

Level of Participation, Challenges Met, and Appreciation of Faculty in the Implementation of Extension Projects during COVID-19 Pandemic: Initiatives for Efficient Delivery of Services in the New Normal

Myrna T. Alferez & Emybel M. Alegre PhD

Abstract: *The practice of conducting extension programs is very common and significantly important among State Universities and Colleges; however, the onset and prevalence of the COVID-19 global pandemic have left extensionists with dire situations, burdensome challenges, and negative outcomes. The purpose of this study is to investigate and determine the levels of participation, the challenges met, and the appreciation of faculty members during the implementation of extension projects amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which would then result in the framing of initiatives for the efficient delivery of services in the new normal regarding extensions programs. After gathering responses from the NEMSU faculty as study participants, the researchers tabulated the results, and the research findings revealed the following: a.) the levels of participation of the faculty are promising signs and very high; b.) the challenges met by the faculty are range between moderate and very high; and c.) the level of appreciation towards extension projects is extremely high. Moreover, using statistical treatment tools for analyzing significant correlations, the researchers rejected the two null hypotheses, and the results revealed the following: there was a positive correlation between the level of participation to the challenges met by the faculty and between the level of participation to the level of appreciation of the faculty to the extension projects.*

Keywords: extension programs, COVID-19 pandemic, challenges, participation, appreciation, extensionists, faculty.

RATIONALE

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a novel coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly known as 2019-Nov), which was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China during an outbreak of respiratory illness cases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). It was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019, and the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency on January 30, 2020 (Gallegos, 2020). COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020; its first such designation since H1N1 influenza was reported as a pandemic in 2009 (The New York Times, 2020).

Many countries worldwide are looking up to mass quarantine measures to effectively slow the spread of COVID-19 (Patel et al., 2020). To abide by government-mandated virus-containment standards, some schools, colleges, and universities have temporarily closed, thereby resorting to distance learning (Zarzycka et al., 2021), and several businesses were forced to shut down, particularly in the entertainment, leisure, and hospitality industries (Lee & Chen, 2020). For safety and cautionary measures, mandatory public mask use, regular hand sanitizing, handwashing, remote work, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and cancellation of public events have been implemented (WHO, 2021a). Lockdowns in cities worldwide imposed severe travel restrictions and limited the availability of public transportation services, causing mobility and accessibility problems for workers and consumers alike (Suman et al.,

2020). While this legal framework was a noble move in preventing the disease's spread, it has generally limited the movement of people, including the mobility of extensionists. This has negatively impacted the delivery of extension services which heavily relies on face-to-face collaboration and interactive educational interventions (Gasmien, 2020).

Provided by governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, higher education institutions, and other organizations (Grove et al., 2020), extension services are believed to extend research-based knowledge in various areas such as agriculture, industry, education, and so on, to improve rural livelihoods, alleviate the conditions of poverty and unemployment, and maintain natural resources, thereby improving people's living conditions (Kapur, 2018). These extension services are more commonly directed toward rural communities because they usually lag behind urban areas. Such lags jeopardize rural people's ability to reach their full potential and improve their social, economic, and environmental conditions (J. R. Anderson & Feder, 2003). Rural communities are very much at risk of significant problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, homelessness, and crime and violence (Kapur, 2019), and 80% of the world's poor who live in rural areas and mainly work in mainly farming depend on agriculture to alleviate poverty and increase their income (The World Bank, 2021). Therefore, the delivery of extension services should effectively reach their target clientele.

The Philippines is not an exemption from all these challenges. With more than 2 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and around 40,000 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021b), the Philippine national government has imposed strict

measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic all over the country (Talabis et al., 2021). For instance, the implementation of strict traveling rules, especially in entering specific areas of jurisdiction has posed challenges in delivering quality extension services (Velasco, 2020). While it is true that alternative modes such as online platforms have been utilized, there are still challenges in service delivery considering that most rural areas have poor internet connectivity.

Although the statements above point out that extension services in the Philippines are also confronted with challenges in terms of successful delivery, not much study has been done on those challenges experienced by extensionists from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), particularly State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), which are one of the primary providers of extension services in the country. As stated by Salazar (2020), community involvement through extension is one of the effective means by which the community feels the presence of the institution. There is increasing appreciation of its impact on the community, for it is the avenue through which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) extend their expertise in line with their programs. The imperative role of the institution toward community development in the Philippines is emphasized in Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 46, Series of 2012, stipulating that one of the missions of the Philippine Higher Education system is “to help improve the quality of human life of Filipinos, respond effectively to changing societal needs and conditions; and provide solutions to problems at the local community, regional and national levels.” The Roadmap for Public Higher Education Reform 2011-2016 also adds to this. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are expected to be incomplete services of national development, be instruments of poverty alleviation, and be vehicles for technology-driven national growth and global competitiveness. Republic Act No. 7722, known as the “Higher Education Act of 1994,” also highlights the extension function of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Section 2 as it mentions that “State-supported institutions of higher learning shall gear their programs to national, regional or local development plans.”

Today, more Filipinos need extended help from these institutions because of the unfavorable impact of the pandemic on the different aspects of their lives. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2021), the Philippines’ unemployed persons increased from 3.88 million in August 2021 to 4.25 million in September 2021. Additionally, many Filipinos are now significantly poorer than they were before the pandemic. Instead of progressing, many have reverted to 2017 levels, resulting in a four-year loss (Dejaresco, 2021). Based on the latest population count, about a quarter of the Philippine population – 25.2 million Filipinos – are now considered poor. The quality of education received by Filipino learners is also affected during the pandemic due to unstable internet connectivity, limited teacher scaffolds, financial-related problems, mental health struggles, and the like (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). Indeed, the

COVID-19 pandemic has immediately and severely crippled humanity’s social, economic, and psychological well-being (Tamirat & Abute, 2021).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines deliver extension services based on their available programs and faculty expertise. Therefore, they can help Filipino communities face a wide range of challenging situations due to the pandemic, mainly when provided by extension services are done and delivered successfully. However, the pandemic has posed challenges in delivering extension services to target communities, as mentioned in the arguments above. With this, there is a need to investigate the different challenges encountered by extension service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic and explore possible solutions that would enable them to be of full service to Filipino communities in need. This is the purpose of this study, however, focusing on one of the state universities in the Philippines, Northeastern Mindanao State University.

Specifically, this research study was conducted to investigate and provide answers to the following research problems:

Problem 1. What is the demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, civil status, highest educational attainment, rank, no. of designation, and no. of conducted extension projects/programs?

Problem 2. What is the level of participation of the faculty in extension projects in the new normal in terms of commitment to work, attendance to extension activities, and performance of the role assigned?

Problem 3. What is the level of challenges met by the faculty in the implementation of the extension projects in the new normal in terms of adherence to IATF protocol, target beneficiaries’ support, and accessibility to the community?

Problem 4. What is the level of appreciation of the faculty towards the extension projects in terms of rewards and recognition, social awareness, and personality upliftment?

Problem 5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of participation of the faculty in extension projects in the new normal and the following: the level of challenges met by the faculty in the implementation of the extension projects; and the level of appreciation of the faculty towards the extension projects?

Problem 6. What are the initiatives done by the faculty to counter the challenges in conducting extension projects in the new normal?

Problem 7. What enhancement may be proposed to improve extension projects in the new normal and to ensure effective delivery to partner communities?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section presents a literature review to understand how the COVID-19 global pandemic has affected extensionists’ delivery of extension services and why it is essential to look at this understudied phenomenon. This literature review is organized into four sections. Part I reviews the different perceptions and definitions of extension, its brief

history, and the role of extensionists in the extension system. Part II describes the nature and impact of State University and Colleges (SUCs) extension services and the challenges they face in their delivery. Part III discusses the international and local studies conducted on the challenges faced by extensionists during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part IV summarizes the reviewed literature and justifies the need to complete this study.

