



American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation (AJMRI)

ISSN: 2158-8155 (Online), 2832-4854 (Print)

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4 (2024)



PUBLISHED BY: E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Influence of Aeta Education in St. Francis Learning Center at Nibangon Subic, Zambales

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Article Information

Received: May 25, 2024

Accepted: June 29, 2024

Published: July 03, 2024

Keywords

Aeta, Aeta Students, St. Francis Learning Center, Indigenous Peoples

ABSTRACT

The Aeta community is one of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines, and they face challenges in accessing quality education. These challenges include limited school infrastructure and resources, a lack of qualified teachers understanding their cultural context, and socio-economic barriers preventing Aeta children from attending school. Hence, this study explored the perception of Aeta students in their education at St. Francis Learning Center. Specifically, it determined the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of year level, gender, age, family members, and socio-economic status; their perception on course descriptions, laboratory experiences, and the quality of academic staff; the factors that influence their decision-making process; and their suggested intervention programs to motivate students to choose the specific Senior High School Strand and college. This study employed a mixed-method research design particularly the explanatory-sequential approach. The participants comprised 10 Aeta Students currently studying at St. Francis Learning Center for the academic year 2024-2025. Results showed that while some students find the course descriptions and teaching methods effective and engaging, others face significant challenges. Scenarios such as teachers being unprepared, insufficient class time, lack of learning materials, and ineffective repetition of lessons point to areas where the educational experience can be improved. Practical utility, economic potential, parental influence, peer relationships, personal interests, career aspirations, and familial roles all play critical roles influence the students' decision-making processes when choosing their Senior High School tracks.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples are those with a clear cultural identity, a pre-colonial social structure, and historical continuity with pre-settler societies are considered. They have distinct languages, customs, and belief systems and frequently hold close ties to their ancestral regions. Even with their rich cultural legacy, indigenous tribes frequently encounter major obstacles while trying to get an education. Indigenous peoples have less educational chances due to several factors, including language challenges, prejudice, socioeconomic disadvantage, and geographic isolation. Insufficient support structures, limited infrastructure, and a curriculum that does not align with cultural norms obstruct their access to high-quality education. Because of this, compared to non-indigenous groups, Indigenous communities often have lower rates of school attendance, completion, and literacy. The AETA community, indigenous to the Philippines, has faced historical marginalization and limited access to education. This research aims to examine the educational practices and challenges faced by the AETA community at the St. Francis Learning Center located in Nibangon Subic, Zambales (Rogayan, 2019). Discuss the Aeta Community in Nibangon).

Education plays a crucial role in promoting social justice and equality for all individuals, regardless of their cultural background or socio-economic status (Motitswe, 2014). This is especially true for marginalized communities, such as the indigenous AETA community in Nibangon Subic,

Zambales (Rogayan, 2019). The AETA community faces various educational challenges that hinder their access to quality education. These challenges include financial constraints, lack of resources, and cultural factors.

The lives of Aetas, an indigenous group, differ from those of the general public. Therefore, consideration may have been given to the design and availability of Aetas resettlement locations (Abaca, 2008).

Evidently, the AETA community in the Philippines has a rich cultural heritage but has faced historical marginalization and limited access to education (Cruz & Abeledo, 2015). To address these challenges, various initiatives have been implemented to provide educational opportunities for the AETA community.

The AETA community is one of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines, with a distinct culture and way of life. They have faced historical marginalization and discrimination, resulting in limited access to education (Balilla *et al.*, 2012). In the past, the AETA community has faced challenges accessing quality education. These challenges include limited school infrastructure and resources, a lack of qualified teachers who understand their cultural context, and socio-economic barriers that prevent AETA children from attending school. The importance of studying the educational needs of the AETA community: Studying the educational needs of the AETA community is crucial for several reasons. First, it will help identify and understand the specific barriers that prevent AETA children from accessing quality education.

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Second, it will provide insights into the cultural and contextual factors that contribute to the educational experiences of AETA students (Rogayan, 2019).

With the foregoing discussions above, this study aims to explore the perception of Aeta students in their education at St. Francis Learning Center. Specifically, it determined the socio-demographic profile of the participants in terms of year level, gender, age, family members, and socio-economic status; their perception on course descriptions, laboratory experiences, and the quality of academic staff; the factors that influence their decision-making process; and their suggested intervention programs to motivate students to choose the specific Senior High School Strand and college.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the mixed method approach of Creswell (2007), particularly the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In explanatory designs, qualitative analysis is used to give a clear picture of the quantitative analysis (Almaki, 2016). The explanatory sequential mixed methods design is defined by a preliminary quantitative period of data collection and analysis, a subsequent qualitative phase of data gathering and analysis, and a concluding phase of linking or integrating the data from the two distinct strands of data. This study used qualitative data to support the findings of the first quantitative data to have a clearer picture of the problem being investigated.

