

Original Article

Sowing the Seeds of Stewardship: An Exploration of Voluntary Services of Barangay Education Workers' Experiences with Non-Readers' Learners

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Abstract. This qualitative phenomenological research explored the lived experiences of eleven (11) Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) providing voluntary literacy services to non-readers in the Santa Cruz North District, Davao del Sur. While community involvement is vital, the specific roles of BEWs in addressing reading difficulties remain underexplored in the Philippine basic education context. Data were collected through semi-structured key informant interviews and analyzed using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of thematic analysis. Results revealed three major themes: (1) Balancing Challenges and Rewards, which highlights resource limitations and time constraints balanced by altruistic motivation; (2) Enablers of Literacy Empowerment, identifying BEWs as advocates and community catalysts; and (3) Comprehensive Growth Through Literacy, documenting improvements in learners' reading skills, confidence, and social habits. The study concludes that volunteer-led programs significantly enhance foundational reading but require structured institutional support and training to remain sustainable.

Keywords: *Barangay Education Workers; Community engagement; Non-reader learners; Qualitative study; Voluntary literacy programs*

Education serves as the cornerstone of societal progress, fostering curiosity and holistic development in learners. In the modern educational landscape, the responsibility for student success has shifted from being solely school-centered to a collaborative community effort. Global literature consistently shows that when community members and parents actively participate in the educational process, students achieve higher academically and adjust better socially (McWayne et al., 2022). In the Philippines, this collaborative spirit is institutionalized through various grassroots initiatives, particularly at the barangay level, where local workers bridge the gap between formal schooling and home environments.

Among these community actors, Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) have emerged as pivotal figures in supporting literacy development, especially in marginalized and rural districts. These individuals often serve as the primary link for non-reader learners who require intensive, localized support beyond standard classroom

hours. However, while existing studies emphasize the general importance of parental and community involvement (Palmes, 2023; Tayab & Ayang-ang, 2024), there is a significant research gap regarding the specific lived experiences of BEWs. Most of the current literature focuses on the quantitative outcomes of literacy programs rather than on the qualitative, phenomenological journey of the volunteers themselves. There is a limited understanding of the motivations, struggles, and perceived impacts of these workers as they navigate their roles in literacy empowerment.

This study is anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that several environmental systems influence a child's development. The BEWs function within the child's microsystem—the immediate environment where the most direct interaction occurs. By providing voluntary literacy services, BEWs alter the educational landscape of the child, creating a supportive layer that complements formal schooling. This theoretical lens allows for a deeper exploration of how community-based voluntary service creates a ripple effect throughout the learner's social and academic life.

By exploring the "essence" of being a BEW, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how grassroots volunteerism functions as a catalyst for educational equity. Consequently, this phenomenological study aims to describe the lived experiences of BEWs in school service, identify their perceptions of their roles in promoting literacy among non-readers, and determine the perceived benefits derived by the learners from these voluntary services."

Methodology

Research Design

The current study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach, which was suitable when there was a need to listen to the opinions of and to comprehend the issue at hand in depth. Qualitative research was described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting, enabling the researcher to develop a level of detail through high involvement in actual experiences (Creswell, 2009). It was an inquiry method useful for discovering and understanding a central phenomenon (Guimalodin et al., 2024). The researcher asks wide, generic inquiries, obtains comprehensive responses in words or visuals, and then analyzes the data for description and themes. From this data, the researcher draws on personal perspectives and prior research. The final report was flexible and may reflect the researcher's prejudices. This research method was well suited to this study, as the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) in the Davao del Sur Division. The researcher used an in-depth interview to conduct this study. It discovered the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of the Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) in teaching reading in public schools.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were eleven (11) Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) actively serving in the Santa Cruz North District, Division of Davao del Sur. Purposive sampling based on specific inclusion criteria was used: (1) must be a designated BEW in the district, (2) must have at least six months of experience working with non-reader learners, and (3) must be willing to participate voluntarily in the interview process. The sample size of eleven was determined based on the principle of data saturation, the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. In qualitative phenomenological research, a sample of 5 to 25 participants is considered sufficient to reach this saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By the eleventh interview, the researcher determined that the emergent themes—such as the balance of challenges and rewards—were repeating, thus providing a comprehensive "essence" of the lived experience without the need for additional participants.

