

Acedia: One Fundamental Cause of Philippine Poverty

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Abstract

Poverty is a condition or as experts say a disease of the society that is traditionally characterized by the lack or insufficiency of basic human needs, such as potable water, sufficient nutrition, health care, essential education, clothing and shelter, because of the incapacity to afford them. However, this term is relative, like in some developed countries; the measurement of poverty is manifested by the condition of having fewer resources or less income than others within a society or country, or compared to worldwide averages.

About 1.7 billion people live in absolute poverty; before the industrial revolution, poverty had mostly been the norm. The formal term for the near absolute lack of resources is called Extreme Poverty, while the condition of being below the norms of developed society is called relative poverty. Given such, it is now generally assumed that poverty could not be eliminated because of its relativity, but its extreme condition can be alleviated. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that absolute poverty is living below the \$1.25 poverty line.

Keywords: Business; Marketing; Poverty; Economic; Capital

Introduction

The top five countries whose majority of the population is at the poverty line (Table 1).

The Philippines has 32.5% of its population living exactly or below the poverty line, which translates to approximately 29 to 30 million Filipinos.

Causes of extreme poverty

Traditionally, the economy plays a significant role in the increment of poverty, the gap between the rich and the poor is the economic foundations of such, with the middle class at the precarious middle. Some experts suggest that corruption, misuse of rich national resources, as in the case of Africa, perennial political conflicts and unrest are the common culprits (Table 2).

In addition, certain external interventions and structural predicaments could also be attributed to the widespread manifestation of poverty. In case of Somalia and other African countries, the IMF intervened on the countries agricultural sector. This caused dependency and eventually led to importation and famine a far cry from the status quo ante of Somalia before the international intervention, when it somehow exhibited a relative level of sufficiency. More so, the civil wars among the warlords, highlighted by the Operation Gothic Serpent of 1993 further aggravated hunger.

However, poverty goes beyond the usual theoretical roots, or even above its structural flaws. Poverty, in its intrinsic nature is more of a social disease. That is, the poor has the mind-set that will not anymore recover from their current status, and that in practicing such mind-set, they lose their drive and motivation, rely on vices such as alcohol, drugs and smoking and other short-term and also budget draining remedies. Worse, they pass this malpractice unto their children.

| Country | UNDP % | CIA % | Continent |
|--------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Zambia | 68 | 86 | Africa |
| Liberia | NA | 80 | Africa |
| Haiti | 65 | 80 | South America |
| Sierra Leone | 70.2 | 70.2 | Africa |
| Suriname | 65 | 70 | South America |

Table 1: Top Five (5) population below the poverty line (as of 2009).

This is utterly true in the Philippines. It has already become a common scenario here where the poor are the worse alcoholics, drug dependents, smokers and of course, the families that have the most members/children. Psychological evidence proves that the aforementioned serve as their outlet in somehow temporarily forgetting their social situation.

But the issue is that by doing such, they tend to spend more, thereby making them fall farther down below the poverty pit. For instance, they will drink all day after receiving a hard earned wage, without remorse for saving. Instead of doing that, maybe they could limit their bottle count to half, and save that cut portion for their everyday budget (Figure 1).

The foregoing paradigm illustrates how the poverty line starts from the bottom of the pyramid. That is, more Filipinos are dug deep into the poverty threshold. Even the recent data from the National Statistics and Coordination Board which shows that it only needs PHP 4869 for a family to stay out of hunger and PHP 7,017 to avoid poverty – is still, unfortunately, not met and reached by majority of the Filipinos. This can be attested by the studies of Mangahas and the Social Weather Station and which stated that self-reported poverty is at a dismal rate of 51%, while chronic and episodic hunger have three and 17% occurrences, respectively.

Acedia

Practically speaking, acedia is the Latin term for the English word SLOTH. In mere layman's language, laziness could, up to a certain extent, be synonymous to acedia since a person who manifest this characteristic exhibits inertia or stagnation, matched with the lack of motivation and drive to succeed in life. However, the implications go

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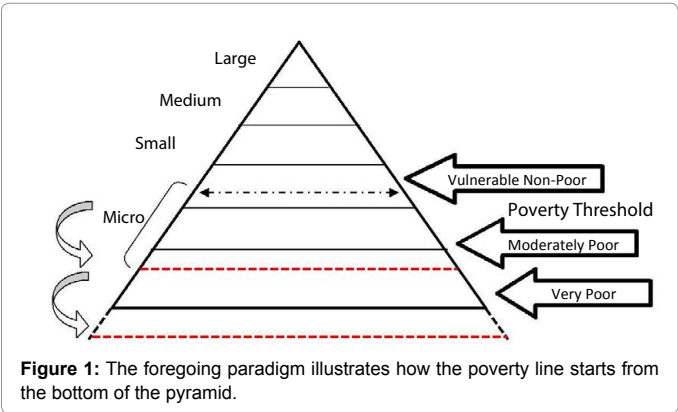
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| Criteria | Entrepreneurial Poor | Laboring poor | Employed Poor | Ultra Poor |
|------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Business Fluency | At least relative fluency on practical business | May have very little or knowledge at all on business | May or may not have practical knowledge on business | No business literacy |
| Literacy Level | Literate | Little or no literacy | Literarate | Little or no literacy |
| Source of Income | Steadt source of income, though limited | Per day II source of income | Steady but insufficient source of income | No source of income |
| Examples | Could be: Owners of small community store owners, underground business | They ar Carpenters, House helpers | They are the typical wage or salary paid employees | They are Bums, potential petty offenders |

