

Challenges and Strategies of Implementing the Philippine Government Internship Program during Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Programs of the government like the government internship program (GIP) aim to attract the best human capital to become part of government service. However, the implementation of such program particularly in the hiring, monitoring & evaluation phases became challenging as consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, this paper focused on determining the challenges met and the strategies applied with regard to the implementation of the said government program across the identified phases. Using a case study design, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants. Through the thematic framework of Braun and Clarke, emerging themes were deduced from the transcripts of the interviews. Findings revealed that challenges encountered include processing, schedule, major turn out of applicants, withdrawal of beneficiaries, behavior and competency, which existed in both hiring and monitoring & evaluation phases. In addition, the strategies implemented include target setting, proposal preparation, implementation, making of accomplishment report, weekly submission and collection of report, and completion internship. The study concludes that the implementation of the Philippine Government Internship Program met various challenges as the landscape of society changed due to the presence of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the carrying agency of the government internship program navigated its way to implement effectively despite the circumstances by applying several strategies like target setting, proposal preparation, implementation, accomplishment report making, submission and collection of report, and internship completion. Finally, the facts demonstrated that in the implementation of a program such as this, resiliency along with professionalism and commitment remained critical for its success despite the catastrophic calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Internship Program, Challenges & Strategies, Case Study, COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The Government Internship Program (GIP), created under Executive Order 139 series of 1993 and implemented through the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) department order number 204 series of 2019, existed for almost three decades to offer paid internship experience in the government. Meaning, the program aims to provide opportunities and engage young workers to serve the public in government agencies' projects and programs at the local and national level. Naturally, the principle is within human resource transformation through converting them into contributors for development.

Thus, Bivainis & Morkvenas (2008) said that in order to achieve goals, institutions must use the main asset, which is the human resource. Larincova (2015) adds that it is the human resources, which keep the institution alive through their abilities, skills and talents. Meaning to say, that the recruitment stage is a critical part of propelling the institution towards achieving its goals. This is the reason why Gupta and Kumar (2014) argue that successful recruitment and selection practices are the leading components at the entry point of human resources in any organization. Furthermore, to sustain it, the consistent monitoring and evaluation of performances can also become critical.

However, when the COVID-19 pandemic came in, the implementation of the program became challenging particularly during hiring, monitoring, and evaluating phases. This means that the Department of Labor and Employment needed to look and adapt for new strategies as they navigated in the shifting landscape of society while aiming at consistently implementing the government internship program.

Thus, this paper explored on the challenges encountered and strategies implemented along these areas of implementing the government internship program. It specifically answered the following questions like (1) What were the challenges met by the interns and the implementing partner agency? and (2) What were the strategies adopted to continuously achieve the expected outcomes of the program?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Department of Labor and Employment and its partner agencies throughout the Philippines, including in the province of Cebu, have been committed in their implementation of the GIP year after year since its conception. The DOLE-GIP was established with the objective to engage beneficiaries into public service by involving them in government programs and projects through the various GIP partner agencies (DOLE DO 204 s. 2019). Furthermore, the GIP aims to provide opportunity to young workers to demonstrate their talents and skills in the field of public service with the ultimate objective of attracting the best and the brightest, who want to pursue a career in government service. However, according to Braithwaite, et al. (2018), a program or intervention that is successfully implemented in one location does not necessarily deliver the same results in other places. Implementation is a change-oriented process of endorsing an action plan (Koichu, et al., 2019). Thus Sullivan, et al. (2018) regards the effective and efficient implementation of a program and its sustainability as needing substantial effort when implemented in a new setting. According to Ko, et. al. (2012), internship has substantial educational and practical implications for public administration. They added that public organizations can utilize the implementation of internship programs to draw talents into the public service.