Research Instrument

The study employed semi-structured interviews because they are one of the most effective methods for understanding fellow humans. In this type of interview, questions are asked and answered in a natural, casual setting. The study's topic was investigated and analyzed through semi-structured interviews with probing questions. Moreover, the semi-structured interview guide questionnaire was authenticated by a professional on the ground. The first draft of the research tools was sent to the research adviser for comments, ideas, and recommendations to enhance their presentation. The changes being incorporated and combined will be refined by a group of experts, and the final version will be produced. Before data collection, the final edition incorporated the changes, remarks, and recommendations of the professional validators.

Data Collection Procedures

In gathering the data for this study, the researcher followed the following organized procedures:

First, the researcher requested a permit from the Graduate School Dean of Davao del Sur State College to conduct the study. Second, the researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of the Division of Davao del Sur to conduct the study in the selected elementary schools within the division. Then, permission was secured from the Public School District Supervisor (PSDS) of the said district, and individual permission was secured from the respective school head of the identified elementary schools, with permission requested from the SDS and PSDS.

Thirdly, the interview was conducted through a Key Informant Interview (KII) after the request to conduct the study was granted. The researcher communicated with the respective school head to assist in identifying the Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) who volunteered their services at the school and participated in the study. Then, an Informed Consent Form was given to the participants. The consent form described the purpose of the study and how the interview was conducted, the risks/discomforts that might be associated with the conduct of the interview, the issue of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the opportunity to ask questions and the freedom to withdraw anytime when the participants believed that it should be withdrawn.

Finally, all information obtained during this study was treated with the strictest confidentiality; it was reported using pseudonyms and, when presented in public, only with broad references. Under no circumstances was it ethical for this research to reveal the individual or group identities of the participants.

Data Analysis

The researcher adopted the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to systematically analyze participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This approach, specifically designed for transcendental phenomenology, aims to uncover the "essence" of a phenomenon through a structured process. First, the researcher engaged in the Epoche (bracketing) phase, intentionally setting aside personal preconceptions and biases about literacy programs to approach the data objectively. This was followed by horizontalization, in which the researcher reviewed all interview transcripts and accorded equal weight to every significant statement. Irrelevant or repetitive statements were eliminated, and the remaining data were organized into theme clusters. The analysis then proceeded to an imaginative variation in which the researcher explored the structural factors and contexts that shaped the participants' experiences. By synthesizing the textural descriptions (what the participants experienced) and structural descriptions (how they experienced it), a composite description was generated to represent the "essence" of being a Barangay Education Worker. Prior to analysis, all audio recordings were transcribed and translated into English. As this is a qualitative phenomenological study, no inferential statistical tools were employed. Simple descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used only to summarize participants' demographic characteristics.

Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative investigation, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher served in dual roles: interviewer for the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and lead coder for the thematic analysis. To ensure the linguistic integrity of the data, the researcher also acted as a translator, ensuring that the nuances of the local dialect were accurately captured in the English transcripts. To maintain academic rigor and quality, the researcher collaborated with a research adviser, a grammarian, and an editor to refine the manuscript. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained a neutral stance, conducting interviews without bias and ensuring that all data were handled with strict confidentiality and professional integrity.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the academic rigor of the findings, the researcher employed several strategies for trustworthiness. Credibility was established through triangulation of data from eleven (11) participants and member checking, in which the initial transcripts and emergent themes were returned to the interviewees to verify their accuracy and "truth-value." Dependability and Confirmability were maintained by strictly following the step-by-step phenomenological procedures without deviation. An audit trail was maintained, documenting all remarks and translation steps to ensure that the findings were derived directly from the participants' accounts and not from the researcher's imagination. Finally, the interview guide underwent expert validation to ensure that the instruments were fit for the study's objectives.

Ethical Considerations

In this phenomenological study, research ethics were the primary consideration in protecting participants and ensuring the integrity of the findings. The researcher adhered to the following protocols:

Institutional Approval. Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained formal permission from the Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of the Division of Davao del Sur, and the respective school heads. Following authorization, the researcher informed potential participants verbally and in writing about the study's goals.

Informed Consent. All participants provided written informed consent. The researcher provided comprehensive information to ensure participants could agree willingly and intelligently. This included instructions on their right to skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher did not pressure or persuade unwilling subjects and ensured a comfortable environment to minimize nervousness during interviews.

Do No Harm. The researcher ensured that the evaluation procedure did not cause participants any physical or psychological harm. Participants were protected from stress, anxiety, or invasions of privacy.

