EPRA International Journal of Socio-Economic and Environmental Outlook (SEEO) ISSN: 2348-4101
Volume: 12 | Issue:10 |October 2025 | SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.645 | Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0314 |Peer-Reviewed Journal

HELPING AND LEADING OTHERS (HALO) AN EXTENSION PROJECT: EXPLORATION OF SATISFACTION AND EXPERIENCES OF PARTNER COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

Angelyn B. Saraña, Aldrian A. Ledesma, Regine I. Hermogenes, Andrey J. Nicavera, Genevi F. Geroche

West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus, Brgy. Caradio-an, Himamaylan City, 6108, Philippines

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra24498
DOI No: 10.36713/epra24498

ABSTRACT

This study explored the level of satisfaction and experiences of partner community participants involved in the Helping and Leading Others (HALO) Extension Project implemented by West Visayas State University – Himamaylan City Campus. The research employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to community members from Sitio Malusay, Brgy. Caradio-an, Himamaylan City, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Results revealed a very high level of satisfaction across all components of the HALO Project, particularly in livelihood seminars, food processing trainings, and the provision of practical knowledge and staff support. The qualitative phase, conducted through semi-structured interviews, provided rich insights into the participants' experiences. Thematic analysis revealed that the HALO Project enhanced the participants' livelihood skills, increased their confidence, strengthened community bonds, and fostered a sense of empowerment. Despite minor challenges such as time constraints and childcare responsibilities, participants expressed a strong willingness to join future extension initiatives and recommended further expansion of the project. Overall, the study concluded that the HALO Extension Project significantly contributed to the socio-economic development and personal growth of its beneficiaries. It highlights the value of community-based, participatory, and skill-driven university extension services in promoting sustainable community transformation.

KEYWORDS: *Community Extension, Participant Satisfaction, Lived Experiences, Mixed-Methods, Sustainable Development, Empowerment*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Community service refers to institutional efforts aimed at supporting and uplifting specific sectors of society, enhancing the overall comfort and well-being of community members. These services often take the form of livelihood projects and interactive programs that foster strong relationships among partner communities, faculty, and students contributing to a positive, collective impact (Borbon & Ylagan, 2021).

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to perform three core functions: instruction, research, and community extension or service. Through these tri-fold responsibilities, faculty members play a critical role in shaping professional, service-oriented, and principled citizens. The goal is to develop competent graduates who are productive and nationalistic, while also ensuring access to quality education as a means to support the nation's sustainable development goals (Peñaredondo-Untong, 2020).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), especially State Universities and Colleges, are increasingly expanding this mandate to include a fourfold function: instruction, research, production, and extension. Instruction focuses on knowledge and skills acquisition, research advances societal and institutional development, and production emphasizes practical innovation. Meanwhile, extension functions represent the institution's direct service to

partner communities. This role is essential, particularly for providing educational and livelihood opportunities to underserved populations (Dinglasan, Macalipay, Clavio, Roxas, Balbis, Gabarda, & Fuertes., 2024).

Anchored in this institutional philosophy is the Helping and Leading Others (HALO) Extension Project, one of WVSU's flagship initiatives in Himamaylan City Campus. HALO bridges academic knowledge with practical service through community-based training programs focused on food processing, livelihood enhancement, and personal development. It facilitates meaningful engagement between the university and partner communities, promoting not only skill development but also social responsibility, empowerment, and collaboration. In view of these objectives, the present study was undertaken to assess the level of satisfaction and the lived experiences of HALO's community participants. Specifically, the researchers sought to understand how the HALO project influenced participants' personal growth, livelihood capacity, and overall well-being.

Thus, The researchers were driven to conduct a study which aimed to explore the level of satisfaction and experiences of the community members who have engaged with the HALO extension project, seeking to understand how the project has impacted their lives and their sense of well-being.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the satisfaction and experiences of partner community participants in the Helping and Leading Others (HALO) Extension Project conducted by West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus. Specifically, the study sought to understand the participants' perspectives, challenges, and the impact of the project on their personal lives and community.

By investigating these key aspects satisfaction and experiences—the study seeks to provide a comprehensive and data-driven understanding of how the HALO extension project influences its beneficiaries and contributes to the university's community service objectives.

1. What is the level of satisfaction of the HALO extension project participants?
2. What are the experiences of the participants during the implementation of the HALO extension project?

By addressing these questions, this study will not only contribute to the understanding of community extension programs but also provide valuable feedback for the university. The findings will be instrumental in improving future initiatives, ensuring that they are more responsive to community needs and effective in fostering sustainable development and social change.

2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in two key theories, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Community Empowerment Theory. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a theoretical framework that examines the outcomes of interactions or relationships between two or more individuals. It focuses on the assessment of the costs and benefits that every individual obtains from the interaction. This theory is a theoretical framework that originated from with an emphasis on the rationalization of evaluating costs and rewards in social relationships. The SET is a prominent framework used to analyze social interaction and social structure. It focuses on the evaluation of key cost and benefit exchanges that occur during interactions (Albert, Rashid, & Mojiol, 2024). In HALO, SET helps us explore why partner community members stay engaged and recommend the program, based on the value they perceive from different HALO activities and overall aspects of the project.

Community Empowerment Theory, community empowerment refers to processes that enable communities of interest or place to develop the capabilities they need to exert greater collective control over decisions and actions affecting their lives and health (Townsend, Abraham, Barnes, Collins, Halliday, Lewis, & Popay, 2020). Wijaya, Nuraini, Sulaiman, & Ahmad10, (2024), emphasized that community empowerment is an effort to develop self-reliance and community welfare through rural development programs oriented to improving rural people's capacity and utilizing local resources. The process of empowering individuals and groups within a community to take charge of their development and become active agents of change is referred to as community empowerment. This can be accomplished through a variety of approaches, including expanding access to resources, encouraging participation in decision-making, and developing self-governance capacity. For HALO, this theory frames how the program aims to foster confidence, autonomy, and leadership within Sitio Malusay community.