Legal Foundations for HEI Extension Services Implementation

Extension services always aim to transfer technology to the intended beneficiaries. It aims to provide a variety of skills and knowledge to the beneficiaries to increase their productivity. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum No. 2, 2016, requires all university instructors and professors to provide extension services as part of their four-fold functions. Despite the threat of the pandemic, the mandate remained unchanged. The COVID-19 emergency and the unprecedented instruction disruption are far from over. Furthermore, because all public CHED governs all public and private HEIs Strategic Plan for 2011-2016 paves the way for HEIs, including their programs, systems, and research, to respond to the thrusts of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), 2011-2016. This is also emphasized in the 1987 Philippine Constitution Article XIV, Section 2, paragraphs 4 and 5 that the State shall;

“Encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs; and (5) Provide adult citizens, the disabled, and out-of-school youth with training in civics, vocational efficiency, and other skills.”

The government encourages all agencies, private or public, especially those in academia, to include in their programs and projects community extension activities that can respond to the needs of underprivileged individuals and groups in the community.

Origin of Extension and the Role of Extensionists

“Extension” is a term that cannot be precisely defined and is open to various interpretations. To Dukku (2011), extension is an informal educational process that provides knowledge and skills to farmers to influence their life choices and raise their overall living standards. Kimaro et al. (2010) agree with this idea. They mentioned in their study that the role of extension is to empower farmers and enable them to determine and analyze their agricultural problems to make the right decisions. The extension is also defined by Davis (2009) as a service to “extend” research-based knowledge to the rural sector to enhance the lives of farmers. Lung’ahi (2014) further explains that extension services include disseminating practical and helpful information related to agriculture, such as improved seeds, implements, pesticides, fertilizers, improved livestock practices, and market information. Moreover, Sulaiman and Hall (2002) view extension as a process directed to help farmers use

capacity development through training, strengthening innovation processes, building links between farmers and other agencies, and assisting farmers in improving their bargaining position through appropriate institutional and organizational development. Overall, the extension includes transferring knowledge, information, and technologies from research systems to farmers, providing advice to farm families in their decision-making, educating farmers, and empowering them to clarify and realize their goals (Dwyer & Maredia, 2021).

Sadakkadulla et al. (2007) define extension as working not just with farmers but with rural people through informal education to achieve total community development. It encompasses a variety of activities; agriculture is just one of them and is viewed as the most important. This is supported by Khalid and Sherzad (2019) who claimed that extension is an informal educational process directed toward the rural population. This process offers advice and information to assist them in resolving their problems. The extension also aims to improve the efficiency of the family farm, increase production, and improve the farm family's overall standard of living. Berthe (2015) also argued that extension services address the needs of farmers and those related to better nutrition, local institutional development such as cooperatives and women's associations, and job creation in rural areas. Although the term "extension" is often linked with agricultural and rural development, it is perceived by Rivera and Qamar (2006) as a non-formal educational function that applies to any institution that disseminates information and advice to foster knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations. Furthermore, Christoplos (2010) defines extension as an umbrella term for all the different activities that provide the information and advisory services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural development.

Scholars from the past decades have also attempted to define the concept of extension, but due to its dynamic character, not a single definition is acceptable. Because of this, Zwane (2012) summarized the many reports of extension into three dimensions. The first dimension considers extension in terms of agricultural performance. The extension is viewed solely in terms of increasing farmer productivity and profitability. The second dimension equates to an extension of rural community development. Under this dimension, extension is considered to improve rural communities, including advancing their agricultural development tasks. On the other hand, the third dimension equates to comprehensive non-formal community education extension. The extension is perceived as a provider of non-formal education for a wide range of audiences, including farmers, spouses, and rural youth, most of which are agriculturally related.

The different perceptions that relate extension to non-formal community education, rural community development, and improvement of agricultural performance can be traced back to history or the term's usage in the past. An account of when the word “extension” was first used was recorded in a reference manual titled “Improving Agricultural

Extension” prepared by Bentz et al. (2006). This source states that the term “extension” was first used in England in the second half of the nineteenth century (starting in 1867) to describe adult education programs that helped universities communicate and extend their research works beyond the campus and neighboring communities. Most of the lectures about literary and social topics eventually expanded to agricultural subjects covered by peripatetic lecturers in rural areas. This work had then spread dramatically and became formally organized, and the use of the term "extension" continued and has persisted as the designation for the job. Some parts of the world, however, use the word “advisory services” instead of “extension” (Christoplos, 2010; James, 2019) because, in the early twentieth century, the United Kingdom transferred the extension function to the Ministry of Agriculture and renamed such activity as ‘advisory services.’ Throughout the years, then, more emphasis has been given to the extension of agriculture. Considering the importance of agriculture and the necessity to produce food for the farm family and the nation, this emphasis is understandable.

It is important to note that agriculture, the most important and most common, was one of the many topics extended to the rural population. Hence, Oakley and Garforth (2018) identified two types of extension – agricultural and non-agricultural. Agricultural extension focuses on helping farmers by passing on the new ideas developed by agricultural research stations, offering them technical advice on agriculture, and supplying them with the necessary inputs and services to support their agricultural production. This type covers many topics, including improved crop varieties, better livestock management, water management, and weed, pest, and plant disease control. An agricultural extension may also assist in forming local farmer groups and organizations so that they can participate in extension programs. Non-agricultural extension, on the other hand, includes all activities and endeavors not directly related to agriculture or livestock production but which are beneficial to the farm families. Non-agricultural extension activities include home economics, family health and nutrition, population education, and community development.

Although the extension was initially conducted in rural areas, there has been a recent trend in running extension services in urban areas (Terry, 2016). A wide range of programs to improve urban residents’ quality of life is implemented (Suvedi & Kaplowitz, 2016). This includes urban entomology, youth development, gardening, forestry, and economic development (National Urban Extension Leaders, 2021). Moreover, many urban topics such as distressed environment, declining workforce preparedness, community development, water quality, aging infrastructure, crime, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment are also discussed. However, extension is still more commonly conducted in rural areas despite this recent trend.

Regardless of the many perceptions and definitions of extension, two common points are apparent. One, they all imply that extension is a process that takes place over some time and not a single, one-time activity, and two, they all

emphasize that extension is an educational process that works with the people, supports them, and prepares them to deal with their problems more successfully. It is also noteworthy to highlight that education is an integral part of the extension because the extension is a type of education that stretches out to the people in different areas, beyond the limits of educational institutions to which the formal kind of education is usually confined (Meena et al., 2018).

The main actors within the extension system are the members of partner communities who receive help or advantage from extension services, the researchers who are in charge of searching for academic or scientific knowledge to be extended to the members of partner communities, staff of commercial or public service and support organizations who also contribute to the realization of the extension services, and most importantly, the extensionists who deliver the extension services to the partner communities and serve as the intermediary between the partner communities and other actors within the extension system (Bentz et al., 2006). Extensionists have a variety of essential roles and duties to play in the extension process. According to Suvedi and Kaplowitz (2016), some of the responsibilities of extensionists include conducting needs assessments and community forums during the program planning stage, conducting farm and home visits, conducting meetings effectively, managing groups and teamwork, understanding group dynamics, and facilitating groups, and writing field reports during program implementation, completing surveys, personal interviews, and focus group discussions during program evaluation, and communicating effectively with community leaders throughout the whole process. In addition, being front-line extension workers means they are the link between “agricultural policy, agricultural research, agricultural education and training, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmer organizations, and private sector stakeholders” (p. 2). Extensionists are also responsible for assisting and supporting the community in conceptualizing and prioritizing their problems and needs (Terblanché, 2005). They are catalysts of change who inspire and influence vital individuals to make changes necessary for transformation, including changes to their desires, attitudes, and behaviors (Govindarajan, 2020). To Lombard (2003), the extensionist is a guide or broker, planner, coordinator, researcher, public relations officer, negotiator, mediator, mentor, therapist, enabler or facilitator, expert, organizer, encourager, or a motivator, educator, administrator, advocate, and activist. Oakley and Garforth (2018) added that the whole extension process depends on the extensionist, the critical element in all extension activities. No matter how good the extension approach is or how impressive the supply of inputs and resources for extension work, the extension program may still fail if the extensionist cannot respond to a given situation and function effectively. Due to the indispensable role of extensionists in the extension process, it is therefore imperative to examine the conditions surrounding their nature of work which may affect how they deliver extension services to their target clientele.

