

The Role and Coping Mechanisms of Poor Families in Northern Samar

Veronica A. Aleria ^a

^a College of Education; University Research and Development Services Unit, University of Eastern Philippines, University Town, Catarman, Northern Samar

Email Address: vpiczon8209@gmail.com

Abstract

This study analyzed the roles and coping mechanisms of poor families in the province of Northern Samar considering the 4Ps recipients as the representatives of the poor families. It described the socio-demographic characteristics of the poor families in the selected communities in the Northern Samar. It analyzed the emergent roles of families in relation to income generation, provision of basic needs and family spending. The power patterns among poor families were also examined. It also discussed the coping mechanisms of poor families in terms of income generation, provision of basic needs and family spending. This study considered the heads of poor families in the drawing out area. The recipients of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) were basically the subjects of the study. They were drawn through purposive sampling technique. The findings revealed that a majority of the parents of the poor families of Northern Samar were elementary graduates, with a monthly income of one thousand or less which were generally earned from farming as the major sources of income and were found to spend much for their “food”. A majority of the poor families had nuclear structure, with carpentry and “others” as their special skills; had single houses type with light materials that need minor repair; however, a majority owned their respective dwelling places but these were used to be attacked by typhoons. In terms of income generation, family coping mechanisms of poor families in Northern Samar, the frequently practiced mechanisms was generally, the culture of sharing is observed in the family while the seldom practiced was a member of the family has to stop schooling and work to augment the income of the family. It further illustrated that the profile of the poor families such as educational attainment and monthly income was significant predictors in generating income, in the provision of basic needs and family spending.

Keywords: coping mechanisms, 4Ps, poor families, Northern Samar

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty situation in Eastern Visayas has steadily worsened for almost six years now. In 2003, it ranked 7th and 5th very recently in terms of severity among the 17 regions all throughout the country. Magnitude of poor families in the region has increased between 2003 and 2009 bringing the total number of poor families to 287,156 or 1.7 million individuals. The National Statistical Coordinating Board further pointed out that one (1) in every three (3) families in Eastern Visayas is poor. Northern Samar and Eastern Samar are then categorized by the same board as “cluster 1”, considered as the poorest provinces in the region. This goes with the findings that one (1) in every seven (7) families in the region cannot even meet the basic food requirements (NEDA Report, 2007).

As reported in the provincial profile of Northern Samar, the province is the new entrant in the list of 10 poorest provinces with poverty incidence of 52.2%. It ranked number 7 in the entire country, while first in the region (Provincial Profile, 2009). Having the incidence of poverty, it is but a logical point for research especially for Social Scientist like the researcher to consider what the emergent roles poor families have in the

real functional context of poor families in Northern Samar. Baseline data gathered in this study will therefore serve as the takeoff point in designing future development programs and the like ultimately geared towards giving the solutions to these problems.

As to the question of who are considered poor, the provincial profile refers to them as individuals and the families whose incomes fall below the official poverty threshold as defined by the government. These are those who cannot afford to provide in a sustained manner their minimum basic needs for food, health, education, housing and other social amenities of life. Data from the same source noted that three (3) out of ten families in Northern Samar are not capable of providing the basic food requirements. With this scenario at present is the question of who is to be blamed. Is it the parents or the children? What are the existing functions of the family members that may or may not contribute to the welfare of the family? These are among the concerns of Social Science, thus, it fascinated the researcher's interest and the discipline where academic strength come and pushes that intellectual urge to design one, thus this study.

The growing concern of Social Science which is primarily the major focus of this study is an excellent and intelligent mirror of one's being unaware of the special lens through which one looks at life, how life exists, and how human habitat and niche and special communities vary. Anthropology, to Clyde Kluckhohn (1994) is the science of human similarities and differences, this academic endeavor hopes to intricately look into how poor families find realization of their family emerging roles and how they, in such social structure which to some is miserable put life along peaceably together through their coping mechanisms.

On the contrary, "people are pretty much the same all over the world" (Kottak 1996). This promotes an erroneous idea that people in/from different communities have the same desires, feelings, values, roles to play and aspirations they do. The concept states that a poor family has standard social science definitions; however, the word poor family in this research study means those whose monthly family income is set within the bracket of poor respective government agencies like the NEDA. Poor family by social context could be projected as a scene of tragedy, struggle and shame; some others consider it a venue of hopelessness. Positively, many would outgrow their negative notions by considering their being poor and their poor family as a showcase of best practices; and becoming a source of human services.

