

PANTAWID PAMILYA PROGRAM TOWARDS POVERTY REDUCTION

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Abstract

Poverty remains a big challenge in the Philippines. To address the problem, the government introduced Pantawid Pamilya Program that uses conditional cash transfers (CCTs) to poor households that have been identified and agreed upon by the beneficiaries. This study evaluated the perception of the beneficiaries on the attainment of the objectives of the Program and further; it delved on determining the effect of the program at the household level of the Set 1 Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries in the Province of Surigao del Sur; determining the extent of attainment of the objectives of the Pantawid Pamilya Program; and providing recommendations to enhance the implementation of the program. The study revealed that the program was effective in attaining its objectives but there are still aspects that need further attention regarding the initiatives of the Government in reducing poverty level in the country.

Keywords: *poverty reduction, perception, Pantawid Pamilya Program, beneficiaries*

1.0 Introduction

Given the breadth and width of Pantawid Pamilya Program (3P's), the Government is making a huge investment using its scarce resources. Hence, it should be significant and judicious to conduct a study that will determine the return on this considerable investment. Formerly called Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), the project is a poverty reduction and social development strategy of the national government. It provides conditional cash grants to extremely poor households based on their compliance with verifiable conditions that have been identified and agreed upon by the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries are identified using the National Household Targeting System (NHTS), to improve their health, nutrition and education particularly of children aged 0-14. This study evaluated the perception of

the beneficiaries on the attainment of the objectives of the Program and further; it delved on determining the effect of the program at the household level of the Set 1 Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries in the Province of Surigao del Sur; determining the extent of attainment of the objectives of the Pantawid Pamilya Program; and providing recommendations to enhance the implementation of the program.

Previous studies have proven the vastly positive contribution of the program in reducing chances of poverty Fiszbein et al., (2009), Gertler et al., (2012), Verlarde et al., (2011) but each focused on different effects of Pantawid Pamilya. Fiszbein et al., (2009) noted the impact of Pantawid Pamilya in human development, particularly in education and health; Gertler et al., (2012) and Velarde & Fernandez (2011) addressed

the immediate effect of Pantawid Pamilya on beneficiaries' annual income. As one of the piloted regions in the Philippines, a need to assess the effect of Pantawid Pamilya has to be initiated.

The cited studies manifest a means of improving human development of the extreme poor by building their human capital. This goal is apparently based on the observed correlation between poverty status and the state of human development. However, they only consider human development with respect to health, education and annual income. This study attempts to explore other contributions of the program based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), namely: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achievement of universal primary education, promotion of gender equality, reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health.

The effectiveness of Pantawid Pamilya Program in the attainment of its objectives are desirable from the perspective of policy and implementation. The study can be utilized to enhance the program to improve the lives of its beneficiaries. This study further assists the government and non-government organizations to design programs and projects to help address poverty incidence in the country.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

The efficiency of Pantawid Pamilya Program can be manifested in the attainment of its objectives which are categorized as: improvement of preventive health care among pregnant women and young children; increase of the enrollment in and attendance rate of children in school; reduction of the incidence of child labor; raise of the average consumption rate in food expenditure of poor households;

and encouragement of the parents to invest in their children's (and their own) human capital through investments in their health and nutrition, education, and participation in community activities.

Investment in human development, particularly in education and health, purports improvement of the country's chances of reducing poverty. Fiszbein et al., (2009) proves in his study that CCTs have a positively impact on outcomes such as increase in the enrolment of children in schools in Mexico, Colombia, Bangladesh and Turkey. They have also been proven to decrease the incidence of child labor among children aged 7 to 13 years old in Mexico and Nicaragua; lower the incidence of illness among young children, as well as increase the utilization of health services among young girls in Honduras. The program also posted remarkable improvements in the nutritional status of children by increasing the average consumption rate in food expenditure.

On the other hand, participation in community activities is an important determinant of poverty alleviation especially because economic growth alone is not sufficient for poverty reduction; growth must be accompanied with equity and promoted by participation (Okunmadewa, 1999). Tunrayo (2009) defines community participation as an active involvement of the community members in particular projects geared towards the development of an area. The main purpose of community development projects is to organize, develop and utilize available natural resources and manpower. These resources are utilized in such a way that the entire rural population depending on them has an opportunity to meet their basic needs along with reasonable facilities for education and health. This promotes in a positive and healthy environment.

