

AN ANALYSIS OF THE KEY INFLUENCERS OF NERIAN HAPPINESS

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to provide an objective view of 'Nerian Happiness'. 'Nerian' is the moniker for the students of SFNCS in the Philippines. The research focused on the factors influencing Nerian Happiness and the direction of the factors tested as key influencers of happiness in the San Felipe Neri Catholic School (SFNCS). Methodologically, this study provided key functions in using Data Modelling through PowerBI – a Microsoft-powered data analyzer and data modeler which enables the researcher to dig deeper into the analysis of the study. Utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire that was validated using the Cronbach alpha test, the researchers were able to elicit quantitative responses concerning the extent of Nerian Happiness toward their teachers and the school. The study also looked at the perspective where the school can be recommended to prospective clients or stakeholders. The results of the study revealed the varying degrees of happiness among students in different grade levels that show a statistically significant association between the students' desire to continue to study in SFNCS next school year, and their willingness to recommend the school to prospective clients and stakeholders. The results of the study will be utilized to enhance the programs of the Marketing and Promotions Department, and boost school enrollment.

Keywords: *educational research; Power BI; school promotions; happiness; satisfaction*



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THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

The school is always referred to as the student's second home. In this 'home', the students are trained on the rudiments of learning while being formed holistically. Talebzadeh & Samkan (2011) explained that happiness is essential to student learning and school experience. Ale Yasin (2001) associated a happy school environment and effective student learning. Achievement is boosted when students receive emotional support and the opportunity to develop their talents. Student happiness, as objectively explained by Doğan (2014), is the collective product of 1) school engagement and 2) classroom confidence. School engagement refers to the active involvement and profound interaction exhibited by the stakeholders of the school towards one another. In the case of San Felipe Neri Catholic School (SFNCS), school engagement is always a consideration in developing plans and programs, and planning activities. It is enriched and reinforced by the school's core values of amity, charity, humility, and integrity. School engagement among the faculty does not end within the school. They are also active evangelizers of the Catholic Church and a counselor to every student and parent who experiences difficulties and hardship. The second element which is classroom confidence is critical to a student's happiness. Many students regard the school as their second home and their teachers as parents and *confidantes*.

The SFNCS is a Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU)- Level III Accredited School in the Philippines. It has been offering quality Catholic education for the past 58 years. It has successfully built a network of alumni who have been performing well in the Philippine Industry. Some are educators who chose to teach in their alma mater after graduating from college. The school is successful in maximizing its curriculum potential by implementing a Standard Based Instruction (SBI) framework in the conduct of teaching, learning, and assessment. It has successfully established a network, from its stakeholders, that caters to community needs, outreach, and extension services. However, like other private Catholic educational institutions, the school has been experiencing a slow to moderate decline in enrollment since 2015. While 'financial' is the leading motivator among the parents to transfer their children to other schools, it was discovered that the students who left the school did not transfer to public schools (where education is free and supported by the national government) but to neighboring private (competitor) schools.

This discovery has stirred up the research department to reflect on the condition of students' student's satisfaction with the school and determine the happiness they feel toward their teachers. By focusing on these two aspects, the study looked into the possible correlation between students' happiness and their 1) desire to continue to enroll in the institution, and 2) sentiment toward recommending the school to prospective clientele.

In the study by Can (2019), the school may enhance the student experience of happiness by improving its 1) curricular offering, 2) school activities, and 3) school facilities. Meanwhile, Engels, et al. (2004) explained the strong influence that school expectations and teacher personality provide in honing students' happiness in school. In their discussions, they mentioned that a happy school environment will lead to high student success. A happy school environment embraces uniqueness, promotes diversity, and improves students' life skills.