This study brings in the voice of the unheard in the desire to pushing up front the voices of the poor families of Northern Samar (the researched). The researcher, being a social scientist, put more premium on the voices of the marginalized and their coping mechanism to surface. But why Northern Samar; and why the poor people? Educational management must not be confined only in the formal academic environment, but the school must be radiated to areas with unheard voices. This ushers the opportunity of curving education-based intervention to welcome poverty eradication as the next concept and concern for future research studies.

Individuals are all brought up in a family no matter and whatever is its category. Family members therefore are enmeshed daily in a network of family interaction. Many beliefs, notions and ideas about the entirety of the family have sprung from daily experiences and observations from within, outside and/or from other families. The family is so close and familiar to anyone that the members feel they already know everything about it. However, there is still a need to stand back and view the family critically from the outside because personal experiences are very limited and may not be representative of other families in the larger society (Medina 2001). There is a need therefore of assessing what roles poor families have in real life setting. Results will be then form part or more precise information and broader generalizations about how and what functions and responsibilities poor families play in the real context with specific focus to Northern Samar.

Another study conducted along poverty reduction was that of Reyes (2004), the same is true in the study of Hokander, however these studies have as its emphasis gender participation. Hokander's study delved much on the reproductive health as a contributory factor to development and poverty reduction.

In the paper presented by Urquico (2010) she pointed out that 4Ps potential is likely to be particularly high in areas where the provision of basic social services, such as schools and health facilities are adequate and accessible. In areas where such provision is non-existent or highly inaccessible as in the remote rural areas, conditional cash transfer programs just like the 4Ps are likely to have far limited effects. Hence, this study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method is a useful tool for fact finding. Since this study aims to investigate poor families' roles, this particular method is used. Moreover, this method was employed by previous researchers in probing into problems which were parallel to those posed in this present study. Correlational procedures were adopted in order to gather reliable data that helped described how poor families made use of their emerging roles in the performance of various responsibilities and functions of the family.

The respondents were drawn through purposive sampling. The list of poor families was sought from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Office of the three chosen municipalities. More weight in the selection of the respondents was given to the beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). For the Balicuatro area represented by the municipality of Lavezares, it had 2, 239 4Ps recipients; central area represented by the municipality of Catarman, 6,788 recipients; while the pacific area represented by the municipality of Pambujan, 1, 745 recipients. However, to ensure higher reliability in appraising the results derived from the study, the following samples per area were as follows, Balicuatro Area had 100 respondents, Central Area had 250 respondents, and Pacific Area had 100 participants.

Data Gathering Procedures

In the in-depth description of the socio-demographic characteristics and profile of the poor families of selected communities of the province of Northern Samar, secondary data from NSO, Provincial Profile of Northern Samar and other available sources of data in the different municipality were reviewed and analyzed. Similarly, data from the survey questionnaire was part in the comprehensive discussion of the same parameter.

In the exploration of the roles and coping mechanisms of poor families in selected communities in Northern Samar, mix methods were used. The researcher constructed a survey questionnaire which helped analyze the roles played by the different members of the family. On the other hand, to ensure validity of the data, face to face interview was employed and conducted.

This study centered on the group of poor families. The members of the poor families just like any category or class of members in a community had their construction of what and how is it being poor. This means that information and knowledge are but realities and realities are in multiple structures.

Furthermore, in the use of qualitative method, the interview gave the marginalized poor their own voice in their construction of the varied roles they use to play in the accomplishment of the family's functions, making them visible and enabling their version of reality not as an outsider's view and perspective to be heard and known (Hugo and Thompson,1995:53 as cited by Cabatac, 2009). It also shows recognition not only of their knowledge but also of them as knowledge-bearers, generators and source.

This study employed the more common techniques of survey questionnaire, and the validation used interviews, and review of secondary materials and documents. This was with her desire on the issue of validity and reliability of data which were gathered. The methodology formed part of the best contribution of this study to the pool of knowledge specifically in the field of educational management, knowing that qualitative research is not within the umbrella of its trend.

Informal interviews were used in the collection of the data. The informal interview which was not usually favored by many informants, was done while the family members had no major family activity and during break from their work. This technique, similar to the other techniques ensured naturalness and authenticity of responses as the informants were on their natural setting and environment. Conversations in an atmosphere like this may not have led the informants to recall and relate their past experiences with the present knowledge of their roles in the family. This authentically gave the researcher the needed data as observation came along this technique. Data gathered employing this technique was validated through the key informant interviews.

