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Case Study on The Impact of Southern Baptist College's Community Projects in Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the impact of Southern Baptist College's community extension projects on the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center in M'lang, Cotabato. A descriptive design was employed, utilizing surveys and interviews with parents, a teacher, and a community leader to assess improvements in the physical environment and their impact on children's development. Results indicated substantial gains in safety, ventilation, sanitation, and classroom aesthetics, with mean ratings rising from "Poor–Fair" to "Very Good–Excellent." Parents and stakeholders also reported improvements in hygiene, nutrition, social interaction, and enthusiasm for learning among children, with overall satisfaction being rated highly. Despite these positive outcomes, concerns about resource sustainability and limited teaching personnel remain. The study recommends regular facility maintenance, resource mobilization through partnerships, and the deployment of additional teaching staff. Findings highlight the role of faith-based, community-driven initiatives in enhancing early childhood education and supporting national development goals.

***Keywords*:** community extension, child development, physical learning environment, early childhood education, faith-based initiatives

I. INTRODUCTION

The physical learning environment has been consistently identified as a key factor influencing children's educational outcomes and holistic development. International studies have shown that classroom conditions—such as lighting, air quality, acoustics, and layout—have a direct impact on learning progress, motivation, and engagement. For instance, Barrett et al. (2015) demonstrated that classroom design features explained up to 16% of the variance in student academic progress across primary schools in the UK. Similarly, Maxwell (2007) found that resource-rich and well-structured classrooms promote independence and social competence, while poorly organized settings restrict developmental opportunities. More recently, Fisher et al. (2014) and Byers, Mahat, Liu, and Knox (2018) emphasized that flexible, student-centered learning spaces improve collaboration and learning outcomes, reinforcing the need for intentional investments in school facilities.

In the Philippine context, challenges in early childhood and basic education facilities remain a concern. Ulep et al. (2020) highlighted that many early childhood facilities, particularly in rural areas, continue to suffer from structural inadequacies that undermine children's readiness for formal schooling. Orbeta, Esguerra, and Capones (2021) also noted persistent gaps in classroom safety, sanitation, and accessibility that affect both teaching quality and child well-being. These conditions underscore the relevance of government policy frameworks such as the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) System Act, legislated under Republic Act No. 8980 (2000) and amended by Republic Act No. 12199 (2025), which obligates the

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State and partner institutions to provide safe, developmentally appropriate, and adequately resourced environments for children. The Department of Education's Child-Friendly School System (CFSS) further complements this mandate by ensuring that schools provide inclusive, healthy, and protective spaces conducive to learning.

It is within this developmental and policy framework that Southern Baptist College (SBC) undertook a series of community outreach projects aimed at improving the physical conditions of classrooms and learning spaces in its partner schools. These projects included the construction of perimeter fencing, ceiling installation in the feeding area, repainting of classrooms, provision of classroom furniture, ceiling fans, and floor mats, donation of toys and gifts, and the installation of a Jetmatic water pump. Each initiative was designed to address pressing structural and resource needs while fostering safer, healthier, and more engaging environments for children's growth and learning.

Preliminary responses from the lone day care worker, parents, and community leaders indicate that they have directly benefited from these improvements. Teachers observed that better ventilation and repainted classrooms created more comfortable and motivating learning environments. Parents and community members expressed that the fencing and water pump contributed significantly to child safety and sanitation. Meanwhile, students reported that donated toys, mats, and other classroom resources made their daily school experience more enjoyable and supported play-based learning. These reflections highlight that SBC's community engagement has generated meaningful educational and social benefits for the partner communities.

Moreover, these initiatives reflect the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) requirement for higher education institutions to pursue community extension services as part of their tri-fold function of instruction, research, and extension. By actively addressing the educational and welfare needs of the community, SBC not only strengthens its institutional mission but also contributes to the national goal of enhancing early childhood care and development through collaborative, community-based interventions.

Rationale of the Project

The projects undertaken by SBC—including perimeter fencing, ceiling installation in the feeding area, repainting of the classroom, provision of classroom resources such as cabinets,ceiling fan, stand fans, pupils' table, refrigerator, and installation of a manual jetmatic water pump are anchored in both practical needs and national policy frameworks. Republic Act No. 12199 (2025), which amends RA 8980, explicitly calls for integrated and holistic support for early childhood development, encompassing health, nutrition, sanitation, safety, and psychosocial growth. These interventions reflect that mandate by ensuring classrooms are not only functional but also safe, inclusive, and developmentally supportive.For example, perimeter fencing aligns with ECCD's safety and protection provisions as well as DepEd's Child-Friendly School System requirements. Improvements to ventilation, sanitation, and nutrition—through ceiling installation, water provision, and better classroom infrastructure support children's health and readiness to learn. Donations of toys, mats, and other learning resources reinforce the socio-emotional and cognitive dimensions of early education, which scholars such as Tadic, Martinec, and Farago (2015) have shown to be critical in fostering children's independence, decision-making, and cognitive skills. Finally, repainting and reorganization of classrooms improve aesthetics and comfort, which have been empirically linked to positive student motivation and engagement (Gislason, 2010; Tanner, 2009).

