

# Socio-emotional Development and Coping Mechanisms of Selected Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v4i3.782>

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Families find various ways to adjust to the consequences brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the new normal setting. While the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries, until then, experienced tremendous problems in securing a job and stable income, and now their situations are aggravated by the pandemic. This study aimed to determine the: (1) profiles; (2) challenges encountered; (3) socio-emotional development (perceived effects of the pandemic on attitudes, emotions, and socialization); and (4) coping mechanisms and suggestions of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program family beneficiaries in Sagpon, Daraga, Albay to overcome their socio-emotional changes. The researchers visited and assisted 10 Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program families in answering the survey questionnaire with minimum health protocols observed. Key informant interviews were also conducted with 5 consenting families to collect more data on their experiences and coping mechanisms. The responses from the survey questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using statistical tools and thematic analysis, while data from the key informant interviews used the case study method. The results revealed that the participants disagreed that they perceived the effects of the pandemic on their attitudes and emotions. In socialization, they believed that it is true to some extent that they experienced some changes. Among their perceived effects of the pandemic on their socio-emotional development were symptoms of hypochondriasis, anxiety, paranoia, and introversion. As coping mechanisms, they suggested praying, meditating, and doing collective hobbies with the family. An intervention is recommended to help the participants with their socio-emotional difficulties.

## KEYWORDS

4Ps family; COVID-19 pandemic; socio-emotional development; coping mechanisms; pandemic challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak turned pandemic made 119 countries close their schools nationwide and disrupted the learning and education of the estimated 897 million students (Martínez, 2020). This closure was the preventive measure of most governments worldwide to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and consider the safety of the students, teachers, and institutional constituents (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, n.d.). As a consequence, learning shifted from physical to virtual classrooms. The change

in the learning setup brought new home-and-school practices and may affect learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development.

The learners were not the only ones greatly affected by the pandemic but also their families. There is an increased demand for providing the needs of the children in terms of education, and parents were expected to act as their teachers. Apart from this, parents were forced to adapt to different workplace setups, like working at their homes; some worked at the physical workplace despite the health risks, while others lost their jobs. They may also experience economic uncertainty, isolation, elevated stress levels, and risk of violence at their homes (Luna-Bazaldua & Pushparatnam, 2020). These scenarios aggravated the existing inequalities in accessing quality education. Socially disadvantaged families are not only short on income but also on other daily and educational necessities. These shortcomings can only let them access limited learning opportunities and may hinder their potential development. UNICEF Data (2020) noted from Save the Children and UNICEF's joint analysis that approximately 150 million children added to live in multidimensional poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic. They do not have access to education, health care, housing, nutrition, sanitation, or water. They found that 45% of children from more than 70 countries were already severely deprived of their critical needs before the pandemic. This will likely worsen the children's situation unless national governments and international organizations put forth more effort to alleviate their difficulties.

Socio-economically, the Philippines was one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in Southeast Asia (Malindog-Uy, 2020). From a Metro Manila lockdown to the entire Luzon island and more localized lockdowns until the Philippine government declared a state of calamity for six months on March 17, 2020 (Pharmaceutical Technology, 2020). The lockdown prohibited people from going outside their homes, shut down business operations in the region, and compelled residents to stay indoors. Families were heavily affected by this measure. The pandemic made some parents struggle to provide for their families since they or someone in their family lost work income. As a result, they struggled to pay for housing, utility, food, or medical costs in the past months, leading to families' mechanism of cutting back food expenses, reducing savings, and going into debt (Karpman et al., 2020).

Further, higher-income parents can work from home and manage their children more than low-income parents. Families may already lack the time and resources for their members even before the pandemic, but the new responsibilities could be an additional stressor for them (UNESCO Education Sector, 2020). A loss of income also resulted in violence, increased negative feelings, and reduced psychosocial well-being in the household. Wilma Bañaga, Child Protection Advisor for Save the Children Philippines, implied in her message that there are different worries like fear of getting infected, struggle to bring food to the table, and more uncertainties that increase the stress of parents and caregivers and that aggression could be a reaction caused by increased levels of stress (Abad, 2020).

