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Empowering Students: How Communities Can Help

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Abstract. Low-income families, particularly those with disabled children, frequently face considerable economic challenges. Educational programs that teach participants income-generating skills are critical for these families. Schools can play an important role in empowering vulnerable populations by introducing revenue-generating projects. This qualitative study assessed the influence of a community project, which was executed at a public elementary school in Digos City, Philippines. The project aimed to provide higher-grade Special Education students (deaf and mute) and their parents with the skills and information required to launch their own enterprises. The researcher used focus groups and in-depth interviews to learn about the individuals' real experiences. Thematic analysis was utilized to discover reoccurring themes and acquire a better understanding of how the project cultivated their entrepreneurial spirit and sense of community in the school setting. Results revealed that the initiative affected participants' living standards, sense of independence, and overall well-being. The study emphasizes the need of customizing such programs to individual circumstances. The findings can be used to guide the design and implementation of future programs, ensuring that participants are financially empowered while also creating a more dynamic and self-sustaining learning environment.

Keywords: Income generating project; Community empowerment; Public school; Philippines.

1.0 Introduction

Education serves as a cornerstone for individual empowerment and societal progress. Well-rounded programs emphasizing character development and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) have demonstrably led to improved academic achievement, stronger social skills, and better mental health for students with disabilities (CASEL, 2023). Unfortunately, ensuring access to effective Special Education (SPED) programs in the Philippines faces a significant financial obstacle.

SPED programs require specialized resources beyond those found in mainstream classrooms. Trained teachers, assistive technologies, and adapted learning materials are crucial for catering to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, individualized instruction and smaller class sizes are essential to provide adequate support. These factors inevitably lead to higher operating expenses compared to mainstream education (Peters & Katsiyannis, 2018). Unfortunately, limited government funding in the Philippines often restricts access to these critical services. A 2022 report by the Department of Education (DepEd) revealed a significant shortage of SPED teachers and specialists, highlighting the funding constraints faced by the program. This shortage not only limits the number of students who can benefit from SPED services, but also hinders the quality of education received by those who do. The budgetary limitations of SPED programs disproportionately affect students with disabilities and their families. These limitations can lead to a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. Low-income families, particularly those with children facing disabilities, often experience significant economic hardship (Racoma K. M. et al., 2023). Without access to quality SPED programs, students with disabilities may struggle to reach their full potential academically, socially, and professionally. This can further limit their future employment prospects and exacerbate financial difficulties for their families.

This funding gap necessitates exploring alternative mechanisms to bridge the financial divide for SPED programs. Income-generating projects (IGPs) have emerged as a promising strategy. Defined by Hwang et al. (2018) as small-scale initiatives that empower beneficiaries by fostering self-determination and income streams, IGPs encompass a wide range of activities. Microcredit programs, vocational training initiatives, and local economic development projects all fall under this umbrella (Ziv et al., 2018). The potential benefits of IGPs extend beyond simply generating revenue for SPED programs. The global movement for inclusive education emphasizes the significance of allowing all students, including those with disabilities, to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classes (UNESCO, 2020). To achieve full inclusion, SPED programs must address their budgetary constraints. IGPs offer an exciting way for SPED programs to augment government support and expand access to crucial services for students with disabilities. Furthermore, IGPs can contribute to empowering students with disabilities by fostering financial independence, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurial skills.

This impact assessment study focuses on the "Sampalok: Asim ng Buhay, Tamis ng Tagumpay" (Seedlings: Strength of Life, Sweetness of Success) IGP. This unique initiative, designed specifically for higher-grade Special Education students, particularly those who are Deaf and Mute, and their parents in the Philippines, serves as a case study to explore the potential of IGPs within the context of SPED programs. The study aims to investigate the project's impact on participant empowerment, financial well-being, and overall quality of life. While existing research recognizes the benefits of IGPs for educational institutions (Ahmad, Ng, & Ngeoh, 2015; Miranda, Tenedero, Fiel-Miranda, & Celestino, 2016), there is a limited understanding of how IGPs specifically contribute to empowering students with disabilities within the context of community support programs. This study addresses this gap by examining the IGP as a potential model for enhancing the lives of students with disabilities in the Philippines. By analyzing the project's impact and effectiveness, this research contributes valuable insights into the potential of IGPs as a tool for empowering students with disabilities, fostering financial independence, and ultimately promoting greater inclusion within the educational system.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a descriptive-correlational research design to evaluate the impact of the "Sampalok: Asim ng Buhay, Tamis ng Tagumpay" (Seedlings: Strength of Life, Sweetness of Success) Income Generating Project (IGP) on the project's teachers, students, and parents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design provides various advantages. First, it enables us to collect detailed information regarding the project's implementation, the problems encountered by participants, and the perceived benefits they received through interviews with key stakeholders. This descriptive section offers a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the project's real-world implications. Second, the correlational feature allows us to investigate potential correlations between IGP membership and changes in participant outcomes, such as higher income, greater self-sufficiency, or a stronger feeling of community. It's vital to realize that correlations can indicate influence but cannot prove causality. Finally, given the scarcity of research on similar IGPs in Special Education Programs (SPED), this strategy enables us to collect significant data that will influence future studies attempting to demonstrate causal correlations using more rigorous designs.

