

Challenges of Kindergarten Pupils Belonging in 4P's (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program) Beneficiaries Program in the Blended Modality of Learning in Digos City, Philippines

Abstract

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a government initiative (law) in the Philippines to support low-income groups. Implementing the blended modality of learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic brought different challenges to different sectors and groups of people. This study focuses on the challenges of kindergarten pupils who belong to this program in the blended learning modality. The study employed qualitative-phenomenological research in addressing the research objectives. Results showed that the participants utilized the full support of the program. However, they still experience various challenges in the blended modality of learning. Three themes were formed from the participant's experiences: lack of technological resources, difficulty in understanding concepts, and insufficient support. This implied that the current education scenario shows a much deeper problem, especially for children of low-level income, creating much learning loss and difficulty in learning. Because of these, it is recommended that there should be a proper program implemented in the country to identify learning losses focusing on this group of children and creating an enhancement program to bridge the gap of these learning losses.

Keywords: 4Ps, learning losses, kindergarten pupils, challenges in learning, blended modality of learning

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Background of the Study

The implementation of the blended modality of learning is seen as the appropriate measure to continue education during the Covid-19 pandemic. This notion is in response to the announcement of the United Nations for policy action regarding quality education amidst the ongoing pandemic (United Nations, n.d.). UNICEF², 2020, a branch of the United Nations, provided a list of online resources that schools, teachers, parents, and school administrators could be used during the blended modality of learning. In addition, UNICEF (2020) also provided a set of guidelines on the conduct of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect children. Moreover, UNESCO³ (2021) announces that "education should be prioritized to avoid a generational catastrophe." These announcements and guidelines by the United Nations were carried out by the state members to formulate initiatives to promote quality education in the blended modality of learning. However, the idea that not all children and schools have access to the necessary technology and materials used in blended learning poses questions regarding quality education. Learners whose family belongs to low-level income groups have less access to quality education in this learning modality. This can be attributed to the socio-economic aspects which affect the family's daily living (Rudenstine et al., 2021, & Chen et al., 2022). Therefore, stories of this minority group would become helpful in formulating policies and programs to promote quality and inclusive education among all students despite the challenges attributed to this pandemic.

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²UNICEF stands for United Nations Children's Fund

³UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural, Scientific and Cultural Organization

In 1943, Abraham Maslow created the theory of human motivation, which implies that human beings have this desire for a goal or accomplishment. To achieve this, an individual must satisfy the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). However, for an individual to accomplish this, they must fulfill the following needs in particular order: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). This theory is widely used in the education sector since many educators believe that learners will develop holistically if all levels are adequately addressed (McLeod, 2007, Medcalf et al., 2013, Burleson & Thoron, 2014). With the Covid-19 pandemic, children who belong to low-level income family members were severely affected and likely deprived of quality learning. Though many policies and support programs were carried out by the government worldwide, still, it is difficult to assume that these children belonging to minority groups have access to quality education. In the report of UNICEF (2020), school closure due to the pandemic affected 1.6 billion children globally, wherein 1 billion of these children belong to low-level to middle-level income families. In addition, the joint report of The World Bank, UNICEF, & UNESCO (2021) shows that there is a significant learning loss among this group of children globally. Following the theory of Maslow (1943), an individual must fulfill all levels in order to achieve the desired goal. However, the learning losses of children in a minority group signify a gap and delays in their holistic development. Further, this can have a domino effect on the country's labor force in the future.

Countries worldwide face similar concerns regarding the learning losses of children brought by school closure and implementation of remote learning. Countries that are not part of the first-world economy are more affected by this transition compared to that first-world economy. Developing countries that are facing problems already in their educational system have difficulty adjusting to the new normal education (Anderson, 2021). Challenges such as lack of internet access, computers, and network infrastructures are barriers these countries face in implementing remote learning (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020, Kruszewska et al., 2022). In addition, teachers are also not prepared for this sudden change resulting in a gap between practice and theory (Tadesse & Whalen, 2020). In the joint report of UNICEF & UNESCO (2020) Southeast Asian nations, specifically in the East Pacific Regions, shows that 20% (80 million) of children don't have access to distance learning through online, TV, and radio, primarily because they don't have the necessary materials to use (p.6). In sub-Saharan Africa, children face similar problems where almost 25% of families in rural areas don't have access to electricity and poor internet connectivity (Alcazar et al., 2020). In Latin America, problems such as connectivity and low digital literacy among students and teachers are significant problems in remote learning (UNESCO & LLECE⁴, 2020). Based on these findings, developing countries face more challenges in delivering quality education, especially to children from low-level income families.

