

Chapter 5

Double Dearth Effect: Disruptions to Resources, Access, and Literacy Practices

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a narrative inquiry on the life experiences of three Filipino families who belong to each representation of socioeconomic status. Furthermore, it unpacks the temporal, social, and geo-physical or spatial elements of their narratives in relation to the disruptive effects of the coronavirus pandemic on their resources, access, and literacy practices. Subsequent to securing their consent, each family was subjected to an online recorded semi-structured interview where they shared their life experiences. The recorded responses were later transcribed and analyzed using Montero and Washington's lens in exploring narratives. The researchers ultimately provide collaborative narratives of the three families' experiences and theorize on the specific experiences of poor or low-income families against the experiences of the middle class and the rich or high-income families. The researchers end the chapter by offering a working definition of their concept called the double-dearth effect.

INTRODUCTION

The unfavorable effect of poverty on people is not a unique issue and it is common knowledge to many. However, when the Coronavirus had spread into a massive scale during the first quarter of the year 2020, poverty appeared to put a heavier burden on people especially those who were already struggling to make ends meet even prior to the emergence of the pandemic. Strict lockdowns and quarantine protocols that were imposed in many nations compelled a lot of people to stay indoors in order for governments to manage the spread of the virus and eventually bring communities back to normal. These measures,

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however, may not render the same meanings for everyone especially when the factor that differentiates their life narratives is their socioeconomic status. The meanings that people ascribe into their experiences relevant to the pandemic, the lockdowns, and the quarantine protocols, are driven by the issue of access to resources in order to survive be these food, health and medicine, transportation, information, technology, and learning, among others. It is considerable, therefore, to study how families with different socioeconomic status live, act, decide, and prioritize between and among several priorities including aspects relevant to learning, literacy, or education. It is also imperative that in order to understand the perspectives of families who are living during these troubled times, researchers should seek to provide data on these families' narratives. Consequently, policy makers and other stakeholders may then have heightened awareness of actual experiences and that they could base their subsequent actions for social innovation on these data.

The United Nations (2019) report that 736 million people were in extreme poverty in 2015. As for the Philippines, the full year poverty incidence in households was around 16.6 percent in 2018 (Mapa, 2019), which indicate the proportion of poor Filipinos whose per capita income is insufficient to meet their basic food and non-food needs. The poverty in the Philippines became more predominant when the world has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). Filipino families particularly those who are living below the poverty line prior to the pandemic were reported to battle mental health and social behavioral problems brought about by the destabilization of the Philippine economy (Albert, Abrigo, Quimba & Vizmanos, 2020). This situation also negatively impacted families not only in terms of meeting their basic needs but even their right for quality education (Alipio, 2020). As revealed in Alipio's study, children from low-income families and rural parts of the Philippines are confronted with obstacles in terms of educational resources and access. This may be attributed due to the severity of unemployment and additional priorities like vitamins, disease protection gears, among others.

Recent studies on the relationship between poverty and the literacy development of children have been mostly contextualized in Canada (Ciuffetelli-Parker, 2017), the United States of America (Jones, et. al., 2019), and Australia (Hayes & Comber, 2018). Most of these studies explored the adverse effects that poverty brings to children's reading and numeracy skills (Grotlüschen, Buddeberg, Redmer, Ansen, & Dannath, 2019) and how this affects them until their college years (Belzer & Pickard, 2015). Similarly, evidence conveys that the poverty experienced by the parents, when they were young, contributed to their poor reading skills and this experience seems to be inherited by their children as well (Dermott & Pomati, 2015). The central issue was that these low-income families tend to have difficulty supporting the literacy development of their children since their finances were usually allocated for their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter (Choi, Hatton-Bowers & Shin, 2020). It appears that in these studies, they end up advocating the need for: (1) incorporating inclusive pedagogical practices that ensure that, indeed, no child is left behind; (2) examining the current policies of various educational institutions in mitigating the literacy gaps of students in high poverty areas; and (3) helping the parents partake on the literacy development of their children by also fostering their literacy skills set.

Meanwhile, in the Philippine context, recent studies tend to focus on the efficacy of the governments' initiatives in addressing the negative repercussions of poverty to children's literacy skills. Some studies along this track are meant to unpack how the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) cash assistance to the poorest of the poor families affects their children's study habits, academic performance, and attendance (Punzalan, 2018). Conversely, some studies try to discover the cash assistance's success in enticing parents to motivate their children to enroll school year by school year (Reyes, Tabuga, Mina & Asis, 2015). If one is to infer on the nature of the said studies, it may be safe to assume that there

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