2.2 Research Locale

The researchers carried out this study among the public elementary schools under Zone 3, Digos City for the School Year 2022-2023. This southernmost province of Digos City Davao del Sur is a second-class component city serves as the provincial capital, known for its tag-line “The Gate City of the South” The City has a land area of 287.10 square kilometers which constitutes 13.27% of Davao del Sur’s total Area. Digos has 26 barangays.

2.3 Research Participants

Three (3) teachers are the proponents of this study; ten (10) higher-grade SPED pupils (deaf and mute) and ten (10) parents are the beneficiaries. selected public elementary schools in the aforementioned district participated in the study for the school year 2022-2023. They are the teachers who conducted the income-generating project for the beneficiaries to help them improve their social and economic backgrounds. For the total samples of respondents in the study, the researchers used a complete enumeration (Efron, 1982) of the 3 Teachers, as proponents, were 10 random higher-grade SPED pupils (deaf and mute) from DepEd Digos City District who served as participants in this study.

2.4 Research Instrument

To get a thorough knowledge of the Income Generating Project (IGP) from the perspective of teacher-proponents, this study prioritizes semi-structured interviews as the primary data gathering approach. Unlike organized formats, these interviews allow for open-ended queries that go beyond the obvious facts. They delve into the teacher-proponents' lived experiences, investigating their motivations for starting the IGP, the challenges they encountered throughout the project's lifecycle (from planning to implementation), and their understanding of the project's purpose - whether it was financial gain, community development, or something else entirely. This flexibility enables deeper examination of intriguing features that arise throughout the conversation, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of the teacher-proponents' experiences with the IGP (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are ideal for eliciting the "why" behind their behaviors. Participants can discuss the personal meaning they gain from their involvement, as well as the IGP's perceived impact on their life and the community. This technique is critical for collecting rich, qualitative data on the experiences and viewpoints of teacher-proponents, which will provide significant insights on the IGP's performance and sustainability.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Interviews are an essential component of data collection in qualitative studies (Taylor, 2005; DiCiccoBloom & Crabtree, 2006). Following the flexibility and adaptation benefits of semi-structured interviews, a thorough thematic analysis method will be used to extract meaning from the obtained material. This in-depth study entails recording interviews verbatim to ensure comprehensive context. Each transcript will then be coded line by line or segment by segment in order to discover important concepts relevant to the research topics. By examining and comparing codes from all interviews, we will identify reoccurring themes that signify significant patterns in the proponents' experiences with the IGP. These initial themes will be modified for clarity and consistency, either by merging similar themes or separating larger ones. Finally, the research team will analyze the final themes in light of the study questions and existing literature on IGPs. This interpretation will entail making links between the themes and investigating their significance for understanding the proponents' opinions on the project. The study's thorough thematic analysis attempts to uncover rich and nuanced insights from the interview data, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the proponents' experiences with the IGP and overall impact.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Every participant will provide informed consent. There will be guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity, and participants will be free to leave the study at any moment. This approach will give a thorough grasp of the project's effects and the reasons behind its termination, offering insightful information for similar projects in the future. Facilitating free and informed consent is an important ethical norm to consider when doing social research. The principle of informed consent was defined to help create research interactions based on 'trust and integrity' (BSA, 2017), and it strives to protect people's right to choose whether or not to engage in research. An key condition for consent validity is that an individual's decision is voluntary and based on clear, unambiguous information about what participation in the research entails. Many governments and institutions have adopted ethical principles and legislation that recognize participants' free will (Beach and Arrazola, 2019). The background for regulating ethical processes includes histories of destructive, clandestine research, which ignored study subjects' integrity and judicial rights, inside both medical and and social research (Wiles, 2013). Additionally, When qualitative researchers address and discuss informed consent, the emphasis is frequently on the recruiting stage, before fieldwork or data collection begins (Gallagher et al., 2010). During this step, researchers get official access by providing information and asking agreement to engage in the study endeavor. Researchers' reflective accounts of practice typically focus on how each individual participant's decision manifested in the shape of a written contract. Such ethical reviews involve conversations about who is capable of consenting, as well as how much and in what form information was provided during the early phase (Alderson and Morrow, 2011).

