

Indigent Students in the Academe: The Role of Motivations, Resiliency, Challenges and Needs in their Academic Journey

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Abstract: *Indigent students are not surprising in the Philippines but how they can survive in the academe of higher learning makes their story interesting. The study sought to determine the motivations, resiliency, challenges and needs of these indigent students in the tertiary level. This is a quantitative descriptive-correlational method of research employing the use of interview and questionnaire techniques. The 240 indigent students of Tagbilaran City College were the respondents of this study. It was found out that they are extremely motivated in 6 out of 7 motivations. Furthermore, nearly 93% of them are commendably strongly to exceptionally resilient. The challenges on system and time management and non-tuition fee expenses made them feel difficult to survive in College. There is no significant difference of the students' needs in the three academic programs. Studies and financial management topped among these needs. Their level of resiliency and perceived challenges have significant correlation. For them to be helped perform academically better and survive in the academe, financial help, better communication of the lecturers and nutritious food should be addressed. It is strongly recommended that the school come up with institutional financial aid policies.*

Keywords: Indigent Students, Indigence, Motivations, Resiliency, Challenges

1. Introduction

Poverty and inequality in the Philippines remains a challenge [2]. In fact, the full year 2018 poverty incidence among population, or the proportion of poor Filipinos whose per capita income is not sufficient to meet their basic food and non-food needs, was estimated at 16.6 percent, translated to 17.6 million Filipinos who lived below the poverty threshold [12]. With this million souls existing under extremely miserable living conditions, indigence is inseparable from the lives of the million Filipino students. Based on the 2017 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), there were 3.6 million out-of-school children and youth (OSCY). Of the 3.6 million OSCYs, 83.1% were 16-24 years old youth who are not in school, not gainfully employed and have not finished college or post-secondary course [14]. With national development as the ultimate goal, the Philippine government invested in the future of the youth. In fact, the Republic Act No. 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which mandates the free tuition and miscellaneous fees in local and state universities and colleges, is in full swing [10]. With the government's 'No one is left behind' policy, the law on free tertiary education, regardless of beliefs, gender, and socioeconomic status, assures every Filipino equal access to education.

Since August 2017, when the free tuition law took effect, more students from different high schools have taken an interest to attend college [11]. College enrolment surged among low-income students [5]. Students from indigent families flocked in college. Their presence changed the face of Philippine Tertiary Educational landscape. At the same time, their perspective in life shifted. Their usual routine of how to feed their stomach in a day may have been exacerbated to how to survive in the academe. Considering their status quo, they are prone to risks. The academic pressures, the environment full of diversity, their non-tuition fee expenses and many others pose them threats. In fact, a college institution offering education exclusive for students from low income families had significant turned out in its enrollees after a semester in 2019 due to financial problems [1] and academic pressures.

Hence, despite free tertiary education, indigent students still have reasons to discontinue schooling. These reasons prompted the researcher to explore on the cases of indigent students in the tertiary level. This investigation sought to shed light on their motivations, resiliency, challenges and needs and to find out how they can be helped perform academically better and survive in education of higher learning.

2. Objective

This study was conducted to determine the motivations, resiliency, challenges and needs of indigent students in the tertiary level. With the significant findings, the study hoped that the school administration may be guided to come up with programs intended for the subjects of the study.

3. Methodology

This is a quantitative descriptive-correlational method of research employing the use of interview and questionnaire techniques. Through purposive sampling, the 240 indigent students, who are Alternative Learning System, Old and K-12 curriculum graduates of Tagbilaran City College were the respondents of this study. The 240 respondents were composed of first year students from the three academic programs: Office Administration, Tourism Management and Entrepreneurship. The respondents brought the questionnaires home and returned them through the class mayors 2 days after. The study took place during the first week of December 2019.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the motivations to study of the indigent students. It reveals that they are extremely motivated to study in college for financial stability, preparation for future family, gain knowledge and skills for job security, personal satisfaction and development, better career opportunities and social skills development. All these areas 'correspond exactly' to their reasons of getting college education. All these six are reasons to have better and comfortable life. It implies that the respondents

are full of whims and schemes in life. It also connotes the idea of no focus or clear goal in studying college. Since they have pervasive reasons to study in college, the tendency is they might get lost. Too many reasons would lead to uncertainty. Living by the social norms highly motivated them as well. This means society's expectation over someone's decision to get education is still at work.