In the Philippines, remote learning is also being implemented by the Department of Education. The use of radio, TV, online classes and modules was implemented in various regions of the country (Department of Education⁵, 2020., Department of Education, 2021a). However, the sudden change in learning modality resulted in low enrollment in the country for the SY 2020-2021, wherein one-fifth of Filipino elementary and secondary learners (equivalent to five million students) choose not to enroll in this school year (Gamboa, 2021). This large number of students will be left out and may result in a high number of out-of-school youth in the country. On the contrary, those students who are enrolled in distance learning demonstrate lower academic performance compared to their performance before the implementation of distance learning (Cruz, 2021). Furthermore, in April 2022, the Department of Education released the DO 17 series of 2022 that set the guidelines for the progressive expansion of face-to-face classes (Department of Education, 2022). This memorandum ensures that face-to-face classes at all basic education levels must be implemented without violating the safety protocols. This move of the Philippine government is directed to the adherence to quality education to minimize learning losses among learners.

⁴LLECE stands for Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education)

⁵Department of Education is one of the executive departments of the Philippines. The tasks of this department include ensuring quality education in the country, ensuring access to education for all citizens, and promoting equality.

This study is conducted to determine the challenges of kindergarten pupils belonging to the 4Ps program in implementing the blended modality of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study's objectives include determining if they benefited from the 4Ps program during the pandemic, identifying the main challenges they experienced, and describing how they experienced these challenges in the blended learning modality. These objectives center on identifying challenges to hear the voices of these vulnerable groups. This study would benefit the school administrators, teachers, and private organizations to develop a beneficial intervention program that focuses on these groups. Moreover, the result would also be beneficial to the Philippines' government, especially the social welfare department, to create an additional support program highlighting child welfare. To the department of education in the country to create a separate plan to address the learning losses or gaps among students, especially the minority group in order to minimize drop-out or low academic performance in the succeeding school year. Furthermore, the result is also beneficial to the local government unit to create a separate program addressing the challenges identified in this study.

Literatures

4Ps (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program)⁶

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a development measure initiated by the national government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor, to improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18 (Luz, 2020). In addition, this program is patterned after the successful Conditional Cash Transfer ⁷(CCT) Programs in Latin America and Africa (Luz, 2020). CCT has been cited as one of the key factors behind the positive socio-economic outcomes achieved by Brazil where 11 million families are currently enrolled in the program, and other countries. The said program was started in 2007 and was later expanded in 2016 under former President Benigno Aquino III. In 2019, the 16th President of the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte signed the new 4Ps law (Republic Act⁸11310) which added new benefits such as additional cash incentives in each level of basic education and beneficiaries will also receive health and nutrition grants (Republic of the Philippines, 2019). The enhancements to the existing program hope to ensure that all youth beneficiaries will have the assistance they need to finish high school and senior high and thus have a greater chance of landing a job. These include the expansion of age coverage from 0-14 to 0-18 years old and the increase in the amount received by students 12-18 years of age. The Act also strengthens implementation by penalizing actions that jeopardize the program's integrity (Pantawid Program, 2020). In addition, 4P's households can claim their money through cash cards or through offsite payments, and pay-out is done every two months. Beneficiaries with cash cards can directly withdraw their payments through national bank free of charge or via any other bank.

Children of the 4Ps beneficiaries are referred to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)⁹, which is also DSWD's (Department of Social Welfare and Development¹⁰) partner in the project, along with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)¹¹ and the implementing state universities and colleges (SUCs).¹² Under the said program, it ensures that the grantees are enrolled in selected SUCs duly recognized by CHED, channeled to CHED priority courses, and be extended the needed support that will guarantee completion of studies, thus qualifying them

⁶Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in English is Bridging Program for the Filipino.

⁷Conditional Cash Transfer is a program designed to reduce poverty by providing welfare and support to those low-income citizens of the country.

⁸Republic Act is a piece of legislation used to create policy in the Philippines.

⁹Commission on Higher Education is a Philippine government agency that is tasked to supervise tertiary education in the country.

