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## Rang-Ay Babaen ti 4Ps: Its Impact to Selected Ilokano Beneficiaries in Santiago, Ilocos Sur, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

The pressing problem on poverty have led the Philippine government to initiate program on poverty alleviation, and one of these programs is the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Review of related studies revealed that there is a need to investigate the impact of this program. In this context, this case study was conducted to determine the impact of the 4Ps in terms of poverty reduction, social development, financial management, and livelihood empowerment. Through the use of an aide-mémoire, six (6) beneficiaries and their families were interviewed. Results of thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that 4Ps program provides the families' basic needs, promotes the families' well-being, promotes their socioeconomic status, and provides capital for their livelihood. Clearly, the program had positive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries which characterizes the Ilokano phrase 'Rang-ay Babaen ti 4Ps' which means the improvement of the quality and status of the beneficiaries' lives after adopting the 4Ps program.

### INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, poverty has long been the most pressing problem that many Filipinos experience. This problem compelled the government to initiate programs as intervention. One of these endeavors is the enactment into law of the Republic Act No. 11310 or the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program otherwise known as 4Ps. It is the flagship poverty alleviation program of former President Gloria Macapagal (Senate of the Philippines, 2021).

The 4Ps seeks to end severe poverty in the Philippines by focusing on human capital development (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2016). Reyes et al. (2015) articulated that the long-term goal of the 4Ps is to increase human capital. 4Ps is regarded to have a lot of potential for enhanced educational attainment and improved nutrition and health outcomes based on the experience of other countries that have adopted the Conditional Cash Transfer programme (CCT). One of the concerns that the 4Ps intends to solve in the educational system is the increased dropout rates. CCT schemes have proved successful in improving enrollment rates in various countries.

In addition, 4Ps is a conditional cash transfer program that encouraged disadvantaged families to invest in their children's future by ensuring that moms and children received healthcare and attended school. He also stated that its goal is to provide social support and development to those who received it. Accordingly, it aspired to prevent the vicious transmission of the poverty cycle by offering possibilities for young people's growth.

Furthermore, Dulliyao (2019) revealed that there has been a significant decrease in child labor, which was one of the 4Ps' original goals. Both parents are encouraged to attend

the program's monthly developmental sessions. Tutor (2014) articulated that only the mother's participation as a head beneficiary is mandatory and required by the program in accordance with their conditions. Usually mothers exercised complete control over how the assistance is budgeted because they believed that if their spouse budgeted the subsidy, they will simply use it for vices. Notably, moms are far more educated about their children's needs, and they spent more time in the household than their husbands (Talimio & Salagubang, 2019).

Interestingly, Kandpal et al. (2016) revealed that the 4Ps has resulted in decreased in extreme stunting among poor children aged 6-36 months in recipient communities. This implies that CCT enabled families to better care for their children. In fact, more parents in these communities fed their children high protein foods like eggs and fish, which contributed to better nutritional status. Nonetheless, the 4Ps provided cash transfers to low-income families in order to improve their health, nutrition, and education (Reyes et al., 2014).

Notably, poverty in the Philippines was anticipated to rise as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. This has lowered consumption growth and additional revenue losses. As a result, stronger measures were needed to combat poverty in the Philippines in the face of the pandemic, which had disproportionately affected the poor (Nichols, 2020). Overall, while the loan agreements provided policy levers useful in ensuring that the government maintains citizen involvement and accountability mechanisms under the 4Ps even in the midst of the pandemic, the pandemic's impact on these mechanisms is evident (Aceron et al., 2021).

In fact, impoverished families before joining 4Ps struggled

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on how they coped with all their financial needs. When they became part of the program, their lives improved a lot better. The benefits that they received helped them improve their livelihood. Through this program a lot of its member's lives were changed. The 4Ps beneficiaries are they used their cash assistance to buy the needs of their children in studying. The 4Ps beneficiaries also followed the rules and regulations that the program implemented. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) workers managed the cash allowance given by the government which was distributed to those beneficiaries. Many members were helped by the program in improving their health and well-being. Moreover, the reviewed studies also revealed that 4Ps beneficiaries were chosen from all the provinces of the Philippines. Beneficiaries' opinion of the 4Ps implementation determined the policy's efficacy and impact on the beneficiaries' lives across the Philippines. According to the students, the 4Ps were able to fulfil their mission in terms of health and education for the beneficiaries. During the programs introduction, however, problems with getting help, financial literacy, not all beneficiaries being qualified based on the program criteria and, and some beneficiaries not comprehending the concept of 4Ps were discovered (Acupido et al., 2020). As such, more studies were to be conducted to determine the degree of the effectiveness of the program (Acupido et al., 2020); thus, investigating its impact to the beneficiaries who graduated from the program. Due to the aforementioned findings and observations, the researchers decided to conduct a study to qualitatively describe the impact of the 4Ps as experienced and lived by the beneficiaries. Through this study, concerned government agencies and officials would be given ideas on how to better implement the program. Finally, it also aired and surfaced the first hand experiences of the beneficiaries that helped people understand their context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Philippine government launched the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in 2007. The 4Ps Family Development Session was regarded as an essential program component for equipped and empowered families' human capital. Its objectives were to empower household beneficiaries to become more productive and responsible for meeting family needs (World Bank, 2018). Dela Torre (2016) stated that 4Ps are used for a variety of but interrelated purposes and have been shown to have an impact on education, either directly, through the program's educational and health grants, or indirectly, by improving the overall human condition of its recipients. Dazet al. (2016) articulated that the grant programs helped people who wanted to improve their understanding and keep a thorough understanding of their abilities, for example, scholarly aptitudes, abilities, and additional creation exercises. Accordingly, the cash grant given to 4Ps beneficiaries assisted Filipino families in meeting their expenses, maintaining good health, proper nutrition,

