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Future-Proofing Strategies of Philippine Private University from the Perspectives of Middle Management

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Abstract
Private academic institutions in the Philippines improve higher education by offering flexible, creative programs that meet student needs and connect education to careers. To be competitive, these institutions need future-proofing measures to adapt to change. This descriptive-correlational study examined how a private institution and its branch in Laguna, Philippines, used these tactics. A survey of 35 middle managers (deans, department heads, and program coordinators) examined the relationship between future-proofing and institutional sustainability. All five future-proofing criteria were "excellent," with curricular innovation scoring best. Student achievement and academic program relevance were "extremely good" for institutional sustainability. A substantial correlation exists between future-proofing approaches and institutional sustainability ($r = 0.754$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that better implementation leads to better sustainability outcomes. Future-proofing indicators did not differ by demography, although perceived sustainability did vary by age group ($F(5) = 3.261$, $p = .019$). Respondents shared practical, real-world methods for institutional resilience. The findings will inform private higher education policy and administration to prepare institutions for a changing educational environment.

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Introduction

In the Philippines, private academic institutions are vital to the country's higher education system. They significantly contribute to expanding access to education, improving the quality of instruction, and promoting innovation. As institutions not directly funded by the state, they rely on tuition and private funding, which grants them greater freedom to implement innovative and industry-relevant programs. According to James (1991) [12], approximately 80% of higher education students in the Philippines attend private institutions, demonstrating their central role in expanding access. Her research also emphasizes that private institutions frequently exhibit more cost-effectiveness and diversity, with several programs specifically designed to align with labor market requirements. This adaptability enables the implementation of novel educational frameworks and industry-relevant curriculum, hence augmenting their impact on the evolution of the higher education sector.

Furthermore, these institutions help bridge the gap between educational outcomes and workforce demands. They offer a variety of educational programs, teaching methods, and learning environments including flexible schedules, specialized courses, online learning, industry-based training, and interdisciplinary programs. This diversity allows students with varying needs, interests,

and goals to pursue educational paths suited to them. In order to meet the requirements of a varied student body and to ensure that the education offered is in accordance with the expectations of the contemporary labor market, private higher education institutions in the Philippines have embraced flexible learning modalities, such as hybrid and online courses, as stated by Cachero-Paderog (2023) [3]. Based on the study, this approach enables institutions to create more accessible and responsive learning environments that reflect the realities of a rapidly changing labor market.

Additionally, private schools sometimes have greater freedom than public institutions when it comes to experimentation with new teaching techniques, technology, and curriculum. Private institutions have the ability to adapt to changes in technology and society in a more efficient manner since they do not have to adhere to formal regulations, bureaucratic processes, or standardized curriculum requirements to the same extent that public institutions do. This implies that their flexibility and responsiveness make them leaders or pioneers in trying out and implementing new educational methods, technologies, or ideas. According to Gulosino (2003), the responsiveness of private higher education institutions in the Philippines has fostered institutional growth, allowing them to adapt swiftly to emerging educational demands and societal changes. This adaptability positions private institutions at the forefront of implementing innovative educational practices and technologies.

Consequently, private education institutions must guarantee that the curriculum matches with the skills and knowledge necessary for real-world application (Ebdane, 2024) [6]. Through close collaboration with industry partners, frequent curriculum updates, and the provision of practical training, they enhance graduates' preparedness and competitiveness in the job market.

However, these institutions face mounting pressures due to rapidly evolving technological landscapes, demographic shifts, policy reforms, and heightened global competition. According to Santiago (2020), the sustainability of private higher education in the Philippines is increasingly challenged by financial instability, regulatory changes, and shifting student expectations. To remain competitive and relevant, institutions must adopt forward-thinking strategies that not only address immediate concerns but also anticipate and adapt to future disruptions.

Amidst these rapid changes in society and technology, the concept of future-proofing—an institution's ability to anticipate, embrace, and prepare for change to maintain excellence and resilience has become increasingly important (Bryson, 2018) [2]. The study of Bryson emphasizes that future-proofing involves strategic planning, technological integration, human resource development, and curriculum modernization. Another previous study argues that institutions must adopt a comprehensive approach to leadership, organizational flexibility, and innovation to remain resilient in the face of evolving challenges (Kemp *et al*, 2022) [13] to sustain long-term success.

Previous studies show that the education sector continues to face complex challenges, including technological advancements, globalization, changing student demographics, and educational reforms. The study conducted by Fullan (2020) shows how these interconnected factors place pressure on institutions to continuously evolve. Similarly, Finkelstein et. al (2021) [9] emphasizes that such transformations require systemic adaptation to maintain educational quality and relevance. Thus, to keep up with these challenges, the academic sector must remain effective and responsive to both current and future educational demands.