The pandemic gave rise to overwhelming home and work responsibilities and management. According to a survey conducted in the Philippines to 4,111 respondents by the Statista Research Department (2021), 37% of Filipinos perceived that the COVID-19 outbreak (now pandemic) affected their daily lifestyles and family lives. 33% of their respondents perceived that their working life or arrangements were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These different challenges in education, work, and home responsibilities affected young children and their families. They are the most vulnerable to being left behind and will continue to suffer from the effects of the pandemic if governments do not monitor, analyze, and act on their problems (Luna-Bazaldua &

Pushparatnam, 2020). Thus, governments should make changes to their programs if their existing assistance might not meet the current needs of their people.

The target respondents in this study are the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiary families. The National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction identifies who and where people experiencing poverty are and selects the 4Ps beneficiaries. People experiencing poverty have experienced challenges (health, nutrition, education, housing, etc.) before the pandemic (Department of Social Welfare and Development, n.d.). The 4Ps families need to carry more of the burden the pandemic brings to their families. Their difficulties include unemployment, insufficient income, and home school education of children, to name a few. The study by Howes et al. (2020) supported their difficulties. Howes et al. (2020) expressed that many parents have lost their jobs, find balancing work with childcare and homeschooling difficult, and have worsened their financial situation. They added that these challenges are particularly acute for low-income families.

Along with the rest of Luzon, Albay was placed on lockdown or enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) on March 17, 2020. This includes Sagpon, Daraga, Albay, the target locale of this study. The population comprises 6,587 of the 126,595 Daragueños based on the 2015 Philippine Statistics Authority's Population Census (PhilAtlas, n.d.).

Families are experiencing household economic insecurity, which limits their ability to meet their children's basic needs (health and nutrition, as well as other psychosocial development needs like education and social development). Young children, particularly those living in vulnerable conditions, are at risk of not developing to their full potential if they are denied access to education for a prolonged time (Luna-Bazaldúa & Pushparatnam, 2020). This research paper is aimed at finding out how the pandemic affected 4Ps families and determining the (1) 4Ps' family profiles, (2) their challenges encountered, (3) their socio-emotional development (particularly, their perceived effects of the pandemic on their attitudes, emotions, and socialization); and (4) their coping mechanisms and other possible preventive measures to endure the socio-emotional difficulties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used descriptive survey methods using quantitative and qualitative methods. Purposive sampling was used for selecting the 4Ps beneficiaries, and stratified sampling was for having family representatives who are the mother and the child. The respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (a) a 4Ps beneficiary and (b) a resident of Sagpon, Daraga, Albay. Two (2) groups of respondents formed part of the sample: (a) mother and (b) child. To conduct this study and collect data from the 4Ps beneficiary families, the researchers sought permission from the barangay captain of Sagpon, Daraga, Albay. The barangay provided a list of eligible respondents through the social worker; from the given list, there were ten (10) family respondents.

A validated researcher-made survey questionnaire in English and its translation in Filipino were used as tools for data collection. The questionnaire consists of four parts designed with open-ended questions: (1) socio-demographic profiles; (2) challenges encountered by the families during the pandemic; (3) perceived effects on attitudes, emotions, and socialization; and (4) suggested interventions to the perceived effects of the pandemic. Another tool used for data collection was the interview guide for the key informant interviews. Three experts validated the survey questionnaire, the interview guide, and its Filipino translation. The validators of the research instruments include a guidance counselor, a Filipino professor, and a research coordinator.

The first part of data gathering happened through a house-to-house distribution of survey questionnaires while following the minimum health protocols (wearing face masks and face shields, sanitation of hands, and social distancing). The researchers asked for the ten (10) families' permission to participate in the study through the informed consent form included in the questionnaire. The researchers explained the purpose of the study, sought the informed consent of the family representatives, and explained the confidentiality of the information to be gathered. A parent gave the children respondents aged 17 and below consent to answer the survey questionnaire.