and achieving satisfactory performance in education of children in order for them to be able to move and accelerate to the next higher level of learning. Various studies have found that these human capital investments improved child health, nutrition, and education outcomes, as well as maternal health outcomes (Bastagli et al., 2016). Aside from these, the parent-beneficiaries must attend a mother's class and family development sessions designed to improve their knowledge and understanding of core family values and parental responsibilities, as well as to encourage them to participate in community activities (Mangahas et al., 2018).

Balacuit (2018) stated that 4Ps implementation boasts a slew of goals and enticing benefits for marginalized Filipino families. This program has been found to be extremely effective in alleviating poverty among those who are vulnerable and in need of government financial assistance. Clearly, the 4Ps program has partly satisfied its objective of helping the student-beneficiaries improve their academic performance. The program also instilled in the minds of the students the value of education as one of the best investments for a brighter future. The grant kindles the 4Ps beneficiaries' interest in attending classes, better than the time prior to receipt of grant. The opportunity also reduced the prevalence of children who are forced to stop from school to secure their family's financial needs. The reduction of cases of child labor is a good indication that the 4Ps program was successful in its campaign in improving the lives of the disadvantaged families and for the parent-beneficiaries to realize the importance of education as an element of success. With this great effort of the government to help the poor student-beneficiaries through the 4Ps, it was a good indication that in the future the government would produce well-educated citizen that are imperative for a more productive country and society.

Above all, the reviewed literatures revealed that this program aims to empower the human capital of those people whose suffering through poverty. In revealing this, quantitative approaches were used. Also, the reviewed literature manifested research gaps that need to be filled. These gaps include the recent economic progress in the Philippines, millions of families, the majority of whom have small children, remained impoverished (UNICEF, 2015); the 4Ps is relatively new in its implementation. Studies reviewed in this paper were more on the extent of the implementation of the 4Ps. More studies were to be conducted to determine the degree of the effectiveness of the program (Acupido et al., 2020); thus, investigating its impact. In the lights of these gaps, this study was formulated to know how the 4Ps benefited those members of this program using qualitative approach.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

This study used case study as its design. A case study is a study of a particular person, organization, or event, in depth. In a case study, almost every aspect of the

subject's life and background is examined in order to identify patterns and reasons for behavior (Cherry, 2021). This design was employed to determine the impact of 4Ps program on selected Ilokano recipients. Hence, the researchers found the design appropriate for the study.

### Selection and Study Site.

This research is carried out in Santiago, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. Santiago is a municipality that helps impoverished families by enrolling them in the 4Ps, which aim to make their life a little easier. The study's key informants were chosen using the two criteria. First, they graduated from the program. Second, they are willing to be interviewed. With these criteria, only six (6) participants and their family members were identified.

### Data Gathering Instrument

In gathering the data, the aide-mémoire was the main data gathering instrument. The interview guide, which comprised a priori codes, was used to create the aide-mémoire. These a priori codes serve as the foundation for the questions that were posed to key informants during the interview (Azarias, 2022; Azarias et al., 2020; Azarias & Capistrano, 2019). Finally, before the actual interview, robotfoto was utilized to collect demographic data from the key informants.

### Data Gathering Procedure

In conducting the data, the researchers constructed first the interview guide before the aide-mémoire was constructed. The aide-mémoire was used to discover the program's influence and experiences for individuals who were a part of it. The researchers determined the final list of participants based on their willingness. After determining the final list of participants, the researchers explained the study's purpose and ask the parents of the children who was interviewed for their approval to participate if they were under the age of 18. In addition, schedules for interviews were set. Parents were the first to be interviewed. Then, their children were interviewed to verify their parents' statements. Last, the data were analyzed qualitatively.

