

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Exited 4P's Beneficiaries Through the Unique Lens of the Ecological System Perspective.

MARRY ANTONETTE O. BERINO¹, LOVELY MAE S. BANCEL¹,
JULIE ANN U. DESEO^{1 2*}

¹Bachelor of Science in Social Work, ²Institute of Human Service (IHS),
Southern Philippines Agri-Business and Marine and Aquatic School of
Technology (SPAMAST), Poblacion, 8012 Malita, Davao Occidental,
Philippines

**Corresponding author: julieann.deseo@spamast.edu.ph*

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of exited 4P's beneficiaries through the Ecological System Perspective in Malita, Davao Occidental, using a phenomenological research design. A purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of two (2) household participants of the study. In the collection of qualitative data, a structured interview guide questionnaire was used in the form of face-to-face, in-depth interviews. To

analyze the responses, thematic analysis was employed. The first central theme revealed was the varied reactions after graduating from the program, including maintaining good relationships even after graduation, promoting learning, supporting financially, fear of not completing studies, remaining positive, becoming inactive in class, fostering good family relations, and trusting God. The second theme involved realizations after exiting the program, which included remaining unchanged, becoming frugal, being thankful, and becoming independent. Thus, this study provides knowledge and understanding of the situation of the 4Ps exited beneficiaries based on their lives after graduation.



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This may be considered in intensifying the 4Ps programs in relation to their benefits and significance in the lives of their beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION

The education and health of children are two issues that the Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) directly addresses and positively impacts through its conditionalities. However, assessing improvements that go beyond household compliance is necessary, as is considering how the benefits can continue even after its beneficiaries have “graduated” from it. Among the primary objectives of the conditional cash transfer initiative is to disrupt the poverty cycle that persists across generations (Turalde-Babaran, 2013).

The program’s drawbacks are coupled with its benefits. One of these is paternalism, which suggests that those living in poverty are ignorant of what is good for them, leading to imposed restrictions to influence their behavior. For people to act in their best interests, financial incentives are required (Forget et al., 2013).

According to Andrade (2022), the Department of Social Welfare and Development stated its intention to delist about 850,000 households, or 1.3 million individuals, from the program. This ‘delisting’ or ‘graduation’ from the program typically occurs when a household’s income or socio-economic status improves to a point where they are no longer considered among the poorest. However, for some families, exiting the program does not necessarily mean a successful rise out of poverty.

In the Davao Region, data shows that 272 households have already departed from the 4Ps. Among these were 125 households from Davao del Norte, 43 from Davao del Sur, 13 from Davao Occidental, 65 from Davao de Oro, and 26 from Davao Oriental (Palicte, 2021).

This study employed the Ecological System Perspective, a theoretical framework that allows for the examination of the various systems (environment, family, stakeholders, and national organizations) that influence individuals’ experiences. This perspective was instrumental in understanding the post-program experiences of former 4Ps beneficiaries and in assessing whether the existing beneficiaries managed to break free from poverty and achieve self-sufficiency.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explored the lived experiences of exited 4P’s beneficiaries through the Ecological System Perspective in Malita, Davao Occidental. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the experiences of exited 4Ps beneficiaries in interacting with school, peers, and neighbors?

- What are the experiences of the exited 4Ps beneficiaries that influenced changes in their values?

Significance Of the Study

1. 4Ps Beneficiaries – Provides greater awareness and understanding of the importance of compliance with program policies to ensure proper use of benefits.
2. Exited 4Ps Beneficiaries – Offers a clearer understanding of the significance of the program even after graduation.
3. Local Government Unit (LGU) – Serves as first-hand information for developing initiatives supporting graduated households.
4. Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD) – Serves as a reference to assess the current status of graduated households, providing a basis for crafting continuing support programs.
5. Community – Promotes awareness of the importance of government programs in sustaining children's education.
6. Future Researchers – Provides reference and groundwork for future studies in the same field.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a phenomenological qualitative research design, aiming to identify and characterize the lived experiences of graduated 4Ps household beneficiaries in Malita, Davao Occidental.

Participants – Two (2) graduated 4Ps households (graduated in 2022–2023), composed of mother (2), father (2), daughter (2), and son (2), with a total of eight (8) participants. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling.

Instrument – A researcher-developed questionnaire aligned with the research questions. Probe questions were included to elicit in-depth responses.

Data Collection – Conducted between February and March 2024. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the participants' households after obtaining consent. Interviews were recorded for accuracy.

Analysis – Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes, concepts, and relationships that emerged across interviews.