Among these motivations, financial stability with the mean of 4.75 tops the reason of their decision to be in college. Making more money is what drives them to go to college. Their personal experience and background of being deprived financially explains this tendency. In the minds of people who experience the worst of indigence dwells the idea that money can solve everything. Money can give a comfortable life. A postsecondary degree gives the opportunity to pursue high paying careers [9].

Their personal background and experience gave them the insight to prepare for their future family. This implies that they don't want their future children to suffer the same fate. To struggle and live in scarcity is something they don't like their children to experience. Item no.9 in the questionnaire, (Part I: Motivation) 'to set an example for my children' got an individual score of 4.56 with a qualitative description of 'Corresponds a lot' which means extremely motivated. This insinuates the precept that they want their future children to dream and get educated.

Table 1: Indigent Students' Motivation to Study

| Motivations | Mean | Rank | Verbal Interpretation |
|--|------|------|-----------------------|
| Financial Stability | 4.75 | 1 | Extremely Motivated |
| Gain Knowledge and Skills for Job Security | 4.41 | 3 | Extremely Motivated |
| Personal Satisfaction and Development | 4.38 | 4 | Extremely Motivated |
| Preparation for Future Family | 4.57 | 2 | Extremely Motivated |
| Better Career Opportunities | 4.27 | 5.5 | Extremely Motivated |
| Social Skills Development | 4.27 | 5.5 | Extremely Motivated |
| Living by the social norms | 3.99 | 7 | Highly Motivated |

Legend:

| Mean | Qualitative Description | Verbal Interpretation |
|-----------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 4.20-5.00 | Corresponds exactly | Extremely Motivated |
| 3.40-4.19 | Corresponds a lot | Highly Motivated |
| 2.60-3.39 | Corresponds moderately | Moderately Motivated |
| 1.80-2.59 | Corresponds a little | Slightly Motivated |
| 1.00-1.79 | Does not correspond at all | Poorly Motivated |

Table 2 presents the level of resiliency of the indigent students. The data shows that 46.25 % or 111 out of 240 respondents fall under exceptional level of resiliency. The respondents with exceptional level of resiliency are very resilient most of the time and rarely fail to bounce back whatever life throws at them. They believe in making their own luck. Simply put, they are very confident to stand unmoved by whatever circumstances they meet in life. Since they are used to living a life full of challenges, their faith, patience and life skills have already been formed. Thus, nearly half of the respondents, no matter what they face in college, they can stand firm.

Furthermore, a whopping 47.08 % or 113 of the total respondents with a mean of 3.53 with a qualitative description of 'Strongly Agree' are classified under strong level of resiliency. These students are pretty good at rolling with the punches and they have an impressive track record of turning setbacks into opportunities. Financial distress because of the

non-tuition fee expenses, troubles due to system loss and undefined time management (both with Qualitative Description of being 'Difficult' in Table 3) academic distress due to a number of subject requirements and social anxieties, which are slightly challenging (in Table 3) are just some of the setbacks that the indigent students face. With strong level of resiliency, these students can turn these setbacks into opportunities of learning. They don't see them as threats but as chances to their advantage, to build and develop themselves.

On the other hand, only 3.33 % or 8 out of 240 respondents are under developing level. These indigent students, although they may not always feel at the mercy of events, would in fact benefit significantly from developing aspects of their behavior. Meaning, they gain insights from their experiences. 'Charge to experience' may become their common line.

With a composite mean of 3.1, the indigent students have strong level of resiliency. Meaning, they are pretty good at rolling with the punches and they have an impressive track record of turning setbacks into opportunities. Generally speaking, this data speaks that the students are prepared for challenges. The more resilient they are, fewer the challenges they feel difficult (refer to Tables 2 & 3). Table 7 supports this idea where challenges and level of resiliency correlate with each other. Thus, facing with the challenges (in Table 3), they can't just surrender.

Table 2: Indigent Students' Level of Resiliency, N=240

| Student's Responses | | | Level of Resiliency |
|---------------------|----------------|------|---------------------|
| Frequency | Percentage | Mean | |
| 111 | 46.25% | 4.51 | Exceptional Level |
| 113 | 47.08 % | 3.53 | Strong Level |
| 8 | 3.33% | 2.82 | Established Level |
| 8 | 3.33% | 1.52 | Developing level |
| | Composite Mean | 3.1 | Strong Level |

Legend:

| Mean | Level of Resiliency |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 4.01-5.00 | Exceptional level |
| 3.01-4.00 | Strong Level |
| 2.01-3.00 | Established Level |
| 1.00-2.00 | Developing level |

Shown in Table 3 are the challenges perceived by the indigent students. The table revealed that 'non-tuition fee expenses with a mean of 2.71 is a difficult challenge faced by the indigent students. This challenge includes their food allowance, board and lodging, fare for their transportation, expenses for the subject requirements, and others. This issue involves finances. With parents earning meager income and they don't have another source, they cannot sustain their needs. When they were asked what factor may be improved to help them perform better, 'Financial Help' received a score of 64.17 % or equivalent of 111 out of 240 respondents (Table 5). Money for their non-tuition fee expenses is of great concern that caused a significant turned out of enrollees in the City College [1].