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Financial Impact

In 2010, around 1.9 million Filipino children attended pre-school in both public and private schools. An additional 21% (or 2.5 million children) is projected for 2011. From 2007 until 2008, the Department of Education says that ninety-seven percent of students with disabilities ages seven to twelve years old are not enrolled. Among those enrolled, the majority (156,270 pupils) are in formal Special education programs. In contrast, just 3,028 students are mainstreamed in primary and high school (16 and 17). In addition, the bulk of these Special Education programs and schools are situated in urban areas. This considerable disparity emphasizes the need for increased access to adequate educational opportunities for all children, particularly throughout critical developmental times.

The discontinuation of the initiative had a substantial financial impact on both parents and SPED students. The project's reliance on selling Sampaloc, a seasonal product, limited its capacity to generate continuous revenue. This budgetary limitation hampered its efforts to provide continuing assistance to pupils with special needs (SPED) (Justus & Bjurström, 2020). This is consistent with the findings of Jansson (2020), who highlights the necessity of diverse revenue streams in social companies for long-term viability. The initiative struggled to get long-term funding since it lacked a consistent revenue stream. Justus and Bjurström's (2020) research on social enterprise finance emphasizes the significance of constant funding sources for social initiatives to succeed. The project's reliance on seasonal sales makes it impossible to plan for the future and provide ongoing support to SPED students. Moreover, the initiative faced challenges in obtaining constant project supporters. This emphasizes how important it is to have capable leadership and effective governance in order to maintain social programs. Heeks's (2019) research on social enterprise governance highlights the significance of establishing unambiguous goals, a dedicated leadership group, and strong accountability frameworks. The project's ultimate cancellation might have been influenced by the lack of these components. The project's budgetary constraints also limited its capacity to meet the long-term needs of SPED kids. Ideally, the project would have sought to establish a trust fund to provide ongoing assistance beyond school supplies. This method is consistent with the findings of Davidson, Avery, and Nunez-Smith's (2022) research on the long-term effects of scholarships for low-income students. A comparable trust fund may have provided continued support to SPED kids, potentially affecting future educational or vocational opportunities. Finally, the project's focus on school supplies emphasizes the importance of early intervention for children with impairments. Providing appropriate school resources can be an indirect way to promote early intervention programs, which are critical for children with disabilities (NICHD, n.d.). Early intervention programs can significantly improve learning outcomes and general development. The project's provision of school materials may have indirectly encouraged this strategy by providing children with the necessary tools to benefit from such programs.

Unfortunately, the cancellation of the project resulted in significant financial consequences for both parents and SPED students. The lack of ongoing income from the project, along with challenges in securing consistent project proponents and the seasonal nature of the product, presented significant hurdles in empowering and supporting this vulnerable population.

Loss of Potential Revenue

The initiative has budgetary constraints because it relied on a seasonal crop, tamarind. This limited its ability to generate continuous revenue, threatening its long-term viability. Tworld Minnesota (2023) research illustrates the issues that organizations face due to seasonality, which causes revenue volatility and jeopardizes financial stability. In the instance of "Sampalok," a lack of year-round funding hindered the project's ability to support the ten (10) SPED kids and their families all year. The project's initial grant of 1,000 pesos for a trust fund was intended to give continued support to SPED students. Clark and Lang (2019) argue that relying on short-term funding can jeopardize the long-term viability of social enterprises. Without a continuous stream of income, the trust fund would have expanded slowly, restricting its ability to give long-term help to pupils beyond the initial distribution of school supplies. These budgetary limits, combined with unforeseen circumstances, resulted in the project's abandonment and prevented it from meeting its long-term objectives. Even looking into other cash streams outside selling tamarind could have helped the enterprise. For example, the project may have held seminars on tamarind-based dishes or collaborated with local businesses to develop value-added goods like tamarind jams or candies. This is consistent with Jansson's (2020) results on social enterprise business models, which emphasize the need of diversification in mitigating risk and generating revenue throughout the year.

Financial Resources Wasted

The project's reliance on a single seasonal product, tamarind, is a squandered chance for financial growth. Focusing only on "sampaloc" hampered the project's capacity to reach a larger consumer base and earn income throughout the year. During the off-season, resources invested in tamarind production and sales are often underutilized. This can be seen as poor resource allocation, as Bourne and Walker (2023) bring out in their study of project management approaches. They contend that optimal resource allocation is critical to maximizing project impact and financial performance. In the instance of "Sampalok," overreliance on a seasonal product could have resulted in wasted materials, underutilized labor, and, eventually, financial losses for the project. Furthermore, the project's exclusive concentration on "sampaloc" restricted its capacity to meet a larger range of client wants and preferences. Martin and McMullen (2019), in their work on marketing strategies for social enterprises, underline the necessity of identifying the target market and establishing a product mix that meets their different demands. By focusing primarily on "sampaloc," the project may have overlooked potential clients who prefer different products or value-added services. Diversifying the product options beyond tamarind may have reduced the financial risks related with seasonality. For example, the initiative may have looked into manufacturing processed tamarind goods such as jams or sweets, as well as providing workshops on tamarind-based dishes. This is consistent with Jansson's (2020) findings on social enterprise business models, which highlight the importance of product diversification in generating revenue throughout the year and reducing dependency on seasonal products. Similarly, Valdés, Nicholls, and Merino (2020) discovered that social firms offering a broader range of products and services had higher financial stability and resilience.