Beyond policy compliance, SBC's projects are also deeply rooted in its institutional identity as a faith-based institution. The College's Mission and Vision Statements embody a strong commitment to Biblical principles of truth, faith, and service, which extend to its educational practices and community engagements. Through community extension initiatives, SBC students are not only able to serve but also to learn from the communities they partner with, gaining valuable insights into social responsibility, Christian stewardship, and the practical application of their academic training. This reflects the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) mandate for higher education institutions to undertake community extension services, but in SBC's case, it is further strengthened by its mission to integrate service with the cultivation of Christ-centered character.

In total, these initiatives operationalize national ECCD policies, DepEd child-friendly school standards, CHED's extension mandate, and SBC's own faith-driven mission. They represent a holistic approach to improving the quality of early learning environments while also nurturing SBC students as servant-leaders who embody truth, faith, and service in their engagement with local communities.

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Objectives of the study

This study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To assess the impact of SBC's community outreach projects—such as fencing, classroom repainting, ceiling installation, furniture and fan donations, and water pump provision—on the safety, sanitation, and learning environment of Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center.
2. To determine the perceived benefits of these initiatives for students, parents, and day care worker in improving children's readiness to learn and overall school experience.
3. To analyze the contribution of these initiatives to SBC students' learning experiences, particularly in relation to the institution's Mission and Vision anchored in Biblical principles of truth, faith, and service.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of SBC's outreach initiatives in improving child-centered learning environments, while also highlighting their contribution to policy implementation, community development, and student formation in line with SBC's mission of truth, faith, and service.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Creating high-quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been one of the toppriorities worldwide. Innovations in ECE have often been inclined towards curriculum and social environment aspects, neglecting the classroom's physical environment. Many research studies have documented the impact of the classroom's physical setting on children's learning environment (Matthews & Lippman, 2016).

History and Development of Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center

The Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center was established on March 20, 2017, with 32 pupils in Sitio Paglaum, Población B, M'lang, Cotabato, as a response to the growing demand for accessible early childhood care and education. Initially, the center operated within the local Southern Baptist Church building, reflecting the community's resourcefulness in maximizing available spaces for the sake of its children.

At the heart of its beginnings was a single day care worker, whose commitment to teaching went beyond financial compensation. Despite relying solely on a modest and irregular government honorarium, she continued to nurture young learners with patience, dedication, and love. Her perseverance demonstrated the vital role of educators in shaping the foundation of children's learning and development. More importantly, her service inspired partner institutions, particularly those with Community Extension Services, to extend God's blessings through tangible support to the center.

The increasing number of enrollees over the years became clear evidence of the center's positive impact on the community. Parents began to see the importance of early childhood education, while children benefited from structured learning opportunities that built their confidence, social skills, and preparedness for formal schooling.

Recognizing the growth of the program and the limitations of a temporary facility, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of M'lang constructed a one-classroom building to serve as a permanent home for the Child Development Center. However, while the LGU provided the physical classroom, it lacked the necessary amenities and provisions to fully meet the pupils' needs. To address this gap, Southern Baptist College (SBC) adopted the center, equipping it with child-friendly resources and support. This development significantly improved the quality of learning by creating a safe, dedicated, and nurturing environment. It also strengthened the community's trust in public education initiatives and reinforced the partnership between local governance, SBC, and community stakeholders.

Over time, the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center has grown into more than just a learning facility. It has become a symbol of hope and empowerment, reflecting the community's collective efforts to secure a better future for its children. The center's existence has led to measurable impacts, including increased school readiness among children, stronger parental engagement in education, and deeper collaboration among government, church, and civil society.

In essence, the history and development of Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center highlight not only the progress of infrastructure and services but also the transformative impact on lives, proving that when communities unite around education, they create pathways of opportunity for generations to come.

