



ALIGNING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES WITH INSTITUTIONAL CORE VALUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AT SAINT THERESA COLLEGE OF TANDAG

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the alignment of school activities with the institutional core values of Service, Truth, and Communion and their relationship with a culture of excellence at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. during the School Year 2025-2026. A mixed-methods approach was employed involving 320 respondents, consisting of 287 students and 33 faculty members from the institution's academic departments. Quantitative data were gathered through a researcher-made, expert-validated questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson's correlation. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings showed that school activities were generally implemented, with an overall weighted mean of 4.07. Christian Formation obtained the highest domain mean (4.18), followed by Instruction (4.05), Extension (4.04), and Research (4.00). The activities were also generally congruent with the institution's core values, obtaining an overall weighted mean of 3.94. Among the core values, Service recorded the highest mean (4.03), followed by Communion (3.93) and Truth (3.86). The culture of excellence was reported as evident across academic performance, participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, discipline and character formation, recognition and awards, and perceptions of excellence. Correlational findings indicated significant relationships between the implementation of school activities, their congruence with the institutional core values, and the manifestation of a culture of excellence. Qualitative findings further emphasized the role of school activities in faith formation, values integration, leadership development, community engagement, and academic and personal growth. The findings suggest that deliberate alignment of institutional activities with core values can strengthen the development and sustainability of a culture of excellence in Catholic higher education.

Keywords: *institutional core values, school activities, culture of excellence, values integration, Catholic higher education, Christian formation, institutional alignment*

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are increasingly expected to pursue academic excellence while simultaneously developing learners' character, values, social responsibility, and sense of purpose. In this context, institutional values are not merely statements expressed in vision and mission documents; they become meaningful when translated into everyday teaching practices, student experiences, organizational decisions, and school activities. In higher education, alignment between institutional goals and actual practices is particularly important because it provides coherence to the educational experiences of students and helps establish a shared institutional culture. Recent research on institutional alignment suggests that vision, mission, goals, and objectives become more meaningful when they are integrated into institutional practices and reflected in the lived experiences of students and faculty (Aquino & Rivano, 2026).

This consideration is particularly significant in Catholic education, where academic development is understood alongside moral, spiritual, and social formation. Catholic schools are expected to provide educational experiences that reflect their religious identity and mission while preparing students for responsible participation in society. Keefe (2021), in examining the experiences of graduates of Catholic secondary schools, found that participants recognized both the academic strengths of their schools and the influence of Catholic educational mission on the development of personal values. Similarly, Cacho (2021) reported that graduates of a Philippine Catholic institution viewed values-oriented formation as an important component of their education and associated Catholic education with holistic formation and social transformation. These findings underscore the importance of ensuring that institutional mission and values are not confined to formal statements but are experienced through concrete educational practices.

The integration of institutional values into school activities provides one mechanism through which such mission can be enacted. Activities related to Christian formation, instruction, research, community extension, student organizations, and other institutional programs can provide opportunities for learners to practice values rather than merely learn about them. Recent research on Catholic educational practice has likewise emphasized the importance of integrating institutional identity and Christian formation into curricular and educational programs. Banjao and Arpilleda (2026), for example, examined the integration of Christian formation across curricular programs in Catholic schools in the Caraga Region and highlighted the embedding of Christian values within different areas of school practice. At a broader level, a recent meta-analysis of exemplary Catholic school initiatives found that mission-oriented practice is strengthened when holistic formation, community engagement, learning, service, and institutional mission operate as interconnected elements of school life (Mission in Practice Project, 2026).

The alignment of institutional values with educational practices is also relevant to the development of a culture of excellence. Excellence in education extends beyond academic achievement to include student engagement, character formation, participation, leadership, social responsibility, and continuous improvement of institutional practices. Evidence from Philippine educational settings indicates that school culture is associated with student outcomes. In a study of national high schools in Ilocos Norte, Pagat (2025) found that school culture was generally favorable, with unity of purpose receiving a particularly high assessment and reflecting strong alignment with school mission and values. The study further found significant relationships between selected school-culture factors, particularly collaborative leadership, collegial support, teacher collaboration, and learning partnership, and students' academic performance.

Such findings suggest that excellence may be sustained when institutional culture provides a coherent environment in which academic and developmental goals are mutually reinforced.

