Motivations And Learnings Of Accounting Students In Community Engagement Participation

Kai Crisostomo[1]
Accountancy Program
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Dianne Leigh Garrido[2]
Accountancy Program
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Vincent James Mallari[3]
Accountancy Program
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Gerean Marie Marallag[4]
Accountancy Program
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Romel Joe Raguindin[5]
Accountancy Program
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Dr. Fe Rose-Anne Maramag[6]
School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Abstract— **Engaging in the community and addressing societal concerns raise an individual's awareness and open them to many perspectives about the roles and relationships that contribute to it. The University of Saint Louis-Tuguegarao (USLT), a CICM school, incorporates community engagement activities into its curriculum. However, this study focused on Outreach Programs and Extension Activities, excluding the Service-Learning Program. This study explored the motivations, learning, and recommendations of accounting students participating in community engagement. This qualitative study was conducted through online or in-person interviews, which provided flexibility and capacity to gather more data to assess the variables. The informants were asked to answer open-ended questions about their motivations, experiences, and recommendations. In addition, it utilized purposive sampling to gather informants based on the needs of this paper. This study concludes that students participate in community engagement to help the marginalized and to have self-development. With this, the students' learning reflected a sense of community, self-fulfillment, and the benefits of talking about the environment. Furthermore, vital skills were also enhanced; participation gave way to students' communication skills and social skills. These community engagements will come to fruition if additional outreach programs are implemented and follow-up programs for the existing community engagements are conducted. Future researchers need to study the perception of the beneficiaries of community engagements – evaluations from the recipients that can conclude the effect or impact of the community engagements.**

I.   INTRODUCTION

Students' engagement in community outreach programs, extension activities, and service-learning programs produces an understanding of societal challenges in the partner communities that are part of their academic experience. Grade school, high school, and tertiary level community service learning and other forms of community participation are acknowledged components of academe in today's educational settings.

Volunteerism and community service were developed and promoted in the Philippines by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and other agencies such as the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA). Higher education benefits college students, including academic knowledge and abilities, personal growth, societal issues, and awareness. In theory, students' involvement in community engagement motivates them to learn and excel academically because immersing in a real-world situation constructs an experience that acquires a new goal, encouraging them to study (Quillinan et al., 2018). Colleges and universities increasingly emphasize the importance of undergraduate education in helping students develop ethically, analyze societal issues, and discover a sense of purpose in life.

Many private and public colleges and universities have lead offices for community service and service learning. However, the title may vary, usually including some combination or selection of words like "outreach, service, civic engagement, and/or community engagement" (Llenares & Deocaris, 2018). The foundation of engaging learners in community service is premised on mutual exchange, in which students and community organizations offer and receive something of value.

Engaging in the community and addressing societal concerns raise an individual's awareness and open them to many perspectives about the roles and relationships that contribute to it. The University of Saint Louis-Tuguegarao (USLT), a CICM school, incorporates community engagement activities into its curriculum. Community engagement fortifies the Louisian core value of Social Awareness and Involvement. According to the Community Engagement and CICM Advocacies (CECA) office, community engagement refers to its three components: Outreach Program, Extension Activities, and Service-Learning Program. However, this study will focus on Outreach Programs and Extension Activities, excluding the Service-Learning Program. The study of Balubar et al. (2021) already concluded that accounting students at USLT acquired critical academic, personal, social, and professional skills when participating in a service-learning program. Thus, expanding the study based on the other two community engagement components is only appropriate.

The University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao engages its name in relevant causes that continuously help communities through outreach programs and extension activities. Outreach programs are occasional; their frequency depends on their cause's relevance to the community. On the other hand, extension activities are continuous operations of the school to support its partner communities.

As more colleges and universities pursue participation and volunteer opportunities, researchers will need additional evidence to examine participants' motivations and experiences and provide recommendations. According to a study, college students who participated in community service had higher self-esteem, confidence, and self-awareness (Jones & Abes, 2004; Jones & Hill, 2013). Identifying students' motivation and experience in community involvement will primarily benefit the students themselves, and this study can serve as their foundation. For example, if community involvement has a positive outcome, they will value it since, according to Chan (2016), a positive result can improve students' skills and talents. This study also addressed the underlying gap identified by Balubar et al. (2021) in their study titled "The Effects of Participation in Outreach Programs and Extension Activities."

This study was conducted to explore the motivations, learnings, and recommendations of accounting students who participate in community engagement. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1.) What motivates the students to participate in community engagement?

2.) What are the learnings acquired by the students in joining community engagement activities?

