



## Challenges Encountered by Indigenous Children in Self-Learning Module during New Normal Education

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### ABSTRACT

The impoverished and indigenous peoples are the most seriously affected groups in the Philippines' abrupt shift in curriculum due to the risk of the COVID-19 outbreak who reside in rural areas where the provision of basic services has been challenging. This study aims to determine the challenges faced by indigenous children in the self-learning module. Using a researcher-made validated semi-structured interview, the study implemented a qualitative narrative research method design wherein responses were gathered from participants' interviews, experiences, and challenges encountered in the self-learning module. The participants of the study were two (2) kindergarten parents and one (1) grade 3 parent from Sitio Poquiz Maasin, San Clemente, Tarlac, Philippines. As an outcome, the pandemic affects the learning of indigenous children. Loss of motivation showed that learners were becoming lazy when answering and completing their modules. The learners also showed they had challenges in concentrating, which has an effect on the learning and teaching experiences. Because of their parents' limited education, challenges in understanding the module were noted, and unclear instructions in the modules made it challenging for students to answer. Despite these challenges, the researchers lay out some alternative ways and interventions that can be utilized to cope up with the new normal education.

*Keywords: indigenous children, indigenous people, self-learning module, new normal education*

Submitted	Accepted	Published
08 October 2023	18 November 2023	30 November 2023

<b>Citation</b>	:	G. Fabros, B., T. Ancheta, J., R. Balanay, A.J., D. Bellen, M., S. Cuario, A.S., & Marzan, Ma.I. (2023). Challenges Encountered by Indigenous Children in Self-Learning Module during New Normal Education. <i>Jurnal PAJAR (Pendidikan dan Pengajaran)</i> , 7(6), 1337-1345. DOI: <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v7i6.9647">http://dx.doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v7i6.9647</a> .
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### INTRODUCTION

Education empowers people in all aspects of life. The rights of the indigenous people (IP) globally had been illustrated when the United Nations released the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIPS) during its General Assembly in 2007. The Philippine government upholds the importance of education as outlined in its Constitution from 1987. It envisions all citizens, even the marginalized and indigenous communities, in obtaining a quality education. In response to the needs and desires of society in terms of education, Education for All (EFA) was established. The Philippines is multicultural and has many diverse indigenous groups with rich and unique cultures, learning systems, and languages. The government hasn't always given indigenous communities' educational and cultural needs top priority. Through the enactment of Republic Act 8371 also known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, this law encourages the state to support non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems as well as autonomous, out-of-school learning opportunities, and most especially those addresses community needs.

Indigenous peoples, groups, and cultures from the non-dominant segment of society resolved to conserve, develop, and transmit to the next generation their ancestral lands and ethnic identity. IP children are regarded as one of the most vulnerable groups due to their residing in rural places and having limited access to essential amenities like schooling (Wodon & Consentino, 2019). With the initiatives, collaboration, and support of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the Department of Education (DepEd,) agencies, and stakeholders, the curriculum framework indigenous peoples were adopted under Department Order no. 32, s. 2015. The framework guides schools and other education programs to engage indigenous

communities in contextualizing and enhancing the purpose of achieving high-quality education, the K–12 curriculum is based on people's educational and social environments. Indigenous people also have their curriculum and evaluation process and one of these is curriculum flows with the cycle and situation of the community. As a result, indigenous education varies according to their tribe's circumstances. Indigenous populations now have access to better and more varied educational options and advantages. The Indigenous Peoples' Education Office (IPsEO) and IP Education Focal Persons around the country have been thinking about how to not only address the issue of how learning resources can be accessed but also how children can be directed in using these materials.

The Aeta were forced to abandon their ancestral homeland after Mount Pinatubo erupted in 1991. The majority of Tarukan's residents were transferred to the Dueg Aeta Resettlement Site and Sitio Poquiz in San Clemente, Tarlac. Before returning to Tarukan many years after the eruption, Lito Diaz was the leader of the resettlement town of 700 Aeta households. He was the eldest of the group and a traditional village elder, so when he joined the Aeta Leaders, he had to balance his traditional style of leadership with the new models he was acquiring in training. Not everyone is capable of exercising this privilege. Poverty and geographical position are two factors that make it difficult for a youngster to attend school. Education is seen as the way to lift a family out of poverty in the Philippines. Poverty, ironically, is the root cause of a child's absence from school. Young Aeta pupils might walk to school in their slippers and travel up mountains. Regardless of the distance, they will attend class with insufficient school materials and even an empty stomach. They may lack the means to educate themselves, but their will to learn is laudable.

