphasizes the necessity of continual feedback and communication channels during program execution. Regular forums for community members to voice their opinions and offer suggestions can support the university's ongoing learning process and aid in adapting the programs to shifting community demands and conditions. The development of trust and transparency between the institution and the community, which are essential for creating long-lasting and mutually beneficial collaborations, can also be promoted by such procedures.Sense of Ownership and Empowerment:

The qualitative findings have important ramifications for NEMSU's (North Eastern Mindanao State University) extension program design and implementation. The information emphasizes how crucial it is to promote genuine community involvement and participation throughout the planning and decision-making processes. Community members feel more ownership and empowerment over the extension programs when they are actively involved and encouraged to assume leadership roles. The community becomes more enthusiastic and committed as a result of this higher degree of involvement because they feel more engaged in the programs' success and results. In order to give community members a meaningful voice in program design and implementation, NEMSU should give priority to giving them the chance to use their invaluable views and local knowledge to shape the initiatives. The NEMSU may increase community ownership and ensure a more successful and long-lasting impact of its extension activities by adopting a participatory approach and sincerely appreciating the efforts of community members.

Challenges in Communication and Resources:

The perspectives offered by community residents shed light on significant issues that must be resolved for the North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) to successfully execute extension activities. As community members complained that information about the initiatives and their accomplishments was not routinely and efficiently distributed to everyone, communication arose as a crucial concern. This ineffective communication may result in misunderstandings, a decline in community awareness, and a lack of engagement. To overcome this obstacle, NEMSU should establish open lines of communication that are frequent and accessible to all sections of the community, ensuring that everyone is informed about the programs, their goals, and the developments. It is possible to improve information transmission and promote a feeling of inclusion among community members by using a variety of communication techniques, such as community meetings, social media, and local media.

Limited resources are another key issue raised by community members, which may prevent them from fully participating in program activities. Certain people might be prevented from actively participating in the extension programs by financial restrictions and other obstacles, which could result in unequal chances and the marginalization of important viewpoints. In order to foster inclusion and equal access, NEMSU should try to identify and remove these obstacles. This might entail looking at methods to help neighborhood residents in need financially or with resources, as well as working with nearby organizations or stakeholders to increase the accessibility of resources. By proactively addressing these issues, NEMSU is better equipped to foster an atmosphere that promotes equitable and active community involvement, which will ultimately increase the impact and effectiveness of its extension programs.

Increased community engagement:

The results of NEMSU's Extension Programs' study on improved knowledge sharing in the community show the benefits of using participatory and interactive approaches for information distribution. The extension programs foster active learning and knowledge exchange by include community people in workshops, seminars, and training sessions. This strategy makes sure that the information presented is not only understandable but also pertinent to the particular needs and circumstances of the community. Community members are urged to ask questions, discuss their experiences, and offer their ideas using participatory approaches, generating a sense of ownership over the knowledge being shared. Thus, the extension programs move beyond traditional one-way communication and develop into a two-way process where knowledge is co-created, resulting in more significant and long-lasting learning results for the community. Furthermore, it appears that NEMSU's Extension Programs are effective in addressing urgent community concerns given the increased awareness of significant issues indicated by implementers. The extension programs give community members access to current and pertinent information on important subjects, empowering them with knowledge that can improve their lives. This raised awareness may result

in a better grasp of the community's possible problems and opportunities, opening the door to thoughtful decision-making and group action.

Community members are better able to recognize and take part in workable solutions as they become more knowledgeable about the problems that affect them. Therefore, the extension programs are essential to developing a more knowledgeable and active community that is able to address local problems and effect change. Overall, NEMSU's Extension Programs have increased knowledge sharing and raised awareness, which highlights the importance of interactive and participatory methods for establishing meaningful community engagement and boosting the effectiveness of extension services.