As used in this study, Nerian happiness is objectively defined by the variables concerning the student's 1) happiness toward their teachers, 2) happiness toward school, 3) the school's worthiness to be recommended to others, and 4) the student's willingness to enroll for the next school year. The conceptual framework from the book "Happiness by Design" by Dolan (2014) enumerated four aspects of happiness relevant to an organization: 1) happiness toward people, 2) happiness toward the organization, 3) happiness toward the entities outside the organization, and 4) happiness by having the organization.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender and grade level. The majority 359 (58.5%) of the respondents are female, while 255 (41.5%) are male. Tabbod, et al. (2019), in their study of school happiness vis-a-vis academic performance, presented a significant relationship between school happiness and academic performance among male and female students. Their findings showed that the degree of correlation between school happiness and academic performance is higher among the male respondents than the female. The same discussion was provided by Telef (2021) and Willms (2003). Telef (2021) revealed that gender contributes to the idea of school happiness, all because of the upbringing and "molding" made and provided by the school. Most schools offer team games, sports festivals, and other physical activities that interest the males more. For Telef, school happiness is realized by the males because of the zest that they find in engagement, and the persistence of the school to engage each member of the team. The study of Willms (2003), as mentioned by Göksoy (2017) and Lumontod (2019), discussed that happiness in school, as experienced by both genders, can also be explained by the family's engagement in their children's school activities.

Table 1*Demographic profile of the respondents*

Demographic Profile	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	255	41.5%
Female	359	58.5%
Grade Level		
Grade 6	10	2%
Grade 7	92	15%
Grade 8	35	6%
Grade 9	144	23%
Grade 10	142	23%
Grade 11	78	13%
Grade 12	113	18%
Total	614	100%

The data on the grade level of the respondents were also collected by the researchers. Grade 9 had the highest number of participants in the study; it had 144 (23%) out of the 614 students. Next was Grade 10, which had 142 (23%); Grade 12 had 113 (18%), Grade 8 had 35 (6%), while Grade 6 had the least, 10 (2%). The importance of determining the grade level in the study is explored by Mertoğlu (2020). She explained that the grade level of the students can also prove the diverse academic culture of the school through the activities offered per grade level. The engagement of the students, when grouped according to grade level, may show varying degrees of happiness and attachment to the institution.

Table 2*The extent of Nerian happiness*

Parameters	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Happiness toward Teachers	614	5.07 <i>Moderately Happy</i>	.95868
Happiness toward School	614	4.90 <i>Moderately Happy</i>	1.13791
Happiness toward School	614	5.18 <i>Moderately Happy</i>	1.03420
Happiness in recommending the school	614	4.75 <i>Moderately Happy</i>	1.53660
Overall Value	614	4.97 <i>Moderately Happy</i>	

Table 2 shows the results of the descriptive statistics applied to the following variables: 1) Happiness toward teachers; 2) Happiness toward the School; (3) School is worth recommending, and (4) Will enroll next school year.

The parameters used in the study have congruence with those in the study of Dolan in 2014 wherein he traced the value of happiness from the environment that influenced a particular individual. To determine the value of happiness among Nerian students in the school community, it used Happiness as an independent criterion and assumed that it is influenced by the environment of the student.

Table 2 shows that the overall value of Nerian Happiness is 4.97. On a 6-scale survey, 4.97 means Moderately Happy. The definition of the parameter relates similarly to the evaluation of student experience that was associated with satisfaction, differing perceptions, and unique interpretation of experience (Dolan, 2014). Datu & Lizada (2018) explained that student happiness predicts student behavioral and emotional management. Student happiness can predict the degree of association with school activities and academic-related challenges. In the context of SFNCS, with respect to the student respondents, the mean value of 5.15 can be explained if one looks at the engagement of the students in social, civic, and co- and extra-curricular activities provided by the school.

On the four dependent variables used in the study, it can be seen that the students perceived that the 'school is worth recommending'; and this variable got the highest average of all the moderately happy criteria. Noticeably, the standard deviation of 'school is worth recommending' is only 1.03. On Recommending a school, (Aguado et al., 2015), the value of institutional reputation is always considered, while parental choice only matters by around 26 to 32%.

The pertinence of self-choice and peer influence combined is 45 to 67%. The result addresses the need to improve the opportunities for student expression in terms of academic activities, social recreation, and civic productivity. (Lumontod, 2019).

Students’ happiness toward teachers is the most consistent of all the four independent variables. With a mean value of 5.07, it has less than a 1.0 standard deviation, describing the data as less scattered. Happiness toward teachers, as described by (Lumontod, 2018), is the overall satisfaction of the emotional attachment of the student toward the teacher. Happiness toward teachers may be difficult to define as to its scope, but the research studies of Datu & Lizada (2018) among 262 Filipino students, and Lumontod (2019) found, in particular, that objectivity, resourcefulness, and “student-centeredness” constitute the happiness of the students toward their teachers.

