

Is the 4PS program of the Philippine government a boon or a bane in terms of implementation in education? (An action research)

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ABSTRACT

Issues such as those examined in this study often present multiple perspectives, revealing that no program or intervention is ever entirely flawless. Based on the responses from the 20 participants, it is evident that despite the Philippine government's development program aimed at addressing the primary needs of Filipino households, significant challenges remain unresolved. Progress toward the program's goals appears stagnant, and a considerable degree of improvement is still required before the intended outcomes can be realized fully. Similar to experiences in other countries that have adopted comparable economic programs under various names but sharing a common objective, transformative progress remains elusive. This stagnation can be attributed, in part, to deeply ingrained cultural factors that resist rapid change. Culture, having been cultivated and internalized over generations, shapes behaviors and social norms in ways that cannot be quickly altered. The widening disparity among social classes exacerbates what is often termed the cultural gap or lag, a condition indicative of underdevelopment. Consequently, even a well-funded and robust economic program may serve only as a superficial solution—a mere enhancement without addressing the fundamental issues at its core. In addressing the study's hypothesis, findings indicate no significant relationship between the general demographic profiles of beneficiaries and the reasons for discontinuing participation in the 4Ps program. Factors such as age or the number of household members enrolled appear less influential than the sustained commitment of government policies to tackle poverty systematically. While current efforts are commendable, they fall short of delivering comprehensive or lasting solutions at this juncture. Moreover, the decision to continue or discontinue program participation seems largely contingent on the personal choices of beneficiaries, influenced by a range of individual circumstances. Throughout this process, a profound acculturation occurs, shaped not by inherent traits but by evolving environmental factors that alter priorities and outlooks. Such shifts often result in missed opportunities, evoking feelings of regret among those who fail to capitalize on available resources. This underscores the critical role of education, which equips individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate life's pathways, make informed decisions, and cultivate the resilience and determination required to achieve their goals.

Keywords: 4Ps program implementation, education discontinuity, cultural influence on poverty programs

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INTRODUCTION

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) represents a flagship initiative of the Philippine government aimed at alleviating poverty by providing conditional cash grants to the country's poorest households. Designed to improve the health, nutrition, and education of children aged zero to eighteen, the program is spearheaded by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The 4Ps draws inspiration from conditional cash transfer (CCT) schemes successfully implemented in Latin America and Africa, where similar programs have lifted millions out of poverty. This model aligns with the broader aspiration of sustainable development, positioning poverty reduction as a primary social challenge facing the Philippines today.

The origins of such global development efforts can be traced back to the 1992 Brundtland Report, which urged wealthier nations to allocate at least 0.2% of their Gross National Product to support underdeveloped countries. However, many G20 countries failed to follow through on this recommendation, deeming it neither beneficial nor worthwhile. This global context posed a significant challenge to developing nations, including the Philippines, where progress toward economic development was arduous but not unattainable. By the late 1990s, according to Rostow's model of development, the Philippines was entering a "take-off" stage with aspirations of becoming a "tiger economy" in Asia. This optimism was supported by a ten-year development plan initiated during the administrations of Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos.

However, external and internal crises soon impeded this trajectory. The global recession triggered by events such as the Gulf War and the economic downturn in the United States—then a superpower—led to unprecedented inflation rates and market instability, exemplified by a decline in Wall Street's performance. Concurrently, the Philippines faced political upheaval marked by the short-lived presidency of Joseph Estrada and the controversial rise of Gloria Arroyo's administration, which lacked formal impeachment proceedings. Arroyo's initial years were fraught with both domestic and international challenges, with poverty emerging as a critical concern. The promise of a tiger economy faded amidst calls for wage increases and reduced costs for basic commodities, particularly fuel.

In response to these challenges, the Arroyo administration devised the 4Ps as a strategic plan to support impoverished families by supplementing their daily sustenance rather than replacing their need to work. Early implementation showed signs of hope, with increased investments generating employment opportunities. Yet, political instability, underscored by scandals involving graft, corruption, and plunder, severely undermined economic stability. Cost-cutting measures proved ineffective, and heavy borrowing compounded the country's financial woes. The investment climate deteriorated, and the 4Ps program faltered amid these setbacks.

Under President Noynoy Aquino's leadership, the 4Ps program received renewed attention, this time with more explicit conditions tied to children's health and education. Despite this, implementation weaknesses emerged. The lack of strict enforcement led to cultural shifts where beneficiaries became dependent on cash transfers without sufficient motivation to seek sustainable livelihoods. This dependency contributed to reduced household budgets for educational needs and a marked increase in school dropouts. Additionally, concerns arose that

many beneficiaries were not among the poorest but instead belonged to the middle class, largely due to recommendations from local barangay officials. These issues forced the program into a period of suspension.

