

University–Community Engagement, Perceived Impact, and Beneficiary Satisfaction: Evidence from a Multidimensional Extension Program in the Philippines

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Abstract

University–community engagement enables higher education institutions (HEIs) to mobilize academic expertise and institutional resources to address community needs. However, limited empirical evidence examines how perceived community impact across multiple program domains relates to beneficiary satisfaction within an integrated university extension program, particularly in the Philippine higher education context. This study examined Project H.E.L.E.N. (Health, Education, Livelihood, Environment, and Nurturance), a multidimensional university extension initiative in the Philippines, by assessing perceived impact across its five domains, beneficiary satisfaction, and the association between these constructs. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed with 282 respondents from three adopted communities. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using weighted means and Pearson's product-moment correlation. The findings showed high overall perceived impact ($M = 3.07$), with Education receiving the highest rating ($M = 3.31$), followed by Livelihood ($M = 3.23$), Environment ($M = 3.16$), Nurturance ($M = 2.85$), and Health ($M = 2.80$). Beneficiaries also reported high satisfaction ($M = 3.09$). Perceived project impact was strongly and positively associated with beneficiary satisfaction ($r = .757$, $p < .001$). The findings indicate that beneficiaries' perceptions of multidimensional community impact are closely linked to their overall evaluation of the extension program. The study contributes empirical evidence that perceived community impact and beneficiary satisfaction, while related, represent complementary dimensions of stakeholder-centered extension evaluation. The findings support the use of both constructs in assessing integrated university extension programs, while the cross-sectional correlational design does not permit causal inference.

Keywords: university–community engagement, perceived community impact, beneficiary satisfaction, higher education institutions, extension programs, Philippines

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly engage communities through extension, outreach, and partnership initiatives that apply academic expertise and institutional resources to local development concerns. A community-based perspective is particularly important because university initiatives may produce effects that extend beyond institutional outputs and involve multiple dimensions of community life (Wanjiru & Liu, 2021).

In the Philippine higher education context, university extension serves as an important mechanism for contributing to community development. Previous studies have documented outcomes associated with personal development, community improvement, collective action, program effectiveness, and sustainability (Adame et al., 2022; Magnaye & Ylagan, 2021; Muya, 2022). Other studies have emphasized the institutional capacity required to sustain community engagement and the importance of stakeholder-oriented approaches to research and extension (Abenir et al., 2020; Bastida et al., 2024). More recent synthesis of Philippine higher education extension research further indicates that community outcomes may include economic empowerment, skills development, social inclusion, sustainability, and leadership (Angco, 2026). Together, these studies suggest that university extension should be examined not only through activities delivered but also through the benefits and experiences perceived by intended beneficiaries.

One important dimension of such evaluation is perceived community impact, which refers to beneficiaries' assessments of the benefits or changes they associate with an intervention. In a multidimensional extension program, perceived impact may vary across areas such as education, health, livelihood, environmental concerns, and social well-being. Assessing these domains separately can identify differences in perceived outcomes that may be obscured by a single overall measure. A complementary dimension is beneficiary satisfaction, which reflects beneficiaries' overall evaluation of a program based on its relevance, responsiveness, quality, and value. Although perceived impact and satisfaction are conceptually related, they are not interchangeable. A program may be perceived as beneficial while receiving less favorable evaluations of particular implementation dimensions, such as communication or community participation. Despite growing scholarship on university–community engagement and extension outcomes, limited empirical evidence directly examines the association between multidimensional perceived community impact and beneficiary satisfaction within a single integrated university extension program, particularly in the Philippine higher education context. Existing Philippine studies have primarily examined extension outcomes, effectiveness, sustainability, and community engagement, while comparatively less attention has been given to how beneficiaries' perceptions of multidimensional program impact relate to their overall satisfaction. Examining these constructs together can provide a more differentiated understanding of how beneficiaries evaluate integrated extension initiatives.

