

Awareness of students towards the government's poverty reduction program

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Abstract

Most Filipino families continue to experience poverty, which limits their access to opportunities, particularly in education. In response to this issue, the Philippine government implemented the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a conditional cash transfer program that provides financial assistance and social support to low-income families to improve their living conditions and support their children's education and health. This study examined the awareness of Grade 9 and Grade 10 student beneficiaries at San Jose National High School regarding the program's status. Using a descriptive-correlational design, a total of 167 identified student beneficiaries were selected using stratified sampling. The study found that most student beneficiaries are aware of the objectives, benefits, and processes of the 4Ps program. The respondents showed a clear understanding that the program aims to support their education and help address the financial challenges faced by their families. In terms of the status of the program, the students indicated that the 4Ps significantly helps them continue their studies and meet some of their daily educational needs. Moreover, the results showed a strong positive correlation between the level of awareness of the students and the status of the government poverty reduction program among the respondents. This means that students who have greater awareness and understanding of the program are more likely to recognize its benefits and implementation. Thus, this study recommends that teachers and curriculum developers incorporate localized case studies from the 4Ps program into Social Science or Araling Panlipunan classes.

Keywords: poverty reduction, level of awareness, 4Ps, government program

Awareness of students towards the government's poverty reduction program

1. Introduction

Poverty alleviation is one of the nation's most urgent concerns in the Philippines, where a large percentage of the population remains under the poverty line (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). To combat this, the national government had launched and pursued a very broad array of poverty alleviation programs across diverse sectors, such as the 4Ps and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program. In addition, students' attitudes and knowledge about these government programs had become a priority. As stakeholders in society and potential future implementers and policymakers, students could influence public opinion and keep the programs going. Their perceptions and awareness could provide feedback to refine public participation and anti-poverty operations, enabling them to be better communicated and delivered (Omaweng, 2022). Putting Occidental Mindoro first added another level of priority. The province, especially the town of San Jose, still grappled with socio-economic issues that circumscribed the extent and impact of poverty alleviation programs (Ramirez, 2024). As a growth region spanning rural and semi-urban areas, San Jose exemplified the strengths and weaknesses of national programs in action at the local level.

Apart from these, government anti-poverty programs in most areas are plagued by issues such as inappropriate information delivery, uneven implementation, and low participation from the main community sectors (Hercapacio & Irham, 2023). Problems are even more critical in provinces like Occidental Mindoro, where infrastructure and logistical challenges could sabotage the effective delivery of services. Student beneficiaries are, in most cases, the least considered, even though they could be potential stakeholders and beneficiaries of the program. Low participation and poor awareness among students could lead to ineffective use of available services and poor community support (Ponferrada et al., 2024). Misunderstandings could arise unless people knew about the benefits of programs, access procedures, and official government agencies, leading to myths that could ultimately weaken government efforts and hinder citizens' participation. This presented a significant gap in research: although various evaluations of government programs documented their short-term impacts, few examined students' attitudes toward these programs, especially in disadvantaged communities like San Jose.

Statement of the Problem - This study aimed to determine the relationship between students' perceptions of the government's poverty-reduction program. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of awareness of students in the government poverty reduction program in terms of socio-economic status, program disability, and cultural background? (2) What is the status of the government poverty reduction program in terms of program benefit, access, and participation processes, and assistance program (4ps, Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program)? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness of students and the status of the government's poverty reduction program?

Significance of the Study - This study aims to determine students' level of awareness and perceptions of government poverty-reduction programs in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Through this research, the respondent will learn how the flow of government programs in poverty reduction will reduce their curiosity. First, the student-respondents would be more aware of and better understand the government's poverty alleviation programs and how they could benefit from them. Moreover, teachers could better understand students' perspectives on poverty and use this understanding to promote social awareness. Additionally, guidance counselors would gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students affected by poverty. Furthermore, the LGUs could better understand students' awareness of these government poverty alleviation programs and possibly improve them. Lastly, other researchers could use this research as a reference for further research on poverty reduction and social welfare programs.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - The study was conducted to assess the perspectives and levels of

awareness of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students at San Jose National High School in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, specifically regarding the government's poverty reduction program, particularly the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, from August 2025 to March 2026. The respondents were selected from different sections of the Junior High School, and a total of 156 students participated in the study. The study's scope was on students' level of awareness and perspectives on the 4Ps in terms of socio-economic status, culture, benefits, processes, and assistance, and on determining students' level of awareness and perceptions of the effectiveness of the government's poverty reduction program. The study's limitation was that it only focused on students from San Jose National High School and did not include students from other schools, parents, teachers, or government officials. Moreover, the study relied solely on survey questionnaires and not on validation from students' interviews and academic records; thus, it was limited to the students who participated in the study.