The effects of technology, globalization, changing student demographics, and ongoing educational reforms pose challenges for institutions to be innovative and keep up with change (Fullan, 2020) [10]. Furthermore, to maintain the quality and relevance of education in this changing environment it requires a systematic approach to transformation (Finkelstein, 2021) [9]. Consequently, it is essential for academic institutions to remain agile and forward-thinking in order to effectively respond to both current and anticipated challenges in education.

Digital technology is reshaping how educational institutions operate and compete, pushing them to adopt new tools and approaches (Porter & Heppelmann, 2017) [20]. Furthermore, aligning curriculum with future labor market demands is crucial to ensure graduates are adequately prepared for employment (Young, 2020) [24]. In the Philippine context, financial instability, regulatory constraints, and shifting student expectations are identified as the most pressing issues facing private academic institutions (Santiago, 2020) [22]. Despite these insights, research remains limited on the role of middle management—such as deans, department heads, and program coordinators—in sustaining institutional resilience.

Since middle managers serve as the bridge between strategic leaders and frontline policy implementers, they are in a prime position to translate institutional goals into concrete actions (Vieira, 2016) [23]. Therefore, it is essential to explore and understand their strategies and perspectives to develop governance models that not only address current needs but also prepare for future challenges. In a time of rapid and often unpredictable change, examining the approaches of middle management is key to ensuring the long-term effectiveness and relevance of private academic institutions in the country.

The findings of a phenomenological study showed that middle-level managers in higher education institutions (HEIs) encounter challenges such as resistance to change, budget limitations, resource allocation issues, and the need to maintain interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships. By integrating strategic planning with quality management practices, institutions can ensure long-term sustainability and continuous improvement through goal alignment, stakeholder engagement, regular updates to plans, performance monitoring, and the allocation of dedicated resources (Miciano, 2023) [17].

According to the study of Kemp & Seashore, 2022 [13], building resilient educational institutions requires distributed leadership and the empowerment of operational leaders. Furthermore, another study highlights that the future of private higher education institutions relies on innovative and adaptable governance models and internal structures (Finkelstein *et al*., 2021) [9]. As a result, the objective of this study is to investigate the insights of middle management at private academic institutions in the Philippines on the measures that they use to protect their operations from future uncertainties. This research is intended to make a contribution to the development of management practices that are sustainable and can provide support for these institutions to achieve long term success. This will be accomplished by identifying practical and appropriate methods for overcoming challenges such as integrating

technology, ensuring the curriculum is relevant, and developing staff.

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the premise that future-proofing strategies implemented by middle management directly influence the institutional sustainability of private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines. Future-proofing, as described by Bryson (2018), involves strategic actions that enable institutions to anticipate and respond effectively to emerging challenges, particularly in areas shaped by rapid technological, economic, and societal changes. In this study, the framework focuses on three core components: Technology Integration, Curriculum Innovation, and Industry Partnership. These components represent essential levers through which private HEIs enhance their adaptability, academic relevance, and competitiveness.

Technology integration includes the adequacy of IT infrastructure, accessibility of digital resources, regular upgrading of systems, utilization of educational technologies, and mechanisms for evaluating the impact of technology on student learning outcomes. Curriculum innovation encompasses regular curriculum review and revision, integration of 21st-century skills and emerging technologies, benchmarking of curricula against national and international standards, alignment with CHED policies and industry trends, and mechanisms to bridge academic learning with real-world applications and Industry partnership as the institution's engagement with corporate, community, and professional organizations to collaborate in curriculum development, offer students internship and practicum opportunities, support faculty industry immersion, integrate industry mentors and speakers into academic programs, and co-develop innovative programs and training modules.

Objective

To investigate the insights of middle management at private academic institutions in the Philippines on the measures that they use to protect their operations from future uncertainties. This research is intended to make a contribution to the development of management practices that are sustainable and can provide support for these institutions to achieve long-term success. This will be accomplished by identifying practical and appropriate methods for overcoming challenges such as integrating technology, ensuring the curriculum is relevant, and developing staff.

Research Methodology

The research design utilizes a descriptive-correlational method of research with the help of survey questionnaires as the main source of data. Copeland (2022) stated that the aim of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Correlational research refers to a non-experimental research method which studies the relationship between two variables with the help of statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) [4]. Correlational research does not study the effects of extraneous variables on the variables under study. In particular, this study determines the profile of the respondents, future-proofing strategies and institutional sustainability among middle management of private universities in the Philippines. Likewise, it probes the significance of relationships, through correlation, between future-proofing strategies of middle management and institutional sustainability at a private university with an annex institution in Laguna, Philippines.

Research Subjects

The participants of this study were the middle managers of private university with an annex institution which includes administrative officers, program coordinator/manager, department head/chairperson/dean, and others. To determine the population of the participants, the researchers made use of purposive sampling; in all, there are thirty-five middle managers from two different institutions. Participants were required to be middle managers who serve as a connection between those who are in charge of the company and the people who work directly with customers.

