



# LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT SESSION PARTICIPANTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the lived experiences of beneficiaries of the Family Development Sessions (FDS) under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Bagamanoc, Catanduanes. Using a descriptive phenomenological design guided by Husserlian phenomenology, data were collected from twenty (20) purposively selected participants through interviews and focus group discussions and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that FDS contributes significantly to personal development, improved parenting practices, enhanced family relationships, and increased community involvement. Participants reported greater self-confidence, better communication with their children, and more responsible parenting behaviors, leading to stronger parent–child relationships. However, challenges such as communication gaps, role overload among parent leaders, interpersonal conflicts, and competing responsibilities affected participation. The findings informed the development of the Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD), highlighting FDS as a catalyst for behavioral, cognitive, and social transformation. Strengthening support systems and flexible delivery strategies are recommended to enhance program effectiveness.

**Keywords:** *Family Development Sessions, 4Ps, Phenomenology, Parenting, Family Relationships, Community participation*

## INTRODUCTION

Families represent the central environment where values are nurtured, behaviors are guided, and social cohesion is fostered, making them the primary unit of society. The nature and quality of interactions within the family significantly shape individual growth and overall family well-being (Cox & Paley, 2003). Despite this, many low-income families face challenges that can hinder these developmental processes, including limited access to education, healthcare, and resources for parenting support (Dunst *et al.*, 2007).

To address the challenges faced by low-income families, the Philippine government established the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a conditional cash transfer initiative aimed at improving the health, education, and overall welfare of children in disadvantaged households (Republic Act No. 11310, 2019). While providing financial assistance is a key component, the program also focuses on family empowerment through non-monetary interventions, with the Family Development Sessions (FDS) serving as a central strategy. FDS are structured learning sessions intended to support beneficiary families by enhancing parenting practices, fostering stronger family relationships, and encouraging active participation in their communities (DSWD, 2018). As a core element of the 4Ps, FDS complement case management activities and aim to strengthen the psychosocial well-being and parenting capacities of participating families, particularly mothers, by providing knowledge, guidance, and practical skills tailored to their needs.

The Family Development Session (FDS) is designed to support families by enhancing their understanding, shaping positive attitudes, and strengthening their ability to carry out household responsibilities, while encouraging values, peer connections, and participation in community activities. Beyond assisting parents in establishing support networks and accessing relevant resources, FDS also emphasizes inclusivity by recognizing the rights of marginalized groups, including women, children, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. Through these sessions, families are provided with opportunities for learning, collaboration, and empowerment, which can contribute to meaningful improvements in their daily lives (DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 22, Series of 2018).

Family Development Sessions (FDS) aim to empower beneficiaries and support their personal and family development. However, several barriers limit the program's full potential. Issues such as the high incidence of early pregnancies and children not attending school continue to challenge households, and some families struggle to meet program requirements. Because of these ongoing social difficulties, it is important to examine not only how FDS is implemented but also how participants personally experience it. Integrating guidance and counseling techniques into the sessions can enhance family relationships, promote personal growth, and address psychosocial needs, while also strengthening parenting practices and encouraging active involvement in the community. These approaches can help FDS achieve its long-term goal of supporting sustainable improvements in the lives of beneficiary families.

In response to the identified gaps, this study explored the lived experiences of participants in the Family Development Session (FDS), with particular attention to the outcomes and challenges they encounter. Specifically, it examined how participants perceive the effects of FDS on (a) personal attitude, (b) parenting skills, (c) family relationships and responsibilities, and (d) social engagement within their communities. The study also investigated the personal meanings participants assign to their participation, and the common obstacles they face in attending and engaging with FDS activities. Drawing on these experiences, the research aimed to propose program enhancements and support strategies to improve the delivery of FDS, strengthen parenting abilities, reinforce family bonds, and encourage active community participation. By addressing these objectives, the study provided insights that can enhance the effectiveness of the 4Ps program, ultimately contributing to the well-being and development of Filipino families.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Family Development Session (FDS) participants in the Province of Catanduanes, particularly focusing on the outcomes and challenges associated with their participation. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceived outcomes of the Family Development Session (FDS) program among its participants in terms of:
  - a. Personal attitude
  - b. Parenting skills
  - c. Family relationships and responsibilities
  - d. Social involvement in the community
2. What personal meanings do participants assign to their participation in the Family Development Session (FDS) program?
3. What common challenges do participants encounter in attending and engaging with the Family Development Session (FDS)?
4. Based on the lived experiences of participants, what program enhancements can be proposed to improve the delivery of the Family Development Session (FDS)?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used a descriptive phenomenological research design guided by Husserlian phenomenology to examine the lived experiences of beneficiaries regarding the effects and challenges of the Family Development Session (FDS) in Catanduanes. Husserlian phenomenology was chosen because it emphasizes describing experiences as they are consciously lived, allowing the researchers to capture the essence of the phenomenon while consciously setting aside personal biases. To systematically interpret