Confidentiality and Anonymity. The researcher guaranteed that no one other than the researcher had access to the raw data. Personal details were redacted, and pseudonyms were used in all published versions of the study. The researcher carefully reviewed the phrasing of reports to ensure that participants could not be identified through context or specific anecdotes.

Data Privacy. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act, the researcher employed technical and organizational safeguards to protect sensitive information. All responses were used exclusively for scholarly research and were stored securely.

Relevance. The researcher focused solely on assessing relevant components. Interview questions were strictly aligned with the qualitative phenomenological goals to avoid "survey fatigue" or unnecessary intrusion into the private lives of the key informants.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and analyzes the lived experiences of Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) volunteering their services to non-readers in the Santa Cruz North District, Division of Davao del Sur. Several pages of transcribed text and data analysis were produced from in-depth face-to-face interviews with the informants. It began with familiarization with the recorded transcribed material. The original thoughts were preserved when the transcripts were transcribed into English. In addition, the method involved several judgments about which data were valuable for the study and which were not, because they were unrelated to the research topics. Important phrases from the transcripts and comments were identified as thematic statements to help define the study's themes. To identify patterns and relationships between themes, they were enumerated and sorted in a specified sequence. To reduce the number of items, the key themes were reorganized into fewer categories. Major topics emerged because of the approach.

Lived Experiences of the Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) Rendering Service in the School

Table 1. Summary of Emergent Themes and Sub-themes

Research Question	Major Theme	Sub-themes	Key Findings
1. What are the lived experiences of BEWs in school service?	Balancing Challenges and Rewards	Resource limitations; Time constraints; Motivation	BEWs struggle with a lack of materials but are motivated by seeing learner progress.
2. How do BEWs perceive their role in promoting literacy?	Enablers of Literacy Empowerment	Literacy advocates; Community partnership	BEWs act as bridges between the school and the community to foster literacy.
3. What benefits do non-readers derive from BEW services?	Comprehensive Growth Through Literacy	Literacy skills; Confidence; Positive habits	Voluntary services lead to foundational reading gains and increased learner self-belief.

Balancing Challenges and Rewards in Volunteer Education

Within this context, the development of supportive educational environments is essential, particularly for non-readers who enter school with limited foundational skills. Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) play a crucial role in addressing these gaps by providing voluntary, community-based literacy services that are responsive to the unique needs of marginalized learners. Through their dedication, BEWs extend learning beyond formal classrooms by offering remedial instruction, individualized guidance, and emotional support grounded in empathy and cultural sensitivity. Their voluntary service fosters positive learning dispositions such as motivation, resilience, and self-confidence, which are indispensable for learners who may initially struggle with self-doubt or social stigma. The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Balancing volunteer service and household duties is challenging, but our commitment to helping every child read keeps us serving the school." (KII1P1)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Despite limited resources and time, their volunteer work remained meaningful through strong community support and learner-centered strategies that created positive change." (KII2P2)

It was evident that all Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) had access to rigorous, well-rounded academic programs and learning experiences that significantly enriched their educational development and equipped them with the competencies necessary for effective service delivery. As volunteers working with non-readers, these academic and training exposures enable BEWs to apply sound pedagogical strategies, literacy interventions, and learner-centered approaches in community-based settings. Their background knowledge and continuous capacity-building experiences strengthen their ability to diagnose reading difficulties, design appropriate remedial activities, and implement flexible teaching methods that respond to the diverse learning needs of non-readers. When given the identical topic, informants signified their own experiences:

"The experience of Barangay Education Workers is both challenging and fulfilling as they help struggling readers through simple, engaging activities, finding joy as learners gain confidence and reading skills." (KII3P3)

Facing persistent challenges stemming from inadequate teaching materials and limited access to training resources, Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) often encounter constraints that hinder the effective delivery of instruction to non-readers. The absence of age-appropriate reading materials, instructional guides, and learning aids limits their ability to implement diverse and engaging literacy strategies tailored to learners' varying needs. As a result, instruction may rely heavily on improvised or repetitive methods, which can affect learners' motivation, comprehension, and sustained engagement in the learning process. Volunteer education has pros and cons, but even with obstacles such as a lack of resources, time, or students with diverse talents, the pros usually outweigh the problems. To sustain excitement and effectiveness, volunteers need guidance, training, and acknowledgment. When volunteers are valued and see their impact on children, they are more committed to educational activities. Consequently, the teaching profession is inherently demanding, and for teachers, the challenges are often intensified by the unique needs of their students. Teachers experienced moderate to high levels of stress, primarily due to workload and emotional demands.