Nevertheless, identification of the program constraints is included in the study to establish evidence-based problems encountered by the beneficiaries while availing the program. If these problems are identified, these can be addressed properly,

thus increasing the extent of the achievement of its objectives. This can further be utilized as basis for policy formulation and enhancement of the program to reduce poverty rate. Figure 1 shows the schematic diagram of the study.

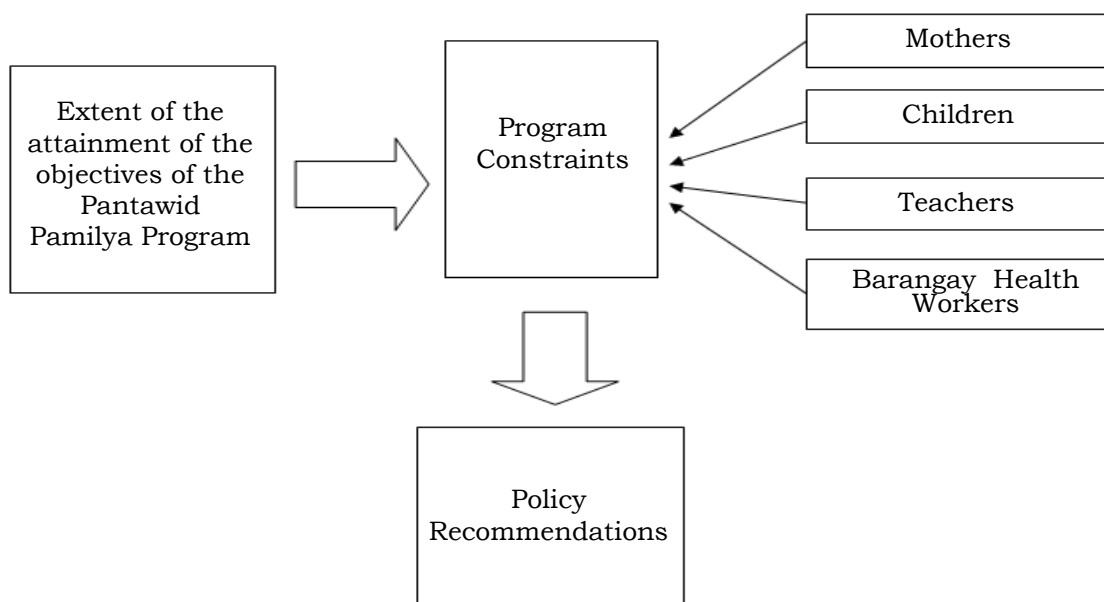


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the study

3.0 Research Design and Methods

The study employed a quantitative-qualitative descriptive survey design using random samples of households in Surigao del Sur as unit of analysis with mothers as respondents. Moreover, this study utilized a survey questionnaire administered personally by the researchers to the individual respondents.

Validation and pilot-testing of the research instrument were conducted. An initial run of household survey followed covering twenty (20) households prior to the full-scale household survey. The data were treated using frequency count.

The survey instrument is divided into four categories: personal information of the respondent; assessment on the attainment

of first objective of Pantawid Pamilya which is to improve preventive health care among pregnant women and young children; assessment on the attainment of second objective which is to increase the enrollment in and attendance rate of children in school; assessment on the achievement of third and fourth objective which is to reduce the incidence of child labor and raise the average consumption rate in food expenditure of poor households; and, assessment on the attainment of fifth objective which is to encourage parents to invest in their children's (and their own) human capital through investments in their health and nutrition, education, and participation in community activities. The

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The identification of the respondent and the sample size was decided employing cluster sampling method. 77 respondents from Tagbina and 63 from Hinatuan were

chosen.

To validate responses from the survey, the same time, identify the constraints encountered in complying with the conditionalities of the Pantawid Pamilya Program, the method of triangulation was used such as focused group discussion (FGD) with four groups: children beneficiaries, mothers, teachers and health workers.

A set of criteria was adopted in selecting respondents in the focused group discussion. Four (4) separate groups were identified composed of five members in each group: children beneficiaries, mothers, and teacher and health workers in the barangay health station/municipal health office /rural health unit. The FGD questions were subjected to a review to assess its validity and consistency. Instrument consultants were from SUCs, NEDA and DSWD.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The table below presents the extent of Attainment of the objectives of the Pantawid Pamilya Program.