2. Methodology

Research Design - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design. A descriptive design was used to determine the level of awareness and perceptions of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students of San Jose National High School (SJNHS) regarding government poverty-reduction programs. Specifically, it investigated the student's level of awareness of their socio-economic status, disability status, and cultural background, as well as the status of government poverty reduction programs in terms of benefits, access and participation processes, and assistance programs such as 4Ps. Moreover, a correlational design was used to examine the significant relationships among the identified variables. Furthermore, the study analyzed whether there were significant differences in students' perceptions and levels of awareness across levels of awareness, and whether there was a significant relationship between students' level of awareness and their perceptions of the effectiveness of government reduction programs. This study used a quantitative approach to measure and analyze the relationship between these variables objectively.

Respondents of the Study - The San Jose National High School has a total of 287 4Ps beneficiaries, comprising 126 in Grade 9 and 161 in Grade 10. The respondents were chosen using stratified sampling in their chosen grade level. The result had a population of 167 beneficiaries using Slovin's formula. However, only 156 beneficiaries participated. Based on Raosoft Calculator with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level (Ellen, 2022), for a population size of 287, the sample size was 167. However, only 156 students participated in the survey.

Research Instrument - The researchers used the survey questionnaire they developed as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was used to assess students' awareness of the government's anti-poverty program. The questionnaire had two main sections. Part I assessed the level of awareness of the government's poverty alleviation program among the student respondents, and Part II assessed the program's standing. All the assertions were rated on a four-point Likert scale in which (4) very high, (3) high, (2) slightly low, and (1) very low. The instrument is formatted and calibrated to give definition, precision, and usability in eliciting the data needed for the study.

Data Gathering Procedure - The researchers employed a face-to-face survey to collect data for this study. In this method, the researchers used a survey in which respondents answered structured questions based on their experiences and observations. This approach enabled prompt assessment of respondents' ease in answering questions, which showed that no particularly sensitive topics were involved. Before conducting the survey, the researchers prepared a consent and endorsement letter, signed by their principal and the subject teacher at Divine Word College of San Jose. This letter served as proof of approval from their school. The researchers then presented the letter to the principal of San Jose National High School (SJNHS) to request permission to conduct the study among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students. After receiving the approval from SJNHS, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaire. Once the survey was fully checked and approved by the adviser, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected Grade 9 and Grade 10 students of SJNHS. Data collection started and ended in one day. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaires to ensure a high retrieval rate and accurate responses. After collecting the data, the researchers organized and analyzed the results using statistical analyses.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - The study used descriptive statistics to analyze data collected from respondents. The weighted mean was used to determine students' level of awareness of the government's poverty reduction program, particularly the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), by socio-economic status, program disability, and cultural background. The same statistical tool was also used to determine the program's status regarding benefits, access, and participation processes, and assistance programs. Furthermore, the study used Pearson's *r* to determine the significant relationship between students' level of awareness and their perception of the effectiveness of the government's poverty reduction program.