Facing Resource Limitations

The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Despite limited resources, helping non-readers is fulfilling because trust from families and learners' progress gives meaning to the service." (KII4P4)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Capturing and maintaining children's attention is challenging for Barangay Education Workers, especially with easily distracted learners, requiring patience and resourcefulness." (KII5P5)

Furthermore, due to the insufficiency of standardized and readily available educational materials, Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) are often compelled to create self-made teaching resources such as printed stories,

word cards, flashcards, and improvised reading worksheets. This added responsibility complicates instructional planning, as BEWs must balance material preparation with lesson delivery and learner support. Thus, when given the identical topic, informants signified their own experiences:

"Many Barangay Education Workers seek training on reading strategies, phonics, and learner engagement, but access is limited since we are volunteers." (KII8P8)

Limited funding may have a major impact on how a program or effort is carried out and the results it achieves. Staff or volunteers may have increased pressure and stress due to a lack of resources, which might limit their ability to provide full service to participants, slow down operations, and restrict funding. The quality of services or interventions may suffer, access may be limited for some beneficiaries, and these limitations may curb chances for program development or innovation. For long-term viability, businesses may need to make tough strategic decisions, set priorities, or collaborate to solve problems. The significance of effective planning, innovative problem-solving, and community involvement in reducing the negative effects of resource shortage on morale and equitable concerns among stakeholders is underscored.

As stated in the study by McWayne et al. (2022), parental role construction is framed from a sociocultural perspective. Applying this perspective foregrounds the need for researchers and practitioners to gain an insider's understanding of how families themselves construct their roles in supporting children's education. By doing so, the field can reimagine family-school partnerships that are inclusive of normative family practices across ethnoculturally diverse families and develop interventions that build on cultural heritage, community strengths, and families' funds of knowledge.

Navigating Time Constraints

The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"[Teaching] children who initially cannot read becomes rewarding, as [their] gradual progress brings joy and motivates us to be effective Barangay Education Workers." (KII1P1)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Parental support varies; some actively help at home, while others cannot do so due to work, which concerns the Barangay Education Workers, given the limited time for reading." (KII6P6)

Balancing personal responsibilities with volunteer commitments is a common challenge for Barangay Education Worker (BEW) volunteers, often leading to inconsistent teaching engagement. As volunteers, BEWs usually juggle multiple roles within their families and communities, such as earning a livelihood, caring for children or elderly family members, and managing household responsibilities. Since their work in education is largely voluntary and often receives limited financial or institutional support, teaching duties may sometimes take a secondary priority when personal or economic demands arise.

Prioritizing critical activities is essential for navigating time restrictions (De leon et al., 2025). While this might boost productivity, it also increases the risk of missing opportunities or reducing the depth of work. Time constraints may be a source of stress and pressure, which can negatively affect morale and teamwork. However, they also have the potential to improve abilities such as problem-solving, flexibility, and swift decision-making. In addition, teams or individuals working under pressure to complete tasks within a set timeframe may develop novel approaches or improved methods. In general, time constraints affect how work is done and the final product, weighing the pros and cons of potential obstacles and opportunities for advancement.

Hence, De Paz et al. (2024) stated that parental involvement was essential to facilitate their children's education at home and examined the experiences of parents acting as teachers or facilitators for their children. The study explored the challenges faced by both parents and children during home-based learning, the support provided by the school, and the strategies parents used to support learning. The findings revealed that common challenges included disruptions to children's daily routines, difficulty in teaching learning activity sheets, and children's struggles to stay focused during home learning.

Encountering Engagement Issues

Based on the results, BEW volunteers are required to employ innovative, creative teaching strategies that go beyond traditional methods. They often use storytelling, songs, games, visual aids, and hands-on activities to make learning more engaging and relatable. By integrating play-based and learner-centered approaches, BEWs help create a positive and encouraging atmosphere that reduces anxiety and builds learners' confidence. However, developing and implementing these strategies demands additional time, effort, and creativity, especially in the absence of formal training and adequate instructional materials.