Furthermore, they found it 'difficult' or challenging for them to manage their time and to practice a system (Mean=2.66) of doing things. Their organization skills have not been mastered. Poor time management results to piling up their school-related projects and assignments. Much time has been wasted for not following a system in doing things. Based on the interviews, students said they did not know where to begin their school-related works. Sleepless nights were spent to meet deadlines.

On the contrary, having an established level of resiliency (Mean=3.1, Table 2) helps them face emotional and physical problems, psychosocial anxieties and academic pressures. For them, they are just slightly challenging given the fact that these students are used to this kind of issues in their childhood. For

some reasons, they have already built their self-confidence when it comes to these problems; however, these challenges should not be ignored for they might cause mental health problems in a later time if they remain unresolved. Little things when accumulated become uncontrollable.

Table 3: Indigent Students' Perceived Challenges

| Perceived Challenges | Rank | Mean | Qualitative Description |
|--|------|------|-------------------------|
| System and Time Management | 2 | 2.66 | Difficult |
| Non-tuition Fee Expenses | 1 | 2.71 | Difficult |
| Emotional and Physical Health Problems | 3 | 2.33 | Slightly Difficult |
| Psychosocial Anxieties | 5 | 2.04 | Slightly Difficult |
| Academic Pressures | 4 | 2.15 | Slightly Difficult |

Legend:

| Mean | Qualitative Description | Interpretation |
|-----------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 3.26-4.00 | Very Difficult | Very Challenging |
| 2.51-3.25 | Difficult | Challenging |
| 1.76-2.50 | Slightly Difficult | Slightly Challenging |
| 1.00-1.75 | Not Difficult | Not Challenging |

Table 4 reveals the truth that the respondents believe that every need is very important for them. It connotes the idea of generality, which may result to ambiguity. When ranked according to their means, the needs for their 'Studies' (Mean= 4.20, 4.28, 4.18) appears to be the top priority among all needs for the indigent students. They are described as 'extremely important' and 'very important' respectively by the students in the three academic programs. Their studies are their priority. Table 1 supports this data for they are extremely motivated to study because they believe that finishing college and earning a degree would someday give them financial stability (Mean=4.75), prepare for their future family (Mean=4.57) and gain knowledge and skills for job security (Mean= 4.41). Education is their hope to improve their way of living.

4.16, 4.15). Students in the three programs highly needed tips on how to manage finances, obtain information about part-time jobs, and save money. Being financially incapacitated pushed them to learn how to solve their own financial incapacity. It implies the idea that no other people can solve their own problems but they themselves.

Across the three programs, the indigent students have the same priority and level of importance of their needs. This is proven in Table 6 that reveals no significant difference of needs among the Office Administration, Tourism Management and Entrepreneurship students. This might be due to the fact they all stand on the same ground. People of the same background have the same needs as the saying goes, "Birds of the same feather flock together".

Experiencing the worst of financial incapacity, they highly needed help to address 'Financial Management' (Mean=4.16,

Table 4: Indigent Students' Needs by Academic Program

| Students by Academic Program | Rank | Office Administration Students | | Rank | Tourism Management Students | | Rank | Entrepreneurship Students | |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Mean | Qualitative Description | | Mean | Qualitative Description | | Mean | Qualitative Description |
| Student's Needs | | | | | | | | | |
| Self- Development | 3 | 4.08 | VI | 3 | 4.12 | VI | 3 | 4.07 | VI |
| Family Relationship | 6 | 3.56 | VI | 6 | 3.74 | VI | 6 | 3.53 | VI |
| Social Relationship | 5 | 3.59 | VI | 5 | 3.76 | VI | 5 | 3.60 | VI |
| Studies | 1 | 4.20 | EI | 1 | 4.28 | EI | 1 | 4.18 | VI |
| Financial Management | 2 | 4.16 | VI | 2 | 4.16 | VI | 2 | 4.15 | VI |
| Specific Social Issues | 4 | 3.85 | VI | 4 | 3.93 | VI | 4 | 3.77 | VI |