Physical Environment and Its Importance inEarly Child Development

The physical classroom environment is recognized as crucial in influencing children's learning and development. Theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding this relationship. Montessori (1912) emphasized the

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importance of the prepared environment, where orderly and child-centered classrooms foster independence, concentration, and creativity. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory likewise underscores the role of the microsystem, such as the classroom, in shaping children's developmental outcomes. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory highlights how the design of classrooms that promote interaction, collaboration, and guided learning can enhance cognitive growth and social competence. In summary, these frameworks emphasize that the quality of the physical space has a direct influence onhow children learn and engage with others.

In the Philippine context, several policies point outthe significance of providing child-friendly learning environments. The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act (Republic Act 8980, as amended by RA 12199 in 2025) institutionalizes the establishment of safe, developmentally appropriate, and accessible child development centers nationwide (Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2025). The Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157, 2012) further mandates that all kindergarten learners must be provided with classrooms that are conducive to holistic growth and school readiness. On a broader level, UNICEF and UNESCO (2009, 2015) promote the Child-Friendly Schools framework, emphasizing adequate lighting, ventilation, sanitation, and inclusive design as essential to achieving equity and quality in education.

Research studies consistently affirm the influence of classroom design on student outcomes. Barrett et al. (2013) found that environmental factors such as lighting, air quality, color, and flexible layout accounted for 16% of the variance in student learning progress. Maxwell (2007) also showed that well-structured and resource-rich classrooms foster independence and social competence, whereas overcrowded or poorly organized environments restrict children's developmental opportunities. Gislason (2010) similarly argued that classroom aesthetics and layout influence engagement, motivation, and teacher-student relationships, while Tanner (2009) demonstrated that improved classroom conditions correlate with better academic performance, attendance, and behavior.

Within the Philippine context, Ulep et al. (2020) highlighted that many early childhood facilities, particularly in rural areas, remain structurally inadequate, limiting children's readiness for formal schooling. These findings resonate with the challenges faced by community-based child development centers, where the lack of proper facilities often undermines the delivery of quality early education. Thus, both global and local evidence support the notion that investments in improving the physical learning environment yield significant developmental benefits for children.

The well-designed and meaningfully organized physical setting is a significant component of children's learning experience and development. It fosters and supports the children's capability to perform activities, initiate and complete tasks, direct their own predetermined choices and responsibilities, and help enhance their cognitive skills (Tadjic, Martinec & Farago, 2015). Review of literature on children's development shows that the early years of a child's education are crucial, and governments across the globe have allotted budgets for developing the physical organization and structure of learning environments.

The Role of the Physical Environment in Learning

The physical environment has long been recognized as a critical factor in children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Barrett et al. (2015) demonstrated that classroom design elements such as lighting, air quality, and flexibility in layout account for measurable gains in student progress. Similarly, Maxwell (2007) emphasized how resource-rich and well-structured environments support independence and social competence, while poorly maintained classrooms restrict developmental opportunities. In the Philippine context, Ulep, Casas, and Orbeta (2020) observed that structural inadequacies in many early childhood facilities, particularly in rural areas, negatively affect school readiness. These findings highlight the importance of community engagement projects that address environmental improvements—such as installing ceilings, repainting classrooms, and providing furniture—as these create learning spaces conducive to holistic child growth.

Community Partnerships and Collective Responsibility

Holistic child development thrives when education is approached as a shared responsibility among schools, families, and communities. International evidence shows that community participation fosters stronger ties and broader support systems for children. Ní Chonchúir et al. (2020) found that collaborative, school-based health interventions enhanced children's well-being by strengthening relationships between schools and families. In the Philippines, collective initiatives

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such as Brigada Eskwela demonstrate how partnerships between schools, parents, and community members lead to improved facilities and a stronger sense of ownership (Bacani & Castillo, 2016). These efforts reflect a recognition that the well-being of children cannot rest solely within classrooms but must be supported by an engaged and empowered community.

Policy Frameworks Supporting Community Engagement

Philippine education policy explicitly recognizes the role of community participation in advancing early childhood development. The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act of 2000 (RA 8980), as amended by RA 12199 in 2025, institutionalizes multi-sectoral collaboration to ensure that children benefit from health, nutrition, early learning, and protection services. Similarly, the Department of Education's Child-Friendly School System framework highlights the importance of safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where stakeholders—including parents and community members—actively contribute to child development. At the tertiary level, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates community extension programs as part of the core functions of higher education institutions (David, Ablaza, & Cruz, 2018). These frameworks anchor practical outreach projects, such as those carried out by SBC, within national policy, ensuring that community engagement initiatives are not only voluntary but expected contributions to nation-building.