After collecting data through the questionnaire, the second part of data gathering was conducted through the key informant interviews with five (5) consenting families who answered the survey questionnaire. The researchers went to the houses of those who agreed to participate in the key informant interviews. Data gathered from the questionnaire were then tallied, and the responses to the interview were listed, coded manually, and organized into cases.

Primary and secondary data sources were utilized to form significant connections from the data gathered. The responses collected from the survey questionnaire and key informant interviews served as the primary data sources. The secondary data sources used in this study were books, online articles/ reports, and journal articles that provided information for elaborating and discussing the results.

The descriptive statistics method was used to analyze and interpret the data collected for this study. The statistical tools used to interpret and analyze the results include frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and rank. While thematic analysis and the case study method were used to interpret the qualitative data gathered.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Profiles of the Selected 4Ps Beneficiary Families: The 4Ps Family Context***

#### ***Type of House***

Most of the 4Ps family respondents own a house (70%). This is followed by having a concrete house (60%), a house made of light materials (50%), a rental house (20%), and a mortgage (10%). None responded to an apartment, rented room, or rented boarding house.

Houses made of light materials can be vulnerable to the risk of fire and burn injuries and typhoons (Gielen et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2011). For families paying rental fees and mortgages for their houses, thinking and worrying about where to find payment is an additional burden. The 4Ps cash assistance and other sources of income may not be enough for the expenses of the 4Ps families.

#### ***Family Size***

Most family respondents (60%) have two to five family members or small family size. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents have six to ten family members. None of them have eleven or more family members. The result implies that the 4Ps families, with either few or many members in the family, are likely to be vulnerable to poverty.

#### ***Type of Family***

Participants that are in a nuclear family have a percentage of 50. Some are in extended families (40%), and (10%) have a single parent. None were in a childless family, stepfamily, or grandparent family among the participants. 4Ps families may have different family types, but a family's relationship could be strengthened by having quality time together (Ahmed et al., 2020) or otherwise during the pandemic.

### **Age Group of Family Members**

The respondents' family members are mostly in the age range of thirteen to twenty years old (70%). This is followed by twenty-one to thirty years old (50%), while six to twelve and thirty-one to fifty years old age ranges have (30%) of the participants, zero to two and fifty-one to sixty years old both have (10%) of the participants, and none have family members in the age range of three to five and sixty-one and above years old.

Family members have different necessities in their physiological, cognitive, and socio-emotional processes that affect their development (Corpuz et al., 2015). But their different unfulfilled needs and common problems of having financial insecurities are at the core of their hindered development.

### **Number of Children Attending School**

Most 4Ps family respondents have family members attending junior high school, college, and elementary school. Vega et al. (2015) expressed that the family and the school should collaborate to achieve the educational and social goals aimed at the child. To do so, a more knowledgeable other should facilitate the child. In times of the pandemic, parents need to teach their children and aim to achieve the learning competencies of the curriculum.

However, the new learning modality, particularly online classes, impacted the learners negatively (Barrot et al., 2021). Due to the lack of funding caused by their parents' unemployment and the high-cost Internet data, students could not attend online classes and learn the lessons effectively.

**Table 1.** Number of Children Attending School

Level of Education	Number of Children Attending School	$f^*$	Percentage	Rank
Kindergarten	1	1	10%	5
	Not indicated	0	0%	
Elementary	1	1	10%	3
	Not indicated	2	20%	
Junior High School	1	1	10%	1
	2	2	20%	
Senior High School	Not indicated	2	20%	4
	2	1	10%	
College	Not indicated	1	10%	2
	1	3	30%	
None		0	0%	6

*\*Multiple responses*

### **Number of Children Working**

Forty percent (40%) of the respondents were families with two children working for the family, while 20% had a child working for the family. The other 40% of the respondents have no working children in their family. Regarding 4Ps beneficiaries, parents may not be the only members balancing work and home responsibilities. Children may also force themselves to work and try to balance different obligations to meet the needs of their families.