Legend:

| Mean | Qualitative Description | Interpretation |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 4.20- 5.0 | (EI)-Extremely Important | Extremely Needed |
| 3.40-4.19 | (VI)-Very Important | Highly Needed |
| 2.60-3.39 | (MI)-Moderately Important | Moderately Needed |
| 1.80-2.59 | (SI)-Somewhat Important | Slightly Needed |
| 1.00- 1.79 | (NI)- Not Important at All | Not Needed |

Presented in Table 5 are the factors that the indigent students believe can help them perform academically better. Majority of the respondents (64.17%) believed that "Financial Help" (Rank 1) can help them survive in College. Having established level of resiliency (Table 2) plus the financial assistance that they shall receive, they believe they can hurdle the challenges they found difficult (Table 3). With the financial assistance, their worries

and anxieties about their non-tuition fee expenses (Table 3) will dissipate with an assurance that "All is well". Their focus is no longer on where and how to find money for their food allowance, board and lodging, fare for their transportation, subject requirement expenditures, and the like, will be diverted to their academic undertakings. They can focus on learning the lessons in the classroom. They can focus on attending to their

projects and assignments. The academic pressures, emotional and physical health problems, psychosocial anxieties which are ‘Slightly Difficult’ for them (Table 3) will become a naught once they are financially assisted. Challenges involving money can ruin a day.

Better communication of the lecturers caught the attention of half of the respondents. There are 122 out of 240 or 50.83% of the respondents spoke up that there is a need to improve the speaking abilities of the teachers. Fluency in the English Language and the ability of the teachers to express themselves in class can more likely challenge and inspire the indigent students to better perform in class. Given their educational and societal background, the indigent student may not be able to speak straight English but they can understand. The way a teacher articulates and delivers her message in class can make learning happen even to the slowest learner in the room. These indigent students were deprived to experience the best teachers whose speaking ability is superb. In the classroom with superb teachers, deprived students can change the perspective. Better perspective in the classroom results to better mood. With better mood comes the motivation to learn despite the pressures. Gritty teachers make the indigent students grittier.

Moreover, the factor ‘Nutritious Food’ got noteworthy data. It caught the attention of the 48.33 % of the respondents. It has something to do with the food sold in the canteen. Based on informal interviews, the canteen concessionaires sold the same variety of food every day. Mostly, the foods sold did not follow the prescribed three food groups that an individual should consume. Monotonous food leads to loss of appetite. Loss of appetite leads to student’s empty stomach. Left with no option considering the school campus is secluded, indigent students, renting a boarding house or not, would flock in the canteen. When asked what other issues they encountered during their stay in College, the respondents replied “Eating Concerns”. This implies a problem might have on food aspect.

Lastly, though with less significant number, ‘Teacher’s behavior in approaching students’ should not be ignored. Table 4 shows that the topmost need of the indigent students is their ‘Studies’ (Extremely Important). The teachers deliver the lessons in class every day. They are the people these students talk to about difficulty in understanding lessons. Their presence in the classroom is primordial to students’ understanding the lessons. If they, teachers, show unprofessionalism in dealing with students’ misdemeanor would somehow show negative impact to the students. Less respect with unprofessional teachers diminishes students’ interest to stay in class.

Table 5: Factors to Help Indigent Students Perform Academically Better, N= 240

| Factors | Frequency | Rank | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------|------------|
| Financial Help | 154 | 1 | 64.17 % |
| Better Boarding House near to the College | 49 | 9 | 20.42 % |
| Good Classroom Environment | 97 | 4 | 40.41 % |
| Better Communication of the Lecturers | 122 | 2 | 50.83 % |
| More Industrial Exposure | 63 | 7 | 26.25 % |
| Flexible Time | 48 | 10 | 20.00 % |
| Nutritious Food | 116 | 3 | 48.33 % |
| Mentor-ship Programs to Improve English | 92 | 5 | 38.33 % |
| Help from Counselors | 59 | 8 | 24.58 % |
| Attractive College Environment | 78 | 6 | 32.5 % |
| Others; Teacher’s behavior in approaching students | 1 | 11 | 0.42 % |

Table 6 shows the significant difference of the needs among the three groups of students. Using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the result shows that the F observed value of 0.962 is lower than the Critical factor of 3.04. This result accepts the null hypothesis. Hence, significant difference among the indigent students’ needs in the three academic programs does not exist. The Post Hoc Test, Scheffe test, supports this data. The needs of the indigent students from the three Academic Programs do not necessarily differ. This is proven in Table 4 that shows across the three programs, the indigent students have the same priority and level of importance of their needs. This fact can be attributed to the reality that they all stand on the same ground. People of the same background have the same needs as the saying goes, “Birds of the same feather flock together”. Table 4 supports this claim.