Table 2: Classification of poverty (source: Lectures in poverty management by prof. Conrado Montemayor, Ph. D and Benedict David, Ph.D).



beyond the aforementioned, as acedia is also of spiritual stagnation, and relatively, could also qualify as eventual degradation if left unchecked. This is attributed to the fact that acedia clogs the initiative of a human being to form, uphold and practice his virtues, particularly charity from which acedia directly opposes. This opposition could grow stronger if a person refuses to rekindle away from inertia, just as what Isaac Watts said, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands myself, my life, my all,” acedia directly contradicts this requisite to love due to its filthy nature.

Here emphasized that from all the seven spiritual vices known to man, acedia stands out as the more obscure, at least in the contemporary audience. This holds true since it conditions other vices due to its filth and as what Pope Gregory once stated, it is a kind of sorrow a sorrow that that sprouts resentment, listlessness, sullenness and apathy. In addition, since acedia is opposed to charity, a person under the former’s influence will not develop the conviction to uphold what is right from what is wrong in terms of spiritual righteousness, neither could he be capable to utterly love another person, for his mind is already dirty with thoughts that challenge love, empathy and virtue.

Even the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, stressed the point of how this vice could ultimately tarnish a person’s spirit and virtue in many of his works regarding this spiritual vice. For instance, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Aquinas clearly stated that certain sins are not merely satisfied with carnal pleasure, but only in spiritual pleasure, and among these include pride, avarice and acedia. Clearly, it shows how acedia taints one’s character, as a whole, not just the body, since it is predicated on challenging and eventually destroying the very basic nature of what a person is supposed to be and what he is capable of to love (charity).

Acedia and poverty

Even before the actual responses of the individuals under study for this research were solicited and analysed, it will not take long for even the average person to discern that acedia is a primary cause of poverty. Empirical and even anecdotal examples from people around would surely testify how these poor people act.

For instance, poor people are the ones who like to bet on games of chance gambling, per se. These individuals would rather take the risk of betting their already meagre resources, with the hope of winning big, than working hard to earn more, gradually. This manifestation of impatience, in itself, is practically acedia in nature. It is sloth since it promotes sluggishness and inertia, from which, should they lose on their bets, their mind-set will now shift to anger a very unnecessary, impractical and obnoxious one. Even if they win at times, it still develops to acedia since it sprouts addiction, as they become dependent on material vices a form of inertia, once more. Either way, there is sorrow in what they do; there is lack of discipline and loss of virtue.

Social marketing

Social Marketing has been one of the most widely used forms of marketing communications today as a methodology to uphold and enforce social good, or to promote social welfare. This is usually done to remind people about the benefits or hazards of a certain practice, thing or behaviour. Since its beginnings in circa 1970s to 1980s when it was used in healthcare, with the use of the conventional marketing mix, this program expanded and has proven to serve its purpose and has been steadily proving its worth towards achieving its primary objective of creating social awareness towards social good.

Basically, it is defined as a discipline from which its principles emanates from the different fields of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and communication theory with practical roots in advertising, public relations, and market research. In doing such, social marketing applies techniques drawn from the commercial sector to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups, organizations, or society as a whole. Given such, its intent is to create positive social change. It can be applied to promote merit products and services or to make a target audience avoid demerit products and services and thus promote its well-being.

Social marketing is both predicated on serving the society’s welfare, as with satisfying the customers and firm’s needs, respectively, by providing transparent product information and open exchange of ideas. In detail, it puts the creation, communication, delivery, and exchange of offerings of value from the clients and customers on par with organizational activities to meet the needs of the market. Social marketing’s historical focus on voluntary change through superior offerings of value and emphasis on individual change to create broader social benefit is consistent with the notion of value exchange among customers, clients, society, and the organizational partners.

Social marketing in poverty alleviation, let alone in addressing acedia, was not yet used in the Philippines as an applied science in addressing this so-called social disease. This paper introduces this new paradigm for this field of study, in the perspective of a common lay person with a background in business, with relatively sufficient theoretical knowledge of philosophy.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research was predicated on the following specific objectives, in detail, the study aims to:

1. Determine the poor's perception and reason on why they are poor.
2. Determine the poor's optimism in uplifting their standard of living.
3. Identify the factors that contribute to the poor's current standard of living.
4. Discern the poor's belief on alleviating their current poverty condition.
5. Evaluate the poor's overall mind-set.

Related Literature

Poverty management

Poverty Management is a higher approach that is used to address the lingering symptoms of poverty. It is predicated not only on alleviation, which is the stereotypical method in addressing the issue. Rather, it is focused on treating the issue as a social disease, rather than mere economic discrepancy [1-4]. It is focused on these three tiers: identification, which is defined as determining the causes and subjects of poverty, healing or the actual addressing of the symptoms and causes of poverty, and lastly, actual alleviation, which is defined as the concrete steps and procedures to uplift the social and economic status of the poor [5].

