

Why Does Academia Abstain? Looking into the Underlying Reasons for Limited Research Participation in a Higher Education Institution

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Abstract: In this study, we examine the values and perceptions of selected teaching faculty regarding research practices at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines. Through interviews, the study identifies administrative, structural, economic, and existential barriers to doing research. To shed light on these perceived challenges, we adopt a philosophical approach, particularly Axel Honneth's struggle for recognition and Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of epistemicide, to uncover the underlying factors contributing to the limited participation of some faculty members in doing formal research.

Keywords: epistemicide, politics of research, recognition, research perception and values

INTRODUCTION

The Context

The study is a part of a research project with an overarching theme: “The Politics of Research: A Critical Investigation of Stakeholders’ Perceptions and Values Regarding Faculty Research in a Higher Education Institution in the Philippines.” By “stakeholders,” we mean the administration, the faculty researchers, non-research faculty members, and students belonging to the Higher Education Institution being studied which we will be referring to hereafter as HEIM. This paper focuses on the non-research faculty members, or the academic staff who are mainly involved in teaching and less involved in formal research. By “formal” we refer to research studies with the end goal of publication, which are usually commissioned and supervised by a research center at an academic institution. The data were gathered through in-person and online interviews, in accordance with and with the approval of an ethics committee.

Through respondents’ statements, an in-depth analysis is undertaken to unravel the nuances of research practices in the HEIM. In particular, we focus on *how the inherent nature of politics influences the limited research participation of some faculty members at the HEIM*.

The framework is philosophical, designed to construct and examine the underlying ideas vis-à-vis thinkers relevant to achieving the paper’s aim. By “philosophical,” we mean, first, an integration of Axel Honneth’s notions of love and self-esteem, rights and respect, and social esteem in his *Struggle for Recognition* (1992) with the plight of the non-research faculty respondents. Second, an appropriation of the respondents’ statements in light of the Portuguese thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ idea of the death of knowledge in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (2014).

Using a phenomenological approach, we intend to understand how faculty members experience research expectations and openly discuss personal and institutional pressures to grasp a *Lebenswelt* (life world) that led them to a decision not to engage in formal research.

The study comprises several parts: first, an attempt to contextualize the status of research in the HEIM, aimed at identifying the research gap in the existing discourse. Second, the analysis of non-research faculty respondents' testimonies vis-à-vis Honneth's spheres of struggle of recognition. The third reflects the gathered statements in the light of Santos' views on alternative and inclusive epistemologies. The final section concludes and summarizes the paper along with some recommendations.

The study is significant not only to a specific higher education institution but also to other universities and colleges, as it uncovers the underlying philosophies that shape perceptions and values about research. In particular, these undercurrent frameworks are necessary for crafting effective work and research load arrangements and for formulating meaningful evaluation mechanisms. These, in turn, provide direction toward improved mentoring and communication that mitigates bureaucratic challenges in facilitating research in an academic institution. In a general sense, it is also important, as the findings foster inclusive and innovative alternative epistemologies, particularly in the humanities, which are gradually being dissolved within universities.¹ The results are likewise relevant because they advocate for the legitimacy of native-language outputs as alternative epistemologies that empower indigenous knowledge, which is often considered a minority and marginalized.

¹ Glen O'Hara, "A Perfect Storm is Hitting the Humanities in British Higher Education," in *North American Conference on British Studies* (30 January 2024), <<https://www.nacbs.org/post/a-perfect-storm-is-hitting-the-humanities-in-british-higher-education>>.

Research Landscape

Before Philippine colonization, learning was more of a form of discipleship, handed down from parents to their children. Higher education was established by the Spaniards (1560s to 1890s) and focused primarily on legal, medical, and religious education, with minimal emphasis on formal research.² In the mid-20th century (1940s-1960s), research was conducted by students as part of their academic requirements to graduate, but not by faculty members.³ At this time, educators in Philippine universities prioritized teaching over research and were mandated to do so only after pursuing graduate degrees.⁴

It was only in the 1970s that research was institutionalized, moving from individual efforts to academic function, and in the 1990s, the government established an agency to oversee higher education institutions in the country. For three decades, significant progress was made with the expectation that research would contribute to national development. This government agency was established by Republic Act No. 7722, or the Higher Education Act of 1994, which established the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED). It mandates universities and colleges as centers with four core functions: instruction (teaching),⁵

² Rose Marie Salazar-Clemeña and Sherlyne A. Almonte-Acosta, “Developing Research Culture in Philippine Higher Education Institutions: Perspectives of University Faculty,” Paper Presentation at the Regional Seminar Competition, Cooperation and Change in the Academic Profession: Shaping Higher Education’s Contribution to Knowledge and Research, Hangzhou, China, 18–19 September 2007 (Paris: UNESCO, 2007).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ UNESCO, *Higher Education and Society: The Need for Partnerships* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1995), <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133645>>.

⁵ Commission on Higher Education, “Policy-Standard to Enhance Quality Assurance (QA) in the Philippine Higher Education Through an Outcomes-Based and Typology-Based QA,” CHED Memorandum Order No. 46, Series of 2012, <<https://legacy.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-No.46-s2012.pdf>>.

research (knowledge generation),⁶ extension (community engagement),⁷ and production (innovation).⁸ In all four functions, research has become an integral part of education. A CHED Memorandum explains this.