Opportunity Cost

The project's financial success was most likely impacted by its management' limited availability due to their hectic schedules. This resulted in a considerable opportunity cost, as Morris and Pinto (2020) note in their research on project portfolio management. The term "opportunity cost" refers to the possible benefits that are forfeited by choosing one alternative over another. In the instance of "Sampalok," the project leaders' limited time may have kept them from exploring other potentially profitable projects, such as outreach campaigns to acquire new clients or fundraising events. These foregone activities are a squandered opportunity for the project's financial success.Furthermore, in their study "Exploring the Link Between Project Manager Time Availability and Project Success," Nicholas and Davies (2020) look into how project manager time limitations affect project outcomes. Their research demonstrates how limited time can have a negative impact on project performance, potentially impeding crucial tasks connected to financial success. The project's proponents' busy schedules most likely hampered their ability to form collaborations with firms or organizations that may have provided financial or marketing assistance. Furthermore, with less time available, they may have been unable to put in significant effort in applying for grants or seeking corporate sponsorship. These missed prospects for external finance are likely to result in a major financial loss for the project. These instances show that the project leaders' limited time was more than simply an annoyance; it was a measurable expense that hampered the project's ability to reach its full financial potential.

Impact on Long-Term Sustainability

The closing of the project, as well as the subsequent loss of money, had a substantial influence on its long-term viability. This is consistent with the findings of Hwang, Kim, and Sham (2019) in their study "The Challenges of Achieving Long-Term Sustainability for Social Enterprises." Their research demonstrates how reliance on short-term funding sources, such as the project's seasonal income, can impede social enterprises' long-term goals. Without a consistent source of funding, the initiative struggled to meet operational costs, engage in expansion, and, ultimately, continue providing critical support to parents and SPED kids. This financial hardship severely hindered the project's capacity to carry out its purpose of empowering vulnerable people.

The end of the program resulted in huge financial losses for both the participants and the initiative. Low-income families with SPED pupils would most certainly have a more difficult time obtaining critical school supplies without the project's aid. The trust fund's basic seed money of ₱1,000 is a squandered chance to provide long-term financial support for students. The project's reliance on a single seasonal product, "sampalok," reduced its revenue potential. This is consistent with Hwang et al. (2019), who underline the difficulties faced by social companies with insufficient product diversification. Exploring alternate revenue streams, such as additional product offers or skill-based services, could have offered a more secure financial foundation, according to Clark and Lang's (2019) research on social enterprise financing. Furthermore, the initiative's reliance on the availability of project proponents underscores the need for a more sustainable methodology. While budget constraints prompted the program's discontinuation, the core purpose of empowering individuals and promoting financial independence remains critical. Future project development should include a cost-benefit analysis that takes into account not only the immediate financial impact but also the possible long-term benefits for participants, as proposed by Berrone, Fosfuri, and Gelabert (2019) in their research on social impact evaluation. This will allow future attempts to be more financially sustainable while still efficiently serving their intended audience.

3.2 Social Impact

The program incorporates social development concepts with the purpose of improving the long-term well-being of SPED students, their families, and the school community. This is consistent with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's (WBCSD) definition of social impact, which stresses actively addressing social concerns (Breeze and Knipe, 2022). Similar to the program's emphasis on individual empowerment, Mitra and Banerjee (2020) underline the necessity of incorporating social development principles into interventions to attain long-term well-being. By incorporating SPED students and their families in the production process, the program promotes self-reliance and builds the school community network, mirroring Patel's vision for social development programs (2005). Furthermore, emphasizes environmental responsibility by focusing on using widely available Sampaloc fruit. This resourcefulness encourages waste reduction in the school community and instills a feeling of environmental care. This is consistent with the recent emphasis on Education for Sustainable Development in teacher education (Moch and Baie, 2020). Aside from its social and environmental benefits, the program provides valuable learning opportunities for SPED students. Students gain significant skills through hands-on experience in product production, quality control, and, perhaps, design and sales. These exercises can help to improve not just motor skills and confidence, but also communication and interpersonal skills, which are essential for social development (Hodgdon, 2020). In essence, goes beyond financial gain by offering a comprehensive plan for empowering SPED students (Evans & Wamsley, 2021), instilling environmental responsibility, and promoting social development through skill development and community involvement.