In the quantitative case, the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, family members, and. Socio-economic status were described. In the qualitative case, the Aeta students' perception of course descriptions, laboratory experiences, and the quality of academic staff; the factors that influence their decision-making process; and their suggested intervention programs to motivate students to choose the specific Senior High School Strand and college were explored.

This study was conducted at St. Francis Learning Center. The participants of this study are 10 Aeta students' currently studying at St. Francis Learning Center for the academic year 2024-2025. They were selected through convenience sampling as willingness to participate in this

study were considered.

The data for this mixed-methods research design came from both quantitative and qualitative sources in order to thoroughly investigate the perception of Aeta students in their education at St. Francis Learning Center. The surveys collected quantitative data on the participants' demographics. Following that, the qualitative phase included in-depth interviews. The qualitative data supplemented and expanded the quantitative findings. The instruments used in this study is a checklist survey and an interview guide. The survey asked the participants' demographics. On the other hand, the interview guide was used to know the participants' perception on course descriptions, laboratory experiences, and the quality of academic staff; the factors that influence their decision-making process; and their suggested intervention programs to motivate students to choose the specific Senior High School Strand and college. Frequency and percentage were used in interpreting the quantitative data while narrative analysis was used in analyzing the qualitative data.

The researcher showed respect for the respondents' rights, wants, values, and preferences. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) provides guidelines and regulations that researchers must adhere to when conducting studies that involve the collection and use of personal data. Before proceeding, the researcher obtained the necessary permissions from the University's Graduate School and from the respondents. Respondents' anonymity was protected, and the Data Privacy Act was incorporated into the survey. The researcher presented the Data Privacy notice and consent form that shall state the purpose of the study in the introductory part of her questionnaire. The consent form is an agreement in the research questionnaire to ensure that respondents are fully informed and they provide their informed consent before participating in the study. The identity of the respondents and the collected data were maintained in strict confidence and will not be shared with anybody beyond the scope of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants

Age	F*	Sex	F*	Fam*	F*	Soc*	F*
13 to 15	2	Female	4	1-4	2	Employed	2
16 to 18	2	Male	6	5-8	6	Self-Employed	3
19 to 21	2			9-12	2	Unemployed	5
22 to 25	4			13-15	0		

N = 10, F = frequency; Fam = Family Members; Soc = Socio-Economic Status*

Results showed that majority of the Aeta students aged 22 to 25 years old with 4 responses followed by 13 to 21 years old. Results also indicated that majority of the Aeta students are male with 6 responses followed by female with 4 responses. On the other hand, majority of the

Aeta students belong to family size of 5 to 8 members followed by 1 to 4 members and 9 to 12 members. Further, in terms of socio-economic status, majority of the Aeta students' parents belong to unemployed with 5 responses followed by self-employed with 3 responses

and employed with only 2 responses. For those self-employed, the job involves planting crops like camote and banana. Others' job involves fishing and farming, earning below minimum wage, and owning a sari-sari store. According to Abaca (2008), Aetas was once quite resourceful in its environment. In order to obtain food, which was abundantly available in their area, they would turn to hunting, fishing, gathering, or foraging. The primary method employed by the Aetas for obtaining food was using a variety of approaches and methods. For example, they might fish using the biste (short iron spear) and angtoko (water goggle) types, or the mamalah type, in which Aetas constructed dams by dumping large stones into the stream, which caused the stream to branch out and facilitate fishing. The parents are high school graduates. Their income level is low to moderate due to multiple sources of income, though still below minimum wage, supplemented by small retail (sari-sari store). Their socioeconomic status is low to moderate. Only few have a teaching position job and earning minimum wage. The individual is likely to have at least a college degree given the teaching profession. The income level is minimum wage, providing a steady and reliable source of income. Their socioeconomic status is moderate. Some are working in a factory at minimum wage while the mother takes care of the children. The parents' educational background is not specified but is likely minimal given the job type. The income level is minimum wage from the father's employment.

Perception of Students at the St. Francis Learning Center on their Junior High School Education and Senior High School Specialization in Terms of Course Descriptions, Laboratory Experiences, and the Quality of Academic Staff

The experiences of the Aeta student-participants at the St. Francis Learning Center regarding their Junior High School and Senior High School course descriptions offer a nuanced glimpse into their educational journey. Each student's perspective is a proof to the challenges and occasional triumphs they encounter in their academic environment. Aeta Student no. 1 candidly shared their struggle with understanding the course descriptions, describing them as "mahirap intindihin at minsan nakakalito" (difficult to understand and sometimes confusing). This student's experience suggests that the language or complexity of the course material poses a significant barrier, making it challenging to grasp the content fully. Echoing this sentiment, Aeta Student no. 2 admitted, "Nahihirapan akong sumabay" (I have a hard time keeping up). The difficulty in keeping pace with the coursework highlights a need for instructional methods that are more accommodating to different learning speeds and styles.