Instrumentation and Validation

A researcher-made questionnaire was utilized to acquire the necessary primary data for the study. The instrument is divided into three (3) parts: Part 1 dealt with the demographic profile of the respondent; Part 2 pertains to the future-proofing strategies of middle management; and Part 3 covers the level of institutional sustainability. The researchers sought the advice of their adviser to assess the quality and suitability of the indicators. Then, the questionnaire was submitted for face validation to a panel of experts consisting of the researchers, statistician, and a specialist in the field. The suggestions and recommendations of the panel were incorporated in the draft of the questionnaire. A pilot test of the instrument was done by having 22 middle managers from other private universities to ensure the equivalence and uniformity from the final roster of actual respondents. Also, the researcher-made questionnaire underwent a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha for a thorough validation of the formulated indicators. Cronbach's alpha value of.988 was obtained, indicating an excellent internal consistency of the 10 indicators which were described using a 4-point scale (4-strongly agree; 3-agree, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree). The results revealed excellent reliability across all indicators, following the benchmarks set by George and Mallery (2019), where $\alpha \geq 0.90$ is interpreted as excellent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process comprised both pilot testing and the conduct of the survey administration. The pilot testing period took place between April 3 to 10, 2025, using Google Forms, and included 22 respondents across various private institutions for the purposes of assessing the reliability and simplicity of the survey instrument. Comments collected during this process were employed in revising and finalizing the questionnaire. The actual data gathering was carried out for 1 month from April 10 to May 10, 2025, using a combination of Google forms and printed survey tools distributed to the middle managers who were then working at a private university with an annex institution in Laguna, Philippines. The actual survey involved 35 middle managers as respondents and the instrument was centered on respondents' profile, future-proofing initiatives and institutional sustainability of middle management of private universities in the Philippines. Prior to data collection, institutional administrators were coordinated with in order to obtain the permission to conduct the study and to ensure the smooth distribution and recovery of the survey instruments.

Ethical Consideration

This research followed ethical research standards in line with Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 of the Philippines. Prior to data collection, there was formal communication with school authorities, and proper approvals were sought to ensure openness and adherence to institutional procedures.

An informed consent form, in detail, was given to every participant explaining the aim of the study, their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw at any time, confidentiality and protection of their data, and data storage. Statements on absence of personal risks and potential benefits of the study were also included.

All data gathered were anonymized and kept safely in password-protected databases, which only the research team could access. All identifiable personal information was not included in all reports and presentations. No minors were involved in the study, and all the participants were aged 18 and above. In an effort to further guarantee compliance, the research acquired ethics clearance from the relevant institution's ethics review committee before deployment.

Treatment and Data Analysis

Since the study is a descriptive-correlational type of research, the descriptive statistics used were frequency and percentage for the demographic profile of the respondents, while weighted mean and standard deviation was utilized to determine the future proofing strategies of middle managers and the level of institutional sustainability of private university in the Philippines with numerical ranges for a 4-point scale (1.00-1.74 for strongly disagree; 1.75-2.49 for disagree; 2.50-3.24 for agree ; and 3.25-4.00 for strongly agree). In addition, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation also known as Pearson r was used to determine the relationship between future-proofing strategies and level of institutional sustainability among middle managers of a private university in the Philippines. On the other hand, t-test and ANOVA were used to assess significant differences in future-proofing strategies of middle management and the level of institutional sustainability among private universities based on the respondent's demographic variables. Significance levels were set at $p < 0.05$. These methods ensured a rigorous and statistically sound interpretation of the data, aligning with best practices in educational and organizational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) [4].

Results And Discussions

Table 1 shows the respondent's profile in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, years of service, position, and institutional location. In terms of age, 9 or 25.7% of the respondents are 40 years old and below; 7 or 20.0% of the respondents are 56-60 years old; 6 or 17.1% of the respondents are 46-50 years old and 51-55 years old; 2 or 5.7% of the respondents are 61 years old and above. As for gender, 19 or 54.3% are female and 16 or 45.7% respondents are male. In terms of educational attainment, 21 or 60.0% of the respondents have master's degree; 10 or 28.6% of the respondents have doctorate degree; 2 or 5.7% of the respondents have post-doctorate and others. A total of 20 or 57.1% of the respondents have more than 10 years of service; 8 or 22.9% have 6 years and 7 or 20.0% have 3 years. Based on position, 29 or 82.9% are department head/chairperson/dean, 2 or 5.7% are administrative officers; 1 or 2.9% are program coordinator/manager and 3 or 8.6% are others;

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	40 years old and below	9	25.7
	41–45 years old	5	14.3
	46–50 years old	6	17.1
	51–55 years old	6	17.1
	56–60 years old	7	20.0
	61 years old and above	2	5.7
	Total	35	100.0
Gender	Female	19	54.3
	Male	16	45.7
	Total	35	100.0
Educational Attainment	Master's Degree	10	28.6
	Doctorate Degree	21	60.0
	Post-Doctorate Degree	2	5.7
	Others	2	5.7
	Total	35	100.0
Years of Service	3 years	7	20.0
	6 years	8	22.9
	More than 10 years	20	57.1
	Total	35	100.0
Position	Administrative Officer	2	5.7
	Program Coordinator/Manager	1	2.9
	Department Head/Chairperson/Dean	29	82.9
	Other	3	8.6
	Total	35	100.0

Table 2 presents the future-proofing strategies of an institution in terms of curriculum Innovations, as evaluated by respondents. All five indicators received a weighted mean within the "Excellent" range (3.25– 4.00), indicating strong institutional performance in updating and aligning the curriculum with current and future demands.