### **Profiles of the Selected 4Ps Beneficiary Families:**

#### **The 4Ps Family Socio-economic Status**

##### **Monthly Family Income**

All ten 4Ps families have a monthly income of not more than 11,690 pesos, less than the official poverty threshold. These families are considered part of the poor income group (Zialcita, 2020). For this reason, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (n.d.) provided cash assistance to extremely low-income families through the 4Ps.

##### **Source of Income**

Most family respondents earn their income from work (80%). Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents earn from their businesses. None responded to part-time jobs as their source of income.

The sources of income, as indicated by some participants, are their earnings from an owned *sari-sari* store, construction work, and a water refilling station. According to Holland's theory of career choice (careers.govt.nz, n.d.), personality and the environment determine the career of a person, but this theory may not apply to low-income families. Low-income workers may have their jobs for economic survival and may not be because of their personality and skills (IResearchNet, n.d.).

##### **Parents' Occupation**

Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents had fathers with full-time jobs and were unemployed, while 10% had part-time jobs and owned a business. The indicated father's occupations by the participants are driver, construction worker, electrician, and *tanod* (patrol). Forty percent (40%) of the participants did not state their father's occupation.

Of the ten 4Ps families, 60% have mothers with part-time jobs. These jobs include being a housemaid, laundrywoman, and vendor in a *sari-sari* store. 40% of the participants have unemployed mothers. None have mothers with full-time jobs.

*Most jobs mentioned by the participants cannot provide a stable salary to support their families. Unemployment and underemployment are the root causes of poverty and will make 4Ps families have difficulty securing stable incomes and improving their well-being. Thus, they need decent jobs (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Poverty, n.d.). It is also believed in the Philippines that the higher the credentials, the better the career options. As a result, high school graduates have fewer opportunities to work and could be experiencing more existential crises due to loss of work during the ECQ (Nicomedes et al., 2020).*

#### **Challenges Encountered by 4Ps Families during the pandemic**

##### **Challenges in terms of work**

The top general results in work-related challenges presented in Table 2 imply that 4Ps beneficiaries are concerned about their *employment status* (fewer opportunities to work, unemployment, and job loss). When going to the workplace, they experienced a high cost of transportation fees. This is due to the limited passengers because of the health and safety protocols like the social distancing measure. Commuting-working family members are more exposed to the virus, and 4Ps beneficiaries may lack resources to protect themselves. Besides working from home and ensuring children's health and educational needs, parents were also concerned about managing their work and home responsibilities.

**Table 2.** Challenges in terms of work

Challenges in terms of work	<i>f</i> *	Percentage	Rank
Unemployment	8	80%	2
Fewer opportunities to work	9	90%	1
Forced to work overtime	0	0%	6
Difficulty taking breaks	3	30%	5
Exhaustion	5	50%	4
Loss of job	6	60%	3
In the Workplace			
Inadequate protection from the virus	3	30%	2.5
Exposure to prone workplace	3	30%	2.5
Costly transportation fees	4	40%	1
Work-from-home			
Conflict with home and work roles	8	80%	1
Distractions (pets, children, technology, etc.)	3	30%	2.5
Maintaining routine	3	30%	2.5
Internet access	1	10%	3

*\*Multiple responses*

### **Challenges in terms of Family Income**

In Table 3, the top three challenges in terms of family income show the interrelatedness of having a lack of food and resources, being short on a budget, and experiencing a financial crisis. Lockdowns are implemented to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and private companies are greatly affected by this measure (Velmonte, 2020). There are fewer customers or clients as people are requested to stay home. This resulted in some to lose their jobs. Workers cannot secure food and resources when they lose their jobs and lack the income to pay for their family's expenses. Consequently, their earnings must budgeted to their minimum, or they may even fall into debt (Karpman et al., 2020).

