

Improving Future Street Education Programs: Insights from CSWDO Employees on Access, Inclusion, and Support in Masbate City's Past Initiative

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Abstract

This study examined the discontinued Street Education Program in Masbate City by evaluating the perceptions of City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) employees in terms of access, inclusion, and educational and psychosocial support provided to marginalized youth. Anchored on Social Inclusion Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and the Rights-Based Approach to Education, the study employed a quantitative descriptive research design involving thirty (30) CSWDO employees selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. Findings revealed that the program provided very sufficient access and strong teaching support, with high participation reach and consistent facilitator guidance. Inclusivity across socio-economic status, gender, and age groups was rated highly, indicating effective reduction of participation barriers. Educational and psychosocial support were frequently provided, with psychosocial support identified as a major strength; however, learning materials were found to be very insufficient, highlighting a key limitation in program implementation. The study concludes that while the program was effective in promoting access, inclusion, and support, its sustainability and overall impact were constrained by inadequate instructional resources. Recommendations emphasized strengthening resource provision, enhancing educational support, and maintaining inclusive and adaptive program strategies. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing equitable access to education for marginalized youth. It contributes to socio-economic, educational, and institutional sustainability by providing evidence-based insights for improving inclusive and community-based education programs.

Keywords: Access, Inclusion, Marginalized Youth, Psychosocial Support, Street Education Program

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development; however, marginalized youth—particularly street-connected and out-of-school children—continue to face barriers to formal education due to poverty, stigma, and systemic constraints. Evidence from global and Philippine contexts shows that alternative and inclusive education programs, including outreach-based and community-driven initiatives, are critical in expanding access, promoting inclusion, and providing educational and psychosocial support. This study examines the discontinued Street Education Program in Masbate City through the perspectives of CSWDO employees, focusing on access, inclusion, and support to inform future program development.

1.1 Background of the Study on Access, Inclusion, and Support for Marginalized Youth in Masbate City

Access to education for marginalized youth remains constrained by poverty, limited resources, and systemic inequities. Programs such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) demonstrate that flexible and learner-centered approaches can expand participation, although challenges such as slow policy implementation, limited resources, and unequal access to technology persist (Mahinay and Manla, 2025). Similarly, barriers in outreach and completion rates hinder participation among marginalized learners (Osawa, 2021), while contextual differences in rural settings affect access and instructional adequacy (Catyong et al., 2025). Inclusive education initiatives further highlight persistent limitations, including insufficient resources and teacher preparation (Beltran et al., 2025; Aleño et al., 2024). International studies also emphasize that stigma, poor health conditions, and social exclusion significantly hinder educational participation among street-connected children (Julien, 2024; Md. Easin & Das, 2025; SAGE, 2024). Innovative outreach strategies, such as mobile learning programs and community-based interventions, demonstrate effectiveness in improving access and transition to formal schooling. Psychosocial support is equally essential, as resilience-building approaches and supportive relationships enhance participation and learning outcomes (Yildirim et al., 2020). Community-based and non-formal education initiatives in the Philippines further illustrate the importance of tailored learning environments and integrated support systems. Collectively, these insights establish the importance of examining the Street Education Program in Masbate City in terms of access, inclusion, and support.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on Access, Inclusion, and Psychosocial Support

Literature consistently identifies access as a multidimensional concept encompassing enrollment, availability of learning materials, instructional support, and structural flexibility (UNESCO, 2020; Bateson and Casley, 2025). Barriers such as the digital divide and limited outreach mechanisms further restrict access among marginalized populations (Abdeljabar and Alouini, 2025; Filges et al., 2022). Inclusion is framed as meaningful participation across socio-economic status, gender, and age, requiring learner-centered and equity-driven approaches (Liu and Potmesil, 2025; Rončević and Rieckmann, 2025). However, inadequate training, funding constraints, and persistent stigma limit inclusive implementation (Murillo-Jiménez et al., 2025; Osborne et al., 2025). Psychosocial and educational support are critical determinants of program effectiveness. Integrated interventions—including mentoring, counseling, and life-skills development—enhance engagement and retention among marginalized youth (Acosta-Amaya et al., 2025; MDPI, 2024; UNESCO, 2020). Local studies reinforce these findings, emphasizing the role of community-based programs, gender-responsive approaches, and facilitator support in sustaining participation (DepEd, 2017; DSWD, 2018; Bautista et al., 2020; de Guzman and Javier, 2021). Overall, the literature underscores that effective programs must integrate access, inclusion, and psychosocial support within flexible and learner-centered frameworks.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Street Education Programs