The poor is generally underprivileged, the only differentiating factor is the level of income, privilege and luxury that these people receive. This makes poverty relative [6]. This is attributed to the fact that what could be poor in a developed country may already be a lower middle class in a developing one. Thus, the aforementioned discrepancy makes the term poverty subjective [7-10]. But extreme poverty, or as defined, the condition of having a wage below the IMF set \$2 per day, is a consensus, and shall be the reference term for this research. This unfortunate scenario holds true for majority of the countries in Asia, particularly the South Region, than in any other continent.

In detail, extreme poverty is synonymous to living a miserable economic and social life, with education, healthcare and nutrition as the primary areas that suffer [11]. These are the people characterized as living sans the basic laps of human necessities and privileges, they may have sources of income, but is utterly insufficient, they may have a house, but a very tainted one, or they may live under a bridge or along the streets, begging for alms and having the potential to commit petty offenses [12]. Their income is vulnerable and is at risk to some sort of shocks or circumstances that may significantly alter their already meagre budget.

Empirical research has consistently found that households in poor developing areas, with emphasis on the rural settings, may have the ability to protect themselves against a substantial fraction of income risks or shocks, but complete safeguard from these external forces are not guaranteed since their budget to do this and that is very limited. The degree of vulnerability depends on the characteristics of the risks and shocks and the households ability to respond.

Thus, in order to achieve and sustain such safeguards, it is mandatory that the poor should have a steady source of income, this could be achieve via providing sustainable funding and working

capital, but more importantly, they must be taught on how to discipline themselves to become more productive, because without self-discipline, all efforts will just be palliative [13]. In the respective studies of the poor in China and Malaysia, further re-established the notion that an individual's basic necessities should be reinforced in order to alleviate poverty, these are proper sanitation, sustainable livelihood, healthcare and most of all discipline and self-respect. Altogether, the mind-set of the poor could change according to the study.

The poor's mind-set

Just as aforementioned, poverty is a multi-faceted disease that involves the economic, social and even mental faculties of a person [14]. Economically, the manifestations are described as being the group who fall under the lower 10% of the economic pyramid, which is often described as the underprivileged and having the evidences of insufficient resources, provisions for luxuries and even in extreme cases, basic needs.

More importantly, the fundamental issue in poverty is not on the foregone issues, for these are only the effects. The most critical is the mind-set of the poor, or simply, the poor thinks that they will forever be poor, and that they are the moral and economic obligations of the taxpayers and the government [15-17]. Their mind-set is already conditioned to this notion, with very little hope of self-dignity and room for growth. Worse, they become parasites and over dependents. They do not believe in the society, that the latter could never help them, along with the children, and their future per se, in uplifting their social disease.

Research Methodology

This study was divided into two parts. The first part was predicated into identifying the causes and perception of selected Filipinos about poverty [18]. Their respective answers determined whether or not acedia indeed plays a part as one of the reasons for their current dismal standard of living. The second tier involved their exposure to the social marketing program in order for them to control their vices, and eventually check their acedia to achieve a more meaningful life.

Altogether, the entire program took a quarter of a year to be completed.

Sample size and sampling design

A total of 100 heads of families from selected impoverished barangays in Metro Manila were used as the sample groups for this study [19]. The said number of sample respondents was determined using the Slovene's formula at 10% margin of error and level of significance.

More so, to further add substance to the study, a modified cluster sampling method was used on the respondents. They were divided into groups in order to determine a more extensive and comparable progress of the program [20].

The actual clustering process shall be described on the data gathering procedure part of this chapter.

Data collection instrument

In identifying whether the causes of poverty are influenced by the behavioural, attitude, societal and psychological factors of an individual or group a structured questionnaire shall be patterned after E. Roberto's Usage Attributes and Image (UAI) survey questionnaire to obtain the needed information [21]. The questionnaire will be composed mostly

of structured questions in two forms dichotomous and multiple categories. Some of the questions offered a fixed number of variables while some were open-ended; thus enabling the respondents to express personal preferences. A Focus Group Discussion was also conducted to have a more in-depth analysis of each response.

The same format of data collection was used for the follow-up, after the respondents are being exposed to the program [22]. After which, their responses were compared to the first part – the poverty causes identification tier and its link to acedia, where each response has been compared and thoroughly analysed to determine whether there has really been a significant progress to a certain respondent [23].

Or simply, the results were compared in order to identify if discipline through vice reduction (the goal of social marketing) were indeed achieved to address the predicament of acedia.

Data gathering procedure

Household interviews on selected barangays were chosen as the sample locale. A letter requesting the researcher to be permitted to conduct the interviews was given to the barangay authorities. The respondents were asked according to the contents of the questionnaire and they answered each as honest and sincere as possible.

Afterwards, the respective responses were assessed and the actual social marketing program shall be introduced to the sample [24]. This marked the second stage of the study as has been discussed on the foregone topics – the actual implementation of the social marketing programs [25]. To supplement this, barangay orientations were evidently conducted by the officials to collectively educate the people about the thrust of the research.

After the respondents have been made aware and the plan has been oriented and given to them, the implementation process began [26]. Each barangay was divided into five sample clusters, comprising of not more than 20 members per given group. The first cluster was exposed on the social marketing program for one month. Another cluster was given two months, the third had three, the fourth one had four months and the last cluster five months for the program.

