

Physical Health Management of 4P's Learners in Calibungan High School

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Abstract: This research examined the physical health management of learners under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's) at Calibungan High School for the academic year 2024–2025. Recognizing that good health was essential to effective learning and overall development, the study assessed key aspects of student well-being, including nutritional status, health maintenance, physical stamina, dietary practices, mental health, sleep quality, personal hygiene, and common health issues—within the context of their socio-economic conditions.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 186 learners through survey questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Findings revealed critical concerns such as undernutrition, irregular sleep patterns, high intake of unhealthy foods, and limited physical activity—largely influenced by economic hardship and modern sedentary habits. These outcomes underscored the urgent need for school-based and community-supported interventions. The study proposed strategies that could have been implemented by educators, administrators, and health agencies to promote healthier lifestyles among students. Ultimately, the research aimed to contribute to the development of healthier, more resilient learners better equipped for academic and life success despite socio-economic challenges.

Key Words: physical health management; 4P's learners; student well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

In the relentless pursuit of academic excellence and holistic development, physical health stands as a foundational pillar of a learner's success. For students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, maintaining good health is not only a personal struggle but also a systemic challenge. The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program

(4Ps), a government initiative anchored in Republic Act 11310, aims to break the cycle of poverty through conditional cash transfers that promote education, nutrition, and health. However, the extent to which these interventions translate into sustainable health practices among learners remains uncertain.

A growing call continues to emerge for the public, academic institutions, and businesses to intensify their efforts in addressing the issue of childhood obesity and overweight, as highlighted in Smith's 2020 study. This call involves implementing

comprehensive strategies and initiatives that promote healthier lifestyles among children. By fostering environments that encourage physical activity and balanced nutrition, these sectors actively contribute to reducing the rising rates of obesity and its associated health risks. Collaborative efforts and heightened awareness remain essential in shaping a healthier future for the younger generation.

On November 13, 2023, Vice President and DepEd Secretary Sara Z. Duterte, alongside Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Teodoro J. Herbosa, pledge to collaborate in addressing health-related concerns affecting Filipino learners. The Department of Education's WASH in Schools (WINS) Program continues to serve as a comprehensive, sustainable, and scalable school-based initiative aimed at improving both learning and health outcomes. This program upholds children's rights to dignity, support, and protection, ensuring that no health-related barrier impedes their development. Through this partnership, DepEd and DOH prioritize physical and mental well-being as essential components of holistic education.

Studies by Patil et al. (2021) and Oberne et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of health literacy (HL) and digital health literacy (DHL) in shaping students' behaviors and well-being. Patil et al. find that students with strong HL and DHL are better at rejecting misinformation during the COVID-19 infodemic and can use their networks to spread accurate health information. Oberne et al. show that students with higher HL consume more fruits and vegetables, indicating that health knowledge positively influences dietary habits. Building on these findings, the current study explores physical health management beyond diet, including aspects like mental health, sleep, hygiene, and overall well-being. It aims to develop strategies that help 4Ps learners stay healthy and succeed academically in the new normal.

The Department of Education (DepEd) launches the MATATAG Curriculum in 2023 to produce learners who are job-ready, responsible, and holistically healthy—physically, mentally, and socially. The acronym "MATATAG" reflects a direct commitment to learner well-being and inclusive education. As part of this initiative, the curriculum strengthens Physical Education and Health (PEH) by promoting physical literacy, healthy lifestyle choices, and active social participation. It also integrates mental and emotional development through lessons on stress management, emotional resilience, and positive

values. These components ensure that students are equipped to face modern challenges not only intellectually, but also in terms of health and character.

In Tarlac, learners face growing exposure to unhealthy habits as rapid technological changes reshape their routines. Many spend long hours watching television and playing video games, which results in sedentary lifestyles, irregular sleep patterns, and elevated stress levels. These behaviors often coincide with poor dietary choices—frequent intake of junk food, soft drinks, and limited consumption of fruits and vegetables. A 2023 UNICEF report shows that 74% of Filipino adolescents eat fewer than three servings of vegetables daily, while 38% regularly consume soft drinks. A 2022 systematic review by BMC Primary Care finds that adolescents with over three hours of screen time daily face a 27% higher risk of being overweight or obese. Another study on food advertising in the Philippines reveals that most ads targeting children promote unhealthy products high in sugar, salt, and fat.