Ethical Considerations - The researchers upheld ethical standards throughout the study period to ensure the respondents' rights, safety, and confidentiality. The researchers informed respondents of the study's purpose before data collection and assured them that participation was voluntary. Informed consent is obtained from all respondents, and they are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researchers also ensured that all personal information obtained from respondents remained confidential and was used solely for academic purposes. To protect respondents' anonymity, no names or personal identification details are revealed in the report, and all collected data is stored safely and accessed only by the researchers. The researchers ensured the study was conducted honestly, ethically, and respectfully so that no one was subjected to harm or distress. By taking these ethical considerations into account, the researchers ensure that the research will be accurate, clear, and respectful of the respondent's privacy and rights.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the mean level of awareness among students by socioeconomic status, program disability, and cultural background, with an overall mean of 2.73, interpreted as High. In terms of socioeconomic status, the composite mean of 2.83 indicates that students generally have a high level of awareness of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) eligibility criteria. However, they may not fully understand the detailed requirements. The Liberal Reform Theory explains that an individual's socioeconomic status influences access to information and awareness of government programs (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2020). The highest mean (3.06) indicates that students are more aware of the benefits that families receive from the program, which may lead to more positive perceptions and support for the program. However, the lowest mean (2.57) shows that students have limited knowledge about how unemployment affects qualification for the program. According to Tejero et al. (2022), an individual's knowledge of government programs is influenced by their socio-economic status, while Rendon and Reroma (2019) explain that limited resources can restrict access to important information about government programs.

Moreover, regarding program disability, the composite mean of 2.66 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand government programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs). This suggests that students recognize the importance of these programs in promoting inclusion. According to Jenkins et.al. (2021), government programs for PWDs promote inclusion and equal access. The highest mean (2.79) indicates that students are more aware of government programs implemented for PWDs, suggesting effective information dissemination. PIDS (2019) emphasized that awareness is important for PWDs to access education and poverty-reduction programs. However, the lowest mean (2.58) indicates that students have less knowledge about special assistance services and the inclusion of PWDs in poverty reduction programs. As emphasized by the National Council on Disability Affairs (2021), there remains a limited understanding of inclusive processes for PWDs.

Lastly, regarding cultural background, the composite mean of 2.71 is interpreted as High, indicating that respondents are generally aware of cultural considerations when implementing the 4Ps program. Beneficiaries' daily lives, family routines, and community traditions shape their understanding of the program. This supports the idea that integrating local culture and language enhances awareness and understanding (Mendoza, 2024). The highest weighted mean (2.85) indicates that beneficiaries are more aware that the government respects cultural practices through flexible use of cash grants and community engagement. This aligns with findings that culturally responsive programs strengthen trust and participation among beneficiaries (University of the Philippines Baguio,

2024). However, the lowest weighted mean (2.60) indicates that culturally sensitive strategies are less noticeable because beneficiaries focus more on immediate needs such as education and food. According to the Department of Tourism (2025), awareness increases when cultural elements are clearly communicated through information and exposure activities.

Table 1

Mean Level of Awareness of Students in terms of Socioeconomic Status, Program Disability, and Cultural Background

Indicators (Socio-Economic Status)	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am familiar with how the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program supports low-income families	3.06	High
2. I understand the financial assistance provided through the poverty reduction program	3.01	High
3. I recognize how socio-economic background affects eligibility for the program.	2.63	High
4. I realize how family income level influences access to government assistance programs.	2.98	High
5. I know how employment status affects qualification for poverty reduction programs.	2.57	High
6. I am aware of how household size and number of dependents are considered in program eligibility.	2.70	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.83	High
Indicators (Program Disability)		
1. I am familiar with the government programs available for persons with disabilities (PWDs).	2.79	High
2. I understand the benefits and services provided to PWD beneficiaries.	2.73	High
3. I recognize the inclusion of PWDs in government poverty reduction efforts.	2.58	High
4. I am aware of the special assistance programs designed to address the needs of PWDs	2.58	High
5. I know about the priority access provided to PWDs in selected government services.	2.64	High
6. I am aware of the policies that promote equal opportunities for PWDs in social programs.	2.62	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.66	High
Indicators (Cultural background)		
1. I am familiar with the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program for indigenous peoples (IPs) and cultural minorities.	2.68	High
2. I am aware of the culturally sensitive approaches used in government poverty reduction programs	2.60	High
3. I recognize that the program provides equal access regardless of cultural background.	2.65	High
4. I am informed about the government's efforts to respect cultural practices during program implementation.	2.85	High
5. I acknowledge the policies that protect cultural minorities from discrimination in social programs.	2.73	High
6. I am aware of community-based programs that support culturally diverse groups.	2.74	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.71	High
OVERALL MEAN	2.73	High