the participants' narratives, thematic analysis was employed, which helped identify recurring patterns and themes while remaining faithful to the participants' experiences. Thematic analysis was utilized as the qualitative analytic method to identify recurring themes and patterns within the data, allowing for systematic organization and interpretation of participants' experiences. This method supports methodological rigor by synthesizing diverse perspectives, generating deeper insights, and minimizing researchers bias through the categorization of data into meaningful themes and subthemes (Costa *et al.*, 2016). To systematically interpret participants' narratives, the study utilized thematic analysis, which helped identify recurring patterns and themes in the data while remaining true to the participants' lived experiences.

## Participants of the Study

This study used purposive sampling, a method commonly employed in qualitative research to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information. Random selection was not appropriate because the study focused on the experiences of beneficiaries in Family Development Sessions (FDS). A total of twenty (20) beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) from the Municipality of Bagamanoc, Catanduanes, participated in the study. The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows:

- a.) Must be an adult who is an active beneficiary of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps),
- b.) Must be serving as a parent leader under the 4Ps program,
- c.) Must have actively participated in Family Development Sessions (FDS)
- d.) Must have been attending FDS for at least one year prior to data collection.

The exclusion criteria included:

- a.) 4Ps beneficiaries who were not serving as parent leaders
- b.) Individuals who had less than one year of participation in FDS
- c.) Those who were no longer active in the 4Ps program
- d.) Beneficiaries who were unwilling or unable to participate in the interviews due to health or personal constraints.

The sample size was considered sufficient as data saturation was reached, with no new insights emerging from the final interviews. This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the beneficiaries' experiences, ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the study findings.

## Research Locale

The research was conducted in Bagamanoc, Catanduanes, Philippines, where the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is actively implemented, and Family Development Sessions are regularly conducted. The locale was chosen because it provided direct access to beneficiaries who had firsthand experience with FDS.

## **Data Gathering Instrument**

The main instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide, designed to collect participants' reflections, perceptions, and challenges regarding FDS. The guide was applied in both group discussions and one-on-one interviews, providing flexibility for participants who preferred a private setting or could not join group sessions. Open-ended questions, along with follow-up prompts, encouraged participants to provide detailed and meaningful responses.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

Prior to data collection, permission from the relevant authorities was secured. The researchers then distributed consent forms and explained the study's purpose, procedures, and participants' right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participants were assured that their responses would not affect their status or benefits as 4Ps beneficiaries. Permission to audio-record the discussions and interviews was also obtained. Data were collected through group discussions for shared reflections and one-on-one interviews for participants who preferred a private setting or could not attend group sessions. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Throughout, privacy and confidentiality were emphasized, and pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Audio recordings from both group and individual interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times to identify meaningful statements and recurring ideas. These statements were coded and organized into categories, which were then refined into themes and subthemes. This systematic approach allowed the researchers to faithfully describe the participants' lived experiences in accordance with Husserlian phenomenology (Husserl, 1931).

## **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through the four key criteria of qualitative research. Credibility was strengthened by expert review of the interview guide by a licensed professional and member checking with participants, while verbatim transcripts ensured accurate representation of experiences. Dependability was maintained through a detailed record of research procedures and decisions. Confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in participants' responses and practicing reflexivity to minimize bias. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