¹⁰Department of Social Welfare and Development is a Philippine government agency that is tasked to supervise the rights of the citizen and the development of the community.

¹¹Department of Labor and Employment is a Philippine government agency that is tasked to supervise the labor force of the country including the implementation of the labor code and creation of programs pertaining to labor.

¹²State Universities and Colleges is a government-funded higher education institution in the country.

for high-value-added jobs in the future (Lluz, 2020). In partnership with the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges, 4Ps has enrolled 36,003 beneficiaries in state universities and colleges as of June 2015 ((Lluz, 2020). Moreover, the program also has strict compliance regarding the school attendance of the students who are beneficiaries because it is their basis for giving the cash transfer. It is therefore expected for the beneficiaries to attend school regularly or at least 85% of the school days. Thus, the program shows a big help, especially in supporting students in fulfilling and realizing their dreams. Through this program, the Philippines' government helped its people become better members of society.

Blended Modality of Learning

Blended learning (BL) is a learning delivery modality that combines distance learning approaches such as online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-based instruction¹³. Meanwhile, Homeschooling is a learning delivery modality for young people to learn even when they are in their homes (Yes, 2021). The Department of Education (DepEd) has adopted different teaching methods due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of these methods is modular distance learning, a learning delivery modality that DepEd conceptualized and classified under the distance learning approach. The Department of Education's modular distance approach works on four-step processes (4Ps), which are: pagkuha (distribution), paggamit (application), pagtutok (monitoring), and pagbalik (submission). Moreover, Modular Distance Learning (MDL) is a learning method where students can use printed self-learning modules (SLM) and modules that can be accessed digitally or through electronic devices such as laptops, computers, tablets, and smartphones (Yes, 2021). To maintain the education of millions of Filipino learners and for every school to still attain its mission and vision to provide quality education to every Filipino learner, the Department of Education implemented Modular Distance Learning (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). Modular Distance Learning (MDL) involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules (SLMs), whether printed or in digital format, which are centered on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC) provided by DepEd (Martinez, 2020).

Online Distance Learning (ODL) is a learning method where teachers can teach their students through the internet. Students can also download learning materials and submit their homework through online means (Yes, 2021). Being an educator, facing multiple issues in conducting ODL, such as little exposure to set up the platform (zoom meeting, Google Hangout Meet, Telegram, Google Classroom, etc.), concerning student participation (Foon & Sum, 2014), limited assessment method to measure course learning outcomes (Zhu et al., 2018). A rigorous study on student online learning attitude reported that a higher CIL (Communication in Information Literacy) level was correlated with a higher online learning attitude. Eager to explore computer tools and possess the ability to use internet applications can reduce the symptom of technology stress among students, especially in joining ODL activities (Yang et al., 2018). TV/ Radio-Based Instruction (TVI) is a learning method where the self-learning modules are taught on television and radio. It is an effective alternative for students without internet access and computers, tablets, and smartphones (Yes, 2021). The Department of Education (DepEd) has made use of radio-based instruction (RBI) mainly as one of the options to reach learners in the Alternative Learning System¹⁴ (ALS) program (Department of Education, 2021b). Primarily used as a form of distance learning to teach learners who are unable to attend face-to-face lessons or in remote areas, radio-based instruction enables them to continue their education despite these challenges. Through the years, radio-based instruction has reached out to school youth (OSY), persons deprived of liberty (PDL), persons with disabilities (PWD), working students, indigenous people

¹³TV/Radio-Based Instruction is the use of either television or radio as a medium of instruction in order for learners to watch or heard the discussion of teachers. This mode of instruction is part of distance learning method implemented by the Department of Education.

¹⁴Alternative Learning System is a program implemented by the Department of Education which aims to deliver basic literacy among out-of-school youth (OSY), special/differently-abled person, and adults.

(IP), farmers, and others who are unable to attend day-to-day classes. This is to maximize the more dynamic available modes for the benefit of learners. Only those areas without internet and data connectivity and not reached by television signals should resort to undertaking DepEd Radio.

Research Objectives

The idea that kindergarten pupils belonging to the 4Ps program have many untold stories during the conduct of blended modality of learning creates an opportunity to express their sentiments. To materialize this, the study aims to:

1. To determine if participants have benefited from the 4Ps program,
2. To identify the challenges of participants in the blended modality of learning, and
3. To describe how the participants experienced these challenges.