Extension Services in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), particularly State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), are more commonly known for delivering knowledge and skills to students. However, this is not their only function. They are also mandated to research to develop new theories and practices in the institution and apply their knowledge to the outside community through extension services (Chua, 2014; Medina, 2019). According to Sermona et al. (2020), the extension function of SUCs cannot separate itself from the instruction and research functions. Extension relates to instruction because it allows the institution and its faculty members to share their expertise with the community. Likewise, the extension also refers to research because it is where research and innovation products are converted into goods and services that benefit the community and the country. Alcalá (2011) also adds that because the extension applies SUCs' research findings, the research and extension functions are therefore inseparable. Mani and Zulueta (2020) believe that the proper balance of these functions will result in a balanced human capital equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be productive individuals.

Originally, SUCs were only required to perform the three primordial functions. Later, the production function which deals with the augmentation of the resources and revenues of SUCs was added (Chua, 2014; Mani & Zulueta, 2020). The same functions are also practiced in the universities and colleges in the United States and Europe since their activities are also centered on teaching (instruction), discovery (research), application (extension), and integration (Mani & Zulueta, 2020). Moreover, the National Budget Circular No. 461 indicates that the four-fold function of SUCs did not limit them to "teaching colleges and universities," but more to research and development-driven institutions of higher learning, allowing them to progress economically and academically.

Focusing on the extension function, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines defines this in its Memorandum Order No. 8, Series of 2008 as an "act of communicating, persuading, and helping specific sectors or target clientele (as distinguished from those enrolled in formal degree programs and course offerings) to enable them to effectively improve production, community and institutions, and quality of life." SUCs provide a wide range of extension programs and services to serve and improve community life. These are primarily intended to increase livelihood security, alleviate poverty, reduce illiteracy, improve health and nutrition, and establish a governance system that promotes, supports, and sustains human development while protecting and preserving the environment (Bidad & Campiseño, 2010). The more common examples of extension programs and activities are livelihood (Daquiz et al., 2016; Felicen et al., 2014; Peprah et al., 2017), health promotion (Daquiz et al., 2016; Rocha & Soares, 2009), and computer literacy programs (Daquiz et al., 2016).

To explore the nature of extension services in selected SUCs in the Philippines, Sermona et al. (2020) conducted a study involving 13 SUCs with 61 respondent extensionists. The researchers found out that the respondents implemented two types of extension programs – (1) integrated and (2) stand-alone. Integrated extension programs implement a range of schemes together, such as skills training, livelihood, and technology transfer. An example highlighted in the study is the Barangay Integrated Strategies to Improve Land and Water Resources Management for Inclusive Growth or Project BISLIG of the University of Southeastern Philippines Bislig Campus (now Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) - Bislig Campus). This extension program is an integrated one because it aims to empower smallholder farmers and fishers in their area socially, economically, and politically and improve their livelihood and well-being through science and technology interventions developed by USP. On the other hand, stand-alone extension programs also involve a range of schemes. But what makes it different from the other is that one program will only focus on one of the areas or schemes. These are technical skills training like food processing, basic driving, and dishwashing liquid making. The researchers also found out that the stand-alone extension projects and activities were not based on the SUCs' extension programs that were requested by external agencies or organizations. This corresponds to another categorization of extension services – (1) demand-driven and (2) accreditation-driven. As the name implies, demand-driven extension programs are based on the community's basic functional needs and demands. The Local Government Unit usually requests these upon identifying the specific needs of its constituents. On the other hand, Accreditation-driven extension programs are conducted due to the requirements of the accrediting body. Nevertheless, both types of programs provide opportunities for the target clientele to improve their standard of living and quality of life (Bidad & Campiseño, 2010).

Sermona et al. (2020) also found in their study that some SUCs collaborate with external agencies [e.g., the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)] to deliver their programs through the SUCs' extension services units. These partnerships were interwoven through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Moreover, the recipients in the extension programs of the SUCs include women, out-of-school youths, farmers, fisherfolks, LGU employees, parolees and probationers, indigenous peoples, students, children, and professionals such as teachers. Sermona et al. (2020) also highlighted that although the data gathered is not conclusive for all SUCs in the Philippines, it still does provide a clear picture of how SUCs understand and approach extension services.

The various statements of different authors and organizations above present the nature of extension services in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines. However, this is not the focus of the study. There is a need to

justify whether extension, as an affected sector of the COVID-19 pandemic, is worth a closer look. Hence, the following studies provide insight into the impact of SUCs' extension services on the community.

A study conducted by Codamon-Dugyon (2016) aimed to assess the impact of Ifugao State University's (IFSU) extension programs on the residents of its six adopted barangays in the province of Ifugao, Philippines. Results showed that the extension programs of IFSU have generally benefited the adopted barangays or communities and helped shape the lives of the residents. The extension services had positive outcomes, such as increasing residents' knowledge and skills, thereby capacitating and empowering them to be self-reliant citizens; promoting residents' health and wellness; and preventing the vulnerable members of society, such as youth and mothers, from engaging in vices, thereby making them more responsible and conscientious individuals.

In another study, Salazar (2020) evaluated the impact of Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges' extension programs in various partner barangays and communities in the Rinconada Area of Bicol Region, Philippines. The findings revealed that the extension services' program outputs in terms of skills training, health education, computer literacy, advocacy programs, and livelihood programs were deemed 'satisfactory' by the recipients. Additionally, the economic and social impacts of the school's extension services were also considered 'satisfactory.' Therefore, the College had met its goal of providing extension services that address the needs and problems of the community.

Similarly, Ammakiw (2013) conducted a study to determine the impact of the extension programs of the Kalinga-Apayao State College, Tabuk City, Philippines, in terms of political, social, economic, ecological, and cultural aspects. Some of the evaluated programs of the College were Adopt-a-Barangay Program, Gender Sensitivity Training, and Advocacy, Health and Farmers Nutrition, and Functional Literacy Program. The findings revealed that the political, social, economic, ecological, and cultural impacts of the College's extension programs were 'high.' Furthermore, the program implementers were able to provide the recipients with access to essential services while also establishing formal education and long-term human resource management in the adopted barangay.

Another study by Sibal and Elizaga (2019) assessed the impact of the extension program of the College of Public Administration at Cagayan State University, Craig Campus. Their extension program, which ran for five years, was dubbed the "Barangay-based Integrated Capability Program" (BICP), and constituted in this banner program is the project "Citizens Empowerment for Smarter Local Governance." Its primary goal was to provide barangay officials with technical assistance and empowerment activities related to contemporary local concerns, law, and governance through seminars or training workshops. According to the recipients of the program or respondents of the study, the said extension program provided them with adequate knowledge and skills, which helped them improve their performance as barangay

officials. Notably, this enabled them to craft good ordinances and resolutions, fund management, document activities, and use parliamentary procedures in meetings. More importantly, there was a transformation of values and attitudes toward their work. According to the respondents, these made their community a "model barangay" and enabled them to receive an environmental management award.

Moreover, a study conducted by Dilao and Maghamil (2011) aimed to evaluate the impact of the community extension programs on the residents of barangay Catadman-Manabay, Ozamiz City. The respondents deemed the extension programs helpful to their community based on the results. Remarkably, the extension programs enhanced their knowledge and skills, helped them promote cleanliness, augmented their family income, improved their confidence, and made them stay away from vices.

Herrera (2010) also conducted a study to examine the impact of a 3-year extension service on Village Lumbocan, Butuan City residents. Findings revealed that the extension program had helped the respondents a lot because the training on wire installation, plumbing, and kutsinta cooking enabled them to generate income. Also, because of the training and lectures on solid waste disposal and management, they could adequately segregate biodegradable from non-biodegradable waste materials and learn how to dispose of their garbage properly. Moreover, respondents in critical positions such as Kagawa and punong villages admitted that their perspectives on leadership and governance had changed because of the extension program.