Globally, street education programs address structural barriers through flexible delivery systems, outreach strategies, and resource provision (UNESCO, 2018; UNICEF, 2019). Studies highlight the importance of learning materials, trained facilitators, and psychosocial interventions in improving participation and outcomes (Thomas de Benítez, 2017; Devries et al., 2020; Panter-Brick et al., 2018). Nationally, Philippine initiatives emphasize alternative and community-based education as key strategies for reaching marginalized youth affected by poverty, child labor, and social exclusion (DepEd, 2016; Albert et al., 2016). However, resource limitations, inconsistent instructional support, and systemic constraints remain challenges (Orbeta et al., 2019; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2019). Locally, Masbate City reflects these challenges, with poverty, out-of-school youth, and street-involved children influencing access to education. The CSWDO implemented the Street Education Program to address these gaps through outreach, life-skills development, and psychosocial support. This local context provides a relevant setting for examining program effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis for Evaluating Access, Inclusion, and Support

This study is grounded in Social Inclusion Theory (Amartya Sen, 1998), which emphasizes removing barriers to participation; Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which highlights multi-level influences on development; and the Rights-Based Approach to Education (UN, UNICEF, UNESCO, 1948), which frames education as a fundamental right. These frameworks collectively explain how access, inclusion, and psychosocial support interact to influence program effectiveness. They justify examining the Street Education Program as a multi-dimensional intervention addressing structural, social, and individual factors affecting marginalized youth.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Evaluating the Discontinued Street Education Program

Despite extensive research on inclusive and alternative education, gaps remain in understanding discontinued programs and the perspectives of frontline implementers. Existing studies primarily focus on active programs, learner outcomes, or policy-level analyses, with limited attention to implementers' experiences and program-level challenges. Few studies integrate access, inclusion, and psychosocial support within a single framework in localized contexts such as Masbate City. This study addresses these gaps by examining CSWDO employees' perspectives on the discontinued Street Education Program, providing insights into its strengths, limitations, and implications for future interventions.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with key Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 – Quality Education, by examining how alternative education programs expand access and promote inclusive learning for marginalized youth; SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, through its focus on addressing socio-economic, gender, and age-related disparities in educational participation; SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, by highlighting the role of education and life-skills development in supporting future employability and self-sufficiency; and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, by emphasizing the role of local government units such as the CSWDO in delivering equitable and inclusive social services. By evaluating access, inclusion, and psychosocial support within the Street Education Program, the study contributes to strengthening equitable education systems and advancing inclusive development for vulnerable populations.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes to socio-economic sustainability by addressing educational inequalities among marginalized youth, enabling long-term participation in education and employment. It supports educational sustainability through the evaluation of alternative learning systems and inclusive practices. Additionally, it advances community and institutional sustainability by providing evidence-based insights for improving local government programs and service delivery. The integration of psychosocial support highlights its relevance to public health and social sustainability, as emotional well-being is essential