This study contributes to this gap in three ways. First, it examines perceived impact across five program domains, recognizing that integrated extension initiatives may produce varying perceived outcomes across areas of community development. Second, it adopts a beneficiary-centered perspective by examining how intended beneficiaries assess program benefits and overall satisfaction. Third, it empirically examines the association between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction, providing evidence on whether stronger perceived benefits are accompanied by more favorable evaluations of the program.

Specifically, the study aims to (1) determine the perceived impact of Project H.E.L.E.N. across its five program domains; (2) assess beneficiary satisfaction with the program; and (3) determine the relationship between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction. The study is guided by the following hypothesis: H₁: Perceived community impact is significantly and positively associated with beneficiary satisfaction in Project H.E.L.E.N.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which views organizations as operating through relationships with groups that can affect or be affected by organizational activities. Stakeholder Theory provides a useful basis for examining university extension from the perspective of intended

beneficiaries. Rather than treating communities solely as recipients of institutional services, the theory supports recognizing them as stakeholders whose experiences and evaluations are relevant to assessing program value. This perspective is consistent with the growing emphasis on community-centered evaluation, which considers outcomes and experiences alongside institutional implementation.

The present study applies this perspective by examining perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction as related but distinct dimensions of stakeholder evaluation. Perceived impact concerns the benefits beneficiaries associate with the program, whereas satisfaction represents their broader evaluation of program relevance, responsiveness, quality, and value. Examining both constructs allows the study to consider not only what beneficiaries perceive the program to have contributed but also how favorably they evaluate their overall experience. Stakeholder Theory provides the conceptual rationale for considering these perspectives together, but it does not itself establish a causal or statistical relationship between perceived impact and satisfaction. The relationship between the two constructs is therefore examined empirically through the study's descriptive-correlational design.

1.2 University–Community Engagement and Stakeholder-Centered Evaluation

University–community engagement encompasses collaborative relationships through which higher education institutions (HEIs) apply knowledge, expertise, and institutional resources to address community concerns. Contemporary approaches emphasize reciprocity, stakeholder participation, and shared benefits, positioning communities as partners rather than passive recipients of university services. Thus, engagement extends beyond service delivery to include processes through which institutions and communities identify needs, implement responses, and assess outcomes.

This partnership-oriented perspective underscores the importance of systematic monitoring and evaluation of engagement outcomes (Plummer et al., 2022). Wanjiru and Liu (2021) argued that evaluations focused primarily on university perspectives may overlook community-level effects and proposed purpose, process, and community impacts as complementary dimensions of engagement evaluation. Similarly, Nanyanzi et al. (2021) found that stakeholder groups may differ in their perceptions and needs regarding community engagement, highlighting the importance of incorporating beneficiary perspectives. Institutional outputs, such as activities conducted, participants reached, and services delivered, may demonstrate implementation but do not necessarily indicate whether beneficiaries perceive the program as relevant, useful, or beneficial.

Philippine studies further support the importance of institutional capacity, community outcomes, effectiveness, sustainability, and stakeholder participation in university extension (Abenir et al., 2020; Adame et al., 2022; Magnaye & Ylagan, 2021; Muya, 2022; Bastida et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies support a stakeholder-centered approach in which university extension is evaluated not only through activities delivered but also through beneficiaries' perceptions of outcomes and their overall engagement experience. This perspective provides the basis for examining perceived community impact and beneficiary satisfaction as complementary dimensions of Project H.E.L.E.N.'s evaluation.

1.3 Perceived Community Impact and Beneficiary Satisfaction

Perceived community impact refers to beneficiaries' assessments of the benefits, improvements, or changes they associate with an intervention. In university extension, such outcomes may include changes in knowledge, skills, livelihood opportunities, health-related practices, environmental awareness, social relationships, and community capacity. Philippine research indicates that extension initiatives may generate outcomes across multiple areas of community development, with effectiveness, sustainability,

responsiveness, and participation influencing perceived benefits (Adame et al., 2022; Magnaye & Ylagan, 2021; Muya, 2022; Bastida et al., 2024).