Students’ happiness toward the school has the second most scattered scores. With a standard deviation of 1.13 and a mean value of 4.90, the student has a rather scattered view of school happiness to a moderate degree. Can (2019) and Mallari, Ebreo, & Pelayo (2015) explained that student happiness toward the school is influenced by the school management, with a 94% extent; learning environment with 87.2%; and collaboration with 82.8%. School happiness, when the three mentioned criteria are met would be around 93 - 94%.

The last factor in the category ‘moderate happiness’ is “Willingness to stay in SFNCS next School Year”. It has a 4.75 mean value and scattered, dispersed, and inconsistent responses thru the standard deviation of 1.54. In the same study by Can (2019), his criterion revealed that when the learning environment and teaching field are met (teaching field refers to the appropriateness of the teacher with his major, training, and academic preparations), these contribute significantly to student happiness in the school. The study also recommends that school administrators consider collaboration across grade levels. Lastly, it commended the actions of the tested school in relating high enrollees by improving the classroom environment through enhanced curricular activities and collaborative student-based extra-curricular activities.

Table 3
Test of significant difference between gender and Nerian happiness

Gender	Mean	Test of Significant Difference		
		F	Significance	Result
Male	5.28	0.006	0.938*	Not Significant
Female	5.27			

* tested at 0.05 level

Table 3 presents the test of significant difference between gender and Nerian happiness. The computed alpha of 0.938 is greater than the critical value of 0.05. Thus, it can be deduced that there is no significant difference between genders and their level of happiness toward school. The result failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Since both levels of happiness fall under moderate happiness, (Male = 5.28 and Female 5.27), both genders can be considered moderately happy among the factors tested in the study. The result of the analysis above confirms that the associated factors influencing student happiness cater similarly and do not discriminate between the genders of the students. The same result was revealed by Talebzadeh & Samkan (2011) and Zarnaghash, et al. (2015). They emphasized the roles of school administrators, planning officers, and student activities heads/coordinators in providing gender-inclusive activities. The impact of gender inclusiveness in the classroom can be seen in productive school enrollees. It radiates hope to every individual for their inclusivity matters despite individual differences (Donnelly et al., n.d.).

Table 4

Test of significant difference between grade level and Nerian happiness

Grade Level	Mean	Test of Significant Difference		
		F	Significance	Result
Grade 6	4.8000	11.76	0.000*	Significant
Grade 7	5.8261			
Grade 8	5.3429			
Grade 9	5.4444			
Grade 10	5.1831			
Grade 11	5.3205			
Grade 12	4.7345			

* tested at 0.05 level

Table 4 presents the test of significant difference between grade levels and Nerian happiness. Since the computed alpha value is 0.000 is less than the critical value of 0.05, it can be deduced that there is a significant difference in the value of happiness when respondents are grouped according to grade levels. Moreover, it can be gleaned that the Grade 7 students, with almost 92 respondents, got the highest mean value of 5.82 or 'Very Happy'. Grade 12 students, meanwhile, had the lowest level of happiness in the moderately happy category.

According to Dolan (2014), the value of happiness among students changes as they progress on the academic ladder. In his book, he defined the concept of “many focus, one experience, and one focus, many experiences”. Accordingly, students fail to appreciate the value of happiness when they have multiple foci, and this leads only to the same experience; they tend to experience distinction bias, wherein they look at differences among focus/activities and feel disappointed when they realize that the third is easier than the first, or that the last is better and “I should have focused more on it”. On the other hand, when the focus is only one, say for example they do a musical play and connect the skills and concepts of the play in English, Music, Arts, and Social Sciences, the opportunities for experience are abundant and their initiative becomes robust. The result of the statistics above shows that the students have significantly different levels of happiness that stretch from ‘moderately happy’ to ‘very happy’.

On the other hand, Mertoğlu (2020) explained that the significant difference in the grouping of grade levels can be associated with age. It can be seen that students get less happy as they enroll in a higher grade. The data also shows that at the entry point of a new level, the mean score for the grade level’s happiness is high (i.e., Grade 7 and Grade 11) but it gradually decreases when they reach a higher level. It can also be attributed to the expectations during this period and the roles that they are preparing for themselves as they progress to a new stage of their academic career.