Another study conducted by Quezada (2014) aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Surigao Del Sur State University (SDSSU) across all its campuses. SDSSU's community extension programs (literacy, livelihood, and environmental) across all campuses were rated very effective, indicating that the projects' goals were met. Two examples of sustained livelihood programs were 'Victoria's Pasalubong' of SDSSU-Tandag and 'Sipag at Tiyaga' of SDSSU-Cantilan. This was evident because the recipients could earn money by engaging in entrepreneurial activities with the products they produced already registered with the Department of Trade and Industry. Packaging and labeling introduced were also applied by the recipients whose products were displayed in different marketing outlets. With this, they were able to send their children to school and provide for the needs of their families. This implies that the University's social responsibility was met through the livelihood project. The literacy projects were also successful, and this was demonstrated through the establishment of 'Eskwelahan sa Saka' for daycare pupils of SDSSU-Tandag. In addition, the environmental program successfully implemented the mangrove reforestation project of SDSSU-Lianga and other clean and green activities that help address the current threats of global warming and ensure long-term forestry sustainability.

In another study, Llenares and Deocarís (2018) examined the long-term impact of a 44-month community extension program on Barangay Mangga, Quezon City residents. According to the data gathered, the residents

learned the value of saving money and other resources, interpersonal relationships among family members, and the importance of family planning, good housekeeping, and sanitation. Furthermore, the women who took part in the program realized that they could earn extra money while staying at home by engaging in micro-entrepreneurship. The respondents, in general, also reported that as they learned to manage their resources (like money and time), they also earned additional income through their newly discovered skills in preparing and selling snacks and doormats. Some of them reported that they could purchase new appliances and donate more money to the community church with the extra income they earned. One attendee even revealed that they had assisted a neighbor in paying for their medical expenses.

Contrary to this study, Tacbas et al. (2010) found that the extension programs of the University of Northern Philippines had not contributed to the employment of most of the residents of their adopted communities in the province of Ilocos Sur. On the other hand, those who gained employment admitted that their houses were not improved, and they could not buy appliances due to their generated income after the training. However, Peng et al. (2021) argued that extension alone would not lift people from poverty unless combined with the right policies, technology, and other factors. Nevertheless, the respondents in the study of Tacbas et al. (2010) perceived an improvement in their social status in terms of self-esteem, health and nutrition, and the environment because of the extension programs of the University of Northern Philippines. Furthermore, the program outputs of the University in terms of skills training, information drive, medical or dental mission, and livelihood organizations were deemed 'high' by the respondents.

Several studies, such as those presented above, prove that extension plays a significant role in improving people's way and quality of life. As stated by Dilao and Maghamil (2011), the problems in the community will not be addressed solely by local government officials or residents. Instead, this will need the help of a knowledge-based sector, such as the academe, which will arrive at a scientific diagnosis of the occurrences of problems in the community. However, in effecting development in the community, Geronimo (2006) emphasized that many challenges and difficulties arise. Hence, the following studies have presented the different challenges encountered by SUCs in conducting extension services.

Sermona et al. (2020) found that SUCs encounter problems during extension projects' preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, the primary problem reported is the hectic schedule of faculty extensionists. According to the respondents, faculty members are sometimes overwhelmed with many tasks, and the 15-24 actual teaching units and other teaching-related activities, such as lesson preparation, development assessment tools development, and student work grading also expected to conduct research and participate in in in in various activities such as accreditation as workforce members. Hence, they find balancing education, research, and

extension work difficult. Another issue that some of the respondents face is the crafting of proposals because, as they have expressed, they do not have the skill of writing; the result extension is the least acted-upon responsibility of the faculty members among their other functions in the university or college. One problem of respondents encounter during the implementation stage is the conflicting schedules of faculty extensionists and participants. They reported that the plans set in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) were often not followed, and in some cases, only a few participants would show up to the activities. Aside from this, there is often a delay in procuring the needed materials and supplies, and the insufficient budget often restricts the extension project's implementation due to unavailable resources. The respondents also stated that transportation had also been a challenge, particularly in hard-to-reach communities. Some of them would even spend their own money to arrive at the place of their partner communities. The same problem is encountered during the monitoring and evaluation stages, where faculty extensionists would go back and forth to the partner communities. Other problems in the monitoring stage are the unavailability of the monitoring team and the unavailability of the participants—those in the evaluation lack cooperation from the participants and an unestablished evaluation system.

Bidad and Campiseño (2010) also had the same finding as Sermona et al. (2020) regarding the transportation problem of the faculty extensionists. The respondents reported that transportation is always unavailable during extension activities. However, since Bidad and Campiseño's (2010) study also involved the extension program's recipients, they found out that the recipients' primary problem was the length of time in conducting classes and training, which they deemed too short. Knowledge transfer and skill development cannot be accomplished in days; otherwise, half-baked trainees may be awarded certificates of completion. Other problems derived by the authors in their study include insufficient and defective tools for a better learning process and unavailability of participants during training due to other matters at home, at sea, or farm.

Moreover, Sedanza (2018) also found out in his study that the primary problem of extensionists was the lack of time to conduct research and extension activities. This is also similar to the findings of Sermona et al. (2020) about the difficulty of the extensionists in balancing their extension work with their other duties and responsibilities. Another problem identified by Sedanza (2018) was the low priority of purchasing equipment and supplies needed during the extension activities, thereby agreeing with both Sermona et al. (2020) and Bidad and Campiseño's (2010) findings.

Medina (2019) also enumerated some challenges that affect extensionists' community engagement. These challenges include low faculty motivation, extension as a second-rate endeavor to research, multiple responsibilities and Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) targets, and no or low budget for research and extension.

After identifying some problems encountered during extension services, the authors of the different studies above suggested some solutions. These include the reduction of teaching loads or provision of teaching load equivalent (Sedanza, 2018; Sermona et al., 2020), provision of training and mentorship on extension proposal writing (Sermona et al., 2020), good time-management (Medina, 2019; Sermona et al., 2020), hiring of full-time extension workers (Sedanza, 2018; Sermona et al., 2020), timely submission of procurement documents and constant follow-up with concerned personnel or offices (Sermona et al., 2020), improved system for vehicle reservation and utilization or provision of a dedicated vehicle for extension services (Bidad & Campiseño, 2010; Sermona et al., 2020), development of an evaluation framework (Sermona et al., 2020), motivation through rewards, recognition, and praise for college or university work (Bidad & Campiseño, 2010; Medina, 2019; Sedanza, 2018), adequate funding for various programs, projects, and activities (Medina, 2019; Sedanza, 2018), and extension of the time for skill development training of participants (Bidad & Campiseño, 2010).

With the positive impact of extension, it, therefore, deserves the attention of researchers who may examine the different factors that affect its delivery to its target clientele. Exploring the other challenges surrounding it will lead to the generation of possible solutions, which will ensure that an endeavor as beneficial and impactful as an extension reaches the people in need.

Challenges of Extensionists during COVID-19

The most recent challenge that extensionists are facing is the COVID-19 global pandemic. As said previously, it has changed the way this world works and affected all walks of life. If people are most in need during these trying times, the extension would be a good platform for alleviating their difficult living conditions. Hence, international and local studies were conducted about the challenges affecting the delivery of extension services during the COVID-19 pandemic and the possible solutions to those challenges.