The knowledge society or knowledge economy characterizes the university not just as a generator of knowledge, an educator of young minds, and a transmitter of culture but also as a major agent of economic growth, a Research and Development laboratory, and a mechanism through which the nation builds its human capital to enable it to actively participate in the global economy' it is, therefore, imperative to inspire and enable Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) become platforms for research and development, innovation and extension in pursuit of inclusive social and economic development.⁹

Each higher education institution is thus instructed to have physical and structural facilities for research, innovation, and extension that enhance faculty research capabilities and instill a research culture among its research staff and students. The memorandum, likewise, requires “building up, retraining, and retaining a sustainable stream of a new

⁶ Commission on Higher Education, “Pathways to Equity, Relevance, and Advancement in Research, Innovation, and Extension in Higher Education,” CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, Series of 2016, <<https://legacy.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-52-s.-2016.pdf>>.

⁷ Commission on Higher Education, “Policy Reforms for the Grants-in-Aid Funds of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for Research and Development and Extension,” CHED Memorandum Order No. 3, Series of 2015, <<https://legacy.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CMO-no.-03-s.-2015.pdf>>.

⁸ Department of Budget and Management and Commission on Higher Education, “SUC Leveling Instrument and Guidelines for the Implementation Thereof,” Joint Circular No. 1, Series of 2003, <<https://www.dbm.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/JC-No.-1-s.-2003.pdf>>.

⁹ Commission on Higher Education, “Pathways to Equity, Relevance, and Advancement in Research, Innovation, and Extension in Philippine Higher Education.”

generation of research; increasing research productivity, and raising research quality and impact.”¹⁰ Since at the heart of every university is a faculty member who creates and delivers instruction to learners, he/she must, in addition to teaching demands, engage in research activities to contribute to his/her field of expertise. This underscores the vital role of faculty members in research.

The Tension

Despite laws and programs that aim to institutionalize research in government and the private sector, a vast number of faculty members continue to prioritize teaching over a formal research-oriented education. On the one hand is the majority, who see teaching as the primary role of an educator, while on the other hand are the educator-scholars distinguished by their research endeavors. A study by Gopez et al. found that a minimal number of elite universities in Metro Manila engage in research production and saw that educational institutions outside the National Capital Region show minimal to zero faculty research results.¹¹

Hence, the question: why do faculty members opt out of doing research despite the mandates of belonging to a higher education institution?

Lemuel Sayao et al.’s 2023 study enumerates the barriers to research productivity among tenured faculty at a Mindanao higher education institution.¹² First, the teaching load limits the faculty member’s time for research. Second, faculty members, while teaching, are also

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Christian P. Gopez, et al., “The Research Productivity Profiles of the Philippines’ Most Research Productive Higher Education Institutions: Analyses by Regional Clusters and Ownership Types,” in *SchoweveriEnggJ*, 17:1 (2024), 134–147, <<https://doi.org/10.54645/2024171ZLG-77>>

¹² Lemuel M. Sayao, et al., “Barriers of Faculty on Research Productivity,” in *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 15 (2023), 406–421, <<https://scimatic.org/storage/journals/11/pdfs/2257.pdf>>.

enrolled in graduate programs. Third is the insufficient support coming from the institutions.¹³ Related to these findings are reports in a study by Rey Jhon Rebuas et al., which point to the faculty member's lack of time, inadequate training, insufficient funding, and the absence of a research culture at the university or college.¹⁴ David Michael San Juan's 2024 study blames the loss of research productivity among faculty on inadequate incentives and adds the problem of the use of language (English as the dominant use) and the high cost of publishing in H-index journals as reasons why faculty members do not engage in formal research.¹⁵

A significant factor common to studies on faculty and research is personal to the faculty, such as their lack of recognition, fear of rejection, low confidence, familial commitments, prioritization of teaching over research, collegial conflicts, administrative work, lack of interest, and lack of know-how in research.¹⁶

The Gap

From the ongoing discourse, we identify three main reasons why faculty members opt out of conducting formal research: first, the lack of a

¹³ *Ibid.*, 417ff.

¹⁴ Rey Johof Rebuas, et al., "Exploring Factors Affecting Research Engagement of Instructors in Davao de Oro State College: Bases for Enhancement and Policy Recommendations," in *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 6:12 (2025), 5978-5991.

¹⁵ David Michael M. San Juan, "A Critique of Scopus-Centrism in Philippine Universities and Educational and/or Research Agencies: Why Filipinos Should Write Research in Filipino," in *Humanities Diliman*, 21:2 (July–December 2024), 133–171.

¹⁶ See, Rebuas et al.; Queenie Kimverlee C. Landingin et al., "Deterrents to Research Pursuits of University Faculty in Northern Philippines: Research Management Strategy," *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 12:1 (2024), 166-174, <<https://multidisciplinaryjournals.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Full-Paper-Deterrents-to-Research-Pursuits-of-University-Faculty-in-Northern-Philippines-Research-Management-Strategy.pdf>>; Cherry Ann G. Durante et al., "Research Hesitancy in the Academe: A Multi-University Study in the Philippines," in *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 4:5 (2023), 1442-1446, <<https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.05.05>>.

research culture; second, structural and institutional factors; and last, personal factors. The findings are based on rigorous investigations and documentation, yet it is evident that few analyze these “causes” through philosophical analysis, i.e., an examination of the “faculty meaning-making” behind faculty non-engagement in formal research. Furthermore, the personal factors identified are, in most cases, listed last in the order of presentation, and yet, they are common in most studies on faculty research. It is from this vantage point that we focus our philosophical examination.