What Satisfies Nerian Happiness?

Table 5 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis on the relationship between Nerian happiness and the variables. A significant positive correlation was found between Nerian happiness and happiness toward teachers ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$), happiness toward the school ($r = 0.620$, $p < 0.01$), happiness in recommending the school to others ($r = 0.627$, $p < 0.01$), and happiness to stay next school year ($r = 0.535$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 5*Test of significant relationship*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Nerian Happiness	5.15	1.03					
2. Happiness toward Teachers	5.06	0.96	.641*	-	.522*	.591*	.414*
3. Happiness toward School	4.90	1.14	.620*	.522*	-	.675*	.500*
4. Happiness in recommending the school	5.18	1.03	.627*	.591*	.675*	-	.502*
5. Happiness in staying in SFNCS next school year	4.75	1.54	.535*	.414*	.500*	.502*	-

* tested at 0.01 level

The results revealed that the students' happiness toward their teachers is a powerful indicator of Nerian happiness. This finding is congruent with the discussions of Asıcı & İkiz (2018), Göksoy (2017), and Sezer & Can (2020). Their findings revealed that students find satisfaction and contentment in a school with a supportive teaching and instructional environment. Teacher behaviors toward the students influence the learning setting and even intensify peer interaction. Student happiness draws effective realizations from seeing the school's effort to bring out the best in them. Teachers who are deeply concerned with the student's emotional upbringing significantly enhance the academic efficacy of the student; and by extension, significantly increase school happiness. In the context of this pandemic, the teacher's communication with students and parents enhances confidence among the clientele toward the school. The study by Hodgman, et al. (2021) explained the expectations among teachers to meet with their students and be available at the scheduled time to respond to students' questions. While challenges in technology are the pressing concerns during this pandemic, teachers who show a mountable interest in communication help enhance the students' academic efficacy and reveal a significant increase in parents' trust in the school.

Another significant finding is the interaction between Nerian Happiness and happiness in recommending the school. Significantly, the study shows the latter as a moving indicator of Nerian happiness. School reputation is always shaped by the culture that builds and fortifies the academic, instructional, and pedagogical atmosphere of the institution. These are critical to student happiness since the students' experience will matter and shape their decision to stay in the school and to recommend the school to prospective clients.

Also significant to this finding is the literature of Ahlstrom (2013) and Sarkodie, et al. (2020). These authors revealed two important concepts. First, the stakeholders will only recommend the school if the school can bridge the gap between the classroom and the community. Relationship building, especially on the higher grade levels, is pertinent to having an established school reputation. Second, the stakeholders will only recommend the school if they find that the school’s programs are aligned with the community’s goals and will sustain their students in the face of the demands of the ever-changing economy. Thus, a valuable school program will carry the reputation of the school.

Key Influencers of Nerian Happiness

Figure 1
What influences a student to be “very happy”?

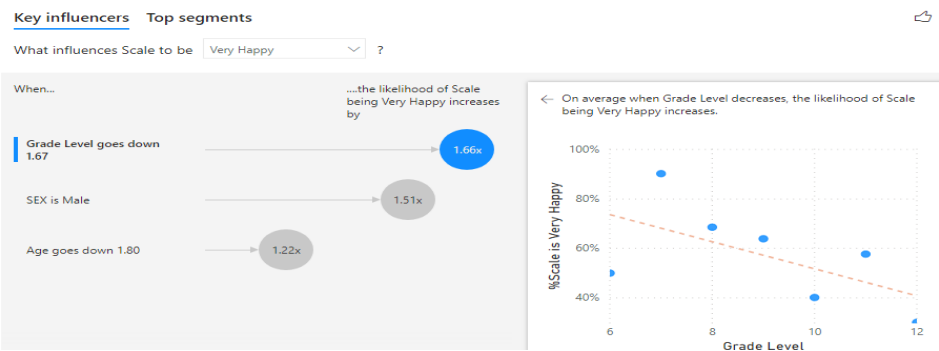
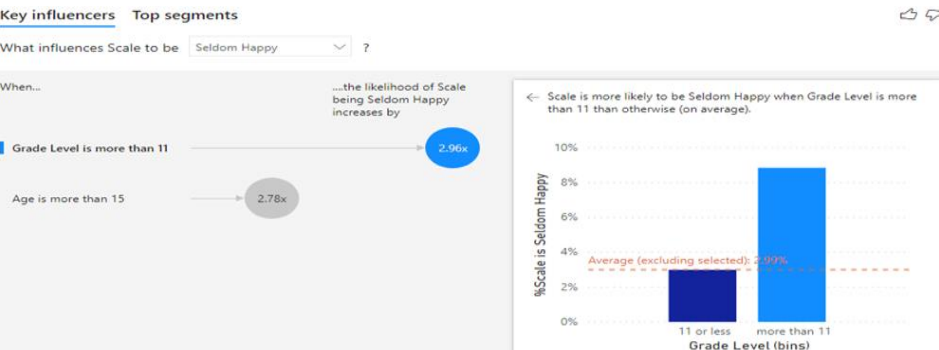