By integrating these theories, the study explores two central dimensions of the HALO Extension Project: SET helps us understand participant motivation, continued engagement, and satisfaction, based on perceived returns such as skills and community support. While Empowerment Theory provides the framework to assess how HALO enables self-organizing capabilities, strengthens community agency, and contributes to sustainable transformation.

Furthermore, these frameworks allow a robust examination of how social relationships, community processes, and participatory dynamics interact ultimately shaping the experiences and outcomes of HALO extension project in partner community.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a mixed-method design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches through a convergent parallel method. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) to determine participants' satisfaction levels, while qualitative data were examined through narrative analysis to explore experiences and insights. Both sets of data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and merged to provide a comprehensive understanding of the HALO Extension Project.

3.2 Research Method

The quantitative method utilized a descriptive design to determine participants' satisfaction with the HALO Extension Project according to demographic factors such as age, sex, income, civil status, and family size. A researcher-made questionnaire was used for data collection. The qualitative method employed narrative analysis through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their stories and reflections about the project's impact on their personal and livelihood development.

3.3 Respondents of the Study

The quantitative phase involved all community members who participated in the HALO Extension Project in Sitio Malusay, Barangay Caradio-an, Himamaylan City. Only active and consenting participants were included. The qualitative phase involved five purposively selected participants who consistently joined HALO activities and could provide detailed insights. Their narratives helped explain and support the quantitative findings.

3.4 Instrument of the Study

The quantitative instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into:
Part I: Socio-demographic profile (age, sex, income, civil status, family size).
Part II: Satisfaction ratings using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied.
For the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was used to gather in-depth experiences. Both instruments underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity and reliability.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was reviewed by three experts for face and content validity and pilot-tested to determine reliability. Using Cronbach's Alpha, the instrument achieved a coefficient of 0.971, rated as Excellent. For the qualitative phase, trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and reflexivity, ensuring credibility, dependability, and authenticity of findings.

3.6 Data Gathering Procedure

A formal request was sent to the Barangay Captain for approval. After obtaining consent, the researchers distributed questionnaires personally to participants and explained the process. For the qualitative phase, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with selected participants. Data were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and validated by participants through member checking.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage). Qualitative data were analyzed through five steps: transcription, organization, coding, categorization, and theme identification. Both datasets were then merged to compare and interpret findings comprehensively.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent, were assured of voluntary participation, and their information was kept confidential. The researchers ensured honesty, cultural sensitivity, and integrity throughout the study, protecting participants' rights and well-being at all times.

EPRA International Journal of Socio-Economic and Environmental Outlook (SEEO) ISSN: 2348-4101
Volume: 12 | Issue:10 |October 2025 | SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.645 | Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0314 |Peer-Reviewed Journal

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Data Analysis

Table 1

Level of Satisfaction of the Participants towards HALO Extension Project in Terms of the Project Activities and The Aspects of the Project

	N	Mean	*SD*	*Descriptive Interpretation*
Project Activity				
1. Seminar on livelihood opportunities and financial management	40	4.88	.33	Very Satisfied
2. Cooking Skills Presentation	40	4.90	.38	Very Satisfied
3. Fish Presentation and Demonstration	40	4.90	.38	Very Satisfied
4. Fish Preservation Hands- on Training	40	4.90	.379	Very Satisfied
Aspects of HALO Extension Project				
1. Accessibility of the project	40	4.88	.40	Very Satisfied
2. Knowledge value of the activity	40	4.93	.27	Very Satisfied
3. Quality of services provided	40	4.93	.35	Very Satisfied
4. Effectiveness of the project	40	4.85	.48	Very Satisfied
5. Efficiency and maximization of use of participant's time	40	4.95	.22	Very Satisfied
6. Maintenance of order and discipline during the activity	40	5.00	.00	Very Satisfied
7. Staff support and assistance	40	4.95	.32	Very Satisfied
8. Provision of valuable skills and knowledge	40	4.98	.16	Very Satisfied

Note: 4.51-5.00 Very Satisfied; 3.51-4.50 Satisfied; 2.51-3.50 Neutral; 1.51-2.50 Dissatisfied; 1.00-1.50 Very Dissatisfied

In terms of the HALO Extension Project Activities, the study reveal that participants were very satisfied with the activities conducted under the HALO Extension Project.The Cooking Skills Presentation, Fish Presentation and Demonstration, and Fish Preservation Hands-on Training each received a high mean rating of 4.90, indicating a high level of satisfaction with consistent responses among participants. The Seminar on Livelihood Opportunities and Financial Management was also rated very positively, with a mean of 4.88 and a standard deviation of 0.33, showing minimal variation in participant feedback. These results reflect the value of hands-on, localized training emphasized in community extension literature. Esteban (2025) found that when state universities in the Philippines conduct extension programs aligned with the daily economic and social realities of beneficiaries, such efforts significantly improve community engagement and satisfaction. His study highlights the importance of aligning project activities with actual community needs an approach clearly reflected in the HALO initiative.

In terms of the project's overall aspects, all categories received ratings within the "very satisfied" range (4.51–5.00). Notably, the Maintenance of Order and Discipline during activities achieved a perfect score of 5.00, with zero standard deviation, reflecting unanimous satisfaction. The Provision of Valuable Skills and Knowledge followed closely with a mean of 4.98, and very little variation in responses. Other aspects such as Staff Support and Assistance, Efficiency in the Use of Participants' Time, and Quality of Services Provided also scored above 4.90, reinforcing the strong positive perception of the project. The aspect with the lowest yet still very high rating was the Effectiveness of the Project, which garnered a mean of 4.85 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.48, suggesting a bit more variability in participant responses. This echoes the findings of Ituriaga, Mariñas, and Saflor (2024), who emphasized that successful community extension initiatives especially in rural agricultural contexts depend on service quality dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, and staff competence. Their study concluded that these factors not only enhance satisfaction but also contribute to long-term resilience and community empowerment. Thus, the HALO Project's high ratings across these aspects affirm its alignment with best practices in extension services.