3.) What are the recommendations of the students to improve the community engagement activities?

II. METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative research design employing descriptive research methods. The study is conducted at the University of Saint Louis located at Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. The informants of this study were the 20 students from the School of Accountancy, Business and Hospitality (SABH), specifically from Bachelor of Science in Accountancy and Bachelor of Science in Management Accoutning programs. Purposive sampling technique was utilized with the following inclusion criteria:

1. At least 2nd year student in BSAC or BSMA program
2. Enrolled in USLT for the Academic year 2022-2023
3. Participated in at least three (3) community engagement activities of the school and the department.

TABLE I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INFORMANTS

Informants	Course and Year	Participated Community Engagement
INFT 1	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Tree Planting
INFT 2	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Backyard Gardening
INFT 3	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Tree Planting
INFT 4	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Backyard Gardening
INFT 5	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Tree Planting
INFT 6	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Tree Planting
INFT 7	BSAC - 4	Outreach Program and Tree Planting
INFT 8	BSAC - 4	Project Bag-asa and Project Kavulun
INFT 9	BSAC - 4	Tree Legacy and Relief Operations
INFT 10	BSAC - 4	Relief Operations and Investree
INFT 11	BSAC - 4	DKLC and Tree Planting
INFT 12	BSAC - 3	Tree Planting and Community Clean Up-Drive
INFT 13	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Outreach Program
INFT 14	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Relief Operation
INFT 15	BSAC - 3	Tree Planting and Backyard Gardening
INFT 16	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Outreach Program
INFT 17	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Outreach Program
INFT 18	BSAC - 3	Tree Planting and Community Clean-Up Drive
INFT 19	BSAC - 4	SABH Alay Pasko and Backyard Gardening
INFT 20	BSAC - 4	Tree Planting and Outreach Program

The researchers used both online and in-person interviews to have an in-depth discussion with the informants. The informants were asked to answer open-ended questions about their motivations, experiences, and recommendations. The researchers took notes and recorded the interview with the informants' consent for analysis and interpretation. The researchers sought authorization to conduct the study from the Vice-President for Academics through the Academic Dean of the School of Accountancy, Business, and Hospitality. After its approval, the researchers administered the approved questions, and the data was gathered through multi-step gathering, which was conducted using online platforms. Google forms were administered first to determine whether the informants are qualified. When the informants were determined, the

researchers scheduled an interview through Google Meet. Throughout the study's planning, execution, and conclusion, the researchers ensured that ethical standards were followed and executed effectively. Prior to conducting the interview, the researchers obtained informed consent from the participants. The data or information obtained was protected from any leakage to preserve the informants' information and achieve confidentiality. Rather than misrepresenting the data, the researchers acknowledged the study's results/findings and were open to any changes. The researchers ensured that their data-gathering procedure was not infiltrated nor of any detriment to the privacy of their informants (Wallman & Harris-Kojetin, 2004). Hence, they were well-informed and oriented adequately before participating in the data-gathering procedure. Additionally, the researchers kept every piece of information secured and confidential to protect the privacy of their informants and to avoid third-party factors that might harm them in any aspect (Helgesson, 2015). The data acquired for the study was analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis. This was accomplished through a series of meticulously executed steps. First, the researchers carefully studied the interview transcripts and listened to the recorded audio to create an ordered summary of all the information acquired. By that time, they had discovered several significant aspects of the topic that were interesting and relevant. Following that, essential data extracts were categorized into critical themes. These themes were again developed and evaluated for consistency before proper names and definitions were given. Some verbalizations and the frequency of those responses were included to enrich and validate the themes that emerged from the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To promote community engagement advocacies, the University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao held activities under the following programs: Assist-a-Day Care/DKLC, Community Immersion, Alay Pasko, Tree Legacy, Bloodletting, and Relief operations with the involvement of its employees, students, and other stakeholders. The CICM advocacies cover Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC); Indigenous Peoples (IPs); Environmental Protection and Management; and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM).

This research study explored the motivations, experiences, and recommendations of the accounting students who participated and volunteered in community engagements. Significant findings were considered in this study, wherein it talked about the depiction of the community engagements that were participated by accounting students of the University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao, the reasons why students or volunteers engaged themselves in such activity, and their experiences throughout the activity. After carefully reviewing the informant's responses and interview transcripts, the researchers grouped commonalities and sorted this information through the predetermined significant themes. These were: (1) the Motivations of Accounting Students in Participating in Community Engagement, (2) the Learnings and Skills Acquired by Accounting Students in Participating in Community Engagement, and (3) Recommendations of Accounting Students to Improve Community Engagement Activities.

