College Experience of Students in a Faith-Based Institution

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*Abstract-*This paper aimed to understand the experience of college students who studied under a faith-based institution, especially in Thailand. By using a one-on-one interview form, the researcher collected data of eighteen participants who regularly studied in a faith-based institution. Each interviewee was asked a list of ten questions focused on their personal demonography, feeling, thinking, and experience about four major aspects of the topic – physical, mental, spiritual, and social. All participants completed providing the answers under the normal condition. Through reading the transcribed texts several times, the data were formed into different categories and themes for analysis. The result showed that students had positive perspectives about faith-based institutions. Health educations that applied religious' principles were taught both direct – lessons and indirect – encouraged programs. Moreover, these institutions provided healthy environments and mental support systems for students to grow their mental health and spiritual life. Both religious and non-religious students reported the effective teachings of faith-based institutions which changed their perceptions and behaviors positively in terms of social interaction development.

Keywords- Faith-based institutions, mental aspect, physical aspects, spiritual aspects, social aspects.

I. INTRODUCTION

Faith-based institutions are educational organizations that are increasing both in several facilities, and enrolled students every year around the world, even though some adverse control comes from political power in some countries.

According to Haitt (2017), in the US, Protestant evangelical Christian schools have more than 5.5 million students who are studying in approximately 3000 Christian schools.

This study also reports that there are more than 20000 Christian schools in 100 countries around the world. Not only in the US, but the statistics also report the rapid growth of students' enrollment in Africa where "the learning crisis" affects the education system (Wodon, 2019c). However, many educators in Kenya express concern about the adverse control of political power which leads to negative influences to the development of faith-based organizations (D'Agostino et al., 2019).

Similarly, faith-based institutions also form significant influences on the education system, teachers, and students in Asia, especially in China. According to Silva et al. (2020), faith-based schools "can provide alternative schooling" which can replace the government educational system and lead the "alternative international higher education pathways within andbeyond China".

Moreover, faith-based institutions are increasing in the higher education arena in post-Mao. From that, the beliefs and identities of students are shaped under multiple knowledge forms (Zhao, 2018). Research also reports positive teaching experiences of teachers who applied their faith in their teaching under faith-based institutions. According to Ding and Costa (2018), in China, teachers who apply religious' principles, faith-based emotional supports, interactions, position identities into teachings help students to be more positive in learning.

As major organizations which affect the teaching principles of teachers and the religions of students in the West and East, faith-based institutions do exist in Thailand as well. Many studies showed positive feedback on these institutions on student's learning experience and academic performance.

According to Kitjaroonchai&Hungyo (2017), students who study in a faith-based institution in Thailand achieve high academic performance and build up positive moral values. As Christian educators and faith-based institutions in Thailand apply the biblical worldview into instructional pedagogy, the "effecting change" is seen in students' beliefs which are strongly related to the teachers and students relationship (Deprey, 2019).

This qualitative study aims to understand the experience of college students in a faith- based institution, especially in Thailand. It is important and necessary to understand the

whole experience of college students who study in faith-based institutions during their college years, as these experiences help educators and parents provide positive learning conditions for children.

Moreover, educators who educate their students in faith-based institutions must adjust the teaching methods to fulfill the students' needs in their learning through understanding theperceptions of students in this particular field. Administrations, teachers, and parents can benefit from seeing the real experiences and suggestions to make the improvements.

Especially for those who want to open more faith-based institutions in the higher education level, the research may provide a deep understanding of the influences of the faith-based teaching methods on students' development. The research question that will be analyzed in this study is "How do college students in a faith-institution perceive their experience in terms of physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects?"

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Faith-based institutions are organizations or groups of people involved in providing a religious foundation. In terms of education, a faith-based institution is defined as an organization that applies religious principles in the teaching methods.

According to Isaac (2012), faith-based institutions use the scripture as the fundamental ideas for teaching and learning of students in the school (p.1). In another definition, the combined expression of the believers' responses to the calls of doing a good performance for the community in the direction of their faith is faith-based learning (Babie et al., 2020).

Moreover, faith-based learning does not stop at educational fields; some researchers define them as social services based on religious principles. Crisp (2014) states that a faith-based institution is the "social service agency" related to the beliefs and ideals to one particular religion under the patronage of that religious community or organization (p.11).