Table on the Extent of attainment of the Pantawid Pamilya Program

Objectives	Extent of Attainment
Preventive Health Care among Pregnant Women and Young Children	7.08
Increase the enrolment in attendance rate of children in school	9.61
Reduction of the incidence of Child Labor	6.99
Raise the average consumption rate in food expenditure of poor households	6.54
Encouragement of the parents to invest in their children’s human capital through investments in their health and nutrition, education and participation in community activities.	8.98
Total	7.84

Pantawid Pamilya Program has attained what it aims to achieve with respect to the identified objectives as evident. However, it was found out that there are still aspects that need honing as to the initiatives of the Government in the promotion of its health and education programs.

The table shows that the mother and children-recipients have generally availed the health services freely provided by the government as one of their responsibilities while availing the program. Of these, the health service is on buying additional iron tablets.

With respect to the perception of the mothers who benefited from the Pantawid Pamilya Program, they reveal that that the Program has greatly contributed to the general well-being of their family. They have availed health benefits that include consultation services and free medicines from their respective health centers, improve nutrition and education of their children. Respondents even disclosed that if not for the program, their children, though attending school, may not be able to fully participate in school activities because their financial capacity restricts them from doing so. The health-related support they gained because of the program has ensured that young children will be provided with the proper health-care as well as those pregnant beneficiaries. They revealed that before being a beneficiary, it was difficult for them to visit medical facilities because of their insufficient income, however, now they have enjoyed medical services because the program allows it so.

Consequently, results revealed that after availing the program, the enrollment and attendance rate of the children significantly increase more than the primordial conditions set by the program.

It is also evident that many parents do not require their children to augment

family's income and provide for their school needs as reflected in the weighted mean but few allowed their children to work to help parents provide for the family needs. On the other hand, the children-respondents find the program very beneficial for them. During the Focused-Group Discussion, they divulged that they have been given now the right of entry to basic education which their parents whose income is inadequate were not able to make available for them. The Program essentially brought them closer to their dreams because as revealed by the children-respondents, they do want to obtain quality education knowing that this will eventually give them a better life.

According to teachers, because of the Program, they have noticed that their students are now actively taking part with school activities and even the parents of the beneficiaries have become enthusiastic in participating to school call-ups. They do not find it difficult anymore to convince parents to become involved with their children's academic-related activities because obligations are now met with positive responses unlike before when the Program has not been implemented. Parents do not prioritize this kind of obligations because it is more important for them to look for money to support the needs of the family, rather than attending parent-teacher-meetings, but now with the Pantawid Program, outlooks and attitudes have slowly met refinement.

It also reveals that the consumption rate in food expenditure of poor household increases a little. The increase also resulted to the change in the variety of food bought as reflected in the mean. Of these, the highest increase was on their budget for food. The table discloses that parents invested with their children's human capacity with respect to their health, nutrition, education and participation in

community activities especially on attending school's activities as shown in the mean rating. As to the health workers, there is an increase in the number of clients facilitated. However; some supplies of the barangay health centers run out, thus, they are sometimes unable to provide health needs of their clients.

Program Constraints of Beneficiaries

As revealed during the FGD, despite having met the requirement espoused by the Program, beneficiaries find some constraints like shortage in the amount that they are expected to receive. The shortage then affects the budget that they have prepared for the months covering the grant. At times like these, they find it difficult to warrant the financial obligations because of the tight budget resulting to their children's absenteeism because the latter is forced to help the former to augment the family's income. Also, the beneficiaries revealed that because only three children are covered by the program, the remaining children of the family developed a negative perception thinking that they have not been given priority by their parents.

Teachers also revealed that there are those beneficiaries who still cannot meet school obligations despite the support given to them by the Program. They asserted that some beneficiaries divert the budget required for school expenditures to other forms of expenses of meager importance like buying appliances, loading their cell phones and the likes.

On the other hand, BHWs disclosed that because the health services are free of charge, beneficiaries really avail of them. Only a small portion seems not to really adhere to the agreements on health because of culture-restriction issues, to this end, they find ways and means to slowly

introduce the health programs in a way that will not affect the beliefs of their clients.

5.0 Conclusion

The Pantawid Pamilya Program of the government is effective in its objectives in alleviating the poverty status of Filipino Families particularly in the Province of Surigao del Sur. However, for a more efficient result, there is a need to strengthen the collaboration between LGUs, DSWD, and other elemental agencies with respect to the implementation of health-and-education-related ventures to achieve greater impact in terms of beneficial outcomes of the program. Government shall also enact policies on the implementation of various programs on health and education which have been subjected to rigorous scientific study as to ensure the viability and effectiveness of these programs.

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