Faith-Based Engagement and Holistic Formation

Beyond policy frameworks, faith-based institutions like SBC approach community outreach through their mission and vision grounded in Biblical principles of truth, faith, and service. Engagements such as the provision of safe water through jetmatic pumps, the donation of toys and gifts, and the improvement of learning facilities for the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center reflect a dual purpose: to improve the conditions for children's learning and to form SBC students in values of service and compassion. This mirrors Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki's (2011) meta-analysis, which found that students engaged in service-learning develop stronger academic skills, civic attitudes, and social responsibility. For SBC, student participation in extension programs is thus both a ministry and a pedagogical approach, where learners grow academically and spiritually by serving others.

Holistic Child Development Through Community Engagement

Taken together, these studies and frameworks affirm that community engagement is indispensable for the holistic development of children. Improvements to the physical learning environment, stronger school-community partnerships, alignment with national policy, and integration of faith-based values create a comprehensive ecosystem of support. For the children of Sitio Paglaum, the outreach projects spearheaded by SBC directly address structural and resource-related gaps, while also fostering values of dignity, belonging, and opportunity. For SBC students, these initiatives provide experiential learning that integrates faith, academics, and service, embodying the holistic vision of education.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center, a community-based early childhood care and development (ECCD) facility located in Mlang, Cotabato. The center serves preschool-aged children and is supported primarily through partnerships with the local government and external stakeholders,including Southern Baptist College as its major benefactor.

Respondents

This study involved three groups of respondents namely: Parents/Guardians of Pupils, who provided feedback on the impact of the improved facilities and resources on their children's readiness and enthusiasm for schooling; the teacher/Child Development Worker, who assessed the functionality and effectiveness of the physical improvements and resources in facilitating learning; the community leader who attests to the effectiveness of the school project.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who directly benefited from or were involved in the outreach projects. The total sample included approximately 20 parents/guardians, 1 teacher/child development worker, and 1 community leader.

Research Instruments

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Structured survey questionnaires, consisting of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions, were distributed to parents and guardians to assess their perceptions of improvements in the learning environment and their

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children's holistic development. To complement these findings, semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with the child development worker and a community leader, providing deeper insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of the implemented projects in Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center.

Data Gathering Procedure

The Community Extension Coordinator sought permission from the barangay officials of Poblacion B and the assigned day care worker. Research instruments were validated before the conduct of the survey. Surveys were administered to parents/guardians during scheduled school activities. Interviews with the teacher community leaders were scheduled at their convenience. The collected data were encoded, transcribed, and organized for analysis.

Data Analysis

The study utilized descriptive statistics to analyze the survey data. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the respondents' profile, while mean scores and weighted means were computed to assess changes in the physical environment and children's development outcomes using a five-point Likert scale. Open-ended responses were analyzed through thematic analysis, allowing the identification of common perceptions, challenges, and suggestions from stakeholders.

1. Percentage

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

P = percentage
f = frequency of a given response
N = total number of respondents

2. Mean

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

Where:

$\bar{X}$ = mean
ΣX = sum of all responses
N = total number of respondents

3. Weighted Formula Mean

$$WM = \frac{\Sigma fX}{\Sigma f}$$

Where:

WM = weighted mean
f = frequency of responses
X = weight or scale value assigned to each response
ΣfX = total of the product of frequency and weight
Σf = total number of responses

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analyzed findings of the survey on the impact of Southern Baptist College's Community Extension Project at Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center. The results are organized into five major parts: (1) Respondent Profile, (2) Physical Environment and Infrastructure, (3) Child Development and Learning Outcomes, (4) Stakeholder Perceptions, and (5) Suggestions and Comments.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Category	Options	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25	7	46.67%
	26–35	4	26.67%
	36–45	2	13.33%
	46 and above	2	13.33%
Total		15	100%
Role	Parent/Guardian	12	85.71%
	Teacher	1	7.14%
	Community Leader	1	7.14%
	Other		

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Total		15	100%
Children Enrolled	1	7	46.67%
	2	5	33.33%
	3 or more	3	20.00%
Total		15	100%
Years of Involvement	Less than 1 year	3	20.00%
	1–2 years	6	40.00%
	3 years or more	6	40.00%
Total		15	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. In terms of age, the majority of participants were below 25 years old (7 respondents), followed by those aged 26–35 years (4 respondents). A smaller number were in the 36–45 years (2 respondents) and 46 years and above (2 respondents) categories. This distribution indicates that the respondents were mostly young parents or guardians, which is consistent with the target beneficiaries of early childhood development programs.