Faith-based institutions carry many different aims to serve the community while helping students to grow holistically under the principles and beliefs of a particular religion. In a Christian context, a faith-based education aims to help students to "contextualize their own beliefs" by the teaching. It encourages students to "inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue", from which they can understand the root of their beliefs (Barber et al., 2020).

This kind of institution does not serve for academic and self-religious development only; it also serves many different aspects of cross cultures. Further, based on the

education philosophy of religion, the schools follow faith-based teaching methods that create motivation and encouragement for students to achieve religious commitment and for parents to build up "parental involvement" in the learning process of their children (Wilson, 2010).

Many students shared that their experiences in the faith-based institution brought positive impacts on their learning process. The students in a faith-based education reported high achievement of the elementary students in reading assessment compared to other institutions (Henry et al., 2017). Moreover, the Christian schools provided a positive environment for students to develop their spiritual life besides understanding academic knowledge and relational development (Otto & Harrington, 2016).

Through the encouraging learning environment, students who gained faith-based educations could earn diverse experiences after several years. In addition, through building high-quality educational attainment, the faith-based institution could bring economic benefits for the community.

According to Wodon (2019d), by the improvement of Catholic schools in educational attainment, these schools and students who graduate from Catholic institutions contributed around "12 trillion to the changing wealth of nations". It means that the positive education of faith-based institutions can create the economic success of students and encourage impact to the community.

Not only positive influences on the students' development, but faith-based institutions also receive encouraging feedbacks from parents of children. Christian schools help to develop the positive parentship and relationship between schools and parents in terms of building a good educational foundation for children. Because parents have different ways to access the information about their children's studying process, Christian schools successfully develop their communication approaches which parents can use to increase "the essential partnership relationship" (Hiatt, 2017).

Consequently, the schools and parents can work together to educate children in both settings – school and home, where they spend lots of time. Moreover, according to Wodon (2020a), research also pointed out that parents had high satisfaction with the faith- based education, and they were willing to support this education system.

Several studies reported different contributions and effects to the community and society of faith-based institutions. Most of the reports showed the satisfied feedback about these institutions. **Daniels and Gustafson (2016)** stated in their study that when people took the education which applied a religion's principles, they would perform and lead out in many community services which provided

many positive influences for the community. These community services involved faculty members, students, and staff to solve social issues. In addition, according to **Frew et al. (2016),** faith-based education or church-based educational approach had more active African Americans taking part in clinical trials for the community compared to secular schools.

These clinical trials (such as vaccine trials) carried big meaning contributions for the community. The social contribution of faith-based institutions was also noted as accepting the disabled children in the education environment with other students, so the number of students grew more and more in Christian schools (Lane, 2017).

Besides, research showed that Christian schools or faith-based educations mostly were built in the low-income countries around the world to serve the different purposes of the religious philosophies, especially serving poor people.

According to Wodon (2019a), one of the major purposes of the faith-based institution was to serve the poor people who really needed education to make changes in their life. Thus, most of faith-based Catholic schools were built in the low-income nations, "especially in sub-Saharan Africa".

However, there was a difference in the geographic disparities of the faith-based schools in the low-income nations between the expected location and building locations of these schools. The research reported that these schools were not in the expected area where the local people needed them the most (Wodon, 2020b).

For the different leader's positions and the organization's size, the religious principles were also involved in building the effective school management skills of leaders and saved the educational budget of the government for their citizens' needs.

Bailey (2017) stated that theleaders of the Christian schools, especially Christian women leaders, should follow the religious principles and teaching approaches so that they would be more beneficial for students and schools in the faith-based education system. Not only stopping at the suggestions for the school principals and leaders, but the government also received the benefit of saving the money for the education system when the faith-based institutions increased.

According to Wodon (2019b), in a community with many faith-based institutions, the governments of "38 countries for which estimates are computed, total annual savings are valued at US$ 63 billion" which is supposed to support education costs. It did not mean that students did not pay when they came to study under the faith-based institution,

but the education fee would be paid fully by students' families and supports from the schools instead of taking the sponsors ships from the government.

In modern society, there were many challenges and difficulties that the faith-based institutions needed to overcome if they still wanted to spread their educational beliefs and missions for many countries around the world. The Catholic schools and other faith-based education systems had to face difficulties in their teaching and in maintaining infrastructures which might lead to the school closures in the "economic downturn" (Wodon, 2020c).

Challenges for the faith-based institution also came from the intersections between different religious philosophies in the community.