Scale: 3.26–4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 –2.50 Slightly Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2

Mean Level of Government Status in terms of Program Benefit, Access and Participation Processes, and Assistance Program

Indicators (Program Benefit)	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am aware that poverty reduction programs aim to improve the lives of low-income families.	2.97	High
2. I understand that the government poverty reduction program (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program) helps reduce income inequality and promote social justice.	2.88	High
3. I am aware that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program encourages school attendance and health check-ups for children.	3.02	High
4. I know that the program aims to help families become self-reliant in the long run.	2.83	High
5. I am aware that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program supports inclusive economic growth.	2.86	High
6. I understand that the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program aims to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty.	2.71	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.88	High

Indicators (Access and Participation processes)		
1. I am familiar with the application process conducted through barangays or LGUs.	2.64	High
2. I know how the government verifies the eligibility of families for assistance.	2.59	High
3. I am aware that beneficiaries must comply with certain conditions to remain in the program.	2.72	High
4. I am aware that the program encourages community participation and transparency.	2.61	High
5. I know how information about the program is announced or disseminated to the public.	2.68	High
6. I understand the role of students and citizens in supporting poverty reduction initiatives.	2.85	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.68	High
Indicators (Assistance program)		
1. I am familiar with how the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program aims to improve the lives of low-income families.	3.06	High
2. I understand that the program provides education, health, and livelihood support.	3.10	High
3. I recognize that the 4Ps help beneficiaries meet their basic needs and improve family well-being.	3.07	High
4. I know that beneficiaries receive cash grants for essential household needs.	2.93	High
5. I am aware that skills training and livelihood workshops are offered through the program.	2.72	High
6. I acknowledge that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program provides nutrition and health assistance for mothers and children.	3.00	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.98	High
OVERALL MEAN	2.85	High

Scale: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of government status across program benefit, access, and participation processes, and the assistance program, with an overall mean of 2.85, interpreted as High. In terms of program benefit, students are aware of the benefits provided by the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), with a weighted mean of 2.88, interpreted as high. This indicates that students recognize how the program helps beneficiaries meet their basic needs through cash assistance and program activities. This aligns with Halique and Campado (2025), who stated that the program supports beneficiaries through health and educational assistance. The highest mean (3.02) indicates that respondents are aware that the program provides assistance and resources that benefit their lives, such as free health checkups and improved school attendance. This supports the findings of Abrigo et al. (2022), which show that the program improves school participation and access to health services. Meanwhile, the lowest mean (2.71) indicates reduced awareness of the program's goal to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. According to Reyes et al. (2015), the program aims not only to address immediate needs but also to prepare the next generation for long-term development.

Furthermore, regarding access and participation processes, the composite mean of 2.68 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand how individuals access and participate in government programs. According to Osinski (2021), participation processes help individuals understand how they can effectively engage in programs and fulfill expected responsibilities. The highest mean (2.85) indicates that students are aware of their roles as citizens in supporting poverty-reduction programs. This supports Sasaki et al. (2019), who emphasized that social programs such as the 4Ps become more effective when beneficiaries actively participate. However, the lowest mean (2.59) indicates limited awareness of the government's role in verifying family eligibility. As explained by Ngangi et al. (2021), technical procedures and participation mechanisms in government programs are often not well understood by community members.

Lastly, regarding the assistance program, the composite mean of 2.98 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand the purpose of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). This aligns with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2015), which states that the program assists low-income families in meeting their needs. The highest weighted mean (3.10) shows that students are most aware of financial and

educational assistance. Similarly, PIDS (2014) explains that the 4Ps provides cash grants for education and health services to poor Filipino families. However, the lowest weighted mean (2.72) indicates lower awareness of livelihood assistance and skills training. Green Valley College Foundation Inc. (n.d.) noted that some beneficiaries remain less aware of the full range of program components. Moreover, Republic Act No. 11310 (2019) institutionalized the 4Ps as a national poverty reduction strategy and defined the roles of the government and beneficiaries.