Theme 1: Motivations of Accounting Students in Participating in Community Engagement

One of the significant themes that were determined in the study is the motivation of accounting students who participated in community engagements. The data gathering results revealed that the informants' prevalent motivation in participating was narrowed down to care for the environment and poverty alleviation.

A. Care for the Environment

Participation in community engagement activities promotes environmental awareness. This program was described by the informants as an awareness to the community and society in rehabilitating the planet. It is one way to combat and slow down the effect of environmental repercussions that allow naturally disparaging calamities to affect people.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

> *INFT1: "I joined the tree planting kasi I want to help the environment a better one. And sa outreach kasi… to help the people that are living in that environment."* [I joined the tree planting because I want to help make the environment a better one. As regards outreach, I want to help the people who are living in that environment.]

> *INFT6: "I joined tree planting kasi… I like being in nature and I like planting trees. It's my way of contributing na rin to the rehabilitation of our mother nature…"* [I joined tree planting because I like being in nature and I like planting trees. It is my way of contributing to the rehabilitation of our mother nature…]

> *INFT7: "…imagine mo na lang, nakakalbo na ang mundo and hindi tayo mabubuhay ng wala tayong halaman and yun nga kung iisipin natin. Maliit na bagay lang naman yung magtanim tayo isang maliit na tree, or kahit isang niyog nga lang, maliit na bagay na iyon."* […just imagine, the world has gone bald and we cannot live without plants, and that is it if we think about it. It is just a small thing to plant a small tree or even just a coconut, that is a small thing.]

> *INFT10: "…environmental activities are uhm common and is a major program of the organization so I think it is good to join and be part of something na, that we help the environment…"* […environmental activities are common and is a major program of the organization so I think it is good to join and be part of something that helps the environment…]

INFT15: *"Uhm, I joined in order to promote a better and greener environment…"* [I joined in order to promote a better and greener environment...]

Considering that accounting students were already aware of the advantages of community engagement, it was found that students' participation in this activity spurred their desire to be more environmentally conscious. Additionally, they can use what they have learned in class to benefit the environment and the community by taking advantage of this chance, such as the program's proactivity. Proactivity is where students will take appropriate action to the environment's condition. This aspiration motivated them to act when the chance presented itself. This is also manifested in the study of Balanac & Punzalan (2020), in which the participants' motivations in the outreach programs were eye-opening and helpful in realizing that making tiny efforts can significantly influence their lives, the communities, and the environment. Engaging the participants in this activity allows them to contribute to bettering the earth and exposes them to its myriad long- and short-term advantages.

Additionally, it was determined that this practice is raising environmental awareness. Accounting students become motivated to assist and act appropriately when exposed to the issue. Although there may have been difficulties, they did not stop the participants from being motivated to take action, which may have been what was needed to persuade people that this was one of the best methods to save Mother Earth. This study emphasized the vital contribution of planting trees to students' impressions of life, community, and environment.

B. Aid and Assistance for Marginalized People

One of the informants' motivations was to assist the people on the sidelines of society. The USLT breeds students in pursuing this mission of helping the marginalized, which was promoted in every aspect of being a part of the institution. Generally, the informants' significant reason for participating was to be one with the community, to empathize with them, and to support them.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

INFT6: *"…I joined outreach to be able to help those who are in need or those who are on the sidelines of society."*

INFT8: *"…We have considered these projects because as Louisian leaders, we are expected to ensemble "compassion" and working on Community Service is an important manifestation of such. Aside from serving the student, Louisian leaders are also bound to be one with the community- to empathize with them and to support them in our all ways possible."*

INFT13: *"I wanted to experience and know the life they have and of course to send help to those who are in need"*

Aid and assistance for the marginalized people were credited with increasing social awareness and global responsibility. The cognition of societal crisis motivates students to involve themselves in community engagement, leading to future action. It was found that the activity, indeed, had a positive effect on the students' social consciousness. Subsequently, it leads to increasing social awareness, sympathy, and support. Considering the current condition of the marginalized is also a factor in joining such activities. Altruism is an important role to apply in this situation because it was manifested by the informants that personal gain was never the intention. To aid and assist was the primary reason for participating in community engagement. Personal gain was considered insignificant, and selfless volunteerism was implied by some students who joined community engagement activities.