And now that the world is experiencing a pandemic and having difficulty in teaching and learning because of the changes that happened, the global crisis that they are experiencing today might also affect the educational system of indigenous people and their community. Furthermore, another challenges that the educational system is facing today is the higher rate of drop out of indigenous students because they can't join in online class. Given all of these there are only a few research conducted in this inquiry, the researchers want to find out their current situation in the community, investigate the things that they do to cope up with the new normal learning system today and provide alternative ways to minimize the challenges they experienced. Since education is for all, no child and community should be left behind during the COVID-19 pandemic; especially indigenous learners.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

Narrative research design was utilized in this study wherein the strategies and procedures to direct narrative inquiry are described. A framework for participant selection, data collecting, and data administration is provided by the research design, and analysis, data visualization, moral considerations, credibility, and rigor. Narrative research design describes the life experiences of the respondents which is the most appropriate method to use depending on the participant's experiences. The study utilized narrative research design to rely on the participant's perspectives regarding their narrative experiences or prior knowledge about the research topic.

### **Location and Participants of the Study**

The study was conducted in Sitio Poquiz Barangay Maasin, San Clemente, Tarlac, Philippines. This place has a group of Indigenous People (Aeta). There are three (3) participants on this study, specifically two (2) kindergarten parents and one (1) grade 3 parent in Dueg Resettlement Elementary School, San Clemente District, Tarlac City, Philippines for the school year 2021-2022.

### **Data Collection**

Full Research Ethical approval were secured by the researchers. Then, letter were presented, its procedure, aims, and goal of the study. Written informed permission were acquired by each participant before they are asked questions. All the participants identities will remain confidential. Interviews were narrated and taken notes with participants' permission.

To gather the needed data on the interview, the researchers used validated researcher-made questionnaires. The researchers asked the participants to share their experiences. Open-ended questions and areas of concern were highlighted in the interview guide.

Considering the health threat brought by the COVID 19, data collection processes were aligned with the Departments of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), and the Inter Agency Task Force's (IATF) existing policies. The interview took place face-to-face with the participants. To make sure that all involved are safe, wearing face masks was observed religiously and later the researchers used the transcripts and were afterwards anonymized.

The analysis process is based on Ryan and Bernard (2003) Technique to Identify Themes. When the data gathering procedure was completed, this study investigated the acquired data by examining the focus group discussion transcripts from the completed session with the study's participants. According to Canary (2019), the study's transcript analysis is essential since there are several themes and frameworks to take into account, depending on the kind of data the researcher intends to convey. Furthermore, the study used a thematic narrative analysis method to identify the different experiences and to highlight the common themes of indigenous children during the self-learning modules and to categorize the large amount of data and make it easier for readers to digest. This method gives relevant ideas and concrete answers to the challenges that indigenous children had experienced in education during the pandemic.

### **Instruments**

The instrument used that served as the main tool in gathering the needed data is a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaires used were checked and validated by experts in the field from the Tarlac Agricultural University, Philippines, College of Education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the result from the conducted data collection procedures.

### **The pandemic affects the learning of Indigenous Children**

The following are the results of the data analysis that the researchers conducted. The study found out that, the pandemic has an effect on the learning of the indigenous children are as follows: loss of motivation, easily distracted, and spoor comprehension.