for sustained learning engagement. Overall, the study supports the development of resilient, inclusive, and learner-centered educational systems that promote sustainable development in marginalized communities.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design to assess access, inclusion, and educational and psychosocial support provided by the Street Education Program of the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) in Masbate City prior to its discontinuation. The design aimed to systematically describe the demographic profile of CSWDO employees and their perceptions of program implementation, including participation reach, adequacy of learning materials, availability of teaching support, and inclusivity across socio-economic status, gender, and age groups. The study also examined the adequacy of educational and psychosocial support, including literacy and numeracy assistance, facilitator availability, emotional guidance, and responsiveness to learners' needs. In addition, it gathered recommendations from CSWDO employees to improve future programs. Quantitative descriptive design was appropriate because it enabled the objective description of existing conditions and perceptions without manipulation of variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Ary et al., 2019). The use of structured data collection and statistical analysis ensured a comprehensive evaluation of program strengths and limitations.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Masbate City, the capital of the Province of Masbate, located in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. The city serves as the administrative, economic, and social center of the province and is characterized by both urban and rural barangays with varying socio-economic conditions. These conditions influence access to education and social services, particularly among marginalized youth such as street children and out-of-school individuals. Masbate City has diverse demographic characteristics and faces challenges related to poverty and youth vulnerability, which contribute to limited access to formal education. The presence of marginalized youth populations highlights the need for alternative education programs such as the Street Education Program implemented by the CSWDO. The program operated in selected urban barangays where street-involved youth were most visible and aimed to provide educational, social, and psychosocial support through community-based and outreach approaches.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were CSWDO employees in Masbate City who were directly involved in the implementation of the Street Education Program prior to its discontinuation. These included street educators, social welfare assistance personnel, and social workers who actively participated in program planning, delivery, and community outreach. Their direct involvement in providing educational and psychosocial services made them reliable sources of information regarding the program's access, inclusivity, and support mechanisms. Their experiences enabled the study to capture accurate and context-based insights into the implementation and effectiveness of the Street Education Program.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling to select respondents based on their direct involvement in the Street Education Program. This approach ensured that participants possessed relevant knowledge and firsthand experience in delivering services to marginalized youth. Purposive sampling is appropriate when the research focuses on individuals who are most knowledgeable about the subject of investigation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). A total of thirty (30) CSWDO employees were selected, and all questionnaires were successfully retrieved, resulting in a 100% retrieval rate. This ensured sufficient and reliable data for analysis and strengthened the validity of the findings.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The instrument was developed based on the study objectives, relevant literature, and existing tools assessing access, inclusion, and support in non-formal education programs. It was organized into sections covering respondents' demographic profile, access to the program, inclusivity, educational and psychosocial support, and recommendations for improvement. The instrument measured access through participation reach, availability of learning materials, and teaching support; inclusivity through socio-economic, gender, and age considerations; and support through both educational assistance and psychosocial interventions such as emotional guidance and facilitator responsiveness. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale to quantify responses, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement or higher adequacy of access, inclusion, and support. As described in Table 1, the scale ranged from strongly disagree or very insufficient to strongly agree or very sufficient, allowing for standardized interpretation of responses. Prior to administration, the instrument underwent content validation by subject-matter experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Revisions were made based on expert feedback to enhance reliability and validity.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic process. The study began with the development and approval of the research proposal, followed by the construction and validation of the questionnaire. A formal request for permission was submitted to the City Mayor of Masbate and endorsed to the CSWDO to authorize data collection. The researcher personally administered the validated questionnaires to selected respondents, providing clear instructions to ensure accurate responses. All questionnaires were completed and retrieved on the same day, ensuring a complete dataset. The research process also included encoding, recording, and tabulating the data for analysis. An expert statistician assisted in interpreting the results. The procedure ensured accuracy, consistency, and adherence to research standards throughout data collection and analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the demographic profile of respondents by calculating the proportion of responses relative to the total number of participants. Weighted mean was used to determine the level of access, inclusivity, and educational and psychosocial support, as well as the importance of recommendations for future programs. Ranking was applied to identify priority areas based on respondents' evaluations. These statistical techniques enabled an objective assessment of the Street Education Program and facilitated the identification of its strengths and limitations. The results provided a basis for evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving future educational interventions for marginalized youth in Masbate City.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Main Findings on Access, Inclusion, and Support

3.1.1 Demographic Profile of CSWDO Employees

The data revealed that the majority of respondents were street educators, followed by personnel in social welfare assistance, with a smaller proportion of social workers. Most respondents had extensive experience, with a notable proportion involved in the program for six years, while others had shorter periods of involvement. In terms of outreach, most employees reported reaching between 41 to 50 marginalized youths annually, followed by those reaching 21 to 30 and 11 to 20 youths, indicating high levels of engagement and outreach capacity. These findings suggest that the program relied heavily on frontline practitioners, particularly street educators, who maintained direct contact with marginalized youth. This aligns with evidence that community-based implementers are essential in reaching vulnerable populations, as they sustain engagement and ensure program continuity (UNESCO, 2017; Dela Peña, 2019). The presence of experienced personnel further supports effective implementation, as long-term involvement enhances institutional knowledge and service quality (Tasse and Sommerfeld, 2016; DSWD, 2020). High outreach levels also reflect effective program organization and structured engagement strategies consistent with findings on successful street education initiatives (UNICEF, 2019; Alampay and Garcia, 2018).

3.1.2 Level of Access: Participation Reach, Learning Materials, and Teaching Support

The findings showed that the program was perceived as highly effective in reaching marginalized youth, providing broad participation opportunities, and engaging new participants. However, learning materials were generally rated as very insufficient, indicating limitations in availability, appropriateness, and accessibility of resources. In contrast, teaching support was rated as very sufficient, with respondents highlighting consistent facilitator availability and timely academic guidance. These results indicate that while the program successfully ensured access and participation, resource limitations constrained its overall effectiveness. High participation levels reflect the effectiveness of inclusive and flexible program designs, which enhance access among marginalized youth (UNICEF, 2018; Save the Children, 2019). However, insufficient learning materials align with studies emphasizing that lack of resources undermines learning outcomes in non-formal education settings (Rose and Alcott, 2015; EDCOM II, 2023). The strong presence of facilitators supports literature highlighting the importance of instructional support in sustaining engagement and improving learning experiences (Hattie, 2017; Medel-Añonuevo, 2018).