These results supported the study of Yue and Yang (2020), wherein they mentioned that these tendencies should be recognized and taken advantage of to improve students' ability to volunteer, as Ismail et al. (2019) added. The importance of the functional or actuality approach to motivation was highlighted by Harnish and Snider (2013). They hypothesized, for example, that people with a motive to help the underprivileged are more likely to pursue and maintain their participation than those whose motive is strong for helping others but weak for self-gain (e.g., the pure altruist).

C. Self-Development

One of the most robust areas of community involvement research is looking into how these activities affect student outcomes and development. The study's informants described their motivation in participating in community engagement as an instrument to improve their perception of themselves and gather insights about developing their morals, values, and sense of character. Furthermore, these kinds of activities are initiated for the development of the students; it is to increase their learning and also apply the context of morals that they acquired in the academe.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

INFT12: *"As a student and a leader, I always thought of myself that I fundamentally need new experiences and a simple action and kindness that will help the community. Uhm …with this effort, it can be crucial for my growth and development as a student to become a professional someday that personified positive or I mean constructive characteristics."* [As a student and a leader, I always thought of myself that I fundamentally need new experiences and a simple action and kindness that will help the community. With this effort, it can be

crucial for my growth and development as a student to become a professional someday who personified positive or I mean constructive characteristics.]

INFT16: "Yung nagpasali sa akin dito is yung gusto ko talaga na… Maimprove yung sarili ko. It may seem like, makasarili but i know that it is also one of its goal di ba? I mean para sa atin din naman to. Para may mareflect tayo about sa life ng others pati narin about environment." [What made me join here is because I really want to improve myself. It may seem selfish but I know that it is also one of its goals, right? I mean it is for us too. So that we can reflect about the life of others, as well as about the environment.]

According to the study results, most "participants" saw benefits for their social connections, self-confidence, self-esteem, and personal empowerment. It was exemplified that in self-development, helping the community does not necessarily mean that personal growth will not be considered. Helping is a vital part of developing students' self-esteem and life satisfaction. A concrete experience was an effort of the student to understand the community's situation and subsequently apply this learning for their self-development. Generally, this study found that tying students with the community is also a character development tool to produce students with values and morals that can help them with their future professions and careers. In the study of Meyer et al. (2019), students were highly motivated to support self-improvement, serve their communities, and promote understanding, volunteerism, and nonprofit work. The career dimension was low, indicating that volunteers did not see their volunteer work as a method to advance their characteristics. The study by Stein (2017) supported that the highest incentives were values and morals. As a result, volunteers regarded volunteer work as an opportunity to demonstrate their ideals of giving while also improving their knowledge, skills, and talents. The results of these studies manifested with the outcome of this research. Motivation is not only about the community's benefit but also about its participants.

Theme 2: Learnings and Skills Acquired by Accounting Students in Participating in Community Engagement
The participants of the study shared their various experiences in engaging with communities. It was discovered that they have developed a set of knowledge and skills through their involvement in community engagements. This steered the researchers to present the following sub-themes:

A. Learnings in Participating in Community Engagements
Individuals who experience community engagements have learned about themselves and others. Applying these learnings reflects what is happening with their lives and the community, and the work that still needs to be done. Developing successful and sustainable learnings about societal problems requires moving beyond the traditional

boundaries of learning. The participants need to experience community engagements that boost their self-fulfillment, sense of community, and the benefits of taking care of the environment. These learnings are elaborated as follows:

1. Self-fulfillment
In engaging with the community, there are things that the participants felt after the activity. It has something to do with their self-fulfillment, defined by scholars as the ultimate goal of human striving and as the real test of the goodness of human life. It is an achievement of an individual that realizes the value regarding their traits and personalities. This experience is a platform for them to appreciate the essence of helping the community, which results in personal fulfillment that nourishes their character. Interacting with the community is a way to push the participants beyond their boundaries and, subsequently, has a personal gain that fulfills their needs and helps them achieve goals past materialistic possessions.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

INFT2: "It was a fun experience because aside from bonding with my co-officers, it was fulfilling because I know that our activity would fruit into something useful for the community."

INFT3: "Yung experience... Experience was memorable because first time ko to participate in this kind of activity. Uh, many of us participated that's why It was fun doing it. It made me happy and fulfilled knowing that I had really contributed in doing something that day to make a difference in the coming years." [The experience was memorable because it was my first time to participate in this kind of activity. Many of us participated. That is why it was fun doing it. It made me happy and fulfilled knowing that I had really contributed in doing something that day to make a difference in the coming years.]