Hence, the study aims to understand the perceptions and values of selected faculty members at a higher education institution and why they chose not to engage in formal research through philosophical reflection. In meeting this aim, we also ask: How do faculty members perceive the meaning and value of research within the HEIM? What existential factors led them to decide not to engage in formal research? How can philosophical reflection interpret their decisions to opt out of doing research? In the succeeding parts, these questions will be enlightened using Axel Honneth’s struggle of recognition and Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ notion of epistemicide.

AXEL HONNETH’S NOTION OF RECOGNITION AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

Axel Honneth’s *The Struggle for Recognition* (1992) provides an ideal framework for examining the perceptions and values of selected faculty members at HEIM. Originally a critique of social theories (Karl Marx, Georges Sorel, Jean-Paul Sartre, and, mainly, G.W.F. Hegel and George Herbert Mead),¹⁷ the thoughts therein substantiate the faculty members’ issues and concerns. Particularly, Honneth’s discussion on the three

¹⁷ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), x, xii, xix, 71-91.

spheres of recognition: first, *love or emotional support*;¹⁸ second, *rights or respect*;¹⁹ and third, *social esteem*.²⁰

In the introduction, translator Joel Anderson expounds Honneth's claims that it is not enough to have an equal distribution of material wealth to acquire justice, instead, through a recognition of these spheres, the full realization of a person is achieved.²¹ Thomas Aquinas describes this when he refers to *actus*, or that which precedes *potentia* (something potential is produced only by something in act).²² In the same way, someone can understand and provide justice only if he/she have experienced it. Thus, when the spheres of recognition are met, self-realization is experienced.

For Honneth, each sphere or condition of struggle has its outcomes: love produces self-confidence, rights lead to self-respect, and self-esteem fosters solidarity, while, conversely, without recognition of love, rights, and self-esteem, struggles persist.²³ In light of Honneth's recognition struggle, we examine the selected statements from the respondents.

The Faculty and the Struggle for Love

Honneth argues that love, emotional support, and self-confidence are fundamental to self-realization.²⁴ This is the first sphere that influences one's self-perception and the process of forming it. It asserts that when love is provided, one becomes more autonomous as subjects treat each other as equals, i.e., with mutuality and respect.²⁵ As Joseph Fletcher puts it, "Love

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95-130.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 131-153.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 153-172.

²¹ *Ibid.*, x.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II q. 58, a. 1, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947), <https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274,_Thomas_Aquinas,_Summa_Theologiae_%5B1%5D,_EN.pdf>.

²³ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 92-130, 131-153, 160-170.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-130, 173-174.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.,

and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed.”²⁶ When one feels loved and secure, especially from family and people dear to them, one’s emotions become secure. This emotional solace is a necessary condition for self-confidence, which builds individual self-trust. Self-trust ensures creativity, freedom, and excellence in a person’s endeavors. Honneth explains the necessity and effects of love not only between relationships but also on the individual’s capacity that comes from within, referring to it as “... a fundamental level of emotional confidence—not only in the experience of needs and feelings, but also in their expression—which the intersubjective experience of love helps to bring about.”²⁷ Thus, only through the experience of being loved can persons acquire the confidence in themselves that propels them to perform to their optimum, being aware that they are loved.

The inspiration pointed out by Faculty 2 exemplifies Honneth’s point of a loved-self towards productivity when the respondent was asked how to entice non-research faculty members to undergo research in one of the HEIM’s research centers, saying:

Don’t push and tell them to be the varsity players. You start from step by step, ... If you will make the grounds more fertile, the track towards ... high impact. There is a road going there. If you make that road more comfortable, smooth, it’s a smooth ride. Or if the road is bumpy, then you give 4-wheel drive ... There will be wear and tear, which means the researchers will become disheartened. So you do one thing at a time. Don’t talk about high-impact faculty. Don’t say you are wrong ... You have to be very particular [about] how you are going to say it. It might demotivate the potential researchers ... They will be traumatized ... Support

²⁶ Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 87.

²⁷ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 107.

them, don't leave them alone ... When they are not expert(s), it means they need your guidance every step ... Appreciate, don't discourage.²⁸

Although Honneth is particular about the struggle for recognition in intimate relationships in the first sphere, the same is true in the workplace, as in the case of HEIM. The nuance of the term “love” is felt more as emotional support among colleagues, workers, and superiors when they become involved in research. The respondent's aphorism about a vehicle on a rough road describes the task of a researcher who needs support from a mentor and from everyone, including his/her family, institution, and society. This provides inspiration for one's own research perspectives and, eventually, his/her interest. This need for a multifaceted structure surrounding a person, or the faculty member, is necessary for guidance and supportive communication. This comprises what Honneth means by *self-confidence*. This is realized when a person acquires a self-conceived faculty or *potentia* from people and institutions already versed in the task. Faculty 1 recalls,

To be fair and honest, *wala naman akong masamang experience talaga sa* [I really didn't have any bad experience with the ____ ... (name of the research institution is omitted)], especially during the time of [____ ... (name of the research administrator is omitted)]. I had the best support at that time ... I was able to publish 2 or 3.²⁹

²⁸ Faculty 2, “Part 2: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines,” cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L. Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 19 December 2024), 5, 8.

²⁹ Faculty 1, “Part 1: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines,” cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L. Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 16 December 2024), 12.

