



Social Studies Pre-service Teachers' Views on the 4Ps

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ABSTRACT

As the Philippines flagship social protection program, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) sought to aid the poorest of the poor and end the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. Though extensive research has been done in various areas related to the 4Ps, limited research explored the program from the social studies education perspective. This study aimed to describe the experiences and insights of social studies pre-service teachers on the 4Ps as beneficiaries. It involved five (5) informants who were purposively selected for the study. A written interview following Gibb's reflective model was utilized to gather data, which was then analyzed, compared, and categorized using a researcher-made data analysis matrix. Informants identified the 4Ps as a bridge to progress, a flawed structure, and a work in progress. Opportunities seen by beneficiaries were financial assistance, education, and healthcare & family development. Informants also identified greed, grant delays, and unsustainability as the pitfalls of the program. To improve the 4Ps, job opportunities, an improved selection process, and a sense of responsibility were suggested. The findings of this study have significant implications for future policies and research surrounding the 4Ps, particularly in streamlining its targeting system and investigating leakages in the system that prevent its benefits from reaching its intended beneficiaries.

Keywords: 4Ps, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, social studies, pre-service teachers, conditional cash transfer program

1. Introduction

Poverty is one of the world's most pressing problems today (Polvanov, 2021), and the first target of the sustainable human development goals is to eradicate it by 2030 (Yuheng, Wenhao, Chuanyao, & Yansui, 2019; Li, Wu, & Wang, 2021). Polvanov described poverty as an economic position that deprives an individual or social group of a certain range of minimum needs and resources necessary to live, such as well-paying work, quality education and healthcare, and socialization. Poor people are also more exposed and vulnerable and less resilient to natural hazards and disasters, which becomes a cycle that makes poverty harder to escape (Hallegatte, Vogt-Schilb, Rozenberg, Bangalore, & Beaudet, 2020).

For this reason, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the consequent Philippine Development Plan targeted to eradicate it (Albert & Vizmanos, 2018). Poverty eradication is an important index of human social progress (Yuheng et al., 2019), and social protection programs designed to mitigate both expected and unexpected life events (Handayani & Paredes, 2017) can be used to eradicate poverty. To achieve this, the country used a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)*, as its flagship social protection program (Kim & Yoo, 2015).

The 4Ps aimed to help the poorest of the poor in the Philippines. By giving cash grants to beneficiaries and improving their access to quality education and healthcare, the program seeks to break the cycle of poverty. Furthermore, beneficiaries, especially students, identified other benefits derived from the program such as spiritual and social growth, improved confidence and motivation, and better academic performance (Pineda & Fabella, 2019). To fully maximize the program, reform through measures such as providing more job opportunities and improving the selection process is encouraged (Aguado, 2021; Diaz, 2021; Lagdameo, 2018).

Extensive research has been conducted in various areas related to the 4Ps. However, limited published research has been done to examine the program from the perspective of the beneficiaries, particularly of social studies pre-service teachers. Social studies pre-service teachers generally perceive their subject as critical in the learners' acquisition of citizenship skills such as responsible, well-informed, and independent citizenship (Boikhusto, Dinama, &

Kgotlaetsile, 2013). As a result, social studies pre-service teachers have to be aware of social issues and think critically of them to encourage their learners to do the same (Mahpudz, Jamaludin, & Palimbong, 2018; Pedroso & Herbuela, 2022).

This qualitative-narrative research study aimed to describe the views of social studies pre-service teachers on the 4Ps, where the findings of this study highlighted the personal impacts of the CCT program through the lens of social studies pre-service teachers. It will also contribute qualitative literature to its existing body of knowledge. Patterns observed in the responses will be utilized to inform policymakers in adopting policies to improve the program and to determine research gaps for future investigation.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-narrative design to describe the experiences of social studies pre-service teachers as beneficiaries of the 4Ps. This recorded relevant data in a systematic subjective approach through the stories related by the informants (Lluz, 2020). Rosiek & Snyder (2020), Kim (2016), and Ford, (2020) posited that personal narratives are sources of evidence that cannot be documented by other research methods and are effective measures of inviting readers to examine the relationships between the present and the future to re-assess their own experiences and beliefs.