In Medieval Europe, apprenticeships were used as a pathway for students of a specific trade to get into the trade guild, which is an association of specialists in a specific field of work (Jackel, 2011). In 2007, then President PerwazMusharaf of Pakistan introduced the National Internship Program in their country. Under the program, Batool, et.al, explained that fresh Pakistani unemployed graduates may undergo a year of practical experience with government organizations located closest to their hometown, with the aim to make them emerge as better human resource for their economy. Under the program, interns were required to join full-time and are bound to adhere to the rules and regulations laid out by the organization they are serving.

In the Philippines' GIP, students or youth between 18 to 30 years old, with no work experience and at least high school or vocational- technological (voc-tech) graduate may qualify for the GIP. Employment period shall be a minimum of three (3) to a maximum of six (6) months and an allowance or stipend that is 75% of the existing minimum wage in the region will be given to the beneficiary. Furthermore, former GIP beneficiaries may be readmitted for another six (6) months upon recommendation of the partner institution for possible hiring, provided further that they will be given tasks that would enable them to acquire additional competencies that would make them merit a potential position in the government service.

The GIP is part of the Governance Strategy stated in the Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2017- 2022 to promote youth participation in government and bureaucracy. The National Youth Commission (NYC) is the lead agency for this endeavor, where their monitoring metrics of the program's success is the number of government interns, percentage of outstanding interns recruited in the government and the number of new youth workers in government. But what happens when the students or possible interns have little knowledge on how the government or bureaucracy works and the programs it offers? The answer: students may not consider a career in the public sector (Ko, et. al., 2012). Aside from drawing

possible talents to public service, Ko, et. al. (2012) adds that public organizations may utilize internship programs to improve their image. In 2020, no less than the former President of the Republic of the Philippines, Rodrigo Roa-Duterte, publicly announced his inclination to hire graduates and other competent Filipinos to replace dishonest and corrupt government officials and employees. In a pre-recorded address by the president, posted on different media websites on 11 November 2020, he told corrupt government workers not to think they would count in the large context of governance and that there are a lot of civil service eligible Filipinos and graduates who can replace them. Beneficiaries who have finished their GIP stint may replace corrupt and incompetent government workers and improve the image of their respective agency.

From 2019- 2021, the GIP has catered sixty (60) beneficiaries in the town of Argao. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2019, the GIP was continually implemented, though delayed. After the lockdown in March 2020, the local partner agency continued to accept GIP applicants for their June implementation of the program. However, they finally implemented the program that year in the month of August, where Cebu province was already under a less strict Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) status (IATF Resolution Nos. 60-A & 63, s. 2020). After that, the local implementing partner agency have not stopped implementing the program, as there were already guidelines from DOLE on the GIP implementation amidst the ongoing pandemic.

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative case study aims to provide local perspective concerning the implementation of the government internship program, which can be useful contribution for designing policies at the national level. Yin (2009) defined case study as an empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon in a real-life context. Therefore, the focus of the study was the challenges and strategies implemented in hiring, monitoring and evaluating stages of the government internship program.

The researchers conducted the study in the Municipality of Argao, Cebu Province, Philippines. It is one of the towns in the south of the province of Cebu located in the southeast portion of the province or 67 kilometers away from Cebu City, the province's capital. The town has 45 barangays with a total land area of 191.50 square kilometers and a population of close to 80,000 people. In 2018, the poverty incidence in Argao was at 15.90% (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). Hence, poverty and the need to make a living were the leading reasons the beneficiaries joined the government internship program.

This research focused on getting data from six participants who joined the GIP through the office of the elected representative of the district. This was done purposively considering the fact that the office actively collaborated with the Department of Labor and Employment. Moreover, selection of the participants was through the criteria set for the study.

Furthermore, the main instrument of the study was the semi-structured interview guide validated using the criteria of Caffrey (1995). It consists of three introductory, four content and three follow-up questions. In addition, the questions were in English and translated in the Cebuano dialect during the in-depth case study interview. This was done considering that; a semi-structured interview guide is a schematic presentation of questions or topics, which have to be explored by the interviewer (Crabtree & DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). They added that interview guides achieve the purpose of exploring more systematically and comprehensively, as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action and achieve optimum use of interview time.