Method

This study follows the phenomenological research design to understand the challenges of kindergarten learners belonging to the marginalized group in Digos City, Philippines¹⁵, in the blended modality of learning implemented by the Department of Education in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sampling Technique

This study utilizes the purposive sampling technique in the identification and selection of participants. Patton (2014) highlighted the importance of conducting purposive sampling techniques in qualitative research to yield information-rich cases with limited resources. Following the guidelines of Cresswell & Plano (2011), Bernard (2017), and Spradley (1979) the selection includes (1) identification and selection of participants who are knowledgeable or have experience regarding the phenomena, (2) that they are available and willing to participate, and (3) can express their opinion in an expressive, articulate and reflective way. Moreover, inclusion criteria in selecting the participants include (1) the participant is a kindergarten pupil in Digos City, Philippines, who is officially enrolled in the academic year 2021-2022, (2) the participant is a beneficiary of the 4Ps program, and (3) the participant is willing to be interviewed personally or virtually with the approval of his/her parent/ guardian. Below is the sampling frame of the study (Table 1).

Table 1. The Sampling Frame

Barangays	Number of Participants for IDI	
	Male	Female
Dawis	5	1
Aplaya	3	3
Mabini	3	3
Total	11	7

Informed Consent

Before participating, the participants were requested to read and understand the consent form with the help of their parent/guardian. When the participant indicates his/her willingness to participate in the study, he/she was requested to sign the consent form in hard copy. To obtain the full participation of participants, orientation regarding the whole process was carried out by the researchers. The signing of consent forms happens only once the participant has fully understood his/her role in the research process and agreed to participate. Moreover, participants were also reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any given time, as stated in the consent form.

Data Gathering Procedure

¹⁵Digos City, Philippines is a city located in the southern part of the country (Mindanao, Region XI)

The following procedures were properly carried out before and after the conduct of data collection; First, An approval letter including necessary attachments was sent to the Department of Teacher Education to commence the study. Second, after the approval, the researchers survey the identified barangays to determine any potential participants in the study. Third, after identifying potential participants of the study, the researchers asked the participants if they were willing to participate (with the approval of their parent/guardian). Fourth, an orientation of the selected participants was carried out (with the signing of a consent form). Fifth, the participant is given the privilege to choose a face-to-face or online interview and the scheduled date/ time of the interview. Sixth, in conducting a face-to-face interview, all health protocols were observed, such as wearing of face mask/social distancing/use of sanitizer/rubbing alcohol was used. In the online interview, participants were given a load to connect to the internet during the conduct of the interview. Seventh, after the interview, the researchers transcribed the participants' responses and presented them back to the participants for the final approval of the transcription. Eighth after the approval, the researchers proceed with data interpretation. Finally, after the data has been collected and interpreted, all transcripts/records of the interview are kept in a secured google drive wherein the researchers and the subject professor have the only access. This drive will be permanently removed after three years.

Data Analysis

This study utilizes Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method to develop an emergent/global theme obtained from the participants. Moreover, steps include: (1) reading the transcribed manuscript several times to understand the meanings, (2) Extracting significant statements that is/are directly related to the phenomenon being studied, and (3) Groupings of significant statements with similar meanings from different statements of the participants and giving new meaning, (4) Repeating the first to third process to ensure that all significant statements were included and this time new themes may be formulated, (5) Compile all descriptions generated from first to the fourth process, (6) Summarize the descriptions being generated to identify the fundamental structure of the phenomenon being studied, and finally (7) adding credibility of data by discussing with experts and independent reviewers.

Results and Discussion

This part of the study presents the findings of the conducted study, including data interpretation and analysis regarding the challenges of Kindergarten pupils belonging to the 4Ps in the blended modality of learning in Digos City, Philippines.

A. Do the participants benefit from the 4Ps program?

The interview revealed that all participants exhibited full benefits of the 4Ps program through their parents by buying them food, dress, toys, school supplies, and other important materials to continue their schooling despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

"My mother bought me food, and she also bought me school supplies like a notebook, ballpen, pencil, eraser, and other school supplies" Participants 3, 8

"My family bought me food as well as toys" Participants 7, 13

"My mother bought my favorite food, which is chicken, and school supplies" Participants 12, 17

"My family bought me food, school supplies, dress, and toys," Participant 16

These statements from the participants indicate that parents use the funds they get from the 4Ps program to ensure the full support of their children.