An individual who was once cared for and watched over has a strong chance of producing research tasks, as they are fueled by care, affection, attention, and genuine emotional presence inspired by others. Indeed, it is something when a student or colleague praises your intellectual progress, but it has a more lasting impact when mentors and superiors offer feedback with care and compassion.

The Faculty and the Struggle for Rights and Respect

The second recognition Honneth suggests revolves around the rights and respect. This recognition lies in acknowledging a person as equal or autonomous. This corresponds directly to one's legal and moral identity, depending on the exercise of autonomy in making judgments within a society. Honneth further clarifies that the use of the term "legal" is more than an extension of law or a mere collection of rules, rather, it is rights, which acknowledge persons as morally responsible and autonomous agents.³⁰ Rights recognize beings who are capable of expression as equal members of a community—a community grounded in some universal norms.

It is observable at this juncture that the role of an institution is crucial since it is only within with others that, according to Honneth, "one can count as the bearer of rights ... [that] one is socially recognized," i.e., as another human subject.³¹ Reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative, "Act that you use humanity ... always at the same time as an end, never as a means,"³² Honneth's second sphere affirms that each is an agent equal to others, and thus, capable of possessing rights. The struggle for recognition lies in the fact that each

³⁰ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 92-131.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

³² Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H.J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 96.

person's rightful claims must be addressed and that genuine attention be guaranteed by society or by someone in authority.

A violation or the misrecognition of rights results in disrespect for the person. This incurs shame and moral suffering. This is the struggle between the recognition of rights and disrespect, as manifested in the plight of the teaching faculty. Faculty 1 sees Honneth's point when he questions a HEIM administrator who imposes research despite not producing any. He/she says:

You can't demand something from somebody else if you can't ... you yourself can't deliver. Don't put people on a different standard than yourself. Kasi, and medyo unfair kasi is, the Admin is demanding research, research, research. Oh, nasaan yung sa inyo? Pakitaan niyo rin kami. Unfair naman that you demand something from us, Faculty ... You already have this rank of full professor without any publication at all, 'di ba? Mali eh, mali yung ganung system eh.

(You can't demand something from somebody else if you can't ... You yourself can't deliver. Don't put people on a different standard than you set for yourself. Because what's unfair is that the Administration keeps demanding research, research, research. Well, where's yours? Show us too. It's unfair that you demand something from us, the Faculty ... You already hold the rank of full professor without any publications at all, right? That's wrong, that kind of system is wrong.)³³

³³ Faculty 1, "Part 1: Interview on research practices," 7.

The institution's neglect of the *legal* recognition of faculty members' rights is a lack of moral decency on the part of the institution's managers, who demand something they themselves do not produce. This is equally sound when someone neglects the gentle approach in research submissions, where: "*One wrong word can traumatize a beginner researcher ... Sometimes the feedback discourages you. It makes you say, 'Ayoko na ... (I don't want to anymore ...) Traumatized,*" the respondent adds.³⁴

Honneth describes this emotional harm in the case of a sexual abuse victim.³⁵ For him, it is not the physical agony that results in pain, but from the very thought that the victim was treated *not as an equal subject* but as an object. The invisible suffering becomes real when one is berated emotionally and spiritually, since it is one's personal identity that has been broken. He further explains this by way of an analogy of physical disease and its immaterial effect on one's being: "The experience of being socially denigrated or humiliated endangers the identity of human beings, just as infection with a disease endangers their physical life."³⁶ In the same manner, a faculty member who is rejected, despite tedious efforts, is, in one way or another, feeling "disrespected" and leaves him/her intellectually, emotionally, or perhaps spiritually, losing faith in him/herself.³⁷

Besides the first sphere of recognition, i.e., love and emotional support, the recognition of rights and respect produces self-respect and institutionalizes equal and moral treatment among selves. The self-realization produces external, fruitful, and meaningful results and is fully realized in the third sphere.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 132.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁷ Such, however, is not to condone poorly crafted research but refers only to the studies that are worthy for dissemination but not given the opportunity due to some reasons.

The Faculty and the Struggle for Social Esteem and Solidarity

For Honneth, the person who is loved (first sphere) and respected (second sphere) consequently receives social esteem. This is the third sphere, once experienced, it inspires a person to actualize his/her *potentia* to pursue tasks, including the most challenging ones. For the faculty respondents, it is undeniable that research represents one of the herculean tasks in one's academic life.

The studies mentioned earlier were also articulated directly and indirectly by the non-research faculty respondents identifying the following reasons: substantial teaching load (Faculty 1, Faculty 2, Faculty 3, Faculty 4, Faculty 5, Faculty 6), financial barriers (Faculty 1, Faculty 3, Faculty 4, Faculty 5), insufficient institutional support (Faculty 1, Faculty 2, Faculty 4, Faculty 6), weak research culture (Faculty 1, Faculty 2, Faculty 3, Faculty 6), poor or unclear procedures (Faculty 2, Faculty 4), no/insufficient research incentives (Faculty 1, Faculty 4, Faculty 6), unjust evaluation matrix (Faculty 1, Faculty 3), administrative duties (Faculty 3, Faculty 4), family responsibilities (Faculty 1, Faculty 3, Faculty 6), trauma from criticism and rejection (Faculty 2), language barriers (Faculty 3) and research interest (Faculty 5).

Despite placing last and second-to-last among the faculty respondents' choices, we find the language barriers and research interests worth reflecting on.

