Profile and Needs Analysis of Child Development Workers in One Municipality in the Province of Laguna, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is a critical component in the holistic development of children, and early childhood teachers are instrumental in creating rapid physical, mental, and emotional growth in socially supportive environments for their learners. This study is focused on assessing the needs of the Child Development Workers (CDWs) in one municipality in the province of Laguna, Philippines. The descriptive research design was used in the study. It employed a survey questionnaire and a Focused Group Discussion that involved 11 CDWs. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the profile of the respondents, their training needs and interests, their further learning preferences, and the ECCD Domains where they need additional assistance and interventions. The study concludes that the age bracket and length of experience in ECCD of most CDWs, in cognizance of the majority being married, reflect their capacity to teach the children entrusted by parents under their care. Consequently, their educational background and professional development, specifically in terms of opportunities for training to capacitate themselves continuously, showed inadequacies. The common topics of interest and further learning preferences of the CDWs range from teaching strategies, child development, curriculum planning and delivery, development of learning materials, assessment of children, and classroom management. The findings may serve as the basis for providing interventions, extension activities, and training services to the CDWs for the enhancement of the 8 ECCD Domains among learners.
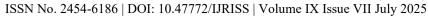
Keywords: needs analysis, early childhood education, ECCD domains, child development workers

INTRODUCTION

Children acquire remarkable brain development from birth to eight years old, which represents a crucial window of opportunity for education. When children are healthy, safe, and learning well in their early years, they are better able to reach their full developmental potential as adults and participate effectively in economic, social, and civic life. Providing early childhood education is regarded as a means of promoting equity and social justice, inclusive economic growth, and advancing sustainable development [17].

The Education Committee (EDCOM) II Year One Report states the following issues and concerns in early childhood education that requires careful and immediate attention: nutrition and feeding which emphasizes that each child has access to health and nutrition interventions that are critical to early childhood care and development and addressing the intricacies of maternal and child health and nutrition comprehensively; Supply-Side Factors which take into consideration the development of a universal ECCD database, expansion of the ECCD provisions to encompass private, community-based, and home-based programs, and development of education pathways for child development workers and teachers through certificate programs; and governance and funding of ECCD which encourages the conduct of a study on the complementarities in service delivery on the ground including local councils for the protection of children, barangay nutrition scholars, and barangay health workers [2].

In addition, the EDCOM highlighted among its priorities the foundational skills in reading, writing, and numeracy, as well as socio-emotional learning, and the mobilization of parents and the community to provide the interventions as support to teachers [2].

Many children lag in mastering foundational skills such as basic literacy and numeracy. Only 10 percent of Filipino students achieve the minimum reading standard, and only 17 percent for the minimum mathematical standard expected by the end of primary education, as defined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 [16].

There are also challenges in socio-emotional learning… students from conflict-affected areas and urban poor communities in the Philippines generally have lower socio-emotional skills, and children who attended preschool or daycare have better socio-emotional skills compared with peers who did not have the experience [10].

The CDWs play a significant role in addressing the foregoing issues. This is cognizant of the theory of self-efficacy, which is described as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" [3]. In consonance, "Teacher efficacy is the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" [12]. Moreover, the roles of the CDWs show relevance to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that child development is influenced by a complex interplay of nested environmental systems, from the immediate microsystem (e.g., family, classroom) to the broader macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms, policies) [7].

In connection, several issues concerning the support for the CDWs were identified. Existing facilities and the number of CDWs are insufficient to meet current demand, raising concerns about whether the current supply can adequately cater to increased demand. The ratio of CDWs to enrolled children in the Philippines appears to surpass the standard set by the ECCD Council (1 CDW:10 enrolled children), which may affect the quality of care and attention given to each child. To meet the goal of universal access for children, the country needs three times its current stock of CDWs (around 89,000) or approximately 240,000 CDWs. Around 50% of CDWs in the Philippines are high school graduates, with the remaining half being college graduates. The distribution of college graduates among CDWs varies across local governments and is influenced by income class, with cities and first-class municipalities having more college-educated CDWs [13].