Overall, the data indicates that the HALO Extension Project was well-received by the community participants. The high satisfaction ratings across various activities and implementation aspects reflect that the project was relevant, effectively managed, and successful in providing meaningful learning and engagement experiences. The consistency in responses also suggests that the program was uniformly impactful among the respondents.

Narrative Analysis

This qualitative phase of the study presents a narrative analysis of the lived experiences of community participants who engaged in the HALO (Helping and Leading Others) Extension Project. The responses from the participants

provide rich qualitative insight into the project's effectiveness, relevance, and impact. The data were thematically analyzed based on common narratives, highlighting key themes that emerged from their testimonies. Hence, the qualitative data that were gathered and analyzed were used as another support to quantitative interpretation for achieving reliable claims.

Participants Experiences During the HALO Extension Project

Community extension programs are integral components of higher education institutions' mandates to serve society beyond the classroom. These programs aim to bridge academic knowledge with real-world community needs, empowering individuals through skills training, livelihood development, education, and health initiatives. Rooted in participatory and collaborative approaches, community extension initiatives respond to local challenges by offering sustainable and relevant interventions designed to improve quality of life.

In the Philippine context, such programs are especially vital in marginalized and rural areas, where access to opportunities and resources may be limited. As highlighted by Esteban (2025), extension efforts that are skill-driven, inclusive, and responsive to community needs have the greatest potential to uplift lives and strengthen community engagement. The HALO Extension Project is one such initiative, designed to support and capacitate partner communities through practical activities and structured support systems. The following section discusses the satisfaction and experiences of participants in relation to the activities and implementation aspects of the project, framed within the broader goals of community extension work.

With this instance, from the conducted interview with this study's desired participants, the researchers have identified themes from the repeatedly emerging concepts and ideas that comprise the experiences and impact of the HALO Extension Project. With that, below are the themes that emerged from the experiences of participants. As the researchers gathered remarkable experiences of the participants, the result of the experiences basically begins with this theme as it appeared most often among the succeeding themes.

Skills Acquisition and Confidence

One of the significant contributions of the HALO Extension Project is its ability to equip participants with practical skills while at the same time strengthening their confidence in applying them. The project went beyond providing technical training and it also fostered a sense of self-assurance among participants that they could use their newly acquired abilities in daily life and possible livelihood opportunities. Reach one of the participant of HALO initiatives claimed that,

> *"Gintudluan nila kami kon paano magluto sang fish tocino kag maghimo sang boneless bangus. Tungod sini nga proyekto, daku gid ang nabulig sini para mas madugangan pa ang pagsalig namon sa amon kaugalingon." (They taught us how to cook fish tocino and make boneless bangus. Because of this project, it really helped a lot to further enhance our self-confidence.)*

Her reflection clearly demonstrates that the HALO project served not only as a source of technical knowledge but also as a meaningful avenue for empowerment, equipping participants with the confidence to explore and sustain livelihood opportunities. The skills they gained such as preparing fish tocino and making boneless bangus are practical and marketable, which can translate into potential income-generating activities for their families. This insight reinforces the results of the descriptive analysis, which revealed that most respondents rated themselves as "very satisfied" in acquiring new skills, indicating that the training effectively met its objectives. Furthermore, the outcome aligns with the observations of Asio, Sardina, and Olaguir (2023), who emphasized that community extension activities are not limited to the transfer of technical competence but also foster participants' self-efficacy through hands-on, experiential learning. Such projects create a supportive environment where participants can practice and apply their new knowledge, allowing them to recognize their own capabilities. This dual benefit of skill-building and confidence enhancement strengthens the potential for long-term livelihood success. .Likewise, Genalyn shared that,

> *"Ang boneless bangus isa ka dugang nga abilidad nga mahimo pa namon mapangitaan sang pangabuhi." (Boneless bangus is an additional skill that could even help us earn income.)*

Her statement reflects the practical and economic benefits of the training, showing that the skills learned were useful not only for household needs but also as a source of livelihood. This supports the descriptive results, where participants reported strong satisfaction with the project's relevance to improving daily living and income potential. Dinglasan et al. (2024) emphasized that extension programs offering marketable skills help families and communities become more sustainable by converting practical knowledge into income opportunities.

This theme aligns with the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Community Empowerment Theory (CET), which grounded this study. According to SET, individuals engage and remain involved in activities when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs (Blau, 2023). Participants' acquisition of new skills and enhanced confidence represent positive rewards that strengthen their satisfaction and reinforce trust in the program. At the same time, CET emphasizes the process of gaining control, competence, and self-efficacy as key aspects of empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 2024). Through hands-on training and experiential learning, participants not only developed technical abilities but also achieved personal empowerment demonstrating the project's alignment with both theories that promote mutual benefit and sustainable self-reliance.

