

ASEAN Engagement's Impact on Academics and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Academic institutions occupy pivotal role in motivating students to engage with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-relevant and international programmes equipping them to thrive in world's challenges and transcend transnational boundaries. Using 4-point Likert scale with 60-item researcher-made validated questionnaire, this research measured the level of students' self-esteem, academic experience, and motivation on ASEAN-relevant engagement, employing quantitative descriptive design. A total of 216 purposively grouped respondents: ABM (Accountancy, Business, Economics, Finance, and Management), HUMSS (Humanities, Arts, Music, Culture, Social Sciences, and Education), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine), and TVL (Information Communications Technology, Home Economics, Agri-Fisheries, and Industrial Arts), from Central and Northern Luzon, Philippines participated. Findings revealed first-year females taking HUMSS were more motivated with favourable impression towards engaging to ASEAN-relevant programmes that expanded their self-esteem. Significance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) in motivating students engage with ASEAN-relevant programmes was highlighted. Results revealed significant differences with year levels and programmes of study on academic experience, while their participation to ASEAN-relevant activities was evident on high positive correlation of motivation and self-esteem; thus, level of Filipino university students' self-esteem and motivation to engage in ASEAN-relevant programmes improved as they went through their university education experiences. Therefore, institutions should develop well-rounded, globalised curriculum programmes, capturing students' general welfare and maximising their full potential. Educators must provide students with support, recognising their efforts and progress, for their academic and personal development.

Keywords: Academic Experience, ASEAN Engagements, Internationalization, Motivation, Self-Esteem, University Students.

Introduction

Education increases the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) awareness and creates sense of regional identity in addition to being significant engine of economic and social prosperity. There is a link between developing nation's comparative advantage in closely linked goods that it is already manufacturing and quality of its basic education (1, 2). By encouraging lifelong learning based on principles of equity, inclusivity, and excellence, ASEAN supports international engagements, which advance future-ready education, ensuring inclusivity, enhancing teachers' capacity, and mobilising resources through collaborations. As part of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ASEAN shapes students into capable people geared through promoting equality, sustainability, and appreciation of cultural diversity. To help realise

these goals, the Philippines initiates its parts through serving as Chair of 2021 ASEAN High-Level Education-related meetings where countries are given chance to assess progress and strengthen academic cooperation while addressing issues raised such the problems in mobility caused by pandemic, but isolation led to strengthening technology utilised in ASEAN education (3). Through ASEAN engagements that recognise value of student mobility, students who have capacity to be global leaders but lack funding are reached. After all, quality education brings opportunities to students, for better occupations (4) if they are more prepared for these rising roles, which widen perspectives while learning critical life skills such as leadership, communication, among others. As a result of the dynamic nature of both education and industry, academic institutions place greater

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emphasis on ASEAN-relevant engagements and internationalisation because developing students' intercultural competence is typically prerequisite for preparing them for careers in global economy (5-9).

However, structural disparities restrict attainment of ASEAN-relevant engagements to mobilise students. As showed visa and student-residence permit, limited government funding, and culture shock are the most common challenges (10). While there are academic requirements to accomplish and permits to secure before going off-campus, university students find time to intensify visibility in ASEAN setting, not just to improve academic standing but also to build stronger self-esteem and relationships with ASEAN brothers and sisters (11-15). When institutions send students to ASEAN-relevant contests, they take pride in representing and bringing home recognitions for the country that enhance their world visibility and esteem as reputable institutions with high caliber learners (16-18). Students take part in research conferences and seminars abroad (19-21). There are also opportunities for choral groups to render performances, while sharing unique cultures and traditions before international audience (22-24). Local culture influences most students and institutions to strive for personal growth and better education; hence, the inclusion of internationalisation in university education policies and programmes (25). In the case of Asian university education, international relationships core on various issues; thus, ASEAN-relevant opportunities given to universities drive people to become more motivated to mentor faculty and students to go abroad (26-28). There are sponsoring organisations to support academic and financial needs to finish studies abroad (29-31). More than international scholarships provided to faculty and students, relationships built among countries and linkages forged are realised significantly; thus, resulting in possible exchange programmes and research project collaborations of universities (32-34).