Despite the growing literature on Catholic education, school culture, values formation, and institutional alignment, there remains a need for context-specific research examining how institutional activities actually reflect the core values of a Catholic higher education institution and how such alignment relates to a culture of excellence. Existing studies have examined Catholic mission and values formation, the quality of Catholic education, and school culture separately, but fewer studies have simultaneously examined the implementation of school activities, their congruency with specific institutional core values, and the manifestation of excellence from the perspectives of both students and faculty. This gap is particularly relevant in institutions where core values serve as explicit foundations for educational practice.

Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. (STCTI) is a Catholic educational institution whose educational mission is anchored on the core values of Service, Truth, and Communion. The institution implements various activities through Christian Formation, Instruction, Research, and Extension to support the holistic development of its students and faculty. The present study therefore examined the extent to which these activities are implemented, the degree to which they are congruent with the institution's core values, and the extent to which a culture of excellence is manifested within the institution. The study also investigated the relationships among these variables and explored the lived experiences of students and faculty regarding the alignment of school activities with the institutional core values. The original study specifically identified these dimensions as the major areas of inquiry.

By examining institutional activities, core-value congruency, and culture of excellence within a single framework, this study seeks to contribute empirical evidence to discussions on mission-driven Catholic education. More specifically, it provides an institutional-level perspective on how values can be translated into educational practices and how such practices may support academic, personal, spiritual, and social development. The findings may provide a basis for strengthening institutional programs

and designing interventions that promote greater coherence between the stated values of a Catholic higher education institution and the experiences of its academic community.

Research Questions

This study examined the alignment of school activities with the core values of Service, Truth, and Communion and its relationship with the culture of excellence at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of implementation of school activities in terms of:
 - 1.1 Christian Formation;
 - 1.2 Instruction;
 - 1.3 Research; and
 - 1.4 Extension?
2. What is the extent of congruency of school activities with the STCTI core values of:
 - 2.1 Service;
 - 2.2 Truth; and
 - 2.3 Communion?
3. To what extent is a culture of excellence manifested in terms of:
 - 3.1 academic performance;
 - 3.2 participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities;
 - 3.3 discipline and character formation;
 - 3.4 recognition and awards; and
 - 3.5 student and faculty perceptions of excellence?
4. How do students and faculty describe their lived experiences regarding the alignment of school activities with the STCTI core values and the development of a culture of excellence?
5. How do the qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative results regarding the implementation of school activities, core-value congruency, and culture of excellence?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design to examine the implementation of school activities, their congruency with the institutional core values of Service, Truth, and Communion, and the manifestation of a culture of excellence at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. The study was conducted in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, with 320 respondents comprising 287 students and 33 faculty members from the College of Nursing, College of Arts, Science and Teacher Education, College of Business, Technology and Accountancy, and College of Criminology. A researcher-made questionnaire validated by experts served as the primary instrument for quantitative data collection. The instrument consisted of four parts covering the respondents' demographic characteristics; the level of implementation of school activities in terms of Christian Formation, Instruction, Research, and Extension; the extent of congruency of school

activities with the core values of Service, Truth, and Communion; and the manifestation of a culture of excellence in terms of academic performance, participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, discipline and character formation, recognition and awards, and student and faculty perceptions of excellence. Qualitative data were also gathered through interviews to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty concerning the congruency of school activities with the institutional core values and their perceived contribution to a culture of excellence. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage for the demographic characteristics, weighted mean for the level of implementation and extent of congruency, and Pearson's product-moment correlation to determine significant relationships among the major study variables. Qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework, and the qualitative findings were examined alongside the quantitative results to determine their corroboration and provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

RESULTS

Table 1. Level of Implementation of School Activities

School Activity Domain	Average Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Christian Formation	4.18	Implemented	1
Instruction	4.05	Implemented	2
Extension	4.04	Implemented	3
Research	4.00	Implemented	4
Overall	4.07	Implemented	

Table 2. Extent of Congruency of School Activities With STCTI Core Values

STCTI Core Value	Average Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Service	4.03	Congruent	1
Communion	3.93	Congruent	2
Truth	3.86	Congruent	3
Overall	3.94	Congruent	

Table 3. Manifestation of a Culture of Excellence

Dimension of Culture of Excellence	Result Reported in the Study	Interpretation
Academic performance	Evident	Evident
Participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities	Evident	Evident