Entrepreneurial Outlook and Livelihood Potential

Another important outcome of the HALO Extension Project is its role in inspiring participants to pursue entrepreneurship. The livelihood training did not only provide knowledge in food processing but also encouraged participants to think of ways to use their skills for business opportunities, particularly home-based ventures that could support family income. Arlen expressed,

> *"Natun-an ko kon paano maghimo sang Spanish sardines kag iban pa nga produkto halin sa mga na-ambitan namon sa kada aktibidad sang HALO Project. Tungod sini nga programa, nakakuha kami sang ideya kon paano makasugod sang gamay nga negosyo halin sa balay." (I learned how to make Spanish sardines and other products from the skills we gained in every activity of the HALO Project. Because of this program, we were able to get ideas on how to start a small business from home.)*

Her statement shows how the training encouraged participants to use their newly learned skills for entrepreneurial activities, such as starting a small home-based business. This reflects the program's goal of not only teaching practical food processing skills but also nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset among beneficiaries. It supports the descriptive results, where many respondents expressed high satisfaction with the project's relevance to livelihood and income generation. Likewise, Binayao, Sayson, and Dulay (2021) noted that community livelihood programs often strengthen entrepreneurial confidence and open opportunities for financial growth. In addition, Miguela reflected that,

> *"Dako gid nga bulig ini sa amon kay indi na kami kinahanglan magbakal, kag pwede pa gani nga himuon nga pangabuhi." (This is a big help to us because we no longer need to buy, and it could even become a source of livelihood.)*

Her testimony highlights not only the household benefits of the training but also its potential as a small business opportunity, allowing participants to save on household expenses while creating an additional source of income. The descriptive analysis supports this observation, showing that participants expressed strong satisfaction with the project's economic relevance. Consistent with these results, Dinglasan et al. (2024) emphasized that extension projects become more impactful and sustainable when they simultaneously improve domestic practices and provide opportunities for income generation, ensuring long-term community benefit.

This theme reflects the essence of Community Empowerment Theory, which highlights how individuals and groups build their capacity to improve their socioeconomic conditions through self-directed action (Laverack, 2023). By encouraging entrepreneurship and self-reliant income generation, the HALO project empowered participants to take control of their livelihood and decision-making. Simultaneously, Social Exchange Theory helps explain participants' motivation to continue applying their skills, as the project created a sense of reciprocal benefit between the community and the institution participants gained income opportunities while strengthening their trust in the university's initiatives (Emerson, 2024). The integration of empowerment and exchange principles illustrates how sustainable livelihood development can arise from mutual collaboration and perceived rewards.

Challenges and Sustainability

While the HALO project provided many benefits, participants also encountered challenges that revealed the importance of sustainability and community support. These struggles did not hinder their participation but instead highlighted their determination and the collective strategies they used to continue learning. *Reah explained,*

> *"May ara man gid ya kabudlayan, labi na kung may mga kabataan, pero nagbuligay gid kami nga mga iloy para makapadayon lang." (There were really some difficulties, especially when you have kids, but we mothers helped each other so we could keep going.)*

Her statement reveals how cooperation became a natural way to overcome difficulties, underscoring the importance of teamwork in sustaining participation. Instead of letting personal challenges discourage them, the mothers relied on each other for support sharing time, effort, and encouragement so no one would be left behind.

This observation complements the descriptive findings where respondents rated community involvement highly, showing that collaboration was not just a strategy but a key factor in keeping the project active and meaningful. Townsend et al. (2020) likewise emphasized that community empowerment thrives when people work together to address shared challenges and build solutions collectively. Building on this idea of persistence, Arlen also shared her own practical concern, pointing out that while the training was valuable, long-term success requires more than a single session:

> *"Kinahanglan gid kapital; indi lang dapat isa ka training, dapat padayon ang negosyo." (Capital is really needed; it shouldn't stop with just one training the business must continue.)*

Arlen's insight highlights the reality that knowledge alone is not enough. For many participants, access to financial resources and ongoing opportunities is necessary to transform training into a steady source of livelihood. This concern mirrors the descriptive results, where some respondents expressed only moderate satisfaction with project continuity, signaling the need for sustained support and resources to ensure that the benefits of the program can grow over time.

This highlights a key limitation identified by several participants the need for both continuity and adequate resources to sustain their livelihood efforts. While the training provided valuable knowledge and initial motivation, many recognized that learning alone cannot guarantee lasting success without follow-up support and access to financial capital. The descriptive results reflected this concern, as some respondents rated themselves only "satisfied" when it came to project continuity, indicating that the absence of ongoing assistance could hinder the long-term viability of their ventures. Arlen's statement about the importance of capital and sustained business activity captures this sentiment, illustrating how participants view the training as just the starting point of a bigger journey toward economic stability. Albert, Rashid, and Mojiol (2024) affirm this perspective, emphasizing that the long-term success of livelihood initiatives relies heavily on consistent program support, resource availability, and opportunities for participants to expand or maintain their enterprises beyond the initial intervention.

The theme of challenges and sustainability connects strongly with the Community Empowerment Theory, which recognizes that empowerment is a continuous process sustained by collective participation and problem-solving (Wallerstein, Oetzel, & Duran., 2023). Participants' determination to overcome financial and logistical constraints reflects the empowerment process, where communities strengthen resilience through shared support and cooperation. Meanwhile, Social Exchange Theory offers insight into why participants persisted despite challenges: the social and emotional rewards of solidarity, learning, and mutual aid outweighed the barriers faced (Homans, 2024). Together, these frameworks illustrate how empowerment and reciprocity contribute to sustaining participation and program longevity.

Community Collaboration and Participation

The HALO project also promoted collaboration and unity among participants, reinforcing the importance of collective action in achieving community goals. This theme reflects how the project not only provided individual benefits but also strengthened relationships and solidarity among community members. Genalyn expressed,

> *"Nalipay gid ko kay nagbinuligay kami diri sa amon komunidad kag daw nadugangan pa gid ang amon nahibaluan". (I was really happy because we worked together here in our community and we learned even more.)*

Her testimony reflects how cooperation and shared learning nurtured a positive community spirit, where participants not only gained new skills but also strengthened their bonds with one another. This sense of togetherness supports the descriptive results, which showed that participants were very satisfied with the level of community participation, recognizing it as a key ingredient in the project's success. Such outcomes are consistent with the findings of Mores, Lee, and Bae (2019), who emphasized that participatory approaches foster social cohesion and pave the way for sustainable development within local communities. Building on this idea of collective growth, Reah also shared her own experience of how the project brought people together and inspired improvements beyond individual households, stating,