Table 2: Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents in Terms of Curriculum Innovations

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The curriculum is reviewed and updated to align with current industry needs and emerging trends	3.66	0.482	Excellent
2. Curriculum is revised based on best practices of leading HEIs in the country and abroad and in compliance with relevant CMO.	3.63	0.490	Excellent
3. The institution is frequently collaborating with industry partners to ensure curriculum alignment with industry needs	3.49	0.562	Excellent
4. The institution's programs is effective in bridging the gap between academia and industry	3.57	0.558	Excellent
5. Technological innovations and emerging technologies are well integrated into the curriculum to enhance learning outcomes	3.49	0.562	Excellent
Overall	3.57	0.531	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

Table 3 illustrated the institution's initiatives for future-proofing in research and scholarship, as assessed by respondents. Three of the five indicators attained a weighted mean in the "Excellent" range (3.25 -- 4.00), although two indicators fell within the "Good" range (3.00-3.24), indicating commendable institutional performance in research facilitation, albeit with opportunities for enhancement.

Table 3: Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents in Terms of Research and Scholarship

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution fosters a culture of research and scholarship	3.60	0.497	Excellent
2. Adequate research infrastructure (e.g., libraries, laboratories, databases) can be found within the institution	3.51	0.562	Excellent
3. Financial and non-financial support and incentives are provided to faculty, students and staff for research activities	3.20	0.632	Good
4. Research outputs are regularly disseminated and utilized to improve teaching and learning practices	3.20	0.677	Good
5. The institution encourages production of research that addresses local and national challenges	3.43	0.558	Excellent
Overall	3.39	0.604	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

According to the respondents' assessments, the future-proofing techniques of an institution with regard to the professional development of teachers and staff are presented in Table 4. The weighted means for all five of the variables were within the range of "Excellent" (3.25–4.00), which suggests that the institution is strongly committed to the professional development of its professors and staff members.

Table 4. Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents in Terms of Faculty and Staff Development

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. Faculty and staff professional development needs are assessed and addressed	3.26	0.505	Excellent
2. Professional development programs are aligned with the institution's strategic goals and future-proofing initiatives	3.37	0.547	Excellent
3. Primary methods (interviews, questionnaires, surveys and observations) are used to identify the professional development needs of faculty and staff	3.37	0.598	Excellent
4. Professional development programs are offered to faculty and staff (e.g., workshops, seminars, online courses, mentoring)	3.43	0.502	Excellent
5. Professional development programs are implemented to enhance faculty and staff skills.	3.40	0.553	Excellent
Overall	3.37	0.539	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

The techniques that an institution use to ensure that it will be prepared for the future in terms of technology integration are presented in Table 5, as assessed by the respondents. One of the five indicators obtained a weighted mean that fell within the "Good" range (3.00-3.24), but four of the five indicators received weighted means that fell within the "Excellent" range (3.25-4.00).

Table 5. Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents in Terms of Technological Integration

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The current technological infrastructure (e.g., internet connectivity, hardware, software) to support teaching, learning, and administrative processes are adequate	3.26	0.657	Excellent
2. Digital resources and technologies for faculty, staff, and students are accessible	3.43	0.608	Excellent
3. The technological infrastructures are frequently updated and maintained	3.23	0.690	Good
4. The educational technologies are integrated into the curriculum and teaching practices	3.40	0.553	Excellent
5. Methods used to evaluate the impact of technology on student learning outcomes are in place	3.26	0.561	Excellent
Overall	3.31	0.615	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

The methods that an institution employs to ensure future sustainability are included in Table 6, which details the strategic planning and execution strategies of the organization. The respondents' assessments of these methods are also included in the table. The weighted mean for all five indicators fells within the "Excellent" range (3.25–4.00), which indicates that there is a high emphasis on systematic planning in order to prepare for future events.

Table 6: Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents in Terms of Strategic Planning and Implementation

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution has a formal, documented strategic plan for future-proofing	3.37	0.547	Excellent
2. The strategic plan is reviewed and updated as needed	3.34	0.539	Excellent
3. The middle management is involved in the development of the institution's strategic plan	3.60	0.553	Excellent
4. The strategic plan implemented within my department/unit is effective	3.34	0.539	Excellent
5. The lessons learned from the evaluation process are used to improve future strategic plans	3.51	0.507	Excellent
Overall	3.43	0.541	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

The respondents' general ideas for future-proofing in five extensive categories are presented in Table 7. Every single location obtained a weighted mean that fell into the "Excellent" category (3.25–4.00).