The nutritional assessment of Calibungan High School for School Year 2023–2024 reveals a serious case of malnutrition among learners: 27 are severely wasted, 57 are wasted, 23 are overweight, and 2 are obese. Most of these students are beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a government initiative that supports the health and education of low-income families. The data collection process involves class advisers, who gather essential information such as height, weight, birthdate, and the list of 4Ps beneficiaries. The health leader consolidates this data, which is then reviewed by the school head before being submitted online. This local data mirrors the national malnutrition crisis. UNICEF Philippines and the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) report that nearly 30% of Filipino children are underweight or wasted. At the same time, poor dietary habits and food insecurity contribute to a "double burden" of malnutrition, where undernutrition and obesity coexist, particularly among low-income households. Research shows that despite receiving financial aid through 4Ps, many families still struggle to access affordable, nutritious food and lack adequate nutrition education. These challenges contribute to persistent poor health outcomes among children, which are closely linked to lower academic performance, increased absenteeism, and the perpetuation of poverty.

There is a need to study the physical health management of 4P's learners at Calibungan High School to better understand their nutritional status, health maintenance and check-ups, physical energy, diet and nutrition, mental health and stress, sleep habits and quality, personal hygiene, overall perception of physical health, and the health problems they encounter. This study aims to explore how socio-economic factors influence their physical health management. It also serves as a guide for teachers in developing strategies and interventions that address the challenges affecting the physical well-being of 4P's learners in the school.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods approach to examine the physical health management of 4Ps which was purposively chosen due to their increased vulnerability to health challenges stemming from poverty, which often limits access to nutritious food, healthcare, and safe living conditions. Data were gathered using anthropometric measurements (height, weight, age) based on WHO and Philippine growth standards, along with validated questionnaires and focus group discussions to explore the socio-economic factors affecting their physical well-being.

The study focused on key areas such as nutritional status, health check-ups, diet, mental health, sleep, cleanliness, and common health issues. A total of 186 learners (101 males and 85 females) from Grades 7 to 12 were selected through total enumeration, as they represented all enrolled 4Ps beneficiaries for the 2024–2025 school year.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents and discusses the results of the study, highlighting key findings on the physical health management of 4Ps learners and interpreting them in relation to existing data, themes, and relevant laws.

Table 1. Nutritional Status of 4P's Learners

Nutritional Status	Frequency	Percentage
Obese	1	0.54%
Overweight	10	5.38%
Normal	153	82.26%
Wasted	14	7.53%
Severely Wasted	7	3.76%
Total	186	100.00%

The study assessed the physical health of learners at Calibungan High School using both quantitative data and interviews. Results showed that 82.26% of students had a normal nutritional status, while 11.29% were undernourished (with 3.76% severely wasted and 7.53% wasted). In contrast, 5.38% were overweight and 0.54% were obese, reflecting a double burden of malnutrition—students suffering from both undernutrition and overnutrition.

Physical health management of 4P's learners were supported by the study of Coles (2023) who investigates the nutritional status of children across 76 barangays in Tarlac City and finds that, while most children fall within the normal weight-for-age range, a significant number are classified as severely underweight. The study identifies family income and parental food choices as key factors influencing children's nutritional outcomes.

Interview findings revealed that students' eating habits were shaped by food availability and affordability. One student shared, *"We eat whatever is available and within our budget, healthy or unhealthy, as long as it prevents hunger."* This highlights how socioeconomic challenges, especially among 4P's beneficiaries, affect their nutritional choices. In response, the school implemented a Feeding Program to support wasted learners and proposed a Health Track Record System aligned with DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2013, which promotes effective school health and nutrition services. These interventions aim to monitor students' health regularly and provide timely support, ensuring that all learners can grow healthy and ready to learn.

Table 2. Summary of Physical health Management of 4P's Learners.

Indicator	Grand Mean	Verbal Description	Rank
Health Maintenance and Check ups	3.48	Rarely	7
Physical Energy and Stamina	3.50	Occasionally	6
Diet and Nutrition	3.52	Occasionally	5
Mental Health and Stress	3.80	Occasionally	3
Sleep Habits and Quality	3.61	Occasionally	4

Maintained Cleanliness	4.00	Occasionally	1
Overall Perception of Physical Health	3.82	Occasionally	2