This statement was confirmed by the informant below:

"Teaching children who cannot read at first is difficult, but seeing their gradual progress brings joy and motivates us as Barangay Education Workers." (KII1P1)

Barangay Education Worker (BEW) volunteers often use interactive activities, such as games, storytelling, songs, and role-playing, to effectively engage non-readers in learning. Non-readers typically have limited interest in conventional reading instruction and may feel intimidated by printed texts, making passive or lecture-based approaches ineffective. Interactive activities help transform learning into an enjoyable experience, allowing learners to participate actively rather than feel pressured or discouraged. Furthermore, other informants also expressed their thoughts in the following manner:

"Their new skills help in daily life, like reading directions, messages, and announcements, boosting job opportunities and self-confidence." (KII3P3)

The success of a program or event could take a nosedive if engagement issues arise. Reduced learning, limited cooperation, and overall results may stem from insufficient participant interest or engagement. The organizers or facilitators may also feel the burden of having to work harder to inspire the participants or change up their approach. On the other hand, problems like these might reveal where things could use some work, which in turn can lead to new ways of engaging people, such as more interactive methods or tailored approaches. Understanding participants' requirements and creating an atmosphere that promotes active involvement and long-term commitment are crucial to resolving engagement challenges.

According to Velasco et al. (2024), a child's academic success, good conduct, and general health may be greatly improved throughout their formative years of schooling via the use of technology and the encouragement of strong parent-teacher cooperation. Regular and meaningful contact between parents and teachers is sometimes hindered by teachers' large workloads and multiple obligations. Similarly, parents may have demanding work schedules, household responsibilities, or other commitments that prevent them from actively monitoring or supporting their child's academic progress. Because of time constraints, participation from all parties may decrease, information may not be shared promptly, and interventions may not be able to accomplish their goals. As a result, there is a pressing need for creative solutions that make the most of limited time while still allowing for meaningful parent-teacher interaction, as a lack of time hinders communication and can undermine the overall support system needed for students' holistic development.

Barangay Education Workers Coping Mechanisms as a Volunteer

In today's ever-changing educational landscape, a perceptive and adaptable approach is especially important for BEW volunteers as they navigate the complex and diverse terrain of learning. The non-readers faced not only academic gaps but also social and emotional adjustments, as they must reintegrate into school environments that may feel unfamiliar or intimidating. In this discussion, the researcher examined the perceptions of Barangay Education Workers, who serve as volunteers working with non-readers. From the results of this study, the emergent themes revealed Enablers of Literacy Empowerment as the main theme with the three sub-themes: Facilitators of Empowerment and Support, Catalysts for Community Collaboration, and Champions of Dedication and Passion.

Enablers of Literacy Empowerment

Barangay Education Worker (BEW) volunteers serve as critical enablers of literacy empowerment for non-readers in community-based learning programs. Their role goes beyond simple instruction; they act as motivators, facilitators, and advocates who help learners develop essential reading and comprehension skills. By being

consistently present, patient, and responsive, BEWs create a supportive learning environment where non-readers feel safe to explore literacy without fear of judgment or failure.

Facilitators of Empowerment and Support

In community and educational contexts, facilitators of empowerment and support play a crucial role in bridging gaps created by inequality, limited access to services, or disrupted life experiences. Their support extends beyond academic or technical assistance; it encompasses emotional reinforcement, advocacy, and the creation of safe spaces where individuals feel valued and heard. By fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility, these facilitators not only empower individuals to overcome challenges but also contribute to sustainable community development and social transformation. These approaches were narrated with the lines of the informants stated below:

"I am proud to serve as a Barangay Education Worker, providing free services so children who cannot read can truly learn, despite the challenges." (KII1P1)

Moreover, this was supported by other informants who shared the same experience:

"As Barangay Education Workers, we guide, support, and inspire non-readers, not only teaching them but also giving hope and motivation to continue their education." (KII2P2)

Through consistent encouragement and personal attention, BEW volunteers help non-readers regain self-belief and develop a positive attitude toward learning. They celebrate small achievements, offer reassurance during setbacks, and adapt their approaches to match the learners' pace and needs. By forming trusting relationships, BEW volunteers not only guide non-readers in developing basic literacy skills but also inspire them to remain motivated, engaged, and hopeful about their ability to learn and improve.

A study by Cagape et al. (2024) investigated the impact of parental engagement on the social and communication development of children with developmental delays. The research used in-depth interviews and identified five key themes: the central role of occupational therapy, encountered challenges like tantrums, effective coping mechanisms, strategic communication style adaptation, and observable progress. Occupational therapy emerges as crucial for fostering various skills, conducted weekly emphasizing nonverbal communication.