Figure 1 shows that one of the key influencers of Nerian Happiness is the grade level of the students. Accordingly, the ‘very happy’ Nerians came from grade levels 9 and below. Most male respondents are ‘very happy’ compared to their female counterparts, whose ages are less than or equal to 14 years. By considering the following key influencers, the research may recommend that the school consider the best practices applied in these levels and apply them to Grades 10 to 12.

Figure 2
Grade level as a determinant of happiness



When grade levels are higher than Grade 11, the students are “seldom happy” compared with those in the other grade levels. When looking at age as a key influencer, those aged 15 and above have a 2.75% chance of being ‘seldom happy’. This coincides with the report that some students from Grade 10 are ‘seldom happy’ with the school when age is considered. ‘Moderately happy’ individuals can be found among those in Grades 8 to 10 but not among those in Grades 11 and 12. Female students tend to be more ‘moderately happy’ to ‘seldom happy’ as revealed by the key influencers test under the category.

Figure 3

Variables critical to the happiness of staying at SFNCS

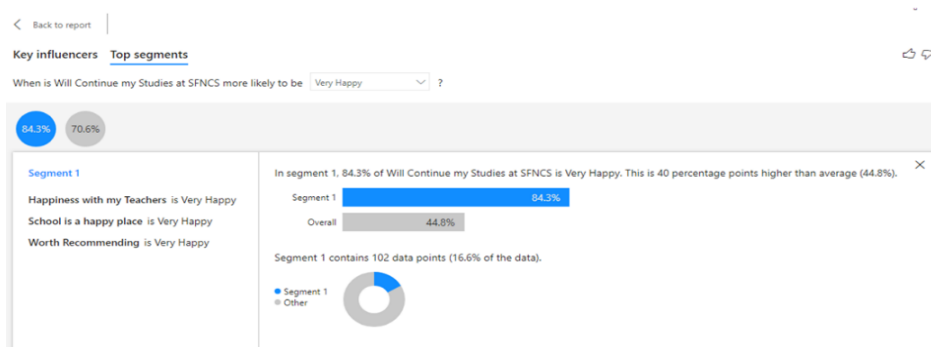
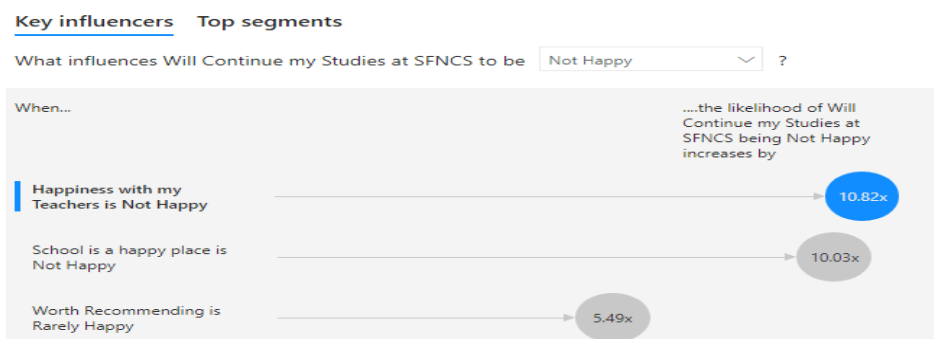


Figure 3 shows the variables critical to students' happiness in staying at SFNCS. The report shows that 84.3% will continue their studies at SFNCS when the variable 'happiness toward my teachers' reaches a very happy level; 'school happiness reaches the very happy threshold', and the 'happiness in recommending the school to others reaches a very happy level'. The figure explains the three variables as critical to the students' stay or enjoyment in the school.

