



INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NORTHERN SAMAR AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT:

It suggests that HEIs have been ready for tragedies and other disasters, not for this pandemic, in terms of organizational readiness. Conclusion: Although HEIs have emergency response teams in place, they are not very prepared for biological risks, IT system accessibility, or the availability of programs and materials.

Students in Northern Samar can apply for scholarships at both public and private universities. The granting of scholarships is one reason why the outbreak did not have an influence on students enrolling in Northern Samar's higher education institutions. It implies that the government's scholarship program might enable the institutions to continue carrying out their continuity plans in the event of a pandemic.

Higher education faculty members tend to be married, middle-aged women with master's degrees who are predominately female. HEIs in Northern Samar have met the CHED minimal criterion that faculty members hold a master's degree. Although some professors have an excessive teaching load that could lead to overworked teachers, the faculty generally has the advanced technological expertise and is in a cumulative position. Even though some faculty members at higher education institutions in Northern Samar have an excessive workload, they are mature enough to provide high-quality instruction despite the pandemic. Although it suggests that a few institutions are understaffed, the HEIs in Northern Samar generally have average teaching loads.

Keywords: *Tragedies, organizational readiness, scholarships, HEIs*

INTRODUCTION

A number of guidelines were put into place in the Philippines by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the management of infectious diseases to encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and guarantee an efficient government response to assess, track, contain, regulate, and prevent the spread of such viruses. However, as of December 15, 2021, COVID-19 continued to afflict 2,836,803 Filipinos and resulted in 50,341 fatalities nationwide, of which 4,243 total documented cases and 70 fatalities were from the province of Northern Samar (DOH, 2021).

The transmission of the 2019 coronavirus illness (COVID-19) in higher education institutions is being prevented, controlled, and mitigated according to a number of memorandum orders, advisories, and guidelines established by the Commission of Higher Education. This resulted in the cancellation of classes, extracurricular activities, board exams, and several graduations. The majority, if not all, institutional goals were not achieved, and university research and extension projects have also been delayed. The fight to put an end to this pandemic is still far from where it should be. (CHED, 2020)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, this study is aimed to determine the Institutional factors affecting the Organizational Response of Higher Education Institutions in Northern Samar amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. Policy responses
 - 1.1. Administrative measures

- 1.2. Financial resources
- 1.3. Support for teaching-learning continuity
2. Institutional responses
 - 2.1. Health front
 - 2.2. Calendar setting
 - 2.3. Contribution of Research and Development
 - 2.4. Technological resources

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The process variables include organizational responses of higher education institutions in Northern Samar to policy responses such as administrative measures, financial resources, and support for teaching-learning continuity; and institutional responses such as health front, calendar setting, research and development contribution, and technological resources. These findings will provide information for the Northern Samar higher education institutions' institutional continuity framework.

Institutional responses in the process which are included are health front, calendar setting, research and development contribution, and technological resources as well as organizational responses of higher education institutions in Northern Samar to policy responses such as administrative measures, financial resources, and support for teaching-learning continuity. The institutional continuity framework for the higher education institutions in Northern Samar will be able to use the information from these findings.

Northern Samar will have ten (10) higher education facilities, both public and private, that have acquired CHED accreditation for the academic year

2020–2021. However, only nine (9) respondents from higher education institutions made up the sample because one (1) higher education institution declined to take part in the study. The study's findings were based on the data that respondents submitted on the survey questionnaire, which was verified by an interview and other documents. The COVID-19 outbreak only started last year, so this study was only meant to serve as a formative evaluation. In the absence of a standardized one, the researcher developed an instrument based on CHED issuances. The health protocol followed during the study's execution is one of the study's shortcomings, to sum up.

METHODOLOGY

The province of Northern Samar is one of the three that make up Samar Island. Its eastern, northern, western, and southern borders are formed by the Samar Sea, the San Bernardino Strait, the provinces of Eastern and Western Samar, and the Pacific Ocean. It is a province of second-class with a total area of 349,800 hectares. It consists of 24 municipalities and 569 barangays. There are substantial amounts of coral, salt, adobe, gravel, dirt, boulders, and cobbles in Northern Samar, as well as high-value minerals including bauxite and chromite. Additionally, there is a plantation with 16.8 million coconut trees. Despite having so many natural resources, Northern Samar is surprisingly one of the poorest regions in the Philippines. With a percentage of 56.17 percent, Northern Samar in the Visayas is third in terms of the prevalence of poverty. 2018 (Fiestada, et al.).

The statistical criteria employed in this study included frequency counts, percentages, weighted averages, and ranks. The researcher performed both descriptive analysis with a 0.05 level of significance and Pearson R coefficient correlation to look at the link between the variables.