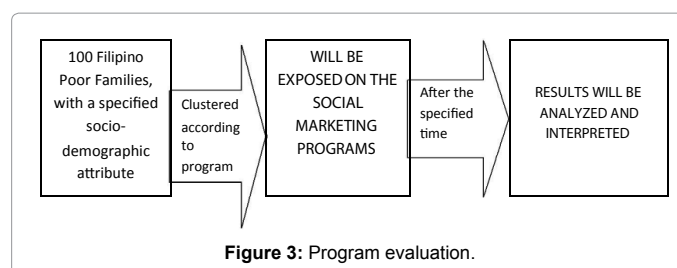
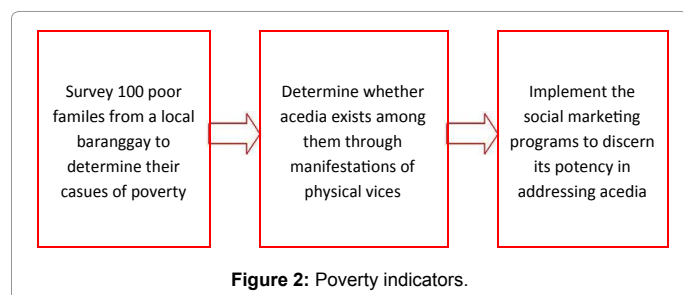
Research paradigm

The following shall illustrate the flow of this research [27]. The respective paradigms shall portray how the research shall be conducted based on the tiers and programs presented above, which are benchmarking, identifying poverty causes and implementation and evaluation of the programs used (Figures 2 and 3).

Discussion of Results

Respondents poverty profile

The respondents who were interviewed for this research whose responses would appear on the following pages of this study primarily



belong to the labouring, employed and entrepreneurial poor classifications, respectively [28]. Strictly following the methodologies proposed for this research, the respondents were meticulously probed for answers, whilst assuring them that their disclosures will be treated with utmost confidentiality. They were also the ones who underwent the social marketing program proposed for this research, and their progress was evaluated after its duration [29-32].

In general, the abstract profiles of the interviewees were as follows:

1. They comprised primarily of heads of families from fathers to single mothers.
2. There were some bread winners of legal age young individuals who are working to support their parents and extended families who either have sickness or have no jobs.
3. The most common jobs of the respondents are market vendors, house helpers, carpenters and public utility drivers. Other jobs include mall salesmen, fast food chain cashiers and drug store assistants.

Perception about poverty

This area of the study refers to the mind-set and impression of the respondents towards poverty.

And from the given survey conducted, it is determined that poverty is indeed a multi-faceted predicament, with many anchors and predications that linger across the society and the economy.

Lecture during the International Convention of Social Protection held at the University of Santo Tomas, created a metaphor comparing poverty to a monster that has many hearts. And in order to defeat hi so-called social tyrant, every heart must be stabbed simultaneously using all possible poverty alleviation means (e.g., microfinance, micro enterprising and social enterprising, among many more). Given such, it could now be concluded that his metaphor is valid, for according to the respondent's mind-set, they believe that it has many areas to consider.

Going further, based on multiple responses of the participants, they have utterly indicated that poverty is indeed a social disease, with majority (60%) attesting to this claim. This answer further reinforces the idea of that poverty is like an ailment that affects the mentality of an individual that is, pushing him to think that the structure of the society is definitely unequal and unfair. The same discernment can be said to that of the lectures and studies in his poverty management courses [33] (Table 3).

In addition, more than half (55%) of the respondents indicated that poverty could be classified as an inevitable life situation. When further probed, they said that it is an unfortunate life status that they have inherited from their parents who refused to fight for the upliftment of their standard of living. Book clearly emphasized this social and economic state, citing it as a structural problem of any given nation,

| Base: Number Respondents | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Social disease | 60 |
| Inevitable life situation | 55 |
| Curse | 20 |
| Others (including corruption) | 15 |
| N.B. Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses | |

Table 3: Perception about poverty.

| Base: Number Respondents | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Lack of Financial Discipline (including vices) | 70 |
| Lack of private and government support | 40 |
| Lack of education | 37 |
| Born Poor | 25 |
| Others (including Inflation and Corruption) | 13 |
| N.B. Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses | |

Table 4: Reasons of poverty.

which, according to his research, is attributed to the fact of the innate inequality of wealth distribution existing among countries and its citizens.

However, it is quite interesting to consider the result that corruption is not among the mind-set of most of the people under study, as it was only mentioned by a handful of respondents. The researcher and his facilitators took further initiative to ask some of those who did not indicate corruption as part of their mind-set for poverty. The results were unanimous: they simply stated that corruption is just the offshoot of a long-running malpractice that they reasonably phrased as “hindi pantay na antas sa lipunan na nag umpisa pa sa mga ninuno natin na naging dahilan ng ating katamaran at nakakaawang kalagayan sa buhay” or social inequality, in short. Thus, social disease and structural inevitability, as what experts suggest, could indeed qualify as the mind-set and perception of the poor about their current dismal standard of living.

Reasons for poverty

This part extensively probed the underlying reasons on why the respondents think that they are poor. Based on the results gathered, nearly three-fourths (70%) gave an honest answer that their current state of poverty is significantly attributed to the fact that they lack the proper discipline to manage and budget their finances [34].