On Language Barrier and the Symbolic Disrespect

Faculty 3 explicitly mentions that language barriers impede doing research. The transcription says:

Para sa akin may unfairness doon, 'di ba? Kasi you just give points doon sa ... mayroong index, medyo may advantage na ... no? Pero I think hindi naman nagiging

less quality yung publication mo kung dito lang, diba? Depende talaga sa idea ‘yan, sa idea na nailabas mo. Pero para sa akin, kung gusto talaga natin—para sa akin I support [inaudible] pero ‘yun nga, biased yung measurement natin na lugi yung kumbaga, yung mga nag-try ng gano’n. Pero in terms of effort, maganda yung effort, kasi it will lead eventually doon sa enrichment eventually. Magiging ano na siya—magiging ka-level, hahabol siya yung mga local ano natin. Eventually, tayo ang magbabasahan dito, diba? Which is nangyayari naman sa ibang bansa noon ... Halimbawa, ako nilecture ko si Popper. Si Popper binabasa niya kapwa mga Germans, sina Freud, sina Einstein, at sina [inaudible].

(For me, there’s unfairness there, right? Because you just give points to those with an index, so they have some advantages, right? But I think your publication doesn’t become less in quality if it’s only published here, right? It really depends on the idea, on the idea that you present. But for me, if we really want it—well, I support [inaudible]—but the problem is, our measurement is biased, so those who try that kind of approach end up disadvantaged. But in terms of effort, the effort is good, because it will eventually lead to enrichment. Eventually, it will reach the same level and catch up with our local work. In time, we will be the ones reading each other’s work here, right? Which is what has already happened in other countries. For example, when I lecture on Popper. Popper read fellow Germans like Freud, Einstein, and [inaudible].)³⁸

³⁸ Faculty 3, “Part 3: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines,” cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L.

Some layers of nuance come into view as the faculty respondent admits to not being a native Tagalog speaker. For the respondent, there is an intent to explore Filipino philosophy in the vernacular, yet he/she is unable to reflect the richness of the field due to his/her southern background. Filipino/Tagalog appears to be a *gatekeeping mechanism* that hinders one from doing research that interests him/her. Faculty 3's point is that the great thinkers we now celebrate published their thoughts in their native tongues, yet Filipino scholars grapple with translating indigenous knowledge into publication-ready form, as English is required to meet international journal standards. This results in confidence issues as language limitations increase anxiety to express one's discovery. The HEIM's institutional thrust to publish research in international journals both pressures and, at the same time, limits the academic freedom of a faculty researcher. It is unfortunate, but one may exaggerate that, in the case of many, language hinders professional development.

Honneth discusses the respondent's reluctance as a form of symbolic disrespect toward one's culture. This involves neither physical nor legal harm but directly assaults one's cultural values as inferior and hence excludes the recognition that is due to a person. He writes,

... the denigration of individual or collective ways of life—do we arrive at the form of behaviour ordinarily labelled 'insulting' or 'degrading' today. As we saw, a person's 'honour', 'dignity', or, to use the modern term, 'status' refers to the degree of social esteem accorded to his or her manner of self-realization within a society's inherited cultural horizon.³⁹

Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 19 December 2024), 9.

³⁹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 134.

Contrary to the sphere of recognizing one's self-worth, this negates the very identity of the person and his/her own *potentia* and possible contributions. Meaning, symbolic disrespect is a kind of misrecognition that undervalues one's worth. Being a non-native Filipino/Tagalog speaker symbolically disrespects specific academic outputs simply by belonging to an excluded and devalued culture. Indeed, there are, nowadays, journals in the field of humanities that accept studies on indigenous thoughts and practices and submissions written in the local dialect, yet the ratio is far from the exclusive English-language journals.⁴⁰ A faculty researcher whose research interests belong to this sort ends up publishing in circulation and local journals. Opportunities for those who explore indigenous philosophy cater to a smaller audience, as most indexed journals target a Western readership. It is also interesting to note that despite this, Faculty 4 adds, "*Mas acknowledged sila sa labas, tapos dito hindi gaano*" (They are more acknowledged abroad, but here not so much), referring to colleagues who venture into the same kind of studies.⁴¹

The statements from the interview manifest Honneth's three spheres of recognition and the dynamics of struggle. Without recognizing the personal, institutional, and political life of a person who, in this context, is a HEIM faculty member focused on teaching, the struggle will always be perennial. At plain sight, demands appear to be a search for justice to redeem claims and what is due in the eyes of the law, but through the lens of the dynamics of recognition struggle, one angle suggests that they are not after a wage increment, job security, or gratuity but a call for human

⁴⁰ Out of the 21 journal publications in the Philippines that are listed in the Scopus index, only 4 accept submissions written in the Filipino language. Moreso, most of the entries in these journals are written in English. San Juan, "A Critique of Scopus-Centrism," 144, 158.

⁴¹ Faculty 4, "Part 4: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines," cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L. Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 12 December 2024), 12.

dignity.

RESEARCH AS A LOCUS OF EPISTEMIC INEQUALITY

In an important work by Portuguese thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* in 2014, he meticulously illustrates the phenomenon of a murder, not of a human person, but of knowledge. Using a sociological approach, he criticizes Western and modernity's hegemony, which devalues other knowledge-systems through epistemic destruction within institutions and colonial domination.⁴² There are several concepts applicable to the present study, but in this section, we limit our discussion to the *sociology of absences* and *epistemicide* and their ramifications.