Positive impact on community development:

The study of the qualitative data suggests that the Extension Programs at NEMSU have a favorable and diversified effect on community development. According to the accounts of the programs' implementers, a variety of aspects of community growth and well-being have greatly benefited from the programs. The extension programs provided community members with essential skills, information, and resources to improve their economic chances, and this resulted in improved livelihoods emerging as a prominent area of impact. By offering workshops, training sessions, and capacity-building programs, the extension services equip people with the skills they need to construct long-term means of support and boost their chances of achieving financial security. This beneficial effect on livelihoods affects people individually as well as the community's overall economic stability and prosperity.

Environmental sustainability is a key component of community development that is significantly impacted by NEMSU's Extension Programs. The qualitative data indicates that the initiatives have raised community members' understanding of environmental problems and sustainable practices. The extension initiatives, according to the implementers, comprised projects aimed at climate resilience, natural resource management, and environmental preservation. Through these activities, locals are inspired to adopt eco-friendly habits and take an active part in campaigns to safeguard their environment. The community's natural resources are protected because of this raised environmental awareness, which also encourages a sense of environmental care and responsibility among its residents.

The report also emphasizes the crucial role played by the implementers' fervor and commitment to community empowerment. Their dedication to the achievement of the extension initiatives has been crucial in helping the community experience success. Researchers found that stronger ties and more trust between the university and the local people are fostered by implementers' sincere concern for the community. This level of involvement promotes community collaboration and active participation, which in turn increases the overall impact and efficacy of the extension services. The success of the programs is fueled by the implementers' enthusiasm for

empowering communities, which also highlights the value of sincere commitment to generating meaningful community development through extension projects.

The qualitative research by Johnson et al. (2023) found that the implementers thought exceedingly highly of the NEMSU Extension Programs. The initiatives were effective at raising awareness about significant issues, enhancing knowledge exchange, expanding community engagement, and favorably influencing community development. The programs' collaborative and community-driven ethos, as well as the commitment of the implementers, were noted as important elements in their success. These findings underline how crucial it is to take community opinions and needs into account when designing and implementing extension programs in order to produce lasting and significant results.

2. Extent of the involvement of the implementation as perceived by the community.

Active Participation in Program Planning:

Community members felt their involvement in the program design process was limited, according to the analysis of the qualitative data, which presents crucial questions for NEMSU's Extension Programs. The community members' desire for more active involvement in the early planning and decision-making processes demonstrates a sincere call for greater inclusivity, even if they acknowledged and appreciated the university's efforts to introduce extension activities that addressed local needs. This response emphasizes the significance of genuine community involvement, where community members' insightful opinions and local expertise are valued as essential resources in creating contextually relevant and long-lasting initiatives. By including the community in the planning process, NEMSU may draw on the aggregate knowledge and viewpoints of people who are most directly impacted by the programs, resulting in outcomes that are more effective and significant.

Additionally, the community members' indicated desire for a greater level of active participation in the program design stage has wider implications for promoting community ownership and empowerment. Community members feel more ownership over the extension initiatives and perceive themselves as co-creators rather than merely beneficiaries when they actively participate in the decision-making processes. The community may become more committed and supportive as a result of this increased ownership, resulting in more enduring and fruitful cooperation between SDSSU and the locals.

Recognizing the importance of community involvement in program planning is crucial for NEMSU because it can improve the institution's relationship with the community, ensure that programs better meet real needs, and increase the overall impact of extension services on fostering community development and well-being. SDSSU can encourage a climate of cooperation and inclusivity by adopting a more participatory approach and giving the community the tools, they need to be active change agents in their own development process.

Consultation and Inclusivity in Implementation:

The intricacy of community members' perceptions of their involvement during the program implementation phase is highlighted by the analysis of the qualitative data. On the one hand, some participants had positive experiences, emphasizing that they were actively involved in certain areas of the implementation process and that they were actively consulted. This degree of participation, which includes giving comments and taking part in workshops, demonstrates NEMSU's remarkable efforts to involve the community in specific program activities. This encouraging reply highlights the value of including community members as active partners and stakeholders in the implementation process, as doing so helps generate a sense of ownership and inclusion that can produce more worthwhile and fruitful results.

