



## The experiences of grantees of Benguet Provincial Scholarship Program

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### Abstract

Poverty issues today affect the economy and societal growth of the nation. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal number one is to end poverty, and it is believed that to alleviate poverty is through education. With that, government agencies and non-government organizations provide financial assistance to students to pursue their studies. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the experiences of the grantees of the Benguet Provincial Scholarship Program. A qualitative research design was utilized making use of questionnaire and interview to gather data from the grantees. In this study, being motivated for their academics, relieved of their school fees, and professional and personal development has been experienced by the grantees. However, difficulty during the application has been experienced by some grantees. Addressing these problems through strict implementation of the guidelines should be done. On the other hand, grantees and aspiring grantees should be guided in the implementing rules and regulations of this program.

**Keywords:** Scholarship, financial assistance, experiences

### Introduction

Education has been valued as the most significant legacy that parents can impart to their children. Having a better education opens opportunities that would ensure a promising future and eventually lift them out of poverty (Maligalig et al., 2010) <sup>[17]</sup>. Additionally, it has a substantial effect on the development of efficient methods to positively affect the economy of a particular country, region, or the cumulative economy of the world (Sahatciu, 2016) <sup>[36]</sup>.

However, not everyone can manage to go to college or to continue his education due to poverty. Indeed, one of the United Nations Development Programme goals is that by 2030, poverty will be ended in all its forms everywhere, ensuring significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources through enhanced and developed cooperation in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries and creating policy frameworks at the regional, national, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions. Also, they are promoting Education for All (EFA) from country to country (UNESCO, 2020).

On the other hand, educational institutions in areas of high poverty have tried to meet the needs of their students by establishing programs that attend to their basic needs in order to establish an environment for successful learning to take place (Wilson, 2012) <sup>[41]</sup>. Governments and individuals with lower socioeconomic status are prioritizing the importance of education for it provides knowledge, skill, technique, information, and wisdom to their duties and rights towards their family, society, and the nation (Shahidul & Zehadul Karim, 2015; Prasad & Gupta, 2020) <sup>[33, 24]</sup> aside from escaping poverty while building up harmony and democratic society to express their voices and views to showcase their potentials and becoming a better people in the community (Idris et al., 2012) <sup>[12]</sup>. However, with a low-income family's severely limited resources, such as access to technology, resources, and requirements required by the school (Rosenshine, 2012) <sup>[32]</sup>, education tends to be less

prioritized over more basic needs. Hence, the family's chances to move out from poverty are unlikely.

In the Philippines, it was indicated in the 1987 constitution that "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all." The right of every Filipino to quality primary education is further emphasized in Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. Along with Republic Act 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act, these laws reaffirm the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all Filipinos by providing children with free and compulsory education at the elementary and high school level. In August 2017, the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931) was enacted and passed into Law. This is to allow Filipino citizens full access to quality education by providing adequate funding and to increase the participation rate in tertiary education. This gives preference to the poor but academically proficient and highly motivated students.

This study highlights that despite poverty, Filipino families still value education as a means to finding better employment opportunities (Infante et al., 2014) <sup>[13]</sup>. To enable students to pursue their studies locally and abroad, Government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) provides ways in the form of financial assistance, scholarship, and study loans who has shown excellence in academic or athletic aspect (Daz et al., 2016) <sup>[8]</sup>. Indeed, studies on financial assistance have played a significant role in alleviating the educational expenses of students to finish their degree, attend classes regularly, aim for higher grades, and participate in varied school activities, as well as focus on their lessons and projects (Purigay, 2020) <sup>[26]</sup>. Examples of scholarships from various institutions that help students to continue their schooling are the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's), Commission of Higher Education (CHED), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Government Services Insurance System (GSIS), National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), Technical and Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)

among others. Indeed, scholarship is paving the way to help vulnerable, unprivileged, or disadvantaged students access college, which can increase the frequency of degrees achieved within the country or abroad (Cosentino et al., 2019) <sup>[7]</sup>. Relatively, provinces in the country like the Provincial Government of Benguet, believe in inclusivity and recognize the right of every individual to equal opportunity. They have started to establish a college educational scholarship program through Provincial Ordinance No. 04-92, helping deserving and willing students to finish their studies despite socioeconomic conditions.

This study is anchored on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a motivational theory in psychology compromising a tie model of human needs. This theory is based on the idea that there are particular needs that all humans must satisfy to reach their full potential. One needed thing for challenged students is the bottom needs before reaching the top needs, which scholarship programs can mitigate.

The objective of this study is to determine the experiences of the grantees of Benguet Provincial Scholarship Program. It is good to know the grantees experiences in a specific scholarship is important to identify its resiliency and impact, enhance its needed qualifications, augment its services to applicants, and determine its performance. There is less research about this type of study, and it will be a valuable source for other researchers discussing the experiences of grantees in a scholarship.