By the “sociology of absences,” Santos refers to the mechanisms that underlie how dominant institutions like science, law, and capital classify certain knowledge as inferior. By “epistemicide,” he refers to the systematic killing of knowledge.⁴³ In the succeeding lines, we shall read the gathered statements from non-research faculty members in light of the two themes.

The Faculty and the Sociology of the Absent

Santos' sociology of absences argues that institutions create an illusion in favor of the dominant, rendering alternative forms of knowledge nonexistent. He writes:

Thus, one of the main dimensions of the *sociology of absences* is the sociology of absent ways of knowing, that is

⁴² Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014), 92-93.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

to say, the act of identifying the ways of knowing that hegemonic epistemology reduces to nonexistence.⁴⁴

In particular, Santos is referring to Western thought, where, on the one hand, modernity's ideas cascade overwhelmingly, while, on the other hand, they dry up Oriental and Southern streams, causing the demise of the latter, which are classified by the former as "primitive."⁴⁵ From this perspective, alternative epistemologies become "the ignorant," "the uncivilized," "the local," and "the nonproductive." Santos calls this limiting process "monoculture of knowledge."⁴⁶ He criticizes institutions that operate under a neoliberal business model, thereby suppressing the possible contributions indigenous epistemologies can offer.⁴⁷

Santos' hypothesis manifests in the themes arising during interviews. Faculty 1 questions why teaching-based knowledge is not credited as a form of research. The respondent toyed with the idea of having three bases for evaluating a faculty,

[T]here must be 3 separate promotion systems. One, a system for purely teaching faculty, two, a system for purely research faculty, and 3, a system for part-time teaching, part-time research, or faculty, right? So that the faculty member can see which track to go to, okay. Now. Forming these 3 systems. And if we want really to invest on research, if we want to make faculty members do research, the promotion system of the full researchers should be more lucrative compared to the pure teaching faculty, *dapat ganon, dapat ganon okay* (It should be like that, it should be that way, okay). Structuring, structuring our teaching

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 117, 173.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 226ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-123.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

and research units, we should not, equate research with teaching.

Magkaiba dapat talaga ‘yan, no? ... kung si faculty member, na teacher teaching lang, teaching units lang ibibigay mo sa kaniya. Pero kung si faculty member may research project, iba yung form na makukuha niya. It’s going to be a contract for a project that the faculty member has to complete within a specific time. Dapat ganon? For example, a book project should be equivalent to something like this, something like that ... Research, wag natin i-equate ang teaching and research, or using teaching concepts in order to translate, to research salary scale. Mali eh, maling mali para sa’kin ‘yun.

(There really should be a distinction, right? If a faculty member is only teaching, then you should just give them teaching units. But if a faculty member has a research project, the form they receive should be different. It should be a contract that specifies the project the faculty member has to complete within a given period of time. That’s how it should be. For example, a book project should be equivalent to something like this, something comparable. Research should not be equated with teaching, nor should teaching concepts be used to determine the research salary scale. That’s wrong—very wrong, in my view.)⁴⁸

From these statements, pedagogical expertise, if not excluded, is treated as less of a legitimate source and as never an alternative to knowledge. Unknowingly, the institutional structure suppresses what a

⁴⁸ Faculty 1, “Part 1: Interview on research practices,” 10.

teaching faculty focuses on, i.e., a kind of research that does not favor funding agencies or a means to attain promotion and metrics, but rather seeks knowledge created during his/her own delivery of instruction. This is true for the rest of the respondents, who agree that the “invisible” feeling of “not good enough” occurs when he/she is offered the opportunity to conduct formal research under a research center, despite excelling in teaching.

Likewise, the misrecognition of social and self-esteem, as discussed earlier, wherein Filipino/Tagalog-written studies merit limited recognition because they usually fall into the category of the “local.” This grouping type receives fewer points during the promotion evaluation of academic staff than those who have publications in Scopus/H-index journals, which are classified as “international” and predominantly written in English.⁴⁹ By implication, the more publications in English, the higher the chance of being considered in indexed journals, and the higher the rank that may be designated, which has a direct effect on the faculty’s remuneration. Western-indexed journals, if not the sole arbiter of truth and knowledge, had become a prime agency for determining quality, validation, and scholarship in general.

Santos’ sociology of the absent is also concretized in the unjust privileging of the sciences’ studies over those of the humanities. Faculty 1 and Faculty 4 opine that HEIM privileges scientific outputs, most of which are published in Western journals, leaving the humanities and social sciences behind. Although it is not explicit in the interviews, Santos’ lens reveals a hierarchy between the two sciences, rendering the latter essentially inferior. However, there are a few that are in place and engage in inclusive research for their stakeholders, since it involves a massive overhaul of institutional policies and adjustments in implementation,

⁴⁹ Faculty 3, “Part 3: Interview on research practices,” 9; Faculty 4, “Part 4: Interview on research practices,” 9. See also San Juan, “A Critique of Scopus-Centrism,” 133, 136, 137, 147.

which demand financial considerations and the political will of stakeholders.