For integrated extension programs, assessing impact across distinct domains is particularly relevant because aggregate assessments may conceal differences in perceived benefits across program areas. Accordingly, the present study examines perceived community impact across five domains—Health, Education, Livelihood, Environment, and Nurturance—reflecting the developmental orientation of Project H.E.L.E.N. Perceived impact is interpreted as a stakeholder assessment of benefits or changes associated with the program, rather than as an objective or causal measure of effectiveness.

Beneficiary satisfaction represents a related but distinct dimension of program evaluation. It reflects the extent to which beneficiaries evaluate the program favorably in terms of relevance, quality, responsiveness, usefulness, and overall experience. Ieren et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of participation, consultation, and responsiveness in beneficiaries' evaluations of community-based programs. Perceived impact and satisfaction are therefore conceptually distinct: perceived impact concerns what beneficiaries believe the program has accomplished or contributed, whereas satisfaction concerns how favorably they evaluate their experience with the program. A beneficiary may perceive meaningful benefits while identifying weaknesses in implementation, participation, or communication, just as high satisfaction may coexist with more limited perceived changes in particular outcome areas. Treating the constructs as complementary enables evaluation to capture both perceived program benefits and beneficiaries' broader assessment of the engagement experience.

1.4 Relationship Between Perceived Impact and Beneficiary Satisfaction

Although perceived community impact and beneficiary satisfaction represent distinct constructs, they may be empirically related. Beneficiaries who perceive greater benefits from an intervention may evaluate the program more favorably because it is experienced as relevant, useful, and valuable. Satisfaction, however, may also reflect implementation-related factors such as service quality, communication, responsiveness, participation, and expectations. The relationship between the constructs should therefore be examined empirically rather than assumed.

A stakeholder-centered perspective provides a basis for expecting such an association. When beneficiaries perceive that an engagement initiative has generated meaningful benefits in areas relevant to their needs, these perceived outcomes may contribute to a more favorable overall evaluation of the program. Nevertheless, perceived impact cannot be assumed to fully determine satisfaction because satisfaction encompasses broader experiential considerations.

Although Philippine research has examined university extension in relation to community outcomes, effectiveness, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement (Adame et al., 2022; Magnaye & Ylagan, 2021; Muya, 2022; Bastida et al., 2024), comparatively limited empirical attention has been given to the direct association between multidimensional perceived community impact and overall beneficiary satisfaction within an integrated university extension program. Examining these constructs together can clarify whether beneficiaries who perceive greater program benefits also tend to report more favorable overall evaluations of their engagement experience.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the association between perceived community impact across the five domains of Project H.E.L.E.N.—Health, Education, Livelihood, Environment, and Nurturance—and overall beneficiary satisfaction. Consistent with the study's nonexperimental, correlational design, the study examines statistical association rather than causal influence.

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Perceived community impact is significantly and positively associated with beneficiary satisfaction in Project H.E.L.E.N.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to assess beneficiaries' perceptions of Project H.E.L.E.N.'s impact across five domains—Health, Education, Livelihood, Environment, and Nurturance—and their satisfaction with the program. The descriptive component was used to summarize perceived impact and beneficiary satisfaction, while the correlational component was used to examine the association between the two constructs.

Data were collected cross-sectionally following program implementation. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction. Because the study did not involve experimental manipulation or longitudinal measurement, the findings indicate statistical association rather than causal relationships.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The study involved beneficiaries from three adopted communities of Project H.E.L.E.N.: Camp 7 Elementary School, Baguio City; the Blessed Community of Persons with Disabilities, Inc. (BCPDI), Tuba, Benguet; and the Municipality of Tublay, Benguet. The identified beneficiary population was 2,248. Using Slovin's formula with a 6% margin of error, the minimum required sample was 247. Proportional allocation was used to determine the target number of respondents from each adopted community. The allocated sample consisted of 37 respondents from Camp 7 Elementary School, 27 from BCPDI, and 183 from the Municipality of Tublay, for a total target of 247 respondents. The distribution of the allocated sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Beneficiaries and Allocated Sample