In contrast, Aeta Student no. 3 had a positive outlook, expressing that the courses were "maganda at madaming natutunan" (good and I learn a lot). This indicates that when course descriptions and teaching methods

resonate well with a student's learning style, they can be engaging and informative, leading to a more fulfilling educational experience. However, the issue of teacher preparedness was pointed out by Aeta Student no. 4, who noted, "Minsan di kabisado ni teacher ang tinuturo" (sometimes the teacher is not familiar with what they are teaching). This scenario suggests that there are instances where teachers might not be fully equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively, potentially impacting students' understanding. Time management within the curriculum was another concern. Aeta Student no. 5 mentioned, "kulang sa oras at di namin natatapos" (there's not enough time and we don't finish). This reflects a need for better pacing of the curriculum to ensure that students can complete their tasks and fully grasp the material.

On a more positive note, Aeta Student no. 6 appreciated their teacher's skills and the classroom activities, stating, "magaling si teacher at maganda ang laro namin pag klase" (the teacher is good and our class activities are fun). This feedback underscores the importance of engaging and interactive teaching methods that make learning enjoyable. Yet, for Aeta Student no. 7, the struggle to understand the teacher was evident: "Nahihirapan po ako. Di po maintindihan ang sinasabi po ni mam" (I find it difficult. I can't understand what ma'am is saying). This highlights a possible gap in communication or teaching style that doesn't align with the student's learning needs.

Aeta Student no. 8 raised a practical issue, noting, "Lagi pong nagpapasulat sa blackboard, ubos na nga po ung notebook ko at wala na po akong lapis/ballpen" (ma'am always asks us to write on the blackboard, and my notebook is already full, and I don't have any pencils or pens left). This illustrates the logistical challenges some students face, indicating a need for adequate learning materials and support. The repetition of lessons was a recurring theme. Aeta Student no. 9 shared, "Inuulit ulit po ni mamung lesson para maintindhan ko po kaso di ko po talaga maintindhan" (ma'am repeats the lesson for me to understand, but I still can't really understand). This suggests that while there is an effort to provide additional support, it may not be effective for all students. Moreover, Aeta Student no. 10 echoed the difficulty in keeping pace, stating, "Di po ako makasabay" (I can't keep up). This further underscores the necessity for differentiated instruction that caters to varying levels of student comprehension and learning speeds.

In terms of their laboratory facilities and experiences during Junior High School and their Senior High School specialization, they reveal a varied challenges and successes. Aeta Student no. 1 highlighted a significant issue with resources, noting, "Kulang po ang gamit po namin. Minsan po kulang po upuan naming" (We lack supplies. Sometimes we even lack chairs). This lack of basic resources like seating can severely impact the learning environment, making it difficult for students to focus and engage fully in their studies. Echoing the theme of insufficient resources, Aeta Student no. 2 mentioned, "Si teacher lang po ang may libro" (Only the teacher has

a book). This scenario where only the teacher has access to the necessary textbooks suggests a significant gap in resource availability, which can hinder students' ability to study independently and effectively. Aeta Student no. 3 shared a specific example from their specialization in carpentry, stating, "Pagdating po sa Strand po namin lalo na po sa Carpentry, kami po ang nagproporvide po ng gamit palibot dito po sa School" (In our strand, especially in Carpentry, we provide the materials around the school). This indicates a hands-on approach where students are actively involved in sourcing materials, which can be both a learning opportunity and a challenge, depending on the support they receive.

The absence of visual aids was a challenge noted by Aeta Student no. 4, who said, "Nahihirapan po kami kasi walang visual aids" (We find it difficult because there are no visual aids). Visual aids are crucial for enhancing understanding, especially in practical and technical subjects, and their absence can make it harder for students to grasp complex concepts. Aeta Student no. 5 pointed out the reliance on traditional teaching methods, stating, "Puro lecture po" (It's all lectures). This suggests that the teaching methods may be too one-dimensional, possibly leading to disengagement and difficulty in retaining information, especially in a practical learning environment. Aeta Student no. 6 observed that their teacher assigns tasks from the book, "Si mam po ay nagpapagawa po ng sa libro po" (Ma'am assigns tasks from the book). While this method provides structure, it may also limit the opportunities for interactive and hands-on learning experiences that are crucial for technical subjects.