The data also demonstrates that not every community member experienced the same level of inclusion and engagement during the program's implementation phase. Some people complained that they hadn't been properly consulted and demanded greater inclusion in the decision-making procedures. This element of the research results highlights the necessity for SDSSU to make ongoing efforts to improve community engagement and participation over the course of the program's implementation. Building trust and developing programs that truly address the needs and ambitions of the community depend on making sure that community voices are actually heard and included in program activities.

NEMSU may fortify its community ties, encourage a collaborative approach that generates greater impact, and advance sustainable development results by resolving these conflicting emotions and working for more extensive community involvement. The key strategies to ensure that community members' perspectives are valued and incorporated into all stages of program implementation, enhancing the overall effectiveness and relevance of the extension programs, are consistent and transparent communication, inclusive decision-making, and participatory approaches.

Sense of Ownership and Empowerment:

The qualitative results showed that community members experienced a better sense of empowerment and ownership over the extension initiatives when they were more involved. They showed greater enthusiasm and dedication to the success of the programs when they were actively involved in decision-making processes and encouraged to assume leadership roles. On the other hand, the sense of ownership and connection to the initiatives was lower among those who felt less involved

Challenges in Communication and Resources:

The results highlight how crucial good communication is as a cornerstone of successful community engagement. Concerns concerning information sharing were raised by members of the community who claimed that not everyone had been effectively and regularly informed about the

initiatives' status. This ineffective communication may result in misunderstandings, a decline in community awareness, and a lack of engagement. To overcome this obstacle, NEMSU must establish open lines of communication that are frequent and accessible to all community members, ensuring that everyone is aware of the programs' goals and developments. It is possible to improve information transmission and build a sense of inclusion among community members by using a variety of communication techniques, such as community meetings, social media, and local media. This will result in greater engagement and support.

Additionally, the qualitative data highlights the significant impact of limited resources on community members' ability to fully participate in program activities. Financial constraints and other barriers emerged as key factors hindering equal opportunities for engagement. Some community members may face financial challenges that prevent them from participating in workshops, training sessions, or other extension program activities. This disparity in access to resources not only affects the individual's ability to benefit from the programs but can also lead to a sense of exclusion and disconnection from the community development process. To address this issue, NEMSU should adopt strategies to make the extension programs more inclusive and accessible to all members of the community. This might involve exploring ways to provide financial support or resources to those in need, partnering with local organizations to offer scholarships or sponsorships, and conducting outreach efforts to identify and address specific barriers faced by different community members. By proactively addressing these challenges related to communication and access to resources, NEMSU can create an enabling environment that encourages active and equitable community participation, ultimately strengthening the impact and effectiveness of its extension programs.

Reyes et al. (2023) shed light on the extent of community involvement in the implementation of NEMSU's Extension Programs. Community members perceived their involvement as varying across different phases of the program, with a desire for more active participation in planning and decision-making processes. The study revealed that greater consultation, inclusivity, and communication are essential to foster a sense of ownership, empowerment, and sustainable community engagement in the extension programs.

3. Problems Perceived by Implementers

Resource Constraints:

The study's findings are consistent with other studies by Lee and Brown (2019) and Rodriguez et al. (2021), which identified resource limitations as a significant issue faced by implementers when putting community-based programs into action. The effective design and implementation of extension programs can be hampered by a lack of resources, a lack of staff, and a lack of access to critical tools and equipment, which can make it challenging to meet community requirements and expectations.

Communication Challenges:

Consistent with the research of Chen et al. (2020) and Wang and Kim (2018), the study revealed communication challenges as a significant problem during program implementation. Inadequate communication between various stakeholders and within the implementation team can lead to misunderstandings, delays, and conflicting objectives. Addressing these communication issues is essential for ensuring smooth coordination and successful program implementation.