B. What are the participants' challenges in the blended modality of learning?

Participants indicated that distance learning is difficult primarily because of the following reasons; (1) lacking technological resources, (2) difficulty in understanding concepts, and (3) Insufficient support.

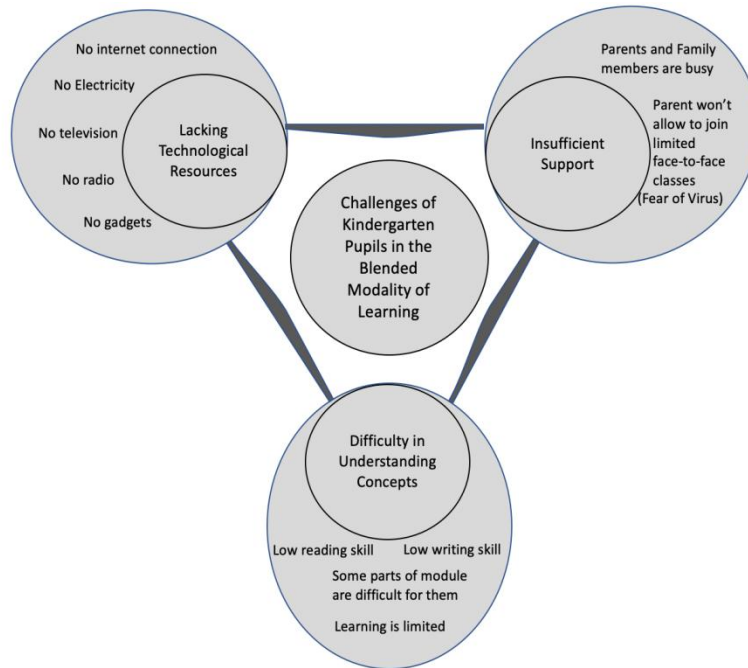


Figure 1.
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Figure 1
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modality of learning. Each participant has unique experiences in this new modality of learning. In the *lacking technological resources*, the theme emerges because some of the participants mentioned that they don't have the necessary technological resources that could be used in this modality of learning. They identified no internet connection, no electricity, no television, no radio, and no gadgets as the main challenges under this theme. Moreover, these identified resources are essential, especially if students are learning independently or with the help of other family members. For the *difficulty in understanding concepts*, this theme emerges because participants highlighted that it is difficult to learn in this learning modality. Participants even mentioned that they have low reading and writing skills making it more difficult to understand concepts. Aside from that, some parts of the module are difficult for them. And some participants also admitted that they have limited learning. These participants' claims can be directly attributed to the difficulty in understanding concepts in their module. For the *insufficient support*, this theme emerges because participants experienced low family support for learning concepts in their module. Reasons include busy family members because they prioritize family income and staple food and fear of parents to the disease that could be attributed to this pandemic. These themes show a direct culprit why kindergarten pupils belonging to the 4Ps Program experienced challenges in the blended modality of learning.

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C. How do the participantsexperiences the different challenges in the blended learning modality?

Participants have various experiences in the blended modality of learning. In these experiences, three main challenges are identified, namely; (1) lacking technological resources, (2) difficulty in understanding concepts, and (3) Insufficient support.

Lacking technological resources

In this learning modality, resources such as gadgets, books, and connectivity are significantin delivering quality education amidst the ongoing pandemic. However, participants experienced difficulty availing of these significant resources, especially since we are now in the age of the 4th industrial revolution. Participants even mentioned that;

"We don't have internet in our home, and my mother told me not to attend face-to-face classes... I don't have learnings especially in answering modules, and I do not use the internet as well"
Participants 1, 5, 10

"Difficult because I don't use a cellphone to answer my modules," Participant 2,

"We don't have television, internet and other forms of technology... the only technology we have is radio but not functioning" Participant 3

"We don't have any forms of technology because my father bought us food to eat... and it's difficult to answer my module because I am the one who answers my module because my mother and father are working" Participant 6

"We don't have electricity in our home we only have a radio but no battery... sometimes I go to pisowifi vendo machine where I connect to the internet. Participant 7, 13