INFT11: "First of all, the community engagements were fun and fulfilling. And uhm it actually makes me feel parang… I'm an accomplished human being, it humbles me… ehmm it makes me realize the importance and value of the smallest things." [First of all, the community engagements were fun and fulfilling. And it actually makes me feel like I am an accomplished human being, it humbles me. It makes me realize the importance and value of the smallest things.]

INFT14: "Uhh , okay naman siya kasi ang saya magtanim ng seedling sa ano kami dati eh sa part ng enrile ata yun. Magandang experience naman siya. Tapos sa relief operation uhh for me, sobrang fulfilling talaga niya kasi, natutulungan mo yung mga tao nangangailangan ganon. tapos parang

nakakataba ng puso kasi alam mo sa sarili mo na parang may maganda kang nagawa despite of sa mga nangyari.” [It is okay because it is fun to plant a seedling, we used to do it in Enrile. It is a good experience overall. Then in the relief operation, for me, it is really fulfilling because you help people who really need that. Then, it is heartwarming because you know in yourself that you did something good despite what happened.]

INFT18: “It feels very fulfilling to the extent that I also feel self-actualization because as I do these community engagements, I can also do reflections on what I have done and I can gain lessons so I can improve and enhance my personal lifestyle.”

Community Engagement is a powerful force for encouraging self-fulfillment and strengthening the core of achievement beyond tangible success. Experiences like this helped the students achieve the outcomes that are critical for personal growth, responsible citizenship, and a sense of accomplishment. Each participant is a candidate of knowledge pertinent to vital social issues, intellectual competence, interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, integrity, and a level of motivation that invests time, energy, and emotion in concerns more significant, like immediate self-fulfillment. The participant felt a sense of accomplishment since helping with the rehabilitation of the community is an embedded goal for everyone. Producing a contribution to the community has a significant link to the students' achievement. Entering adulthood with accomplishments is crucial for their self-confidence because it allows them to have the belief to flourish in every course they enter. This discovery is in agreement with the study of Bhayat and Mahrous (2012), which stated that having students assess and reflect on their experiences in a community involvement project is crucial for each of them to grasp better what they have witnessed and learned. This allows them to "examine and make sense" of it for their sense of accomplishment in addressing the communities' drawbacks.

2. Sense of Community
The warmth of belongingness within the community can give people a multilateral benefit. Being in a community dictates a bond that will hold every individual. Moreover, this bond is rooted in common grounds such as history, camaraderie, beliefs, and culture that everyone should preserve if it is for the benefit of the community. Having solidarity is a springboard to have the skill to adjust in joining a new community or being a part of the workforce because these future professionals will work with other professionals around them.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:
INFT8: “...The warm welcome of the community in Sitio Padongsol made the wait much more meaningful. Seeing the kids happy and hopeful was, for me, the best highlight of the activity. Playing and interacting with them felt different because we knew that somehow, we are igniting their hope for a better future. We knew that they felt safe in our presence. The way they smiled and laughed showed how thankful they were of our simple gifts and make us feel that we need to help them and think of their situation as a part of the community. The feeling that if this community is very solid, maybe I can also do that for my own community. This also helps me to realize that it is important to be family oriented since it is a basic unit of the society or the community”

INFT10: “...While uhm during the outreach it really gives me a sense of community na dapat hindi lang sarili mo ang iniisip mo pati rin dapat ang mga tao sa paligid. At nafeel ko na sa community na iyon parang iisa sila with common ground. Ithink maiaapply ko to sa sarili ko because I am also a part of a community and as well as may mga community rin na magiging part ako in the future...” [… During the outreach, it really gives me a sense of community that you should not only think about yourself but also the people around you. And I felt in that community that they were one with a common ground. I think I can apply it to myself because I am also a part of a community, as well as there are also communities that I will be a part of in the future …]

Students participated in community engagements that established the sense the vitality of community outcomes. In this study, the outcome is a sense of community–the feeling of being integrated with the community, feeling a part of the community, and belonging to the community. Community engagements could address the importance of participating in these activities, discovering that participants learn to become community-oriented individuals. It is crucial for their part because, as future professionals, they need to join a community and be a part of that to support each other in times of challenges. As the cliché dictates that "no man is an island," the community was designed to have a structure where individuals should participate. Codependence will always be a part of life. Hence, these community engagement activities should be training grounds for the students to develop their community-oriented personalities. In today's fast-paced and diverse culture, shifting the focus to the community level may provide the return on effort individuals have expected from outcomes focused on developing a sense of community.