Simply, the primary unit of analysis for the study were the responses from the case study in-depth interview, which can be seen through the transcripts. Moreover, supplemental data also helped in verifying information

such as issuance of memoranda and other relevant documents.

- Data Gathering Procedures

Primarily, the study used Daniel’s (2018) TACT framework for the trustworthiness of the study that stands for trustworthiness, auditability, credibility and transferability. In addition, the researchers availed the ethical framework of Kang and Hwang (2021), which includes maintaining relationships with research participants, upholding informed consent, upholding confidentiality and privacy, upholding beneficence and upholding honesty and integrity. Both trustworthiness criteria and ethical framework were critical guide across the three phases, including pre-data gathering, on data gathering and post-data gathering.

- Data Analysis

Analysis of data was through thematic framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis (TA) is the process of deducing data in order to classify and present the patterns or themes related to it. A rigorous TA can produce trustworthy and insightful findings. In this study, TA was used to identify the themes in the qualitative data, which are the statements and experiences of the participants, as told by them during the KII.

After the case study in-depth interview, the researchers familiarized the data. During this process, the researchers read and reviewed the transcribed responses. The notes made during the data gathering were also revisited. Alhojailan (2012) explained that processed data in TA can be displayed and classified according to its similarities and differences. Hence, in this research, the authors inputted the initial themes into a separate table and categorized them. To achieve classification, the process should include coding, categorization and noting patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Creswell (2009) found this to be able to provide a relationship between the variables and factors to come up with a reasonable and logical chain of evidence. The themes and categories picked from the responses were then analyzed. After this, findings of the study were drawn to satisfy the research questions. Lastly, documents gathered by the researcher were analyzed to draw the data needed.

After the thorough analysis and interpretation, all confidential files were kept for safekeeping. There was no incentive or money given to the study participants. Study results were intended only for the betterment of the community and organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on the challenges and strategies across the phases of hiring, monitoring & evaluation of the government internship program. Therefore, the unit of analysis primarily based on the in-depth case interview was deduced in consonance with the study focus.

Table 1. Challenges Encountered

GIP Phase	Themes	Categories
Hiring Phase	processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • readily available requirements • smooth application process
	schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delayed internship commencement • uncertainty of internship

	major turnout of applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of placement • lack of funds • rejected applicants
	withdrawal of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actual job wasted internship slot
Monitoring and Evaluation Phase	behavior	tardiness and absences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • falsification of daily time record •
	competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delayed preparation of reports • copying reports of other interns

• Challenges Encountered in the Hiring Phase

Findings reveal that processing and schedule are among the challenges encountered with the GIP. However, the participants are quick to point out that processing was not a major problem since requirements are readily available and that the application process was smooth sailing.

[...] So far, ma'am, sa hiring gyud itself, wala ra gyud. Pero kung mo(hisgot) nasamga requirements, ginagmay ra man, kanangsapaglukatsamgakuhaunon. Pero aside from that, wala ra kay ang hiring smooth raman sad gyudsiya. Wala ra'y interview, lahos-lahos ra gyud. (For the hiring itself, none, ma'am. But if we talk about securing the requirements, there was a slight setback. But aside from that, it was all smooth. There was no interview, the process was through and through.) –Participant B

[...] Wala. Derecho-derecho raman 'to. Pero requirements, ang ubanngakinahanglanadtuonsa barangay perodaliraman ang paglukat. (None. It [the process] was straightforward. But there were requirements that I needed to secure from the barangay, but securing them was fast.) -Participant C

While processing (of application) was described by the beneficiaries as smooth sailing due to the readily available requirements, they pointed out that the delayed internship commencement and its uncertainty were a challenge to them. Hence, they were confused and challenged and they felt uncertain. Anjum (2020) states that when students enter professional life, they have to face many challenges. After submitting their requirements in June 2020, they have not heard from the implementers after that. One of the beneficiaries admitted that he felt anxious about the unclear schedule since classes were also starting then. He initially thought that the GIP would start and finish before the opening of classes. The GIP finally pushed through in August 2020.