> *"Daku guid ang nahimo sini sa amon komunidad, bangud naghatag ini sang pag-uswag kag nakatambong sa paghimo sang mas matinlo nga palibot." (This initiative greatly benefited our community, as it contributed to progress and fostered a cleaner environment.)*

Her observation demonstrates that the project's benefits reached far beyond individual households, contributing not only to personal growth but also to wider community development. The improvements in cleanliness and collective progress she described mirror the descriptive analysis, where respondents expressed strong satisfaction with the program's broader community impact. This reinforces the idea that the HALO project functioned not just as a livelihood initiative but also as a catalyst for social and environmental change. Dinglasan et al. (2024) likewise

affirmed that community-based projects integrating skills training with environmental and social values create lasting improvements in local well-being, fostering a cycle of shared responsibility and sustainable development.

This theme directly demonstrates Community Empowerment Theory in action, emphasizing that genuine empowerment flourishes when communities engage collaboratively and take shared responsibility for their development (Perkins & Zimmerman, 2024). The unity and cooperation among participants signify the growth of collective agency a hallmark of empowered communities. In line with Social Exchange Theory, participants' willingness to collaborate can also be seen as a reciprocal exchange of trust, support, and mutual respect (Cropanzano, Anthony,& Mitchell., 2024). The HALO project thus strengthened social bonds and fostered mutual commitment, reflecting both the empowerment process and the social exchange dynamics essential to sustainable community growth.

Program Inclusivity and Youth Involvement

An additional concern raised by participants was the need for inclusivity, especially involving the youth in extension activities. While mothers and adults benefited from the project, some participants recognized that broader participation could strengthen community outcomes in the long term. Julie Ann emphasized,

> *"Importante nga indi lang mga iloy ang matudloan kundi ang kabataan man, kay sila ang paglaum sang pungsod." (It is important not only to teach mothers but also the youth, since they are the hope of the nation.)*

Her statement highlights the need to extend the program's reach beyond a single target group, recognizing that the next generation plays a vital role in sustaining what the project has started. This insight connects closely with the descriptive findings, where inclusivity was rated only moderate, signaling room for improvement in engaging different sectors of the community. Esteban (2025) supports this perspective, emphasizing that involving the youth ensures continuity and strengthens the long-term sustainability of community transformation efforts. Building on this idea, she further suggested,

> *"Kon may padayon nga programa para sa kabataan kag sa komunidad, mas maayos ang disiplina kag kabuhi." (If there are continuing programs for the youth and the community, discipline and livelihood will improve.)*

This reflection shows how inclusivity and program continuity work together to create positive, long-lasting outcomes. By calling for sustained activities that involve both young people and adults, her statement reinforces the idea that long term development requires active engagement across generations. This perspective validates the descriptive results, where respondents highlighted the importance of expanding the project to reach more community members. Consistent with this view, the Community Empowerment Theory stresses that when all sectors including the youth are involved in community initiatives, collective resilience strengthens and the potential for continuous growth becomes greater.

The emphasis on Inclusivity and youth involvement aligns with the principles of Community Empowerment Theory, which values participatory equality and intergenerational collaboration as foundations for sustainable community development (Zimmerman, 2023). Involving younger members ensures continuity of empowerment efforts and cultivates leadership for future community transformation. From the lens of Social Exchange Theory, inclusivity strengthens perceptions of fairness and shared benefit, increasing collective motivation to engage in extension activities (Molm & Takahashi, 2024). Therefore, this theme underscores that sustainable empowerment depends on equitable participation and reciprocal contribution across all community sectors.

Integration of Livelihood and Environmental Values

Finally, the HALO project showed its strength in integrating livelihood skills with environmental awareness, creating a holistic approach to community development. This integration provided participants with opportunities to improve their economic situation while also learning to value environmental discipline. Julie Ann shared,

> *"Madamo guid kami natun-an sa mga aktibidad kag seminar, labi na sa bahin sang pangabuhi kag sa husto nga pagdumala sang basura." (We gained substantial learning from the project's activities and seminars, particularly in the areas of livelihood and proper waste management.)*

Julie Ann emphasized that through the seminars, they gained not only practical livelihood skills but also valuable lessons on proper waste management and environmental care. Her reflection highlights how the project successfully combined economic training with environmental education, allowing participants to improve their income opportunities while also promoting a cleaner and more sustainable community. This observation aligns with the descriptive results, where participants expressed very high satisfaction with the integration of these two

components. Consistent with these findings, Dinglasan et al. (2024) pointed out that projects addressing both livelihood and environmental needs create more sustainable and long-lasting outcomes for communities. Further illustrating the program's commitment and reliability, she also observed,

> *"Bisan indi maayo ang panahon, nagapadayon sila sang programa." (Even during bad weather, they continued the program.)*

Her comment underscores the consistency of the HALO project in delivering activities despite external challenges, demonstrating a level of reliability that built trust and confidence among participants. This steadfast commitment reflects a key factor identified in the descriptive results, where satisfaction with program continuity was rated very highly, showing that participants valued not only the content of the training but also the assurance that it would continue regardless of difficulties. Such persistence strengthens community engagement and motivates participants to stay involved over time. Albert, Rashid, and Mojiol (2024) likewise emphasized that the credibility and long-term success of livelihood programs depend heavily on their ability to remain dependable and resilient, especially when faced with unpredictable circumstances.

This theme reflects a combined application of Community Empowerment Theory and Social Exchange Theory. CET highlights that empowerment involves holistic well-being, including environmental responsibility alongside economic advancement (Perkins & Zimmerman, 2024). The HALO project's integration of livelihood and ecological awareness empowered participants to take collective action for sustainable living. Correspondingly, SET explains how this dynamic builds reciprocal benefit: participants gained livelihood and environmental knowledge while the community enjoyed improved environmental conditions and stronger cooperation (Blau, 2023; Emerson, 2024). This reinforces the idea that empowerment and reciprocity are mutually reinforcing processes essential to community sustainability.