Table 6: Significant Difference of Needs among the Office Administration, Tourism Management and Entrepreneurship Students

| Academic Programs | F | Critical Factor | Decision | Interpretation |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Office Administration | 0.962 | 3.04 | Accept Ho | Insignificant |
| Tourism Management | | | | |
| Entrepreneurship | | | | |

Table 7 shows the relationship of indigent students’ motivation, resiliency, challenges and needs. With the computed t value of 0.14 that is lower than the critical value of 1.960, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the level of resiliency and needs have no correlation. This implies that the level of resiliency does not influence the needs of the indigent students nor their needs depend on their level of resiliency. Even if majority of the respondents are strongly (47.08 %) to exceptionally (46.25%) resilient, the needs for self-development, family and social relationship, financial management, specific social issues and their studies are still very important for them. They are not complacent being strongly resilient. Not that they are very resilient, they do not need anymore the rapport with the people around them. They value these aspects. They still are willing to grow and learn.

Furthermore, needs and resiliency do not correlate with each other. In fact, a person can be resilient even his needs for self-development are not addressed. Say for instance, many, even with unmet needs, have not finished their college education, have family and social issues, but they have survived in the test of life. They are successful. Besides, many whose needs that had not been satisfied survived college, and there are many whose needs had been addressed but failed. Needs are not determinants of the level of resiliency nor the level of resiliency determines one’s needs. One who has exceptional level of resiliency cannot say he need not to establish good relationship with people.

The computed t value between the respondents’ needs and motivations is 0.77 that is lower than the critical value of 1.960. This accepts the null hypothesis. The respondents’ needs and motivations do not correlate with each other. Their reasons to study in college are not because of the aforementioned needs. They just enrolled not knowing yet their true purpose of going to college. Say for instance, Table 1 shows that six out of seven motivations to study, the respondents are ‘extremely motivated’. They have ‘universal’ reasons. Universality leads to ambiguity. The data imply that the respondents have undefined purpose to study. Their mindset is vague. They have lots of whims and schemes. There is no clear goal. Others did not

expect to go to college so they might have no focus or main purpose of going to college yet.

Moreover, the City College offers only three academic programs with minimal tuition fee. Alternative Learning System (ALS), old and K-12 curriculum graduates were admitted. Since choices were limited, the respondents might have been forced to enroll. The aforementioned needs did not influence their motivations to study. They just simply enrolled so they could study in college. In fact, Table 4 shows "Studies" came out to be "extremely important" for them.

Lastly, the relationship between challenges and level of resiliency is positive. The computed *t* value is 2.66, which is higher than the critical *f* value of 1.960. This positive correlation implies that students who tended to have faced more challenges tended to have strong level of resiliency. The more challenges they would face, the more resilient they would become. Their resiliency is shaped by their challenges. The more and bigger challenges there are, the higher resiliency there should be. The higher level of resiliency is, the less difficult the challenges are. Tables 2 and 3 supported this idea; accordingly, nearly 93% of the respondents have strong to exceptional resilience while more challenges became slightly difficult respectively.

Table 7: Significant Relationship of the Indigent Students' Motivation, Resiliency, Challenges and Needs

| Variables | <i>T</i> value | Critical Value | Decision | Interpretation |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Level of Resiliency Vs Needs | 0.14 | 1.960 | Accept Ho | Negligible Relationship |
| Needs vs Motivations | 0.77 | 1.960 | Accept Ho | Negligible Relationship |
| Challenges vs Level of Resiliency | 2.66 | 1.960 | Reject Ho | Significant Relationship |

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings presented, the researcher concluded that motivations, challenges, and needs are not barriers to indigent students' academic journey. Instead, they built the indigent students' resiliency that plays a vital role in their academic success. Implementing a program on financial help can make a lot of difference. With their extreme motivation towards studies, exceptional level of resiliency, well-addressed needs, and the school's financial aid, indigent students in the academe can successfully traverse in their quest of learning.

6. Recommendation

The researcher strongly recommends that the school come up with institutional financial aid policies. They shall coordinate with government and non-government agencies, private individuals, institutions, and other non-government organizations for scholarship grants, loans, or work-study programs for these indigent students.

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