For the key informant (KI) interviews, the reconnaissance visits were conducted upon approval of the research proposal. This reconnaissance visits gave the researcher enough opportunity to identify key informants. The key informants were those who were considered by the community to be knowledgeable considering the

parameters in defining “poor families”. The definition of terms was included for the sake of exclusivity in the study and for proper direction in the frame/context of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first sets of data discuss about the socio-demographic characteristics of the poor families in selected communities in Northern Samar in terms of parent’s educational attainment, monthly income, source of income, spending patterns; and also, the profile of poor families in terms of structural factors, economic status and social misfortune.

In the 450 family respondents, 153 fathers or 34% and 125 mothers or 27.8% were elementary level, 110 fathers or 24.4% and 113 mothers or 25.1% were elementary graduates, 79 fathers or 17.6% and 76 mothers or 16.9% were high school level and only 66 fathers or 14.7% and 71 mothers or 15.8% were high school graduates. The least of the number of fathers and mothers belonged to the college level with 42 or 9.3% and 65 or 14.4%, respectively.

This could only mean that poor families of the province of today also come from poor families too, with considering the old standard of NEDA that families with income from 5,000 and below are poor.

Basically, parents of every family had their respective roles attached and expected of them. This part discusses the roles of parents in relation to income generation, provision of basic needs and family spending.

Table 1 presents the parents’ roles on income generation, “the parents give the whole income for the family” ranked first. This means that the parents’ earnings were spent entirely for their families. “The parents observe thriftiness with regard to unnecessary spending” ranked second, while “The family members work all throughout the waking hours to earn money” ranked third. This means that the parents spent the whole day to earn the basic necessities for their family.

On the other hand, the least or occasionally performed roles were “the parents accept immediate paid labor and leave the major source of income”, “The family members avoid over spending”, “The parents give only a part of the income for the family”. This means that the parents avoided overspending to prevent them from doing extra work and concentrate more on their major livelihood strategy.

Table 1. Role of the Family – Income Generation

	Role	Analysis
1.	The family give the whole income for the family.	Frequent
2.	The family members observe thriftiness with regards to unnecessary spending.	Frequent
3.	The family members work all throughout the waking hours to earn money.	Frequent
4.	The family members dominate much of the earnings of the family.	Frequent
5.	The family members works 7 days a week and 8 hours a day.	Frequent
6.	The family members do not engage in any vice to ensure that income is intact for the family.	Frequent
7.	The family members accept extra work whenever possible to ensure enough income for the family.	Frequent
8.	The family members give only a part of the income for the family.	Frequent
9.	The family members avoid overspending.	Frequent
10.	The family members accept immediate paid labor and leave the major source of income.	Frequent

Table 2 presents the roles in the provision of basic needs, the first three frequently performed roles were; “The parents allocate budget to start up the education of the young”, “The parents prepare the food daily”; and “The parents are responsible in the construction of the house”. This means that the parents were responsible in providing the basic needs of their family.

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On the contrary, the least frequently performed roles in the provision of basic needs were, “The parents provide regular budget for food”, “The parents provide all the needs of the family”, and “The parents provide all the other needs of the family”. Bringing back the discussion into the monthly and source of income of the family, these two factors may lead to the least performance of such roles. This means that having a meager income, the parents can hardly exercise their responsibilities in terms of providing what the family needs.

Table 2. Role of the Family – Provision of Basic Needs

Role	Analysis
1. The parents allocate budget to start up the education of the young	Always
2. the parents prepare the food daily	Always
3. The parents are responsible in the construction of the house	Always
4. The parents plan out for the education of the young.	Frequent
5. The parents provide the food according to its availability	Frequent
6. The parents are responsible for the clothing needs of the family.	Frequent
7. The parents manage the repair and maintenance of the house.	Frequent
8. The parents provide all the other needs of the family.	Frequent
9. The parents provide all the needs of the family.	Frequent
10. The parents provide regular budget for food.	Frequent

In terms of family spending, Table 3 shows that the frequently performed roles were “Closely monitor when family members are doing tasks”, “Share much of the responsibilities”, “Tell the members of the family what has to be done and how to do it”, “Lead the family activities”, “Affairs of the family are our responsibility”.