More recently, with the collaboration of the DSWD and local government units, the 4Ps program has been revitalized under a strict enforcement framework. Presently, every cash withdrawal requires an official receipt, and school attendance is rigorously monitored, with absences directly affecting the disbursement amounts. Children are now compelled to attend school to ensure the full receipt of benefits. Despite these efforts, the overall impact of the program remains uncertain. Questions persist regarding who truly benefits and who is left behind as the program continues to evolve and adapt within the complex socio-political landscape of the Philippines.

Statement of the problem

For the better comprehension of what 4Ps is all about, how it influences and affect the standard of living of every Filipino family, on how education and health were made to be the primary concerns of this program and how it can sustain the needs and be an answer to poverty. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the general profile of beneficiaries of 4Ps in terms of age, number of beneficiaries, and number of years of being a beneficiary?
2. What are the reasons for being a beneficiary of 4Ps?
3. What are the reasons why a beneficiary stopped being a member of 4Ps?
4. What is the significant relationship between the general profile of 4Ps beneficiaries and the reasons why a beneficiary stopped being a member of 4Ps?

METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on the two important factors why 4Ps is implemented and these are concerns regarding education and health. Since Philippines is at the throes of entering the new industrial revolution 4.0. equipped with this is the promotion of sustainable development and this can only be done through a proper and well implemented economic program which the main objective of what 4Ps is all about.

The study seeks to answer the questions as to why beneficiaries of the said program has stopped receiving the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and the assessment of the reasons behind it.

The study uses the descriptive survey method in order to come up with the assessment of the reasons why there is the stoppage of being 4Ps recipients. See Appendix A for the questionnaire.

Survey is needed in order to arrive at an unbiased assessment of reasons why a 4Ps beneficiary stopped being one. It offers a viable and definitive results in order to prove the significant relationship between the two variables namely: the general profile 2and the reasons why being a 4Ps beneficiary had stopped.

The data gathering tool is based on a questionnaire which tackles about the general profile of the 4Ps beneficiaries, on the reasons why they continue or stop being a beneficiary in

terms of schooling alone. The study is limited to twenty (20) respondents, who are parents of students in Grade 7 level of Perpetual Help National High School.

The twenty (20) respondents are handpicked through a purposive sampling. This is done because there is a specific purpose attached to this and that is assessing the reason why in spite of the continuous pay-out of being a 4Ps beneficiary, there is an increasing rate in drop-out which is against the Education For All Program of the Department of Education.

For a better viability and reliability of the study, the best statistical treatment to be used is the z-test in order to see if there is indeed a significant relationship between the general profile of the beneficiary and the reason why had stopped being a beneficiary of 4Ps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted survey, the general profile of the 4Ps beneficiaries reveals that 30% of the beneficiaries are between 0 to 3 years old, 23% fall within the 4 to 6 years age group, 12% are aged 7 to 10 years, 16% are between 11 to 13 years old, and 19% range from 14 to 17 years old. Among the twenty surveyed households, 37% have between one to three beneficiaries, 62% have four to six beneficiaries, and 1% have seven to ten beneficiaries. Regarding the length of participation, 81% have been beneficiaries for five years or less, while 19% have been members for more than five years.

The reasons for becoming a 4Ps beneficiary differ: 33% were recommended by the barangay captain, 15% were identified through interviews conducted by social workers, and 52% were based on observations by the local government units (LGUs) assessing the level of poverty. When exploring reasons why beneficiaries ceased participation, education-related factors were significant. Specifically, 34% of beneficiaries stopped attending school due to teenage pregnancy, 21% due to lack of interest in schooling, 11% stopped because of working far from home under family pressure or similar reasons, and 44% dropped out due to involvement in vices such as drugs, liquor, and gambling. This situation has led to a dramatic increase in dropout rates among 4Ps beneficiaries.

The findings suggest that being a 4Ps beneficiary is strongly linked to how families cope with poverty, one of the Philippines' primary social problems. The conditional cash transfer (CCT) program aims to promote sustainable development by prioritizing health and education. Government agencies monitor the flow of CCT funds to ensure that these needs are met. However, an unintended consequence has been the growing dependency on the cash transfers, which fosters laziness and indulgence in vices. This dependency negatively affects children, the program's primary beneficiaries, by depriving them of adequate learning resources and nutritious food.

The surge in student dropouts raises concerns about the program's effectiveness. Although teenage pregnancy accounts for a large proportion of dropouts, this issue is not solely poverty-related but also a moral and social problem. Furthermore, despite receiving support, some beneficiaries lose interest in education, leading to truancy and absenteeism. Parents of Grade 7 students at Perpetual Help National High School, selected randomly and with identities confidential, expressed frustration about children who stopped schooling due to teenage pregnancy. While many beneficiaries continue their studies, some exceed the program's maximum beneficiary age of 18. As a result, Grade 7 students constitute the last batch eligible for the program, except for a few families with younger children.