These statements from the participants signify the importance of technological resources in the current timeline. Though they are at the kindergarten level, they already feel how important is technology. Quesenberry et al. (2016) noted that technology must be introduced as early as kindergarten and preschool to prepare them to become digitally literate. Acer for Education (2019) highlighted the benefits of using technology at the kindergarten level, including opening a new world of learning activities, promoting adaptive learning, and developing tech skills and collaboration. Though some parents and concerned individuals acknowledged the danger of technology, it is still beneficial, especially since we are now in the 4th industrial revolution, where technology is essential and the main driver of development. Therefore, it is empirical to at least introduce technology to every student for them to be prepared for the world of a technology-driven society.

Moreover, it is also being mentioned that aside from having no technology in their home, they don't have access to electricity. In the modern world, electricity is shown as one of the important commodities that every household must-have. Basically, electricity will power every technology in every household; without it, the technology will not serve its purpose. In the Philippines, 93% of homes have access to electricity, while there are 1.62 million homes that don't have electricity (Domingo, 2021). These data show that many Filipino homes still don't have access to electricity. Filipino who live in rural areas and belong to low-income groups are among those households that don't have access to electricity (Quirapas-Franco, 2021). This scenario clearly reflects why these children in the vulnerable groups are being deprived of additional learning aid (e.g., television) in times of this pandemic. In relation to the unavailability of electricity, other learning aids such as television and radio are lacking in their household because the family chooses to prioritize food and shelter over their wants. This clearly manifests how family members decide on their security over temporary things. Although the Department of Education launched TV and radio-based learning as part of their initiatives in the blended modality of learning (Department of Education, 2021) this was not cascaded to all learners, especially those who lived in rural areas.

Difficulty in Understanding Concepts

In this modality of learning wherein learners are forced to understand concepts of their own or with the help of their parents/guardians brings a unique experience to both students and parents/guardians. However, this also concretizes the assumption that not all learners have the ability to understand concepts easily without the help or guardianship of teachers or even parents or their guardians. With this, some participants expressed their feelings about this modality of learning such as;

"I love to draw in my modules like drawing shapes and coloring them... but I don't know how to read some words... It's difficult to write also" Participants 8, 16

“I learn and answer my modules on my own and because of that my learnings are limited... also, I don't know if my answer is correct or wrong” Participants 10, 15

“Difficult because I don't use other sources in answering my modules... Some parts of modules are not clear to me... I didn't answer those parts which are difficult”
Participant 13

“Modules are difficult primarily because I do not know how to answer the modules... My learnings are limited only” Participant 17

The statements of the participants manifest how difficult to learn skills and concepts in the blended modality of learning. At their current age, it is understandable that learning is difficult, especially reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. These skills must be properly addressed at the early stage in order for learners to acquire much higher skills as they progress. In the K-12 curriculum guide under the kindergarten stage, the seven (7) domains highlight the importance of holistic development and these must be acquired by learners, these domains include (1) Socio-emotional development, (2) Values development, (3) Physical health and motor development, (4) Aesthetic development, (5) Mathematics, (6) Physical and natural environment, and (7) language, literacy and communication (Department of Education, 2016). It is clear that these domains prioritize not just the socio-development aspect of learners but also their intellectual aspect. However, with the blended modality of learning, it is clearly shown that not all learners have fully acquired this set of domains. This creates a learning gap among learners once they enter higher grade levels and it creates a different learning gap as the learner progresses.

In the report of the United Nations (2021) there are 584 million children experiencing difficulty in reading due to the closure of schools, this number is much higher compared to 460 million in 2020. This number is quite alarming, especially in the Philippines which belongs to the developing world and was hit severely by the pandemic. Along with other necessary skills and learning, the quality of learning acquisition is highly affected and this resulted in higher learning losses among children. Moreover, vulnerable groups are highly affected by these learning losses because family members tend to prioritize their daily survival compared to helping their children with their learning tasks. In the Philippines, the education dimension had the largest contribution when it comes to Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) with a percentage of 36.9% in the 2017 deprivation index, which is higher compared to 36.5% in 2016 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018)). With this, it is clear that the current kindergarten students belonging to vulnerable sectors will end up being deprived of quality education, which may result in an increase in education deprivation. Moreover, the study conducted by (Shah et al., 2019) revealed that teaching-learning material factors and socio-economic factors are among the major factors why students dropped out at the primary level. This indicates that children being deprived of quality learning have the highest possibility of dropping out.