### Perceived outcomes of the FDS program among its participants

#### *Perceived outcomes of the FDS program among its participants in terms of Personal Attitudes*

##### **Theme 1: Self Improvement through Social Interaction**

Self-improvement emerged as a significant outcome of the Family Development Sessions (FDS) program. One participant shared, *“Dakula ang naging epekto kan pagbali ko sa 4Ps. Dahil sa pag-attend ko kan FDS, nag kaugwa akong self-improvement. Dati, masupgon ako at warang pakiamram sa mga nangyayari sa barangay; Mie nakikisalamuha sa iba. Pero munyan na miyembro na kan 4Ps at obligado na mag-attend ki FDS, nasanay na makihalubilo at magkaugwa nin interaksyon sa iba kong mga ka-miyembro sa grupo”* (Being part of the 4Ps made a big difference in my life. Through attending the FDS, I was able to improve myself. I used to be strict and uninterested in what was happening in the barangay; I didn't interact with others. But now that I am a member of 4Ps and required to attend the FDS, I have become accustomed to socializing and having deeper interactions with my fellow group members). This testimony illustrates how the FDS fosters personal growth and social engagement, encouraging beneficiaries to develop interpersonal skills and community involvement.

The researchers Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD) integrates these behavioral, cognitive, and social perspectives to explain how FDS facilitates multidimensional change at the individual, family, and community levels. TSFD posits that self-improvement through social interaction is not only about behavioral compliance or skill acquisition but also about fostering active community participation and empowerment. This holistic approach underscores the dynamic interplay between personal growth and social responsibility, showing how empowered families can become catalysts for sustainable community transformation. The participant's experience exemplifies this synergy, where enforced participation (Operant Conditioning), capacity building (Human Capital), and observational learning (Social Cognitive Theory) converge to produce meaningful social engagement and personal development, which are central to TSFD's framework.

##### **Theme 2. Additional Knowledge**

Participation in the Family Development Sessions (FDS) led to significant knowledge gains among beneficiaries. One participant shared, *“Marami akong natutunan sa FDS may mga topic sa FDS na nakakatulong hindi lang sa aming pamilya maging sa aking sarili, katulad ng mga batas na nag poprotekta sa aking mga anak at maging sa aking karapatan”* (I learned a lot from the FDS; there are topics that help not only our family but also myself, such as laws protecting my children and my rights). This highlights how the program effectively raises awareness about legal rights and family responsibilities, empowering participants to make informed decisions within their households.

Supporting this, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD, 2018) noted that the FDS curriculum covers essential topics like family rights, child protection, parenting, and health, aiming to equip beneficiaries with the knowledge needed to fulfill their roles and protect their families. Additionally, a University of the Philippines Los Baños study by Dy (2018) confirmed that 4Ps beneficiaries highly value FDS for improving their understanding and practical application of family development, resulting in better family management and responsible parenting.

### **Theme 3. Discipline**

Discipline was a key outcome of the Family Development Sessions (FDS). One participant said, *“Nagkaroon ng disiplina sa sarili. Pag FDS lagi sa aming pinapaalala ang mga patakaran ng programa para hindi kami matanggal or mabawasan.”* This highlights how FDS fosters responsibility and compliance among beneficiaries. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (2018) notes that FDS promotes self-discipline to ensure adherence to program rules. Similarly, Manguiat et al. (2018) found that FDS positively influenced attitudes toward responsibility and discipline, essential for continued program participation.

### **Perceived outcomes of the FDS program among its participants in terms of Parenting Skills**

#### **Theme 1. Additional knowledge gained**

Participants reported that the Family Development Sessions (FDS) significantly enhanced their knowledge, especially in effective parenting and child protection. One participant shared, *“Maludog permi amg uro ko pero kan tg turo sa FDS na dapat ang magurang mahinahon pag nakikiistonya sa mga aki para mas masabutan ninda ang tig sasabi ta. Tg apply ko man ito minsan sa mga aki ko pero minsan dae mo man talaga maiiwasan na mag taas ki boses lalo kung ang mga aki dae nag dadangog sa tg iistonya ko sainda.”* This reflects a shift toward more patient and effective communication, which is essential for nurturing positive family relationships. Another participant emphasized the importance of learning about online safety, stating, *“Dakur akong naukudan sa FDS parte sa pagiging sado na magurang arug kan sa OSAEM OSAEC so topic manungod sa online sexual abuse na makatabang lalo na ang mga kabataan ay puro na cellphone. Tg sasabihan ko ang sakuyang mga aki na dili mag basta basta mag para chat sa dili kamidmid.”* This highlights the program’s relevance in addressing contemporary issues faced by families, such as protecting children from online sexual abuse.