**Table 3.** Challenges in terms of Family Income

Challenges in terms of family income	$f^*$	Percentage	Rank
Lack of food and resources	9	90%	1
Salary delay	6	60%	4
Short on budget	8	80%	2
Social Amelioration Program (SAP) (dependence on a monthly cash subsidy from DSWD for low-income families for two months)	3	30%	6
Reduced Income	5	50%	5
Financial crisis	7	70%	3

*\*Multiple responses*

### **Challenges in terms of Family Activities**

As observed from Table 4, the top two challenges in terms of family activities are related to the educational needs of the children. The implementation of online learning has a tremendous effect on children's studies. They encountered some difficulties with this approach, including poor or limited access to an Internet connection for their academic needs (Constantino et al., 2020). But it is not only the students who suffer from the changes in the teaching-learning modality. Parents were also affected by the educational changes as they had to stand as teachers for their children to make them understand the lessons and provide educational resources while considering their financial situations and daily needs (Luna-Bazaldua & Pushparatnam, 2020).

**Table 4.** Challenges in terms of Family Activities

Challenges in terms of family activities	$f^*$	Percentage	Rank
Parents have difficulty teaching children	7	70%	2
Limited access, poor, or no Internet connection at all	9	90%	1
Technology dependence	2	20%	5
Too much social media use	3	30%	4.5
Safety protocols at home	3	30%	4.5
Ruined sleeping habits	5	50%	3.5
Rumors from social media and the environment	5	50%	3.5
Social isolation	0	0%	6
Confirmed positive cases around the area	3	30%	4.5

*\*Multiple responses*

### **The Perceived Effects of the Pandemic on Socio-emotional Development of 4Ps Families**



### Perceived Effects on Attitudes

Based on Table 5, thinking and worrying about getting infected by the virus had the highest weighted mean, also a symptom of *hypochondriasis*. Another symptom experienced by some is *paranoia*, like having difficulty trusting other people, while some felt unmotivated when the pandemic became normal.

People worry about acquiring COVID-19, not just for themselves but especially for their families and loved ones. That is why they worry about acquiring the virus to prevent infecting family members, especially those older and more vulnerable to COVID-19. People had an extreme sense of concern about a threat that is perceived as a destruction to physical safety (Goode, 2017). This is called a "moral panic," and the reason behind this was the delayed dissemination of information from experts to communities (Nicomedes & Avila, 2020, as cited in Greco, 2005). Although families were thinking and worrying about contracting the virus, they did not distance themselves from people, including their family members, as "they feel more connected than they typically do" during the pandemic (Wilkins, 2020).

Along with the pandemic's negative effects, there are still positive things that happen in families. Despite difficulty trusting other people, challenges are no longer new to them as they accept the ups and downs people face in life. It is also good to note that families did not use drugs and talk about suicide and death. Thus, they are willing to survive despite struggling financially and socio-emotionally.

**Table 5.** Perceived Effects on Attitudes

Perceived Effects on Attitudes	Weighted Mean	Descriptions	Rank
1. I think I am not worthy.	1.2	Strongly Disagree	14.5
2. I think and worry that I am sick (or get infected by the virus).	4.2	Agree	1
3. I feel tired and irritable during the day.	3	True to Some Extent	5.5
4. I find it hard to go to sleep.	2.8	True to Some Extent	6.5
5. I wake up several times during the night.	2.5	Disagree	7.5
6. I find compromising, forgiving, and accepting criticism hard.	2.5	Disagree	7.5
7. I find it hard to trust other people.	3.5	Agree	3
8. I easily get offended.	3	True to Some Extent	5.5
9. I feel aggressive.	1.9	Disagree	10
10. I have trouble relaxing.	2.2	Disagree	8
11. I believe I am always right.	1.6	Strongly Disagree	12
12. I don't have time for self-improvement.	3.3	True to Some Extent	4
13. I no longer feel challenged.	3.7	Agree	2
14. I feel uninspired and unmotivated.	2.8	True to Some Extent	6.5
15. I keep myself away from people (including family members).	1.7	Strongly Disagree	11
16. I treat people as if I won't see them again.	1.2	Strongly Disagree	14.5
17. I get upset over simple or minor things.	2.8	True to Some Extent	6.5
18. I feel extremely anxious.	2	Disagree	9
19. I engage myself in using drugs.	1	Strongly Disagree	15
20. I usually talk about suicide or death.	1.3	Strongly Disagree	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	

### **Perceived Effects on Emotions**

As shown in Table 6, the perceived effects of the pandemic on the emotions of 4Ps families include feeling restless and afraid. Parents are more likely to experience restlessness since they balance work and home responsibilities. Upon experiencing the pandemic's effects, people are also expected to experience fear.

