

Seminarians' Satisfaction on the Services of Mary Help of Christians Seminary System

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Abstract - This study determined the level of satisfaction of the seminarians. The specific objectives include the determination of the (1) profile of the seminarians in terms of their age, monthly family income and grade/year level; (2) reasons of entering the seminary; (3) the level of satisfaction of the seminarians to the academic and academic support services in terms of intellectual, human, spiritual, socio-pastoral formations and administrative services. It employed multimethod research design. The Seminarian's Satisfaction Questionnaire was administered among 89 seminarians. The present study was conducted at Mary Help of Christians (MHC) Seminary System composed of MHC High School Seminary, MHC College Seminary and MHC Theology Seminary. Findings showed that majority of the respondents are adolescents, from High School Seminary and from family of average-income earners. The respondents in general entered the seminary to heed God's call to service and for one's personal growth and development. Other people also played a significant role as the seminarians found a good degree of inspiration and motivation from them. They expressed moderately satisfaction with the academic and academic support services provided by the seminary system. Consequently, services under spiritual formation obtained the highest score denoting strong satisfaction. More, age and grade/year level have significant correlation to the level of satisfaction on the seminary services along intellectual, human and socio-pastoral formations and administrative services. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that Mary Help of Christians Seminary system may utilize this study as a basis in the creation of the Five-Year Development Plan towards the improvement of delivery of the academic and academic support services. Semestral satisfaction survey by the seminarians regarding the quality of the services provided is also paramount.

Keywords –, satisfaction of services, seminary, academic and non-academic services

INTRODUCTION

Seminary education primarily aims to produce in priests a personality patterned in Christ's humanity having virtue, excellence, goodness of character and respect for one's self, other creatures and especially, God [1]. It is designed to provide the skills for the students to unite their own unique qualities with specific pastoral and leadership skills, including preaching, leadership in worship, counseling, teaching, administration, and promotion of individual and social/political qualities in accordance with the teachings of the gospel [2].

Many seminarians persist across the priestly formation program because of the experience of transformation in knowledge, pastoral skills, and

sense of vocation [3], social recognition, social involvement, social influence and social vehicle for mobility [4]. While some reported that priestly formation had a great impact on the development of their identity, the way they relate with other people, cope with difficult situations and reason out about situations that demand morality [5], some still resort to dropping out. Aspiring priests sometimes experience needs and aspirations conflicting with their social role and the expectations made of them [6].

Like the regular university environment, the present study proposes that student satisfaction is highlighted as one of the keys towards seminarians'

retention [7]. Student satisfaction is defined as a “short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students’ educational experience” [8] and that this will only be achieved when their actual experiences or performances met or exceeded their initial expectations [9].

Lo identified three student satisfaction factors: instructor’s directions and support, own commitment to learning and course policies [10]. Further, Billups, Gibson and Al-Sheeb, Hamuda and Abdella emphasized that students’ sense of belongingness contributed to high student satisfaction [11] [12] [13].

Fredrickson further explains that as an institution’s provided programs and delivered benefits exceed the charged fees, students would have a high sense of satisfaction [14]

In Mary Help of Christians Seminary System where the process of formation of future church leaders in the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan initially takes place, assessment of student satisfaction is somewhat overlooked.

The researcher assumes that assessing seminarian satisfaction provides a way that the seminary system can focus directly on issues of quality development in order to ensure that educational standards are high and that spiritual and vocational reasons for undertaking priestly formation will be strengthened [15]. The results of this study will serve as a basis on crafting the action plan for the entire seminary system for an improved delivery of academic and non-academic services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the level of satisfaction of the seminarians to the services offered by Mary Help of Christians Seminary System in Pangasinan. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: profile of the seminarians in terms of age, monthly family income; and grade/year level; reasons of the seminarians in enrolling in the seminary; level of satisfaction of the seminarians on the academic and non-academic services along intellectual formation, human formation, spiritual formation, socio-pastoral formation, and administrative services; and the proposed scheme to improve the service delivery of the seminary system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized multimethod research design. Multimethod research may be broadly defined as the practice of employing two or more different methods or styles of research within the same study or research program rather than confining the research to the use of a single method [16]. The present study used two approaches on collecting and analyzing data: quantitative research expressed under descriptive-evaluative and correlational design and qualitative research framed under phenomenological approach.