### Design and Methodology

The study used qualitative research design to find out the scholar's experiences from the time they applied until they graduated. After reliability testing on the researcher's questionnaire, communication letters, and consent were secured. 13 grantees participated in the interview and served as key informants. While 282 grantees shared their experiences through google form. This study was conducted from March, 2023 to June of 2023. Thematic analysis was used to treat data gathered. Further, the researcher practiced and applied the principles of ethics and data privacy throughout the study.

### Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Finding

#### 1. Relieved on their school fees

Based on the preliminary results of the family income and expenditure survey in 2021, poverty incidence among the population was recorded at 18.1 percent. This translates to around 19.99 million Filipinos who live below the poverty threshold of about Php 12,030 per month for a family of five (PSA, 2022). In the Cordillera Administrative Region, 6.9% of Cordilleran families were poor in 2021, translating to 30.74 thousand poor Cordilleran. In Benguet province, Poverty Incidence among families has decreased the poverty incidence to 6.2 from 6.6 (PSA, 2019). Family income is considered a vital socioeconomic status factor affecting the student's achievement (Akhtar, 2012) <sup>[2]</sup>. It is the primary support that a student needs in order to become persistent in their studies (Vanthournout et al., 2012) <sup>[39]</sup>. Aside from the financial support, moral and material support by the parents is a big help in encouraging the students to perform academically in school (Machebe et al., 2017) <sup>[16]</sup>.

From the data gathered, grantees' responses support how the scholarship program helped ease the burden of the financial demands of schooling—having the grant they received

incredibly helped them to pay their tuition fees. Aside from being able to pay his school fees, the amount given to them helped them to pay their rent and allowance. Based on their statements, they were relieved from their financial difficulty, indicating a good experience they had. Supplementary, it is aided by the study (Casimiro, 2019) <sup>[5]</sup> in which 4P's grantees were helped to lessen financial worries such as tuition, rent, and allowance. However, the grant is not enough to augment the school expenses of the students, particularly courses in the medical field, students in private institutions, and others. Some grantees work while studying. Working on online jobs, fast-food crews, school jobs (student assistants), and summer jobs are ways experienced by these working student grantees.

Further, in the study conducted by Williams (2014), as cited by Pregoner et al. (2020) <sup>[25]</sup>, the reasons why students work are due to budgetary needs, to meet a quick or basic necessity, and to help understudies in the future. One of the driving forces of working while studying is that they want to support themselves financially and be independent. The increase in working students can be attributed to a desire to minimize loans and debts (Kavarana, 2013, as cited by Abeoja et al., 2019). Because of the desire of these grantees to finish their studies, grantees serve as an internal motivation to send themselves to school. On the benefits of working student according to Ali (2017) <sup>[1]</sup>, working while studying is the key to success and is the foundation of one's future and career.

Indeed, the scholarship helps students ease studying without worrying about their school fees, but other students are still engaged with work while studying to help themselves to be free from fees.

#### 2. Motivated for their academic achievement.

Most of the grantees pointed out that being a scholar, they were self-motivated and persisted in finishing their studies. Aside from the relief of their school fees, being a scholar motivates them in their academics. Anchored with Long (n.d), Cappeli and Won (2016) <sup>[4]</sup>, and Nguyen et al. (2019) <sup>[19]</sup>, they have discussed that financial aid has the potential to help community college students persist in their goals and be motivated to perform in completing their degrees. In addition, it helps students to attend classes to achieve high and good grades, resulting in outstanding academic performance in general (Montilla et al., 2015; Qi et al., 2022; Sivatte & Gabaldon, 2023; Lin, 2016; Casimiro, 2019) <sup>[18, 27, 37, 14, 5]</sup>.

Furthermore, Purigay (2020) <sup>[26]</sup>, on the assessment of the implementation of the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary (UNIFAST) education, also found that financial assistance motivates students to attend class regularly and explore knowledge and skills. Also, it allows them to participate in various school activities and focus on their lessons and projects. Thus, students' financial aid becomes increasingly essential for persistence (Stewart et al., 2015) <sup>[38]</sup>.

Therefore, having a scholarship motivates them in their academic achievement. Some of them received flying colors during their graduation. However, the study found that there are factors hindering students from completing their studies within the prescribed duration. The majority of them incurred failed subjects, incomplete grades, pregnancy, and addiction to vices, among others.