On a more positive note, Aeta Student no. 7 enjoyed their experience in the TVL cookery strand, sharing, "Sa TVL cookery po, enjoy po kaming magluto kasi ung mga gamit po namin ay sakto lang din po" (In TVL cookery, we enjoy cooking because our equipment is just right). This indicates that when resources are adequate and aligned with the curriculum, students can have a fulfilling and enjoyable learning experience. Aeta Student no. 8 also had a positive experience in carpentry, stating, "Maganda po ang carpentry, marunong na po kaming gumawa ng upuan at lamesa" (Carpentry is good, we already know how to make chairs and tables). This reflects successful hands-on learning, where students gain practical skills that they can immediately apply. Aeta Student no. 9 appreciated their teacher's teaching skills, mentioning, "Magaling si mam magturo at mag paliwanag ng lesson po" (Ma'am is good at teaching and explaining the lessons). Effective teaching, as noted here, can significantly enhance the learning experience, making complex topics more understandable and engaging. Moreover, Aeta Student no. 10 shared their positive learning outcomes, particularly in the GAS (General Academic Strand), stating, "Madami po akong natutunan lalo na po sa GAS" (I learned a lot, especially in GAS). When prompted further, the student only smiled, indicating a sense of satisfaction and perhaps pride in their learning achievements.

In terms of quality of teaching and support they received

from the academic staff during their Junior High School education and Senior High School specialization, their responses paint a picture of a nurturing and supportive learning environment, punctuated by moments of joy, dedication, and inspiration. Aeta Student no. 1 shared a particularly touching experience, describing how their teacher provided additional help after class, especially with reading. "Pag tapos po ng klase, tinutulungan po ako ni teacher lalo na sa lesson po. Tinututor nya po ako lalo na po sa pagbabasa" (After class, my teacher helps me a lot, especially with the lessons. She tutors me, particularly in reading). This one-on-one attention highlights the teacher's dedication to ensuring that students understand their lessons and improve their skills, which can be crucial for their academic development. Similarly, Aeta Student no. 2 appreciated the thoroughness of their learning experience, noting, "Madami po kaming natutunan at minsan po umuulit po ang mga lessons po" (We learn a lot, and sometimes the lessons are repeated). The repetition of lessons indicates an effort to reinforce understanding and ensure that all students grasp the material, which can be especially beneficial for those who need extra time to learn.

Aeta Student no. 3 expressed joy in the classroom environment, stating, "Enjoy po kami sa class kasi naglalaro po kami" (We enjoy the class because we play games). Incorporating play into learning can make education more engaging and enjoyable, helping students to associate positive emotions with their studies. In addition, Aeta Student no. 4 highlighted the support from the sisters at the school, particularly in subjects like Math and English, "Tinutulungan po kami nila sister lalo na po sa Math at sa English" (The sisters help us a lot, especially in Math and English). This support underscores the comprehensive educational assistance provided to the students, ensuring they have the help they need in challenging subjects.

Moreover, Aeta Student no. 5 noted that they receive additional lessons after regular class hours, "Pagkatapos po ng klase meron din po kaming mga additional lessons" (After class, we also have additional lessons). This extra instruction time can be critical for reinforcing learning and providing students with the opportunity to ask questions and clarify doubts. Aeta Student no. 6 mentioned that they often engage in reflection, "Lagi kaming nagrereflection" (We always reflect). Reflective practices can help students internalize their learning and develop critical thinking skills, making the educational experience more meaningful. Aeta Student no. 7 spoke warmly of the teachers' caring nature, "Mapagmahal po ang mga teachers po. Kahit makulit kami mabait pa din sila sa amin. At gusto ko pong maging katulad nila at maging teacher din" (The teachers are loving. Even though we are sometimes naughty, they are still kind to us. I want to be like them and become a teacher too). This admiration for their teachers' kindness and patience inspires students and even motivates some, like this student, to pursue teaching as a career.

Echoing this sentiment, Aeta Student no. 8 simply stated, “Gusto ko pong maging teacher katulad ni Mam” (I want to be a teacher like Ma’am). This indicates that the positive impact of their teachers has sparked a desire to follow in their footsteps. Aeta Student no. 9 expressed gratitude for the care they receive from the nuns, “Maaruga po ang mga Madre po di po nila kami pinapabayaan lalo na sa pagaaral at sa pagkain” (The nuns are caring. They do not neglect us, especially in our studies and with food). This highlights the holistic support provided, ensuring students’ well-being both academically and physically. Further, Aeta Student no. 10 summed up their feelings with a deep sense of gratitude, “Napakaswerte po namin dahil nandito po kami” (We are very lucky to be here). This statement encapsulates the overall positive experience and appreciation for the educational environment at St. Francis Learning Center.

In connection with this, according to Valenzuela *et al.* (2022), the teachers made a noticeable effort to engage the Aeta students and give them a top-notch education. Instructors showed resilience and flexibility in handling the difficulties brought on by the pandemic. They proved to be a respectable and good teacher to the Aetas in the community by their unwavering persistence in bringing education to the Aeta tribal group. Nonetheless, more support from the local government in carrying out the IPED program would enable the current project to provide the Aeta students with a first-rate education in keeping with their culture and customs.

What Factors Influence the Decision-Making Process of Students at the St. Francis Learning Center When Choosing Their Senior High School Track or Strand?