2.2. Informants

Employing the purposive sampling technique (Pedroso, Tangco-Siason, Ortizo-Roces, & Magramo-Basbas, 2022), five informants who met the inclusion criteria were selected. Andrade (2021) describes it as a type of sampling that studies only a specific group of people whose characteristics are relevant to the study. Key informants were selected based on the following criteria: a) 18-22 years old during the conduct of the study, b) a student of a public university, c) a social studies education major, and d) a beneficiary of the 4Ps.

Table 1–Profile of the Informants

Social Studies Pre-service Teacher	Age	Type of Tertiary Higher Education	Course and Specialization	4Ps Beneficiary? (Yes/No)
Alicia	18	Public	Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) Major in Social Studies	Yes
Rachel	19	Public	BSEd Major in Social Studies	Yes
Jacqueline	19	Public	BSEd Major in Social Studies	Yes
Bart	18	Public	BSEd Major in Social Studies	Yes
Ginny	19	Public	BSEd Major in Social Studies	Yes

2.3. Data Gathering Instrument

Open-ended questions following Graham Gibb's reflective model through a written interview were utilized in gathering data. Open-ended questions helped the informants to share their experiences and ideas freely (Tangco-Siason, Magramo-Basbas, Montaña, Galvez-Felimon, Ortizo-Roces, & Pedroso, 2022). Using Gibb's reflective model, informants reflected on their experiences based on their descriptions, feelings, analysis, evaluation, conclusions, and actions (Pedroso, 2021). The questions in the written interview form were in English.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Because the study took place in the context of health restrictions during a pandemic, the research instrument was administered online in the first quarter of 2022. The written interview forms were sent to the identified informants' email addresses. They were reached through Facebook Messenger for follow-up questions. Limited access to internet connectivity merited the asynchronous conduct of the data collection procedure.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data was organized using a researcher-made data analysis matrix to identify codes and themes in the experiences of the informants as 4Ps beneficiaries and social studies pre-service teachers. Significant phrases and statements were highlighted and assigned to appropriate codes. Then, codes

were classified according to relevant categories. Finally, these categories were condensed and grouped into the informants' appreciation, criticism, and proposed solutions to the CCT program.

2.6. Trustworthiness

Thorough data collection, member checking, informant validation, and direct quotations were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. Actions and procedures undertaken during this study were also reported to other researchers for them to consider when conducting research that may or may not be related to this study.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

The informants' voluntary involvement in this study was confirmed through written informed consent. The researchers kept confidentiality throughout the conduct of the study by maintaining sole access to the data shared by the informants. Each informant was also given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

3. Results

The beneficiaries and social studies pre-service teachers' views of the 4Ps have three themes (Fig. 1): (1) a bridge to progress, (2) a flawed structure, and (3) a work in progress.

3.1. A Bridge to Progress

Opportunity International (2018) and Diaz (2021) reported that over 26 million people in the Philippines, or a quarter of the population, live in poverty. Of this, 5.2 percent or one of 20 are in subsistence poverty. The 4Ps, as a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, presented its beneficiaries with opportunities to alleviate themselves from poverty. These opportunities have three categories: (a) financial assistance, (b) education, and (c) healthcare and family development.

Financial Assistance. The 4Ps aim is to provide conditional cash assistance to the poorest of the poor for additional income and cushion to deal with financial risks and crises in a volatile economy (Diaz, 2021). Cabral (2010) and Lagdameo (2018) stated that the 4Ps is a measure to provide the poor with the assistance they need to fulfill their immediate needs. Rachel shares:

"For the families who receive the financial support every three months, this could really be a huge help regarding their food supplies, health, and household necessities."

Cabral cited the success of CCT programs in Latin America and Africa to be the inspiration behind the government's rationale to implement its CCT program in the country under the implementation of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). According to Alicia:

"That is why the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, a program of DSWD, aims to reduce poverty by providing qualified families conditional cash grants as it helps people alleviate poverty in the country."

Education. Aside from financial support, the 4Ps also gave its children-beneficiaries (aged 3 to 18) better access to education (Luo, 2018; Diaz, 2021; Lagdameo, 2018) as part of its investment in human capital (Sasaki, Diaz, & Brazal, 2019). Jacqueline says:

"As one of its beneficiaries, I could say that it really helped support my schooling in the past years."

Sasaki reports that since the implementation of the 4Ps in 2008, enrollment, daily attendance, and completion rate increased due to the beneficiaries' ability to pay for school fees and requirements. This closed the educational gap between student beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and increased student achievement in low-income households (Diaz, 2021). Orbeta Jr, Melad, & Araos (2021) even found that beneficiaries have more grit in school in gaining the funds needed for their education. Bart says:

"The 4Ps give me the hope to enjoy and continuing education."