According to Arifin, evaluation research is a research that has an aim to provide information for decision maker (policy maker) related to a power or strength of a program seen from its effectiveness [17]. Likewise, descriptive-correlational design simply describes the desired characteristics of the sample that is being studied and tries to determine an association between the variables [18].

Furthermore, Stangor asserted that correlational research is designed to discover relationships among variables and to allow the prediction of future events from present knowledge. On the other hand, it cannot be used to

draw inferences about the causal relationships between and among the variables [19].

On the other hand, phenomenological approach is defined as the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by people living those experiences.

The main characteristics of phenomenology research include seeking to understand how people experience a particular situation or phenomenon. Data collected is qualitative and analysis includes an attempt to identify themes or make generalizations regarding how a particular phenomenon is actually perceived or experienced.

The present study was conducted among 89 seminarians in the Mary Help of Christians Seminary System under the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan during the academic year 2019-2020. Total enumeration was applied in this case in order to fulfil the main objective of the study, which is determination of the level of satisfaction of the entire studentry on the services being provided by the three seminaries.

This study utilized the Seminarian Satisfaction Questionnaire. This formulated 110-item questionnaire is based on the Commission of Higher Education's Students Affairs and Services. It has three parts: (1) profile of the respondents, (2) reasons of enrolling in the seminary and (3) level of satisfaction on the services provided by the seminary system alongside its areas of formation.

The present study used frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, Spearman rho and Kruskal Wallis as statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 89 respondents, 36 or 40.4% are aged 15-17 years old followed by those aged 12-14 years old with 27 or 30.3%. Most of them are Grade 11 high school seminarians with frequency count of 17 (19.1%) while only one of them is 3rd year college (1.1%).

As observed, the population of the seminarians decrease as the grade/year level steps us. This demonstrates a low cohort survival of those who initially entered the seminary and those who actually almost completed seminary education

program. Based on some reports of the Mary Help of Christians Seminary, majority of the seminarians leave the seminary because of personal reasons that include realization that priesthood is not their vocation, change of career and family matters.

Pietkiwicz revealed that priests experience needs and aspirations conflicting with their social role and the expectations made of them leading to a decision to change vocation [20]. Likewise, majority have monthly family income of Php10,001-20,000.00 with frequency count of 20 (22.5%) while only small percentage comprise the respondents from high earning families with frequency count of 9 or 10.1% for those with income of more than Php70,000.00 and 8 respondents or 9% of the group with Php50,001-70,000.00.

While most of the seminarians come from average-earning families, there are some who grew in high-profiled families. Some are sons of physicians, lawyers and politicians. This gives the impression that some of the seminarians were actually raised in a sophisticated lifestyle where they can acquire their basic needs and wants with ease. The exact opposite is the setup of the seminary- a place where a seminarian is exposed and trained to live in simplicity and that wants are earned as a reward of a fruitful effort.

Thus, the seminarian's experience of a community life which does not match to his usual living could influence his satisfaction level to the services offered by the seminary.

On the other hand, seminarians who are used to live in meagerness are the ones who diligently express appreciation to the seminary activities.

Since satisfaction is often described as the expectation versus reality experience, this study ventured on finding out the main reasons of the respondents why they subjected themselves for seminary formation.