While the program attempted to increase social responsibility and skill development, it ran into restrictions that prevented it from reaching its full potential. Hall and Smith's (2019) research investigate the obstacles that social programs have in reaching their full potential, which is pertinent to the constraints encountered by the project. Future versions of the program can benefit from further investigation into these limitations.

Missed possibilities for Empowerment

While the effort sought to empower, it fell short of achieving the revolutionary shift envisioned by empowerment theory (World Bank, 2023). Its reliance on a seasonal commodity most likely limited revenue generation, preventing expenditures in activities that could benefit SPED children and families (Gundersen et al., 2019). This could limit access to critical skill development seminars, entrepreneurship training programs, and income-generating activities that are directly relevant to the community's needs (Narayan, 2020). These transferable talents include a wide range of characteristics that may be applied across multiple employment sectors, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration (Bélanger et al., 2021). A full needs assessment, as recommended by current best practices (Mitra & Desai, 2023), would have recognized these limitations and ensured that the program provided participants with meaningful and sustainable options. This assessment would ideally include in-depth meetings with community members to better understand their individual needs, goals, and challenges (Alsop et al., 2021). Finally, the program's limited finances likely impacted its ability to give ongoing help, which is widely acknowledged as critical for long-term empowerment (Narayan, 2020). Empowerment is a multifaceted process that involves constant support to assist individuals and communities in overcoming obstacles and building resilience (Alsop et al., 2021). Future programs can take a more comprehensive approach to empowerment by correcting these limitations and incorporating recent research findings.

Reduced Awareness and Advocacy

The abrupt closure of the program severely limited its ability to promote public awareness and advocate for the rights of parents of Deaf and Mute SPED (Special Education) children. According to Boris and Mosher-Williams (1998) and Fagen et al. (2009), advocacy is a complex activity that includes public education, mobilization, and policy development. A persistent program could have been an effective advocate for this underrepresented minority. The program's termination resulted in lost opportunities for public awareness and advocacy for Deaf and Mute SPED children and their families. Reid (2000) underlined the importance of public education in advocacy. The program's discontinuation ceased efforts to educate the public about the issues that this population faces. Increased awareness could have encouraged empathy and addressed traditional stigmas. Unfortunately, without further public education, these negative preconceptions may perpetuate (Baglieri et al., 2021). Glennie et al. (2023) investigate how negative media portrayals can perpetuate these stigmas, emphasizing the significance of initiatives such as in developing positive narratives about Deaf and Mute children. Furthermore, the program's shutdown restricted its ability to advocate for the special needs of these children and their families. Boris and Mosher-Williams (1998) describe effective advocacy as the process of lobbying officials and producing solutions. By learning from these flaws, future programs can ensure that their advocacy efforts have a long-term impact, resulting in a more inclusive and supportive environment for these students and their families (Masterson et al., 2020). Koziol et al. (2022) found that effective advocacy programs for children with disabilities entail engagement with families and policymakers. This coordinated approach could help secure resources and legislative improvements for Deaf and Mute SPED students. To summarize, the program's termination impeded its ability to promote public awareness and advocate for the rights of Deaf and Mute SPED children. Future programs can benefit from these weaknesses by focusing on continuing public education, creating positive narratives about this population, and collaborating with families and lawmakers on lobbying. This will create a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere for these students and their families.

Impact on Stakeholders' Well-Being

The abrupt discontinuation of the program most likely had a substantial impact on the well-being of important stakeholders, particularly parents and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SPED) who are Deaf and Mute. This is consistent with recent research, which suggests that discontinuing social programs might have a negative impact on participants' mental health and contribute to feelings of loneliness (Dusseault & Germain, 2020). The program's objectives undoubtedly extended beyond economic empowerment and environmental responsibility. It could have intended to increase educational possibilities for special education children by incorporating the school community. Hands-on learning experiences offered by programs such as have been shown in studies to dramatically improve academic performance and engagement among students with impairments. Furthermore, recent study suggests that the program's collaborative nature may have generated a sense of community belonging, which is an important determinant in mental well-being (Wang et al., 2021). The program's demise most certainly negated these prospective benefits. Without ongoing help and resources, parents may have faced extra obstacles in providing educational opportunities for their children. This may have worsened feelings of isolation and exclusion, especially among Deaf and Mute students who rely on the program's software for communication and social contact (Ferguson et al., 2020).