Healthcare and Family Development. Lagdameo (2018) cited ill health and the lack of healthcare access as factors strongly associated with the poverty cycle in the country. The 4Ps sought to address this by providing health services such as pre- and post-natal care for pregnant women and deworming for children, even making it a conditionality that must be complied with to continue availing of the program. In addition to these health-related practices, beneficiaries were required to attend Family Development Sessions (FDS), an essential component of empowering human capital, and was proven to be effective (Manguiat, Dy, Ferido, & Baconguis, 2021; Pambid, 2017). Alicia states:

“The subsidy, family development sessions, seminars, and livelihood programs are activities that are also helpful in improving the lives of beneficiaries.”

3.2. A Flawed Structure

These statements shared by the student-beneficiaries showed their capacities to evaluate and reflect on their experiences, which is an essential part of their social obligation as social studies pre-service teachers to understand the pressing issues of contemporary society (Pedroso, 2021). The informants voiced the imperfections that were inherent in the system in three categories: (a) corruption and gambling, (b) grant delays, and (c) unsustainability.

Corruption and gambling. Critics slammed the 4Ps as a failure because of its faults in the technical accuracy of its database, methods, and application (Orbeta & Paqueo, 2016), which lead to various leakages. Its benefits reputedly did not reach their intended beneficiaries and were instead leaked through corruption and patronage politics. Jacqueline shares:

“In terms of elevating the poverty in the country, the program elevated it in the sense that it has given the poor additional money to help with their daily needs but there is still the problem of corruption.”

Informants, who have firsthand experience and insights from the program as beneficiaries, noticed the improper use of the cash grants among their fellow beneficiaries. Bart says:

“...some people take advantage of it. They gamble the money for their pleasure.”

This, however, was the opposite of the findings of Orbeta et al. (2021). They reported time-tested and internationally-backed findings that CCT programs do not increase dependency and expenditure on vice goods such as tobacco, alcohol, and gambling in countries where they are implemented. Nevertheless, Bart contends:

“The government is helping us, but some human beings are greedy...”

Grant Delays. The delay of cash grant transactions resulted in a cycle of pending payments and debts for the beneficiaries, especially when they are dependent on them (Tangco-Siason et al., 2022). Ginny confirms:

“This is not a monthly allowance as expected by families but rather it is a 5-6 months yearly subsidy that results in debt and pending payments in school and other necessities. It became a cycle.”

Aguado’s (2021) informants shared the same dilemma, adding that because of these delays, cash grants intended for health and education are relocated for their basic needs, exacerbating the cycle. Ginny adds:

“4Ps is helpful as it is but for me, the effectivity rate is low for granting of money is long overdue.”

Unsustainability. A nationwide CCT program such as the 4Ps required substantial capital investments. In June 2010, \$600 million was loaned from the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank to fund this program (Lagdameo, 2018). Rachel affirms:

“It requires a huge amount of finance. We should also know that the said program is a loan-driven program; much of the cash grants given to the beneficiaries are generated from loans abroad...”

Ladhani & Sitter (2020) posited that reliance on external funding is unsustainable for the program and poses a risk for the government to lose ownership of the program. The World Bank’s most recent additional funding of \$500 million will cover at most 9 percent of the 4Ps budget until June 2022, but these dole-outs are ultimately costly for the government. Jacqueline concurs:

“... the 4Ps program is just a temporary relief and not a permanent solution.”

3.3. A Work in Progress

Acknowledging its faults, informants maintained an optimistic view of the program and saw it as a work in progress that has the capacity to help its beneficiaries better when improved. These suggestions have into three categories: (1) job opportunities, (2) improved selection process, and (3) sense of responsibility.

Job Opportunities. While countries with CCT programs have lower poverty rates than countries without, dole-outs are inadequate to fully eradicate poverty. Diaz (2021) emphasized empowering the poor and crafting cash-for-work initiatives to encourage beneficiaries to be more productive citizens of the country. Jacqueline suggests:

“The government should focus more on providing jobs for the people so that they have the opportunity to raise themselves from poverty.”