Table 7: Overall Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents

Construct	Factors	WM	Interpretation
Future-Proofing Strategies	Curriculum Innovations	3.57	Excellent
	Research and Scholarship	3.39	Excellent
	Faculty and Staff Development	3.37	Excellent
	Technological Integration	3.31	Excellent
	Strategic Planning and Implementation	3.43	Excellent
	Overall	3.41	Excellent

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

The extent to which institutions are able to sustain themselves, with regard to financial sustainability and resource management, is evaluated by respondents and presented in Table 8. A weighted mean score in the "Very High" category (3.25–4.00) was obtained by three of the five indicators, which suggests that the institution's resource management is effective overall but might be improved in terms of balance.

Table 8: Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents in Terms of Financial Sustainability and Resource Management

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution employs strategies to ensure long-term financial sustainability	3.40	0.497	Very High
2. The institution's budget is being reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing needs and priorities	3.17	0.664	High
3. The institution prioritizes and allocate resources (financial, human, physical) to support strategic goals	3.11	0.631	High
4. The institution ensures the efficient utilization of human resources	3.26	0.657	Very High
5. The institution has contingency plans for financial emergencies	3.26	0.701	Very High
Overall	3.24	0.634	High

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High); 2.50 – 3.24 (High); 1.75 – 2.49 (Low); 1.00 – 1.74 (Very Low)

The level of institutional sustainability in terms of human resource management and development, as determined by the respondents, is shown in Table 9. The weighted mean for four of the five indicators fell within the "High" range (2.50–3.24), while the weighted mean for one of the indicators fell within the "Very High" range (3.25–4.00).

Table 9: Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents in Terms of Human Resource Management and Development

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution employs strategies to attract and recruit qualified faculty and staff	3.00	0.420	High
2. The institution's compensation and benefits package are competitive compared to other institutions	2.77	0.731	High
3. The performance evaluation process contributes to the professional development and improvement of the faculty and staff	2.91	0.658	High
4. The institution has a formal succession planning process for key leadership positions	2.89	0.718	High
5. The middle management is involved in the recruitment, performance management, and development of their team members	3.31	0.631	Very High
Overall	2.98	0.660	High

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High); 2.50 – 3.24 (High); 1.75 – 2.49 (Low); 1.00 – 1.74 (Very Low)

According to the respondents, the level of institutional sustainability, which is measured by the relevance of the academic programs offered, is shown in Table 10. Out of the five indicators, four of them earned a weighted mean that was in the "Very High" range (3.25–4.00), and one indicator had a weighted mean that was in the "High" range (2.50–3.24).

Table 10: Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents in Terms of Academic Programs and Relevance

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution ensures that graduates possess the skills and competencies required by the labor market	3.63	0.490	Very High
2. The institution ensures that the 21st-century skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, digital literacy) are integrated into the curriculum	3.60	0.553	Very High
3. The institution promotes the development of students' entrepreneurial and innovative mindsets	3.23	0.598	High
4. The institution ensures that academic programs are flexible and adaptable to changing student needs and market demands	3.29	0.622	Very High
5. The quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of academic programs	3.34	0.591	Very High
Overall	3.42	0.590	Very High

Not: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High); 2.50 – 3.24 (High); 1.75 – 2.49 (Low); 1.00 – 1.74 (Very Low)

Table 11 illustrates the degree of institutional sustainability as it relates to student outcomes, according to respondents' assessments. The weighted mean of each of the five indicators fell inside the "Very High" range of 3.25 to 4.00, which is indicative of the high degree of dedication that the institution has to tracking and facilitating student achievement.

Table 11: Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents in Terms of Student Outcomes

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The institution employs strategies to enhance graduate employability	3.46	0.611	Very High
2. The institution tracks and measures graduate employment rates and career success	3.40	0.553	Very High
3. The institution assesses and measures student learning outcomes	3.46	0.505	Very High
4. The institution measures student engagement and satisfaction with the learning experience	3.54	0.505	Very High
5. The institution addresses student feedback and concerns	3.51	0.562	Very High
Overall	3.47	0.545	Very High

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High); 2.50 – 3.24 (High); 1.75 – 2.49 (Low); 1.00 – 1.74 (Very Low)

The respondents' assessment of the level of institutional sustainability, as it pertains to the development of infrastructure, is shown in Table 12. The weighted mean of each of the five indicators fell within the "High" range (2.50–3.24). This suggests that the institution possesses sufficient infrastructure to sustain its operations but that there is still room for development.