Pre-professional skills like a sense of community should be developed during their education and should allow them to become well-rounded with the help of community engagement. As evidence, the study of Jackson (2016) dictates that this type of embedded community-engaged

learning complements the curriculum and gives students a greater sense of community and empowerment while providing a richer experience for the community partner. Students' experiences, skills, and views may also help form their pre-professional identities in a community-engaged approach. The greater sense of community is knotted with professional belongingness because it enhances their treatment with other professionals and the community in which they will be involved. An early link to the desired profession can help develop and accomplish a student's career prospects. Blocher (2012) discovered that pre-professional identity is an understudied notion that can affect professional achievement, well-being, and productivity in the classroom and beyond.

3. Beneficial Effect of Taking Care of the Environment

Under this category, the participants have experienced how community engagement is beneficial to the environment. Generally, many informants revealed that their experiences helped them realize that community engagements are crucial to rehabilitating the environment. The environment should be nursed to sustain the life of every organism in the world.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

INFT1: *"In planting trees di ba kailangan nating maghintay para mag grow yung plant and believe din na after long years mabubuhay yun at makakatulong in many ways. So just like in real life yung mga simple things na ginagawa natin ngayon is may effect siya sa future natin. Our habits as children will determine our lifestyle as adults. Yung mga actions na ginagawa natin wheter good siya or bad may impact siya sa buhay natin so we eventually reap what we sow now so yung nag plaplant ng trees uhmm nakakatulong siya sa ibang tao at sa atin di kasi balang araw ehmm makakasave siya ng buhay para kapag may mga bagyo para makakatulong yun to prevent flood din so knowing that im made a geniune contribution now will somehow help others now and in the future. Ganun din sa outreach the main point is to help talaga."* [In planting trees, we have to wait for the plant to grow and also believe that after several years, it will live and help in many ways. So just like in real life, the simple things we do now have an effect on our future. Our habits as children will determine our lifestyle as adults. The actions we do, whether good or bad, have an impact on our lives. So, we eventually reap what we sow. It helps other people and us because it can save lives when there are typhoons and can help prevent flood too. So, knowing that I made a genuine contribution will somehow help others now and in the future. It's the same with outreach, the main point is really to help."*

INFT8: *"During the activity, it was evident how our simple works can mean the world to other people. I have learned that our presence and our presents for them, no matter how small, if deemed genuine, can inspire these communities to work more for a better future. We wrapped the activity happily and we all went home with a fulfilled heart and with a promise that our mission will not end in our federation year."*

INFT14: *"Skills, knowledge ko siguro is mas naging aware ako sa… tree planting kasi hindi naman siya basta-basta na pagtatanim lang, parang ano siya parang nagtanim ka rin ng buhay, parain the future at para rin sa advantage at benefit din yan ng mga tao sa future. Tapos sa relief ops naman interconnected sila eh…. Siguro one learning is kung bakit nagkakabaha ganun mas naging aware din siguro ako na mas lalong alagaan ang mga nasa paligid natin environment specifically. At tsaka ano, mas naging makatao ako that time kasi kaya kong magserve sa kanila without receiving anything."* [I became more aware of tree planting because it is not just planting. It is like planting a life for the future and also for the advantage and benefit of the people in the future generation. Then in the relief operations they are interconnected. I also became more aware to take care of those around us, the environment specifically. Also, I became more humane at that time because I could serve them without receiving anything in return.]

These shared experiences influence the students' perceptions about the environment, in coordination with the University's advocacy to rehabilitate the environment, specifically the presence of KKP events in every program that the University facilitated. Developing a good foundation to take care of the environment is an early stage to save the deterioration of natural resources. It is interconnected with the calamities that every corner of the planet is experiencing. Community engagements exposed the students to this reality. As a result, awareness of the students was increased, and they became an advocate for the environment. Environmental awareness has been taught since the early part of the academe; this study discovers that the effectiveness of teaching environmental awareness and its benefits are more effective if there are activities that can expose them to the current situation of the environment.

According to Pawar and Rothkar (2015), cited by Balanac & Punzalan (2020), forests are vital for human life because they offer a varied range of resources, such as absorbing carbon or acting as a carbon sink, generating oxygen which is vital for life's existence on Earth, also known as earth lung, aiding to regulate the hydrological cycle, world's climatic condition, water purification, providing habitat to wildlife, decreasing global warming, absorbing poisonous gases and noise, reducing pollution, preserving

soil, and mitigating natural threats like floods and landslides. These identified threats can be prevented with the discovery of this study and in agreement with the research of Balanac & Punzalan (2020), which dictates that people are living in a period swayed by humans to the fact that the Earth's systems are now reformed. It is reformed with the learners being exposed to calamities, and joining tree planting activities helps the world conquer significant drawbacks from natural disasters.