International. A study titled “The impact of COVID-19 on agricultural extension and food supply in Zimbabwe” conducted by Bright et al. (2021) aimed to “assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural extension and food supply as well as the effectiveness of the suggested coping strategies in Zimbabwe” (p. 1). The study targeted a population of extension officers within the ten provinces of Zimbabwe. The cluster sampling technique was used, with each section being considered a cluster. Ten agriculture extension workers were randomly chosen for questionnaire administration in each cluster. For the study, a total of 100 extension workers were chosen. The study employed mixed research methodologies. Key informant interviews with a critical informant guide were used to gather qualitative data on the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural extension services. Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Triangulating ensured the validity and credibility of the data through cross-verification. The

structured questionnaire was administered via phone interviews by the COVID-19 regulations of minimizing close contact to reduce transmission. Key informant interviews were conducted via phone calls and emails, as needed, using a critical informant guide. For analysis, data will be entered into Microsoft Excel and then exported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Microsoft Excel was used to create the graphical presentations, while SPSS was used to generate frequencies on the challenges faced by farmers, agricultural extension workers, vendors, and agro-dealers. Interviews with key informants yielded qualitative data, which was transcribed and translated. The quantitative results of the questionnaire administration were supplemented by detailed information gathered from key informants. The study revealed that although the agricultural sector is deemed essential, the extension staff feared for their lives, making it difficult to deliver their services effectively. Additionally, only 5% of employees in the formal sector were permitted to return to work during the lockdown, resulting in reduced service delivery in all sectors, including agriculture. The study also revealed that the main challenges faced by extension workers during COVID-19 were transport challenges or movement restrictions, which proved to be the major stumbling block during lockdowns, gatherings were limited to few people and a shortage of PPE or Personal Protective Equipment. Solutions suggested improving farmer training sessions during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, including using social media platforms and securing travel documents in compliance with COVID-19 regulations. However, data and network coverage costs may exclude some farmers due to natural geographic distribution differences. Telecommunication companies must reasonably reduce data charges and make efforts to build infrastructure to cover the remaining unreachable areas. Therefore, agricultural extension services in Zimbabwe were very much affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another study titled “Confronting a Global Pandemic: Responses from Caribbean Extension Service Providers” conducted by Joseph and Barry (2021) aimed to assess the capacity of Caribbean extension and advisory service providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, identify the current extension strategies used to assist farmers during the pandemic, describe the barriers extension officers encountered in doing their duties, and make recommendations that would facilitate the delivery of extension services in the region during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seventy extension service providers from 11 Caribbean countries responded to an open-ended questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey platform. The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using a qualitative analysis technique. This included categorizing and summarizing participant responses, developing categories or codes, and sorting information to create themes. In-vivo coding was used to code the collected data. The findings indicated that extension strategies to assist farmers during COVID-19 included encouraging the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs),

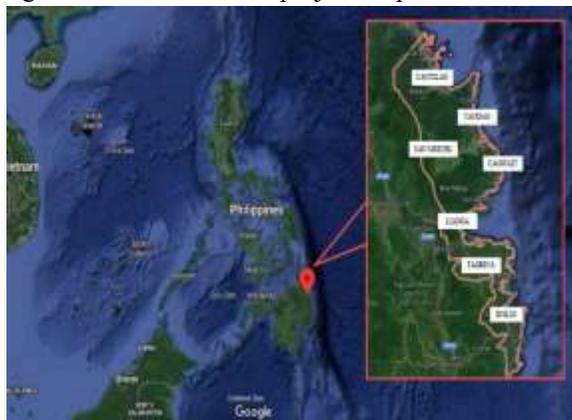
providing incentives geared towards encouraging local production, providing timely and valuable information, and linking farmers to markets (marketing support). Furthermore, extension officers face several challenges in executing their duties; one of them is technological barriers. Although the use of ICTs may be one of the solutions in delivering extension services, farmers are not up to date with the help of technology. Some of them are also unable to fully describe what they see in the field through the technology, making it difficult for the officer to determine exactly what the issue is. Because of limited information, extension officers cannot confidently make the best recommendations. This poses a challenge when extension officers cannot adequately assist the farmers. Other barriers to using the technology, according to the participants, include limited access and availability for both farmers and officers. Farmers do not have access to technology, and in some instances, farmers in remote and rural areas mostly do not have an internet connection. While officers must deal with the problems that farmers face, they have expressed inadequacies with the appropriate technology available to them in our service delivery. The second challenge experienced by the participants related to the lack of resources required to deliver services during the pandemic. They raised concerns about staff shortage and the ministry's failure to provide them with the necessary tools like phones, computers, and internet connectivity. In some limited cases, there were also inadequacies regarding protective gear and hygienic necessities used for protection in instances where face-to-face interaction was necessary. The third challenge experienced by the participants is limited mobility due to the lockdown implemented by the government. Officers could not reach designated areas due to the lack of public transportation. The fourth challenge encountered by the extension workers relates to governmental restrictions and social distancing protocols. Because of the curfew in place, officers are discouraged from venturing too far, and the necessary social distancing protocols affect the officers' abilities to account for work done. The last challenge found in the study is the fear of getting infected with the virus, and even one of the participants stated that this is his main barrier. Because of this, farmers do not feel the usual and robust support from their officers. In the study, strategies that the extension workers recommended in facilitating the delivery of extension services in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region include the increased use of ICTs for communication and information dissemination coupled with explaining how to use the technology for both the extension workers and farmers, the existence of appropriate infrastructure, reduced prices of devices and costs of data plans, and adequate mobile network coverage. The rich information provided by this study from real-life experiences of frontline extension workers in the Caribbean has proven how the current pandemic has immensely hampered the delivery of effective extension services.

Furthermore, a study entitled "Rural Extension Professionals' Knowledge, Preparedness and Perceived Barriers to Control/Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Pandemic in Imo State, Nigeria" was conducted by Jo et al. (2021) to ascertain extension officers' awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic, examine their COVID-19 preparedness, and demonstrate barriers encountered in service delivery to a clientele, particularly with regards to adequate reduction of COVID-19 spread. The study population consists of Imo State Agricultural Development Programme's 1,200 extension supervisors and extension field agents. A total of 120 extension workers were chosen using the purposive random sampling technique. The data gathered through a multiple-choice questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Generally, the results show that the respondents are fully aware of the symptoms and transmission of COVID-19 and that they are prepared for its dangerous wave. Additionally, the challenges faced by the extension officers in delivering service to their clientele, especially in reducing the spread of the virus, are "lack of educational COVID-19 programs (M=3.20), inadequate training for extension professionals (M=3.01), lack of awareness among the public (M=3.24), insufficient knowledge among extension works (M=3.3), low-level exposure of rural farmers (M=3.21), poor infrastructure (M=3.31), low level of literacy among farmers (M=3.50)" as well as "cultural beliefs/doubts (M=3.61), inadequate financial resources (M=3.21) to handle the purchase of materials, absence of proper hand sanitizers (M=3.10), discomfort in wearing face masks (M=3.31)" (p.4). While the study shows the challenges faced by Nigerian extension workers in service delivery to their clientele, especially when it comes to the reduction of the spread of the virus, it does not, however, address and discuss in detail the lived experiences of the extension workers, which may have been a source of more in-depth analysis about the problem at hand. Many challenges related to reducing the spread of the virus may have been experienced by the extension workers but were not identified in the study due to the limits imposed by the multiple-choice questionnaire. While it also identifies those challenges related to reducing the virus' spread, it does not point out the broad range of challenges that the extension workers may have encountered during the pandemic. Lastly, the study lacks the aspect of acquiring more information about how the extension workers overcame those challenges and how they could address the same issues in the future. Therefore, there is a need to conduct more studies to address the gaps they did not cover.

Local. Pizaña et al. (2021) conducted a study "Lived Experiences of Extension Project Implementers amidst COVID-19 Pandemic the Unspoken Frontliners' to identify the difficulties extension project implementers face in providing extension services during the COVID-19 pandemic and enumerate the reflections and insights they gained during the extension services' implementation. The study employed a descriptive phenomenology approach to describe the lived experiences of the extension project implementers of Western Philippines University during the pandemic. One university extension director, three college extension coordinators, and seven extension project leaders were selected using purposeful sampling for 11 participants. Despite the new

standard changes, the participants were chosen on purpose because of their involvement and capability in carrying out the extension projects. Individual in-depth interviews were used to collect data, and conversations were recorded with their permission. The study revealed that some participants gave up literacy programs due to the constraints of face-to-face activities and because children are not allowed to go out. The participants also admitted that they were initially hesitant to conduct extension projects through training because they were afraid of getting infected or becoming a carrier of the virus and infecting their clients. In addition, the participants also experienced exhaustion due to the duplication of training workshops. Because only a few clients attend each session, training must be repeated twice or thrice to accommodate more participants. When the same exercise must be repeated, all of the preparations and requirements must be repeated. Some training was also postponed due to the restrictions brought by the pandemic – one during the declaration of the national lockdown and another one when clients declined to attend the said training. Postponements wasted the entire preparation for the training, including food, venue, invited resource person, attendees, and approved papers, which had to be prepared again. Furthermore, there is also a challenge when it comes to the preparation of the venue because it has to be set up by the existing health protocols. There were also challenges in securing Barangay Officials and Local Government Units (LGUs) permission to conduct training because stricter policies and requirements must be met before implementation. Lastly, there were delays in getting the training materials because the procurement office could not get them in time due to shipping and transportation difficulties. Despite the challenges above, the supporting and community partners (Barangay officials and LGU) have lightened the extension project implementers' delivery of



extension services. Moreover, suggested solutions to the problems above include the use of electronic using during the planning and implementation of extension projects and the inclusion of health protocol necessities, such as supplies and materials, and transportation requirements during the planning and budgeting phase.