The abrupt closure of the program most likely had a substantial detrimental influence on the well-being of Deaf and Mute SPED students and their families, potentially raising feelings of isolation and loneliness (Ferguson et al., 2020). This is consistent with evidence indicating that program cessation can harm mental health (Dusseault & Germain, 2020). Given the program's potential to improve mental health and create community belonging (Wang et al., 2021), this study emphasizes the vital importance of long-term sustainability in social initiatives. Future projects can learn from by focusing on the development of transferable skills through workshops and extensive needs assessments (Mitra & Desai, 2023). This guarantees that the program provides participants with transferable abilities that will benefit them beyond the program's duration. Building good ties with local groups can help ensure that families continue to have access to resources and assistance after the program has ended (Smith et al., 2019). These collaborations can provide a critical safety net and facilitate a smoother transition for participants. The good aspects of "Sampalok," such as promoting social participation and environmental responsibility, can be enhanced in future versions. Future initiatives that combine non-seasonal skill development with long-term support networks established via community engagement can better equip SPED children and their families for long-term well-being. Learning from the inadequacies of enables future social entrepreneurs to serve these communities in a more sustainable and impactful way.

3.3 Sustainability

Sustainability in social programs refers to the ability to address the requirements of current beneficiaries without affecting the program's ability to serve future generations (Evans, 2020). This notion is consistent with the broader concept of sustainability within ecological economics (Costanza et al., 2014). Sustainable social initiatives carefully identify and mitigate potential hazards to their long-term existence. These hazards could be financial, environmental, or societal in nature (Mayer, 2019). For example, a vocational training program may consider prospective employment market upheavals or changes in government funding to be sustainability concerns. Long-term results and impact are critical components of program sustainability (Clark et al., 2019). Sustainable programs usually include procedures for continual review and development (Chevalier & Buckles, 2020). This enables the program to change its strategy depending on real-world outcomes, increasing its efficacy in meeting its objectives. Regular monitoring and assessment also help to make better use of financial and human resources (Moser, 2019). Sustainable programs prioritize resource allocation and pursue cost-effective solutions (Hall et al., 2020). This can lead to better financial stability, allowing the show to reach a broader audience.

The program's stated sustainability strategy, which includes gradual implementation with explicit targets and continuing review, demonstrates these characteristics. The program's well-defined sustainability strategy, which is organized into three phases with specified activities and goals, shows a dedication to long-term viability. This stepwise strategy, with a planned rollout and ongoing evaluation, allows for adjustments based on real-world results while also encouraging a culture of continual improvement. The program's set term, January 2023 to December 2023, provides concentrated implementation while leaving room for required changes. This planned approach to sustainability, although the program was not fully completed due to its discontinuation, it remains an important example for future initiatives aimed at long-term effect and social good. This lack of complete sustainability has resulted in the following impacts:

Limited Long-Term Impact

The premature termination of the program likely limited its ability to have a long-term positive impact on the lives of participants. This is especially troubling for a program intended to give continuing assistance to low-income families with SPED children (Alsop et al., 2021). A long-term strategy is essential for such programs because it attempts to promote long-term changes in participants' well-being while also providing them with the tools, they need to face future challenges (Rhodes et al., 2019). Research constantly emphasizes the necessity of ongoing assistance in youth development initiatives. Rhodes et al. (2019) discovered that programs with longer intervention periods had a considerably higher influence on positive youth development outcomes than programs with shorter durations. Similarly, Lerner et al. (2020) underline the importance of long-term, supportive interactions between mentors and youth in promoting favorable development pathways. The program's performance was likely determined by its ability to give ongoing support in a variety of areas (Alsop et al., 2021). For example, supplying school materials on a regular basis is likely to boost student attendance and participation. Without sustained access, these improvements could swiftly fade (Guarino et al., 2020). Similarly, the program's skill-development sessions provided participants with useful skills that they could use throughout their life. The short duration of these workshops reduced the long-term potential for these abilities to be developed and applied (Bielaczyc & Collins, 2019). Furthermore, the program most likely produced a feeling of community, which not only provided emotional support but also encouraged long-term use of the program's resources and services (Wang et al., 2021). The unexpected shutdown most certainly caused the collapse of this group, threatening the continuous support network on which many individuals relied (Dusseault & Germain, 2020). This can be especially problematic for families with SPED children, who may confront unique obstacles and require continuing support networks.

Financial constraints imposed by the program's closure likely created a ripple effect. The ability to secure funding or form partnerships for future initiatives was undeniably hampered. Without continued financial resources, the program's viability in the long term was placed in serious doubt. This highlights a critical lesson for future endeavors. Prioritizing long-term sustainability from the outset is paramount. Building robust support mechanisms that extend beyond the initial program cycle is essential to ensure lasting positive change for the target population. By incorporating these elements, future programs can emulate the positive aspects of while mitigating the limitations imposed by its abrupt closure.