The myriad of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities provided through ASEAN-relevant engagements (e.g., competitions, school representations, etc.) push students to become globally competitive with high self-esteem. While there are only a few research conducted in this specific area, this research determined the socio-

demographic profile of Philippine university students in terms of age, gender, university year level, and programme of study; measured the level of Philippine university students' motivations/academic experience/self-esteem on ASEAN-relevant engagement (e.g., competitions); differentiated Philippine university students' motivations for ASEAN-relevant engagement when grouped according to their age, gender, university year level, and programme of study; and recognised the impact of university students' motivations on engaging to ASEAN-relevant engagement to their academic experience and self-esteem. The present research does not cover the effects of ASEAN engagement on students' perceptions of their roles within the ASEAN region and their future careers. The findings serve as bases for designing and improving ASEAN-relevant programmes that are applicable and integral to curriculum and other initiatives and platforms to improve students' understanding and engagement with ASEAN-relevant undertakings. Further, it prepares and supports structures for ASEAN-relevant programmes for implementation and inclusion in educational institutions.

Methodology

This study employed quantitative descriptive research design, utilising 4-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Agree; 4-Strongly Agree) 60-item researcher-made survey questionnaire that is content-validated by five experts, reviewed, and tested with internal consistency (Cronbach's α of 0.969), to obtain information from university student-respondents of legal age (18 and above) from North and Central Luzon, Philippines, during the Academic Year (AY) 2022-2023, selected purposively and grouped into four clusters: ABM (Accountancy, Business, Economics, Finance, and Management), HUMSS (Humanities, Arts, Music, Culture, Social Sciences, and Education), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine), and TVL (Information Communications Technology, Home Economics, Agri-Fisheries, and Industrial Arts). This research was subjected to Ethics Research Committees (ERCs) and was approved with Central Luzon State University (CLSU) ERC Code 2022-283 and Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) Code 0420. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to differentiate the

Philippine university students when grouped based on age, gender, year level, and programme of study, as well as to measure the impact of motivation on ASEAN-relevant engagement to academic experience and self-esteem.

Results

In congruence with prescribed student's age range per Grade level set by the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd), Table 1 confirms legal and appropriate age of respondents, where fascinatingly there are 2.31% who identified

themselves as non-binary or persons who are neither male nor female while generally there are female respondents (65.28%) who are more active and participative in ASEAN-related endeavours. Further, Table 1 shows that majority (40.48%) of respondents are at first-year university level who are actively engaged in ASEAN-relevant undertakings albeit facing transition period being new to university academe. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, 47.69% of respondents are under HUMSS programme of study.

Table 1: Age, Gender, Year Level, and Programme Study of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Less than the mean age	97	44.91
Greater than the mean age	119	55.09
Gender		
Male	70	32.41
Female	141	65.28
Non-binary	5	2.31
Year Level		
First	87	40.28
Second	60	27.78
Third	26	12.04
Fourth	40	18.52
Fifth and Above	3	1.38
Programme Study		
ABM	34	15.74
HUMSS	103	47.69
STEM	42	19.44
TVL	37	17.13

Table 2: Level of Students' Motivation, Academic Experience, and Self-Esteem towards ASEAN-relevant Engagement

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Description
Motivation	2.97	.450	Agree
Academic Experience	2.85	.465	Agree
Self-Esteem	2.71	.522	Agree

Table 3: Differences on Students' Motivation, Academic Experience, and Self-Esteem when Grouped According to Age

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	df	F	p
Motivation	Below mean age	2.96	.439	1, 214	0.079	0.779
	Above mean age	2.98	.460			
Academic Experience	Below mean age	2.81	.482		1.217	0.271
	Above mean age	2.88	.450			
Self-Esteem	Below mean age	2.69	.536		0.332	0.565
	Above mean age	2.73	.513			

Table 2 shows the overall mean and SD of students' motivation (mean=2.97; SD=0.450), academic experience (mean=2.85; SD=0.465), and self-

esteem (mean=2.71; SD=0.522) towards ASEAN-relevant engagements, described as "Agree", which capitalises positive reception and favourable

impression of Filipino university students on immersing themselves to ASEAN-relevant and international engagements that expand their self-esteem to learn and appreciate global scenes; hence, motivating them to participate more.

The present study differentiates Philippine university students' motivations for engaging in ASEAN-relevant engagement when grouped according to their age, gender, university year level, and programme of study. Descriptive statistics shows the mean of students' motivation when grouped below the mean age is 2.96 with SD=0.439, above the mean age is 2.98 with SD=0.460; academic experience when grouped below the mean age is 2.81 with SD=0.482, above

mean age is 2.88 with SD=0.450; and self-esteem when grouped below mean age is 2.69 with SD=0.536, below mean age is 2.73 with SD=0.513. Through Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference on age to students' motivation [$F(1, 214)=0.079, p>0.05$], academic experience [$F(1, 214)=1.217, p>0.05$], and self-esteem [$F(1, 214)=0.332, p>0.05$]; thus, regardless of age, Filipino university students' motivation, academic experience, and self-esteem towards ASEAN-relevant activities are statistically consistent, which suggests that they are capable of achieving their goals at any point in their university education.