Being afraid stems from the fact that they worry or get anxious about getting infected by the virus. They also fear that they or a family member will get infected and might be carriers of the virus, probably due to exposure to other people while commuting. Fear was used in some media platforms to prevent COVID-19 transmissions by advertising preventive measures (Nicomedes & Avila, 2020). During the community crisis, people rely on social media to disseminate information and stay informed (Montano & Acebes, 2020, as cited in Bao et al., 2020). However, exaggerated media reports lead to a reaction of excessive fear, and this reaction may also be contagious (Montano & Acebes, 2020). Media exposure concerning public health crises was associated with greater psychological distress (Thompson et al., 2017).

Families strongly disagreed that they did not deserve love and never fit in but strongly believed the opposite. People received increased support and care from friends and family members during the pandemic (Zhang & Ma, 2020). The pandemic can impact a family positively. Some created a tighter bond with family members, while others took up more responsibility by collaborating on household work and spending more time with family members. It was reported in the study of Ahmed et al. (2020) that family relations strengthened during the pandemic.

**Table 6.** Perceived Effects on Emotions

<b>Perceived Effects on Emotions</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. I lose my appetite.	2	Disagree	11.5
2. I feel restless.	3.6	Agree	1
3. I am having trouble concentrating.	2.4	Disagree	8
4. I feel overwhelmed.	2	Disagree	11.5
5. I worry too much.	3.1	True to Some Extent	4
6. I overthink about everything.	2.7	True to Some Extent	6.5
7. I feel disappointed.	2.8	True to Some Extent	5
8. I am afraid.	3.4	True to Some Extent	2.5
9. I feel hopeless.	1.9	Disagree	12.5
10. I feel lonely.	2.3	Disagree	9
11. I feel bad about myself.	1.9	Disagree	12.5
12. I feel numb.	3.4	True to Some Extent	2.5
13. I feel like crying.	3.2	True to Some Extent	3
14. I think I am impatient.	2.6	Disagree	7
15. I find it hard to make decisions.	2.7	True to Some Extent	6.5
16. I feel nervous.	2.1	Disagree	10.5
17. I usually experience a headache.	2	Disagree	11.5
18. I lash out at people who say they love me.	2.1	Disagree	10.5
19. I don't feel like I deserve love.	1.5	Strongly Disagree	13
20. I feel like I never fit in.	1.4	Strongly Disagree	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	

### **Perceived Effects on Socialization**

Table 7 reveals that people prefer deep relationships with a few friends and reflect on situations quietly rather than joining in conversations at gatherings. These are indications that the 4Ps respondents are experiencing *introversion* during the pandemic.

Family members preferred staying home reflecting on their problems instead of sacrificing their lives to attend gatherings. However, even today, most people hold in anger and grudges against people they feel mistreated. This is another concern of the families while interacting with others even before; now, it is being amplified by the pandemic.