Insufficient Support

In this pandemic, support is vital among students, especially those in the lower grade level, since they are still exploring the vast knowledge that the world can offer. However, participants of the study identified this as one of the challenges in the blended learning modality. However, the good side is that participants understand the situations in their life wherein they know why their families cannot help them. This is because their parents and family members are busy working for them to have food on their table. Moreover, the participants even mentioned that;

“My mother told me not to attend face-to-face class because of the virus... It's difficult because I only answer the module” Participants 1, 3, 8

“I attended limited face-to-face classes...sometimes I ask my brother and sister to help with my modules, and they say no because they are busy working... I did not answer my modules”
Participants 2, 13

“I did not attend limited face-to-face classes because I am not vaccinated...No one could help me because they were busy selling in the market... I go with them, and I help them for us to have food to eat” Participant 7

The reality that these groups of children know why they don't have this support from their families in answering or learning concepts in modules is heartwarming. At the early stage, they already know their living status and are aware of it. Moreover, with the ongoing pandemic, it is clear that all sectors are affected, and among these sectors are where these vulnerable groups belong. At the beginning of the pandemic, when the government of the Philippines implemented a lockdown and implemented Enhance Community Quarantine (ECQ), sixty-four percent (64%) of households had members who lost their job (Statista Research Department, 2021). In addition, the unemployment rate rose to 17.7% in the country, accounting for 7.3 million Filipino who are unemployed in 2020 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). Thus, to cope with the needs of the family, family members try to find another source of income in order for them to have food on their table. This situation makes it difficult for children to focus on learning because they know what their parents had gone through in order for them to survive. Moreover, it is clear why this factor (insufficient support) arises because the participants have no choice but not to complain to their families because they know the reasons behind it.

Though literature suggests that there is parental involvement in the academic journey of students (Lawrence & Fakuade, 2021., Ribeiro et al, 2021., Sari & Maningtyas, 2020) during the pandemic, still it could be argued that not all parents are involved, especially those groups belonging to marginalized sector. Based on the participants' responses, it is clear that they experienced this problem because of insufficient support extended by their family members. Though some of the participants attended limited face-to-face classes, however, their schedules in schools are not fixed due to the implementation of the blended modality of learning. Thus, making support from teachers and administrators limited. Aside from that, fear of the virus has still affected the decision of parents to send their children to school, creating barriers among learners and their learnings. Woodland et al. (2021) conducted a study on why parents won't send their children to school? in 2021 and the result revealed that the main reasons are; (1) too risky, (2) school is not being open, and (3) other children can't go to school. The result of the study supports the claim of some participants why their parents won't allow them to join in the limited face-to-face classes implemented by the Department of Education.

Conclusion

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a great help to every low-level family in the Philippines. In times of pandemic, beneficiaries use this program to continue supporting their children to go to school as well as use the incentives to buy their needs. However, in the blended modality of learning, children belonging to this program exhibit various challenges primarily because of the lacking resources that are not included in the program. These lacking resources come from the family itself, such as support, other learning materials, and technologies that are not covered by the program. It can be argued that this minority group chooses to work and use that income to feed the entire family to survive, creating much pressure for them to help their children in the blended modality of learning. Children can't do anything in this modality of learning because they know the struggles that their parents underwent for their family to survive daily. With this, children are forced to learn independently or choose not to answer the learning materials that the school gives because they are trapped, and there's nothing they can do in this situation. Thus, it can be argued that both parents and children belonging to this program are pressured because the situation (pandemic) is much heavier compared to before.

Recommendation

To fully understand the challenges of the children belonging to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in the blended modality of learning, a more extensive scale study would be helpful by utilizing a mixed-method or exploratory factor analysis to analyze further the challenges they experienced. In addition, an analysis of the various programs implemented by different local government units, the department of education, and the department of social welfare and development to address the challenges would also be beneficial in understanding the current direction of the identified challenges. With the result, it is recommended that both parents and the department of education and other sectors develop a good program identifying the learning losses of this minority group and create an enhancement program to help them cope. Monitoring the learning losses should be done to avoid generation gaps among these learners and avoid drop-out.

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