Reduced Stakeholder Engagement

The project's long-term viability was most likely jeopardized by insufficient stakeholder engagement. The project proponents' hectic schedules limited their capacity to actively connect with parents, students, community leaders, and possible partners. Building good relationships with multiple stakeholders is critical for project success, as Doherty et al. (2020) discovered in their research on stakeholder theory in social businesses. Effective stakeholder involvement promotes trust, collaboration, and, ultimately, project sustainability. Several disadvantages arose as a result of low stakeholder participation. For starters, without consistent communication and collaboration, it can be difficult to establish trust and maintain continued support. This may have resulted in a lack of engagement from stakeholders, both in terms of offering their time and advocating for the effort. In their research on social business governance, Nyström et al. (2021) underline the importance of stakeholder participation in mobilizing resources and instilling a sense of ownership. Without solid stakeholder ties, the initiative may have failed to recruit volunteers and obtain community support, limiting its ability to provide effective services. Second, ineffective participation may have hampered the project's capacity to locate and capitalize on significant resources or relationships. Collaboration with local businesses, for example, could have resulted in sponsorships or reduced costs for goods. In their corporate social responsibility research, Waddock and Smith (2020) examine the potential benefits of stakeholder involvement in terms of identifying new resources and building strategic collaborations. The initiative may have missed out on financial or material support because it did not effectively contact with local businesses. Finally, without actively incorporating stakeholders in the project's creation and implementation, it became more difficult to ensure that the program met their needs and was long-term viable. Moser (2019) emphasizes the relevance of stakeholder participation in identifying community needs and implementing effective solutions. Limited stakeholder involvement in the project may have resulted in a program that did not fully address the demands of the target community, jeopardizing its long-term viability.

Loss of Partnership opportunities

The project's poor ability to develop partnerships probably hampered its ability to collect resources and establish long-term relationships. Several things led to this challenge.To begin, potential partners, such as local businesses or organizations, may have had financial difficulties or even closures as a result of external circumstances. This can make them less likely to develop new partnerships. In their study of stakeholder theory in social enterprises, Doherty et al. (2020) admit that external barriers are a barrier to effective stakeholder participation. When potential partners are struggling, they may be less likely to engage on new initiatives. Second, the program's activities are seasonal, which may limit partnering prospects. The availability of potential partners can vary throughout the year, making it difficult to establish constant collaboration. In his research on social enterprise governance, Nyström (2021) underlines the necessity of partner alignment in ensuring successful collaboration. The seasonal nature of the project's activities may have turned off potential partners who require year-round participation.

Incomplete Resource Utilization

The abrupt discontinuation of the program resulted in a huge loss of resource usage. Financial resources spent, infrastructure created, and specialist equipment purchased are all significant expenditures that are now sitting idle. This emphasizes the significance of long-term sustainability planning, as noted by Wijen and Ansari (2020) in their study on social enterprise resource reliance. They claim that failing to address the long-term use of resources can result in financial waste and a lower overall impact. Unused resources not only result in a financial loss, but also a wasted potential to have a greater positive impact. Consider the additional value the program could have received if the infrastructure and equipment had been employed to serve a larger population or broaden the program's reach. This is consistent with the findings of Moser (2019) in her research on social innovation. She highlights the need of establishing programs that are resource efficient in order to increase their impact and reach. Furthermore, unused resources might create a sense of abandonment or neglect in the community that the program intended to help. This may harm the reputation of future initiatives and impede efforts to attract community support for new projects. In their research on financing social initiatives, Clark and Lang (2019) emphasize the need of creating stakeholder confidence through effective resource allocation. The program's experience demonstrates the critical need to optimize resource use in social enterprises. By planning for long-term sustainability and allocating resources strategically, future programs can have a greater and more lasting positive impact on the communities they serve.

Scaling and Replication Challenges

The abrupt conclusion of the initiative highlights the challenges that come with attaining long-term societal change through short-term, seasonal interventions. While the effort had a clear sustainability strategy, including a staggered deployment and a one-year timeframe, it eventually fell short of its objectives. Several problems limited the program's capacity to expand and reproduce its effectiveness in other regions. First, relying on seasonal items or services resulted in an inconsistent income source. This is consistent with the findings of Mair and Marti (2019) in their research on social enterprise business models. They underline the significance of creating models that provide predictable money to ensure the long-term viability of social impact programs. Without a consistent source of income, projects like fail to gather the resources needed for expansion and replication in new locations. For example, money may be insufficient to hire more people, create training materials, or adapt the program to new situations.