[...] Nilapasnaganisa timeline, ma'am. More on, “dugayanakasugod, oy!” Unyahapitna ang klase, though online pa ang klase, peromaolagina. Sa pagka-ngalangklase, focus man gud ta ana. Mao na-worry ko ato kay dugay nag-start unyahapitna ang class. Unya, mao to, pag-start sa GIP, sugodnapudklase. (It was already past the timeline, ma'am. It was more of me being worried like, “What’s taking it so long?” And then, the classes, though online, were also about to start. For the classes’ sake, we really have to be focused. That’s why I was so worried about the late commencement of the GIP since the classes were already approaching. When the GIP started, the classes have started, too.) -Participant D

Triangulation with other documents show that in June 2020, the municipality of Argao was under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) due to the COVID-19 pandemic (IATF Resolution Nos. 40 & 46-A, s. 2020). When the GIP started in August 2020, the province of Cebu was already under a less strict Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) status (IATF Resolution Nos. 60-A & 63, s. 2020). With this said, the delayed implementation of the GIP in 2020 was because of the stricter government-imposed restrictions in the month of June. The global COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost all countries and territories worldwide (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The lockdowns and staying home strategies were put in place with the aim to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020).

In addition, major turnout of applicants and the withdrawal of some of the beneficiaries from the internship program emerged also as challenges. Thus, the lack of placement and fund, as well as rejected applicants, really created problems for the partner agency. An opportunity to work and get paid, even for a short period of time, are enough reasons to support the overflowing interest of applicants to join the GIP. According to Gupta and Kumar (2014), the ideal recruitment effort will attract a large number of qualified applicants, who will take the job if it is offered. The major turnout of applicants for the GIP posed a challenge to the partner agency due to the lack of internship placement for all the applicants. Aside from that, the partner agency could not hire all the applicants due to the lack of funds, thereof. Because of this, the partner agency had to deal with applicants who felt bad and disheartened after they had not been called back to be GIP beneficiaries. Participant F, the GIP focal person, picks the applicants who have been endorsed by the requesting barangay or LGU, since they will be the ones working with the intern.

[...] Daghankaayomo-apply unyagamay ra among ma-cater. So, malooy mi samgadilimadawat. (There were a lot of applicants but we could only cater as much. We pity those who could not make the cut.) -Participant F

While there were applicants who have been denied internship opportunity after not being picked for the GIP, there were beneficiaries who just wasted their opportunity. As presented in Table 1, another challenge for the implementers in the hiring phase was the withdrawal of the beneficiaries in the middle of their GIP engagement. The leading reason for this was the fact that these interns have found a job, better than a three-month internship program. For the implementers, the withdrawal meant that the vacated slot was already a wasted internship slot. Once a slot has been vacated, it can't be replaced with another beneficiary.

[...] In the middle of the month, mo back-out kay nakakita ug work. (Problemasiya kay) di namannamupwede ma-ilisan. (In the middle of the month, they would leave because they found a job. It's really a problem because we cannot replace the vacated slot with another beneficiary.) -Participant F

The participants of this study regard challenges as life and character builders. For the beneficiaries and the implementers, challenges, when overcome, can mold their future and make them stronger. The researcher calls this resilience. Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) defined resilience as the ability to bounce back or cope successfully despite substantial adversity. Resilience is related to every type of word which is a positive component of the process for adapting to difficulties or challenges (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).

1. Challenges Encountered in the Monitoring & Evaluation Phase

Moving on to the monitoring & evaluation phase, the research reveals that behavior and competency are the challenges encountered by the participants. These emerging themes are supported by their corresponding categories.

Behavior is one of the cumulative reflections of mental, physical, social and spiritual wellness (Vyas, et al., 2019). Under behavior, the participants perceived tardy and/ or absent interns as one of the challenges they

have encountered in the monitoring and evaluation phase of their GIP stint. Hence, the tardiness and/ or absences of their fellow interns often than not result in the alteration of their daily time record (DTR) or their attendance. It is done by not providing or deliberately changing the exact time of their arrival in their place of assignment. What is alarming for the beneficiaries is that their tardy or absent colleagues think that alteration of their DTR or attendance is okay, which is not.

