

The Role of Faith-Based Higher Education in Social Work: A Case Study of Philippine Christian University's Community Engagement Programs

Ma. Julie S. Bajelot, RSW, Ph.D

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5315-1204>

julie.bajelot@pcu.edu.ph

Philippine Christian University

Taft Avenue, Manila, Philippines

Abstract

This dissertation investigated the multifaceted role of faith-based higher education institutions (FBHEIs) in social work, specifically through an in-depth qualitative case study of Philippine Christian University's (PCU) community engagement programs. The study addressed the need to understand how FBHEIs operationalize their faith-based values within social work-oriented community engagement, particularly within the socio-religious context of the Philippines. The primary objective was to explore the conceptualization, implementation, perceived impacts, and challenges of PCU's community engagement initiatives as they related to social work principles and the institution's religious identity. A qualitative case study methodology was employed, drawing on semi-structured interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and community partners, complemented by document analysis of institutional reports and program materials, as well as participant observation of engagement activities. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns and meanings. Findings revealed that PCU's faith-based identity significantly shaped the ethos, design, and goals of its programs, fostering a strong sense of service and compassion among participants. Students reported personal and spiritual growth alongside skill development, while community partners recognized tangible benefits, though challenges in resource sustainability and alignment of expectations remained. The integration of social work principles with faith-based motivations presented both synergies and complexities. The study concluded that PCU's community engagement initiatives serve as a vital nexus for enacting its faith mission while advancing social work objectives but require continuous reflection to navigate inherent tensions.

Keywords: Social Work, Faith-Based Higher Education and Community Engagement, Qualitative Case Study and Thematic Analysis, Philippines