After careful review of the responses of the respondents regarding their reasons of entering the seminary, three main themes emerged (1) Call to serve, (2) self-improvement and (3) influenced by others.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents in terms of age, grade/year level and monthly family income (n=89)

Variables	f	%
Age		
12-14 years old	27	30.3
15-17 years old	36	40.4
18-20 years old	8	9.0
21-23 years old	10	11.2
24-26 years old	4	4.5
27 years old and above	4	4.5
Grade/Year level		
HS Grade 8	16	18.0
HS Grade 9	10	11.2
HS Grade 10	11	12.4
HS Grade 11	17	19.1
HS Grade 12	11	12.4
College 2nd year	7	7.9
College 3rd year	1	1.1
College 4th year	2	2.2
Theology 2nd year	3	3.4
Theology 3rd year	8	9.0
Theology 4th year	3	3.4
Monthly family income		
<Php10,000.00	16	18.0
Php10,001-20,000.00	20	22.5
Php20,001-30,000.00	17	19.1
Php30,001-50,000.00	19	21.3
Php50,001-70,000.00	8	9.0
>Php70,000.00	9	10.1

This main theme emphasizes that call of service is their primary reason of entering the seminary. The respondents have the desire to serve God and people.

Desire to priesthood. The seminarians reported that they entered the seminary because they want to become priest.

-Seminarian #71: *“I want to become priest someday.”*

-Seminarian #86: *“I want to become a priest and gave a protective spirituality in order to serve god truthfully in the altar.”*

-Seminarian #70: *“I enter the seminary because I want to become a priest by serving, loving, spreading the Good News that the Lord Jesus teaches us.”*

To serve God. The seminarians believe that entering the seminary is an act of submitting one’s self for the service of God. They said that they felt God’s calling them for this vocation.

-Seminarian #74: *“I enter the seminary to follow the call of God.”*

-Seminarian #2: *“To pursue my calling to the priesthood.”*

-Seminarian #76: *“I love serving the Lord with this kind of vocation.”*

To serve people. They affirm that by becoming a priest, they can serve the people of God. They have the compassion towards people especially those who are last, least and lost.

-Seminarian #32: *“I want to serve God and His people.”*

-Seminarian #64: *“Because I want to help people who can’t help themselves.”*

-Seminarian #81: *“To serve God and His Church.*

To deepen my relationship with God.”The respondents reported that they entered the seminary to undergo formation to better themselves along spiritual, human, intellectual and socio-pastoral aspects.

Desire of formation. The respondents desire to become formed holistically that encompasses spiritual, human, intellectual and socio-pastoral aspects.

-Seminarian #43: *“I entered the seminary because I want to deepen my relationship with God and experience the life of priesthood. Seminary is a*

Table 2. Main themes and subthemes of the reasons of the seminarians on entering the seminary

Main Theme	Subthemes	Description
Call to serve	Desire to priesthood	<i>The seminarians have the burning desire to become priest.</i>
	To serve God	<i>They believe that entering the seminary is an act of submitting <u>one's self</u> for the service of God.</i>
	To serve people	<i>They affirm that by becoming a priest, they can serve the people of God./</i>
Self - improvement	Desire of formation	<i>They desire to become formed holistically that encompasses spiritual, human, intellectual and socio-pastoral aspects.</i>
	Further self-identification	<i>They believe that seminary formation will enable them to know themselves more.</i>
	Pursuit to independence	<i>They desire to live independently, out of their comfort zones.</i>
Influenced by others	Parents' desire	<i>Some parents submitted the seminarians to seminary education because they think that would be best for their children.</i>
	Inspired by family	<i>Some seminarians are encouraged by their own family especially those who have relatives in religious life.</i>
	Inspired by significant others	<i>Some seminarians are inspired by their friends and the other priests and seminarians that they meet outside.</i>

place where our attitude and behaviour are being disciplined so I too want to be formed.”

-Seminarian #27: “I enter the seminary because I believe that this school could help me to become a better person.”

-Seminarian #58: “I enter the seminary because I want to change myself. Outside I’m so very noisy but here it’s limited.”

Further self-identification. The respondents believe that seminary formation will enable them to know themselves more especially their strengths and weaknesses.

-Seminarian #36: “I want to discover more about myself and my relationship with God.”