[...] For me, maosiya'ngproblemagyud kay ang uban man gud, magsaligsilaba. Like, kanangwala may (pause) dili man to siya biometric, DTR ra man siya, which is isulat ra. There are some nga, "Ah! Okay ra na, oy, kay DTR ra man, maoni, maona.. (For me, it's really a problem because other interns grow complacent. Since we do not have biometrics, we use DTR for our attendance, where we just write (our attendance/ time in/ time out). There were some interns who would say, "It's no big deal, it's just a DTR," and so on and so forth.) -Participant B

[...] Kay ang uban man gudbastamakabantaysilangamaora'ggiyano-yanonalangsauban (ang attendance) kay madala man. (Maka-ingon) silanga, "Ay, okay ra man diay," so buhaton sad nila. Madalasilaba (sa nag absent-absent). (When interns noticed that other interns were just playing with their attendance, they followed what they were doing. They said, "They are doing it, so why can't we?" They were influenced by those who incurred absences.) -Participant C

On the other hand, the challenges under competency are categorized into two, which are: delayed preparation of reports and copying of reports of other interns. The Government of Western Australia (2022) defines competency as the capability to apply or use the set of related knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully perform critical work functions or tasks in a defined work setting. Thus, competencies serve as the basis for skill standards that specify the level of knowledge, skills and abilities required for a successful stint in the workplace. For the beneficiaries, the laziness of a few of their colleagues is a challenge to obtaining competency in their place of assignment. Laziness implies that an individual is not performing or doing the tasks expected of him or her because of causes controllable to himself or herself, often pertaining to an individual's effort (Madsen, 2018).

[...] Kami, mo-advance, maora'g every week nalanggyud mi mohimo ug accomplishment ba para diliganimagtipun-og among himu-onon. Pero ang uban is, naagyuyubanmagtipun-ogsa whole month. Mao pay ihimo. (My fellow interns and I (who are not lazy), we do our accomplishment reports in advance, so the reports needed to be submitted would not pile up. But other interns have pending accomplishment reports to do for a good whole month. They would have to beat time to make it.) -Participant A

The behavior of some of the GIP beneficiaries during the onset of the program was challenging, pointing out tardiness and absences as the top contributors of this problem. Thus, tardy and absent interns posed as a challenge since the GIP focal person is not aware if the reported attendance is correct or have been certified true by the supervisor of the intern's place of assignment. Tardiness and absences do not only affect productivity but also affect the amount of the intern's stipend. As stated by the beneficiaries, other interns altered their DTRs or attendance just to make it look like they were present and have arrived and left on time.

[...] Mao na problem kay ug ang ila supervisor asa [sila] na-assign, di man ko makabaloana. (That's the problem since only the supervisors in their place of assignment will know [if the attendance is true] and I will not know that.) -Participant F

Just like behavior, competency ends up being one of the challenges encountered by the implementers in the GIP monitoring & evaluation phase. The partner agency expressed dismay over interns who would show up to their place of assignment and would just play video games in their cellphones during internship hours. Hence, the said beneficiaries would just turn serious when the focal person goes to visit them, as part

of his monitoring. For the implementers, this still falls under laziness. It shows what kind of personality the beneficiaries have, which is really uncalled for as government interns. However, the focal person clarified that the lazy interns they had were not really bad at their internship performance. They just did not really put effort to be conscious about doing their exact tasks at the exact time even if they can.