The table 2 revealed varied health practices shaped by economic hardship, family dynamics, and psychosocial stressors. Quantitative findings showed that “Maintained Cleanliness” received the highest rating (mean = 4.00), indicating that learners occasionally practiced hygiene, such as handwashing, although interviews revealed limited access to soap. This finding supported the objectives of DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016, which promoted proper sanitation and hygiene through the WASH in Schools Program. Learners’ “Overall Perception of Physical Health” (mean = 3.82) suggested that they occasionally viewed themselves as healthy, but interviews revealed that many rarely visited health centers. This was reflected in the lowest-rated indicator, “Health Maintenance and Check-ups” (mean = 3.48), which contradicted the health compliance requirements of RA 11310, the 4Ps Law. “Diet and Nutrition” (mean = 3.52) showed mixed eating habits, with students choosing between healthy and budget-friendly options, often resorting to processed food. These results highlighted the need to reinforce the School-Based Feeding Program under DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017, which aimed to improve access to nutritious meals in schools. Mental Health and Stress (mean = 3.80) indicated occasional emotional strain, with learners expressing feelings of exhaustion and fear of being judged when sharing personal issues. This emphasized the importance of implementing DepEd Order No. 9, s. 2005, which mandated guidance and counseling services in schools. Sleep habits (mean = 3.61) were affected by excessive mobile phone use, often used as a coping mechanism, leading to disrupted sleep patterns. Vaccine hesitancy among parents emerged as a recurring issue, especially during school-based immunization and deworming activities. Learners shared that some parents refused consent due to fears linked to past vaccine controversies, which hindered compliance with DOH–DepEd Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2013-001, a policy that institutionalized school-based health programs. Physical Energy and

Stamina (mean = 3.50) ranked low, with students reporting fatigue due to skipped meals and demanding schedules. This underscored the need for stronger parental involvement, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, which emphasized household engagement in child development. In summary, while 4Ps learners occasionally engaged in healthful behaviors, these were inconsistently practiced due to poverty, stress, digital habits, and gaps in program implementation. The findings called for stronger collaboration among DepEd, DOH, and DSWD, improved mental health support, better digital use guidance, vaccine education for parents, and stricter compliance monitoring. Through initiatives like feeding programs, mental health workshops, and parental forums, schools could help learners become healthier and more resilient, in line with the MATATAG Curriculum’s goal of producing well-rounded, job-ready Filipino youth.

Table 3. Health problems encountered by 4P’s Learners

Health Problems	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Headaches	133	71.51%	1
Shortness of breath	49	26.34%	3
Nausea	23	12.37%	7
Dizziness	67	36.02%	2
Respiratory Problems (e.g. Chest Pain)	39	20.97%	6
Digestive Problems (e.g. stomachache and LBM)	43	23.12%	4
Skin problem (e.g. itchiness, allergy)	42	22.58%	5
Others	3	1.61%	9
No answer	11	5.91%	8

Note: Multiple Responses

The health problems encountered by 4Ps learners—such as headaches, dizziness, and poor nutrition—are not merely physical symptoms but powerful indicators of deeper systemic issues rooted in poverty, inequality, and under-resourced public services.

The 2023 Third Wave Impact Evaluation of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) confirmed a critical truth: increased use of health services did not guarantee improved health outcomes. While the program encouraged clinic visits, prenatal checkups, and school attendance, it failed to bring about meaningful improvements in nutrition and long-

term child welfare. In fact, key indicators such as child malnutrition and maternal health either remained stagnant or declined. These findings revealed deep systemic gaps in healthcare infrastructure, program monitoring, and community engagement. Despite the promises of Republic Act No. 11310, poor Filipino children continued to suffer from preventable illnesses rooted not in behavior, but in broken systems. The evaluation underscored the urgent need for coordinated community-based reforms that went beyond cash aid to bring real, lasting change to the physical health of 4Ps learners.

Figure 4. Socio-economic factors affect their physical health management

Socioeconomic Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Education	83	44.62%	1
Employment of Parents	43	23.12%	4.5
Income of the Family	78	41.94%	2
Assets	17	9.14%	8
Family Background	53	28.49%	3
Disabilities	30	16.13%	6
Discrimination	43	23.12%	4.5
Geographic location	25	13.44%	7
No Answer	11	5.91%	9

Note: Multiple Responses

The study found that poverty-related factors—like low family income, limited education, and disadvantaged backgrounds—significantly affect the physical health of 4Ps learners. Many students face hunger, stress, and poor access to healthcare, which harms their well-being and academic performance. The findings stress the need for stronger enforcement of RA 11310 and better coordination among other agency in the government. Ultimately, improving learners' health requires not just medical aid but also broader social and economic reforms.