By providing jobs to complement cash grants and other services, dependency on the program will be discouraged, and it could aid beneficiaries in exiting the program self-sufficiently. Aguado (2021) added that equipping beneficiaries with skills and technology for income-generating programs can also guarantee productivity and independence.

Improved Selection Process. Re-orienting the program to focus on capability development (Lagdameo, 2018) and implementing strict monitoring and evaluation of empowerment and community participation (Diaz, 2021) were some of the feasible solutions to improve the program. Bart says:

“The 4P’s really needed to improve their selections in choosing the rightful beneficiaries because not all humans are worthy to receive help.”

The informants were also aware of the consequences set by the DSWD when the conditions to remain in the program were not met. Jacqueline writes:

“In June 2020, over 70,000 beneficiaries were delisted...”

Despite its shortcomings, informants were optimistic about the future of the program. Alicia tells:

“Continue to improve this program, and break the cycle of poverty by keeping the family healthy and children in school, so they can have a better future.”

Sense of Responsibility. Money is a valuable resource used to cope with financial difficulties (Tangco-Siason et al., 2022), which is why Rachel insists that:

“Beneficiaries should use the cash grants in a useful and proper way...”

Furthermore, informants acknowledged the purpose of these opportunities given by the government. Bart reflects:

“‘Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan’ [The youth is the hope of the nation] – this phrase was imprinted in our minds, to help the youth and mold them to become a good citizen, and that is what 4Ps wants for the country.”

Ultimately, recognizing the program’s contribution to the youth’s human capital fortified the sense of responsibility that the beneficiaries feel. Rachel adds:

“... our government executes its responsibility and so, we must do ours, too.”

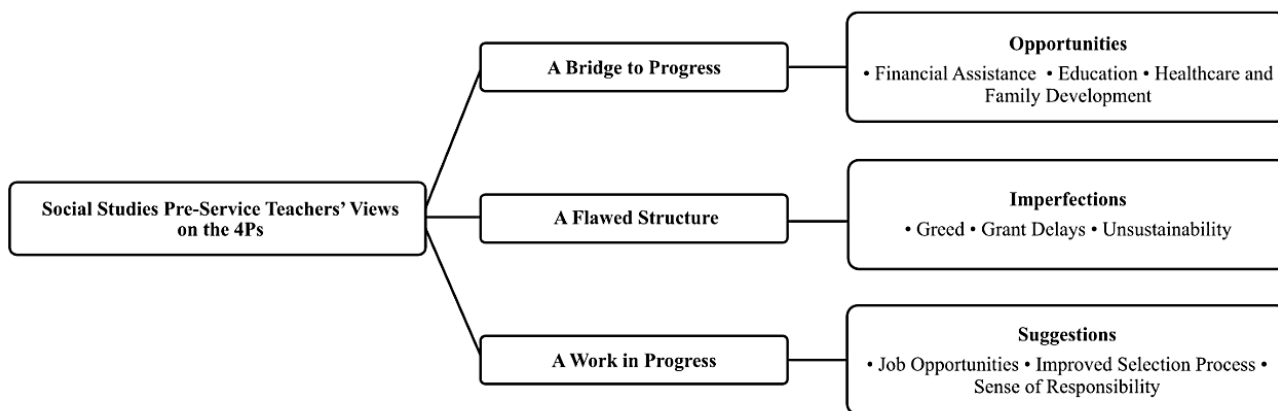


Fig. 1 - Demonstration of meaningful categories of the study

4. Discussion

This study aimed to describe the views of social studies pre-service teachers and beneficiaries on the opportunities, pitfalls, and future of the 4Ps. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the questions: 1) What opportunities do the 4Ps present to its beneficiaries?; 2) What are the issues faced by the

beneficiaries of the program?; and 3) What changes do the beneficiaries seek from the program? Beneficiaries and social studies pre-service teachers view the 4Ps in three themes: (1) a bridge to progress, (2) a flawed structure, and (3) a work in progress.

Poverty is a global issue described as the lack of access to necessities and possession of low capital, which is especially blatant in developing countries in the global south (Cudia, Rivera, & Tullao Jr., 2019). In the Philippines, it is its most daunting problem that has lasted through generations despite having high GDP and one of the fastest-growing economies in the world (Diaz, 2021; Orbeta & Paqueo, 2016). As elaborated by Orbeta & Paqueo, economic growth did not directly translate into lesser poverty incidence. It only widened the socio-economic gap between the rich and the impoverished when the latter lack opportunities to alleviate themselves from poverty, such as access to quality education and healthcare.