Table 4: Differences on Students' Motivation, Academic Experience, and Self-Esteem when Grouped According to Gender

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	df	F	p
Motivation	Male	2.93	.505	2, 213	0.583	0.559
	Female	2.99	.419			
	Non-binary	3.10	.531			
Academic Experience	Male	2.88	.503		0.366	0.694
	Female	2.84	.441			
	Non-binary	2.98	.642			
Self-Esteem	Male	2.74	.532		0.743	0.477
	Female	2.69	.514			
	Non-binary	2.95	.672			

Descriptive statistics reveals that the mean of students' motivation when grouped to male is 2.93 with SD=0.505, female is 2.99 with SD=0.419, and non-binary is 3.10 with SD=0.531; academic experience when grouped to male is 2.88 with SD=0.503, female is 2.84 with SD=0.441, and non-binary is 2.98 with SD=0.642; self-esteem when grouped to male is 2.74 with SD=0.532, female is 2.69 with SD=0.514, and non-binary is 2.95 with SD=0.672. Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference on gender to students' motivation [$F(2, 213)=0.583, p>0.05$], academic experience [$F(2, 213)=0.366, p>0.05$], and self-esteem [$F(2, 213)=0.743, p>0.05$]; thus, valuing SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) for this research knows no gender when it comes to empowering university students to engage with ASEAN-relevant programmes.

Descriptive statistics presents the mean of students' motivation when grouped to first year is 2.94 with SD=0.506, second year is 2.96 with SD=0.418, third year is 3.02 with SD=0.238, fourth

year is 3.08 with SD=0.404, and fifth year and above is 2.63 with SD=0.167; academic experience when grouped to first year is 2.38 with SD=0.519, second year is 2.80 with SD=0.449, third year is 2.77 with SD=0.251, fourth year is 3.07 with SD=0.422, and fifth year and above is 2.52 with SD=0.333; self-esteem when grouped to first year is 2.68 with SD=0.573, second year is 2.70 with SD=0.505, third year is 2.67 with SD=0.364, fourth year is 2.87 with SD=0.524, and fifth year and above is 2.44 with SD=0.102. Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference on year level to students' motivation [$F(4, 211)=1.182, p>0.05$] and self-esteem [$F(4, 211)=1.259, p>0.05$], while remarkably, results from academic experience reveals significant difference [$F(4, 211)=3.174, p<0.05$], which highlights that year level vis-a-vis academic experience towards ASEAN-relevant engagements has metamorphosed since fourth year university students accumulated higher education experiences since they have longer stay at university than lower year level students.

Table 5: Differences on Students' Motivation, Academic Experience, and Self-Esteem when Grouped According to Year Level

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	df	F	p
Motivation	First	2.94	.506	4, 211	1.182	0.320
	Second	2.96	.418			
	Third	3.02	.238			
	Fourth	3.08	.474			
	Fifth and Above	2.63	.167			
Academic Experience	First	2.83	.519		3.174	0.015*
	Second	2.80	.449			
	Third	2.77	.251			
	Fourth	3.07	.422			
	Fifth and Above	2.52	.333			
Self-Esteem	First	2.68	.573		1.259	0.287
	Second	2.70	.505			
	Third	2.67	.364			
	Fourth	2.87	.524			
	Fifth and Above	2.44	.102			

* significant at the 0.05 level

Table 6: Differences on Students' Motivation, Academic Experience, and Self-Esteem when Grouped According to Programme of Study

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	df	F	p
Motivation	ABM	2.90	.467	3, 212	1.649	0.179
	HUMSS	2.95	.436			
	STEM	3.11	.426			
	TVL	2.95	.374			
Academic Experience	ABM	2.75	.485		2.929	0.032*
	HUMSS	2.80	.461			
	STEM	3.02	.456			
	TVL	2.90	.428			
Self-Esteem	ABM	2.66	.486		1.732	0.162
	HUMSS	2.65	.564			
	STEM	2.86	.499			
	TVL	2.77	.436			