Not all cases are bleak; some parents manage to support their children's tertiary education despite limited resources. For example, one parent's daughter is set to graduate from CSPC despite the family's financial constraints, subsisting on meager meals and limited allowance. The parent, a laundry worker, and the father, a carpenter, struggle but celebrate this educational achievement. However, other respondents cited lack of interest as a reason for dropout. Since absences reduce cash payouts by 400 to 500 pesos, children sometimes feel pressured to attend but remain disengaged. Some eventually choose to stop attending classes and turn to vices. Parents reported issues such as children's involvement in cockfighting, laziness, dishonesty, and substance abuse. One fourteen-year-old was reported to consume alcohol heavily and lie about absences, such as claiming to sell snacks at school when she was actually spending money on cigarettes and alcohol.

A particularly poignant story involved a family with two children—one in senior high school and another in Grade 7. The older child's education was interrupted by pregnancy, leading the younger child to make sacrifices and care for a niece living with them. Financial resources intended for school supplies and daily allowance had to be shared, underscoring the complex challenges families face in managing limited means.

Through informal discussions and written feedback, the researcher recognized that motivation and cultural factors strongly influence how beneficiaries view the CCT program. Despite clear and transparent rules, attitudes toward the program vary widely, shaped by culture, lifestyle, and environment, which play a crucial role in forming personality and motivation.

The 4Ps program has been a significant government effort to support Filipino families' basic needs, receiving approximately 70% of the national budget allocated for this initiative. Yet, concerns about its overall effectiveness persist, especially given the rising dropout rates. Although the government promotes easy access to education through free tertiary education and dedicates a large portion of CCT funds to educational fees, there is apprehension that the program encourages dependency and laziness.

These traits of dependence and laziness are rooted historically, tracing back to Spanish colonial influence and persisting across generations. Before the 4Ps program, families living in poverty struggled daily, taking on menial or contractual jobs while endeavoring to send their children to school despite accruing debt. The main obstacle was the scarcity of job opportunities, particularly for illiterate or drop-out individuals, rather than problems related to supply and demand.

Recognizing the role of education in poverty, the government implemented initiatives such as Education for All and the K-12 program, which provide broader access to schooling and create opportunities for blue-collar employment after Grade 12. Motivated individuals are encouraged to pursue tertiary education to further improve their prospects.

Against this backdrop, the 4Ps program seeks to address poverty by funding health and education needs. While it has positive objectives, challenges remain linked to culture, moral values, social attitudes, and persistent social stratification. Despite financial support, social class continues to influence opportunities and outcomes in Philippine society, highlighting that economic solutions alone cannot fully resolve poverty's complex dimensions.

CONCLUSION

Every issue presents multiple dimensions, and the findings of this study indicate that no development program is without limitations. Based on the responses of the twenty participants, it is evident that despite the Philippine government's initiatives aimed at addressing the primary needs of Filipino households, substantial challenges remain unresolved. The implementation of the program appears to have stalled, suggesting that significant improvements must be introduced and enforced before the program can achieve its intended outcomes.

Similar experiences in other countries with comparable economic programs reveal that despite shared objectives, progress remains difficult to attain. Cultural factors, deeply embedded and shaped over generations, present significant barriers to change. The widening disparity across social classes exacerbates what is known as the cultural gap or lag—an indicator of underdevelopment. Thus, even a well-funded economic program cannot fully address the complex nature of poverty, serving instead as a partial measure rather than a comprehensive solution.

Regarding the study's hypothesis, the data show no statistically significant relationship between the demographic profiles of 4Ps beneficiaries and the reasons for program discontinuation. These outcomes suggest that the continuation or cessation of participation is less influenced by demographic variables and more dependent on the government's sustained commitment to poverty alleviation. Although the program is performing adequately, there remains room for improvement in its efficacy.

Furthermore, the decision of beneficiaries to continue or discontinue participation appears to be a matter of individual choice, shaped by diverse personal circumstances. This dynamic reflects a process of acculturation influenced by environmental factors rather than innate characteristics, resulting in shifts in priorities that affect beneficiaries' engagement. The findings underscore the crucial role of education in equipping individuals with the capacity to make informed decisions and pursue pathways conducive to overcoming poverty.

Therefore, the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs such as the 4Ps relies not only on government support but also on addressing cultural and educational factors that influence beneficiary behavior. A comprehensive approach that integrates sustained policy enforcement with education and personal development is essential to advancing the program's objectives.

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