

Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program: A University-Led Reading Intervention for Socioeconomic Empowerment

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ABSTRACT:

Tara, Basa! is a university-led extension program that uses education as a tool for socioeconomic transformation and inclusive community development. Implemented by Northwest Samar State University in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development, local government units, and public elementary schools, the program targeted foundational literacy gaps among incoming struggling Grade 2 learners in the Calbayog City and Samar Divisions. It also provided cash-for-work opportunities for college students from low-income families. Using a multi-sectoral approach, trained college student-tutors and youth development workers delivered structured reading recovery interventions supported by standardized literacy assessment tools and instructional modules. Complementing the child-focused efforts, the Nanay-Tatay Teacher Sessions involved parents and guardians to actively support literacy development at home, strengthening family engagement. Program evaluation results showed improved reading skills among participants, increased parental involvement, and better academic and socioeconomic support for college student-tutors. Beyond improving literacy, the program promoted youth engagement, community collaboration, and sustainable university-community partnerships. It offers a scalable model for higher education institutions to promote inclusive socioeconomic change, based on partnership, empowerment, and shared responsibility.

Keywords: Tutoring program, Reading intervention, Socio-economic support, University-community partnership, Multi-sectoral approach

INTRODUCTION

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental pathway toward socioeconomic mobility and inclusive development. However, persistent inequalities in access to quality education continue to affect marginalized communities, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines. Among the most pressing concerns is the issue of foundational literacy, where many learners struggle to develop basic reading skills at an

early stage. Reports have consistently shown that poverty remains closely linked to low educational attainment, creating a cycle in which limited access to learning opportunities constrains both individual and community development (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2021; World Bank, 2022). In this context, addressing early-grade literacy is not only an educational priority but also a socioeconomic imperative.

Early literacy development plays a critical role in shaping learners' long-term academic success. Studies emphasize that reading proficiency in the primary grades serves as a strong predictor of future learning outcomes, as it enables learners to access, process, and construct knowledge across subject areas (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000; Snow et al., 1998). Moreover, literacy development is not confined within the classroom; it is significantly influenced by the home environment and parental involvement. Research has shown that children who are exposed to reading activities at home and whose parents actively engage in their learning demonstrate stronger language development and comprehension skills (Bus et al., 1995; Dowdall et al., 2020; Kim & Quinn, 2013). These findings highlight the importance of integrated interventions that connect school-based instruction with family and community support systems.

In response to these challenges, multi-sectoral approaches to education have emerged as effective strategies for addressing complex learning gaps (Epstein et al., 2019). Programs that integrate the efforts of academic institutions, government agencies, and local communities have shown promising results in improving educational outcomes while simultaneously addressing socioeconomic constraints. One such initiative is the Tara, Basal Tutoring Program, a national flagship program institutionalized under Executive Order No. 76, Series of 2024, and spearheaded by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The program adopts a three-pronged approach that targets elementary learners, college student-tutors, and parents or guardians, thereby creating a holistic ecosystem of learning and support.

At the local level, the implementation of the Tara, Basal Tutoring Program by Northwest Samar State University (NwSSU) in partnership with government agencies and local stakeholders provided an opportunity to operationalize this multi-sectoral model. The program aimed to address the literacy needs of incoming struggling Grade 2 learners directly within the exact venues of the Calbayog City and Samar Divisions. Through structured reading interventions conducted from May 12 to June 6, 2025, the program not only targeted reading proficiency but also provided cash-for-work opportunities to college students from low-income families. In addition, the inclusion of

Nanay-Tatay Teacher Sessions sought to empower parents as active partners in their children's learning, reinforcing the vital connection between home and school environments.

Despite the increasing implementation of such extension programs, there remains a limited body of empirical research that systematically examines their effectiveness, particularly in terms of intersecting educational and socioeconomic outcomes at the local level (Fitzgerald et al., 2012). While program reports often document accomplishments and implementation processes, there is a clear need to translate these into research-based evidence that can inform policy, practice, and future program design. Specifically, there is a gap in understanding how university-led, community-based interventions can simultaneously improve literacy outcomes, strengthen parental engagement, and support the socioeconomic needs of student participants.