Catalysts for Community Collaboration

At the community level, BEWs work closely with barangay officials and local stakeholders to mobilize resources, organize literacy activities, and raise awareness about the importance of education. This collective approach strengthens community ownership of literacy programs and ensures the sustainability of initiatives for non-readers. Through collaboration and shared commitment, BEWs help build a culture that values learning, where every sector contributes to empowering individuals and improving overall community literacy outcomes. These approaches were narrated with the lines of the informants stated below:

"We help children who cannot read, as not knowing how to read makes everyday life [difficult]." (KII3P3)

Community involvement further enriches the learning experience by providing additional resources, role models, and shared spaces for educational activities. Through teamwork among families, educators, and community members, children are surrounded by a network of support that addresses both academic and emotional needs. This collaborative effort fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, enhancing not only children's learning outcomes but also the overall effectiveness and sustainability of educational initiatives within the community.

These approaches were narrated with the lines of the informants stated below:

"Barangay Education Workers recognize that literacy work requires patience, creativity, and strong dedication." (KII5P5)

Involving families and the community is essential, as it provides children with consistent support at home, boosting their confidence and motivation to learn. The informants attested this with their statements below:

"The Barangay Education Workers believe that every small progress a child makes is a great achievement and it gives them inspiration." (KII6P6)

Community development and durability depend on similar goals, effective leadership, confidence, resources, and good communication. These catalysts inspire stakeholders to collaborate on solutions to local issues, resulting in better, more creative solutions. Building trust and relationships strengthens social cohesiveness, which attracts and includes underrepresented groups and gives underrepresented perspectives a platform. Establishing shared leadership and open communication streamlines operations and eliminates misalignment. With the right resources and technology, teachers can coordinate and manage collaborative activities, which is good for community development.

Carreon (2024) evaluated reading programs to see whether parental participation affected academic success. The study classified parental engagement as parenting behaviors, teacher communication, and home/family support. Researchers found that kids' academic performance increased when parents regularly supervised, spoke with teachers, and supported learning at home. This principle is closely tied to community engagement since parents are influential in their children's education. Parents encourage collaboration between educators, school administrators, and community organizations. Community participation increases kids' academic achievement and their ability to get along, take responsibility, and solve problems together. A community development study shows that when local stakeholders and families actively participate in educational activities, it promotes trust, resource sharing, and collaboration. According to Carreon's study, parent involvement increases communal collaboration, which benefits everyone's academic and social growth.

Champions of Dedication and Passion

For non-readers, this dedication becomes a powerful source of motivation. BEW volunteers persistently encourage learners to try again, reassuring them that mistakes are part of the learning process. Their enthusiasm for teaching inspires hope and resilience, helping learners overcome fear and self-doubt. By modeling perseverance and compassion, BEW volunteers not only teach reading skills but also instill confidence, determination, and a renewed belief in the value of education, making them true champions of dedication and passion in the community. These approaches were narrated with the lines of the informants stated below:

"The parents work together in teaching; the child becomes able to read and develops an interest in learning. The results are very rewarding." (KII4P4)

These approaches were narrated with the lines of the informants stated below:

"Seeing even small progress, like recognizing a letter or word, brings joy and motivates me to continue teaching as the child begins to read." (KII2P2)

Barangay Education Worker (BEW) teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to their voluntary role, driven by a genuine passion for teaching and a deep desire to positively impact children's lives. Despite the absence of substantial financial incentives, BEW teachers remain dedicated to serving learners, especially those who struggle with basic literacy. Their willingness to devote time, energy, and effort reflects a sincere sense of purpose and responsibility toward the children and the community they serve.

The emerging themes generated for research question number 2. This passion is evident in the way BEW teachers patiently guide learners, adapt teaching strategies to individual needs, and consistently encourage progress, no matter how small. Their commitment goes beyond academic instruction, as they also nurture learners' self-esteem and love for learning, as shown in the lines that followed:

"Seeing children learn to read brings me joy, knowing I help change their lives and open future opportunities, which motivates me to continue." KII3P3)

This was also supported by other informants, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Even small gestures from parents and the community, like a smile or a thank you, motivate me to take my role as a teacher seriously." (KII4P4)

This was also supported by other informants, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Volunteering brings experience, joy, and inner peace, offering satisfaction that money cannot buy." (KII6P6)