This aforementioned reason is distantly followed by the poor's distrust on the institutions both private and government that are predicated on alleviating poverty, as what their responses suggest (40%). They have indicated that these sectors need to pursue further to strive more in addressing this predicament, as they feel that the efforts are not significantly felt.

More so, once more, corruption is not much of a factor in this part of the study, just like the previous topic. The respondents just think that this much hyped concern is the mere result of the structural flaws of the system which also according to them includes their own faults for not being disciplined enough in terms of financial wit. Or simply, they have admitted that they themselves have faults in their current way of life (Table 4).

Lastly, other structural and personal issues such as lack of education and lesser job opportunities comprise the rest of the responses.

Relation to vices: The respondents who answered lack of financial discipline, upon further probing, revealed that vices do indeed play a part on their current status in life which according to them is degrading

and vicious (this will be further discussed on the following sub-topics). Some of their admissions are as follows:

“Bisyo ang isa sa mga pangunahing dahilan” (My vices are primarily one of the primary reasons why I am poor)

“Siguro kung wala akong bisyo, baka kahit pano mas maayos ako kasi mas kaunti ang gastos ko at hindi ako nagkakasakit, kaso hindi talaga maiwasan.” (Maybe I am better off in life, and even healthier sans my vices, however, this cannot be helped) [35].

Hence, this further proves two things:

1. Vices can be identified as a form or effect of the lack of financial discipline which directly attributes to the reasons of poverty; and
2. The social disease aspect of negatively affecting the poor's mind-set which comprises multi-faceted characteristics and attributes - is truly valid, as what the respondents claim.

Outlook on Poverty Alleviation

This aspect solicited their honest opinions whether they still believe that their current standard of living could be resolved and uplifted. Clearly, nearly nine-out-of-ten (89%) still have faith among themselves and the system. They also emphasized that prayers still work wonders in addressing one's life problems. And matched with discipline and some people or organizations that are willing to sincerely assist them, they ardently believe that they could still find a way to become more productive citizens by alleviating their current poverty status (Figure 4) [36].

However, there are still people who remain pessimistic on their current standard of living, as they said that they will die in that way poor and they will just let their children believe and work harder. This somehow proves the study of some poor people indeed manifesting a sense of hopelessness. Fortunately for these Filipinos under study, majority are still nurturing a sense of optimism.

Number of Family Members

The results gathered for this part are in-line with the data that could be found on the local and national census. The respondent's respective family profiles are within the matrix of having five to seven family members, with two or three children per family [37] (Table 5).

Reasons for having such number of family members

Further probing revealed that an underlying reason for having such number of family members, besides the obvious reason of having children, is due to extended families. Most of the respondents have stated that their relatives are living with them. These relatives include

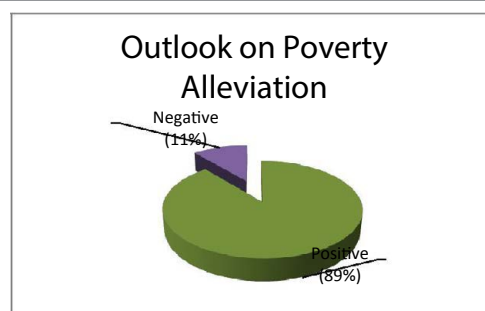


Figure 4: Outlook on poverty alleviation.

| Base: Number Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|
| 2 - 4 members | 39 |
| 5 - 7 members | 42 |
| more than 7 members | 19 |

Table 5: Number of family members.

| Base: Number Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|
| 100 - 200 Pesos | 8 |
| 201 - 300 Pesos | 27 |
| 301 - 400 Pesos | 40 |
| More than 400 Pesos | 25 |

Table 6: Total daily income.

their respective parents, cousins from provinces that are looking for jobs, and even their grown up children who have married and had their families earlier in life.

This, according to them, clogs their family budget and convenience since they have more mouths to feed. It could have been better if their extended families are helping, unfortunately, they are not. Those who have 5-7 members stated that they only have two children, but one or both have already married, and unfortunately, could not find stable jobs to support their young families, so they cling to the parents for more support [38].

More so, another pertinent reason is that quite a number of these respondents, despite only having one or two children, only have meagre income. So notwithstanding such small family number, their income cannot conveniently sustain a certain degree of financial comfort.

Daily Income

The NSCB data of 2009 that it will only take approximately 4,800 and 7,000 Pesos to get a family out of hunger and poverty respectively, at a certain point, could hold true. The same goes for the lecture and study during the International Convention for Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, wherein she discussed how chronic (poor ever since a given period) and transient (became poor for a period due to external reasons) poverty could be alleviated. Even the World Bank and IMF matrix of \$1.25 per day poverty may seem to be very low for a family not to reach [39].

However, beyond the statistical data are underlying reasons qualitative but definitely significant and negatively affecting why people are still experiencing poverty. These subliminal reasons are discussed on this part.

This segment confirms the responses of these families for still having an arduous time with their financial viability. As the following data would show, most respondents are still less than the minimum wage set forth by the government [40]. Those who have answered above 400 Pesos per day are just barely making ends meet, as further probing revealed that the highest income matrix from entire respondent profile is just around 12,000 Pesos (Table 6).