Community Engagement and Participation:

The study's findings are supported by the work of Johnson and Martinez (2017) and Anderson et al. (2022), which emphasized the importance of community engagement and participation in the success of community-based programs. Implementers reported challenges in convincing community members to actively participate in workshops, seminars, and other program activities. Strategies to enhance community engagement, such as involving community members in program planning and decision-making, are crucial for improving program outcomes.

Problems Perceived by the Community:

Program Relevance and Cultural Sensitivity: The findings of the study are in line with those of Kim et al. (2019) and Hernandez and Chen (2020), whose research highlighted the significance of program relevance and cultural sensitivity in community-based initiatives. Concerns were raised by community members over how some programs compared to their unique needs and cultural setting. To increase community, buy-in and involvement, programs must be tailored to address local concerns and incorporate cultural sensitivity.

Limited Access to Information:

The study's conclusions are supported by earlier research by Martinez et al. (2018) and Lopez and Wang (2021), which identified limited access to information as a significant issue in community-based programs. Inadequate communication channels hindered the dissemination of program details, schedules, and objectives, which in turn reduced community members' awareness of the programs and willingness to participate. Improving communication channels and distributing accurate and timely information are necessary to encourage community involvement.

Sustainable Impact and Follow-up:

The study's conclusions are consistent with those of Brown and Lee (2019) and Rodriguez et al. (2021), who stressed the significance of long-term effects and follow-up for community-based projects. To achieve long-term benefits, community members stressed the necessity for ongoing monitoring and evaluation after the first program implementation. The beneficial effects of the extension programs can be increased by carrying out follow-up evaluations and offering continuous support.

IV. Conclusion

It is concluded that NEMSU Extension Programs and Services has provided valuable insights into the impact of NEMSU extension initiatives on the community. The qualitative findings have highlighted both positive aspects and areas for improvement, offering valuable recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the extension programs. One of the key findings is the community members' desire for more active participation during the program planning phase. While they acknowledged and appreciated the programs' relevance to their needs, they expressed a genuine wish to have their insights and local knowledge taken into account during the initial planning and decision-making processes. This feedback emphasizes the importance of fostering a genuine partnership between the university and the community, where community members are empowered to actively contribute to shaping the extension initiatives. Encouraging more meaningful community engagement from the outset can lead to a stronger sense of ownership, increased commitment, and ultimately, more successful and sustainable outcomes.

The study also highlights the challenges faced by the community, particularly related to communication and access to resources. The inconsistent communication of program information to all community members led to misunderstandings and limited engagement. Furthermore, limited resources hindered full community participation, creating inequalities in opportunities for involvement. Addressing these challenges is crucial to fostering a more inclusive and equitable extension program, where all community members have access to relevant information and resources, promoting a deeper and more meaningful community partnership.

Overall, this study provides valuable data and insights that can inform the decision-making process at NEMSU and guide the improvement of their extension programs and services. By embracing a more participatory approach, transparent communication, and proactive efforts to address community challenges, NEMSUA can strengthen its relationship with the community, ensure program relevance and effectiveness, and foster a positive and sustainable impact on the community's development and well-being.

V. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that fostering meaningful community engagement is essential. NEMSU should adopt a participatory and inclusive approach, involving community members in the decision-making processes and co-designing initiatives together to ensure greater relevance and buy-in. Secondly, enhancing communication strategies is crucial; NEMSU should implement clear and efficient communication channels to regularly share information about the extension programs with the community. Transparent and consistent communication builds trust and fosters active engagement. Thirdly, to address resource challenges, NEMSU should identify barriers hindering community members' participation and consider offering financial support or collaborating with local organizations to enhance resource

availability. Fourthly, strengthening implementers' capacity through training and capacity-building programs can further empower community members and enhance program outcomes. Lastly, establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation system is important for long-term impact assessment and continuous improvement. By implementing these recommendations, NEMSU can strengthen community partnerships, increase the relevance and impact of its extension programs, and contribute to sustainable community development.

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