Figure 4

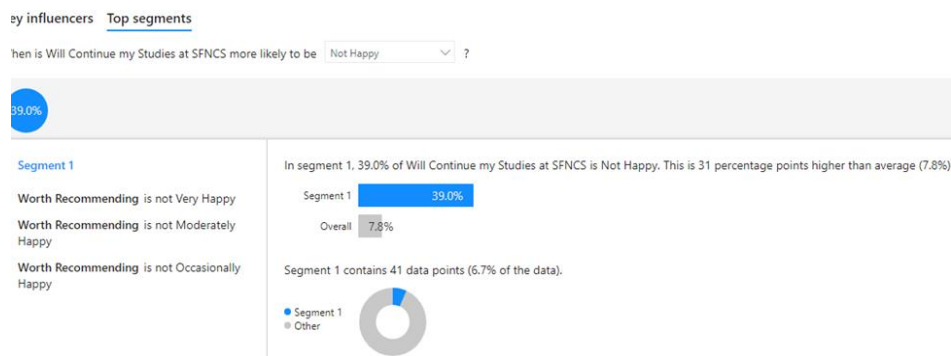
Happiness in continuing studies at SFNCS when all variables decreased



The above figure shows that when students are no longer happy with the teacher, not happy with the school, and no longer find the school as worth recommending, the likelihood of their continuing their studies at SFNCS decreases by around 25 to 26%.

Moreover, the data found that recommending the school to non-Nerian students is crucial to the desire of the students to continue their studies in SFNCS. The figure below will explain this.

Figure 4
Happiness in continuing studies at SFNCS vis-a-vis happiness to recommend the school



Based on Figure 4, the single component of recommending the school to non-Nerian students is enough to reduce the sampled students by 39%, which is around 239 of the total 614 respondents. When students no longer find the school worth recommending, it becomes a powerful force to reduce the school population. The above findings concur with the study of Dagang & Mesa (2017). Their study on school choice revealed that School Academic Reputation has a 5 over 5 extent of influence among the factors affecting students’ school choice. This academic reputation is the source of recommendation among non–students of the school. Vibrancy in campus life influences students’ perception of the school with 0.00 significance; this includes religious affiliation and community activities that make the school ‘well-known’ in the community. Sharmin, et al. (2019) explained that “considering the school as a future option” is moderately affected by the school’s popularity. It is suggested that community-based activities which engage leading stakeholders can strengthen the bonds of the school and the community; in such a case, the school will not face problems marketing the school to other people in the community.

CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to provide objective scrutiny on the different aspect that influences the concept of happiness among students of SFNCS. The happiness toward their teachers and the school are essential components that qualify the concept of Nerian happiness.

By testing the influence of gender and grade level on the concept of Nerian happiness, this study established that gender does not provide any significant difference in happiness between male and female respondents. However, grouping based on the respondents' grade levels yielded statistically significant differences in the happiness of the students. The grade levels of the respondents provide different opportunities for students to appreciate happiness. Moreover, the study was able to objectively present a strong association of happiness with the teachers. This impacts positively on the confidence of the student in studying in the same school next school year. The results of the study suggest that while happiness is a key factor in decreasing student attrition or transfers to other schools, key factors (i.e., teachers, and school offerings) should also be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions of the data, the following actions are recommended to further improve the programs of the SFNCS to enhance Nerian Happiness:

1. The guidance and counseling department must strengthen its Holistic Nerian Program (HNP) and align its activities with the results of the study. A review of its target goals and success indicators is deemed necessary to further evaluate the extent of implementation in the Nerian Community.
2. Faculty development programs must consider "retooling the advisers" program. This new program aims to strengthen the communication and connection skills between teachers and students. It will develop a balanced formation program so that the teachers can become 'second parents' as well as 'experts in their fields of specialization'.
3. Aware that since 2017 the Committee on School Promotions has been undertaking a series of evaluations and reviews of its activities, the results of this study will help the Committee in crafting novel ideas to address student attrition and increase school-community collaboration.
4. The school administration would do well to embark on a consistent effort to establish profound networks with parents and the community. This will help the school in sustaining its enrollment while enhancing its academic and social reputation in the community.

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