

A phenomenological study on the battle of students of rural areas from poverty and COVID-19 crisis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study using a phenomenological approach highlights the lived experiences of students of rural areas in battling poverty just to attain the dreams in life behind the covid-19 crisis. This was conducted to twelve students from the Province of Davao del Sur in the Philippines who encountered such experiences. The participants were invited to share their experiences in battling both poverty and the threat of coronavirus infections. They have reflected these experiences from their own words and statements. In determining the essential themes of the study, significant phases that emerged from the transcripts and comments were identified as thematic statements. As based on the results, the following are presented: in sub problem 1, on the participants' battle from poverty and COVID-19 crisis, three essential themes were drawn from the transcripts, as follows: Hunger; Boredom; and Fear and Anxiety. Conversely, in sub-problem 2, the participants shared their coping mechanisms applied from the experiences they had encountered. Three essential themes were drawn from the transcripts. These are Building stronger faith and belief; Obeying Government Protocols; and Optimism.

Keywords: Poverty, Rural Areas, Hardship, COVID-19, Students, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is said to be one of the main obstacles for students to achieve their dream. Students experiencing the difficulties, others are still able to graduate due to their dedication and efforts [1-2]. But, in achieving this, one will first experience hardship and trials in life, which is why most poor students can not complete their educational qualification [3]. The students, who lived in rural areas or far from developed communities, are the ones who still walk and

travel to reach school. This became even worse during the pandemic of COVID-19, originated in 2019 at Wuhan, China and later spread globally in 2020. COVID-19 catapulted the global economy which has severely affected the poor due to unemployment and other livelihoods. This deeply affected the young members of struggling families.

The COVID-19 crisis has devastating effect on everyone, especially the people from middle or lower class as they are facing financial struggle

on daily basis. Due to poverty, some students had their meals at their respective schools only. Schools are most certainly not just a place for learning but also for eating healthily food on daily basis [1]. Therefore, closure of schools will exacerbate food uncertainty. Yet, due to the strict implementation of ordinances and laws by local government units, some of them are restricted from leaving their home [4]. This leads to many poor lose their jobs and adjustable livelihoods. To address these, the government has provided financial assistance to the poor, but it is reported that it is still not enough to meet their needs [5]. For students, they are directly struggling due to the lack of support in their learning, especially with today's modern teaching methods [6].

While learning may proceed unobstructed for youngsters from higher revenue generating families, the kids from lower revenue generating families are probably going to battle for the completion of schoolwork and online courses [7]. Past the instructive challenges, nonetheless, lower revenue families face an extra danger: the progressing pandemic is relied upon to lead to a serious financial downturn. Past downturns have exacerbated levels of kid neediness with enduring ramifications for youngsters' wellbeing, prosperity, furthermore, learning outcomes [8].

These students are worried about their education especially now that they are facing the new normal and they need to adapt to modern learning modalities which need to have gadgets and good internet connection [4]. Even despite extreme hardship and trials, it can be seen that these students continue to resist. Positivity in life licks their minds even when they are having

a hard time. The students are facing all the hardship with their parents in work and managing their studies with it [9]. The study aimed to explore the experiences of students from rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic which was given a highlight on their battles towards obtaining a quality education.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design using a Phenomenological approach. The proposed study is exploratory; consequently, any features of data that got from this were all fluid, abstract, and given from the viewpoint of the members and dependent on their agreement and lived experiences. It searches for designs throughout everyday life, activities, and expressions of individuals being researched [10]

2.2. Research Participants

The participants of this study were high school students in the Province of Davao del Sur, Philippines. For the students to be selected in the study, they meet the following criteria: First, they must be a student of grade 7 to 12 of any private or public schools in the Province of Davao del Sur; second, they must be living in rural areas, far from cities and towns; and can be the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and finally, they must have belong to lower class and faced challenges of COVID-19 crisis. There were twelve (12) participants were selected. The number was derived based on Lewis (2015) when he claimed that getting needed information from 8 to 15 participants ensured the highest possible degree of validity and reliability of the results [11].

2.3. Sampling

This study utilized purposive and random sampling techniques. Twelve participants were chosen who are from any rural areas in the Province of Davao del Sur in the Philippines who experienced the challenges from both poverty and the COVID-19 crisis. The selection of this sampling technique is supported by Guarte and Barrios (2006) when they claimed that Purposive Sampling is an irregular choice of examining units inside the fragment of the population with the most data on the normal for intrigue [12]. A random sampling technique was employed so that all qualified students were given the chance to participate in the study, thus, reducing possibilities of subjectivity and bias [13].