The researcher first sought approval to conduct this study from the head of the offices of numerous higher education institutions in Northern Samar. After the request was granted, the researcher started delivering the survey questionnaire to the professors through Facebook Messenger group conversations and direct personal messages. The survey was also physically administered by the researcher, who also gave it out to several Northern Samar higher education institutions.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRATION OF DATA

Calendar Setting

The item regarding the academic calendar postponement by HEI due to the COVID-19 pandemic received the highest weighted mean of 4.24, which was interpreted as "excellent," whereas the item regarding the creation of help desks and virtual windows to address administrative issues, academic calendar changes, academic procedures, and student welfare received the lowest weighted mean of 3.84, which was interpreted as "very good." The institutional reaction was rated as "very good" by the average mean score of 4.0 for calendar setup. Given the rapid impact of the

pandemic on the academic community, it is assumed that certain HEIs in Northern Samar have modified their academic calendars.

But at the height of the pandemic, HEIs haven't set up support desks to answer students' questions about sudden schedule changes that disrupt lessons. The findings of this investigation support the study of Ochavillo. To give everyone involved in maritime education more time to adjust to the paradigm shift to online learning in the midst of the epidemic, he recommended delaying the start of SY 2020–2021 to January 2021 in his study. Every kid had an equitable and inclusive opportunity to receive an education because to this catch-up system. Additionally, it enabled them to complete their education within the time frame set forth by their curriculum year.

Contribution of Research and Development

The highest weighted mean of 3.68, which is interpreted as a "very good" response, was received by the item on providing services and producing research products needed to deal with the effects of the pandemic, while 3.58, which is interpreted as "poor," was received by the items on producing research on the effects of this crisis in areas like environmental sustainability, industry, and the economy, among others, and continuing to support the conduct of ongoing researches to reach the target.

Technological Resources

The highest mean, 3.82, was assigned to the question about maximizing the use of technology to support learning and teaching, while the lowest mean, 2.86, was assigned to the question about the availability of computers with internet connections in all colleges and departments. Both mean values were interpreted as "good" institutional responses. 3.34, or "good," was the average mean score. It is implied that despite the abrupt switch to online learning and the requirement for slow/minimal internet connections during the epidemic, not all colleges and departments at HEIs have them. Institutional response judged to be "very good" based on grand mean of 3.77.

This implied that by following the IATF and LGU protocols, the HEIs in Northern Samar developed and carried out extraordinary responses to the health front. HEIs delayed all academic and co-curricular activities during the pandemic's early stages, including classes, exams, and extracurricular events. The pandemic caused the suspension of classes as well. Technology resources, however, were still few. The findings of this investigation supported those of Salac and Kim. According to the report, switching abruptly to online learning will provide difficulties for both students and the entire educational system in the Philippines. The nation's slow internet speeds are making these problems worse. According to 2015 data, the nation's modest internet speed of 2.8 Mbps put it in 104th rank out of 160 nations.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The HEIs were rated as being "moderately equipped" for administrative support, institutional continuity plans, and emergency management teams in addition to organizational-level strategic preparation.

The results for accreditation level, however, revealed that all private institutions were CHED recognized but lacked any level of accreditation, with the exception of the state university and its three campuses, which are accredited at levels 2 and 3, respectively. The institutional factors revealed that the majority of HEIs had budgets that were moderately adequate.

It also showed that the HEIs were "moderately equipped" for teacher and student preparation in cognitive skills. Organizationally speaking, the HEIs in Northern Samar were "moderately equipped."

Conclusions and Implications

HEIs have a budget that is merely adequate. All six (6) private colleges were also CHED-recognized; however they were not accredited. It implies that there may be several reasons why they cannot submit to accreditation, one of which may be financial. Additionally, it can be deduced that some private institutions' subpar educational offerings are to blame for students' bad performance on the licensing examination.

Additionally, despite having limited technology capabilities, HEIs are clearly responding to the pandemic with quick institutional and legislative responses.

During the epidemic, sluggish internet access was the biggest issue that administrators, staff, and students had to deal with.

The main problem facing administrators, staff, and students during the outbreak was slow internet connectivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Relative to the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed.

1. ICT education and skill development should be provided for administrators and academic members.
2. Higher education institutions should give more scholarships to deserving but underprivileged students. Students should participate in the formulation of policy and decision-making processes at HEIs.
3. A request for the financial support necessary for the timely release of academic continuity plans.
4. To improve the standard of education at their school, private higher education institutions should voluntarily submit themselves for accreditation.
5. A plan for institutional continuity that considers biological hazards should be in place at HEI.
6. HEIs must offer adequate technological resources.
7. The availability of Online Educational Resources (OER) for use as a resource in a variety of flexible learning pedagogies should be made available through HEIS.

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