This means that the parents were authorities, guide and direct the family in terms of spending the resources of the family, however to the utmost involvement of family members in the spending affairs of the family.

The parent’s least or occasionally performed the following spending emergent roles; “On significant matter/s about the family, I don’t tell my family”, “Make consider suggestions made by other members on plans of upcoming projects”. These findings adhere to the basic culture of the Filipino family of reminding family members of their weaknesses with the end in view of properly guiding and directing the towards the right path of life.

Table 3. Role of the Family – Family Spending

Roles	Analysis
1. Closely monitor when family members are doing tasks	Frequent
2. Share much of the responsibilities	Frequent
3. Tell the members of the family what has to be done and how to do it	Frequent
4. Lead the family activities	Frequent
5. Affairs of the family are our responsibility	Frequent
6. Make the final decision-making authority in terms of spending within the family	Frequent
7. Allow family members to carry out the decisions to do the tasks.	Frequent
8. Allow family members to use their creativity and ingenuity in solving family problems	Frequent
9. They command and they do the command	Frequent
10. Give freedom to exercise self-direction and let them show their self-worth	Frequent
11. When there are differences in role expectations, we work with them to resolve the differences	Frequent
12. Allow family members to determine and decide what needs to be done and how to do it.	Frequent
13. When things go wrong, they usually think and do strategies to keep things running on schedule.	Frequent
14. Delegate the tasks to the members of the family	Frequent

15.	When something goes wrong, s/he tells the family members that a procedure is not working correctly/properly, and establishes a new one.	Frequent
16.	For every major decision, they ask the approval of each member of the family	Frequent
17.	Create an environment in which every family member is part of any activity of the family. Allow them to participate in the decision-making process.	Frequent
18.	They get my family members' advice	Frequent
19.	Expect the family to do tasks related to objectives, household's affairs, community involvement and political affairs	Frequent
20.	Direct or threats family members with punishment in order to get them achieve the family affairs/activities	Frequent
21.	Always employ win-win decision.	Frequent
22.	Use leadership power to help the family members grow	Frequent
23.	Command and never do the share in doing the tasks.	Frequent
24.	When a family member makes mistakes s/he is/will be/given a corresponding punishment.	Frequent
25.	When a family member makes mistakes, I tell him/her not to ever do it again.	Frequent
26.	Ask for the ideas and inputs of the family members on plans of upcoming projects, etc.	Frequent
27.	Make consider the suggestions made by other members of the family	Frequent
28.	On significant matter/s about the family, I don't tell my family	Frequent

Table 4 shows the mechanisms of how the poor families coped with their income generation, provision of food and family spending. Among the coping mechanism of poor families, the frequently practiced mechanisms were, “Generally, the culture of sharing is observed in the family”, “The father accepts extra works to augment income” and “Married children share financial burden with the family”. This means that the father had to find ways and means to earn a living. Undeniably, the Filipino culture of sharing is still practiced by the poor families in Northern Samar.

Least or seldom practiced were, “Depend on dole out from neighbors, relatives and friends”, “A member of the family has to stop schooling and work to augment the income of the family”, and “Ask regular financial contribution from the children whether married or not”. This means that in the culture of sharing, dependency from other families with no relations is not cultivated. No one is sacrificed of his/her education in the process of providing/adding income to the family which runs counter to what had been observed by the researcher in some of the visited families who were 4Ps recipient.

Table 4. Coping Mechanisms – Income Generation

	Coping Mechanisms	Analysis
1.	Generally, the culture of sharing is observed in the family	Frequent
2.	The father accepts extra works to augment income	Frequent
3.	Married children share financial burden with the family	Occasional
4.	Everybody in the family enters extra work for extra pay.	Occasional
5.	The mother accepts regular extra work from neighbors and other people	Occasional
6.	The married children help in the generation of income for the family	Occasional
7.	Children schooling are made to work every Saturdays and Sundays or as the need arises	Seldom
8.	Ask regular financial contribution from the children whether married or not.	Seldom
9.	A member of the family has to stop schooling and work to augment the income of the family	Seldom

Looking at the ranking of the coping mechanisms under provision of basic needs, it can be gleaned in Table 5 that the occasionally practiced were “The father doubles his major task to support and satisfy the basic needs of the family”, “The mother accepts extra work like doing laundry, caring for other family’s children on a daily

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payment basis”, and “Borrow money and other non-cash in exchange of future paid labor”. This indicates that both parents worked hard for them to provide the basic needs of the family. Furthermore, the relatives were the best support system in the provision of the basic needs.