### Mode of Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the transcribed interview recordings. Thematic analysis is typically used in describing a group of texts, such as an interview or transcripts (Kuckartz, 2019). In this mode of analysis, the researchers studied the data carefully in order to uncover recurring themes subjects, ideas, and patterns of meaning (Caulfield, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The rich sharing of the participants who graduated from the 4Ps of the Philippine government highlighted the impact of the program to them in terms of poverty reduction, social development, financial management, and livelihood empowerment. From the results of the

thematic analysis, four themes emerged as shown in figure 1. The first theme is the identified impact of the program in terms of poverty reduction. The second theme is the impact of the program on the social development of the participants. The third theme is the program's impact on the financial management among the participants. The last theme is this program's identified impact on the participants' livelihood empowerment. Nevertheless, these themes are elucidated in the succeeding discussions.

### Provide Families' Basic Needs

From the interviews that the researchers conducted,

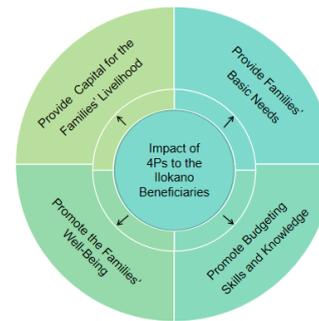


Figure 1: Simulacrum of the Study

the participants explicitly identified their basic needs that include food, education of their children, and good health. Through the 4Ps of the Philippine government, the participants shared that they are able to provide these basic needs of their families. In so doing, they find the program helpful. The verbalizations below support the claim.

*"4ps has helped us a lot, it will help you pursue in providing education for the beneficiaries because umm it is your purpose in becoming a 4Ps."* (P3)

*"It helps us in our everyday needs. That's the big help of 4Ps. Our basic needs every day."* (P5)

*"The allowance from 4ps abh we separate the money on where to use it for school for their umm packed lunch like that, the things needed at school like that it is budgeted before it was even given to us."* (P4)

*"In improving our health, ummm we can buy some vitamins for our children, we can provide them food and also give them good education. In satisfaction I am satisfied because my son has graduated on senior high school and we fulfilled the things that we want for our son umm because of the program."* (P2)

*"It is spent in all umm we just spend the money in our study materials, because there is nothing our money can go because the purpose of it is for our study then the rest is for our home."* (P6)

*"4ps has really affected my life because it has helped me a lot because before my son went to college when he needed something for school the program's cash grants that were given to me always backed me up."* (P3)

The findings is supported by Reyes et al.(2013) who revealed that through the 4Ps, the Philippine government offers conditional cash handouts to the underprivileged or "poorest of the poor" to enhance the health, nutrition, and education of children aged 0 to 18. Similarly, Dela Torre (2016) revealed that the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program aims to reduce and alleviate existing

poverty by supplementing the poor's income to address their current consumption poverty, particularly in the education and health of their family members, while requiring them to follow certain conditions that can boost their human development investment and ensure its compliance, giving them more opportunities to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty in the long run. It is to note that that poverty is a condition in which people lack fundamental necessities for survival such as food, shelter, water, clothing, and education (Crossman, 2017). The finding implies that 4Ps has achieved its objective when it comes to reducing or alleviating poverty in the Filipino community. This supports Montilla et al. (2015) who stated that the program and its major objective is to alleviate poverty and break its inter-generational cycle is still a big question as poor Filipino families, children, and pupils experienced today in the country. Clearly, Ranario (2015) also stated that the 4Ps acts as a lifesaver for families living in extreme poverty because it provides monetary assistance to help them finance their immediate needs.

Finally, the verbalization accentuates that the cash allowance given by the program to the beneficiaries is only spend on the basic needs of their family. In fact, Vigilla et al. (2016) stated that the majority of beneficiary households do not use the cash award right away. Accordingly, they budget the funds and spend the majority of them on school-related expenses (e.g. school projects, school snack, and supplies). Similarly, Aranas et al. (2021) stated that the 4Ps has demonstrated an impact in education, either directly, through the program's educational and health grants, or indirectly. Nonetheless, the finding indicated that 4Ps was a success because the beneficiaries did not suffer as much financially in terms of their basic needs. Overall, this program is beneficial to them.