Table 3
Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.670	0.448	1.976	11.200	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.488	0.238	1.976	6.938	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.639	0.409	1.976	10.309	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Program Benefits)	0.714	0.510	1.976	12.655	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.594	0.353	1.976	9.163	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.461	0.213	1.976	6.447	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.718	0.515	1.976	12.801	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Access and participation process)	0.705	0.498	1.976	12.336	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Assistance program)	0.646	0.417	1.976	10.502	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Assistance program)	0.470	0.221	1.976	6.608	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Assistance program)	0.520	0.270	1.976	7.555	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Assistance program)	0.651	0.424	1.976	10.643	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status	0.764	0.583	1.976	11.694	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients and p-values for hypothesis testing. The awareness level shows a strong correlation with Program Benefits, with a correlation coefficient of 0.714 and statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). This shows that the awareness level has a positive effect on the Program Benefits, as the high value of the correlation coefficient (i.e., the positive value of r) indicates this. At the same time, the results are statistically significant, as the p-value is less than 0.001. Therefore, it can be suggested that the program needs to enhance awareness, which would, in turn, improve perceptions of the Program Benefits, enabling students to utilize the resources and form a positive evaluation of the program. This has also been supported by the findings of Dioses et al. (2019), who found that awareness of the benefits has a positive impact. The awareness level shows a strong

correlation with the Access and Participation Process, with a correlation coefficient of 0.705 and a p-value of < 0.001 . This shows that the awareness level has a positive effect on the Access and Participation Process, as the high value of the correlation coefficient (i.e., the positive value of r) indicates this. At the same time, the results are statistically significant, as the p-value is less than 0.001. Therefore, it is suggested that the program provide clear guidance on the Access and Participation Process, thereby enhancing awareness and enabling students to participate with confidence. This has also been supported by Herrera et al. (2023), who found that awareness positively impacts engagement. In addition, awareness shows a strong, significant correlation with the Assistance Program ($r = 0.651$, $p < 0.001$). The high value of the correlation coefficient (r) suggests that students who are aware of the assistance view it as helpful and know how to use it. The p-value is also significant. It is recommended that the program ensure that information about the assistance program is clear and communicated effectively to students so they can access it with confidence. This is supported by Bernarte's (2015) observation that awareness is important for enhancing engagement and utilization of the assistance. Finally, the correlation coefficient between overall awareness and the program's effectiveness is very high ($r = 0.764$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that overall awareness is strongly related to the program's overall effectiveness. The p-value is also significant. This suggests that overall awareness can be improved to enhance the success of the government's poverty reduction program. be enhanced.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusion was presented: The study revealed that students have a strong awareness of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The students were aware of the purpose and benefits of the program. They were also aware of the program's assistance to low-income families. The students were most aware of the program's assistance in education and health. They were also aware of the program's requirements, which include attending school and undergoing health check-ups. The study also revealed that the students are aware of the importance of cultural sensitivity in implementing the program. The students were also aware of their roles as recipients of the program. There is a strong link between students' awareness and their assessment of the government's poverty reduction program. The more aware they were of the program, the better they could evaluate it.

Recommendations - Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made. School administrators and guidance counselors may establish "4Ps Advocacy Corners" or information hubs on campus. Because students are already well informed, these centers can go beyond basic information to provide updates on compliance timelines and new policy requirements affecting students' eligibility. Social Welfare Officers (DSWD) and Parent Leaders may hold specific "Peer-to-Peer Leadership Workshops" for student awardees. Because the study found that students understand their duties and the value of cultural sensitivity, allowing them to serve as mentors for younger 4Ps beneficiaries can boost community-level compliance and social responsibility. Teachers and curriculum developers can incorporate localized case studies from the 4Ps program into Social Science or Araling Panlipunan classes. Given the relationship between awareness and the ability to evaluate government services, using the 4Ps as a practical example can help students develop their critical-thinking and civic-participation skills. Student Government Leaders can organize "Reciprocal Service Projects" in which 4Ps recipients lead community- or school-based activities. This strengthens students' understanding of their duties as active participants rather than passive recipients and fosters a sense of dignity and cultural pride. Lastly, future researchers may consider other variables that could similarly affect students' awareness of the government's poverty reduction program.

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