Figure 5. Most significant challenges that hinder the physical health management of 4P's learners

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Source of income	54	29.03%	10
Preparation of Food	62	33.33%	9
Availability of Food	49	26.34%	11.5
Eating Schedules	78	41.94%	6
Quality of Food	72	38.71%	8
Source of Food	49	26.34%	11.5
Exercise	74	39.78%	7
Handwashing	93	50.00%	3

Toothbrushing	86	46.24%	4
Sleeping Schedules	110	59.14%	1
Smoking	11	5.91%	13
Stress in school	95	51.08%	2
Stress at home	84	45.16%	5
Others:Please specify	2	1.08%	15
No Answer	6	3.23%	14

The data highlights that the physical health of 4Ps learners is significantly hindered by poverty-related lifestyle challenges, with irregular sleeping patterns, school and home stress, and poor hygiene practices emerging as the most common issues.

As the law institutionalizes the 4Ps program to break the cycle of poverty through investments in health, nutrition, and education. It is imperative that agencies like DepEd, DSWD, and DOH intensify their coordination and delivery of services. This study serves as a wake-up call: improving learners' well-being demands not just policy, but action—where health is not a privilege, but a guaranteed right for every child.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are the conclusions:

1. This study sheds light on a critical truth: health is not merely the absence of illness but the cornerstone of learning, development, and human dignity. The findings from Calibungan High School affirm that 4Ps learners are navigating multiple health-related struggles that extend far beyond the classroom walls—malnutrition, irregular sleeping patterns, digital fatigue, a lack of regular medical check-ups, and growing emotional stress. These issues are magnified by poverty, misinformation, and limited parental support.
2. Quantitative results identified health maintenance and check-ups as the least practiced, and qualitative interviews deepened this picture, revealing that many parents continue to fear vaccinations due to controversies such as Dengvaxia. Learners often rely on unhealthy food out of necessity or craving, rarely see a health professional unless symptoms are severe, and are exposed to long hours of unsupervised gadget use. These are not merely personal issues—they reflect systemic gaps in health education, public engagement, and program monitoring.
3. Despite the existence of Republic Act No. 11310, which institutionalizes the Pantawid Pamilyang

Pilipino Program (4P's) as a human development strategy centered on health, education, and nutrition, the inconsistent implementation of its Compliance Verification System (CVS) weakens its impact at the grassroots level. The law was never meant to be symbolic; it was crafted to deliver real transformation for the most vulnerable sectors. Yet without proper coordination among implementing agencies and active community participation, its potential remains unrealized.

4. This research does not merely call for reform—it calls for recommitment. A recommitment from policymakers to fully operationalize the intent of the laws they author, from educators to embed health and wellness into daily instruction, and from families and communities to become active co-builders of a healthy learning environment. Only then can we say we have not only educated our learners—but truly empowered them for life.

5. Targeted monitoring plan could help bridge these gaps. The following program are proposed to enhance the physical health management in Calibungan High School:

Program	Indicators	Monitoring Tool	Remarks
1. Parental Engagement Program with MSWD Officer	No. of meetings held, attendance rate, feedback from parents	Attendance sheets, feedback forms	Improve engagement by sending advance notice
2. Sayaw Kalusugan Program	Frequency of sessions, student participation, fitness improvements	Attendance log, observation checklist, Photo logs	Track BMI or endurance over time
3. Feeding Program	No. of learners served, nutritional status (BMI), improvement in class energy	Feeding record, BMI charts, student feedback	Coordinate with barangay health unit
4. Mental Health and Stress Management	No. of sessions, number of referrals, student feedback	Session logs, student self-rating forms	Anonymous feedback encouraged
5. Health Symposium	No. of attendees, knowledge gained	Pre/post test, attendance sheet	Collaborate with RHU or DepEd partners
6. Health & Medicine	Availability of basic	Inventory logbook	Monitor for expiration and replenishment

Inventory Book	medicines, log of usage		
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The following recommendations are proposed to support effective implementation:

1. Strengthen shared responsibilities between 4P's Parents, Teachers and Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer.
2. Reinforce Compliance Verification Form.
3. Implement food assistance program to the identified severely wasted and wasted 4P's beneficiary.
4. Provide access to counseling and stress management workshop.
5. Provide a Health Track Record in which it is clearly stated the Nutritional Status of the learners from Grade 7 to Grade 12 then the illnesses and treatment given per grade level then being checked by MSWD Officer Quarterly. It is also indicated in the Health Track record the vaccines and deworming schedules.
6. Make an orderly inventory of the medicines given per year level.
7. Develop a literacy tool kit aligned with the Matatag Curriculum.

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