-Seminarian #31: “I entered the seminary because I was inspired and to know myself more.”

-Seminarian #56: “I enter the seminary because I want to know myself and I want to know Jesus and serve the Lord. Because I am servant, I belong to being servant of the Lord. God is telling me to continue my vocation in seminary.”

Pursuit to independence. The respondents desire to live independently, out of their comfort zones, while serving the Lord.

-Seminarian #38: “I entered seminary because God is calling me to be a priest and I want to

become more independent in life for my own sake.”

-Seminarian #41: “I want to be disciplined and be closer to God. I want to be a servant of the Lord. I want to be independent.”

-Seminarian #57: “I enter the seminary because I want to serve God. I want to become an independent person.”

Some respondents entered the seminary because they are inspired by other people. These significant others are their families especially parents, friends and people from religious life.

Parents’ desire

Some parents submitted the seminarians to seminary education because they think that would be best for their children. The respondents reported that some of them were forced by their parents in order to undergo formation towards better behavioral change.

-Seminarian # #45: “I enter in the seminary because my parents wants me to enter in the seminary for me to change my bad attitudes.”

-Seminarian #18: “My parents encouraged, insisted that I enter.”

-Seminarian #77: “In 2009, I entered minor seminary because my parents just told me so.”

Inspired by family. Some seminarians are encouraged by their own family especially those who have relatives in religious life.

-Seminarian #14: *“My reason in entering the seminary is that i was inspired by my Tito-Priest who is currently in San Carlos City in the parish of St. Dominic de Guzman.”*

Seminarian #26: *“I entered the seminary to answer God's call and also to continue what my brothers have started. It is because also of the discipline that I wanted to become better a well-disciplined seminarian.*

-Seminarian #63: *“I enter the seminary because I want to become a priest someday. I want to imitate my uncle Msgr. Bravo and Fr. Maning.”*

Inspired by significant others. Some seminarians are inspired by their friends and the other priests and seminarians that they meet outside.

-Seminarian #69: *“I was inspired by some priests in the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan and that of some leaders of the Church. I also entered the seminary because of the love and support of my family to my vocation.”*

-Seminarian #82: *“Inspired by Parish Youth Ministry and my assistant parish priest.”*

-Seminarian #48: *“I entered in the seminary because I was inspired when I saw the seminarians serving the Lord.”*

On the analysis of their responses on their reasons of entering the seminary, majority of the seminarians claimed that aside from heeding the call to service, desire for self-improvement is one of their greatest purposes why they submit themselves for seminary formation.

Table 3. Level of satisfaction of the respondents on the seminary services (n=89)

Services	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalence
Spiritual formation services	4.73	Strongly satisfied
Faith services	4.73	Strongly satisfied
Intellectual formation	3.94	Moderately satisfied
Information & Orientation Services	4.23	Moderately satisfied
Instructional Services	3.96	Moderately satisfied
Academic Advising & Counselling Service	3.64	Moderately satisfied
Administrative services	3.88	Moderately satisfied
Admission & finance services	4.14	Moderately satisfied
Environmental support	3.96	Moderately satisfied
Safety & security services	3.94	Moderately satisfied
Scholarship & financial assistance	3.49	Undecided
Human formation	3.84	Moderately satisfied
Residence services	4.37	Moderately satisfied
Sports Development	4.08	Moderately satisfied
Counselling services	3.83	Moderately satisfied
Food Services	3.81	Moderately satisfied
Medical-Dental	3.12	Undecided
Socio-pastoral formation	3.67	Moderately satisfied
Seminarian organizations	3.89	Moderately satisfied
Cultural programs	3.68	Moderately satisfied
Social community services	3.58	Moderately satisfied
Support for personal/social development	3.52	Moderately satisfied
Overall	4.01	Moderately satisfied

A local study revealed that some seminarians enter the seminary for social recognition, social involvement, social influence and social vehicle for mobility. These reasons are connected to and have even reinforced, “spiritual” reasons for undertaking priestly formation [21].