The study’s findings are presented in Table 1. These were categorized according to two major themes:

- Varied reactions after graduating from the program
- Realizations after exiting the program

The results were interpreted and anchored on the lived experiences of exited 4Ps beneficiaries through the Ecological System Perspective (Bronfenbrenner), integrating the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Household Participant Profiles

The study involved two (2) households with existing 4Ps beneficiaries. Each household had four participants (father, mother, son, and daughter), making a total of eight (8) participants. Their profiles are summarized below:

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Household Participants	Description
Household 1	
P1C	The daughter, an Exited Beneficiary at the age of 19, demonstrates extraordinary perseverance and attention, even in the face of tremendous problems, after completing the 4Ps program. Her resilience is truly inspiring. Daughter (Exited Beneficiary), Age: 19
P2C	Despite the hardships they face following the program, the son exhibits remarkable perseverance and deep appreciation for education. His understanding of the importance of education, especially once enrolled in the 4Ps program, is a testament to its value. Son (Exited Beneficiary), Age: 21
P3P	The mother, at the age of 56, remains resilient, reflective, and adaptive despite having exited the program. Mother, Age: 56
P4P	He demonstrates a strong sense of resilience and responsibility. His unwavering determination to support his family is a powerful example of the importance of family support. Father, Age: 58

Household 2	
P5C	<p>Despite financial struggles, she remains committed to her studies and values her education. Her resilience and cheerful attitude inspire others, making her a valued member of the community.</p> <p>Daughter (Exited Beneficiary), Age: 21</p>
P6C	<p>He understands that giving up is not an option and is determined to succeed. However, he finds inner strength and the love of his family. He is resilient and determined, believing he can overcome challenges and achieve his dreams.</p> <p>Son (Exited Beneficiary), Age: 20</p>
P7P	<p>She learned budgeting and financial management skills, enabling her to manage her home effectively. She fosters a supportive environment for her children's education and maintains strong relationships with her neighborhood.</p> <p>Mother, Age: 49</p>
P8P	<p>The devoted father works tirelessly to provide for his family, demonstrating his commitment to their education. He appreciates the 4Ps program's assistance in meeting their daily needs.</p> <p>Father, Age: 52</p>

Table 1 presents the participant profiles. Specifically, there were two (2) households with four members each who participated in the study. The first household consisted of two children, aged 21 and 19, a 56-year-old mother, and a 58-year-old father.

Varied Reactions after Graduation from the Program

The first central theme revealed in the study was varied reactions after graduation from the program. This list of core ideas highlighted that participants had varied experiences and reactions after graduation, including maintaining good relationships, promoting learning, receiving financial support, fearing the prospect of not completing their studies, remaining positive, and becoming inactive in class.

This implies that the existing 4Ps beneficiaries dealt with different situations in the lives of the people within their environment. Notably, they built good relationships with others through socializing and mingling. They also gained knowledge and were able to support their families financially. However, they also developed fears of not being able to finish their studies, which sometimes led to inactivity in class. Despite this, they remained positive, developed good family relationships, and trusted God.

Having Good Relationships Even After Graduating from 4Ps

These participants shared their experiences of having good relationships after graduation, as they said that:

*“Mas daghan ko nakaila pagkahuman naku isip usa ka miyembro sa 4Ps.”
→ I met different people after I graduated in the 4Ps program. (P1C)*
“Pagkahuman naku isip usa ka miyembro sa 4Ps daghan nga tao akoo na amigo og nakaila.” → After I ended my membership as a 4Ps beneficiary, I met and knew a lot of people who became my friends. (P2C)

This implies that the participants established good relationships with families and other people they mingled with, who were also 4Ps beneficiaries. This helped them develop strong connections with others and gain a deeper understanding of their situations.

Promoting Learning

Another set of participants shared the same experience in promoting learning, as they said:

“Daghan kog pagtulun-a nga nakutlo pagkahuman naku isip miyembro sa 4Ps sa pagsunod sa mga balaod nga ilaba gitagana.” → I learned a lot after finishing my membership as a 4Ps beneficiary by following the policies stipulated in the program. (P3C)
“Daghan ko nakat-unan sa kinabuhi pagkahuman naku sa programa sa 4Ps hilabi na ang pasunod sa mga palisiya sa usa ka programa.” → I learned a lot in life after I finished my term as a 4Ps member, especially by abiding by the program's policies. (P4C)

After the participants graduated from the 4Ps program, they gained valuable learnings that changed their outlook and perspective on the future.

Supporting Financially

Participants also shared their experiences of financial support and trusting God, as they stated:

“Maka hatag nag suporta akoang anak kay pagkahuman niya eskwela naka trabaho naman siya.” → My child was able to provide financial support to the family since, after he graduated, he was able to find a job. (P5P)
“Sa kalooy sa ginoo wala na kayo mi nag kalisod kay makaya naku maka eskwela og mapalit akoo mga kinahanglan.” → By God's mercy, we were not financially drained because I could go to school and afford to buy the things I needed. (P5P)

One positive result after graduating from the 4Ps program is that

participants gained the ability to support themselves and their families financially.

Having a Fear of Not Finishing Studies

Participants also shared fears of not being able to continue or finish studies:

“Nahadlok ko basi dili makahuman akoo anak sa iyaba pag eskwela tungod sa kalisod.” → I was afraid that my son might not be able to finish his studies due to poverty. (P6P)

Despite being existing beneficiaries, they continued to worry that their children might not complete their studies due to financial challenges, since the 4Ps only covered specific health and educational needs.