Adopted Community	Beneficiaries	Allocated Sample	Percentage
Camp 7 Elementary School, Baguio City	368	37	15%
BCPDI, Tuba, Benguet	31	27	11%
Municipality of Tublay, Benguet	1,850	183	74%
Total	2,248	247	100%

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a 32-item, researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of 25 items measuring perceived impact across the five program domains and seven items measuring beneficiary satisfaction. Items were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale. Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 3.26–4.00, Very High Impact/Very Satisfied; 2.51–3.25, High Impact/Satisfied; 1.76–2.50, Low Impact/Dissatisfied; and 1.00–1.75, Very Low Impact/Very Dissatisfied.

Content validity was assessed by six qualified reviewers with relevant expertise in community engagement and research. Their recommendations were incorporated before pilot testing. The revised instrument was pilot-tested with 64 respondents from a non-participating community. The 32-item instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .92$, indicating high internal consistency.

2.4 Data Collection

Institutional approval and permission from the participating communities were obtained before data collection. Following informed consent, questionnaires were administered through printed forms and Google Forms. Completed responses were screened for completeness and eligibility. A total of 282 valid responses were retained for analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondent characteristics. Weighted means were computed to assess perceived impact across the five program domains and beneficiary satisfaction across the seven indicators. Composite scores were calculated using the overall mean of the 25 impact items and the seven satisfaction items.

Pearson's product-moment correlation was then applied to the 282 valid responses to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction. Linearity and influential outliers were assessed before analysis, and statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent and were informed of the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality was maintained, and results were reported in aggregate form. Data collection and handling complied with institutional requirements and Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

3. Results

3.1 Respondent Profile

Data collection yielded 282 valid responses. Of these, 208 respondents (73.8%) were from the Municipality of Tublay, 43 (15.2%) were from Camp 7 Elementary School, and 31 (11.0%) were from BCPDI. Female respondents accounted for 162 (57.4%), while 120 (42.6%) were male.

3.2 Perceived Impact of Project H.E.L.E.N.

Table 2 presents the perceived impact of Project H.E.L.E.N. across its five program domains. The overall weighted mean was 3.07, interpreted as High Impact. Education received the highest rating ($M = 3.31$), followed by Livelihood ($M = 3.23$), Environment ($M = 3.16$), Nurturance ($M = 2.85$), and Health ($M = 2.80$). Education was interpreted as Very High Impact, while the remaining domains were interpreted as High Impact.

Table 2: Perceived Impact Across the Program Domains

Domains	M	Interpretation
Education	3.31	Very High Impact
Livelihood	3.23	High Impact
Environment	3.16	High Impact
Nurturance	2.85	High Impact
Health	2.80	High Impact
Overall	3.07	High Impact

3.3. Beneficiary Satisfaction

Table 3 presents the average beneficiary satisfaction ratings across the three adopted communities. The overall satisfaction mean was 3.09, interpreted as Satisfied. Among the seven indicators, the highest

overall rating was for the quality of materials and services ($M = 3.37$), followed by overall satisfaction with implementation ($M = 3.28$). Community involvement in planning received the lowest overall rating ($M = 2.71$). The remaining indicators were rated between 2.93 and 3.24.

Across the three settings, BCPDI recorded the highest average satisfaction ($M = 3.20$), followed by Camp 7 Elementary School ($M = 3.15$) and the Municipality of Tublay ($M = 2.90$). These differences are descriptive, as no inferential comparison among the settings was undertaken.