Table 12: Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents in Terms of Infrastructure Development

Indicators	WM	SD	Interpretation
1. The present technical infrastructure of the institution, which includes things like internet access, hardware, and software, is sufficient to support the operations of teaching, learning, and administration.	3.17	0.747	High
2. The institution makes certain that the physical spaces, such as the classrooms, labs, and libraries, are up-to-date and in good condition.	3.11	0.631	High
3. The institution guarantees that the physical spaces are able to be adjusted to accommodate new pedagogical methods and the varying learning requirements of students.	3.17	0.514	High
4. The institution has already developed plans for the extension and renovation of its physical infrastructure in order to facilitate future growth and development.	3.17	0.568	High
5. The institution makes certain that physical infrastructure is easily accessible to students, professors, and staff members who have disabilities or other special requirements.	3.14	0.648	High
Overall	3.15	0.620	High

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High); 2.50 – 3.24 (High); 1.75 – 2.49 (Low); 1.00 – 1.74 (Very Low)

The table 13 presents the overall level of institutional sustainability as assessed by the respondents across five key dimensions. Two of the five areas received a weighted mean within the "Very High" range (3.25– 4.00), while the three of the five areas received a weighted mean within the "High" range (2.50–3.24).

Table 13: Overall Level of Institutional Sustainability as Assessed by the Respondents

Construct	Factors	WM	Interpretation
Institutional Sustainability	Financial Sustainability and Resource Management	3.24	High
	Human Resource Management and Development	2.98	High
	Academic Programs and Relevance	3.42	Very High
	Student Outcomes	3.47	Very High
	Infrastructure Development	3.15	High
	Overall	3.25	Very High

Note: Scoring Range: 3.25 – 4.00 (Excellent); 2.50 – 3.24 (Good); 1.75 – 2.49 (Fair); 1.00 – 1.74 (Poor)

Table 14 illustrates the analysis of the difference in the future-proofing techniques of the respondents when they were categorized based on their demographic profiles, which included factors such as their age, gender, level of education, number of years of service, and position.

Table 14: Difference in the Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents When Grouped According to Demographic Profiles

Profile	Groups	Mean	SD	Inferential	*p*-value	Interpretation
Age	40 years old and below	3.404	.280	$F(5, 12.801) = 2.074^a$	.135	Not significant
	41–45 years old	3.472	.290			
	46–50 years old	3.460	.115			
	51–55 years old	3.140	.324			
	56–60 years old	3.543	.349			
	61 years old and above	3.540	.028			
Gender	Female	3.385	.326	$t = -.620$	.539	Not significant
	Male	3.448	.255			
Educational Attainment	Master's Degree	3.440	.390	$F(3) = .786$	.511	Not significant
	Doctorate Degree	3.442	.237			
	Post-Doctorate Degree	3.200	.113			
	Others	3.200	.453			
Years of Service	3 years	3.400	.257	$F(2) = .039$	.962	Not significant
	6 years	3.395	.323			
	More than 10 years	3.426	.306			
Position	Administrative Officer	3.360	.057	$F(3) = .601$	.619	Not significant
	Program Coordinator	3.760	.000			
	Department Head/ Chairperson/Dean	3.417	.304			
	Other	3.307	.295			

Note: Dependent: Future-Proofing Strategies a. Welch Statistics

As can be seen in Table 15, the difference in the level of institutional sustainability was examined when the data was categorized according to demographic profiles, which included factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, years of service, and position within the company.

Table 15: Difference in the Level of Institutional Sustainability When Grouped According to Demographic Profiles

Profile	Groups	Mean	SD	Inferential	*p*-value	Interpretation
Age	40 years old and below	3.338	.314	$F(5) = 3.261$	.019	Significant
	41–45 years old	3.208	.432			
	46–50 years old	3.493	.271			
	51–55 years old	2.807	.275			
	56–60 years old	3.286	.344			
	61 years old and above	3.480	.283			
Gender	Female	3.208	.421	$t = -.753$	.457	Not significant
	Male	3.305	.320			
Educational Attainment	Master's Degree	3.256	.431	$F(3) = .040$	.989	Not significant
	Doctorate Degree	3.263	.343			
	Post-Doctorate Degree	3.180	.537			
	Others	3.200	.679			
Years of Service	3 years	3.463	.215	$F(2) = 1.728$	.194	Not significant
	6 years	3.115	.343			
	More than 10 years	3.234	.412			
Position	Administrative Officer	3.160	.226	$F(3) = .540$	.658	Not significant
	Program Coordinator	3.560	.000			
	Dept. Head/Chairperson/Dean	3.269	.395			
	Other	3.053	.266			

Note: Dependent: Institutional Sustainability

Following a significant result from *Table 15*, Tukey's post hoc analysis was conducted to identify which groups are significantly different from each other.