“The eldest child of the family has to go to an urban/city area for a job to finance the basic needs of the family”, “Any member of the family has to go to an urban/city area for a job to finance the basic needs of the family”, and “The mother works in the city and sends money to finance the basic and other needs of the family”, were the least or seldom practiced/done in the provision of basic need of the poor families in the province. This may be because of the satisfaction of the family on the income earned from livelihood strategy which they were used to.

Table 5. Coping Mechanism – Provision of Basic Needs

Coping Mechanism	Analysis
1. The father doubles his major task to support and satisfy the basic needs of the family	Occasional
2. The mother accepts extra work like doing laundry, caring for other family’s children on a daily payment basis	Occasional
3. Borrow money and other non-cash in exchange of future paid labor	Occasional
4. Resort to borrowing money and other non-cash needs from relatives.	Occasional
5. Older children are made to work on non-school days like pedicab driving, being sent to errands by relatives, well-to-do families, etc.	Occasional
6. Resort to borrowing money and other non-cash from neighbors	Seldom
7. Borrow money and other non-cash in exchange of any errand to any member of the family.	Seldom
8. The mother works in the city and sends money to finance the basic and other needs of the family	Seldom
9. Any member of the family has to go to an urban/city area for a job to finance the basic needs of the family	Seldom
10. The eldest child of the family has to go to an urban/city area for a job to finance the basic needs of the family	Seldom

In terms of family spending Table 6 shows that the coping mechanisms were occasionally done on: “Any member of the family is consulted for decision on spending matter”, “Never leave the children unattended by either a father or a mother”, and “In the absence of both parents, a specific member is assigned to manage the family spending activities”; while the least or seldom shown coping mechanisms on family spending were “In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of the close friends”, “In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of non- relatives” and “ In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of the close relatives”. This indicates that decisions relative to family spending were the major task of the parents as well as the other members of the family.

Table 6. Coping Mechanism – Family Spending

Coping Mechanisms	Analysis
1. Any member of the family is consulted for decision on spending matter	Occasional
2. Never leave the children unattended by either a father or a mother	Occasional
3. In the absence of both parents, a specific member is assigned to manage the family spending activities.	Occasional
4. Parents used to carry all children, wherever they may go in search for greener pasture.	Occasional
5. In any family affairs/activity, the children are made to decide in terms of spending	Occasionally
6. The eldest decide for the family in terms of spending even if parents are around	Seldom
7. In the absence of both parents, the other members of the family are left to the relatives nearby	Seldom

8.	In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of the close relatives	Seldom
9.	In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of non-relatives	Seldom
10.	In all family affairs, decision on spending is always put upon the shoulders of the close friends	Seldom

Role and Coping Mechanism

Multiple regression (MR) analysis was employed to test the effect of coping mechanism to the roles of poor families. The analysis revealed an R -Square value of .005 which means that only 0.5 percent of the variance of the input variable which is the coping mechanism in terms of income generation, provisions of basic needs, and family spending of the respondents were attributed to the output variable, the role of the poor families. The resulting F-value of 0.684 with a significant value of 0.562 that was greater than the 0.05 alpha level means that the effect of the coping mechanism on the roles of poor families was not significant. These findings indicate that the role of poor families was not affected by how the respondents coped with their family spending. R-Square b]value shows that if the input variable us used as predictor of the output variable is just arrived by chance.

Table 7. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	dt	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.792	3	0.264	.684	.562 ^a
Residual	172.013	446	0.386		
Total	172.805	449			

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following are the conclusions and implications.

A majority of the poor families belonged to the absolute poverty level, which can be implied that they have less financial potential and that they have roots which/who are poor families, too. Educated people have higher income potential, and are better able to improve the quality of their lives. A greater majority are nuclear families; with special skills whose economic status speaks up of their being poor. Their special skills make them resilient to social misfortunes. This implies that their being poor seems to have been handed from the wrong discipline of their parents.

Poor families as they are, parents are but responsible in the performance of their patriarchal and matriarchal responsibilities. It implies therefore that poor families have the heart of willingness to solve problems and overcome them according to their skills and experiences. Various parameters interrelate with the emergent roles of the parents of poor families. This implies the need for poor families to be more than aware of various coping mechanism, occurrence of unexpected power patterns and give utmost attention in the improvement of the quality of their lives.

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