According to Martínez-Ariño and Teinturier (2019), one of the problems that faith-based schools had to negotiate was the intersections in the growing religious diversity, and it was really hard to find the solutions for "religious homogeneity" which deleted the religious traditional values. Therefore, the question was how a faith-based institution could completely stick to their religious principles while allowing in the fee-religious or personal beliefs of different students who applied to the schools.

Even though the faith-based institutions faced many difficulties, the statistics still reported the high number of enrollments of students who attended the faith-based education system in many countries.

According to Wodon (2019e), in Latin America and the Caribbean area, the report showed that there were around nine million children who regularly attended high schools under Catholic management in 2016. This number went up to nearly "62 million children enrolled in K-12 Catholic schools globally", and in higher education such as colleges or universities, the enrollment of students also was reported at a very high level (Wodon, 2020d).

These huge numbers of enrollment showed that for faith-based education – taking Catholic schools as an example – many parents and students chose to study under the teachings and principles of a particular religious.

III. METHODOLOGY

To conduct this research paper, the researcher used the qualitative research design which applied qualitative approach and methodology. Qualitative in-depth face-to-face interviews about the faith-based institution experience of participants helped to collect data for the study.

The data analysis process followed several steps before forming the results. The researcher also gave attention to ethical concerns during the collecting and analyzing of data.

1. Sample:

In this qualitative study, the population was regular international undergraduates studying in a faith-based university in Thailand. The data was collected from eighteen participants taken from the population with an equal number of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. In the qualitative research method, the study gets more information power, deep understanding, and relevant sharing when the sample size is not too big (Malterud et al., 2016). Participants can choose interview settings where they are comfortable so that they can be encouraged to share more.

2. Data Collection:

To collect data, this study applied qualitative interviewing. The interview approach is a research method that allows the researcher to collect data by the sharing of experiences and understandings of participants through conversation (King et al., 2018). In this interviewing method, a one-on-one interview format was used to collect data from each participant, which meant that the eighteen students, who were interviewed, would answer the interview questions one at a time.

It was the "most common way" for a researcher to get into deep analysis of the data by combining "one-on-one interviewing and using transcription" (Parmar et al., 2018).

The interview protocol of this study included ten main questions related to four major aspects of the research topic – physical, mental, spiritual, and social. These interview questions helped to understand how college students in a faith-based institution perceived their experience in these four aspects (see appendix). Before the interviewees freely answered the prepared questions, the researcher would ask the permission of the participants to record their answers.

After receiving the permission, the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviewees' responses. These transcriptions were very helpful for the data analysis process later.

3. Data Analysis:

The data analysis started with familiarization by reading the transcribed texts several times. The main ideas and initial thoughts of participants during the interview process were noted. The next step was to search for themes of all responses based on the study aim. All codes relevant to the research aim were incorporated into the different themes which provided insights into participants' ideas about all aspects of this study.

Besides, data analysis also provided a clearunderstanding of the responses of participants on emotions, attitudes, ideas, or opinions about a particular field. Through the data analysis, which was a careful inspection of transcription, the researcher spotted of students' perceptions of their experiences in a faith-based institution.

4. Ethical Concerns:

The researcher asked permission from the participants and invited them to participate in this study with willing acknowledgment. The interview questions did not require participants to provide any specific personal information. Using several ways for anonymity purposes was not an only procedure but is related to the psychological attitude of the participant and the research process (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Therefore, the anonymity of the participants was protected.

This research did not lead to any risk for students, instructors, and publishers in terms of perceptions of students on their experiences about faith-based institutions. The ethical value of the study was provided by both researcher and participants and by that decided the authenticity of the article (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012).

IV. FINDINGS

Through analyzing data and responses of all eighteen participants, five main themes were noted. This part provides excerpts from participants' responses used as citations to support themes and categories. The code of interviewees' responses was formed by gender (M-male, F- female), numerical order, religion (C-Christian, N- non-Christian), and participants' role (E- interviewee).

The five themes were enlisted as following. First, students had a generally positive perception of the education system which applied religious principles into teaching and learning. Second, the faith-based institution had different influences on students through health education and practice during their study time in this institution. Third, students experienced mental

support in both psychological and spiritual aspects from counselors and church pastors. Fourth, the faith-based institution provided many programs and opportunities for students to effectively practice the fundamental religion of the school; the program enhanced the positive influences on students' spiritual development. Lastly, students received encouraging changes in their perceptions and behaviors in terms of social interaction by the effective teachings of the institution.