These findings are consistent with studies by Gealon (2016) and Manguiat et al. (2018), which emphasize that FDS attendance improves beneficiaries’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to health, education, and family relationships, leading to better communication and responsiveness to children’s needs. The focus on online safety aligns with Mendoza (2023), who underscores the importance of FDS in addressing emerging challenges like digital risks faced by children. From a theoretical perspective, Operant Conditioning Theory explains how positive reinforcement through knowledge

acquisition in FDS encourages participants to adopt better parenting practices and protective behaviors. Human Capital Theory views this learning as an investment in the participants' skills and awareness, enhancing their capacity to safeguard their families. Meanwhile, Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and modeling during FDS sessions, which builds self-efficacy in applying new knowledge about parenting and child protection.

These theories align with the researchers Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD), which posits that FDS facilitates multidimensional growth—behavioral, cognitive, and social—empowering families to improve communication, protect their children, and address modern challenges effectively. Through this integrated approach, FDS contributes to the holistic development and resilience of families and communities, as supported by Dy (2018) and Aguado (2021), who highlight the program's role in family empowerment and community participation.

### ***Perceived outcomes of the FDS program among its participants in terms of Family Relationship***

#### **Theme 1. Improved Communication Between FDS Participants and Their Children**

The lived experiences of participants reveal that the Family Development Sessions (FDS) foster open communication within families. One participant shared, *“Nagkaugwa kami ki bukas na komuniskasyon sa bawat sado. Pagkatapos ng FDS mi pinapabasa ko sa sakong mga aki ang tg istoryahan sa FDS. Dahil digdi nagkakaugwa kami ki pagkakataon na magkaugwa ki topic na mapag huruhuran sa laog kan harong.”* This statement illustrates how FDS encourages families to engage in meaningful dialogue, creating a safe environment for sharing and understanding.

These findings are supported by Manguiat et al. (2018), who found that FDS participation improved parental responsiveness and parent-child communication, which are key to healthy family relationships. Similarly, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD, 2018) noted that FDS enhances communication skills important for conflict resolution and family cohesion. The University of the Philippines Los Baños study conducted by Dy, (2018) also confirmed that beneficiaries view FDS as helpful in improving family communication. However, DSWD (2018) reported that while parent-child communication improved, changes in marital relationships were less significant, indicating a need to strengthen spousal communication within the program.

#### **Theme 2. Improved family dynamics through FDS participation**

*The theme of harmonious relationships is strongly reflected in the lived experiences of Family Development Session (FDS) participants. One participant stated, “Opo, nakatabang ang FDS sa samong pamilya ta kadakul kaming kaaraman na natutunan sa kada meeting. Maski papaano nagging ma magayon man ang pag iribanan mi sa laog kan haring ta maski paaano naiapply ko ang naukudan ko sa FDS. Mas*

*naiintindihan ko na kaipuhan na mas dakuro ang sakung pag sabot sa sakuyang mga aki.” (“Yes, the FDS has helped our family because we learned a lot of knowledge in every meeting. Our relationship at home has improved because I applied what I learned from the FDS. I now better understand the need to be more patient with my children.”) This testimony highlights how FDS contributes to improved family dynamics through increased knowledge and application of positive behaviors.*

Manguiat *et al.* (2018) found that participation in Family Development Sessions (FDS) improved parental responsiveness and parent-child communication—key components of healthy family relationships—and that beneficiaries highly valued FDS for enhancing interpersonal skills, family management, and peer support, which together foster stronger family bonds. These findings underscore the importance of continuous engagement in FDS as a mechanism for empowering parents to become more attentive and nurturing, thereby creating a supportive environment for children’s growth and development.

## **Perceived outcomes of the FDS program among its participants in terms of Social Involvement in the Community**

### **Theme 1. Active Participation**

The theme of Active Participation emerged as a significant outcome of involvement in barangay activities and Family Development Sessions (FDS) under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). This is illustrated through the testimonies of beneficiaries who describe how their engagement in community activities has led to personal growth, social recognition, and leadership opportunities.