The above international and local studies have some problems and solutions in common. The common issues include the extensionists' fear of getting infected with the

virus, transportation challenges, protective gear and hygienic necessities shortage, and staff shortages. Meanwhile, the standard solutions suggested include using technology, reducing data charges, building appropriate infrastructure to cover unreachable areas, and securing travel documents in compliance with COVID-19 regulations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The general aim of this study is to investigate the challenges encountered by Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) extensionists in extension delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter discusses the process of achieving this aim. This chapter explains the research design, research locale/setting, population and participants of the study, sampling design, research instruments, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study employs the exploratory survey research design. An exploratory survey is a survey-based study to investigate and understand a previously unexplored topic (Bogueva et al., 2018) without preconceived notions about expected responses (Lau, 2017). In this view, this research design uses a descriptive survey research design, quantitative, and involves descriptive statistics (Lau, 2017). For instance, surveys can be easily administered via email or an online tool (Gaille, 2020). Aside from this, the researcher can collect a more significant of responses in a set period; therefore, results are generalizable. It also provides access to otherwise difficult-to-locate, busy populations (such as extensionists). Since no one expects an immediate response in a survey, the participants can take extra time to answer each question comfortably (Gaille, 2020). Therefore, a quantitative survey research design is the most appropriate for this dissertation.

Research Locale

This study involves all the campuses of Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) namely: the Tandag Campus (main), Cantilan Campus, San Miguel Campus, Cagwait Campus, Lianga Campus, and Tagbina Campus, and Bislig Campus. Being located within the same province, the locale or setting of this study, therefore, is Surigao del Sur.

Surigao del Sur is a province in the Philippines located in CARAGA (Region XIII) in Mindanao. Its capital is Tandag City, where NEMSU's main campus is located. Furthermore, the province above is situated on the eastern coast of Mindanao and faces the Philippine Sea to the east.

Figure 2 The Map of Surigao del Sur

Source:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Surigao+del+Sur/>

Participants of the Study

The population of this study involves 160 extensionists across the seven campuses of Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU). The permanent faculty

members from the next campuses are chosen as the participants of this study.

The Procedure of Data Gathering

This study uses the non-probability sampling method to determine the subjects of the study. This method, which is often used in exploratory studies, involves non-random selection to develop an initial understanding of a small or under-researched population (McCombes, 2019). Under non-probability sampling, purposive sampling selects the most helpful sample for research purposes.

Purposive sampling, in particular, involves identifying and selecting individuals who are exceptionally knowledgeable or experienced in a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In the case of this study, the permanent faculty members who conducted extension services are the front liner of this study. So, they are the most exposed to the challenges in conducting extension services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because they are knowledgeable and experienced about the topic of interest, they will purposefully be chosen as the sample of this study.

Research Instrument

This study utilizes a researcher-made questionnaire with open-ended questions to give participants the freedom to respond as they see appropriate, potentially encouraging them to share more personal and genuine viewpoints (SAGE, 2019). A researcher-made questionnaire is opted to fit the current situation in this study. A group of experts in quantitative research from Caraga State University is employed to check the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaire. They scrutinized each statement of the questions to develop a connection and relevance to the study. The implementation of this process will give confidence in terms of the integrity of the findings of this research.

The researcher-made questionnaire is composed of three sections. The first section contains the participants' consent forms. The second section asks respondents for information regarding their profile and length of service in the university and their designated position. The third section contains this study's central questions. The main question is concerned with the challenges that the NEMSU extensionists faced during the conduct of extension services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The other question asks the extensionists to discuss how they could overcome the challenges they have encountered and possible recommendations on how extension services can be improved during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that they are delivered effectively to their partner communities.

Statistical Treatment and Data Analysis

The following ethical considerations are observed to ensure that the participant's responses are safe and confidential: consent, informant validation, confidentiality,

exploitation, misinterpretation, and identification of the participant by self or others. The principles are also correctly observed to avoid falsifying the data, protect the informants' identities, and make them comfortable during the survey.

Consent. The participants are asked to consent to be part of the study's subject. This is done through a consent form introduced in the first section of the survey, as Mahon (2014) suggested. According to Mack et al. (2005), explaining the study to the target participants is necessary to ask for consent. Thus, the participants are informed about the purpose of the study, question types, and the extent of using their responses as part of the study report. They need to know what the study is about beforehand to understand what it means to participate in the research and decide whether to participate.

Informant Validation. The participants are allowed to review and validate the analyzed data to ensure that the researcher has only included what the participants intended to say and that no other information from the researcher is incorporated. Enabling the participants to become data validators ensures that the data is credible and valid.

Confidentiality. Assuring participants' confidentiality involves promising that the information they provide will not be linked to them (Mack et al., 2005). Their anonymity protects them, and no personal information about them is revealed. Before starting the survey, the participants are given assurances about how they would be saved to answer the questions honestly and comfortably.

Exploitation. The researcher is careful to avoid violating any of the participants' fundamental rights. One of the keys to maintaining respect for the participants is protecting them from exploiting their vulnerability. Mack et al. (2005) said that one's dignity must be respected. To avoid offending the informants, they are not forced to answer the survey to satisfy the research needs.

Misinterpretation. To avoid subjective interpretations, the researcher clarifies unclear responses in the survey to the participants. This is done to ensure that the data gathered are accurate.

Identification of the Participants or Others. To keep the researcher's promise to keep the participants anonymous, the participants are identified with participant numbers (e.g., participant 1, participant 2, etc.). Following the suggestions of Mack et al. (2005), the researcher makes sure that nothing is revealed about the participants and their comments when in the outside setting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Participation of Faculty

Table 7 shows the Level of Participation in terms of Commitment to Work. It revealed that the overall level of commitment to work in extension services is a very high result of 3.52. The highest rated indicator is the putting of effort into the conduct of extension activities for the beneficiaries without expecting a return. Next is the indicator about feeling happy to be part of extension activities. Followed by

disseminating the information about extension activities of the college. Finally, the least rated indicators are actively and voluntarily participating in the extension activities of the college.

It implies that as theory meets practice, as formal knowledge meets actual needs, a new impetus for knowledge generation and refinement shall ensue. These dynamics shall then enrich instruction and research within the university (Peñaredondo-Untong, 2020). This observation is similar to the research of Manuel et al. (2023) with the same overall motivation level result of 3.52 in engaging in community extension.

Table 7. Level of Participation in terms of Commitment to Work

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. actively participates in the extension activities of the college/department.	3.50	Strongly agree
2. disseminates information about the extension activities of the college/department.	3.52	Strongly agree
3. voluntarily joins the extension activities of the college/department.	3.50	Strongly agree
4. feel happy to be part of the extension activities.	3.53	Strongly agree
5. put effort into the conduct of extension activities for the beneficiaries without expecting a return.	3.54	Strongly agree
Overall	3.52	Very High

Table 8 shows the Level of Participation in terms of Attendance at Activities. It revealed that the Values shown enclosed in parenthesis are recomputed mean values of the positive side of the concern indicators. The recomputed mean value computation is the difference between 5 and the mean value. Such as, “always joined the extension activities of the college/department” has recomputed mean value of 3.57, and “always attends extension activities on Saturdays” has recomputed mean value of 3.89. Data shows that the overall level of participation in terms of attendance to extension activities is a very high result of 3.52.