1. General Perception:

The student's general perception about education systems that applied principles of a particular religion into educating was one of the key themes in analyzing participants' responses. In the details, both religious and non-religious students provided positive responses to these education systems in general.

The following comment is an example showing the students' attitude toward faith-based institutions generally.

It's a good thing because you can connect with other students spiritually…it's not just education, these schools help to strengthen the mental health and spiritual development of students. (F2NE)

Faith-based institutions are good educational systems that do not only educate students academically; but also help them to grow in their knowledge about religion, and to create opportunities for religious practicing.

These kinds of institutions teach students a lot, not only academic knowledge. Students can have good practice on religious principles…they have chances to develop their spiritual life and right moral perceptions. (M4NE)

However, besides positive thoughts of students about faith-based institutions, some non- religious students mentioned the contrast between religious teachings of faith-based institutions and their personal religion.

I'm born in a Buddhist family…most of my schools are Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Catholic, I find a contrast with my family teachings and the school's teachings…we're just pretty different. (F2NE)

Participants also reported that faith-based educations were really good for those who practiced the same religion as the school. For those who were non-religious or practiced a different religion with the school, it also brought positive influences. However, some of them might feel unfairness when they kept practicing or following the religious principles that differed from their personal religion.

It is cool that a school applies religion to teaching and learning. It is good for me when I attend a school that applied the same religious principles as my religion because I don't need to worry that people will question my religious practices. However, some non- religious students may feel unfair, and question why they have to follow strangereligious' teachings. (F14CE)

Some participants also mentioned their positive thoughts about faith-based institutions during the Covid-19 situation when many schools and education organizations needed to move to online teaching and learning. For me, these institutions are good because they have all the materials and qualified lecturers to teach students… schools prospered because of covid, all teaching and learning activities are shifted to online. (M7CE)

2. Physical Aspect – Health Education and Practice:
The student shared different experiences about the influences of faith-based institutions on physical development, especially health education, perception, and practice during college years. This was the second major theme of this study. First, some participants stated that faith- based institutions provided positive teaching and living environment for students to improve their health conditions and perceptions. This environment encouraged students to live healthier.

The school created a good environment for students to live healthier…including health education in both aspects - physical and mental. Teachers teach us how to have a healthier daily routine. They tried to understand students about mental health conditions. (M4NE)

Most of the students reported that faith-based institutions promoted health principles which followed religious teachings in both direct and indirect approaches. For the direct approach, the schools offered courses which would provide the knowledge for students to live healthy life.

The school had the fundamental ideas of religious principles about health as "New Start" …offering classes as Health and Fitness class; teachers of health education courses were very helpful. They taught all rules and knowledge about health for students. (M7CE)

Besides, the schools also taught health education indirectly through encouraging students to participate in different health events and sports. From that, students formed health habit as playing some sports and exercising.They offered many events and activities that encouraged students to exercise more and live healthier as Fun-Run-Walk. To motivate students to play sports, they provided the sport-light in the evening. (M1CE)

Moreover, participants mentioned that these institutions applied health principles into practice by offering vegetable food in the cafeteria. However, the objective of this action was not really achieved among the university students.They offered vegetarian food in the university's cafeteria. However, they cooked very spicily and oily. Therefore, the original purpose of offering vegetarian food which was to help students healthier was not achieved. (F9CE)By different experiences reported, not only behaviors but perceptions of students had positive changes in terms of health education and practice in daily life. Through these changes, some students applied knowledge about health into practice.

It leads to a good positive attitude…it changed my mind, reminded me every day to keep the routine of being healthy. It made me more health conscious about my food choices and sleeping habits while maintaining an elevated level of discipline in my exercise routines. (M15CE)
However, each student had a different level of changing perception about health depended on the knowledge background.My perception about health doesn't change much because my mom is working in the field of science…she already told me… my perception already has been sharped. (F8CE)

Some non-religious students reported their changes to be more positive in thinking. They practiced what they learned in the classroom in the daily life. The data also supported that students saw the practical relevance of health education, and they began to follow religious principles in other aspects as well.

Heath education of faith-based institutions affected my belief a lot, I ate healthier. I did not believe in any religion, but I heard about religion idea which connected my personal life, I would follow religious ideas or principles… I saw the connection between physical and spiritual aspects in this health education. (F2NE) In terms of physical and spiritual connections, a participant said that by learning and practicing health principles of schools, students could rebuild their faith and have more religious practices while attending faith-based institutions.