In terms of services under intellectual formation as shown in Table 3, the respondents in general reported that they are moderately satisfied (WM=3.94). They experienced moderate satisfaction on information and orientation services (WM=4.23), academic advising and counselling service (WM=3.64) and instructional services (WM=3.96).

In terms of services under human formation as shown in Table 3, the respondents evaluated the services with moderate satisfaction (WM=3.84). Residence services got the highest satisfaction score of 4.37 while medical-dental service having the least one with WM=3.12. Likewise, other services such as counseling service (WM=3.83), sports development service (WM=4.08) and food services (WM=3.81) were rated with moderate satisfaction.

Along socio-pastoral formation, seminarian organizations got the highest score with WM=3.89 and support for personal/social development the least score WM=3.52. Other services such as social community services (WM=3.58) and cultural programs (WM=3.68) were rated with moderate satisfaction as presented on the same table.

Additionally, the table presents the level of satisfaction of the respondents along administrative services where the respondents reported moderate satisfaction with WM=3.88.

Among these, admission and finance services had the highest satisfaction score with WM=4.14 while scholarship and financial assistance had the lowest with WM=3.49. Services such as safety and security (WM=3.94) and environmental support (WM=3.96) were rated with moderate satisfaction.

Services under spiritual formation got the highest score with WM=4.73 denoting strong satisfaction. This is followed by the services under intellectual formation. Services under

The respondents evaluated the spiritual formation services strongly satisfactory with WM=4.73 as presented in Table 3. According to the seminarians, the Sacrament of the Eucharist or the Eucharistic Mass and the Sacrament of Confession are held daily while the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed usually four to five times a day. The respondents are also satisfied with Spiritual Direction because they have an open communication line with their Spiritual Directors whom they can talk to about their spirituality. On the other hand, the occasional conduct community Bible sharing could have contributed to its low satisfaction score.

the spiritual formation got the highest score implying strong satisfaction. Seminary formation is such a challenging process. The seminarians reported that they are bombarded with several academic works and some are being affected by their natural longingness to be home thus giving them a sense of burnout [22].

The seminary system is deemed to be the excellent when it comes to spiritual formation. This happens when the seminarians begin to get distracted, stressed and frustrated and experience needs and aspirations conflicting with their social role and the expectations made of them. This is why the rectors, spiritual directors and formators are vital factors in the success and application of the formation [23]. The present study then discloses how the seminarians are much satisfied with their experience when dealing with their rectors, spiritual directors and other formators. These people are described to be caring and approachable and have open communication with the seminarians.

The services under the intellectual and human formations were rated with moderate satisfaction. The satisfaction level is attributed to excellent educators, their effective teaching methodologies and the physical environment that provides the basic needs of the seminarians. On the other hand, the seminaries may have fallen short on some learning resources that the seminarians wish to have such as fully equipped libraries and good internet connection for academic purposes and other facilities that may

facilities convenience among seminarians (i.e. water supply, renovated rooms etc).

Similarly, services under socio-pastoral formation were evaluated with moderate satisfaction. The seminarians agree that they are much satisfied on the apostolate programs as these serve as their opportunity to expose themselves on the real-life setting of the people they are bound to serve. However, few posited that the seminaries lack some resources that would help on fully shaping them on this aspect. A 30-year old seminarian said, *“Maybe we can have more leadership trainings or other relevant trainings that would help us to fulfill our tasks*

well.” Non-cognitive factors such as student’s identification and integration with the community and students’ feeling of belongingness significantly contribute to overall satisfaction

Overall, the seminarians revealed that although there were some deficiencies on the delivery of the academic and academic support services, they still assert that the entire seminary formation is a pleasant learning experience and is vital on promoting life to their chosen vocation.