#### **Loss of Motivation**

The transition in physical school to modular approach is very challenging especially to the indigenous children. This transition affects the way of learning of the children. The participants shared about how demotivated the indigenous children were while answering their modules. Participant 1 expressed *"When they were doing their module children were too lazy to answer it but when they found out that they would have face-to-face, they got up early and were ready by 6 o'clock. (Nung nag momodule pa lang sila tinatamad silang mag sagot pero nung nalaman nila na mag f to f na maaga silang bumabangon at naka ready na 6 o'clock pa lang.)"* Also, participant 2 answered *"Yes, they are motivated in face-to-face."* Participant 1 added *"Sometimes my daughter does not want to answer her module, she will just cry on me when I'm telling her to answer her module.(minsang ayaw na talaga ng anak ko na mag sagot. Iniiyakan niya lang ako kapag pinilipit ko siyang sagutin yung module niya)"* Now that they have lots of activities to answer they are bombarded and stressed and the only way that can let it out is to cry. They have a bit of a hard time answering as well as the parents, added by participant 3 *"I frequently teach this because he still don't get the concept.(paulit ulit kong tinuro kasi hindi niya naiintindihan)"* Similarly with the answer of participant 2 *"Sometimes my son doesn't understand what I teach.(Minsang ang anak ko hindi naiintindihan yung sinabi ko)"*

#### **Easily Distracted**

Home is the new learning environment. Due to pandemic, face-to-face classes are not available. At home there are numerous distractions that children may encounter that hinders and challenge their concentration in learning. Participant 1 shared *"While answering the module whenever they see someone*

playing, they easily get lost and distracted as a result they will play and set aside their module. (Habang sumasagot sila ng module kapag may nakikita silang nag lalaro nawawalan sila ng gana kaya sinasabi nila ayoko munang mag module, maglalaro muna ako. Lalo na ang anak ko ta kinder kaya medyo makulit)" Participant 2 agreed and added, "Especially my son is kinder so it's a bit naughty and doesn't listen to me.(lalong lalo yung anak ko, makulit at di nakikinig)" In addition, participant 3 replied, "Yes there are times that my son got distracted, and it's unavoidable.(meron ding pagkakataon na yung anak ko ay magulo, normal naman iyon at di maiwasan)"

### **Poor Comprehension**

Parents are the teachers and facilitators during the pandemic and their main responsibility in modular learning is to facilitate, help, and guide their children in their learning. The participants answers proved that the parent and children had difficulty in comprehending the module. Participant 1 shared "Our children is having a hard time answering as well as us- the parents, of course the other parents here did not sent to school, so they have a hard time also answering and teaching, so they just let someone answer their children's modules.(medyo nahihirapan sila sa pag sasagot pati din yung mga magulang, syempre yung ibang magulang dito hindi din nakapag aral kaya nahihirapan sila kaya minsan pinapaanswer na lang nila yung mga module ng mga bata)" added by participant 3 "I kept on teaching this because he didn't understand.(paulit-ulit ko nang itinuturo kaso di paring mainitindihan)" The same sentiments with participant 2 "Sometimes my son doesn't understand what I'm teaching."

### **Roles of the parents in facilitating Indigenous children in a modular approach**

The participants identify their roles on how they facilitate their children during self-learning module, including: parents explain the instructions by using Google Translation, and teaching their children in their convenient time.

#### **Parents explain the instructions by using Google Translation**

Confusions and unfamiliar words are some of the parents challenges when they teach their children, in order for them to understand the instructions, they use google to translate. The participants try to explain the lesson to their children in simple words to the best of their ability and translate the lectures so that their children may comprehend and answer in their modules. The participants all used the same method to help their children with their module: to translate the terms stated in the module so they could comprehend better. As specified by participant 3 "We just skip, and when I have my cellphone, I googled to translate it.(Nilalagpasan minsan pag may cellphone ginoogle sa translate ganon)"

#### **Teaching their children in their convenient time**

The researchers found out that there is no burden on parents in terms of facilitating their children in their daily work. Since the parents have work, the researchers added a question if they preferred teaching their child during the day or at night. Participant 1 answered, "I teach them in afternoon because its my free time.(minsan hapon... bakante kasi naming ng hapon)" Similar with the answer of participant 2 "Also in the afternoon but most of the times during at night when there is still time.(minsan hapon rin, pero minsan gabi pag may time)" As added by the participant 3 "At night, when I go down the mountain. (gabi pagbaba ko ng bundok)" As a result, parents do their best to allocate and make themselves an available time to give the support and essential needs by the children in answering the module. Despite their everyday work, they valued having the ability to teach their children in their module during their free time.