In the Philippines, among the interventions set by the government to address poverty are foreign aid, entrepreneurship, and conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs (Cudia et al., 2019). Its CCT program is the 4Ps, modeled after Latin American and African programs of the same nature (Cabral, 2010; Lagdameo, 2018). The 4Ps invested in human capital, beginning with short-term alleviation by giving conditional cash grants to beneficiaries as financial assistance, and transitioning towards long-term and comprehensive goals by providing healthcare, education, and family development services to the poorest of the poor (Diaz, 2021; Cahyadi, Hanna, Olken, Prima, Satriawan, & Syamsulhakim, 2020).

Such investments do not yield immediate results but are effective in the long term. Cahyadi et al. observed significant reductions in stunting and evidence of increased high school completion rates in a six-year-old CCT program in Indonesia. Exposure to the nutrition, health, and educational components of the CCT as early as possible also led to sustained increases in human capital in children (Millán, Macours, Maluccio, & Tejerina, 2020). Aspirations for higher education among parents and children have also increased (García, Harker, & Cuartas, 2019).

Cahyadi et al. added that these CCT investments have substantial effects on human capital and can continue operating on a large scale without needing interventions from researchers. The results indeed included positive and negative views on the CCT program. However, defects observed by informants and related literature must be recognized and addressed before moving forward with plans for the CCT program since these have potential to increase the program's effectiveness. Tabuga & Reyes saw loopholes, leakages, and exclusion during the program's early stages in 2012 and demanded impact monitoring and evaluation to guarantee sustainability and efficiency. Tutor (2014) also asserted that the poorest fifth of households benefit the most from the program and, thus, they must be the focus on improving the targeting mechanism and addressing leakage issues. Saguin & Howlett (2019) agreed, promoting cultural sensitivity in the development and implementation of the program rather than mere policy transfer from success stories abroad.

The first step toward integrating sensitivity into the development of the program would be to collect data and feedback from beneficiaries and implementors. In this case, issues presented by informants, such as grant delays and unsustainability, were well-documented in the research literature, but the claim of corruption and gambling has little support in published research. Orbeta et al. (2021) dismissed issues related to these altogether. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence may open this subject for discussion in future studies.

The limitations in this study's design may be noted or addressed in future research. First, because of the lack of published research supporting its existence or otherwise, the researchers highly recommend further research on the issue of leakages and vice related to the 4Ps. Second, the study only focused on pre-service social studies teachers who are beneficiaries of the program. These findings cannot be used to infer or generalize the views of other beneficiaries of the program. Future research can expand to include valuable views of beneficiaries from other specializations. Third, our findings were generated in the context of the views of 4Ps beneficiaries and pre-service social studies teachers. Last, written-interview questions were utilized in data gathering and may be subject to self-report bias. Other data gathering methods such as observation may be used, and quantitative research may be conducted to supplement and support this study's findings.

Despite these limitations, the views provided by beneficiaries and pre-service social studies teachers can be used to inform future research and policies, particularly on the 4Ps. For policy-makers and implementors, these findings can be used as a starting point or support for improvements in the CCT program. For beneficiaries, this study may serve as a prompt to share more insights and ideas to further enhance the program and other initiatives to alleviate poverty and increase human capital. Lastly, the information generated on the views of 4Ps beneficiaries and pre-service social studies teachers may, in one way or another, incite the conduct of studies related to this topic.

5. Conclusion

The *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program, or the 4Ps, has bridged many Filipino households and individuals to progress and will continue to until the cycle of intergenerational poverty in the country is broken. It has helped millions of households overcome extreme poverty and provided a lifeline to impoverished children and youth to increase their human capital and uplift themselves and their families from the cycle of poverty. It made sure that as we progress as a country, nobody is left behind.

Though the program has its imperfections, both internal and external, it gave hope to the beneficiaries to pursue their dreams and build a future. It gave them tangible opportunities such as quality education and healthcare, and boosted morale among the hopeless in the pursuit of helping them catch up with

the country's emerging economy. However, to sustainably and justifiably do so, it must address issues that hinder its effectiveness and efficiency, which should be based on the observations and suggestions of beneficiaries, implementors, and research. Thus, the experiences and insights of informed beneficiaries are instrumental in paving the future of the 4Ps and the lives of the poor in the Philippines.

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