B. Acquired Skills in Participating in Community Engagements

The kind of college programs and curricula needed to prepare students and acquire skills from participating in community engagements, having a better grasp on participating in a diverse employment setting and academic environment and handling complex social problems may be facilitated with a better understanding of students' perspective-taking abilities, values to promote a better society through community engagements, and beliefs. As students are exposed to many communities during co-curricular, academic, and future professional learning in college, developing these skills in community engagement outcomes may be accelerated. This study discovers that participating in community engagements is a platform for learning and acquiring new skills, such as communication and social skills. These learnings are elaborated as follows:

1. Communication Skills

More experienced people may find it easier to communicate with persons from various cultural and social backgrounds. Many people find it challenging to move from being socially active student "friends" to professional colleagues in a professional setting. Students participating in community-based activities improve their communication and interpersonal skills while also becoming more knowledgeable about problems affecting the community and how to address them.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

> *INFT2: "....Noong last tree planting naming nakipag usap kami sa mga tao doon sa Sitio so I think with that tree planting I also acquired communication skills."* […During our last tree planting, we conversed with the people in that Sitio so I think with that, I also acquired communication skills.]

> *INFT9: "... I think I've enhanced my skills in working with a team since we have different roles in preparation for tree planting. I honed my communication skills as well as patience. I learned dos and don'ts in planting and how essential those trees are planted in that area."*

> *INFT10: "...In our outreach programm. So, first yung skills, I think communication skills uhm hindi ako nagdalawang isip to communicate with them ah despite the age gap tapos it was nice to talk with them."* [… In our outreach program. So first, I think communication skills. I did not think twice to communicate with them despite the age gap and it was nice to talk with them.]

> *INFT18: "I have gained communication skills and .... because we get to meet new people and share experiences with them as well as help them. This also includes communicating with key people if we tend to ask for donations or sponsorships to promote our programs."*

It has been shown how they practically relate to the learning objectives by highlighting various parts of the community involvement and providing concrete examples. They will undoubtedly benefit from these core abilities in their future employment. Interaction with a wide range of people from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds is a key component that contributes to improving those communication skills.

Community participation has given students a greater grasp of communication outside their comfort zones and into the community since the difficulties of teaching communication skills in the classroom have been noted. Students realize how much their communication abilities have improved during the project period due to the experience of carrying out community activities. The relevance of improving communication and interpersonal skills is clearly established through the researchers' conversation with them and discussion of their experience. A similar approach was given to the participants by Salazar (2020), who discovered that as students share their experiences with the class while working on projects with community partners, community involvement can enhance interclass and professional conversation and increase their communication skills as they finish their outreach activity.

2. Social Skills

Universities today face the challenge of breeding students with academic excellence and supplemented social skills. These skills are essential as the work environment has changed dramatically to include a global workforce with diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, with the rapid advancement of technology, the workplace will change tremendously; socialization is now neglected because of the existence of social media. Community engagement harnesses these kinds of skills that are declining for students.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

> *INFT4: "...uh ano parang you get to know more about the uh stories of different people tapos uh parang uh nakikipag socialize sa iba't ibang tao like*

besides your friends ganun." […You get to know more about the stories of different people and we socialize with them besides your friends.]

INFT11: "I learned how to engage with people from different backgrounds. It made me realize the things that are lacking in society. It made me wiser by socializing with them and the things that I could still do to improve the conditions of the society."

INFT16: "I have been quite improved with how I interact and lead with other people. I became responsible of my assigned duties and responsibilities. And most importantly, I became open of what really our society is. These learnings allowed myself to participate in different discussions about the modern problems that we face not only within my community but also outside the border. I ponder that, as a person who have something to give, we should consistently open our hearts to those feeling needed and utilize our skills and talents to help other people make an attempt for their future."

The most significant barrier to community engagement is a lack of social skills. Community engagement uncovers an emotional context for the activity, the social reality of "real world" work and their engagement in the community, and specific pedagogical techniques that serve as practical skills to enhance the student's social skills. Furthermore, social skills allow breaking beyond the purpose of community engagement. It is established that the main point of community engagement is to help the community. The subsequent learnings and skills acquired by the student result from engagement and socialization with the locals. It is a bilateral benefit to both the community and students; the students help for the betterment of the community, and the students will gather essential facts and something that they will ponder on (Hurtado et al., 2013). All these things can be acquired by joining community engagements.