I was in government schools before; I didn't take care of our health. But when I came to a Christian school, I rebuilt my faith in God… it changed me to be an active person who had more outdoor activities. I also improved my religious practice. (M5CE)

3. Mental Aspect – Teaching and Support:
Schools formed mental supporting systems which combined psychological supports (counselors) and spiritual supports (church pastors) for students who were struggling with mental problems. Moreover, they also mentioned the effective mental supports of the schools.Meanwhile, others viewed these supports differently.

Mental development under faith-based institutions is very good because they have counselors who concern about students' mental health. (M5CE)

I think it's very nice because at least students have someone as teachers and friends to comfort them mentally. (F8CE)

If we have mental problems, we can go and talk with our teachers, counselors, and church pastors. They are very open-minded… because of spiritual connection; mental problems can be solved easily. (F2NE)

Besides, participants stated some reasons which led to mental issues and affected the mental development of college students, especially overseas students. Moreover, teachers of faith-based institutions were very understanding. They supported and tried not to stress students. We often face a lot of difficulties because most of us are far from home and family, we've become more vulnerable mentally. However, teachers are understanding students, they try not to be biased or stress students. (F13CE)

Moreover, faith-based institutions provided both direct and indirect supports for students.For the direct support approach, the school had a counseling system for students. Through the sermons, devotional thoughts, and religious events, the indirect support approach was promoted among religious and non-religious students.Not only counseling supports, but prayers and short devotional thoughts also help me to solve my mental problem… help me to have a good environment for my mental development and to focus more on my class. (F10CE)

Students mentioned some negative issues of the mental supporting system which might not work effectively for some groups of students. Schools had counselors; however, few students came to them and asked for help because students were not aware of it.

They help but only for those who look for them. Students are not aware of the mental supports as counseling jobs. I can see they tried their best but there were lots of students who did not come to the counselingcenter event. (M1CE)

Other participants also reported counselors' jobs which might not help completely to solve the problem because students needed someone close to them to share their mental problems. Moreover, for Asian students, mental issues were very personal; people might not comfortably share with others.

I think it will be better for me if I share my problem with my close friends… I took counseling time with my friends…it literally helped me 100% with my problem. (F8CE)

I think because of Asian culture, we tend to think mental health is a personal problem… it's very hard to share. We are afraid that people may think it is kinds of crazy. (F18CE)

4. Spiritual Aspect:
Faith-based institutions influenced students' spiritual growth in both direct and indirect ways. Students could experience direct religious teachings from events and programs organized by the school and church. Besides that, the positive environment led to indirect impacts on beliefs of students. From that, even non-religious who did not have much religious understanding and practice, also reported changes in their perceptions about religious principles of the school.

It was so hard for me to develop a belief that is different from my family's religion, but my friends explained to me about God, so I didn't reject God one hundred percent. I understood and believed He existed. I felt closer to the religion of the school than my religion. (F2NE)

I'm Buddhism. I do not really believe in anything but when I got into trouble, I remembered and prayed to God.

The religious practice of the school affected students even though they were non-Christian (or did not practice the same religion as the school). (M4NE)

To build the faith foundation for non-religious students, to strengthen the spiritual life, and to create chances to practice religion' principles for students; faith-based institutions organized religious events and programs regularly.

This school gave me a lot of opportunities to learn about religious principles, to be involved in religious events. My spiritual life was getting better because I kept doing these things. (M5CE)

Moreover, the learning environment also supported students' spiritual growth through activities, assignments, and projects related to religious principles.

If you study in this kind of environment, your spiritual development will be increased because somehow the assignments or class activities required students to learn about Bible. Students were required to do and listen to devotional thoughts in every class. (F14CE)

The environment was a necessary factor that led to changes in perceptions of non- religious students about religious views and understanding during college years. They learned to care more about religious aspects of the community.

Before I came here, I did not know or care much about religions. However, since I have been studying in a faith-based institution as AIU, I started to discover more about religions, and respected each different religious belief. (M11NE)

In terms of spiritual practices, because schools offered lots of events and activities related to the fundamental beliefs of the school, students tended to practice and apply more these beliefs and principles rather than their religion.