One participant shared, *“Dahil sa pagiging aktibo ko sa pag partisipar sa mga paatag at mga patawag sa barangay nagkaugwa ako ki pagkakataon na mamidmidan sa komunidad. Dahil digdi nagkaugwa ako ki position sa barangay maski sa diit na panahon.”* This testimony exemplifies how active participation facilitated access to leadership roles and social standing within the community. It aligns with the findings of Mendoza (2023) and Jumlaail and Alberto (2024), who emphasize that FDS not only enhances parenting skills and promotes positive family values but also fosters community involvement, thereby empowering beneficiaries to take on leadership roles and contribute actively to their communities.

Another participant expressed a more nuanced perspective: *“Bilang sarong 4Ps beneficiary, ako ay aktibo sa mga patawag sa barangay. Pero pag abot sa mga benepisyo na nakukuha ko wara masyado.”* This highlights the intrinsic social value of participation beyond material gains. Despite limited tangible benefits, the participant remains motivated to engage actively in community activities. This observation is supported by studies from Gealon (2016) and Manguiat *et al.*, which confirm that attendance in FDS improves beneficiaries’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to health, education, and family relationships. These improvements foster a sense of social responsibility and personal fulfillment that sustains continued participation.

A third testimony further illustrates the empowering effect of active involvement: *“Mas naging aktibo ako sa pakikilahok sa barangay. Mie na ako nasupog ipaisi ang akung saloobin bilang miyembro ng barangay.”* This statement reflects how consistent community engagement through FDS provides a platform for self-expression and personal empowerment. Dy (2018) and Aguado (2021) support this view, highlighting the relevance and effectiveness of FDS in fostering empowerment and social competency among beneficiaries.

These testimonies and supporting studies reveal that active participation in barangay activities and FDS under the 4Ps program contributes significantly to personal development, social empowerment, and community leadership.

## **Personal meanings participants assigned to their participations in FDS**

### **Theme 1. Personal Development**

The theme of Personal Development is strongly evident in the lived experiences of Family Development Sessions (FDS) participants. One participant shared, *“Kan nagpuon akong mag atindir kan FDS bilang sarong kondisyon kan programa, nakaukod ako na makihalubilo sa ibang tayo. Medyo nagkakaugwa ako ki pagbabago dati masupgon ako munyan dae na masyado ta pag nag FDS kaipuhan mong magtaram ta nag aapod ang worker kun ano nag naukudan sa FDS. Dahil digdi nakaukod ako na mag istorya sa inutan na dakul na nag dadangog dae masyadong tg tatakigan.”* (When I started to attend FDS as one of the conditions of the program, I have learned to socialize with others. Slowly, I changed from being so timid and shy; I was able to speak in front of the crowd without shaking since in FDS we are often called to speak and share). This testimony highlights how FDS fosters confidence and social skills, enabling participants to overcome shyness and actively engage with others.

These experiences align with Operant Conditioning Theory, where positive reinforcement through participation and sharing encourages continued engagement and personal growth. Human Capital Theory views the acquisition of new skills and knowledge as an investment in personal capabilities that improve social and family functioning. Meanwhile, Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and active participation in building self-efficacy and confidence.

### **Theme 2. Additional Knowledge Gained**

The theme of Additional Knowledge Gained is clearly reflected in the experiences of Family Development Sessions (FDS) participants. One participant expressed, *“Marami akong natutunan sa FDS mula ng ako ay nakasali sa 4Ps. May mga naukudan ako na dati mie ko aram. So iba nagigibu ko so iba mie ta may mga nakasanayan na ako sa pagpadakula kan mga aki ko.”* (I have learned a lot from the Family Development Sessions (FDS) since I joined the 4Ps. I have gained knowledge about things I didn't know before. Some of it I now practice, while some I don't because I am already used to

the way I raise my children.) This statement highlights the acquisition of new knowledge and the selective integration of learning into existing parenting practices.

These outcomes are supported by the comprehensive evaluation of the FDS conducted by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD, 2018), which found that beneficiaries perceive the FDS as significant and useful, particularly in terms of knowledge acquisition related to child protection, children's education, health, nutrition, and active citizenship. Similarly, Manguiat et al. (2018) study confirmed that family development modules greatly influence the family life of beneficiaries by providing relevant information on parenting, family planning, nutrition, and health care. Additionally, it was further found that FDS participation improves parental responsiveness and positively affects children's behavior by enhancing knowledge and practices on familial relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, Operant Conditioning Theory explains how positive reinforcement through knowledge acquisition encourages continued learning and behavior change. Human Capital Theory views this learning as an investment in personal skills and capabilities that enhance family welfare. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning and modeling during FDS sessions, which builds self-efficacy in applying new knowledge.