### Promote the Families' Well-Being

In the interviews, the participants collectively shared that the program helps promote their well-being. To them, the program allows them to be worry free or be free from any problems or struggles brought by their poor status in life. They become more comfortable. In such context, well-being is defined as a sense of health and vitality that arises from their thoughts, emotions, and actions emanated from the comfort brought about the program. Clearly, they feel happy, confident, uplifted, and comfortable, because of the program as compared to what they were before. As verbalized:

*"Many people see us as low beings but for me because of that program umm I feel like my life is improving and that 4Ps program of the government help me. We don't worry much about our needs" (P2)*

*"My well being as a mother umm actually I didn't struggle for the education of my child, which is a beneficiary, that's all abh I didn't struggle for hiseducation. We become more comfortable." (P4)*

*"The program is a great help. Our usual problems become less serious. We become confident because before we are ashamed of our*

*poor life. Now, life is happy even if there are still many problems." (P5)*

The verbalizations mean that this program is really a big help to them in terms of uplifting and boosting their confidence as a person is being criticized for being poor. This finding is supported by Pineda and Fabella (2019) who stated that with the support of the government, this program motivates the parents to work harder and accept their responsibilities. Accordingly, it helps them understand the importance of the program and improve their financial situation by ensuring that they follow the rules.

Finally, Aranas et al. (2021) stated that the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, like other Conditional Cash Transfers used for various but interrelated purposes today, has demonstrated an impact by improving the overall human condition of its recipients. In fact, the participants stated that this program makes them happy because it helps them to uplift their livelihood and boosts their confidence as well. In short, 4Ps is a good program to them.

### Promote Budgeting Skills and Knowledge

The participants shared during the interviews that they learn to budget their money to things that are needed in their family. In budgeting their money, they separate the expenses for their needs at home and their children's needs in studying. In doing so, they became aware of how and where they are going to spend the cash incentives/ support given to them. They learn how to budget their monetary resources. The statements below support the theme.

*"It is listed were you would spend it, it is separated on how for example when they have fees at school and the rest it will be used for the house needs like that." (P5)*

*"In terms of spending just like what I've said eh you just only need to budget the money for them."(P2)*

*"The allowance from 4ps we separate the money on where to use it for school for their packed lunch like that, the things needed at school like that it is budgeted before it was even given to us." (P4)*

*"In budgeting through 4ps there is a money that budgeted for our studies and for our house it is budgeted separately" (P6)*

From the statements above, it can be said that this program has taught beneficiaries to become thrifty in terms of money. In doing so, they are disciplined in terms of spending the benefits that they received. Diaz (2021) revealed that the conditionalities or strings attached to receiving assistance are a good move in imposing indirect discipline on the beneficiaries to comply with the prerequisites or conditions and participate in the government's various programs and projects, particularly when it comes to ensuring their health and the education of their children.

### Provide Capital for the Families' Livelihood

Before being recipients of the Philippine government's 4Ps, the participants described their life as very poor. They shared that they do not have stable source of income. As a

result, the program made them think of a stable job. With the cash assistance that they received from the program, they are able to put up small business like small sari-sari store and selling snacks. These smallscale businesses allow them to use their cash assistance wisely and not to depend solely on what their government could provide for them. The following verbalizations exemplifies the claim:

*"I have built my own small sari-sari store, because of my pay outs that I've earned. This is the reason why I had the income to build this small store. With this, we don't solely depend on the government."*(P1)

*"We use it for buying fishnet so it can help on our livelihood with my husband, we use it to buy our daily needs. We can't forever rely on the program for our needs, so we need to make ways to earn also."*(P4)

*"Uhhh when we became members of the program my mom thought a business about halo halo, back then when there was no pandemic yet way back 2018 but on 2019 we stopped that business because it was hard the products prices rise that's why she stopped that business."* (P6)

The finding conforms to the findings of Chaudhury & Okamura (2013) which stated that parent beneficiaries acknowledged their enthusiasm for Family Development Sessions (FDS) entrepreneurship and voiced a desire for a greater selection of sessions and skills training so that they may diversify their sources of income. Meanwhile, Millanar (2019) revealed that each year, it has been demonstrated that the 4Ps has had a significant poverty reduction impact through the household heads, husbands, and other adults being more encouraged and inspired to work and start enterprises.

Notably, the finding accentuates the natural ability of parents to make both end meet and go and extra mile given the meager cash incentives that they receive from the government. The finding also indicates that they are aware that the program is not forever; thus, they need to invest in productive ways to make their lives better. Finally, the finding highlights the ability of mothers to make flourish whatever is given to them.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the thematic analysis, it is clear that the 4Ps was able to meet its objectives as exemplified in the sharing of the participants. Despite the growing commentaries against the program, it is lucid that this program is making an impact to the beneficiaries in terms of poverty reduction, social development, financial management, and livelihood empowerment. With the positive impact of the program as shared by the participants, it is also vital that its implementation could be improved in the name of quality and excellent service to the beneficiaries. As such, initiatives to eradicate or mitigate the problems in its implementation should be formulated. Meanwhile, this study interviewed only six (6) participants and their families who are living in the two barangays in the local. With this limitation, future researches should be should consider larger population

of 4Ps beneficiaries. The monitoring schemes also for this program could be investigated as basis in enhancing its implementation.

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