3.1.3 Inclusivity of the Program: Socio-Economic, Gender, and Age Dimensions

The results indicated that the program was highly inclusive across socio-economic, gender, and age dimensions. Respondents strongly agreed that the program ensured equal opportunities for low-income youth, promoted fairness between male and female participants, and encouraged participation across all eligible age groups. Financial barriers were perceived as less restrictive, though slightly lower compared to other indicators. These findings suggest that the program effectively minimized barriers to participation and promoted equitable access. The high level of socio-economic inclusivity reflects practices that prioritize disadvantaged groups and reduce financial constraints (UNESCO, 2020; Plan International, 2021). Similarly, strong gender equity aligns with research emphasizing the importance of gender-responsive strategies in fostering inclusive and safe learning environments (UNICEF, 2018; Unterhalter et al., 2017). The program's success in accommodating different age groups also supports literature on age-responsive education, which enhances participation and prevents exclusion among diverse learners (UNESCO, 2019; Medel-Añonuevo, 2018).

3.1.4 Educational and Psychosocial Support Provided by the Program

The findings revealed that educational support was frequently provided, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills, and through facilitator guidance, although the adequacy of learning resources was limited. Psychosocial support, however, was consistently rated very high, with respondents indicating that participants were regularly given opportunities to express concerns and receive emotional support, and that facilitators were accessible and responsive. These results indicate that the program maintained strong psychosocial support mechanisms, contributing to a supportive learning environment, while educational support was effective but constrained by resource limitations. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy aligns with established practices in programs for marginalized youth (Mendenhall et al., 2017). Meanwhile, high psychosocial support reflects evidence that emotional and social interventions enhance resilience and engagement among vulnerable populations (Betancourt et al., 2016; WHO, 2022). The findings highlight the importance of integrating both academic and psychosocial components to achieve holistic development outcomes.

3.2 Recommendations for Improving Future Programs

The results showed that all proposed strategies for improving access, inclusion, and support were rated as very important. Respondents emphasized the need to strengthen outreach, provide transportation assistance, expand program locations, integrate technology, promote inclusivity, ensure culturally responsive practices, increase staffing, enhance psychosocial training, establish referral systems, and continuously assess participants' needs. These findings indicate strong consensus among implementers on the need for comprehensive and integrated program improvements. The emphasis on outreach, inclusivity, and support aligns with global recommendations for sustainable youth programs, which highlight the importance of accessibility, technology integration, and multi-sectoral collaboration (OECD, 2021). Similarly, the focus on training, referral systems, and continuous assessment reflects best practices in addressing the complex needs of marginalized youth (UNICEF Philippines, 2022). These recommendations reinforce the need for future programs to be adaptive, resource-supported, and responsive to the diverse challenges faced by marginalized populations.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the Street Education Program in Masbate City was effective in providing access, inclusion, and support to marginalized youth, as evidenced by strong participation reach, adequate teaching support, and high levels of inclusivity across socio-economic status, gender, and age groups. The program was implemented by a multidisciplinary workforce with substantial outreach capacity, contributing to its overall effectiveness. However, despite these strengths, the program was significantly limited by the insufficiency of learning materials, which affected the adequacy of educational support. While psychosocial support was consistently provided and served as a major strength, the imbalance between strong human resources and limited material resources highlights the need for improved resource provision. Overall, the program demonstrated that inclusive and community-based approaches are effective, but sustainability and impact depend on balanced support systems.

It is recommended that future educational programs for marginalized youth maintain a multidisciplinary workforce and continue strengthening outreach and participation strategies to ensure broad access. Emphasis should be placed on improving the availability and quality of learning materials through adequate funding, resource management, and partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Inclusive practices across socio-economic status, gender, and age groups should be sustained and further enhanced by addressing remaining financial and structural barriers. Educational support should be strengthened through improved instructional resources, structured learning approaches, and continuous facilitator training, while maintaining strong psychosocial support systems. Additionally, future programs should adopt comprehensive and adaptive strategies, including expanded outreach, use of technology, transportation assistance, and regular program evaluation to ensure effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability.

The study is limited to the perceptions of CSWDO employees who were directly involved in the implementation of the Street Education Program in Masbate City prior to its discontinuation. The findings are based on self-reported data gathered through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The scope of the study focuses only on access, inclusion, and educational and psychosocial support, without examining other factors such as long-term outcomes, funding mechanisms, or perspectives of program beneficiaries. As such, the results are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other programs or locations with different conditions and implementation structures.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest, and this study received no external funding. The research was conducted with the cooperation of the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) employees in Masbate City, whose participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Data were collected using non-invasive survey methods, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality, ensuring that no identifying information of participants was disclosed.

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