I feel closer to Christian than my religion; I go to the church and practice Christian principles. (F2NE)
I don't practice my religion. I practice more Christian principles because of the environment surrounding, the fundamental religion of the school is Christianity. (M4NE)

Under faith-based institutions, many students chose to practice their religion in two ways which were personal and social. Students had their own time to practice and learn about their religion. At the same time, many of them also joined religious events and programs organized by the school.

I have personal devotions as a habit of worshiping. I have more time to find more information about things that I read. Besides, I also had fellowshipping with fellow believers regularly on events and activities organized by the school. (M15CE)

Moreover, socializing with other students who practice the same religion was also an approach that students used to practice their religion in faith-based institutions. They applied their religious knowledge from their background knowledge.

I applied what I did in my local church, I also socialized with friends of the same ages, it's easy to connect, and engage you with other believers. (F8CE)

5. Social Interaction Aspect:
Data clarified that faith-based institutions offered both direct and indirect teachings about social interactions for students; from that, these teaching created positive changes in their perceptions and behaviors. Faith-based educations applied religious principles to teach students appropriate interaction behaviors with others through the sermons and sharing of school events and programs.

They teach indirectly through religious programs when pastors share their thoughts about social interaction rules based on religious beliefs. (F8CE)

Through sharing and sermons, especially requirements as sharing devotional thoughts of each university course, teachers encourage students to be involved in learning the appropriate manners and moral lessons in the community service and interaction. (F12CE)

A healthy environment with diverse events was provided for students to learn and adjust to moral values and behaviors. Moreover, students mentioned that they could learn more in this teaching environment compared to lessons that they learned from society.

They teach us through the good environment by guiding us to read Bible, to see real meanings of good behaviors in the religious practice. This teaching helps us to have better characters while modern society is teaching us different ways of interactions with violence, selfishness, and deception. (F2NE)
Besides, faith-based institutions created the connection between social and spiritual life.

When students developed their spiritual life through religious teachings and practices, they would apply positive approaches of that religion into social interaction.

I believed faith-based educations created the bond between social and spiritual well- being. Communication behaviors and social relationships will be improved once you applied religious principles, and your faith is being nurtured. (F18CE)

Moreover, faith-based institutions also organized official seminars for all university students to learn social interaction rules. This event was the direct teaching about interaction behaviors for both religious and non-religious students as a requirement of the school.

A seminar related to social relations with proper communicative strategies to reach out to others was held once a semester. This is also combined with relations on a faculty level where interactions frequently take place among students and faculties. (M15CE)

Under influences of faith-based institutions' teachings and environments, students did not only build up their appropriate behaviors in terms of social interaction, but they also reported positive changes in their perspectives about social life. The positive perspectives led to healthy behaviors in the interaction with others in the community.

I learned to see the big picture of everything, and I tended to be humbler. Before judging others, I am trying to see what the cause of the problem is. (M3NE)

I changed from a negative to a positive worldview about other's behaviors. Before I got easily mad with other's behaviors or problems. But when I came here, I learned how to be patient in treating others. (M7CE)

Their positive changes allowed them to adapt to the multi-cultural community of the international university. In that community, people had different cultural beliefs, expectations, behaviors, and perspectives about certain problems. Therefore, behaving appropriately was needed to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Before, I tended to be stereotyped by others, but since studying under a faith-based school with a diversity of cultural values and beliefs, I changed to accept others' different perspectives. Then, I could understand more about cultures' differences. I learned to be more careful in social interaction behaviors with others to avoid misunderstanding. (F14CE)

Moreover, faith-based educations also helped students to be more active in their social life with others. When they joined and served religious activities, events, and programs, they learned how to take responsibility for their behaviors.

Back in my country, I'm not really active in my church activities. But when I came here, I think my friends influenced me because most of my friends were very active in church activities. I joined more events and became more active. I learned to take roles and responsibilities for my behaviors. (F10CE)

V. DISSCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Through findings that have been collected and analyzed from interviewees, faith-based institutions received multiple reviews, feedback, and comments about students' experience on four major aspects – physical, mental, spiritual, and social. Moreover, both non-religious and religious students reported effective changes in their thinking and behavior.

These findings showed similarities and connections with many previous studies. Besides that, new results were found based on students' responses on the general perception about faith-based institutions.

When students were asked to share the general perception about faith-based institutions, both non-religious and religious students stated positive perceptions about these institutions. The general perception was noted when interviewees mentioned the education which applied religious' principles into teaching and learning.