These theoretical perspectives align with the researchers Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD), which frames FDS as a catalyst for multidimensional growth—behavioral, cognitive, and social—empowering families to improve their knowledge and practices for better family functioning and well-being.

## **Challenges encountered of the participants in attending and engaging with the FDS**

### **Theme 1. Communication within the group**

Effective communication among group members is critical for the success of community programs such as the Family Development Sessions (FDS) under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). However, participants reported challenges related to timely information dissemination. One participants stated: "*Minsan hindi nasasabihan agad ng parent leaders ang ibang kamiyembro namin. Mie ta man ta sinda masisi ta kadakur man ninda obligasyon tapos dae man sinda na sweldo sa pagiging parent leader. Kaya kadakur nag habo maging parent leader ta kun dae mainform mabawasan sisisihon ang parent leader.*" (Occasionally, parent leaders do not promptly inform other members.

This delay is understandable given their numerous responsibilities and the fact that they receive no financial compensation for their role as parent leaders. If the grants are reduced, the parent leaders will be blamed.) This testimony highlights the communication gap caused by the heavy workload and voluntary nature of parent leaders' roles, which may reduce their capacity to keep all members informed. The lack of financial incentives further complicates their motivation to fulfill communication duties effectively. Additionally,

Rivera (2016) discusses how communication practices between beneficiaries and government implementers affect program perception and participation, emphasizing the need for clear, timely information dissemination. Moreover, interpersonal dynamics among members also affect communication during FDS. One participant noted: “Ung kailangan kong makisalamuha sa ibang kamiyembro ko pag FDS maski dae kami good terms sa kada sado, saro din iyan sa challenge sako kada mag attend ki FDS.” (I find it challenging to interact with other members during the Family Development Sessions (FDS), especially when we are not on good terms with each other. This is one of the difficulties I face whenever I attend FDS.) This highlights that strained relationships within the group can further hinder open communication and active participation, adding a social dimension to the logistical and motivational challenges faced by parent leaders.

Mendoza (2023) and Jumail and Alberto (2024) also emphasize that while FDS promotes community involvement, the burden on parent leaders can hinder effective communication. The importance of communication is further underscored by Gealon (2016) and Manguiat *et al.*, who found that improved communication through FDS attendance enhances beneficiaries’ knowledge and attitudes, which in turn sustains engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, Operant Conditioning Theory explains that the lack of financial incentives and heavy workload reduces positive reinforcement for parent leaders, which may decrease their motivation to communicate promptly and effectively. Providing recognition or other rewards could serve as positive reinforcement to improve communication behaviors. Human Capital Theory highlights that communication skills are valuable assets; investing in training for parent leaders can enhance their capacity to disseminate information effectively, thus improving program outcomes. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of social modeling and observational learning—if parent leaders observe peers effectively communicating and receiving social approval, they are more likely to adopt similar behaviors. However, strained interpersonal relationships among members can negatively impact this social learning process. Finally, the Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD) integrates these behavioral, cognitive, and social dimensions, suggesting that addressing communication challenges requires holistic strategies that reinforce motivation, build skills, and foster positive social interactions within the community.

## **Theme 2. Multiple Tasks Performed**

Another significant theme is the difficulty beneficiaries face in balancing multiple responsibilities. A participant shared: “*May mga pagkakataon na nag kakasabay sabay ang mga obligasyon mi sa harong, sa eskwelahan, importanteng gibuhon o trabaho, kaya minsan mie nakaka attend or nag papaproxy na sana para dae mabawasan sa grants na marerecieve. Sayang man kan bawas, dakulang tabang na ito sa pang urualdaw.*” (There are times when our obligations at home, at school, and important tasks overlap, so sometimes we are unable to attend or have to send a proxy to avoid a reduction in the grants we receive. Although it is unfortunate to have any reduction, this assistance is a big help for our daily needs.) This statement reflects the real-life challenges beneficiaries

face in juggling family, education, work, and program participation. The pressure to maintain grant eligibility despite conflicting obligations sometimes leads to proxy attendance, which may affect the quality of participation. Research by Dy (2018) and Aguado (2021) acknowledges these practical barriers, noting that time constraints and role overload are common challenges for participants in community programs like FDS. Mangotara (2024) also found that beneficiaries often have limited understanding of FDS modules due to competing demands, which affects their engagement. Despite these challenges, Gealon (2016) and Manguiat *et al.* (2018) confirm that FDS attendance positively influences health, education, and family relationships, motivating beneficiaries to continue participating whenever possible.