### **Identifying the challenges that indigenous parents have with regards to educational resources, financial resources, and understanding the modules that the teachers are giving**

This section are the results of the difficulties faced by the parents as well as their children, identified on how the school and the teacher supports the children and how parents were able to have financial stability in supporting their children's education in terms of educational and financial resources show that they don't

have difficulty, this includes receiving free school supplies and support. However, the result shows that there are difficulties faced by the parents in terms of understanding the modules, this includes the following: Having a hard time in understanding due to insufficient and limited knowledge.

### **Receiving free school supplies and support**

The participants expressed how the school supplies are helpful for them especially for their children. Participant 1 shared that *“those school materials are very helpful. (Malaking tulong iyon kasi... nakakatipid din)”* Participant 1 added, *“This is a big help... because it also saves us money.”* Furthermore, participant 1 responded *“they also provide foods that they can eat during recess and lunch.... even us parents do have snacks too.(Nakakameryenda sila pati rin kaming mga magulang...)”* Participant 2 explains how these free supplies are very helpful because they don't have to go down and be bought in the market. Participant 2 explained: *“Yes, so much because we don't have to buy in the market anymore.( Oo sobra kasi di na naming kailangan bumili sa bayan)”* Moreover, participant 3 also mentioned that they will not worry of buying their children's school materials. This means that the school and teachers providing them free school material are very helpful and it makes the parents save their money. Participant 3 shared *“Yes, because I will not worry on my children school materials anymore.(Sobra po, ‘di ko na iisipin mga gamit na kailangan ng anak ko)”* In addition, the participants mentioned that they have no problem regarding their financial resources when it comes to the needs of their children because of the donations, and their daily work in the farm. As described by participant 1 *“During the distribution of modules, they also gave us papers and bags, we just only bought their school uniform. (Noong module may binibigay na rin sila na mga papel at bag, yung binibili lang naming yung damit nila na pang uniform)”*

### **Having a hard time in understanding due to insufficient and limited knowledge**

The pandemic caused school to stop and proceed to modular setting. The participants expressed their dismay on how modular setting is inefficient and inconvenience for them. Participant 1 express her opinion about how face-to-face is effective rather than learning through modular classes. *“I prefer face-to-face rather than modular learning because they don't seem to be learning the modules.(Mas okay kapag face-to-face kase parang di sila natututo sa modules)”* Similar to what participant 2 told the researchers that children are more motivated to learn and they learn quickly to write their names. *“I don't like the module setup because the kids don't seem to be learning. During the modular setting they couldn't write, now they can.(Ayaw ko sa module dahil parang hindi natututo ang mga bata. Noong module di sila marunong magsulat, ngayon marunong na.)”* added by participant 3 *“During the module he is not happy and he also can't read. For me, face-to-face is better.”*

### **Interventions that can be used for the Indigenous children to cope up in a new normal education**

The following are the results of the data analysis that the researchers conducted. The researchers noted that the respondents explained their ways of facilitating their child the best educational experience possible for their child during pandemic while studying their particular lesson as follows: use of twigs, and use of trading food.

#### **Use of twigs**

Based on the response of the participants, using localize materials or things that is seen from their environment became their tools to demonstrate the activities. According to them it is easy for their children to understand math problem when they are presented with an actual/tangible material, as the participant 2 stated *“ Sometimes we use stick so that they can understand counting better and effectively.(minsan gumagamit ng stick para mas lalo nila maintindihan pa ang pagbilang.)”*

#### **Use of trading food**

The participants shared their strategy on how they teach and help their children during their modular lessons by a trading strategy, the use of exchanging foods as they finish their task, likewise the parents sees

this as an effective way. As respondent 1 mentioned “*I discipline (scolded) her for not listening, sometimes I give her fried banana rolls in exchange for doing their modules...I sometimes say that I won't buy you a friend banana rolls if you don't write. (papagalitan pag minsan hindi sila nakikinig, minsan bibigyan ng turon para magsulat dahil may umaakyat dito nagbebenta ng turon. Sinasabi ko minsan na hindi kita bibilihan ng turon pag di ka nagsulat)*” With these ideas and thoughts in mind, Indigenous children must cope with the educational challenges posed by the pandemic. Their parents are limited in their ability to assist their children in their academic activities, but with the right assistance, they may be motivated and encouraged to cope with the educational transitions of the new normal.