Table 16: Tukey's Pairwise Comparison of Level of Institutional Sustainability When Grouped by Age

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Diff (I-J)	Std. Error	*p*-value	Interpretation
40 years old and below	41–45 years old	.130	.182	.979	Not significant
40 years old and below	51–55 years old	.531	.172	.045	Significant
40 years old and below	56–60 years old	.052	.164	1.000	Not significant
41–45 years old	51–55 years old	.401	.197	.347	Not significant
46–50 years old	35–40 years old	.156	.172	.942	Not significant
46–50 years old	41–45 years old	.285	.197	.699	Not significant
46–50 years old	51–55 years old	.687	.188	.012	Significant
46–50 years old	56–60 years old	.208	.181	.858	Not significant
46–50 years old	61 years old and above	.013	.266	1.000	Not significant
56–60 years old	41–45 years old	.078	.191	.998	Not significant
56–60 years old	51–55 years old	.479	.181	.118	Not significant
61 years old and above	35–40 years old	.142	.254	.993	Not significant
61 years old and above	41–45 years old	.272	.272	.915	Not significant
61 years old and above	51–55 years old	.673	.266	.147	Not significant
61 years old and above	56–60 years old	.194	.261	.974	Not significant

A Pearson's correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between the future-proofing strategies of the respondents and the level of institutional sustainability, as shown in *Table 17*.

Table 17: Relationship Between the Future-Proofing Strategies of the Respondents and the Level of Institutional Sustainability

Independent	Dependent	Pearson's *r*	*p*-value	Interpretation
Future-Proofing Strategies	Institutional Sustainability	.754	<.001	Significant

Note: Correlation: 0.00 – 0.19 (very weak); 0.20 – 0.39 (weak); 0.40 – 0.59 (moderate); 0.60 – 0.79 (strong); 0.80 – 1.00 (very strong). (Evans, 1996) [7]

Discussions

The purpose of this study was to examine how future-proofing strategies implemented by middle managers contribute to the institutional sustainability of a private university and its annex campus in Laguna, Philippines. The findings consistently demonstrate strong institutional performance across all dimensions of future-proofing, as well as high to very high levels of sustainability. These results reinforce the notion that proactive planning, curriculum relevance, research culture, technological readiness, and staff development are critical factors in the resilience of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Across all five dimensions: curriculum innovation, research and scholarship, faculty and staff development, technological integration, and strategic planning; respondents rated institutional efforts as Excellent. This indicates that the institution demonstrates high adaptability, responsiveness to change, and alignment with national and global trends.

Curriculum innovation achieved the highest overall mean (WM = 3.57), emphasizing strong institutional alignment with emerging industry needs and trends. Respondents affirmed that technological integration and industry collaboration are well embedded in the curriculum. This supports Young's (2020) [24] argument that curriculum modernization is essential for preparing students for future workforce demands. Additionally, the strong curriculum–industry linkage mirrors findings by Ebdane (2024), who emphasized that programs aligned with sectoral needs enhance employability and competitiveness.

Although rated "Excellent" overall, two indicators (financial support for research and dissemination of research outputs) earned "Good" ratings, suggesting areas for improvement. Limited incentives or dissemination structures may hinder the development of a robust research culture. Similar challenges were observed by Miciano (2023), who notes that inadequate support and institutional structures often impede the productivity of HEIs. Still, the institution's strong research orientation reflects Bryson's (2018) position that strategic investment in scholarship strengthens organizational adaptability.

All indicators for faculty and staff development were assessed as Excellent, indicating strong institutional commitment to workforce capability building. This aligns with Amin *et al*. (2025) who found that continuous professional development enhances workplace performance and innovation. Middle managers appear to have access to training, mentoring, workshops, and competency-based programs that support institutional goals and long-term sustainability.

Technological integration received an overall rating of Excellent, though "frequent updating and maintenance of technology infrastructure" was rated "Good." Respondents acknowledged adequate digital tools but identified the need for more consistent system upgrades. This reflects Porter and Heppelmann's (2017) observation that technological infrastructure must continuously evolve to sustain competitiveness. As educational delivery becomes more technology-driven, regular upgrading becomes essential to prevent obsolescence.

Strategic planning scored Excellent across all indicators, indicating a well-structured and participatory planning culture. Middle managers confirmed their involvement in planning processes, consistent with Vieira (2016), who argued that middle management plays a pivotal role in translating institutional strategies into operational outcomes. The findings support Finkelstein *et al*. (2021), who highlight that adaptive and integrated governance structures are necessary for sustainability in private HEIs.

The institution achieved an Overall Very High sustainability rating (WM = 3.25). Two domains—student outcomes and academic program relevance—received Very High ratings, illustrating the institution's strong focus on graduate competencies and learner success.

Financial sustainability and resource management achieved a High rating (WM = 3.24). Respondents perceived strong long-term financial strategies and contingency planning, although budg*et al*location and resource prioritization may be areas needing improvement. Santiago (2020) noted that financial pressures are among the most significant threats to private HEIs in the Philippines; thus, continuous improvement in resource allocation processes is essential.

Human resource sustainability was rated High (WM = 2.98). While recruitment and performance appraisal systems are functional, compensation competitiveness and succession planning need enhancement. This is consistent with Salvosa and Hechanova's (2021) findings that workforce expectations vary across generations and that HEIs must innovate HR practices to retain talent.