The results of the narrative analysis strongly reflect the principles of the study's theoretical framework. Guided by the Social Exchange Theory (SET), participants' continuous engagement and high satisfaction with the HALO Extension Project can be interpreted as a positive exchange of benefits and values. The skills, confidence, and livelihood opportunities they gained represent meaningful "rewards" that outweighed the "costs" of time and effort invested in the activities. This exchange fostered trust and strengthened the relationship between the university and the community, validating SET's assumption that sustained participation occurs when perceived benefits are greater than personal costs. Meanwhile, the findings also align with the Community Empowerment Theory, which emphasizes building self-reliance, agency, and collective control. The themes of skills acquisition, confidence building, and entrepreneurial outlook clearly illustrate empowerment outcomes, showing how participants not only learned new competencies but also developed the confidence to apply them independently and support others. Through these processes, the HALO Project effectively embodied empowerment as both a goal and a process, allowing participants to transform from passive recipients of aid into active partners in community development. Thus, the qualitative findings affirm that the HALO Extension Project operationalized the principles of both SET and Community Empowerment Theory, resulting in meaningful and sustainable change among its beneficiaries.

The experiences shared by the participants show that the HALO Extension Project made a strong impact on both their personal lives and their community. The results of the narrative analysis strongly reflect the principles of the study's theoretical framework. Guided by the Social Exchange Theory (SET), participants' continuous engagement and high satisfaction with the HALO Extension Project can be interpreted as a positive exchange of benefits and values. The skills, confidence, and livelihood opportunities they gained represent meaningful "rewards" that outweighed the "costs" of time and effort invested in the activities. This exchange fostered trust and strengthened the relationship between the university and the community, validating SET's assumption that sustained participation occurs when perceived benefits are greater than personal costs. Meanwhile, the findings also align with the Community Empowerment Theory, which emphasizes building self-reliance, agency, and collective control. The themes of skills acquisition, confidence building, and entrepreneurial outlook clearly illustrate empowerment outcomes, showing how participants not only learned new competencies but also developed the confidence to apply them independently and support others.

Through these processes, the HALO Project effectively embodied empowerment as both a goal and a process, allowing participants to transform from passive recipients of aid into active partners in community development. Thus, the qualitative findings affirm that the HALO Extension Project operationalized the principles of both SET and Community Empowerment Theory, resulting in meaningful and sustainable change among its beneficiaries. Many participants expressed that they not only learned practical skills but also gained self-confidence and new ideas for starting small businesses. The project also encouraged teamwork and a sense of unity in the community.

At the same time, participants pointed out the need for continued support, resources, and wider inclusivity to sustain these benefits. Overall, the findings confirm that the HALO Extension Project played an important role in empowering individuals and helping the community move toward more sustainable development.

5. CONCLUSION

The project's focus on practical and skill-based training likely addressed the community's needs, leading to a very high level of satisfaction. The quantitative data shows that participants were highly satisfied with specific activities like cooking skills and food preservation training, which they probably perceived as immediately useful. The personal and hands-on approach of the project, including strong staff support, perhaps played a critical role in enhancing participant satisfaction. The qualitative findings indicate that this approach may have increased participants' confidence and fostered a sense of empowerment, which are significant personal benefits that go beyond just learning a new skill. The positive staff-participant interaction and the perceived quality of services were also rated very satisfied, which likely reinforced these positive outcomes. And lastly, the project's ability to strengthen community bonds and promote personal growth is probably a key factor in its success. Despite minor challenges such as time constraints and childcare responsibilities, participants were still willing to join future initiatives, which perhaps indicates the project's strong and lasting positive impact on the community's well-being and willingness to engage in further development. The overall conclusion of the study is that the HALO project likely contributed to the socio-economic development and personal growth of its beneficiaries.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The HALO project may continue its focus on hands-on, skill-based training, particularly in food processing and preservation techniques. The high levels of participant satisfaction and the demonstrable impact on participants' self-confidence and livelihood prospects strongly support maintaining this approach. Given the significant positive impact on participants' self-esteem and community bonding, the project may actively foster a sense of community ownership and collaboration in future initiatives. This might involve incorporating more opportunities for shared decision-making, mutual support, and collective action within the program design. To maximize the long-term impact of the project, a crucial step is to provide participants with access to microfinance or other forms of financial assistance to facilitate the establishment of small businesses based on the skills acquired. This would translate the acquired skills into tangible economic empowerment for participants. Expand the project's scope to include more participants, especially youth and children. This would ensure that the positive impacts extend to future generations within the community, creating sustained positive change. Enhance the project by offering complementary training in business management, financial literacy, and advanced food processing techniques. This would build upon the existing foundation and enable participants to further develop their entrepreneurial potential. Lastly, the success of the HALO project may be disseminated and shared with other higher education institutions and community development organizations to encourage the adoption of similar participatory and skill-based extension projects. This would promote the replication of a successful model in different contexts, maximizing the overall positive impact.