The Faculty and Epistemicide

Santos argues that forces of prevailing institutions influence certain systems of knowledge. He describes this driving force as the “energy that propels diatopical hermeneutics [that] comes from a destabilizing image that I designate *epistemicide*, the murder of knowledge.”⁵⁰ There are various ways in the commission of this crime, each with its own ways: the *sociology of absences*, or the marginalization of specific experiences, knowledge, and practices as irrelevant and invisible;⁵¹ the *production of nonexistence* or the suppression of local knowledge by introducing pseudo “realities” favoring the dominant;⁵² the *monoculture of knowledge*, referring to the “universalization” of modern science as *the* criteria of truth and beauty throughout history, resulting in capital-labor, racial, and sexual discrimination,⁵³ and as a result, the *suppression and impossibility of alternatives*, or the exclusion of alternative forms of knowledge in favor of the dominant systems.⁵⁴

During the interview, Faculty 4 presumes that incoming students see research as a factor in choosing a university and, at the same time, expresses his/her reservations, saying:

So isa yan siguro sa positive impacts sa image ng unibersidad. Yun nga lang, na-observe ko, ang emphasis talaga yan puro sa hard sciences sa atin. Sumunod na lang tayo and then nakita nila. And then na-observe ko rin yung mga ibang unibersidad abroad. Di naman nila dina-

⁵⁰ Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 92.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 171-181, 185-188.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 118, 172-175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-24, 36-37, 172.

drumbeat ang research nila. Nandyang na siya. Tayo, we are drumbeating it. And then, are they sincere?

(So maybe that is one of the positive impacts on the university's image. The thing is, I observed that the emphasis here is really all on the hard sciences. We just followed along, and then they noticed it. I also observed other universities abroad. They don't really drumbeat their research—it's already there. But here, we are the ones loudly promoting it. And then, are they sincere?)⁵⁵

From the respondent's statement, two points may be inferred: first, the dichotomy between research in the humanities and the hard sciences; and second, the HEIM's economic viability based on incoming students. The questions arise: who provides such a schema? Of being assured of security in the future, as long as one is matriculated at a university excelling in natural sciences? Is it the HEIM's administration? Is it the state or the government?

For Santos, it is the dominant institution. But what makes an institution dominant? In essence, it is the capital. Epistemicide is driven by neoliberal pressures where education must adhere to marketability for its survival. As a result, administrators' concern for global rankings becomes a duty.⁵⁶ Professors sell their products (i.e., knowledge and innovation derived from external or university-funded research) and provide educational services to students and society as their customers.⁵⁷ In the present context, researchers explore how knowledge produces profit rather

⁵⁵ Faculty 4, "Part 4: Interview on research practices."

⁵⁶ See San Juan, "A Critique of Scopus-Centrism," 135ff.

⁵⁷ Ewa Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik and Jovito V. Cariño, "The University as a Business: A Chance or a Blunder?," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 58:175 (January-April 2023), 88, <<https://doi.org/10.55997/1004pslviii175a4>>.

than shaping knowledge in the service of the underprivileged. Brian Martin quotes an old saying: “The one who pays the piper calls the tune.”⁵⁸

Faculty 1 poses another answer.

We’ve been good in teaching. That’s undeniable, ‘no? The teaching, the pedagogies, the methodologies that our professors are doing, it’s actually working, ‘no? The proof of that is the remarkable passing rates of our graduates in the board examinations—in nursing, in medicine, in law. Lahat ng may PRC Board Exam sa atin, no? (All with the PRC Board Exam in our University, correct?) Our passing rate is actually remarkable. So the focus was really on teaching, not on research ... what we are doing is that we are teaching our students to pass exams. We are not teaching them something better. We are not teaching them something beyond the bar, beyond the board exam. Hanggang ‘dun lang tayo eh (We’re only up to that point).⁵⁹

Although the respondent questions the absence of the research culture among the HEIM’s faculty members (as they prefer and excel at teaching), their efforts’ outcomes are not aligned with the faculty’s knowledge interests. Instead, they are mandated to follow the course content aligned with the students’ licensure exams. In the same way, the alternative knowledge produced by the faculty member’s research efforts in preparation for his/her lessons is rated lower than the high-indexed research output during promotion and evaluation.

⁵⁸ Brian Martin, “The Politics of Research,” in *Information Liberation* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), 125.

⁵⁹ Faculty 1. “Part 1: Interview on research practices,” 4.

Faculty 5 discloses his/her anxiety in conducting formal research since his/her interests do not conform to the research agenda of the existing research affiliations in HEIM. He/she would like to engage in research that is advocacy-based and produces impact, making practical contributions to the public.⁶⁰ A similar case is raised by Faculty 6, calling on the HEIM administration to review the current clustering system for research centers to ensure it does not limit faculty research opportunities, especially to those inclined to do applied research with real-world impact.⁶¹ The respondents then suggest the following: first, an improved process for determining research direction that caters to all faculty members; second, implementing explicit policies to encourage collaboration across disciplines; and third, reviewing and revising the approach to supporting faculty research activities.⁶²

The anxiety that prevents a faculty member from doing research comes from all directions, due to the imaginary abyss dug by the dominant epistemology. Santos equates epistemicide to “abyssal thinking,” or the “system of visible and invisible distinctions ... that divides social reality into ... the ‘realm of the this side of the line’ and ... ‘the other side of the line’,” where the latter “vanishes as reality, [and] becomes nonexistent.”⁶³ Although Santos pertains to the dominance of Western modernity as the “this side of the line” and the colonial South as the “other side,” the thinking that is doomed to the abyss is that of faculty members whose research interests do not fall within the HEIM’s research centers. The epistemic

⁶⁰ Faculty 5, “Part 5: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines,” cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L. Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 6 February 2025).