[...]...inigsakanakodidto, nagduwa ug ML. Usahay, pertimagtinagulkolna.” (...when I went there, the interns were just playing ML [Mobile Legends]. Sometimes, I can hear rattling from inside (before I come in, indicating that they are trying to act as serious as possible before they see me.) -Participant F

Table 2. Strategies of Implementation

GIP Phase	Themes	Categories
Hiring Phase	target setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation advisory • presence of hiring goals
	proposal preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applicant reaction • beneficiary selection • limited internship slot
	implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internship engagement • government interns
Monitoring and Evaluation Phase	making of accomplishment report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tardiness and absences • falsification of daily time record
	weekly submission and collection of report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delayed preparation of reports • copying reports of other interns
	completion of internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tardiness and absences • make-up for attendance

Strategies of Implementation in the Hiring Phase

Findings reveal that target setting; proposal preparation and implementation are the strategies used in hiring phase of the GIP. Target setting is the first step in the GIP process flow, where implementation advisory and presence of hiring goals are the leading categories under this theme. The study participants claimed that the advisory on the implementation of the GIP or the hiring of interns was posted on the social networking site, Facebook. Thus, giving regard to Melanthiou, et al. (2015) explained about employers using social media to recruit and hire employees due to the many job applicants that have an account on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Aside from posting the hiring information on social media, respondents said that it was also posted in the different barangay halls in the municipality. Just like the Facebook post for the GIP hiring, the publication or post in the barangay contained the requirements to be submitted by potential applicants.

[...] Sa barangay (ko nakahibalonganaay hiring). Mao ra’ggi-post ra nilakinsayganahanmo-apil ug GIP,

pwede ra maka-apply...Then, ingonsila kay nag-posting didtounyamoingon man ngai-pass langinyong requirements sakang Congressman nga office. (I learned about the hiring from the barangay. The post read like, "Whoever would like to apply as GIP intern, you may do so." Then, people from the barangay hall said that interested applicants may submit their requirements to the Congressional office.) -Participant A

On the other hand, even before the DOLE or its partner agency announced the implementation of the GIP in 2019, 2020 and 2021, the partner agency has started receiving requests for interns from different barangays in the municipality of Argao and from the different local government units of the Second Congressional District of the Province of Cebu. Thus, this is a clear manifestation that there is a presence of hiring goals in this situation. Bivainis & Morkvenas (2008) said that in order to achieve goals in an enterprise, the main asset, which is the human resource, must be used. The requesting parties have identified the workload that needs to be addressed, hence needing more human resources to do it since they lack the personnel for it. Human resources keep a company alive through their ability, skills and talents (Larincova, 2015). Thus, in this situation, the human resources were needed to aid the barangay that do not have enough personnel.

According to the partner agency, the process of receiving requests first allows their office to determine the number of interns they are going to consider in the selection process. Aside from the interns referred or requested by the barangay, the partner agency will also have to consider those who will individually apply after the hiring has been announced or posted.

[...] So, among buhaton kay kung kinsanga barangay mo-request, sila'ymohimo ug kinsailangihatagsaamoa kay adto man nila mag-trabaho...I-refer (nila) namounya kung mo-qualify sila, so maonangaakongi-process ang ilangmga documents. (What we are going to do is, whichever barangay submits a request for interns, they will be the ones to prepare the list of possible interns, since they will be working for them. They are going to refer it to us and when the list of names from the barangay qualifies, I will proceed with processing their documents.) -Participant F

Under the theme proposal preparation, the categories include applicant reaction, beneficiary selection and limited internship slots. After the announcement or publication of the hiring for GIP interns, applicants have come rushing to apply for the paid internship. Their desire to get hired is fueled by their need to have work experience and get paid. For them, government internship can strengthen their experience and future job applications but money or pay matters, too. They could use it to uplift their way of living or to provide their needs like food and education, among others.

Applicants' reactions to recruitment systems contribute to the recruiter's image (Hassan, et al., 2020). Different reactions have different effects on an employer's desirability (Bauer, et al., 2001). The focal person believes that the people of Argao trust their office to provide them with assistance pertaining to employment, among other things, hence the many applications they received.