REFERENCES

1. *Adame, M. J., Ayala, J. C., Magpantay, H. G., & Ramos, R. OUTCOMES ANDIMPACTS OF THE UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP: THE FIVE-YEAR ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY EXTENSION PROGRAMS.*
2. *Adnan, T., Praptiningsih, N., &Kalbuana, N. (2024). Analyzing The Impact OfResearch And Community Service Programs Of Higher Education Institutions On Local Economic Empowerment In Indonesia: A Literature Review Study. International Journal of teaching and learning, 2(1), 210-222*
3. *Albert, G. O., Rashid, R. A., &Mojiol, A. R. (2024). A Review of Rural TourismDevelopment in the Context of Social Exchange Theory Application. Media Konservasi, 29(3).*
4. *Anggraini, F. D. P., Aprianti, A., Muthoharoh, N. A., Permatasari, I., &Azalia, J. L.(2023). Validity and reliability questionnaire test of knowledge, Attitudes, and behavior on dengue fever prevention. International Journal on Healthand Medical Sciences, 1(2), 46–54.*
5. *Asio, J. M. R., Sardina, D. P., &Olaguir, J. A. O. (2023). Student's CommunityService Involvement: Implications for a Sustainable Community Extension Service. Asian Journal of Community Services, 2(1), 65-76.*
6. *Aslan, A., & Shiong, P. K. (2023). Learning in the Digital Age Full of Hedonistic Cultural Values Among Elementary School Students. Bulletin of Pedagogical Research, 3(2), 94–102. https://doi.org/10.51278/bpr.v3i2.515 *
7. *Bastida Jr., A. A., Ramos, C. A., & Tolentino, J. B. (2024). A strategic framework for sustainable community engagement: A participatory and co-funded approach. Southeast Asian Journal of Community Engagement, 3(1), 25–40.*

8. *Binayao, B., Sayson, S. M., &Dulay, L. (2021). Effectiveness, Relevance, andSustainability of Extension Projects: The Case of Bukidnon State University College of Education. International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology, 6(6), 10-15.*
9. *Blau, P. M. (2023). Exchange and power in social life (Updated ed.). Routledge.*
10. *Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Thematic analysis. In Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research (2nd ed.). Springer.*
11. *Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.*
12. *Creswell, J. W., &Guetterman, T. C. (2024). Educational research: Planning,conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (7th ed.). Pearson.*
13. *Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E., & Mitchell, M. (2024). Revisiting Social Exchange Theory in Organizational Contexts. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 60(2), 121–137.*
14. *Dinglasan, M. G., Macalipay, A., Clavio, M. a. B., Roxas, R. C., Balbis, J. A., Gabarda,J., & Fuertes, M. F. (2024). Community Needs assessment of Barangay 694 towards an extension services program. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 6(4). https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i04.25452*
15. *Dipboye, R. L., Smith, C. S., & Howell, W. C. (2022). Understanding measurement inorganizational research (2nd ed.). Academic Press*
16. *Doyle, S. (2021). Member checking in qualitative research: Ensuring credibility.Qualitative Inquiry, 27(4), 345–357. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800421996229*
17. *Doyle, L., McCabe, C., Keogh, B., Brady, A., & McCann, M. (2020). An overview of the qualitative descriptive design within nursing research. Journal of Research in Nursing, 25(5), 443-455. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987119880234*
18. *Emerson, R. M. (2024). Social Exchange and Community Engagement: Contemporary Applications. Community Development Review, 55(1), 88–104.*
19. *Esteban, A. P. (2025). Assessing the impact of community extension program in aPhilippines state university: A comprehensive framework and analysis. Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology, 9(2), 1659-1675.*
20. *Fetters, M. D., & Molina-Azorin, J. F. (2023). The evolving landscape of mixed methods research: Current advances and future directions*
21. *Hakiki, M., Budiman, R. D., Firdaus, M., & Astiti, A. D. (2023). The influence of internship experience and career guidance on student work readiness: A quantitative descriptive research study. Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan dan Teknologi Informasi (JIPTI), 4(2), 123-133. https://doi.org/10.52060/pti.v4i2.1398*
22. *Homans, G. C. (2024). The Human Group and Social Exchange Revisited. American Sociological Review, 89(1), 45–63.*
23. *Hossain, M. K., Hanafiah, M. H., & Hamid, A. B. A. (2025). Economic Conditions, Tourism Destination Competitiveness and Tourism Performance: Unravelling the Dynamics in Middle-Income Countries. Tourism & Management Studies, 21(1), 127-139.*
24. *Ituriaga, J., Mariñas, K. A., &Saflor, C. S. (2024). Enhancing Government Services toRice Farmers in the Philippines: A Service Quality–Sustainability-Focused Approach for Long-Term Agricultural Resilience. Sustainability, 16(18), 8108.*
25. *Karume, B. (2024). Influence of community participation on community based waterprojects for rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya.*
26. *Kuswanto, K., & Anderson, I. (2023). Structural model of community participation in rural development in Jambi Province, Indonesia. Population and Economics, 7(2), 115.*
27. *Laverack, G. (2023). Health Promotion and Empowerment: Community Approaches for Social Action (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.*
28. *Llamedo, E. E., Ferrater-Gimena, J. A. O., Sayson, Y. C., Abella, I. E., Sagayno, R. C.,& Villegas, P. V. (2024). Assessing the Real Needs of the Adopted Community: Towards Sustainable Social, Economic, Health and Well-being of the Beneficiaries. American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (AJMRD), 6(09), 37-49.*
29. *Magnaye, R. P., &Ylagan, A. P. (2021). Effectiveness and impact of communityextension program of one Philippine Higher Education Institution as basis for sustainability. Asia Pacific Journal of Academic Research in Business Administration, 7(1).*
30. *Maheshwari, M., Goyal, S., & Dash, D. N. (2024). Community Development throughInstitutional Engagement: A Review of Studies. Pacific Business Review International, 16(12).*
31. *McLeod, S. A. (2025). Descriptive research methods. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/descriptive-research.html*
32. *Molm, L. D., & Takahashi, N. (2024). Reciprocity and Trust in Social Exchange Networks. Sociological Inquiry, 94(1), 55–74.*
33. *Montebon, R., Bachanicha, R., Cantago, J., &Abing, L. (2023). Impact Assessmentof Junior High Student Volunteers on the Community Extension Services of the University. AGPE THE ROYAL GONDWANA RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HISTORY, SCIENCE, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, 4(2), 76-85.*