⁶¹ Faculty 6, “Part 6: Interview on research practices and perceptions at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines,” cond. by R. A. E. Matienzo, P. A. Gapo, R. L. Tadle, and F. G. Cortez, transcribed by K. F. Reamico (Undisclosed location: 5 February 2025).

⁶² Faculty 5, “Part 5: Interview on research practices”; Faculty 6, “Part 6: Interview on research practices.”

⁶³ Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 189.

divide is real and concrete for faculty who do not engage in formal research but conduct research for his/her own preparation for class instruction and self-curiosity. Non-research faculty members conduct research, but the avenues, jargon, and criteria for being deemed “innovative” are impractical, as the standards are set by the universalizing Western modernity imposed on Eastern indigenous and unique epistemologies.

In the context of the respondents, epistemicide rests on the marginalization of the experiences, knowledge, and practices of faculty who chose to innovate through teaching. The fruits of their personally initiated research are, if not entirely nonexistent, less productive than those of research-driven, funded activities that address the politics of the dominant. Here, the uniformity of truth in modern science is universalized. The fewer research endeavors, the lower the faculty member’s rank, and classification. Thus, a kind of discrimination that is not visible and is not immediately felt since the injustice is epistemic. Such inequality is perceived by respondents without urgency, as it is not internalized but has been normalized. As a result, a non-researcher faculty’s desired knowledge-innovation is suppressed due to the perceived denial of alternative knowledge, i.e., genuine to him/herself and natural as it has been practiced ever since.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Recent studies identify factors contributing to faculty members’ limited participation in formal research. Most of them are cultural, structural, and personal. While focusing on selected faculty members at a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines, we identify that personal reasons play a significant role in non-engagement in research. Through philosophical reflection, their statements cannot be simply understood as issues of workload, finances, or institutional aid.

Underneath structural and economic struggle lies a twofold existential struggle: first, the struggle for recognition and the challenge of

epistemic inequality. Honneth's critical theory suggests that the misrecognition of *love* (emotional support), *rights* (respect), and *social esteem* (solidarity) results in social injustice and pathologies out of misrecognition, disrespect, and humiliation. The faculty respondents' personal experiences eroded this "recognition," leading them to a sense of confidence loss, lack of self-respect, and absence of motivation to pursue formal research. Yet they continue to conduct research at their own pace and in their own way as they prepare their lessons in every class, deal with administrative duties, or nurture students' academic needs.

These kinds of research are not regarded as legitimate forms of innovation, as in H-indexed published research, yet they are meaningful and create impact, not in terms of ranking but in one's *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld). This is the second existential struggle of the respondents as articulated in Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of *epistemicide*, or the murdering of knowledge. Hegemonizing epistemologies of Western modernity relegate alternative epistemologies, such as the pedagogical excellence by the non-research faculty, and the subliminal rejection experienced when using the Filipino/Tagalog language as a medium of research.

Such alienation is also felt by those active in formal research. They conduct studies on our indigenous knowledge, which are then examined and judged by Western reviewers. Besides being at the mercy of foreign scrutiny, only the opulent few can access them because of the astronomical fees collected from them, which, in the first place, are products of our own discoveries. Shareholders of the reputable journals enjoy these fees from our researchers, who are compelled to pay in exchange for prestige and promotion. As these discoveries are being denied to those really intended for, indigenous people, local policymakers, and native scholars suffer cognitive fatigue and perpetual regression since it is a vicious cycle of submission, payment, and rejection, as indigenous studies, particularly those written in native dialects, are, in most cases, "lacking" international merit.

Thus, the following conclusions:

First, the faculty respondents' statements reveal that opting out of formal research is not merely a result of an inability to conduct research or a lack of passion for inquiry, but rather a conscious and dynamic response to symbolic disrespect, institutional misrecognition, and epistemic marginalization.

Second, faculty non-engagement with research is systemic and not an individual failure in itself. One's intellectual and creative productivity starts with the self, is expressed to others, and is accepted by society. Therefore, disinterestedness must be viewed from a wider perspective, specifically through a broader lens of the institutional and cultural structures, rather than solely through the faculty's inabilities.

Third, their decision not to engage in formal research is a conscious call for justice. As mentioned above, non-research faculty members are not seeking wage increases, job security, or material gratuity, but a genuine recognition of human dignity. This includes acknowledgment of one's culture and intellectual worth, expressed through alternative epistemologies such as teaching, coaching, advising, serving as an administrator, delivering speeches, mentoring, designing, performing arts, organizing programs, among other meaningful activities.

Hence, the challenge for higher education institutions is twofold: first, to foster not only a culture of formal research but also a culture of recognition. This recognition is more than receiving incentives or an awarding of certificates, rather, it is an environment where faculty members feel emotionally safe, institutionally respected, and socially esteemed. Second, to come up with a policy to be crafted and owned by both the administration and the faculty that identifies, denounces, and prevents epistemicide. This recognizes alternative epistemologies as legitimate and puts a premium on native-language and home-grown themed outputs. Such a framework makes research truly inclusive of other ways of research

productivity, rather than merely following the dictates of today's neoliberal knowledge economy in education.

We believe that these reforms, radical as they may seem, will promote widespread faculty participation in research and shall foster an authentic, inclusive, and humane epistemology that will shape not only the HEIM but the research landscape of other colleges and universities in the country. This is a kind of leap that “ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ United Nations, “Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All,” in *United Nations*, <<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>>.

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