The imperative to rigorously evaluate and sustain such initiatives is strongly reinforced by global and national development frameworks. Primarily, initiatives like the Tara, Basal Tutoring Program directly advances the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), by striving to eliminate disparities in foundational literacy and ensuring equitable learning opportunities. Simultaneously, it addresses SDG 1 (No Poverty) through the provision of cash-for-work assistance, which alleviates the financial burdens of marginalized college students (United Nations, 2015). Furthermore, the program's collaborative nature exemplifies SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), demonstrating how multi-sectoral alliances between universities, government agencies, and local communities can effectively tackle complex socio-educational issues (United Nations, 2015). At the national level, this extension model aligns seamlessly with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) (National Economic and Development Authority, 2023) and AmBisyon Natin 2040 (National Economic and Development Authority, 2016), which prioritize human capital development, lifelong learning, and poverty reduction. By anchoring extension activities on these established frameworks, higher education institutions transcend traditional academic boundaries, transforming into active catalysts for sustainable socio-economic mobility and community resilience.

Anchored on this premise, the present study seeks to evaluate the Tara, Basal Tutoring Program as a

university-led reading intervention for socioeconomic empowerment. Using program-generated data, the study examines the extent of implementation, identifies challenges encountered, and explores its impact on learners, parents, and college student-tutors. By situating the program within the broader discourse on literacy development and community engagement, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on extension-driven educational interventions and offers insights into scalable models for inclusive and sustainable development.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program as a university-led reading intervention for socioeconomic empowerment. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the extent of implementation of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program.
2. Identify the problems or challenges encountered by the implementers and beneficiaries during the implementation of the program.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive–evaluative research design to assess the implementation and outcomes of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program as a university-led reading intervention for socioeconomic empowerment. The descriptive component was used to systematically present the extent of program implementation, while the evaluative aspect focused on determining its effectiveness and identifying challenges encountered during execution (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is highly appropriate for extension-based research as it allows the empirical analysis of program performance using actual implementation data and participant feedback to inform future policy and practice (Rossi et al., 2004).

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools within Calbayog City and Samar Divisions, where the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program was implemented. The respondents of the study were incoming struggling Grade 2 learners identified as non-readers, their parents or guardians who attended the Nanay-Tatay Teacher Sessions, and college student-tutors and Youth Development Workers (YDWs) deployed under the program. Utilizing a purposive sampling approach (Palinkas et al., 2015), data were gathered from a total of ninety (90) implementers and beneficiaries who

participated in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Data for the study were derived from program-generated documents, particularly the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire and monitoring and evaluation reports utilized during the implementation of the extension program. The questionnaire measured the extent of implementation across key indicators, including responsiveness to participant needs, attainment of objectives, quality of facilitation, adequacy of resources, and efficiency of delivery. It employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Outstanding) to capture the respondent's attitudes in program evaluation (Joshi et al., 2015). Additionally, a checklist of common implementation problems was used to identify challenges encountered by both implementers and beneficiaries.

The data collection process followed the official monitoring and evaluation procedures of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program. After the completion of program activities, respondents were requested to accomplish the evaluation instruments to provide feedback on the effectiveness and relevance of the sessions. As recommended for robust program evaluation (Newcomer et al., 2015), the collected data were consolidated by program coordinators and validated through institutional reporting mechanisms to ensure accuracy and consistency.

For data analysis, standard descriptive statistical tools were utilized. The mean and standard deviation were computed to determine the extent of program implementation, offering a clear summary of central tendency and data dispersion (Field, 2018). Furthermore, frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the problems encountered during implementation. The results were interpreted using a predefined scale, where mean scores ranging from 4.21 to 5.00 were described as "Outstanding," 3.41 to 4.20 as "Very Satisfactory," 2.61 to 3.40 as "Satisfactory," 1.81 to 2.60 as "Fair," and 1.00 to 1.80 as "Poor."

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study in accordance with standard behavioral research protocols (APA, 2017). Participation in the evaluation process was completely voluntary, and all responses were treated with the utmost confidentiality. The data used in this study were derived from officially approved program reports and were utilized solely for

academic and research purposes. Proper acknowledgment of institutional partners and adherence to data privacy principles, aligning with

the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), were ensured in the presentation of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of Program Implementation

Table 1: Extent of Implementation of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program

Indicators	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Description	SD
The activity reflects the needs of the participants	4.71	Outstanding	0.64
The objectives of the activity were achieved	4.64	Outstanding	0.55
Expertise of facilitators/resource persons	4.70	Outstanding	0.48
Resource sharing with stakeholders	4.57	Outstanding	0.54
Expected number of participants attended	4.81	Outstanding	0.39
All planned activities were implemented successfully	4.77	Outstanding	0.43
Responsiveness to participant needs	4.81	Outstanding	0.39
Time allotment was sufficient	4.71	Outstanding	0.48
Logistics (venue, transport, accommodation) were adequate	4.72	Outstanding	0.52
Learning materials were sufficient	4.81	Outstanding	0.42
Overall Mean	4.73	Outstanding	0.49

The findings of the study reveal that the Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program was implemented at a highly satisfactory level, as evidenced by the evaluation results of the participants. The overall mean rating of the program was **4.73 (SD = 0.49)**, which is interpreted as “Outstanding.” All ten indicators used to assess program implementation, including responsiveness to participant needs, attainment of objectives, quality of facilitation, adequacy of resources, and efficiency of delivery, consistently received ratings within the “Outstanding” range.