* significant at the 0.05 level

Descriptive statistics indicates that the mean of students' motivation when grouped to ABM is 2.90 with SD=0.467, HUMSS is 2.95 with SD=0.436, STEM is 3.11 with SD=0.426, and TVL is 2.95 with SD=0.374; academic experience when grouped to ABM is 2.75 with SD=0.485, HUMSS is 2.80 with SD=0.461, STEM is 3.02 with SD=0.456, and TVL is 2.90 with SD=0.428; self-esteem when grouped to ABM is 2.66 with SD=0.486, HUMSS is 2.65 with SD=0.564, STEM is 2.86 with SD=0.499, and TVL is 2.77 with SD=0.436. Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference on the programme of study to the students' motivation [$F(3, 212)=1.649, p>0.05$] and self-esteem [$F(3, 212)=1.732, p>0.05$].

However, outstandingly on academic experience, the results reveal significant difference [$F(3, 212)=2.929, p<0.05$]. Apropos of programme of study, the university students under the STEM group have more academic interests and inclinations to ASEAN-relevant programmes.

Table 7 reveals that correlation between students' motivation and academic experience ($r=0.713, p<0.05$) and self-esteem ($r=0.556, p>0.05$) has significant relationship; thus, Filipino university students' level of motivation in terms of engaging to ASEAN-relevant programmes relatively increases as their university academic experiences progress. Further, students' motivation and self-

esteem have high positive correlation, which indicates that Filipino university students who are highly motivated develop and exhibit high self-

esteem because of their engagements to ASEAN-relevant endeavours.

Table 7: Relationship between Students' Motivation and Academic Experience and Self-Esteem

Motivation	Pearson Correlation Sig (2 tailed)	Academic Experience	Self-Esteem
		0.713**	0.556**
		0.000	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Discussion

This research determined the level of university students' self-esteem, academic experience, and motivation on ASEAN-relevant engagements. Following the ASEAN's goal aligned to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically on advocating gender equality and reducing inequalities, interestingly, this study indicates that ASEAN-relevant opportunities are also squarely available for women, contradictory to the study that found even though women show pervasive interest in expanding their global knowledge, they are still struggling to grab international academic opportunities (35). Giving women equal access and rights, not only supports their well-being, but also enables their contribution towards ASEAN-regional progress and inclusiveness (36).

Incongruous to an internationalisation study in South Africa (37), the present research clearly denotes that Filipino first-year university students have more time and interest in participating in local and international extracurricular activities as opposed to higher-level university students who devote their time and effort with required major area of specialisation. Comparably to a study on rethinking curriculum internationalisation in 2022 (33) found that students become more enthusiastic on their academic experience, as they are engaged and motivated by their universities to international learning opportunities, which shape their intercultural competence and boost their self-esteem to bring their significant share towards realizing mutual understanding among people and their nations. Foregrounding relevant theoretical framework (38), as support to the results of this study, showing that students' participation in ASEAN-related activities significantly impacted their self-esteem because they are shaped by higher education institutions to become globally competent and work-ready people.

Correspondingly, a gender study in 2021 revealed that men and women have similar positive views on internationalisation towards more proactive learning experience for students even beyond the institutional boundaries (39). Following that, it was found that adult learners are more inclined at receiving opportunities both locally and internationally (40); however, remarkably, this research found highlighting the importance of eradicating agism among Filipino students because regardless of their age, the students' motivation, academic experience, and self-esteem towards ASEAN-relevant engagements are consistent, which proves their capacities and potentials to reach their academic goals at any point in their academic expedition, which differs from the results found in the US in 2022 that limited and linked age to students' motivation (41). However, they also investigated several other variables including proficiency, literacy, and educational attainment that ordered other march on the results of their study.

In this research, Filipino university students grouped under STEM have more academic interests and inclinations to ASEAN-relevant programmes; thus, this outcome challenges the academic system on bringing equal opportunities for other clusters and on boosting their interests to partake in ASEAN-relevant engagements. As stated, international experiences provided to STEM students were positively connected to their interests while their high academic achievements are essential to their perceptions of global awareness (42). Further, Filipino university students' level of motivation in terms of engaging to ASEAN-relevant programmes relatively increases likewise their academic experiences and self-esteem, which amplifies the essentiality of their engagements to ASEAN-relevant endeavours. As found out, a moderately positive significant correlation between students' state self-esteem and trait self-esteem, which is likewise accurate on

state academic and trait academic motivations (43).