This may seem quite reasonable for a single person; unfortunately, these people have other mouths to feed extended family members, per se. Worse they have vices that really make their already meager earnings further diminish. These aspects will be discussed on the succeeding topics.

Household Expenditures and Budgeting

When asked how do respondents budget and spend their income, their answers were synonymous.

Besides the basic necessities, as with education, some heads of families especially the bread winners are allocating significant portions of their diminutive income to help their respective extended family members [41]. For instance, one respondent told that he occasionally gives his brother who is currently jobless due to lay-off allowances. He admitted that it gives him a really difficult time he even sacrifices some luxuries just to provide for his family [42-44]. This person does not have a vice (he is among the few who does not have, as the following topics will indicate), but his standard of living really experiences setbacks.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned isolated cases, majority of the respondents have unfortunately indicated that they do have vices, and that they are allocating a portion to sustain it. The next heading will thoroughly explain this part.

Manifestation of Vices

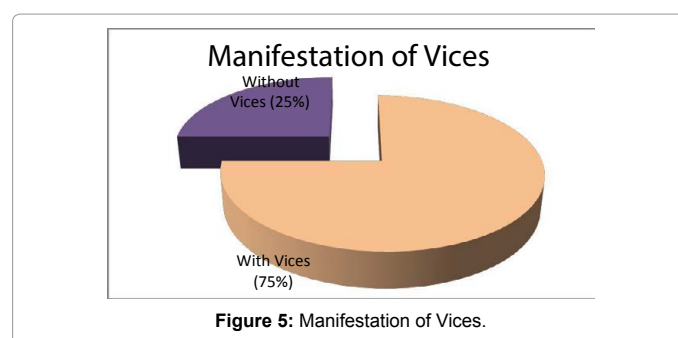
Taking a cue from the foregoing topic, exactly three fourths (75%) have indeed admitted that they do have vices. The other quarter have indicated that either they are disciplined enough to avoid, or does not really have the financial luxury to afford. In both cases, as what the previous sup-topics have confirmed, the people who have vices really allot portion of their income to satisfy their respective cravings (Figure 5).

For instance, one carpenter stated every after a week worth of work, he and his peers will drink to celebrate a hard week's work. In the process, their so-called good time will cost them around two or three cases of hard beer [45-49]. Definitely, they will get the budget from their income, which again depletes their allocation for more important priorities.

Clearly, this confirms the notion that this poverty profile of respondents really has to condition their mind-set to have a proper financial discipline. As majority of them stated on the first part of the interview, their lack of financial discipline becomes more obvious as each inquiry is raised.

Kinds of Vices

For almost the entire respondent profile, their vices are generic smoking, excessive drinking and gambling. Some only have one vice, many have two, some even commit all three. Their response clearly confirmed the research design that the presumptive vices of these people would revolve around the aforementioned [50] (Table 7).



| Base: Number Respondents | Percentage | Average Frequency of Vices |
|---|------------|---|
| Smoking | 47 | 10 sticks / day |
| Excessive Drinking | 51 | Five (5) bottles / three (3) times a week |
| Gambling | 25 | PHP 30 minimum bet / three (3) times a week |
| Others | 7 | |
| N.B. Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses | | |

Table 7: Kinds of Vices.

Based on the above data, excessive drinking seems to be the most rampant vice, followed by smoking. When asked why, the respondents simply answered that drinking is their way of celebrating various occurrences. For one, they will always drink every payday, or even every weekend, like in many cases. More so, they could not work properly without a cigarette, and if there is really a special event, like a birthday, they will gamble.

All these happy but trivial activities will come at the expense of their own income which is already meagre being classified as labouring, employed and entrepreneurial poor, respectively.

Odd Vices

There were other vices that are not usual odd per se. Among those that qualify on the category of others on the table above are as follows:

1. Everyday Fortune-Telling in Quiapo
2. Bar Hopping (three people) almost every weekend, whose budget allocation for such activity is borrowed, thus, making these people incur unnecessary debts.
3. Everyday loading of their prepaid account mobile phones (two people)

These intriguing results were indicated on their responses, and they have openly disclosed their respective manners in doing these vices.

To start, one respondent's vice is not primarily on the usual ones smoking, gambling, excessive drinking, etc. However, she spends at least 50 Pesos to consult a fortune teller to forecast any misfortune or luck that she will experience during the day. More so, she expressed her psychosomatic attitude that she will definitely feel sick if she could not visit her "suki" fortune teller in any given day [51].

Another odd vice are that from three employed poor respondents who are fond of visiting low to middle end bars to drink and party almost every weekend, particularly on paydays. At first glance, this may seem just normal, but when they voluntarily admitted that it causes them to incur debts, then, it already becomes an entirely different issue [52-54]. They consider this a vice since they accumulate debts, especially from a "Bumbay" (Indian small-scale financiers and lenders).

Lastly, two cashiers at a local street drugstore have this self-confessed vice of always loading their mobile phone prepaid accounts every day, with an average of around 25-50 Pesos per transaction. The worst part is that they are not aware that they are spending at least 1,800 Pesos a month reloading their accounts. They only realize it after the facilitator of this survey computed their expenses.