2.4. Data collection

This study involved qualitative research procedures. The questions were prepared according to the havoc by Covid-19 and its consequence on the rural students. The questions were asked through Key Informant Interview (KII) to describe respondent's experiences amid pandemic. The interview designs the semi-structured interview whereby follow-up questions were brought up in request to permit the members to talk uninhibitedly and to test further into the essential target of the examination. The data was collected by recording highlights of the relative multitude of answers of individuals who have experienced the marvel under a phenomenon.

2.5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, three stages have utilized the design after the investigation. To be specific: information reduction, information display, and conclusion drawing and confirmation. The information investigation included separating noteworthy explanations from interpreted interviews.

Procedure

This is an investigation of 'the embodiment of lived experiences. With the advancement of post-positivist approaches, phenomenology is being embraced as a proper method for investigating exploration addresses which prompted an alternate learning method is built. Specifically, this phenomenological study involved the structure of different sorts of experience going from observation, thought, memory, creative mind, feeling, want, and volition to substantial mindfulness, encapsulated activity, and social action, including semantic movement. The structure of these types of experience regularly includes what Smith (2005) called "purposefulness", that is, the directedness of experience toward things on the planet, the property of awareness that it is cognizance of or about something.

Moreover, research required a methodical moral methodology with a characterized technique utilizing cautious arranging in the estimation of factors, astutely organized reflection, and total honesty of strategies to advance straightforwardness and replication (Anderson & Kanunack, 2003). Creswell (2003) attested that in subjective research, cases of information depend on developed points of view from numerous social and authentic implications of individual encounters. This gave a fitting system

to a subjective request by situating the analyst inside the investigation to gather information on member importance, centering upon a phenomenon, and carrying individual incentives to the examination.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since qualitative information is exploratory, this utilized a consistent correlation strategy. The huge articulations were changed into bunches of implications as per how every announcement fell under explicit mental and phenomenological ideas. Also, these changes were integrated up to make a general depiction of the experience – both the textural portrayal (of what was experienced) and the basic depiction (of how it was experienced).

The objective of this qualitative study was to highlight the battles of students of rural areas against poverty and the threat of coronavirus infections. The coping mechanism they utilized to combat the said challenges they encountered. The Informants were invited to recount various experiences and reflect upon their own experiences in words. On identifying the essential themes of the study, important phases that emerged from the transcripts and comments were identified as thematic statements. In subproblem 1, on the participants' battle against poverty and the threat of COVID-19, three essential themes emerged: Hunger, Boredom, and Fear and Anxiety

“Gutom jud sir, labi na ug wala na mi makaon kay wala nay trabaho si Papa. Unya failure pa jud iyang gulayan kay barato kaayo ug presyo. Si mama, manglabada na lang sa lain para naa mi mapalit sud-an ug bugas.”

(We feel hungry, Sir. Especially now that we don't have food to eat because my father lost his job and our farm was a failure due to low price. My mother does the laundry for others just to have money to buy food.) –P2, IDI

Food and money are two important aspects of life. The pandemic lead to serious lockdown around the globe. Many people din't even realized the real pain which is faced by these youngsters. In many countries, the individuals belonging to poor or lower class families din't even had one time meal [14]. The problem is not only of food, the real problem is they can't do anything to arrange the food. No daily wages activities were allowed and unlike others they have to think about both money and food everyday [15].

“Boring kayo sa balay sir uy. Wala man me TV na, ug wala pa jud me cellphone, maong gusto na gani unta me mueskwela. Kay laay kaayo sige pundo ug balay, dili pa jud me pagawson.”

(We feel bored at home, Sir. We don't have television anymore, and we don't have a cellphone. So I even wanted to go to school because it is so boring to stay at home, and we are not allowed to go outside too.) –P9, FGD

Generally people are not use to stay isolated for longer period of time and this state leads to great stress and anixety to people [17]. The Children, pregnant ladies and elderly people are most affected by this isolation process. The isolation after some times leads to boredom and sadness which inhibits one's personality growth [18]. Many people wish to break the rules and act according to their will, but due to the worst conditions they couldn't do so [19].

“Makabati pod me ug kabalaka sir uy. Kay akong mama ug papa sige na lang ug away kay asa na mi ug makaon ani. Samot na jud inig mugawas ka, hadlok kaayo kay sa pikas barangay naa daw nagpositive.”