While students' general welfare is important, the quality of education (SDG 4) provided to them equally arm them to face and win the real-life challenges beyond the portals of universities; thus, aligning their academic preparations and experiences and increasing their levels of motivation and self-esteem to extend ASEAN-relevant engagements and other international opportunities equip them to thrive in the world's challenges and to transcend transnational boundaries.

Conclusion

Aligned to continuous landscape in education, Philippines takes its humble initiatives and efforts to engage students in ASEAN-relevant programmes. While global exposures bring opportunities to students, it is likewise substantial to determine their level of motivation to engaging with such relevant programme and its impact on their academic experience and self-esteem; hence, this study was carried out, with majority (65.28%) were females who appeared more active in ASEAN-relevant engagements. Unearthing university students' motivations and experiences, first-year dominated (40.48%) the number of students, which proved their interest on engaging with ASEAN-relevant programmes albeit fronting transitional period and majority (47.69%) were under HUMSS programme of study. Described as agreeing with overall mean=2.97 and SD=0.450, results highlighted positive reception and favourable impression among Filipino university students on their engagement (mean=2.85; SD=0.465) with ASEAN-relevant undertakings and internationalisation programmes that expanded their self-esteem (mean=2.71; SD=0.522) to learn and appreciate global scenes all the more.

While there was no significant difference with age and gender on students' motivation, academic experience, and self-esteem, this research ascertained the significance of SDG 5—Gender Equality and SDG 10—Reduced Inequalities in terms of empowering students to engage with ASEAN-relevant programmes and promoting internationalisation efforts. Meanwhile, results revealed significant differences with year levels [$F(4, 211)=3.174, p<0.05$] and programmes of study [$F(3, 212)=2.929, p<0.05$] on students'

academic experience. Remarkably, as students grow academically towards receiving their graduation diploma and so the proliferation of ASEAN-relevant engagements, preparing them to become work-ready members of society. Apposite their programme of study (STEM), students showed more interests to ASEAN-relevant programmes.

With students' engagements to ASEAN-relevant endeavours, evident on high positive correlation of motivation and self-esteem, students became highly motivated and revealed improved self-esteem. The correlation between students' motivation and academic experience ($r=0.713, p<0.05$) and self-esteem ($r=0.556, p>0.05$) showed significant relationship; thus, the level of motivation among students to participate in ASEAN-relevant programmes improved as they go through their university education experiences.

The results of this research provide foundations for development of ASEAN-focused programmes that can be integrated into curriculum, with the aim of enhancing students' understanding and engagement with ASEAN-related initiatives and internationalisation programmes. To cater to different student groups in education institutions, ASEAN-relevant undertakings and internationalisation efforts should be holistic and inclusive, fostering an environment where all members, regardless of age, gender, and socio-economic status feel valued and supported, and providing personalised support for human development. To increase students' experiences with regard ASEAN-related and internationalisation participations, academic institutions should offer financial aid and specialised international activities for them to gain global citizenship, self-discovery, and self-confidence. Academic institutions should also promote and bring closer to students, parents, and guardians the ASEAN-relevant and internationalisation programmes, meeting their needs in different academic programmes and phases of their careers. To further investigate the perspectives of students, parents, guardians, and teachers about ASEAN-related engagements, it is recommended to encompass the effects of ASEAN engagement on students' perceptions of their roles within the ASEAN region and their future careers, and employ a qualitative approach that should also cover the exploration of viewpoints held by people

at private educational institutions and other industries, across countries within and beyond ASEAN region.

Abbreviations

ABM: Accountancy, Business, Economics, Finance, and Management, ANOVA: Analysis of Variance, ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations, AY: Academic Year, CLSU: Central Luzon State University, DepEd: Department of Education, ERC: Ethics Research Committees, HUMSS: Humanities, Arts, Music, Culture, Social Sciences, and Education, SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals, STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, TAU: Tarlac Agricultural University, TVL: Information Communications Technology, Home Economics, Agri-Fisheries, and Industrial Arts, UN: United Nations.

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Author Contributions

Joseph A. Villarama and Bench G. Fabros: Conceptualisation. Joseph A. Villarama, Angelica T. Dela Cruz, and Ria-Flor V. Valdoz: Introduction and Literature Review Writing. Bench G. Fabros and Joseph A. Villarama: Methodology, Data Analyses, and Data Interpretation. Joseph A. Villarama: Supervision.

Conflict of Interest

All the authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this research article.

Ethics Approval

This research was reviewed and approved by Ethics Research Committees (ERCs) with Central Luzon State University (CLSU) ERC Code 2022-283 and Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) Code 0420.

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