Hence, all the time, they were wondering why they are always short in terms of ready cash, unknowing that they have this mannerism presumably a vice already that clogs their budget. When probed why they do not know, they only said one thing, to quote "hindi namin nararamdaman dahil kung araw-araw, maliit lang ang gastos, pag inipon pala, lumalaki, nabulag kami" (we never knew that this expense accumulates into a big amount because it appears to be deceptively minimal on a daily basis) [55].

This behaviour definitely qualifies as manifestations of the lack of financial discipline, which in turn, again eventually attributes to the issue of social disease. Obviously, a person who does not know the accumulated value of his or her expenses can be put into a vicious cycle wherein up to a certain point these trivial actions are classified as vices. This can be discerned since the amounts of money they spend

are already negatively affecting their budget and in the long run, as manifested by these isolated cases, they could be already incurring debts.

Effect of Vice in Budget

As part of their responses, the responses have already confirmed that vices are one of the reasons of their current state of poverty as evidenced by their lack of financial discipline. Thus, quantifying their responses, those who have vices are really having a difficult time budgeting their income, as over three quarters (77%) admitted (Figure 6).

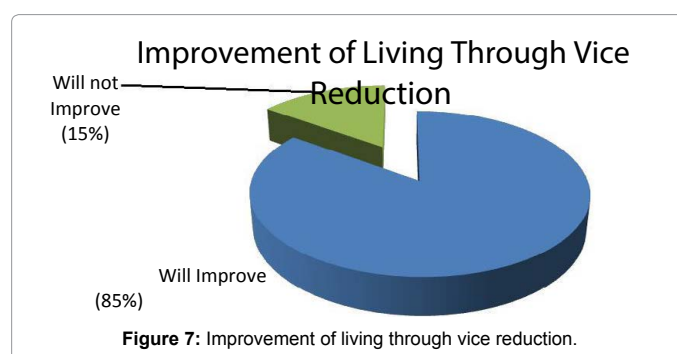
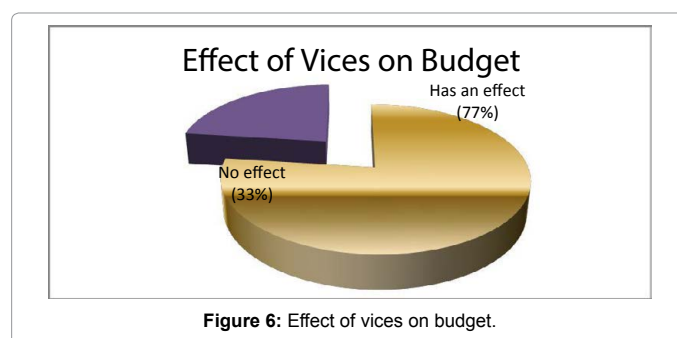
However, those who are not that affected may seem to have a certain degree of luxury looking at first glance from the data above [56]. But when further asked, most of them revealed that they are not that much affected for the reason that sometimes, their neighbour-friends share some beer or cigarette with them, while a handful admitted that their siblings who are working abroad occasionally sends money to them. Of course, once the money is received, a portion will be spent on their filthy habits, unfortunately.

Thus, this scenario somehow disrupts the data presented; as there are some underlying mischievous reasons for some respondents as to why they are not that affected that much.

Belief on the Improvement of Standard of Living through Vice Reduction

The concept of this research is not to totally eradicate the vices of the people under study, but to just limit their habits through discipline, which could be achieved via social marketing or constantly reminding and if necessary, evangelizing them to uphold a common good [57]. This can be achieved using conventional marketing mix strategies that directly catch their attention, like personal one-on-one strategies, for instance. This will further be discussed on the latter parts of the research (Figure 7).

In line with this, true enough, despite their openly admitted



rampant vices, the respondents still believe that they have an infected social disease that needs to be cured. As a result, approximately nine-tenths (85%) of the total respondents with vices still believe that they could muster enough discipline to control their vices. Some even stated that they are willing to totally cut their habits, provided that they will be assisted by a competent and trustworthy facilitator [58].

Unfortunately, there are some who think they could no longer have their legs up and improve their standard of living through limiting their vices. They just stated that they are simply teaching their children not to follow their footsteps, so that they could have a chance to improve their lives.

Manifestation of Acedia

Indeed, there is acedia among the mind-set of the poor as it is very much manifested, and could be indeed concluded as one fundamental reason for poverty. This further reinforces the study of, more so it confirms the very essence of St. Thomas ‘conception of this spiritual vice.

“On his (St. Thomas) account, acedia strikes at the heart of who we are called to be by turning us against our own happiness and ultimate end [59]. It does so because it perceives the demands of friendship with God as a burdensome self-sacrifice, and it clings to the old self while resisting the demands of love.”

Or simply, because of acedia, some people especially the poor fail to develop a positive mind-set to ignite and kindle a positive change. That is, instead of exerting effort to sacrifice in order to achieve something greater in both their material and spiritual life, they just tend to resort to their trivial worldly outlets of physical vices that truly taint their character, which in turn results to spiritual and psychological inertia.

Program Implementation

The social marketing program that the respondents who have vices underwent and confirmed to have the enthusiasm to change - took a cue from the conventional one-on-one marketing strategy. That is, the researcher and the assistants gave a program attached to the questionnaire, and explained how they could achieve their desire to somehow limit their vices and use their saved money for more important priorities. Just as what studied, social marketing could serve as an integral part of poverty alleviation. The paradigm has worked abroad, so it could also have a possibility of success locally.