The decisions of the Aeta students at the St. Francis Learning Center regarding their choice of Senior High School track or strand are deeply rooted in practical considerations, personal interests, and familial influences. Each student’s decision reflects a unique blend of personal aspirations and the desire to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. Aeta Student no. 1 chose their strand with a clear focus on practical utility, explaining, “Ito po magagamit po naming lalo na sa pag-uwi namin” (We can use this especially when we go home). This student prioritizes skills that will be immediately applicable in their daily life and community, suggesting a preference for education that has tangible, real-world benefits. For Aeta Student no. 2, the motivation was strongly tied to familial responsibility and economic prospects. They shared, “Kasi po gusto naming tumulong maski papano sa mga kapatid at mga magulang namin. Gusto ko po ng TVL sa carpentry kasi meron na pong trabaho sa amin at Madali po ang kikitain” (Because we want to help our siblings and parents in any way we can. I want TVL in carpentry because there are already jobs for us, and it’s easy to earn). This response highlights the dual importance of immediate job availability and the potential for earning a livelihood, making TVL carpentry an attractive option. Aeta Student no. 3 echoed a similar sentiment about future utility, stating, “Ito po

ung mapapakinabangan ko po balang araw” (This is something I can benefit from someday). The emphasis on long-term benefits indicates a forward-thinking approach, where the student is considering how their education will serve them in the future.

Parental influence played a significant role in Aeta Student no. 4’s decision. They explained, “Kasi po gusto po ng magulang namin na ganito mas Maganda daw po ang TVL cookery kasi mas makakatulong na ako sa mga magulang ko at dito para sa pagluluto” (Because our parents want this; they say TVL cookery is better because I can help my parents with cooking). This highlights how parental preferences and the practical application of skills in the household influence educational choices. Social factors influenced Aeta Student no. 5, who admitted, “Wala kasi akong kasama sa klase kaya sumama nalang ako sa tropa ko” (I didn’t have anyone with me in class, so I just joined my friends). This decision underscores the impact of peer relationships on academic choices, illustrating how the desire for companionship can shape educational paths. Aeta Student no. 6 was motivated by the broader opportunities provided by the General Academic Strand (GAS). They said, “Maganda po kasi ang GAS kasi madaming mga opportunities sa labas po. Gusto ko pong maging pulis” (GAS is good because there are many opportunities outside. I want to become a police officer). This response shows a clear career aspiration and the recognition that GAS offers a pathway to various professional opportunities.

The influence of siblings is evident in Aeta Student no. 7’s choice. They noted, “Katulad din po ng sa kuya (carpentry) ko kasi sabi nya Maganda po kasi” (Like my older brother (carpentry) because he says it’s good). This reflects how the experiences and recommendations of family members can significantly impact educational decisions. Personal interest was the driving factor for Aeta Student no. 8, who stated, “Mas Madali ang sa cookery kasi hilig ko na po kasi ito” (Cookery is easier because I already like it). This shows the importance of aligning educational choices with personal passions and hobbies, which can enhance engagement and success. Aeta Student no. 9 displayed a flexible attitude towards their education, saying, “Gusto ko lang pong mag aral po kahit ano po okey lang po sakin” (I just want to study; anything is fine with me). This openness suggests a strong desire to learn, regardless of the specific track or strand. Also, Aeta Student no. 10 chose their strand based on familial ties and the desire to assist their father, explaining, “Kasi karpentero po ung tatay ko kaya gusto ko po para makatulong na din po ako sa kanya sa bahay” (Because my father is a carpenter, I want to help him at home). This highlights how familial roles and the desire to contribute to the family’s work can influence educational decisions.

In terms of insights into how their families, peers, and personal aspirations influenced their decisions in selecting a Senior High School track or strand, their responses reflect a complex interplay of familial expectations, peer influence, and personal interests that shaped their

educational choices. Aeta Student no. 1 was driven by a deep sense of familial duty, expressing, “Gusto ko pong tumulong sa mga magulang ko po” (I want to help my parents). This response underscores the importance of family in the student’s decision-making process, highlighting how the desire to support their parents was a significant motivating factor. Similarly, Aeta Student no. 2’s choice was influenced by a combination of personal ambition and familial responsibility. They stated, “Gusto ko pong magkatabaho na at tumulong sa kanila para mapagalaran ko din po ang aking kapatid” (I want to get a job and help them so I can also send my sibling to school). This reflects a strong sense of responsibility not only towards their parents but also towards ensuring their sibling’s education, indicating how family dynamics and economic considerations play a critical role.

Aeta Student no. 3, on the other hand, made an independent decision based on personal preference. They said, “Ako lang po ang nagdesisyon para sa sarili ko kasi Maganda po kasi ito” (I made the decision for myself because this is good). This student’s autonomy in their decision-making highlights the importance of personal interest and self-determination in choosing an educational path. For Aeta Student no. 4, parental guidance was the primary factor. They mentioned, “Mas alam po ng magulang ko ang dapat sa kin” (My parents know what is best for me). This indicates a trust in parental wisdom and the belief that their parents’ experience and knowledge would guide them towards the best choice.

