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EQUITY AND ACCESS IN 4PS IMPLEMENTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTION CRITERIA, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES IN MARAWI CITY

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Keywords	Abstract
<p><i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Targeting Efficiency, Inclusion And Exclusion Errors, Social Protection, Marawi City.</i></p>	<p>This study examined the perceived targeting efficiency of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Marawi City by analyzing beneficiaries' awareness of selection criteria and perceptions of program implementation, alongside key informants' accounts of implementation challenges, discretion, and inclusion–exclusion issues. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative surveys of 100 4Ps beneficiary households and qualitative interviews with 10 key informants composed of local government officials, program implementers, and community leaders across selected barangays.</p> <p>Findings revealed that the majority of beneficiaries lived under conditions of severe poverty, with 87% reporting household incomes below ₱10,000 and 70% being unemployed. While awareness of eligibility criteria was generally high, gaps in clarity and communication persisted. Beneficiaries expressed generally positive views of program accessibility and grievance mechanisms; however, both beneficiaries and implementers identified serious targeting challenges. These included inconsistent application of selection criteria, political influence, and documentation barriers, particularly in remote and vulnerable communities. Inclusion and exclusion errors were widely reported, with 90% of beneficiaries citing the exclusion of deserving households as a major concern. Grievance mechanisms, though present, were perceived as insufficient in resolving targeting inaccuracies.</p> <p>The study concludes that although the 4Ps program contributes to poverty</p>



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	alleviation in Marawi City, its targeting efficiency remains constrained by governance, documentation, and accountability issues. Strengthening screening procedures, simplifying documentation requirements, enhancing grievance systems, and reducing political interference are essential to improving program equity and effectiveness, particularly in conflict-affected and culturally distinct contexts.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Social protection programs play a critical role in mitigating poverty and vulnerability, particularly among marginalized populations in developing countries. In the Philippines, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) serves as the government's flagship conditional cash transfer initiative, designed to improve health, nutrition, and educational outcomes among poor households. Central to the effectiveness of the program is its targeting efficiency, which determines whether benefits reach the intended populations.

Targeting efficiency depends largely on the clarity and consistent application of selection criteria, effective screening mechanisms, and transparent governance processes. However, numerous studies have documented persistent challenges in social assistance targeting, including inclusion and exclusion errors, political interference, and administrative constraints. These issues are often magnified in conflict-affected, geographically isolated, and culturally distinct areas.

Marawi City presents a unique context for examining equity and access in 4Ps implementation. As a city recovering from armed conflict and characterized by high poverty incidence, displacement, and documentation gaps, Marawi faces structural barriers that complicate social program delivery. While 4Ps has been instrumental in supporting poor households, questions remain regarding the fairness, accessibility, and accuracy of beneficiary selection in such a complex environment.

This study examines the perceived targeting efficiency of the 4Ps program in Marawi City by analyzing beneficiaries' awareness of selection criteria, their perceptions of program implementation, and key informants' accounts of challenges, discretion, and inclusion–exclusion issues. Specifically, it aims to:

- (1) Assess beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions and awareness of 4Ps eligibility criteria;
- (2) Examine perceptions of program accessibility, grievance mechanisms, and implementation; and
- (3) identify key challenges and strategies affecting targeting efficiency from the perspectives of implementers and community leaders.

2. METHODS

• Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of 4Ps implementation. This design allowed for triangulation of beneficiary perceptions with insights from program implementers and local stakeholders.

• Quantitative Component



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The quantitative component involved a survey of 100 4Ps beneficiary households across selected barangays in Marawi City. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of households officially enrolled in the program. The survey instrument collected data on socio-economic characteristics, awareness of selection criteria, perceptions of program accessibility, and experiences with grievance mechanisms.

• **Qualitative Component**

The qualitative component consisted of in-depth interviews with 10 key informants, including local government officials, 4Ps program implementers, and community leaders. These informants were selected based on their direct involvement in program implementation, monitoring, or community mediation. Interviews focused on targeting procedures, implementation challenges, discretion in beneficiary selection, and inclusion–exclusion issues.

• **Data Collection and Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize household characteristics and perception trends. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns related to governance, documentation, political influence, and accountability. Findings from both components were integrated during interpretation to enhance analytical depth.

3. RESULTS

➤ **Socio-Economic Profile of Beneficiaries**

Findings revealed that the majority of beneficiary households lived under conditions of severe poverty. Most respondents reported monthly household incomes below ₱10,000, and a substantial proportion were unemployed or engaged in irregular and informal work. These conditions underscore the relevance of 4Ps as a critical source of financial support for basic household needs.

➤ **Awareness of Selection Criteria**

Most beneficiaries demonstrated general awareness of the program's eligibility criteria, particularly those related to poverty status, presence of school-aged children, and compliance with health and education conditions. However, gaps in clarity were evident, with some respondents expressing uncertainty regarding the precise basis for inclusion or exclusion. These gaps were attributed to limited communication and inconsistent information dissemination at the community level.

➤ **Perceptions of Program Accessibility and Grievance Mechanisms**

Beneficiaries generally expressed positive views regarding program accessibility and the existence of grievance mechanisms. Many acknowledged the availability of complaint channels; however, perceptions of their effectiveness were mixed. A significant proportion of respondents felt that grievances related to targeting errors were not adequately addressed or resolved in a timely manner.

➤ **Targeting Challenges and Inclusion–Exclusion Errors**

Both quantitative and qualitative findings revealed serious targeting challenges. Beneficiaries and key informants reported inconsistent application of selection criteria, political influence in



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beneficiary listing, and documentation barriers as major issues. Inclusion and exclusion errors were widely perceived, with many respondents citing cases where non-poor households were included while deserving poor households were excluded. These errors were particularly prevalent in remote and vulnerable communities where civil documentation was incomplete or inaccessible.

➤ **Implementers' Perspectives**

Key informants emphasized constraints related to limited resources, pressure from local political actors, and the complexity of implementing standardized targeting mechanisms in a culturally distinct and post-conflict context. While implementers exercised discretion to address exceptional cases, this discretion sometimes contributed to perceptions of bias and reduced transparency.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that while the 4Ps program contributes meaningfully to poverty alleviation in Marawi City, its targeting efficiency is constrained by governance, administrative, and contextual challenges. The high incidence of poverty among beneficiaries suggests that the program largely reaches its intended population; however, persistent inclusion and exclusion errors undermine perceptions of equity and fairness.

The documentation barriers identified reflect broader structural inequalities in conflict-affected areas, where displacement and weak civil registration systems limit access to social services. Political influence and discretionary decision making further complicate targeting, echoing findings from previous studies on social protection governance in decentralized settings.

Although grievance mechanisms exist, their limited effectiveness in addressing targeting inaccuracies weakens accountability and trust in the program. Strengthening these mechanisms is essential to ensuring corrective action and community confidence.

Overall, the results highlight the need for context-sensitive implementation strategies that balance standardized targeting mechanisms with localized realities, without compromising transparency and equity.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program remains a vital social protection intervention in Marawi City but faces significant challenges in achieving equitable and efficient targeting. Despite relatively high awareness of eligibility criteria and positive perceptions of program accessibility, inclusion and exclusion errors persist due to documentation constraints, political interference, and governance limitations.

To enhance program equity and effectiveness, the study recommends strengthening screening procedures, simplifying documentation requirements, improving grievance redress mechanisms, and minimizing political influence in beneficiary selection. These measures are particularly crucial in conflict-affected and culturally distinct contexts, where conventional targeting approaches require adaptation to local conditions.

6. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION



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7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. PLAGIARISM POLICY

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