The increasing deployment of non-ECE graduates in CDCs examined how gaps in training, pedagogical alignment, and classroom management affected instructional effectiveness, given the professional and pedagogical mismatch, student engagement and behavior management difficulties, and limited familiarity with play-based learning. Though teachers employ self-directed learning, multimedia tools, and parental collaboration as coping mechanisms, these were often unstructured and insufficient. Hence, a critical need for targeted professional development, structured mentorship, and access to quality instructional resources [6].

This study describes the profile and identifies the needs of the Child Development Workers (CDWs) serving in the different Child Development Centers (CDCs) in one municipality in Laguna Province, Philippines. Specifically, this aimed to answer the following questions:

(1) What is the profile of the Day Care Workers?

(2) What are the topics of interest and further learning preferred by the Day Care Workers?

(3) In what ECCD Domains would the Day Care Workers like to receive further assistance, intervention, extension, and training programs for their learners?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the quantitative method and employed the descriptive survey design. A total of eleven (11) Child Development Workers (CDWs) in one Municipality in the Province of Laguna, Philippines, were the respondents in the study. Before the conduct of the survey, the respondents were informed of the objectives of the Needs Assessment. They were asked to confirm their willingness to participate to ensure informed consent and adherence to research ethical standards. Data were gathered using a questionnaire checklist that was based on the Day Care Center and Day Care Worker Assessment Tool (DCC_DCW_ Assessment Tool) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

A Focused Group Discussion was also conducted to substantiate the quantitative data and clarify significant points. The results of the Needs Analysis were presented to the respondents for their confirmation. The DCW Coordinator, who was also present during the presentation, provided additional insights and confirmatory remarks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At the outset, it is deemed important to know the profiles of the Day Care Workers (DCWs) to better understand their needs and the needs of the Child Development Centers (CDCs) they serve.

The data obtained from the responses of the DCWs revealed that the majority of them belong to the aging population. Specifically, eight (8 or 72.73%) out of the eleven (11) DCWs belong to the age bracket of 40 and above. Only three (3 or 27.27%) are within the age bracket of 26 to 35 years old. This is cognizant of the findings of the Education Committee (EDCOM) 2 that many of the DCWs are aging.

All or 100% of the DCWs are females.

The majority of the DCWs are married. In particular, nine (9 or 81.82%) among them, only two (2 or 18.18%) are single.
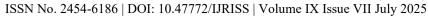
In terms of their educational background, it was found that seven (7 or 63.34%) of them hold a Bachelor's degree in Education. However, only three (3 or 27.27%) have orientation in teaching in the elementary, and do not specify whether such orientation is at the primary or intermediate level. The two (2 or 18.18%) other DCWs are graduates of business administration and computer science, respectively. Another one (1 or 9.09%) reached second-year college. And still another one (1 or 9.09%) reached first-year college only. This shows that the educational background of the DCWs is not up to par with what is required for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). This data contradicts the assertions that children's developmental outcomes are better when classrooms are staffed with teachers whose educational background is early childhood [1], [12].

Ten (10 or 90.91%) of the DCWs attend training only once every year, and only one (1 or 9.09%) DCW is sent to training once a month.

It can be gleaned that preschool teachers vary widely in their level of training and, on average, receive less training and education than their elementary school counterparts [8]. This implies that DCWs have limited opportunities to further develop their capacity to improve the services to the CDCs. Likewise, this finding falls short of the assertions that children's developmental outcomes conclude that staffing classrooms with teachers… who engage in professional development are more likely to provide high-quality ECE [1],[12].

The data on the length of experience as DCWs show that six (6 or 54.55%) of them have served the CDCs for eleven (11) years and above, two (2 or 18.18%) for nine 9 to 10 years, and one (1 or 9.09%) for a year. One (1 or 9.09%) DCW failed to indicate the length of her experience as a DCW.