Table 3: Beneficiary Satisfaction Across Stakeholder Groups

Satisfaction Indicators	LGU (Tublay)	School (Camp 7)	BCPDI	Average	Interpretation
Q1. Timeliness of activities	3.07	2.98	3.15	3.07	Satisfied
Q2. Relevance to community needs	2.95	3.46	3.32	3.24	Satisfied
Q3. Quality of materials and services	2.82	3.45	3.84	3.37	Very Satisfied
Q4. Community involvement in planning	2.62	3.07	2.45	2.71	Satisfied
Q5. Communication with the community	2.90	2.95	2.93	2.93	Satisfied
Q6. Responsiveness to community concerns	2.98	2.90	3.19	3.02	Satisfied
Q7. Overall satisfaction with implementation	2.96	3.35	3.52	3.28	Very Satisfied
Average	2.90	3.15	3.20	3.09	Satisfied

3.4 Relationship Between Perceived Impact and Beneficiary Satisfaction

Pearson's product-moment correlation revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant association between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction, $r = .757$, $p < .001$.

The result indicates that respondents who reported higher perceived project impact also tended to report higher satisfaction with Project H.E.L.E.N. The null hypothesis of no significant association was rejected. The finding does not, however, establish a causal relationship between the two constructs.

4. Discussion

4.1 Perceived Community Impact

The findings indicate that Project H.E.L.E.N. was perceived to generate a high level of impact across its five domains, with Education receiving the highest rating, followed by Livelihood and Environment. This suggests that beneficiaries recognized the program through multiple areas of community development rather than through a single type of service or outcome. The relatively lower ratings for Health and Nurturance indicate that perceived benefits varied across domains, underscoring the value of examining integrated extension programs multidimensionally.

This finding is consistent with Philippine research documenting university extension outcomes across several areas of community development, including personal development, community improvement,

collective action, and sustainability (Adame et al., 2022; Magnaye & Ylagan, 2021; Muya, 2022). It also supports the broader view that community engagement should be evaluated through outcomes perceived by intended beneficiaries rather than solely through institutional outputs.

The contribution of the present study, however, lies in demonstrating how this multidimensional perspective can be applied within a single integrated extension initiative. By examining Health, Education, Livelihood, Environment, and Nurturance separately, the study provides a more differentiated account of perceived program impact than would be possible through a single overall measure. The findings therefore support domain-specific assessment as a useful approach for identifying areas of stronger and weaker perceived benefit. The results should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. Perceived impact reflects beneficiaries' assessments of the benefits or changes they associate with the program and does not constitute an objective or causal measure of effectiveness. The study therefore provides evidence of perceived community value rather than definitive evidence of the program's independent effects.

4.2 Beneficiary Satisfaction and the Participation Gap

Beneficiaries reported a generally satisfactory experience with Project H.E.L.E.N., particularly in relation to the quality of materials and services and the overall implementation of the program. However, community involvement in planning received the lowest satisfaction rating. This pattern suggests that favorable evaluations of program delivery do not necessarily indicate equally strong participation in program decision-making.

The finding is important because university–community engagement is increasingly understood as a partnership process rather than a one-directional delivery of services. While effective implementation may generate perceived value, meaningful partnership also requires opportunities for community stakeholders to contribute to needs identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The comparatively lower rating for planning involvement therefore identifies an area in which the engagement process may be strengthened.

This interpretation is consistent with stakeholder-centered approaches that emphasize the importance of community perspectives in evaluating engagement initiatives (Wanjiru & Liu, 2021; Nanyanzi et al., 2021). It also reinforces the relevance of participation, consultation, and responsiveness in shaping beneficiaries' evaluations of community-based programs (Ieren et al., 2021).

The findings do not establish why planning involvement received a lower rating, and the study did not examine the specific mechanisms through which beneficiaries participated. Nevertheless, the result suggests that future implementation should place greater emphasis on structured opportunities for community voice and shared decision-making. In this sense, satisfaction with service delivery and participation in program governance should be treated as related but distinct aspects of university–community engagement.

4.3 Integrating Impact, Satisfaction, and Engagement Quality

The principal finding of the study is the strong, positive, and statistically significant association between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction ($r = .757$, $p < .001$). Beneficiaries who perceived greater project impact also tended to report higher satisfaction with Project H.E.L.E.N. This finding provides empirical evidence that beneficiaries' perceptions of multidimensional community impact are closely linked to their overall evaluation of an integrated university extension program.