**Table 7. Perceived Effects on Socialization**

Perceived Effects on Socialization	Weighted Mean	Descriptions	Rank
1. I feel bored.	2.2	Disagree	12.5
2. I avoid small talk whenever possible.	2.8	True to Some Extent	10
3. I hold on to anger and grudges against people whom I feel mistreated.	3.8	Agree	3
4. I feel reluctant to share personal things about myself with others.	2.7	True to Some Extent	11.5
5. I doubt loyalty in others.	2.9	True to Some Extent	9.5
6. I feel anxious.	3.2	True to Some Extent	6.5
7. I feel sensitive when I experience rejection.	2.7	True to Some Extent	11.5
8. I experience difficulty working with others.	3	True to Some Extent	8
9. I lack interest in life activities.	1.9	Disagree	14
10. I lack interest in interacting with others.	3.1	True to Some Extent	7
11. I lack the motivation to do anything.	2.2	Disagree	12.5
12. I find it difficult to engage in conversations.	2.1	Disagree	13
13. I feel anxious around other people.	3.3	True to Some Extent	5
14. I prefer staying at home.	3.4	True to Some Extent	4
15. I feel tired after being in a crowd.	3.2	True to Some Extent	6.5
16. I prefer writing rather than talking.	3.2	True to Some Extent	6.5
17. I feel comfortable being alone.	2.9	True to Some Extent	9.5
18. I reflect on situations quietly rather than joining in group conversations at gatherings.	4	Agree	2
19. I prefer to have deep friendships with only a handful of people.	4.2	Agree	1
20. I enjoy spending plenty of time alone.	3.2	True to Some Extent	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>True to Some Extent</b>	

***The Cases of Selected 4Ps Families on their Socio-emotional Development and Coping Mechanisms during the pandemic***

To elaborate on the results from the survey questionnaire, the researchers interviewed five consenting families. Most respondents have parents with unstable income earned from their jobs. They have low-paying jobs like a laundrywoman, *sari-sari* store vendor, tricycle driver, construction worker, housemaids, and *tanod*. While one is an electrician and some

are unemployed. Families from nuclear or extended families have low incomes, with an estimated monthly income of not more than 5,000 pesos. The occupations indicated by families may be unable to earn an income that will provide them with their daily food and needs, which is evident in their challenges.

The challenges experienced by 4Ps families are mostly about financial issues. Apart from that, they also encountered challenges in providing for the children's educational needs. Difficulty in teaching children is evident in four family cases. Thus, 4Ps parents who are expected to function as teachers during the new learning mode could not deliver the concepts effectively to their children as they could not recall and understand the lessons.

These challenges and the pandemic brought consequences to the socio-emotional development, particularly on the attitudes, emotions, and socialization of 4Ps families. Regarding attitudes, family B ignored family members when they did not listen to their raised concerns, while family E experienced being aggressive when dealing with problems. The perceived effects of the pandemic on the emotions of family A is experiencing loneliness, while family D is feeling relaxed and positive. Family A experienced difficulty socializing with people, including their family members, while family C preferred to stay home.

Families cope with their challenges and perceived effects by praying or seeking spiritual support, meditating or reflecting, sharing resources with other families (in extended families), relaxation techniques like planting flowers, doing collective hobbies like watching a comedy show, and bonding with the family. These are their ways to lessen the burden of the perceived effects of the pandemic on their attitudes, emotions, and socialization.

### ***Interventions for the Perceived Effects of the Pandemic on 4Ps Families'***

#### ***Socio-emotional Development***

##### ***Suggested Interventions by the 4Ps Families***

Most participants (90%) answered pray/seek spiritual support to overcome the pandemic's perceived effects on their socio-emotional development. Meditate/ reflect and do collective hobbies with the family ranked second as these interventions gained a percentage of 80. This is followed by engaging in recreational activities (20%) and seeking psychological support (10%).

This is similar to the study of Nicomedes et al. (2020): "An Evaluation on Existential Crisis of Filipinos during the COVID-19 Crisis." Most participants take time to do recreational activities with their families, and some divert their attention away from negativity. This is also supported by Ahmed et al. (2020) who found out that assisting in domestic work and doing collective hobbies with the family strengthened family relations during the pandemic.

Nicomedes et al. (2020) reported that "some respondents cope by meditating" from their 502 respondents. Isolation, finding peace at home, accepting the current conditions, and forcefully thinking positively are some of their strategies for meditation. To sum up Nicomedes et al.'s (2020) results on coping mechanisms, they concluded that the ways to cope with and alleviate Filipinos' negative feelings and existential crises are contemplating, meditation, acceptance, optimism, proactive thinking, spirituality, family bonding, socialization, and keeping oneself busy.