Peer influence was evident in the decision of Aeta Student no. 5, who stated, “Sumama lang po ako sa kaibigan ko” (I just followed my friend). This response illustrates how social connections and the desire to stay with friends can significantly impact educational choices. Aeta Student no. 6 was influenced by their mother’s advice about career prospects, sharing, “Gusto kong maging pulis kasi mataas daw ang sweldo ng pulis sabi ng nanay ko” (I want to become a police officer because my mother says the salary is high). This highlights how parental insights into job opportunities and economic stability can shape students’ career aspirations. Following in the footsteps of a sibling was the reason for Aeta Student no. 7’s choice. They noted, “Ang kuya ko po kasi carpentry kaya ako nadin po” (My older brother is in carpentry, so I chose it too). This response indicates the impact of older siblings as role models and the influence they have on younger family members’ decisions.

Aeta Student no. 8 expressed a clear personal passion for their chosen track, saying, “Ako lang po ang may gusto kasi gusto ko po talagang magluto” (I made the choice because I really want to cook). This highlights the importance of aligning educational choices with personal interests and passions. Aeta Student no. 9 showed a strong desire for education itself, stating simply, “Gusto ko lang din po talagang magaral” (I just really want to study). This student’s intrinsic motivation to learn underscores the value placed on education, regardless of the specific track. Also, Aeta Student no. 10 chose their strand based

on familial occupation, explaining, “Karpentero din kasi si tatay kaya gusto ko din maging katulad nya” (My father is a carpenter, so I want to be like him). This indicates how familial occupations and the desire to follow in a parent’s footsteps can influence educational and career choices.

In terms of the resources and information sources that influenced their decisions on which Senior High School track or strand to pursue, the responses reveal a range of influences, from direct personal experiences and interactions to the limited use of digital and media resources. Aeta Student no. 1 shared a significant limitation in their decision-making process, stating, “Wala naman po kasi wala po kaming mga cellphone po” (There wasn’t any because we don’t have cellphones). This response highlights the digital divide and lack of access to technology that some students face, which can limit their exposure to information and resources. Contrastingly, Aeta Student no. 2 mentioned the internet as a valuable resource, simply stating, “Internet po” (The internet). This indicates that despite some students’ lack of access, others could utilize online resources to gather information about their educational options. Aeta Student no. 3 found television to be an influential source, remarking, “TV” (Television). Television can provide a range of educational programs and information that can influence students’ decisions by showcasing different career paths and opportunities.

The impact of direct interaction is evident in the response of Aeta Student no. 4, who said, “Mga pumunta pong mga bisita na nakikipagkwentuhan po sa amin” (Visitors who came and talked with us). This suggests that personal interactions and conversations with visitors played a crucial role in providing information and guidance. Aeta Student no. 5, like some others, reported having no specific resources, saying, “Wala naman po” (There wasn’t any). This response again underscores the lack of access to information that can influence decision-making. Social media played a role for Aeta Student no. 6, who stated, “Sa Facebook po” (On Facebook). This highlights how social media platforms can be a source of information and influence, providing students with insights and ideas about different tracks and careers. Aeta Student no. 7 also reported no significant resources, mirroring the experiences of students 1 and 5. The consistent theme of limited access to information resources among several students is evident here. Aeta Student no. 8 found television particularly inspiring due to the content related to cooking, explaining, “Sa TV po kasi ang daming mga pagkain na masasarap na madadaling lutuin” (On TV, there are many delicious and easy-to-cook foods). This reflects how media content can spark interest and guide educational and career choices. Aeta Student no. 9, like several peers, reported no specific resources, stating, “Wala naman po” (There wasn’t any). This repeated lack of access emphasizes the need for improved resource availability. Also, Aeta Student no. 10 relied on familial influence, specifically their father, stating, “Tatay ko lang

din po. Wala naman po kaming TV at CP” (Only my father. We don’t have a TV or cellphone). This response highlights the significant role that family members play in the absence of other information sources.

In connection with this, Paz (2021) explained that if educators fail to close the gap between students’ learning styles and their daily lives, the current educational system will become obsolete. Educators are responsible for helping students make connections between what they are learning and their everyday lives and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed.

What Intervention Program May be Suggested to Motivate Students to Choose the Specific Senior High School Strand and College?