The concept may seem trivial and simple with the projected savings to be small but the bottom line remains that even the smallest cent could start a greater mind-set and ignite the passion to become more disciplined in life to alleviate one’s standard of living. Indeed, discipline is already inoculated in many poverty management programs such as microfinance and micro enterprise. But these programs come in the form of penal policies, such that only disciplined recipients most likely the women, as in the case of some well-known micro enterprise institutions could benefit.

This is the grey area that this research attempted to fill out, for this study will not use discipline as policy, but as a marketable initiative to help people, and social marketing has the capability to provide a social advertising jumpstart for this.

Going further, the respondents who have vices and are willing to give the program a try were given the program. Each cluster, as explained previously were given periods of time to implement the schemes, which were as follows:

- 1. Cluster 1 – one month
- 2. Cluster 2 – two months
- 3. Cluster 3 – three months
- 4. Cluster 4 – four months
- 5. Cluster 5 – five months

The clusters that underwent a specific period of exposure were randomly determined by the researcher. In between, they were visited to ask for their progress, until the final results were gathered after the given periods of time.

Program Results

Significantly, the results of the program revealed that majority (65%) of the respondents have indeed controlled their vices, and statistically, changes are evident in terms of the following:

- 1. They were able to save a little more money to allocate for more important priorities such as food and medicine. Some were even planning to accumulate more savings to be deposited on banks.
- 2. Parallel studies to health and wellness were manifested, as some respondents stated that they feel better physically. For instance, one chain smoker proclaimed that due to his control of his vices, he could now feel more energy to work, more so, he said that he became more optimistic in his mind-set and outlook (Table 8).

In detail, the respondents who have changed their filthy habits are scattered across the five-tier social marketing program [60]. That is, it simply means that there is progress from each period covered. This evidently shows the potential of the program. The summary from each period covered are as follows:

- 1. The respondents who were under the one-month period had a success rate of 70% (10 out of 15)
- 2. Majority (55% or 8 out of 15) of the respondents who were under the two-month program also showed progress.
- 3. Only one from the 15 respondents who were exposed to the three-month social marketing scheme failed to control his vice.
- 4. The four-month program was able to kindle positive changes on 11 respondents.
- 5. Nearly half (40% or 6 out of 15) of the people under the longest scheme five months, per se still have shown potential to control their respective vices despite the relatively longer period of time.

Reasons for Vice Control

The term “naramdaman ang hirap ng buhay” was the prime mover for the evident change among the respondents. Those who succeeded in the program emphasized the fact that, since they were given a leg up to help them to counter their bad habits, they took complete advantage of the opportunity. In addition, some also stated that their curiosity to try eventually developed into a so called “hanggang nasanay na” attitude. This simply means that throughout the duration of the program, they have eventually adopted the program as their new habit.

| Base: Number of Respondents with Vices (75) | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Able to control (%) | Not able to control (%) |
| 65 | 35 |

Table 8: Vice control.

Other reasons that are deemed important to also mention include some plans of the respondents to save some more money to buy other things – such as a new mobile phone, or clothes, among other reasons. And they realized that they could somehow speed up their goal of buying their respective wants by cutting down some habits.

Relapse to Acedia

Unfortunately, there are quite a number of respondents who failed to internalize the program as part of their habit. The reasons may be different in construction, but the essence remained the same lack of motivation and belief in oneself to exert more effort. The most trivial reasons, which are presented as follows, simply describe this discouraging scenario:

1. “Mahirap na ako simula pa lang, bisyo ko na lang ang outlet ko sa nararamdaman ko.
2. “Kahit papano, dahil sa inuman, nakakasama ko mga kaibigan ko sa hirap, at kaunting ginhawa.”

Given the above mentioned data, ultimately, not all can escape from the chains of acedia. It is truly arduous to get away from its claws. A person may somehow get out at first, but if proper monitoring and sustainability is sans, then, a possible relapse could occur. This may also happen to those who have successfully completed the program's timeframe. Even though they have rekindled spirit and discipline, still given that they are now again on their own, their conviction might not be that strong to counter the relapse and temptation of acedia. As what Sertillanges [61] (as translated by, always mentioned in his book, constant discipline and conviction are the keys to achieve not only an intellectual life, but more practically, to achieve a meaningful existence.

Conclusion

Based from the results derived from this study, it could be utterly determined that acedia practically contributes to poverty, in this local milieu. Even in the presence of a concrete social upliftment program, the chances of relapse could occur if sustainability will not be achieved. There should always be constant monitoring, and assistance from all sectors of the state, from the micro to the macro levels.

Nevertheless, the best recommendation is still within the mind-sets of the poor on how they would take discipline seriously into their system in order to eliminate acedia. There were quite a number who were able to control their vices but for how long?

Only they themselves can answer that. Only if they truly evangelize themselves by prioritizing the things that matter most both materially and spiritually, could they really say that they have already eradicated acedia from their system from their soul. For no amount of program, no matter how extensive these may seem, can address acedia without the initiative to change, which sprouts only from oneself out of charity and virtue.

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