On the other hand, recruiting workers while attempting to find the right fit for a job position is an important factor when making hiring decisions (Bottger & Barsoux, 2012). The beneficiary selection for the GIP is a hiring decision that the partner agency needed to make. Selecting workers is a procedure used for acquiring workers (Gholston, 2015). During the selection of beneficiaries, the partner agency does the review of application documents, the screening of qualifications and the interviews of the applications. These coincide with Tanguay, et al.'s (2012) statement that the procedure used for hiring workers includes reviewing resumes and conducting interviews. Job interview is one of the techniques used by hiring managers to hire employees and this interview may be done over the phone or face to face in an office setting (Sumanth & Cable, 2011).

Lastly, the category limited internship slots under the theme proposal preparation connotes that all

requirements and application documents were not just reviewed but also validated. The validation helped in the finalization of the list or names of the applicants who have passed the selection process. The internship slots have always been dependent on the budget allocated by the DOLE for the partner agency. The partner agency has to submit to the DOLE Regional Office the list of applicants who have passed the selection process through the program of works. The said document will determine the funds that need to be allocated and downloaded to the partner agency for the actual implementation of the program.

[...] So maona, (sutaon) nato kung pila among budget allocation, akongbalhinon. Kay daghang ang Argao, mostly ang Argao may pinakadako, 45 barangays. Naa mi 15 to 20 ka bata. So ang atongmgalungsod, tag-lima kay mas daghan man ug trabahuonon ang Argao. Unya ang uban kay adto ra man samunisipyo-i-assign. Pananglitan ang Dalaguete, samunisipyo ra nilai-assign unyadirisaArgao kay barangay gyud. (We will find out how much is the budget allocation (for the district). And since there are a number of applicants from Argao and it is also the largest municipality with 45 barangays, we get to have 15 to 20 interns. The other municipalities would get at least five, who will be assigned in their town halls. For example, in Dalaguete, their interns will be assigned in the municipal hall. While here in Argao, they will be assigned to the different barangays since there is a lot of work to be done here.) -Participant F

For the theme implementation, the categories include internship engagement and government interns. Per document provided by the partner agency, they have had 60 successful applicants from 2019 up to 2021 for the GIP in the municipality of Argao. As a matter of procedure, beneficiaries were informed about the date of commencement of their internship. The partner agency also conducted an orientation prior to the engagement or on boarding of the beneficiaries. Hence, interns have to adjust themselves according to the professional environment by implementing their conceptual knowledge in the new world of work (Anjum, 2020).

[...] Pag-after sa pili kay gipaadto mi para itudlo unsay among buhaton. (After the beneficiaries have been chosen, we were told to go (to the office of the partner agency) to teach us of what we are supposed to do (during the internship).) -Participant C

On the other hand, the interns under the GIP get to possess actual government work experience for the next three months, or six months, if extended, from the date of internship commencement. This experience can be valuable as these interns are given a new lens through which they can evaluate their chosen field while also determining the pros and cons of the industry and the specific organizational culture that they are in (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020). Aside from obtaining actual government work experience, interns are paid 75% of the existing daily minimum wage in the locality. A study done by Burke & Carton (2013) found that students paid in their internship reported to have generally more positive experience. Hence, even if the GIP beneficiaries are not in a “student internship”, being paid is still actually a big opportunity for them to earn financially, as they badly need an income to support their studies, their personal needs and their family’s needs, among others.

1. Strategies of Implementation in the Monitoring & Evaluation Phase

The research reveals that the making of accomplishment report, weekly submission & collection report and completion of internship are the strategies used in the GIP monitoring & evaluation phase. These themes are supported by their corresponding categories.

The monitoring & evaluation phase of the GIP, as implemented by DOLE’s partner agency in the Second District, starts with the beneficiaries making an accomplishment report. The interns make an individual assessment of themselves, especially of their performance in the internship program. According to them, their performance was measured through their attendance and/ or tardiness at work. This is why they have a daily time record (DTR), to show their actual attendance for each work day and to show the actual time that

they arrived and left their place of assignment. Aside from that, the interns prepared a diary of their daily accomplishments at work. Writing a daily accomplishment report shows the beneficiaries' awareness of their internship tasks.