It meant that whether students had learning experience under faith-based institutions or not, their general perceptions or opinions about these institutions were positive. It could be noted as a correspondence between students and parents when Wodon (2020a) reported parents' positive feedbacks for these institutions.

In terms of physical developments, health educations, and practices, faith-based institutions provided many different health education approaches to students. The school also applied religious beliefs about health in their teachings. To transfer theories into practices, students were encouraged to join many activities and events that promoted healthy living styles. Thus, students reported that their changes in both perceptions and behaviors led them to live healthier.

This finding showed agreement with the study of Thang and Sibanda (2020) about benefits which students received more from the learning environment with many effective activities to improve their health.

Besides the counselingcenter which was a requirement system to support students' mental development of a school, faith-based educations also brought direct and indirect supports for students' mental health. Students mentioned that through sermons or sharing of teachers and students, they received more understandings and supports to their mental health indirectly. Moreover, the church pastors of the university also came to help those who faced difficulties in their mental life. By connecting mental and spiritual supports, students could be more benefited in their mental growth.

Faith-based institutions affected students spiritually by promotions and applications of religious beliefs and principles through activities, events, and practices of the religion. Each faith-based institution applied fundamental principles of a particular religion; therefore, there were

three main groups of students who had religious practices differently. For students who practiced the same religion as the schools, they found the benefit of supports and healthy environments to nurture their spiritual life.

Moreover, non-religious students stated influences of faith-based educations which helped them to understand more about religious philosophy and knowledge. These experiences of students showed a similarity with the finding of Otto and Harrington (2016) that the specific responsibility of a religious university was to provide apositive environment for students' spiritual growth.

However, the unfair practices were noted from students who were required to practice the school's religion while they were having their religion.Social interactions and behaviors of students were sharped in positive ways when students learned appropriate social interaction rules and moral lessons from teachings of the school and religion.

Students experienced different teachings and ideas about social interactions which were more positive and effective for them, compared to the indirect teachings of society. Students' social interaction behaviors were trained in the process of four steps – learning theories, being affected by positive environment surrounding, leading changes in perceptions, and changing the behaviors.

An agreement between this study and the research's findings of Daniels and Gustafson (2016) was that social interactions of students were also recognized in participating in community services which involved teachers and students of faith-based institutions.

LIMITATIONS

As with the majority of studies, the design of the current study is subject to limitations. This study focused more on four major aspects of students' development which were physical, mental, spiritual, and social. What is less clear is if the academic performance of students is affected by influences of faith-based institutions compared to other organizations. Moreover, thequalitative research design cannot clarify the correlation between four major aspects of students' development which may affect each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To form a full understanding of faith-based institutions' influences on students' holistic development, further studies can examine the academic achievement between students who study under faith-based institutions and students from other organizations. Academic achievement or performance of students is also a major field to assess the influences of an institution's environment on students' development. Moreover, the quantitative research method may need to be used to clarify the correlation among four major aspects –physical, mental, spiritual, and social of

students, because in different learning environments, each aspect of students' holistic development may impact the growth of others.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: College Experiences of Students in A Faith-Based Institution Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewee:

Description of Interview

Synopsis:
The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of college students in a faith-based institution during their college years. Data is being collected from international undergraduates who are studying in a faith-based institution of a university in Thailand. All interview are anonymous, and the interview will take about 30 minutes.

Student Interviews:
1. Would you share a bit your personal information such as your name, major, academic year, and age?
2. What do you think about an education system that applied the fundamental principles of a particular religion into the teaching methods?
3. In your opinion, how did a faith-based institution teach its philosophies about health education?
4. How did these philosophies and ideas (of a faith-based education) affect your perceptions about health or physical development, and behaviors?
5. In terms of mental developments, what do you think about the supports (direct supports - counseling and indirect supports – teaching ideas) of faith-based schools for students to deal with mental problems such as stress, anxiety, or worry in college?
6. In what ways a faith-based institution affects your spiritual development either to your personal religious or the fundamental religion of the school?
7. How did you practice your personal religion and beliefs under a particular faith-based institution?
8. How did the faith-based education teach students about the social interaction rules or help students to build social interaction with others in terms of conflict solving social relationship, or appropriate communication behaviors?
9. What did you experience about a faith-based education in terms of bringing the changes for students' social interacting applications in their social life?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?