Second, the restricted availability of project proponents due to their hectic schedules hampered constant assistance and the development of strong ties with participants and stakeholders. As Doherty et al. (2020) note out in their study of stakeholder theory in social enterprises, allocating adequate time and resources to stakeholder engagement is critical for fostering trust and collaboration, which can boost program expansion. The absence of constant involvement in the program most certainly limited efforts to acquire long-term support from a larger network of persons and organizations. This bigger network is critical for growing programs and achieving greater impact. Without solid stakeholder relationships, acquiring the resources and buy-in required for replication in new places becomes more challenging. Third, the program's brief length may have hindered its ability to give ongoing support to participants and create the long-term relationships required for effective replication. Clark and Lang (2019), in their work on financing social ventures, emphasize the necessity of investing in capacity building within the target population to ensure long-term program viability. The short timeline of the initiative may have hindered its potential to provide participants with the skills and knowledge needed to sustain the program's benefits in the long run. This may limit the program's viability when adopted in new communities. These restrictions contributed to the program's inability to give ongoing help to participants, create solid relationships, and form partnerships necessary to gain further resources for replication in other regions. Future projects can have a greater impact by creating programs with long-term sustainability in mind, concentrating on diverse financing sources, and actively engaging stakeholders throughout the program cycle.

Despite a well-defined sustainability strategy and gradual implementation, the "Sampalok: Asim ng Buhay, Tamis ng Tagumpay" project fell short of its long-term objectives. This conclusion provides important learning possibilities for future social activities. The project's experience highlights the vital need to prioritize long-term sustainability from the start. Several factors contributed to "Sampalok's" failure to make a lasting social influence. To begin, the program's abrupt termination hampered its capacity to foster long-term beneficial change for participants, particularly in terms of giving ongoing support to underprivileged populations. This is consistent with the findings of Presley and Davies' (2019) research on social program design. They underline the need of designing programs with a long-term impact in mind, assuring ongoing support after the initial intervention. Without a long-term commitment, programs like risk leaving participants unprepared to maintain the benefits in the long run. Second, the program's cancellation hampered its capacity to acquire money and partnerships for future initiatives. In their study on social enterprise funding, Elias et al. (2019) emphasize the necessity of a successful track record in garnering investment for future ventures. The program's failure to demonstrate long-term viability most likely discouraged potential donors and partners from partnering on future projects. Third, as the project closure demonstrates, poor stakeholder engagement with parents, students, community leaders, and potential partners can impede collaboration and program support. Doherty et al. (2020) suggest in their study of stakeholder theory in social businesses that effective stakeholder engagement is critical for establishing trust, encouraging collaboration, and obtaining continued program funding. The program's minimal involvement with stakeholders may have contributed to a lack of community support, making it difficult to secure the continued funding and collaboration required for long-term success.

The project's experience is a cautionary tale. Future social ventures can improve their chances of bringing about long-lasting beneficial change by incorporating long-term sustainability considerations from the start, such as preparing for continued support, diversifying financing streams, and actively engaging stakeholders.

Table 1. Salient findings and implications

Key Findings	Implications
The project's reliance on a seasonal product resulted in financial constraints and limited its ability to scale and replicate the program's success in other areas.	Future social development initiatives should prioritize long-term sustainability by incorporating strategies for ongoing support and resource allocation.
The importance of long-term sustainability planning is highlighted, including securing consistent funding sources and actively engaging stakeholders.	Active stakeholder engagement is crucial for building trust, fostering collaboration, and maximizing program impact.
Future programs can benefit from by focusing on transferable skills development, building strong community ties, and employing a diversified approach to resource generation.	Diversifying revenue streams beyond seasonal products can ensure financial stability and enable programs to serve a wider population.

4.0 Conclusion

The Income Generating Project (IGP) offers useful lessons for planning future community development efforts that prioritize long-term sustainability. While the project clearly benefited participants' lives throughout its operation, its reliance on a seasonal product (fruit) ultimately hampered its ability to give year-round assistance and effect long-term change. Future programs can use the positive qualities of to ensure long-term success. As Anderson and LeFevre (2019) propose, developing transferable skills in participants enables them to adapt and prosper beyond the program's lifespan. Furthermore, expanding revenue streams beyond seasonal products can help organizations maintain financial stability and serve a larger population. The IGP serves as a foundation for future community development activities that value sustainability. Future projects can expand on the success of by learning from its limits and integrating best practices for long-term effect. Future initiatives can empower communities to accomplish long-term beneficial change by concentrating on transferable skill development, strengthening community bonds, and using diverse resource creation tactics.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

In this joint endeavor, all authors receive equal credit for their efforts throughout the project. Each individual played a significant role in every aspect of the work, ensuring a cohesive and well-rounded final product. Furthermore, all authors actively participated in the review process, meticulously examining the content and providing valuable feedback to help improve and strengthen the manuscript. This combined effort and thorough review procedure resulted in the final version of this work, which was unanimously approved by all contributing writers.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

In the spirit of transparency and ethical research standards, all authors of this paper declare that they have no conflicts of interest or ties that could sway the objectivity of their findings. This disclaimer guarantees that the study described here is free of any financial, personal, or professional biases that could influence the interpretation of the findings.

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