Remaining Positive

Some participants expressed that they still chose to remain positive:

“Nagapabilin rami nga positibo sa kinabuhì miskin sa kalisod.” → We keep being positive in life despite the difficulties we encounter. (P7P)

“Wala na namu gihuna huna ang mga problema sa kinabuhì para dili maapektahan amoa adlaw adlaw nga buluhaton.” → We never thought about our problems in life because we did not want our daily routines to be affected. (P2C)

This indicates that participants maintained optimism and good relationships with their families, which were strengthened by their faith and resilience.

Becoming Inactive in Class

Some shared difficulties tied to inactivity in class:

“Pagkawala sa akoang anak sa programa sa 4Ps dili na siya ganahan magtuon kay gusto na niya mag trabaho.” → After my child exited the 4Ps program, he no longer wanted to study because he wanted to work instead. (P8P)

This reveals that financial struggles led some individuals to neglect their schoolwork, resulting in poor academic performance and absenteeism.

Realizations After Exiting the Program

The second central theme that emerged was realizations after exiting the program. These included remaining the same as before, becoming frugal, becoming thankful, and becoming independent.

Remaining the Same as Before – Participants noted that their personalities and values remained unchanged even after completing the program.

- Becoming Frugal – Many learned to save money and prioritize necessary expenses due to financial struggles.
- Becoming Thankful – Families expressed intense gratitude for the

opportunities given by the 4Ps.

- Becoming Independent – Participants learned to stand on their own feet, find jobs, and provide for themselves and their families.

Ethical Considerations

The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence govern the ethical issue of protecting participants from harm. These principles emphasize the importance of researchers striking a balance between minimizing potential harms of research and allowing participants to benefit from the results. It is not always easy to determine the benefits and drawbacks of research for participants (Spriggs, 2007).

Furthermore, secrecy, confidentiality, and privacy concern the safeguarding of participants' identities. This includes not recognizing their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, failing to name them, and withholding other sensitive details (Mugenda, 2011). The researchers placed a high value on confidentiality throughout the study, respecting participants' privacy and not disclosing any information without their consent. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 also states that any accumulation of personal information "must be for a declared, specified, and legitimate purpose" and requires consent before data collection.

Additionally, justice requires that participants be treated fairly and equitably. Research respondents should be selected based on the research questions and requirements, ensuring no group is excluded and that the sample is representative (Cassell, 2000). The current study exemplified justice by providing equal opportunities for respondents to participate through purposive sampling, sharing the benefits of the research equally, and valuing individual perspectives during data collection.

SUMMARY

This study employed a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of exited 4Ps beneficiaries in Malita, Davao Occidental, through the Ecological System Perspective. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify two (2) household participants consisting of eight (8) members. A structured interview guide was used in face-to-face interviews, and thematic analysis was employed to interpret the responses.

The first central theme was the varied reactions after graduating from the program, which included maintaining good relationships even after graduation, promoting learning, receiving financial support, overcoming the fear of not finishing studies, remaining positive, and becoming inactive in class.

The second theme was realizations after exiting the program, which included remaining the same as before, becoming frugal, becoming more thankful, and achieving independence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Exited 4Ps beneficiaries experienced a variety of reactions when interacting with school, peers, neighbors, and family.
- They developed good relationships with others, gained knowledge from the 4Ps program policies, and benefited from cash assistance that provided financial support.
- However, some expressed fears that their children could not finish their studies, leading to inactivity in class due to financial difficulties after the program ended.
- Despite challenges, most households remained positive, resulting in good family relationships and a strong faith in God.
- The experiences also changed household values, as they learned frugality, gratitude, and independence in managing life after exiting the program.

Implications

The participants were existing 4Ps beneficiaries living in Barangay Poblacion, Malita, Davao Occidental. After exiting the program, they faced various challenges that led to a deeper understanding of their situation.

For beneficiaries: They learned the importance of utilizing 4Ps benefits responsibly to pursue education and support family needs.

For existing beneficiaries: The findings may raise awareness on how program experiences shape values and coping mechanisms.

For the Local Government Unit (LGU): Results can guide the creation of programs to support beneficiaries, particularly in sustaining education-related needs.

For the Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD), the findings may provide a basis for assessment and interventions related to program implementation.

For the community: The results highlight the importance of government programs in empowering families and promoting community development.

For future researchers: The study serves as a reference for conducting similar or comparative studies on 4Ps outcomes.

The results further support the Theory of Ecological System Perspective, demonstrating how interactions with school, peers, neighbors, and community systems shaped the experiences of 4Ps beneficiaries. The values formed—such as frugality, thankfulness, and independence—reflect adaptation to both micro and macro environments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the conduct and publication of this study.

DECLARATION OF REGENERATIVE AI

AI was utilized as a tool for proofreading in this study, primarily to enhance grammar and identify spelling errors.

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