The finding is consistent with the expectation that beneficiaries who perceive meaningful benefits may evaluate an intervention more favorably because it is experienced as relevant, useful, and valuable. However, the association should not be interpreted as evidence that perceived impact causes satisfaction.

Satisfaction may also reflect implementation-related factors, including service quality, communication, responsiveness, participation, and expectations. The study therefore establishes an empirical connection between the two constructs without determining the direction or mechanisms of that relationship.

The contribution of the study extends beyond identifying a strong correlation. When considered alongside the findings on participation, the results suggest that perceived impact, satisfaction, and participation represent related but distinct dimensions of university–community engagement. Project H.E.L.E.N. was perceived as impactful and satisfactory, yet community involvement in planning received a comparatively lower rating. Thus, positive perceived outcomes and favorable beneficiary experiences do not, by themselves, demonstrate the presence of fully reciprocal or participatory engagement.

This provides a more nuanced understanding of university–community engagement in which effective service delivery can generate perceived value and satisfaction, while deeper partnership requires opportunities for beneficiaries to participate in shaping the interventions themselves. From a stakeholder perspective, this reinforces the importance of treating beneficiaries not only as recipients of university initiatives but also as stakeholders whose knowledge, preferences, and participation can inform program design.

For HEIs, the findings suggest that extension evaluation should combine domain-specific measures of perceived impact with measures of beneficiary satisfaction and participation. Such an approach can help institutions identify both areas of perceived benefit and aspects of the engagement experience that require improvement. The study therefore supports the use of perceived impact and satisfaction as complementary, rather than interchangeable, dimensions of stakeholder-centered extension evaluation.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study examined perceived community impact, beneficiary satisfaction, and their association within Project H.E.L.E.N., a multidimensional university–community extension program in the Philippines. Beneficiaries reported high perceived impact overall ($M = 3.07$), with Education receiving the highest rating among the five program domains. Overall beneficiary satisfaction was also positive ($M = 3.09$), although community involvement in program planning received comparatively lower ratings.

The principal finding was a strong, positive, and statistically significant association between perceived project impact and beneficiary satisfaction ($r = .757$, $p < .001$). This finding provides empirical evidence that beneficiaries' perceptions of multidimensional community impact are closely linked to their overall evaluation of an integrated university extension program. The result supports the value of assessing impact and satisfaction as complementary, rather than interchangeable, dimensions of stakeholder-centered extension evaluation. The observed association should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of a causal effect.

Three practical implications follow. First, HEIs can use domain-specific impact assessment to identify areas of stronger and weaker perceived benefit and inform program refinement. Second, beneficiary satisfaction should be assessed alongside perceived impact because favorable program evaluations may provide information about implementation experiences that impact measures alone do not capture. Third, the comparatively lower rating for community involvement in planning suggests the need to strengthen mechanisms for beneficiary voice and participation, even when program delivery is generally well received.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional and correlational design limits causal interpretation of the relationship between perceived impact and beneficiary satisfaction. The findings indicate association but do not establish whether perceived impact influences satisfaction or whether other factors contribute to both constructs.

Second, the study relied on beneficiaries' self-reported perceptions. Although these perceptions are important for stakeholder-centered evaluation, they do not constitute objective measures of program effectiveness. Future research could therefore combine beneficiary assessments with objective outcome indicators and other sources of evidence.

Third, the study was conducted within selected Project H.E.L.E.N. settings, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other university extension contexts. Differences in community characteristics, program implementation, and institutional arrangements may influence perceived impact and satisfaction.

Finally, the study did not examine the factors that may explain variation in perceived impact, satisfaction, or community participation. Future research could address these limitations through longitudinal and comparative designs, larger and more diverse samples, and the inclusion of additional explanatory variables and objective outcome measures.

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