This result indicates that the program was effectively designed and executed across multiple dimensions. In particular, high ratings in responsiveness and objective attainment suggest that the program was able to address the actual needs of its target beneficiaries. Similarly, the strong evaluation of facilitation quality reflects the

preparedness and competence of the tutors and YDWs, which can be attributed to the comprehensive training provided prior to deployment.

The adequacy of resources and time allocation further supports the conclusion that the program maintained a well-organized implementation structure. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing that well-structured literacy interventions, supported by trained facilitators and sufficient instructional materials, significantly contribute to successful learning outcomes. Moreover, the consistently high ratings across all indicators demonstrate the effectiveness of the multi-sectoral collaboration among academic institutions, government agencies, and local communities in ensuring program success.

Problems Encountered in Program Implementation

Table 2: Problems Encountered in the Implementation of the Tara, Basa! Tutoring

Problems Encountered	Frequency	Rank
Lack of incentives for implementers	30	1
Insufficient materials and tools	13	2
Lack of clear program guidelines	7	3
Inappropriate duration of implementation	3	4

Despite the overall success of the program, several challenges were identified during its implementation. Among the eleven pre-identified issues, only four were reported by respondents, indicating that most potential problems were not experienced. However, the rank 1 concern was the lack of incentives for implementers or the

monitoring team. This was followed by insufficient materials and tools, lack of clear guidelines, and concerns regarding the duration of program implementation.

The prominence of financial and material concerns suggests that while the program was effective in its delivery, logistical and support mechanisms require

further strengthening. The issue of insufficient incentives may affect the long-term sustainability of volunteer-driven or semi-compensated programs, particularly in contexts where participants rely on such support for their own educational needs. Similarly, the concern regarding materials highlights the importance of ensuring adequate instructional resources to maintain the quality of literacy interventions.

Interestingly, no respondents reported issues related to facilitator competence, irregular attendance, lack of monitoring, or weak institutional partnerships. This indicates that the program's core implementation mechanisms, particularly training, coordination, and monitoring, were robust and effective despite not receiving incentives. The absence of these issues further reinforces the strength of the program's organizational structure and inter-agency collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The present study evaluated the Tara, Basal Tutoring Program as a university-led reading intervention for socioeconomic empowerment using a descriptive–evaluative approach. The findings revealed that the program was implemented at an outstanding level, as evidenced by consistently high ratings across all indicators of implementation. This demonstrates that the program was responsive to the needs of its participants, effectively achieved its objectives, and maintained quality delivery through competent facilitators, adequate resources, and efficient coordination.

Despite its overall success, the study identified specific challenges related to logistical and support mechanisms, particularly the lack of incentives for implementers and the insufficiency of instructional materials. While these concerns did not significantly hinder program implementation, they highlight areas that require attention to ensure sustainability and scalability.

Moreover, the program generated positive outcomes across its key stakeholders. It contributed to improved literacy support for struggling learners, strengthened parental involvement through

structured engagement sessions, and provided meaningful socioeconomic and professional development opportunities for college student-tutors. These findings affirm the effectiveness of a multi-sectoral, community-based approach in addressing both educational and socioeconomic challenges.

In conclusion, The Tara, Basal Tutoring Program demonstrates that university-led extension initiatives can serve as powerful platforms for bridging literacy gaps while simultaneously promoting youth empowerment and community development. The integration of education, social support, and community engagement positions the program as a viable and scalable model for inclusive and sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adequate incentives and support mechanisms should be provided to tutors and facilitators to sustain their motivation and participation. Strengthening both financial and non-financial support can improve program commitment and long-term sustainability.
2. Sufficient and appropriate learning materials should be ensured to support effective literacy instruction. Providing contextualized and engaging resources can further improve learner participation and outcomes.
3. Clear and consistent implementation guidelines should be developed and communicated to all stakeholders. This will help ensure uniformity in program delivery and minimize operational challenges.
4. The duration of the program may be extended to allow more time for learners to develop foundational reading skills. Sustained interventions are essential for achieving long-term and meaningful literacy improvement.
5. Stronger monitoring and evaluation systems, including pre- and post-assessments, should be implemented to better measure program impact. Given its effectiveness, the program may also be expanded to other communities to reach more learners in need.

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