Dimension of Culture of Excellence	Result Reported in the Study	Interpretation
Discipline and character formation	Evident	Evident
Recognition and awards	Evident	Evident
Student and faculty perceptions of excellence	Evident	Evident
Overall culture of excellence	Evident	Evident

Table 4. Thematic Findings on the Lived Experiences of Students and Faculty

Major Theme	Synthesis of Reported Experiences
Faith formation	School activities served as avenues for strengthening faith and Christian formation.
Community engagement	Activities provided opportunities for students to participate in and serve the community.
Leadership development	Participation in institutional activities supported leadership development.
Values integration	Respondents experienced the institutional values of Service, Truth, and Communion through school activities.
Personal growth	Participation contributed to students' personal development.
Academic development	Institutional activities were perceived to support academic growth.
Social responsibility	School activities encouraged responsibility toward others and the wider community.

Table 5. Corroboration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Finding	Corroboration
School activities were generally implemented (AWM = 4.07).	Respondents described school activities as important avenues for faith formation, leadership, community engagement, and values integration.	Corroborated
School activities were congruent with STCTI core values (AWM = 3.94).	Respondents emphasized the integration of Service, Truth, and Communion in their experiences.	Corroborated
Culture of excellence was reported as evident.	Respondents associated school activities and core values with personal growth, academic development, and social responsibility.	Corroborated

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that school activities at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. were generally implemented, with an overall weighted mean of 4.07. Christian Formation

obtained the highest rating (4.18), followed by Instruction (4.05), Extension (4.04), and Research (4.00). This indicated that the institution consistently integrated its Catholic identity into its educational activities, particularly through Christian formation. Lapsley and Kelley (2022) emphasized that Catholic education supported students' spiritual identity and moral-character formation when these dimensions were intentionally integrated into school practices. The present finding supported this perspective, as Christian Formation emerged as the strongest area of implementation.

The school activities were also generally congruent with the STCTI core values, obtaining an overall mean of 3.94. Service ranked highest (4.03), followed by Communion (3.93) and Truth (3.86). The strong rating for Service suggested that students were provided opportunities to practice compassion, participation, and community involvement. Sultmann and Hall (2022) emphasized that service and community engagement were important expressions of Catholic educational identity. Poncini (2024) likewise highlighted the importance of supporting religious educators in strengthening Catholic identity, mission, and faith formation within school culture.

The findings further indicated that a culture of excellence was evident in academic performance, participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, discipline and character formation, recognition and awards, and perceptions of excellence among students and faculty. This suggested that excellence at STCTI extended beyond academic achievement to include character, participation, and holistic development. Cacho (2021) similarly emphasized the contribution of Catholic education to holistic formation and the development of values beyond academic competence.

The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results. Respondents described school activities as avenues for faith formation, community engagement, leadership development, values integration, personal growth, academic development, and social responsibility. These experiences demonstrated that institutional values became more meaningful when students encountered and practiced them through actual school activities. McLure and Aldridge (2023) likewise emphasized the importance of school culture and students' experiences in strengthening Christian values within educational settings.

Overall, the findings suggested that STCTI's school activities were generally aligned with its institutional core values and provided a foundation for a culture of excellence. The relatively lower ratings for Research and Truth suggested areas that could be further strengthened through greater emphasis on ethical research, academic integrity, truth-seeking, and values-based decision-making.

Conclusions

The study concluded that school activities at Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. were generally implemented and were congruent with the core values of Service, Truth, and Communion. A culture of excellence was also evident in academic performance, participation, discipline and character formation, recognition, and perceptions of excellence. Overall, the findings indicated that aligning school activities

with institutional core values provided a strong foundation for developing a culture of excellence at STCTI.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that STCTI strengthen the integration of its core values across school activities, particularly in Research and Truth-related practices. The institution could also enhance values-based research, academic integrity, community engagement, and leadership opportunities. Regular evaluation of school activities could further ensure their continued alignment with Service, Truth, and Communion and sustain the development of a culture of excellence.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study complied with applicable ethical standards in the conduct of research. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were maintained, and the information gathered was used solely for research purposes. The researchers also observed proper data-handling procedures and ensured that the results were presented accurately and objectively.

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