Data indicates that the highest-rated indicator is a willingness to attend extension activities even on Saturdays. Also, high-rated indicators are always joining and extending their extra time for extension activities. Finally, the least rated indicators are attending and never being late in every extension activity of the college.

Table 8. Level of Participation in terms of Attendance to Activities

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
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1. attends every extension activity facilitated by the college.	3.38	Agree
2. extends the extra time for the extension activities of the college/department.	3.48	Strongly agree
3. is never late in extension activities of the college/department.	3.26	Agree
4. seldom joined the extension activities of the college/department.	1.43 (3.57)	Strongly disagree
5. never attends extension activities on Saturdays.	1.11 (3.89)	Strongly disagree
Overall	3.52	Very High

It implies that the regular attendance of faculty members to the extension will benefit knowledge outcomes (Llenares & Deocarís, 2018) and increases the motivation of all extension activity participants (Josue-Canacan, 2022).

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. initiates strategies for the conduct of extension activities.	3.38	Agree
2. facilitates the training of the extension services.	3.43	Agree
3. Channel communications by both parties.	3.35	Agree
4. explains the role and functions of the trainers and the trainees.	3.37	Agree
5. set time frame and evaluations of the extension activities.	3.43	Agree
Overall	3.39	High

Table 9 shows the Level of Participation in terms of Role Assigned to Faculty. The highest-rated indicators are facilitating training and setting time frames and evaluating extension activities. The next lower-rated indicator is initiating strategies for conducting extension activities. Also, a much lower-rated indicator is on explaining the roles and functions of both trainers and trainees. Finally, the least rated indicator is channeling communication. It revealed that the overall level of participation in terms of role assignment in extension services is a high result of 3.39.

Table 9. Level of Participation in terms of Role Assigned to Faculty

It implies that the result on the level of participation in terms of role assignment is not very high and similar to the findings of Bañas (2022) that role assignment does not increase faculty sense of participation in extension services unless they do not feel capable in managing new roles and assignments.

Level of Challenges Met by Faculty

Table 10 shows the level of challenges met in terms of Adherence to the ITAF Protocol. The most challenging indicator is following the health protocols set by the Local Government Unit (LGU). The second highest challenge is on secure in a permit before conducting extension activities. The third highest challenge is providing face masks, hand sanitizers, and body temperature checks for beneficiaries. The thfourth-rankngng challenge is maintaining social distancing in extension activities. Finally, is the challenge of postponement due to advisories from IATF or LGU. It also revealed that the overall level of challenges is a very high result of 3.67.

It implies that conducting extension activities during covid 19 pandemic is very challenging. This observation is similar to Pizaña et al. (2021) research at Western Philippines University also reported extension project implementers' challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as following LGU health protocols, wearing face masks, and securing permits.

Table 10. Level of Challenges Met in terms of Adherence to ITAF Protocol

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. follows the health protocols set by the LGU.	3.70	Strongly agree
2. maintains social distancing in conducting extension activities.	3.66	Strongly agree
3. provides face masks, hand sanitizers, and body temperature for the beneficiaries.	3.68	Strongly agree
4. postpones extension activities when there are advisories from IATF or the LGU.	3.65	Strongly agree
5. secures a permit from the authority before conducting the extension activities.	3.69	Strongly agree
Overall	3.67	Very High

Table 11 shows the level of challenges met in terms of Target Beneficiaries' Support. The most challenging indicator is experiencing less participation from the beneficiaries. The second highest challenge is experiencing difficulties in convening the beneficiaries in time of conducting extension services. The third highest challenge is experiencing the participants' gap in health safety. The fourth-ranking challenge is feeling the threat of the virus from the beneficiaries. Finally, is the challenge of feeling the lack of support from the participants. It also revealed that the overall level of challenges is a moderate result of 2.84.

It implies that there is still a moderate challenge in terms of target beneficiaries' support. This observation is similar to the findings of Sermona et al. (2020) that during pre-covid times, beneficiaries already have limited support for extension activities, so the present covid 19 related

restrictions had no doubt worsened the limited support of beneficiaries.

Table 11. Level of Challenges Met in terms of Target Beneficiaries' Support

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. experiences less participation of the beneficiaries.	2.94	Agree
2. experiences difficulties in convening the beneficiaries in time of conducting extension services.	2.88	Agree
3. feels the lack of support from the participants.	2.75	Neutral
4. feels the threat of the virus from the beneficiaries.	2.81	Neutral
5. experiences the participants' gap for health safety.	2.83	Neutral
Overall	2.84	Moderate

Table 12 shows the level of challenges met in terms of Accessibility to the Community. The most challenging indicator is experiencing road problems and risks along the way. The second highest challenge is experiencing the unavailability of vehicles and motorcycles. The third highest challenge is burdened in terms of the high fare of vehicles. The fourth-ranking challenge is the distance of the barangay sites. Finally, is the challenge of the unsafe travel of colleagues. It revealed that the overall level of challenges is a moderate result of 2.69.

It implies that the respondents were still moderately challenged by the accessibility to the community. This observation is similar to the findings of Sermona et al. (2020) that during pre-covid times, extensionists already have limited accessibility to the community, so the present covid 19 related restrictions had no doubt worsened accessibility to the community.

Table 12. Level of Challenges Met in terms of Accessibility to Community

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. experiences road problems and risks along the way.	2.83	Agree
2. experiences the unavailability of vehicles and motorcycles.	2.72	Agree
3. burdens in terms of the high fare of vehicles.	2.71	Agree
4. pressures the distance of the barangay sites.	2.69	Agree
5. suffers the unsafe of colleagues during travel.	2.51	Agree
Overall	2.69	Moderate

Level of Appreciation of the Faculty Towards the Extension Projects

This section presents and discusses the level of appreciation of the faculty towards the extension projects in terms of rewards and recognition, social awareness, and personality upliftment.

Table 13 shows the level of appreciation of the faculty in terms of rewards and recognition related to extension project involvement. The highest-rated indicator by the faculty is when they are provided with certificates and awards from the barangay officials/stakeholders. The second highest-rated indicator is when they are appreciated by the community. The third highest rated is when the faculty are recognized by the administration. Fourth is when the faculty are provided with travel allowance. And the least rated indicator is receiving honorariums. It also showed that the overall mean is 3.07 with a high verbal description.

This implies that the highest form of rewards and recognition appreciated by the faculty are those coming from the barangay and community officials/stakeholders. Also highly appreciated is the recognition received from the university officials. These findings were similar to the findings of Medina (2019) and Sedanza (2018) on how much faculty appreciate rewards and recognition for their involvement with extension projects.

Table 13. Level of Appreciation in terms of Rewards and Recognition

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. receives an honorarium for the extension services rendered.	2.68	Neutral
2. obtains recognition from the administration.	3.03	Agree
3. satisfies the travel allowance in conducting extension activities.	2.94	Agree
4. is appreciated in the community.	3.33	Agree
5. provides certificates and awards from the barangay officials/stakeholders.	3.39	Agree
Overall	3.07	High

Table 14 shows the level of appreciation of the faculty in terms of social awareness obtained in participating in extension projects. The highest-rated indicator by the faculty is motivating the beneficiaries to become productive individuals in the community. The second highest-rated indicators are sharing knowledge with the beneficiaries and promoting cleanliness and peace in the place. The third highest rated is shaping the values and high morale of the beneficiaries. And the least rated indicator is adjusting to different personalities in the deliveries of extension activities. It also showed that the overall mean is 3.52 with a very high verbal description.

This implies that the highest form of social awareness appreciated by the faculty is when they saw how their extension programs helped the beneficiaries and community becomes more productive, knowledgeable, clean, peaceful, and high in values and morale. These findings were similar to the findings of Seranno et al. (2022), Tamirat & Abute (2021), Sermona et al. (2020), and Salazar (2020) on how much faculty appreciate social awareness improvement about their involvement with extension projects.