Academic program relevance domain scored Very High (WM = 3.42)—one of the strongest sustainability areas. Respondents affirmed that programs successfully integrate 21st-century skills and align with market needs. This strongly correlates with the high ratings in curriculum innovation and technological integration, reflecting global expectations for future-ready graduates (Cachero-Paderog, 2023; Young, 2020) [24].

Student outcomes earned the highest sustainability score (WM = 3.47). Effective tracking of employability, learning outcomes assessment, and responsiveness to student feedback indicate robust quality assurance mechanisms. This aligns with Lemke and Harris (2016), who argue that sustainability is enhanced when institutions demonstrate strong performance outcomes tied to learner achievement.

Infrastructure sustainability was rated High (WM = 3.15). The institution has adequate facilities but requires enhancement in modernization and accessibility. This supports NRI (2025) [19], which stresses that future-ready campuses must invest in flexible, inclusive, and technology-rich environments.

A strong and significant correlation ($r = .754$, $p < .001$) was found between future-proofing strategies and institutional sustainability. This indicates that institutions implementing comprehensive future-proofing measures are significantly more likely to achieve high levels of sustainability. This supports Kemp and Seashore's (2022) [13] assertion that resilience and long-term viability depend on consistent strategic innovation and leadership adaptability.

No significant differences were found across demographic groups—age, gender, educational attainment, years of service, and position. This suggests that perceptions of future-proofing implementation are uniform across middle management. The institution appears to have well-institutionalized systems that are consistently experienced across groups.

A significant difference was identified only in the age variable ($p = .019$). Tukey's post hoc test revealed differences between 40 years old and below vs. 51–55 years old, and 46–50 years old vs. 51–55 years old. Older middle managers may perceive more gaps in sustainability, possibly due to higher expectations or longer exposure to institutional challenges. Kim & Park (2024) [14] similarly found that age influences perceptions of organizational sustainability, with older professionals being more sensitive to long-term planning and organizational risks.

Conclusion And Implications

The findings of this study underscore the vital role of future-proofing strategies in ensuring the sustainability of higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly in private academic settings in the Philippines. The consistent "Excellent" ratings across all five dimensions of future-proofing Curriculum Innovations, Research and Scholarship, Faculty and Staff Development, Technological Integration, and Strategic Planning and Implementation—highlight the institution's readiness to adapt to evolving educational, technological, and market trends. These strategies collectively contribute to institutional resilience by promoting curriculum relevance, research responsiveness, digital competence, and leadership agility.

Sustainability in HEIs is not solely dependent on internal strategies, but also on alignment with global quality assurance mechanisms. Institutional sustainability, as shown in the study, is strongly linked with the capacity to achieve high student outcomes, maintain relevant academic programs, and manage resources strategically (Lemke & Harris, 2016) [16]. In the context of the institution where the study was conducted, the outcomes are reinforced through adherence to established quality assurance frameworks such as local accreditation, the QS Stars rating system, ASEAN University Network (AUN) assessments, Applied HE rankings, and Times Higher Education (THE) metrics. These frameworks not only provide benchmarks for excellence but also serve as strategic tools for institutional visibility, competitiveness, and continuous improvement.

Incorporating these standards into institutional planning elevates the credibility and global positioning of HEIs. By embracing these multidimensional quality assurance systems, institutions are better equipped to deliver programs that are responsive to local needs while being globally benchmarked. Furthermore, they foster a culture of evidence-based improvement, innovation, and stakeholder engagement critical components for long-term viability.

In conclusion, the synergy between robust future-proofing strategies and adherence to quality assurance mechanisms strengthens institutional sustainability. It empowers private HEIs to fulfill their mission of producing competent, adaptable, and socially responsible graduates while remaining competitive in an increasingly globalized and disruptive education landscape. Thus, future-proofing is not merely an option, it is an imperative for the sustained excellence and relevance of higher education institutions.

One key limitation of this study is its relatively small sample size, as data were gathered exclusively from a single private university and its annex campus. While the findings provide valuable insights into the implementation of future-proofing strategies at the operational level, the results may not be generalizable to other higher education institutions (HEIs) with different organizational structures, cultures, or strategic orientations. To enhance the robustness and applicability of future studies, it is recommended that similar research be conducted across a broader range of HEIs, including public and private institutions in various regions. Expanding the sample size would allow for more comprehensive comparative analyses and increase the external validity of the findings. Moreover, future research should consider the use of methodological triangulation by involving multiple

stakeholders such as faculty members, students, non-teaching staff, and top-level administrators. Including diverse perspectives would enrich the data and provide a more holistic understanding of how future-proofing strategies are perceived, implemented, and experienced across different levels of the academic community. This multi-stakeholder approach would also help identify potential gaps and alignments between strategic planning and on-the-ground realities, ultimately contributing to the advancement of sustainable practices in higher education.

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