### **Intervention Plan**

Indigenous peoples vary widely within and across nations. At the very same time, Indigenous learners have not generally had access to the same level of quality education that other children in their nation have, particularly during the transition to new normal education.

Indigenous children in Sitio Poquiz are successfully supported by teachers and the school. Indigenous learners feel being supported when the school personnel:

- Take an interest in them and who they are as Indigenous people;
- Expect them to thrive in school: and,
- Assist them in developing their own abilities.

The researchers indicate the several interventions that teachers and parents can use to make a great difference in supporting the children to cope with the challenges they encountered:

- Additional support for children: Finding ways to improve individual children' experiences matters a lot.
- Engaging parents and family: Mutually supportive relationships between schools and parents can help children considerably.
- Reporting and monitoring: Using data to track development helps parents and teachers understand where they are making progress.

The challenges confronting Indigenous learners are diverse. What happens in one part of learners' lives has an impact on the others. For these reasons, interventions for Indigenous learners must be proposed holistically, taking into consideration each learner as a whole person, in cooperation with their families and school. Promoting well-being, involvement, engagement, and achievement is essential for Indigenous learners' success.

### **1. Additional support for children**

There are several ways to give additional support to individual learners. Engaging Indigenous Support Workers is a good approach for schools with a number of Indigenous learners. Together with their parents, such professionals may address the challenges that Indigenous learners experience and seek possibilities to improve their involvement and achievement in school. Supporting teachers in developing positive relationships with Indigenous learners and their parents, introducing new learning resources, and providing professional development for teachers and whole school activities to increase learners and staff cultural awareness.

### **2. Engaging parents and family**

With the help of parents, students can make better and faster progress in school. Indigenous families are likely to be apprehensive of engaging with teachers and administrators if respect, trust, and positive connections have not always been part of historical or recent encounters between Indigenous schools and the community. The most successful relationship between teachers and parents goes on the educational goals for their children, with parents encouraged to have an active part in their children's engagement and learning even during the new normal set up we are facing nowadays. Teachers, parents, and kids described a range of alternative approaches, including carefully managing each child's transition when face to face is now implemented.

### 3. Reporting and monitoring

Performance monitoring and having the data to do so helps teachers and schools to determine if the combination of efforts has the scope and reach to significantly affect student performance during their modular sessions. Without data to monitor progress, it is easy to believe that progress is being made, especially if the new efforts have broad support. This type of information may also increase demand among parents and kids in terms of their expectations, participation, and impact. Such school's trend toward a whole-child approach that prioritizes learners' entire wellbeing. Effective administrators also establish high expectations for teachers and take responsibility to monitor Indigenous children' academic achievement during the transition to the new normal, to ensure that expectations are met and that necessary interventions are implemented on pace. Inspiring leaders promote teacher, family, and school participation in all of the other beneficial approaches.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The pandemic affects Indigenous children, specifically in the teaching and learning process. Loss of motivation, being easily distracted, and poor comprehension are difficulties that are presented during the entire observation and interview with the parents.
2. There is a significant relationship between the parents' parenting role style and the learners' academic performance wherein parents used a google translate strategy to understand the learner's module's instruction and when it comes to facilitating their children there is no impact on parents' daily work.
3. Generally, it's shown that parents don't have difficulty when it comes to educational and financial resources but most of them showed their difficulties when it's all about understanding the lessons through a modular approach.
4. The study concluded that despite the challenges they faced there are also strategies for interventions in supporting children to cope with new normal education.

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were offered:

1. It is highly recommended to have a localized curriculum for indigenous learners that is culturally sensitive and relevant for them to better understand the content of their modules in their context.
2. Simplify the modules, limit the activities and give indigenous learners ample time to complete all the activities in the module.
3. Give more examples with a simple and comprehensive explanation that can easily understand by the indigenous parents and learners.
4. Add engaging activities for indigenous learners to address the demotivation in answering their modules during the modular approach.
5. Strengthen the partnership of parents and teachers. Create a program for Indigenous parents with the school managers to address the sense of loneliness or helplessness, facilitate sharing of experiences, and discuss the coping strategies when facing the learning difficulties of each indigenous learners.

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