34. *Mores, L. S., Lee, J., & Bae, W. (2019). University-community partnerships: a localplanning co-production study on Calabarzon, Philippines. Sustainability, 11(7), 1850.*
35. *Moule, P., Aveyard, H., & Goodman, M. (2023). Nursing research: An introduction (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.*
36. *Oliveira, D. a. D. S., Bernet, R. R., & De MeloHoyos, D. C. (2024). Thetransformativeintegration of university extension and education in communities. In Seven Editora eBooks. https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.009-037*
37. *Ol, R. (2021). Holistic Framework as an Approach towards a Relevant andResponsive Community Extension and Development Program: The Case of SitioDipanamianan. JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research, 45(1), 53-74.ila*
38. *Peñaredondo-Untong, L. (2020). Ethical Climate and Faculty's Trifocal Functions ofState Universities and Colleges (SUCS) in Region XII, Philippines. International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 8(1), 135-141.*
39. *Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2024). Empowerment theory: Applications in community psychology and development. Annual Review of Community Psychology, 72(3), 45–62.*
40. *Riessman, C. K. (2024). Narrative methods for the human sciences (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.*
41. *Roebianto, A. D. I. Y. O., Savitri, S. I., Aulia, I. R. F. A. N., Suciyana, A. R. I. E., &Mubarokah, L. A. I. L. A. T. U. L. (2023). Content validity: Definition and procedure of content validation in psychological research. TPM, 30(1), 5-18.*
42. *Salazar, T. B. (2020). An impact study of the community extension programs in a state college in the Philippines. Int J Edu Sci, 29(1-3), 16-23.*
43. *Sayson, S. M. J. (2024). Philippine State Universities and Colleges (SUCs): A ScopingReview. Journal of Harbin Engineering University, 45(10).https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385273147*
44. *Seranno, M. G. S., Barros, D. D., Sabalza, R. B., Reyes-Chua, E., Hernandez, A. R., &Soliman, R. T. (2022). An Assessment of Community and Extension Service: Basis for Continual Improvement. ASEAN Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 10, 21-31.*
45. *Subagyo, I. E., Saraswati, D., Trilaksono, T., & Kusmulyono, M. S. (2020). Benefits and Challenges of DMAIC Methodology Implementation in Service Companies: An Exploratory Study. Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen, 18(4), 814-824. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2020.018.04.19*
46. *Surya, B., Syafri, S., Hadijah, H., Baharuddin, B., Fitriyah, A. T., & Sakti, H. H. (2020). Management of slum-based urban farming and economic empowerment of the community of Makassar City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Sustainability, 12(18), 7324.*
47. *Tan, M. R., Abad, L. M., & Ramos, J. C. (2025). Enhancing pedagogical capacity through community extension training among teachers in Bukidnon. Philippine Journal of Extension and Development, 8(1), 88–100.*
48. *Tong, A., & Dew, K. (2022). Qualitative research in health care: Ensuring validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research. BMJ Medicine, 1(1), e000193. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjmed-2022-000193*
49. *Toyon, M. A. S. (2021). Explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research:Phases and challenges. International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 10(5), 253-260.*
50. *Townsend, A., Abraham, C., Barnes, A., Collins, M., Halliday, E., Lewis, S., … &Popay, J. (2020). "I realised it weren't about spending the money. It's about doing something together:" the role of money in a community empowerment initiative and the implications for health and wellbeing. Social Science & Medicine, 260, 113176.*
51. *Uy Jr, R. F., Adora, I. G. R., Pilvera, C. J., Dibdib, S., Arendain, H. J. J. R. E., &Laña,Q. (2023). Community Needs Assessment as Basis for the Extension Program of Philippine College Foundation*
52. *Wallerstein, N., Oetzel, J. G., & Duran, B. (2023). Community-Based Empowerment for Social Change. Journal of Community Practice, 31(2), 102–120.*
53. *Wang, B., Rau, P. L. P., & Yuan, T. (2023). Measuring user competence in using artificial intelligence: Validity and reliability of artificial intelligence literacy scale. Behaviour & Information Technology, 42(9), 1324–1337.*
54. *West Visayas State University. (2023). WVSU Calinog Campus wins in PASUC VI-EMC Symposium on Extension. https://wvsu.edu.ph/wvsu-calinog-campus-wins-in-pasuc-vi-emc-symposium-on-extension/ West Visayas State University. (2021). WVSU launches one-extension program in Sara, Iloilo. https://wvsu.edu.ph/wvsu-launches-one-extension-program-in-sara-iloilo/*
55. *West Visayas State University. (2022). WVSU-Calinog holds leadership training workshop in Calinog, Iloilo.https://wvsu.edu.ph/wvsu-calinog-holds-leadership-training-in-barangay-dalid/*
56. *West Visayas State University. (2024). WVSU joins cultural mapping training with UPV and NCCA. https://wvsu.edu.ph/wvsu-cultural-mapping-2024/West Visayas State University. (2024).*
57. *WVSU Calinog mentors win 1st runner-up in PASUC VI Extension Research. https://wvsu.edu.ph/mentoring-mentors-project-extension-pasuc/*
58. *Wijaya, G. G., Nuraini, H., Sulaiman, A. I., & Ahmad10, A. A. Does Rural Development Enable Community Empowerment? Evidence from Village Fund in Indonesia.*
59. *Wutich, A., Beresford, M., & Bernard, H. R. (2024). Sample sizes for 10 types of qualitative data analysis: An integrative review, empirical guidance, and next steps. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 23, 16094069241296206.*
60. *Zhang, Z., & Garcia, L. (2023). Examining Dimensionality and Validity of theAcademic Integrity Survey Instrument.*
61. *Zimmerman, M. A. (2023). Empowerment Theory Revisited: Implications for Youth and Community Development. Journal of Empowerment Studies, 11(1), 12–26.*