Several other sources corroborated this and said the same thing:

"Seeing children learn to read strengthens the community and motivates me, knowing I am part of its progress." (KII7P7)

Furthermore, when given the identical topic, informants signified that despite facing challenges, the joy of witnessing children's progress and the fulfillment from their contributions motivate BEWs to persist in their literacy efforts:

"I continue because even small efforts can make a big difference for the child, family, and community." (KII8P8)

Other informants who shared the same views corroborated this:

"Being a Barangay Education Worker is voluntary service done wholeheartedly, as an act of love and responsibility, even in difficulties." (KII11P11)

The study found that literacy programs need dedicated volunteers, supportive families, and an active community to help people read and write. The role of Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) in empowering non-readers as role models, advocates, and mentors is crucial. Dedication, empathy, and learner-centered methods boost students' reading self-esteem and persistence.

These literacy empowerment enablers may benefit from institutional and community support, according to research. Provide BEWs with enough instructional materials, ongoing training, and recognition for their personal service to improve literacy instruction. Empowering volunteers helps them empower students. The results show literacy empowerment thrives in collaborative environments. Parental involvement and barangay support extend learning beyond the classroom. Future literacy programs should emphasize collaboration and accountability among educational institutions, families, and community members (Diquito & Magallon, 2025).

According to Almasa (2025), parents are adjusting to new technology in the "new normal," juggling multiple tasks at once, having little time to prepare lessons, having limited class time, and having to monitor their students' progress. However, the study also shows how teachers handle these challenges. As champions of dedication and passion, teachers are resilient, flexible, and dedicated (Makiaway et al., 2025). They retain their capacity to engage students, improve teaching approaches, and provide meaningful learning experiences under heavy pressure. They demonstrate that persistence, inventiveness, and dedication to student success can overcome even the most daunting challenges and propel personal and professional growth.

Insights of Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) That Could Be Shared with the Community

The results of this section highlighted three positive sub-themes related to the benefits non-readers derive from voluntary services provided by the Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) in Santa Cruz North District, Division of Davao del Sur. The main theme: Comprehensive growth through literacy. These positive sub-themes include Improvement in literacy skills, boost in confidence and motivation, and positive behavioral and social development.

Comprehensive Growth Through Literacy

This section highlights the transformative role of literacy in fostering holistic development among learners. Literacy goes beyond the ability to read and write; it serves as a foundation for cognitive, emotional, social, and moral growth. Through literacy, learners gain the skills to understand information, express ideas, and engage meaningfully with their surroundings, enabling them to participate more confidently in school, family, and community life. The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Teaching non-readers as a Barangay Education Worker is rewarding, providing free support that helps both children and teachers by reducing their workload." (KII1P1)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"Regular sessions help strengthen basic literacy, teaching children to read syllables, words, and simple sentences as a foundation for advanced reading." (KII2P2)

Non-readers develop foundational reading skills through consistent practice, progressing from recognizing letters to reading simple words and sentences. When given the identical topic, informants signified their own experiences:

"Barangay Education Workers boost children's confidence and motivation, creating a supportive environment where they feel proud, happy, and eager to learn to read." (KII3P3)

Regular literacy sessions enhance children's ability to identify frequently encountered words, which boosts their overall reading comprehension. The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Regular literacy activities help children develop discipline, responsibility, and positive learning habits." (KII5P5)

With this, learners were able to get individualized attention, positive reinforcement, and reading practice via the BEWs' volunteer literacy programs, according to their testimonies. Consistent interaction led to considerable increases in the kids' reading comprehension and mindsets toward learning. The BEWs stressed the need to help non-readers overcome their reading challenges and progressively acquire literacy skills through patience, dedication, and supportive engagement.

As noted by Tayab and Ayang-ang (2024), parents' experiences implementing home reading activities, aimed at informing the development of a structured home reading program, underscored the critical role of parental involvement, particularly in enhancing students' reading proficiency. Despite employing various strategies tailored to the pandemic circumstances, parents encountered challenges, including limited knowledge of reading, pupil motivation issues, and time constraints. These insights contribute to the development of effective home reading interventions that address both supportive and challenging aspects of parental involvement in children's reading development.