The frequencies of the DCWs who have attended the training required by the ECCD Council were determined. Training on the Convention on the Rights of a Child (7 or 63.64% of the DCWs), Child Development (9 or 81.82% of the DCWs), Assessment of Children (7 or 63.64% of the DCWs), ECCD Curriculum Planning & Delivery (4 or 36.36% of the DCWs), Development of Learning Materials (3 or 27.27% of the DCWs), Classroom Management or Guiding Children's Behavior (4 or 36.36% of the DCWs), Teaching Strategies & Conduct of Creative Activities (5 or 45.45% of the DCWs), Partnership with Parents and communities or Parents' Involvement & Education (3 or 27.27% of the DCWs), First Aid Administration on Children (5 or 45.45% of the DCWs), Health and Nutrition of Children (6 or 54.55% of the DCWs), Parent Effectiveness Service (8 or 72.72% of the DCWs), Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities (4 or 36.36% of the DCWs), National and Local Laws/Ordinances on Children & ECCD Programs (4 or 36.36% of the DCWs), ECCD on Emergencies or Crisis Situations (5 DCWs), Information Management & Record Keeping (no one of the DCWs), ECCD Home-Based Program, Supplementary Feeding Program Training (only 1 or 9.09% of the DCWs).

The DCWs affirmed that the training they attended ranged from moderately effective to very effective. However, since they only get to attend the training once a year, they tend to recognize their inadequacies. This instance is contrary to the proposition that investing in continuous professional development for educators should be considered to enhance pedagogical skills and adaptability [8].

As such, all eleven DCWs expressed their interest in further training. The majority of them preferred an in-person or face-to-face modality, once a month, and also preferred handouts or print materials.

This is a good manifestation that supports the proposition that practical interventions such as coaching and tandem building are needed to strengthen educators' self-efficacy [11]. In addition, professional development approaches enable teachers to provide children with domain-specific stimulation supports in real-time, dynamic interactions that foster children's developing skills [12].

The top seven (7) topics of interest and further learning preferred by the DCWs are Teaching Strategies & Conduct of Creative Activities (8 or 72.72% of the DCWs), Child Development (7 or 63.64% of the DCWs), ECCD Curriculum Planning & Delivery (7 or 63.64% of the DCWs), Development of Learning Materials (7 or 63.64% of the DCWs), ECCD on Emergencies or Crisis Situations (7 or 63.34% of the DCWs), Assessment of Children (6 or 54.55% of the DCWs), and Classroom Management or Guiding Children's Behavior (6 or 54.55% of the DCWs).

The least preferred topics of interest and further learning, however, are First Aid Administration on Children (2 or 18.18% of the DCWs), Health and Nutrition of Children (2 or 18.18% of the DCWs), National and Local Laws/Ordinances on Children & ECCD Programs (2 or 18.18% of the DCWs), and Information Management & Record Keeping (2 or 18.18% of the DCWs).

The topics of interest and further learning preferences of the Day Care Workers are relevant to the adoption of innovative teaching methods, digital tools [2], and experiential learning approaches to cater to diverse learning styles [4]. It is also relevant to fostering a curriculum that integrates global best practices with local contexts, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy [16]. The implementation of holistic assessment frameworks that go beyond standardized testing to encompass diverse forms of learner evaluation [9] is also of foremost importance. In addition, the development of education strategies that mitigate the impact of conflict and crises on learners, particularly in conflict-affected areas [1], must be given careful attention to promote safety and security.

All or 100% of the DCWs confirmed that they would like to receive further assistance, intervention, and extension and training programs for their learners on all of the ECCD Domains, namely: the Gross Motor Domain, Fine Motor Domain, Self-Help Domain, Receptive Language Domain, Expressive Language Domain, Cognitive Domain, and Socio-Emotional Learning Skills. This decision will most likely support the enhancement of academic achievement, critical thinking skills, and socio-emotional development among learners [5].
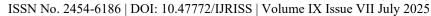
Furthermore, the Day Care Workers' expression of interest in receiving support fosters a great possibility of establishing active participation of communities in education governance, leading to more responsive and culturally relevant policies and practices [14] and forging partnerships with local communities to create a conducive learning environment and promote holistic development [15].

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

The age bracket and length of experience in Early Childhood Care and Development of most of the Child Development Workers in cognizant with the majority being married, reflect their capacity to teach the children entrusted by parents under their care. Consequently, their educational background and professional development, specifically in terms of opportunities for training to continuously capacitate themselves, seemed inadequate.

The topics of interest and further learning preferences of the Day Care Workers, ranging from teaching strategies,

child development, curriculum planning and delivery, development of learning materials, assessment of children, and classroom management, are most essential for effective and efficient Early Childhood Care and Development.

The eight (8) ECCD Domains of child development may be enhanced by providing further assistance, interventions, extension, and training services to the Child Development Workers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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