#### ***Reasons of 4Ps Families for Selecting the Interventions***

Themes were extracted from the participants' responses on why they selected the intervention as a coping mechanism. Both interventions, praying/seeking spiritual support and meditating/reflecting, are selected as they believe they are *guided by the Almighty*, the sole protector in their daily living. Praying and meditating may help them accept the current situation and see the positive side of events (Nicomedes et al., 2020). In addition, they claimed that these coping mechanisms help them *solve and overcome their problems*.

Meditating and reflecting also *help clear the minds* of the 4Ps respondents as they can think more properly. This is a similar reason for selecting collective hobbies with the family. Moreover, doing hobbies collectively with the family helped *prevent stress* as they enjoy the company of each other. Doing collective hobbies with the family and engaging in recreational activities give time for *family bonding*. Doing recreational activities can maintain connections and help families divert their attention from negativities brought by the pandemic (Nicomedes et al., 2020).

The respondent did not indicate the reason for seeking psychological support. Seeking psychological support has the lowest percentage among the participants. Steven J. Hanley (2015), a clinical psychologist, enumerated the reasons why people do not go to therapy, and the first reason is that "psychotherapy is too expensive." For 4Ps beneficiaries, they may find counseling costly, or they may not be aware of this kind of support. However, Hanley (2015) noted that people should "consider the financial cost of not going to psychotherapy or counseling." Other reasons discussed by Hanley (2015) are that people do not have enough time for counseling or psychotherapy, cannot find the right psychotherapist or counselor, and can "self-medicate" their emotional difficulties.

In summary, participants suggested and selected the interventions to lessen the burden of their experiences. During the pandemic, they emphasize spirituality, reflection, and family connection.

### ***Suggested Action Options by the Researchers***

In terms of the identified changes in *attitudes* due to the pandemic, the action options suggested are to:

- (a) Distribute infographics or flyers to families about the COVID-19 virus to become more knowledgeable and feel at ease about their health;
- (b) Train families in planning their solutions to assist them in coming up with solutions to their challenges and
- (c) Try to openly communicate with other people to prevent doubts, mistrust, and anger towards people who mistreated them and understand both sides of their stories.

For the identified changes in terms of *emotions*, the researchers suggest families to:

- (a) Do relaxation techniques or meditation to be more present and for better sleeping habits and reduced stress.

For concerns about *socialization*, families:

- (a) Can do their hobbies together to deepen their relationships with family members and reduce stress.

For other concerns related to *mental health*, the researchers suggest that the barangay officials will:

- (a) Invite registered counselors or psychologists for monthly counseling sessions for selected or referred residents in the barangay for increased mental health awareness, and the selected or referred residents can gradually overcome their symptoms of mental illnesses.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected families. In an urbanized town in Albay province, Philippines, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program beneficiaries' profiles, challenges, the perceived effects of the pandemic on their attitudes, emotions, and socialization, and coping mechanisms were investigated. Interventions were then identified. It is concluded that the 4Ps beneficiary families are part of the poor income group, and parents do not have decent jobs to support their daily necessities and children's educational needs. The challenges experienced by the 4Ps beneficiary families are about their employment status, financial status, home and work responsibilities, and educational needs of their children. The participants disagreed that they perceived the effects of the pandemic on their attitudes and emotions. However, the results revealed that most 4Ps beneficiary families experienced some symptoms of hypochondriasis, anxiety, and paranoia. While to some extent, they had perceived the effects of the pandemic on their socialization. They preferred deep friendships and introversion when experiencing the challenges of the pandemic. The interventions suggested by the respondents to overcome the perceived effects of the pandemic on their attitudes, emotions, and socialization give importance to spirituality, reflection, and family bonding. It is recommended that there should be additional studies on the kinds of assistance or services offered to low-income families to provide them access and support to their different needs.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We express our sincere gratitude to our research adviser, research course professor, classmates and friends, families, research instrument validators, Barangay Sagpon, Daraga, Albay residents and respondents, the thesis committee from Bicol University, Philippines, and to all who contributed to the development of this research.

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