PROPOSED SCHEME FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Goal: To provide better quality of seminary services as expressed by an increase of the satisfaction level of the seminarians

Objective	Activity	Office-in-Charge	Expected Outcome
SPIRITUAL FORMATION			
To promote healthier spirituality among the seminarians	-Sustain the quality of the spiritual formation services (I.e Celebration of Eucharistic Mass, Holy Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours -Bible Sharing at least once a month	Office of the Spiritual Director Religious Beadles	A spiritually formed seminarian living the virtues of Christ
INTELLECTUAL FORMATION			
To help the seminarians develop knowledge and skills for seminary studies and the capacity to intelligently deal with any state of life a seminarian may eventually pursue	-Revision and reproduction the seminarians’ handbook -Conduct of more seminars and lectures with regards to modern social issues -Strengthening peer counseling and conduct of formal tutorial classes -Semestral evaluation of the performance of the faculty members and other academic staff -Reduction the number of assignments during home visits	Deans Principal Faculty Academic Beadles	A satisfied intellectually capable and flexible seminarian
Objective	Activity	Office-in-Charge	Expected Outcome
HUMAN FORMATION			

<p>To help the seminarians character formation and enhancing their strengths while addressing weaknesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hiring of professional guidance counselors -Upgrade dormitory facilities and replacement of non-functional amenities -Encouragement among seminarians to participate in sports activities -Establishment of dental clinic -Training on first aid and basic life support among health commission beadles -Semestral health check-up among food workers 	<p>Office of the Rector Prefect of Discipline Infirmary Health Beadles</p>	<p>A seminarian under a state of physical, psychological and emotional well-being</p>
<p>SOCIO-PASTORAL FORMATION</p>			
<p>To develop among seminarians the deep commitment to and competence for pastoral leadership and service and affective relationship with people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attendance of the seminarians to leadership trainings -Extending hours during apostolate programs -Organization of extension services (i.e environmental) -Equipping music groups with more musical instruments -Provision of art materials 	<p>Office of the Rector Prefect of Discipline Office of the Procurator</p>	<p>A seminarian oriented in service, cooperation, respect, brotherhood, simplicity, urbanity and sportsmanship</p>
<p>ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES</p>			
<p>To provide the seminarians a safe, fair, equitable and challenging learning environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partnership to more scholarship agencies and sponsors -Hiring of security guards -Hiring of property custodians -Upgrading of internet connection -Improving library resources 	<p>Office of the Rector Office of the Procurator Library</p>	<p>Quality service delivery with high satisfaction rating from the seminarians</p>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following are hereby concluded: majority of the respondents are adolescents, from High School Seminary and from family of average-income earners; the respondents in general entered the seminary to heed God’s call to service and for one’s personal growth and development. Other people also played a significant role as the seminarians found a good degree of inspiration and

motivation from them; and the respondents in general are moderately satisfied with the academic and academic support services provided by the Mary Help of Christians Seminary System. Consequently, services under spiritual formation obtained the highest score denoting strong satisfaction.

In light of foregoing conclusion, the researcher recommends that: the Mary Help of Christians Seminary System may collaborate with the parish ministries and other youth organizations

in the conduct of intensive information campaign regarding man and relationship with God. Likewise, it may partner with more agencies/ individuals/ groups that provide sponsorship/ scholarship program in order to cater more students to enrol and persist seminary education; the seminary system may strengthen its vocation campaign among public and private educational institutions and parishes in order to attract more potential students to enrol in the seminary; further, the seminary system may address the deficiencies on the services that were found to be less satisfactory. Likewise, semestral satisfaction survey by the seminarians regarding the quality of the services provided is recommended; the seminary system may exert more effort on providing better services along intellectual, human and socio-pastoral formation especially among seminarians on higher grade/year level; future researchers may conduct parallel study framed in qualitative research design to further substantiate the findings of the study.

Replication of this satisfaction survey after two years coupled with focus group discussions among the seminarians from the three seminaries is highly recommended; and lastly, The Mary Help of Christians Seminary system may utilize this study as a basis in the creation of the Five-Year Development Plan.

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