Table 14. Level of Appreciation in terms of Social Awareness

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. gains to adjust different personalities in the deliveries of extension activities.	3.43	Agree
2. recognizes the importance of sharing knowledge with the beneficiaries.	3.54	Strongly agree
3. motivates the beneficiaries to become productive individuals in the community.	3.57	Strongly agree
4. helps in promoting cleanliness and peace in the place.	3.54	Strongly agree
5. shapes the values and high morale of the beneficiaries.	3.53	Strongly agree
Overall	3.52	Very High

Table 15 shows the level of appreciation of the faculty in terms of personality upliftment obtained in participating in extension projects. The highest-rated indicator by the faculty is being able to work as a team in conducting extension works. The second highest-rated indicator is feeling content in helping others. The third highest rated is the trust and self-confidence gained after giving the extension activities. The fourth highest-rated indicator is acquiring high respect for colleagues, heads, and beneficiaries. And the least rated indicator is increased voluntarism in any extension endeavors. It also showed that the overall mean is 3.54 with a very high verbal description.

This implies that the faculty are personally highly uplift when they saw teamwork among colleagues. Due to involvement in extension projects, the faculty feel contented, trusted, more confident, and respected as they help others. These findings were similar to Seranno et al. (2022) on how extension projects developed teamwork among the extension project participants.

Table 15. Level of Appreciation in terms of Personality Upliftment

Indicators The faculty...	Mean	Verbal Description
1. encourages to work as a team in conducting extension works.	3.61	Strongly agree

2. gain trust and self-confidence after giving the extension activities.	3.53	Strongly agree
3. acquires high respect for his/her colleagues, heads, and beneficiaries.	3.50	Strongly agree
4. increases his/her voluntarism in any extension endeavors.	3.46	Agree
5. feels contentment in helping others.	3.58	Strongly agree
Overall	3.54	Very High

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the level of participation of the faculty in extension projects in the new normal and level of challenges met by the faculty in the implementation of the extension projects.

Table 16. Test of Relationship Between the Level of Participation in Extension Projects and Level of Challenges Met

LP/LC M		AIATF P	TBS	AtC	Overall
Ct W	R	0.431** *	0.137** *	0.353***	0.387** *
	P	<.001	0.066	<.001	<.001
AE A	R	0.044	-0.033	0.162*	0.069
	P	0.537	0.635	0.024	0.306
PR A	R	0.008	-0.05	0.1145*	0.047
	P	0.907	0.465	0.041	0.47
O	R	0.148** *	0.016	0.238***	0.174** *
	P	0.031	0.808	<.001	0.007

Legend: Commitment to Work (CtW), Attendance to Extension Activities (AEA) Performance of the Role Assigned (PRA), Adherence to IATF Protocol (AIATFP), Target Beneficiaries Support (TBS), Accessibility to the Community (AtC).

*** Correlation is significant at the 1% level.

** Correlation is significant at the 5% level.

* Correlation is significant at the 10% level.

Table 16 shows the test of the relationship between the level of participation in extension projects and the level of challenges met. Results showed that there was a positive correlation between the faculty commitment to work in extension projects and adherence to IATF protocol, $r = 0.431$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the faculty commitment to work on extension projects and the overall level of challenges met, $r = 0.148$, $n = 120$, $p < .031$.

This implied that Ho1 is rejected in terms of the relationship between the faculty commitment to work and adherence to IATF protocol. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the commitment to work of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and adherence to

IATF protocol. Results also implied that there is a significant relationship between the commitment to work of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of challenges met in the implementation of the extension projects. These results were similar to the findings of Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) that commitment to work was particularly affected by the covid-19 related protocols, support, and accessibility.

Results from Table 16 further showed that there was a positive correlation between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects and adherence to IATF protocol, $r = 0.353$, $n = 117$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects and the overall level of challenges met, $r = 0.238$, $n = 117$, $p < .001$.

This implied that Ho1 is rejected in terms of the relationship between the faculty performance of role assignment and adherence to IATF protocol. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the role assignment of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and adherence to IATF protocol. Results also implied that there is a significant relationship between the performance of role assignment of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of challenges met in the implementation of the extension projects. These findings were similar to the results of Kumar et al. (2021) wherein the majority of the traditional roles of workers were directly affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Results from Table 16 finally showed that there was a positive correlation between the overall faculty level of participation in extension projects and adherence to IATF protocol, $r = 0.387$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the overall faculty level of participation in extension projects in extension projects and the overall level of challenges met, $r = 0.174$, $n = 120$, $p = .007$.

This implied that Ho1 is rejected in terms of the relationship between the faculty's overall level of participation and adherence to IATF protocol. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the overall level of participation in extension projects in the new normal and adherence to the IATF protocol. Results also implied that there is a significant relationship between the overall level of participation in extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of challenges met in the implementation of the extension projects. These results were like the findings of Medina (2019) of how challenges affected participation in extension activities.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the level of participation of the faculty in extension projects in the new normal and the level of appreciation of the faculty towards the extension projects.

Table 17. Test of Relationship Between the Level of Participation in Extension Projects and Level of Appreciation

LoP/LA	RaR	SoA	PrU	Overall
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Ct W	R	0.289** *	0.04 3	0.334** *	0.271** *
	P	<.001	0.53 1	<.001	<.001
AE A	R	0.463** *	0.02 6	0.524***	0.430** *
	P	<0.001	0.71 9	<.001	<.001
PR A	R	0.503** *	0.03 2	0.579** *	0.446** *
	P	<.001	0.66 1	<.001	<.001
O	R	0.456** *	0.03 7	0.513** *	0.416** *
	P	<.001	0.57 9	<.001	<.011

Legend:

Commitment to Work (CtW), Attendance to Extension Activities (AEA) Performance of the Role Assigned (PRA), Rewards and Recognition (RaR), Social Awareness (SoA) Personality Upliftment (PrU)

*** Correlation is significant at the 1% level.

** Correlation is significant at the 5% level.

* Correlation is significant at the 10% level.

Table 17 shows the test of the relationship between the faculty level of participation in extension projects and the level of appreciation. Results showed that there was a positive correlation between the faculty commitment to work in extension projects and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition, $r = 0.289$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$; social awareness, $r = 0.463$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$; and personality upliftment, $r = 0.503$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the faculty commitment to work on extension projects and the overall level of appreciation, $r = 0.456$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$.

This implied that Ho2 was rejected in terms of the relationship between faculty commitment to work and overall level of appreciation. Thus, there was a significant relationship between the commitment to work of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition; social awareness; and personality upliftment. Results implied in general that there was a significant relationship between the commitment to work of the faculty to extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of appreciation. These findings were similar to the results of Supardi, Yulianah, and Ariawan (2023) on the importance of appreciation and commitment to work.

Results from Table 17 also showed that there was a positive correlation between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition, $r = 0.334$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$; social awareness, $r = 0.524$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$; and personality upliftment, $r = 0.579$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the faculty

performance of role assignment in extension projects and the overall level of appreciation, $r = 0.513$, $n = 117$, $p < .001$.

Hence, Ho2 was rejected in terms of the relationship between the faculty performance of role assignments and the overall level of appreciation. Thus, there was a significant relationship between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects in the new normal and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition; social awareness; and personality upliftment. Results also implied in general that there was a significant relationship between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of appreciation. These results were similar to the findings of Rudi, Arif, and Mapparenta (2022) regarding the positive relationship between role performance and level of appreciation.

Results from Table 17 finally showed that there was a positive correlation between the overall faculty level of participation in extension projects and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition, $r = 0.271$, $n = 120$, $p < .001$; social awareness, $r = 0.430$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$; and personality upliftment, $r = 0.446$, $n = 119$, $p < .001$. There was also a positive correlation between the faculty performance of role assignment in extension projects and the overall level of appreciation, $r = 0.416$, $n = 117$, $p < .001$.

This implied that Ho2 was rejected in terms of the relationship between the faculty's overall level of participation and overall level of appreciation. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the overall level of participation in extension projects in the new normal and the three appreciation sub-indicators, namely: rewards and recognition; social awareness; and personality upliftment. Results further implied in general that there was a significant relationship between the faculty's overall level of participation in extension projects in the new normal and the overall level of appreciation. These findings were similar to the results of Tyasmoro, Chusniyah, and Ar-rohmah (2022) on the effect of participation on the increased level of appreciation.

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