At the St. Francis Learning Center, Aeta student participants shared their views on the types of activities and resources they believe would help them better understand and choose a specific Senior High School strand and college. Aeta Student no. 1 found “career week” particularly motivating. They shared, “May career week po kami, lahat po ay nag-enjoy magsuot ng mga damit na gusto namin” (We have career week, and everyone enjoyed wearing the clothes we wanted). This event allowed students to explore different professions in a fun and engaging manner, helping them visualize potential career paths. For Aeta Student no. 2, hands-on activities and schedules beyond regular school hours were beneficial. They stated, “Naapply na po naming kasi aside po sa school meron din po kaming ginagawa sa mismong school. Stay in po kasi kami kapag sabado at lingo meron po kaming schedule po” (We already apply it because aside from school, we do activities at the school itself. We stay in during Saturdays and Sundays, and we have schedules). This response highlights the importance of continuous, practical application of skills and knowledge, reinforcing what they learn during the week.

Aeta Student no. 3 emphasized the value of collaborative projects and mentorship, explaining, “May paproject po ang mga junior at senior highschool po. Minsan ang mga junior high po tinututuruan din po namin sila sa pagluluto. At si sister po ang nagtuturo sa amin kung papaano ang gagawin lalo na sa pagluluto” (There are projects for junior and senior high school. Sometimes we teach junior high students how to cook, and sister teaches us what to do, especially in cooking). This indicates that peer teaching and mentorship can be highly motivating and effective for learning practical skills. The response from Aeta Student no. 4 highlighted a challenge with time management, stating, “Marami po kaming nakaschedule po kaya minsan nga po kulang din ang oras po namin para magawa namin ang mga assignment sa school” (We have a lot scheduled, so sometimes we don’t have enough time to complete our school assignments). This underscores the need for balanced scheduling to ensure students have adequate time for both learning activities and academic responsibilities.

Aeta Student no. 5 expressed a preference for rest, saying,

“Wala po gusto ko pong matulog” (Nothing, I just want to sleep). This response suggests that fatigue and the need for rest are significant factors that can impact student engagement and motivation. Aeta Student no. 6 shared a responsibility that affects their engagement, explaining, “Assignment ko po kasi na magbantay ng mga kasama ko lalo na ang mga maliliit kasi po nalulungkot sila namimiss nila nanay at tatay nila” (My assignment is to watch over my peers, especially the younger ones, because they get sad and miss their parents). This highlights the importance of providing emotional support and managing additional responsibilities that can impact students’ focus on their education.

The absence of certain activities was noted by Aeta Student no. 7, who said, “Wala naman pong mga activities po dito sa St. Francis, minsan po madaming mga pumupunta po dito na tumutulong po na magbigay po ng mga gamit po” (There aren’t really any activities here at St. Francis, sometimes many people come here to help and give supplies). This response indicates a need for more structured activities that can engage students and aid in their educational decisions. Cultural activities were significant for Aeta Student no. 8, who mentioned, “Tribe presentation po namin at nagsasayaw po kami at napakahalaga po ng kultura na kinagisnan namin pero nahihirapan po kami kasi minsan pag tuloy tuloy po araw araw po ang bisita nakakapagod din po” (We have tribe presentations and dance, and our culture is very important to us, but it’s tiring when visitors come every day). This suggests that while cultural activities are valuable, they need to be balanced to avoid fatigue. Aeta Student no. 9 had a practical suggestion, expressing a desire for better facilities, “Gusto ko pong ipagawa ang parcel po namin (ung mga dormitory ng mga Aeta boys na di pa natapos tapos)” (I want to finish building our dormitory). Improved living conditions and facilities can significantly impact students’ overall well-being and motivation. Also, Aeta Student no. 10 shared that they participate in family activities when at home, stating, “Kapag umuwi po ako sa amin tinutulungan ko po tatay ko parang iyon nadin ang activity naming po” (When I go home, I help my father, and that’s our activity). This indicates that practical, real-life tasks are also considered valuable learning experiences by the students.

In terms of experiences with career guidance and orientation sessions, their feedback highlighted both positive aspects and areas that could be improved to aid in their decision-making for Senior High School tracks and future careers. Aeta Student no. 1 expressed great enthusiasm about the career guidance sessions, particularly enjoying the opportunity to wear aspirational outfits. They stated, “Masarap pong magsuot ng damit na pinapangarap po, (It feels good to wear clothes I dream of)” and felt motivated to improve their studies to graduate and achieve their dreams. Similarly, Aeta Student no. 2 found joy in seeing themselves and their classmates dressed in attire that suited them. They mentioned, “Masaya po ako kasi bagay po pala sa kin, (I am happy

because it suits me)” which boosted their confidence and made the experience enjoyable for everyone. Aeta Student no. 3 echoed this excitement, noting that it was thrilling to finally wear the clothes they desired. They said, “Nakaka excite po kasi nasuot na naming ung gusto po namin, (It’s exciting because we got to wear what we wanted)” which made the career guidance sessions engaging and memorable. Aeta Student no. 4 enjoyed seeing their peers wearing outfits they liked, adding, “Nakakaenjoy pong makita mga kasama ko po na nakasuot ng gusto nila. (It is enjoyable to see my classmates wearing what they like)” This sense of camaraderie and mutual support was a positive aspect of the sessions.