Diverse peers are inevitable for the students, and allowing them to participate in community engagements will take them ahead in life. The more enhanced students' social skills are, the more established connections they will build. A connection is a vital mechanism for future endeavors in the real world. It can dictate how people will have their jobs and outsource things that the situation necessitates. This is displayed in the study of Cabrera et al. (2015), which dictates that connection between people is the ideal tool in facing reality. It is by socializing with people to earn connections to invest in their future success.

Theme 3: Recommendations of Accounting Students to Improve Community Engagement Activities

A. Additional Outreach Programs
Informants saw the value of participating in community engagements. Additional outreach programs were suggested to encourage students to participate. This ignites the spirit of volunteerism among students.

The verbalization of the informant is as follows:

INFT4: "uh I think uhm mag create pa sila ng ibang ng iba't ibang outreach program like yung magvisit sa mga aeta community mga ganun like ano uh cleaning drive yung mga ganung ano na maengage yung mga maencourage din yung mga students na makisali." [I think they should create different kinds of outreach programs like visiting the Aeta community or clean-up drives to encourage the students to join.]

The students appreciated their experience in participating in community engagements. Thus, they urge their schoolmates to participate as well. The findings of this study serve as an eye-opener to every student that community engagements have numerous benefits. The students' exposure helped them see the reality, and participating more in outreach activities is an advantage for every participating student. It is justified by the study of Elizaga (2019) that engaging faculty and students in community engagements is about transforming education. Consider within these how programs might be revised to address community engagement program developmental trajectories better and continue to develop more community engagements.

B. Follow-up Programs
The students who participated in community engagements call for an attempt to look for the result of the work that they were involved in. Some participants revealed that it is important for them to have an update and know the status because they want to evaluate if it is necessary to do the activity again or not.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

INFT2: "For recommendation, I think the department is lacking on the follow up part because after the backyard gardening and the tree planting we still haven't visited those sites yet so we don't know if the plants that we planted that time still stand there or what they're status are."

INFT6: "For the tree planting activity, ah halos lahat kasi ng na attendan kong tree planting eh wala ni isa sa kanila ang gumawa ng follow-up activity like ano ifollow up kung naggrow na ba ang seedlingsl kung ano estado na ng mga naplant na trees. So siguro ang masussuggest ko is dapat mag conduct rin sila ng follow up activities maybe to water the seedlings or to take care their status."
[For the tree planting activity, there were no follow-up activities among all those I attended. Like, there has to be a follow-up if the seedlings have grown

and the state of the planted trees. So maybe what I can suggest is that they should also conduct follow up activities, maybe to water the seedlings or to take care of their status.]

INFT8: "As we are now utilizing our network for our partner communities, I also hope that we don't only give them continuous material support but also provide them with an avenue to learn new things which they can use for their livelihood."

The community engagements allowed the students to view the reality of the world. Their efforts should be well-spent and should be sustained so that they will also benefit the environment and the society. Repeckiene et al. (2014) recommended building an agenda based on previous participants' work to recognize and achieve good educational outcomes by integrating community engagement in students; they should also sustain the program results to diminish future weaknesses of the program, such as the decline of participation of students.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes with the predetermined themes that students participate in community engagements to aid and assist the marginalized, and for their self-development. With this, students' learning reflected a sense of community, self-fulfillment, and the benefits of taking care of the environment. Furthermore, vital skills were also enhanced; participation gave way to students to have communication skills and social skills. These community engagements will come to fruition if additional outreach programs are implemented and follow-up programs for the existing community engagements are conducted.

Based on the results and conclusion of the study, the researchers put forth the underlying recommendations:

1. For the sustainability of the different programs and activities, the results revealed a need for follow-up programs. Thus, the findings of this study should serve as a basis for them to implement projects that would sustain and show the results of the community engagements of the students.

2. Students should focus and participate in community engagements to enhance and acquire a particular skill they wish to improve. Professors should facilitate the students' needs and expose them to appropriate community engagements. This ensures that the student's participation will be fruitful and meaningful.

3. For future researchers, collaboration or partnerships with the community should be studied so that there will be more concrete skills to enhance specific community engagement. This also means that students should participate more in community engagements. Thus, students will identify the community engagements that they need for self-improvement. Future researchers should also study the level of skills that enhances participation in community engagement. Lastly, they should also study the perception of the beneficiaries of community engagements – evaluations from the recipients that can conclude the effect or impact of the community engagements.

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