Boost in Confidence and Motivation

The supportive environment created by Barangay Education Workers helps children feel more confident and motivated to participate in reading activities. Thus, when given the identical topic, informants signified their own experiences:

"Their interest in reading has grown; they are now eager to participate and say, "Ma'am, let's read." (KII3P3)

The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Children who learn to read become more active, engaged, and better at following instructions and understanding lessons." (KII4P4)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"They feel a strong sense of achievement even when reading a simple word. This small success brings visible joy and builds their self-belief." (KII7P7)

Children's self-belief grows, leading to increased enthusiasm for learning and greater participation in school. This statement was confirmed by the informant below:

"They now have higher confidence and self-belief, are no longer shy to answer or read, and can socialize better with their classmates." (KII8P8)

One way to boost confidence and intrinsic motivation in volunteers is to provide them with opportunities to enhance their skills and to offer positive feedback on their efforts. With their self-assurance boosted, they can put their whole selves into their work, and their drive keeps them going even when things get tough. The bottom line is that volunteer programs that focus on boosting morale and giving people agency have a multiplicative effect: they make people happier, and they last longer.

Understanding parents' perspectives on their involvement in their students' learning during these unprecedented times was the focus of the study. The result of the study revealed that parents in challenged areas got involved with the modular learning of their children by creating time and opportunity for study, encouragement and through monitoring and discipline. The strategies employed by parents in challenged areas in modular learning were constantly updated with the teacher, encourage simple routines and making use of available support systems (Palmes et al., 2023).

Positive Behavioral and Social Development

Participation in literacy programs fosters discipline and responsibility in children, helping them develop better learning habits. The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"More opportunities open up once children learn to read, including access to higher education and the chance to earn awards." (KII9P9)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"If a child can read, their future becomes brighter, as it will be easier for them to find a job and understand required documents and information." (KII10P10)

Additionally, another informant experienced the same and shared:

"If everyone cooperates to help non-readers, no child will remain unable to read." (KII11P11)

Improved reading skills contribute to better social interactions, as children become more engaged and willing to communicate with peers. The informants conveyed their experiences in the following lines:

"Their future improves with reading skills, giving higher-grade students better job opportunities." (KII61P6)

This claim was also supported by another informant, who expressed the same sentiments:

"There are also children who can now read the instructions for their activities. Slowly, they are really starting to learn." (KII4P4)

As one of the emerging themes, informants confirmed these statements in their responses below:

"There are already children who can read the labels on food wrappers. They also read the packaging of the food they buy." (KII3P3)

The parent volunteers may make a big difference in children's social and behavioral development by participating in literacy programs or therapies run by volunteers. Parents are more invested and motivated when they see their children making progress in areas such as social skills, collaboration, and emotional control. This, in turn, strengthens the bond between parents and children by encouraging better communication and empathy. Parents' confidence in their ability to promote their children's development, the adoption of effective strategies, and their status as good role models are all bolstered by these observable results.

To improve the execution of the literacy program, Cayabas et al. (2023) state that stakeholders, such as NGOs and HEIs, must be actively involved and work together. Learners are exposed to diversified role models, organized activities, and consistent direction by forming networks and relationships with external stakeholders.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study concludes that Barangay Education Workers (BEWs) serve as a vital lifeline in the educational microsystem, particularly for non-reader learners in rural communities. The synthesis of the lived experiences of BEWs reveals that their service is defined by a delicate balance between logistical challenges—such as time constraints and resource scarcity—and the profound altruistic fulfillment derived from student progress. Regarding their roles, BEWs perceive themselves not merely as tutors but as enablers of literacy empowerment and essential bridges between the school and the community. Their presence fosters a collaborative environment that encourages parental involvement and local stewardship of education. Furthermore, the study highlights that the benefits for learners extend beyond foundational reading skills; participants observed significant improvements in the learners' self-confidence, social behavior, and overall motivation toward schooling. Ultimately, the essence of the BEW experience is "resilient volunteerism," in which personal commitment compensates for systemic gaps in literacy support.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides deep insights into the experiences of volunteers, it is subject to certain limitations. The research focused exclusively on eleven BEWs within the Santa Cruz North District; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to urban settings or different administrative regions. Additionally, the data relies on the self-reported perceptions of the workers themselves.

Future research should expand this inquiry by incorporating the perspectives of the learners, classroom teachers, and parents to create a triangulated view of program effectiveness. Comparative studies between different community-based literacy models could also identify best practices for sustainability. Finally, longitudinal research is recommended to track the long-term academic trajectory of learners who received intervention from BEWs to determine the lasting impact of volunteer-led literacy support.

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