On the other hand, several students, including Aeta Student no. 5, no. 6, no. 7, and no. 8, provided no comments, indicating perhaps a lack of engagement or interest in the sessions. Aeta Student no. 9 admitted, “Di ko po alam, (I don’t know)” suggesting they might not have fully understood or participated in the career guidance activities. Aeta Student no. 10 had a different experience, as they chose to wear their uniform instead of any special outfit. They expressed a clear focus on practical skills, saying, “Okey na po ako sa pagcacarpentry – makakatulong na po ako kay tatay, (I’m okay with carpentry – it will help me support my father)” indicating their priority was learning skills that would help them support their family.

In terms of support and information they feel are currently lacking in helping them choose a Senior High School strand and college. Their responses highlighted both the gaps in resources and the supportive roles played by certain individuals, along with suggestions on how these gaps could be effectively addressed through an intervention program. Aeta Student no. 1 identified a significant lack of books as a major issue, stating, “Kulang po ng libro po. (We lack books.)” This shortage of essential learning materials makes it challenging for students to fully grasp their lessons and prepare for their future educational choices.

Similarly, Aeta Student no. 2 pointed out the inadequacy of computer facilities, noting, “Facilities po pag dating po sa computer po. (Facilities in terms of computers.)” Access to modern technology is crucial for students to explore and understand different career paths and educational opportunities. Aeta Student no. 3 mentioned the limited class time and the predominant use of lectures, saying, “Kulang po kami ng oras magklase po. Minsan po lecture type lng po ang class po namin. (We lack class time. Sometimes our class is just lecture type)” Despite this, they appreciated the help from the sisters, particularly Sr. Anna, who provides additional support.

In contrast, Aeta Student no. 4 felt that they were well-supported, emphasizing, “Wala naman po, binibigay naman po lahat para sa amin po lalo na po ung mga madre na nagaalaga sa amin at ibang brothers na pumupunta po sa amin. (There is nothing lacking, everything is provided for us, especially by the nuns who take care of us and the brothers who visit us)” This sentiment was

echoed by Aeta Student no. 5, who noted, “Di namn po nagkukulang ang mga madre po. Lagi namn pong may pagkain. (The nuns never lack. There is always food.)” Aeta Student no. 6 highlighted an issue with the principal’s demeanor, stating, “Medyo masungit po ang principal po namin kaya ang giangawa po naming humihingi kami ng tulong sa ibang madre na kasama nila po. (Our principal is somewhat strict, so we seek help from the other nuns.)” This suggests a need for more approachable administrative staff or additional support channels.

Aeta Student no. 7 appreciated the continuous guidance from the sisters, mentioning, “Lagi po kaming tinuturuan nila sister kapag di naming naiintindihan ang lesson po. (The sisters always teach us when we don’t understand the lesson)” Aeta Student no. 8 reiterated this support, saying, “Sinasabi po lagi ng mga madre na wag po naming kakakalimutan ang mga lesson po namin kapag may di daw po kami maintindihan kailangan po naming sabihin sa kanila po. (The nuns always tell us not to forget our lessons and if we don’t understand something, we need to tell them.)” Aeta Student no. 9 acknowledged the help from visitors, stating, “Marami pong tumutulong po sa amin lalong lalo na ang mga tao na bumibisita sa amin po. (Many people help us, especially the visitors.)” Similarly, Aeta Student no. 10 noted the assistance from religious brothers, saying, “May mga religious brothers pong mga tumutulong po lagi sa amin. (There are religious brothers who always help us.)” Relatively, Husain *et al.* (2021) denoted that all citizens, regardless of their location or sociocultural background, have the right to an education.

CONCLUSION

It was found that some students face challenges such as unprepared teachers, insufficient class time, lack of materials, and repetitive lessons. Addressing these issues through teacher training, curriculum revision, adequate resource provision, and diverse teaching strategies can enhance the learning experience. Many students struggle due to resource limitations and teaching methods, highlighting the need for visual aids, varied teaching methods, and hands-on learning to create a balanced environment. The dedication of academic staff also positively impacts students, fostering an environment that supports academic, emotional, and social growth. Continuing to provide personalized support, engaging teaching methods, and holistic care is essential for maintaining and enhancing students’ educational journeys. When choosing Senior High School tracks, students are influenced by practical utility, economic potential, parental influence, peer relationships, personal interests, career aspirations, and familial roles. Effective intervention programs could include career counseling, aligning education with market demands, involving parents in decisions, and recognizing personal interests and social connections. Providing sufficient learning materials, improving technological access, extending class time, incorporating diverse teaching methods, and enhancing support from administrative staff can motivate

students to choose specific tracks and pursue college education. Regular career guidance and community involvement further support students' educational and career development.

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