With regard to roles, the findings show that the overwhelming majority were parents or guardians (12 respondents), while teachers (1 respondent) and community leaders (1 respondent) had minimal representation. This is expected, since the project is directly aimed at families and their children. The active participation of parents highlights their strong interest and involvement in the development of the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center.

In terms of the number of children enrolled at the center, 7 parents reported having one child enrolled, while 5 parents had two children, and 3 parents had three or more children attending. This demonstrates that several households entrust multiple children to the center, underscoring its importance in providing early education and care for families in the community.

Regarding years of involvement, 6 respondents (40%) had been engaged for 1–2 years, and another 6 respondents (40%) had been involved for 3 years or more, while 3 respondents (20%) were new to the program with less than a year of involvement. This suggests a balance between long-term stakeholders who have witnessed the program's progress over time and newer members who provide fresh perspectives.

In general, the respondent profile reflects that the majority are young parents who are directly benefiting from the services of the child development center. Their participation provides reliable insights into how the SBC community project has influenced children's development and family well-being in Sitio Paglaum.

Table 2. Physical Environment & Infrastructure

Item	Before Project (Mean)	After Project (Mean)
Safety and security	2.1	4.6
Cleanliness & ventilation	2.3	4.5
Comfort due to electric fans	2.0	4.4
Classroom appearance	2.2	4.7
Clean water availability	2.4	4.6
Feeding area & kitchen	2.1	4.5

(Mean scores, scale 1–5: 5 = Excellent, 1 = Poor)

Table 2 shows that all aspects of the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center's physical environment significantly improved after the SBC project. Safety and security, cleanliness and ventilation, comfort due to electric fans, classroom appearance, water availability, and feeding facilities all increased from mean ratings of around 2.0–2.4 (Poor to Fair) before the project to 4.4–4.7 (Very Good to Excellent) after the project. These results indicate that the interventions greatly enhanced the overall learning environment, making it safer, healthier, and more conducive for children's development.

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Table 3. Child Development & Learning Outcomes

Statement	SA f(%)	Af(%)	Nf(%)	Df(%)	SD f(%)	Mean
More active & participative	10 (67%)	4 (27%)	1 (6%)	0	0	4.6
Hygiene improved	11 (73%)	3 (20%)	1 (7%)	0	0	4.7
Eats better	12 (80%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	0	0	4.7
Excited to attend	9 (60%)	5 (33%)	1 (7%)	0	0	4.5
TV enhanced learning	7 (47%)	6 (40%)	2 (13%)	0	0	4.3
Better social interaction	10 (67%)	4 (27%)	1 (6%)	0	0	4.6
Satisfied with project	13 (87%)	2 (13%)	0	0	0	4.9

Table 3 shows that respondents strongly agreed on the positive effects of the SBC project on children's development. The highest-rated outcomes were improvements in hygiene (M = 4.7), nutrition through feeding facilities (M = 4.7), and overall satisfaction with the project (M = 4.9). Children were also reported to be more active and participative (M = 4.6), more excited to attend school (M = 4.5), and better at social interaction (M = 4.6). The use of television as a learning tool was beneficial but slightly lower (M = 4.3). Overall, the results indicate that the project substantially enhanced children's well-being, learning experiences, and parents' satisfaction.

Table 4. Stakeholder Perceptions

Question	Themes (Summary)
Most beneficial aspects	Classroom repairs, water pump, feeding area, stand fans, ceiling fan, and provisions of refrigerator, TV, installation of ceiling in the feeding area, and perimeter fencing of the classroom.
Positive changes observed	Better hygiene, more active learners, improved attendance
Challenges/limitations	Need more teachers, maintenance, and limited materials
Further partnerships	Yes, sustain the feeding program, add resources

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Southern Baptist College's community extension projects at the Sitio Paglaum Child Development Center significantly improved the physical learning environment, making it safer, healthier, and more conducive to children's holistic development. Interventions such as classroom repairs, ventilation, repainting, feeding facilities, and provision of clean water enhanced hygiene, nutrition, school enthusiasm, and social interaction, while parents and stakeholders reported high satisfaction with the outcomes. These findings highlight the effectiveness of faith-based and community-driven initiatives in bridging gaps in early childhood education.

To sustain these impacts, the study recommends regular facility maintenance, capacity building for the day care worker, and resource mobilization through partnerships with government, NGOs, and private donors. Addressing the growing number of enrollees requires additional teachers or volunteers, while continued involvement of SBC students ensures both service-learning and community benefit. Strengthened collaboration with the LGU and DepEd is also essential to align future efforts with the ECCD Act, the Child-Friendly School System, and CHED's extension framework, ensuring long-term sustainability and policy integration.

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