Some of the primary and general factors hindering students from completing their studies or degrees, which are corroborated by other studies, are lack of study skills, poor time management, inability to prioritize school work, and lack of a mentoring program (Hako & Shikongo, 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>, lack of guidance support, lack of general college knowledge (Temple, 2009) <sup>[34]</sup>, financial problems, poor academic performance (Orazlan et al., 2020) <sup>[20]</sup>, pregnancy, vices (Watson et al., 2014) <sup>[40]</sup>, stress management (Guimba et al., 2015) <sup>[10]</sup>, and absenteeism (Galgo, 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Indeed, the payout that they were receiving was their great motivation to continue achieving good grades to maintain their scholarships. However, incoming grantees should balance their school and outside duties and responsibilities to maintain their grants, which can help them throughout their study completion.

### 3. Developed their personal, social and professional development.

The provincial government organized activities that help grantees share ideas and information suitable for their development. These activities are Christmas parties, tree planting, participation in Adivay festival activities, and others. Grantees pointed out that they could develop their interpersonal skills, self-awareness, essential life skills, emotional quotient, positive interactions, and self-esteem. It helped them to understand their colleagues and address their concerns and priorities effectively. Indeed, other students have also increased positive benefits in their personal and academic performances by joining activities inside and outside the school or co-curricular activities (Rahman et al., 2021; Rathore et al., 2018; Dodke & Dubey, 2022) <sup>[28, 29]</sup>.

Prajapati et al. (2017) <sup>[21]</sup> cited Albertyn et al. (2004) that joining activities enhanced critical thinking skills, further impacting living life activity, being responsible for current and future jobs, and planning. Aside from academic achievement, extracurricular activities develop self-esteem, resiliency, and character development by giving them skills required for personal success, such as leadership skills, time management skills, and the ability to accept constructive criticism (Christion, 2013).

Generally, improving social, emotional, social adjustment and development, psychosocial competencies, and prevention of problems such as abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence, and bullying can be resolved by letting children engaged in attending trainings and activities (Roodbari et al., 2013; Vranda & Rao, 2011; & Puspakumara, 2013) <sup>[31]</sup>.

Therefore, the scholarship that the grantees in this study have experienced has a significant impact on their personal, social, and professional development aside from the cash that they received in paying their school fees, rent, and allowances. It is good that aspiring grantees should be guided in implementing rules and regulations. In this way, they will have outstanding academic achievement while motivated to maintain their grades, which will benefit their future work.

### 4. Difficulty in the application process

The majority of the grantees pointed out that they experienced difficulty in processing their applications. Having been settled in the far-flung community, transportation and lack of financial resources made it difficult to process their application. With the number of applicants vying for a scholarship, the probability of being

chosen was low. Some of the grantees needed help accessing information. However, today, with the help of social media, barangay officials, and reliable sources of information, the residents are aware that such programs exist, as was also mentioned by Ritu and Madaan (2018) <sup>[30]</sup>. Based on their statements, majority of them did not encounter problems from the time of being a scholar; however, difficulty in the application process has been encountered that needs to be addressed, such as a) unguaranteed selection, b) lack of financial resources, c) difficulty in accessing to information, and among others. These should be addressed right away to help students who are qualified and deserving to fill the slots provided.

Despite the negative experiences of the scholars, they pushed forward to fulfill their goals. This is also supported in the study of Alda (2022) <sup>[3]</sup> on the lived experiences of student-scholars under the Expanded Students Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGP-PA) in which they challenged themselves to do better, drove to study, and motivated themselves to succeed. Infante et al. (2014) <sup>[13]</sup> also concluded that despite poverty, Filipino families still value education as a means to finding better employment opportunities. Even those married individuals prioritized education as a means to find better employment.

Throughout their personal and professional development, grantees encountered challenges and failures. Nevertheless, as a scholar, relief from their school fees helped them be motivated in their academics and persist in achieving their goals. Rather than seeing the challenges as a problem, they stayed resilient to develop proper approaches and overcome issues in their professional and social life. There were grantees who incurred failed grades for some reason, and others were terminated, but they were satisfied to pursue their studies. Some of them were considered to correct their performances.

Grantees who considered their lapses made them thankful and strived to do better. However, terminated grantees changed the course of their lives in positive ways. Losing a scholarship turned into a regret for the grantees who were terminated. On the profile of the grantees presented, some grantees could pursue their studies and become successful. Some were public school elementary teachers, Philippine Army enlisted personnel, Administrative Officer, Policemen, Engineer, Medical Laboratory Technologist, and others.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Based from the experiences shared by the scholars, it is indeed that this scholarship is a great help to the students who wants to acquire higher levels of education. Aside from the cash they received in paying their school fees and rent, having this scholarship has a significant impact on grantees personal, social, and professional development. They were motivated for their academic achievement. However, difficulty in the application process has been experienced by some scholars. Despite the challenges experienced, they push forward to fulfill their goals. It is recommended that the BPS should find ways to strengthen the implementation of the program so that people from the underprivilege class could continue to acquire higher level of education. Grantees and aspiring scholars should be guided on the implementing rules and regulations of this program for not be terminated from the program.

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