(I can also feel anxiety, Sir. Because my parents were always fighting on how to get money for our daily needs. Worse when you go out, I feel the scare and fear because, in the other barangay, there seems to be positive of the virus.) –P5, IDI

Domestic violence is common amongst families facing financial issue and other problems. There are many reports which state the rise in domestic violence cases amid Covid-19 [20]. This affected the kids badly, as the activity caused more of negative environment in the home, which is stated as the safest and positive place to live in [21].

In subproblem 2, on the coping mechanisms the informants utilized in battling the experiences, there were three essential themes obtained, include: Building stronger faith, Obeying Government Protocols, and Optimism.

“Karong panahona sir, giingnan jud me nila mama nga mag-ampo kanunay na dili matakdan kay hadlok jud kaayo ang virus. Gitudloan pud me sa simbahan sir nga mag-ampo lang if naa tay pangayuon sa Ginoo.”

(This time, Sir, my mother told me to pray always, not to be infected with the virus because it's very scary. The church also taught me to pray only if we have some requests.) – P6, FGD

It is said that remembering God in worst times, provide positive energy and vibes which helps in

healing with the situations. It is represented in studies that praying or any religious activity helps regenerating positivity and diverts the mind from the ongoing havoc [22].

“Naa naman pud me curfew diri Sir. Mao nga kinahanglan jud musunod sa mando kay para man sa kaayuhan sa tanan.”

(We also have a curfew here, Sir. Therefore, it is good to follow their order because it will be for the good of all.) –P1, IDI

As the coronavirus disease spread from one person to another it was important to impose strict isolation of crowds. Therefore governments from around the globe imposed curfew or lockdown. The people faced financial problem but due to it the spread of coronavirus decreased [23].

“Importante musalig lang jud ta sa Ginoo, Sir. Mahuman raman jud ni tanan. Kay naa naman gibuhad daw nga vaccine ang taga laing country so nagtoo jud ko mahuman ra ning pandemya.”

(It is important that we trust in the Lord, Sir. It will end soon. Because someone from other countries is making the vaccine so I believe this pandemic will be over.) –P10, IDI

The onset of coronavirus was sudden and none of the country or countrymen was prepared for this pandemic. The medical team from major countries started the task of preparing the vaccine for Covid-19. This news breakout as the hope for people and this always made people believe that this time will end soon and they will enjoy normal life soon [24].

The learning insight gained from this study is that in as much as our lives are governed with

battles and challenges, we must employ coping mechanisms to come out victorious amidst the varied hardships.

4. CONCLUSIONS

With the above-stated themes generated from data analysis, it can be concluded that: there are differing battles from the participants in facing poverty and the COVID-19 crisis. Students are now facing the real risks from the surroundings on the pandemic, and also suffering from even worse poverty in which their parents are badly affected. In obtaining the learning competencies that they must have, the government must look into the real situations of the students in rural areas. Others are not still enrolled due to personal reasons such as poverty. The new normal brought changes to the lives of many students. They are suffering challenges in adapting to it. The existence of the coronavirus ever worsened the economic stability of most of the people living in rural areas. They were tremendously affected as their parents lose their jobs, prices of the farm crops were so low and losing, and the risks to be infected from the disease were getting higher that made them unable to work outside.

The most challenging experience the students have encountered are Hunger, Boredom, Fear, and Anxiety. Living in a rural area in which most of the people are in the low class encounter hardship from poverty, which is also triggered by natural calamities and devastation. The coping mechanisms the informants utilized in battling these challenges are Building stronger faith, Obeying Government Protocols, and Optimism. Students have realization in the real scenario from what is happening in their

environment. Their faith is strongly tested as they overcome these trials. It is also considered that following the health protocols by the government eases the spread of the virus. Students believe that the current trials the whole world is suffering will soon end. They are optimistic that these will bring huge understanding about life situations and a lesson to bear in our daily lives, as long as we survive.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The national and local government and its concerned agencies shall consider the livelihood status of the people living in rural areas so that it will help them to fight poverty and hunger. It addresses the development plan for their daily ways of earning, such as for the regulation of good prices of their crops, availability of works, and supports to small and medium enterprises.

The Department of Education must address specific solutions to the students living in the far-flung areas who are suffering from poor internet connection and unavailability of gadgets. Modules must be thoroughly evaluated for the sense that most of the parents from rural areas have a lesser understanding of the topics, hence students need enough guidance in understanding and answering their lessons.

Other researchers may benchmark this study and utilize the literature on the battles of students in rural areas on poverty and the COVID-19 crisis that will guide them in their future work

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NA

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