From a theoretical standpoint, Operant Conditioning Theory suggests that the fear of grant reduction acts as a form of negative reinforcement, motivating beneficiaries to attend or send proxies despite competing demands. However, this pressure may also lead to reduced quality of engagement. Human Capital Theory views the time and effort invested in attending FDS as an investment in personal and family development, but competing responsibilities can limit this investment's effectiveness. Social Cognitive Theory highlights how observational learning and self-efficacy influence beneficiaries' ability to manage multiple roles; support systems and positive role models can enhance their capacity to balance these demands. The Transformative Synergy Theory of Family Development (TSFD) integrates these behavioral, cognitive, and social factors, emphasizing that addressing role overload requires comprehensive strategies that support time management, provide flexible program delivery, and strengthen social support networks.

### **Essence of Experience**

The experience of participating in the Family Development Sessions (FDS) is marked by a delicate balance between growth and challenge. For the participants, FDS serves as a space of personal development, where confidence is nurtured, shyness gives way to active engagement, and social skills are strengthened. One participant shared, *"FDS helped me come out of my shell and engage more with others. I feel more confident in expressing myself and connecting with people."* It is also a source of practical knowledge, offering insights and strategies that participants incorporate into their daily lives, particularly in parenting and family management. As another participant expressed, *"Marami akong natutunan sa FDS mula ng ako ay nakasali sa 4Ps. May mga naukudan ako na dati mie ko aram. So iba nagigibu ko so iba mie ta may mga nakasanayan na ako sa pagpadakula kan mga aki ko"*.

At the same time, participants encounter significant challenges. Communication gaps arise due to the voluntary and demanding nature of parent leaders' roles, compounded by limited financial incentives and occasional strained relationships, which can affect coordination and participation. Beneficiaries also grapple with balancing FDS engagement alongside multiple personal, family, and work responsibilities.

Despite these obstacles, the essence of FDS participation lies in its ability to empower individuals while fostering resilience and social connection. The sessions not only impart knowledge but also create an environment where participants learn to navigate challenges collectively, deepen their sense of belonging, and grow both personally and communally. FDS, therefore, is experienced not just as a program or activity, but as a meaningful journey of learning, adaptation, and transformation.

## **Conclusions**

The study finds that the Family Development Sessions (FDS) under the 4Ps program positively impact participants' personal and family development. They improve communication, emotional openness, and shared responsibilities, leading to stronger parent-child relationships, though less impact is seen in couple relationships. FDS also enhances self-confidence, social skills, and parenting knowledge, promoting more responsible and informed family practices. However, participation is hindered by communication issues, leadership burdens, interpersonal conflicts, and time constraints, sometimes resulting in proxy attendance. Overall, while FDS is an effective tool for family empowerment, improvements in communication systems, leader support, and flexible delivery are needed to maximize its benefits.

## **Recommendations**

Future researchers are encouraged to explore the long-term effects of Family Development Sessions (FDS) through longitudinal studies conducted across diverse contexts to better capture sustained changes in family and community life. Further investigation into the limited impact of FDS on couple relationships is also recommended, particularly in identifying barriers to spousal engagement and developing strategies that better address marital dynamics.

Additionally, assessing the effectiveness of alternative delivery methods, such as digital or modular formats, is suggested to improve participation and learning outcomes. Examining the roles, workload, and support systems of parent leaders is likewise important in promoting more sustainable program implementation.

Finally, the use of quantitative or mixed-method approaches, alongside qualitative methods, is strongly recommended to capture a wider range of perspectives and generate more comprehensive, reliable, and generalizable findings that can better inform future program improvements.

## **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The study strictly observed ethical principles. Participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of data. Privacy was prioritized, especially during one-on-one interviews, to create a safe environment for participants to share their experiences openly.

In addition, the researchers utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely for the purpose of enhancing the clarity, organization, and overall quality of the manuscript. All core ideas, interpretations, and analyses remained the original work of the researchers, with AI serving only as a support tool for refinement and presentation.

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