[...] O, naa mi (record) kung unsaamo'nggi-duty karon. Unsay work amo'nggibuhatkaron, amo'ngisulat. (Yes, we have a daily record of what we did during our duty. Whatever we did on our work day, we wrote it down.) -Participant E

1. Strategies of Implementation in the Monitoring and Evaluation Phase

By making an accomplishment report, the interns exercise accountability or their sense of responsibility. The GIP focal person of the partner agency could not be at each place of assignment all the time. Hence, even in his absence, the interns still do their assigned tasks because this will be the basis of their log of work accomplished for each day.

[...] During sa internship program kay naa mi sulaton everyday kung unsay amonga task. Bale, kung saamoa pa nga work immersion during senior high school, kay naa mi diary kung unsa among gibuhat. And then every weeksiyapapirmahansa in-charge sa among GIP. So akoato, I was assigned to PNP Argao, maonangmagpa-sign ko, it's either sahepe or one of them ngamaka-witness langbangani-duty ko, ana. (During the internship, we wrote our daily task accomplishments. Just like in our high school work immersion, we have a diary of what we have done. And then, we have to have it signed by the GIP in-charge (at our place of assignment). I was assigned in PNP Argao, so I always have my report signed by the Chief of Police or whoever from the station, who could attest to my attendance.) -Participant D

On the other hand, meetings in the workplace are essential for the functioning of organizations and employees' work experiences (Mroz, 2019). Meetings can be used to share information (McComas, 2003), brainstorm (Reinig & Shin, 2002), socialize (Horan, 2002) and solve problems (McComas, et al., 2007). Face to face meetings is one of the prevailing categories for the theme weekly submission and collection of report. According to the beneficiaries, there were instances that the focal person visits them personally at their place of assignment. There were also instances where he would meet them all in a common area within the municipality. The beneficiaries said that the meetings were their avenue to interact with the focal person and their fellow interns. For the focal person, this was his opportunity to see if the interns were behaving appropriately in their assigned area.

[...] Ang gibuhatni Rosslyn is i-check ra man mi niya unsay among nabuhat, accomplishments. Accomplishments ra man mag-base....Perohinuon, ang amo'ngtrabaho kay balik-balik ra man gud. Ilabinasa office, mao ra man gud among trabahuon. Unyadepende ra sa office nga ma-assignannamo kung unsa'yila'ngipunongaipa-trabahosaamo-a. (What Rosslyn did was check on our accomplishments. Our accomplishments were always his basis. Our jobs, especially those assigned in offices, are just the same every day. It's up to our office (suoversors) if they decide to give us additional taks.) -Participant A

[...] Sa amoanga batch is naa man mi group chat, so mangumustaditosi Rosslyn kung kumusta mi sa among trabaho, kung amo bang gibuhatgyud among buhatunon. Like, sigegyudsiya'g monitor saamoa. Mag-send siya ug message dayonnaa may usa ka semana mag-abot mi sa barangay hall saPoblacion-maonangmangumustasiyanamo. Aside sa chat, mangumustapudsiyanamo personal, kung kumusta among trabahogyud. Dayonmangutanapudsi Rosslyn pudsamgatrabahantepudgyudsa SB kung maabotba mi didtonga late, motrabahobasa among mgatrabahuonon. (For our GIP batch, we have a group chat, where Rosslyn asks how we were at work and if we have accomplished our assigned tasks. He was always monitoring us. He sent us messages and every week, we met at the Poblacion barangay hall. Aside from chat, he would check in on us personally on how we were doing at work. He would also ask employees from the SB (Sangguniang Bayan) if we have been late for work and if we have done our assigned tasks.) -

Participant B

On one hand, when developed, self-assessment (of one's performance) can make feedback more effective (Bashir, et al., 2016). For the GIP focal person, performance assessment includes the beneficiaries' airing out of difficulties in their internship. In the context of education, Bashir, et al. (2016), explained that feedback can close the gap between current and desired performance of the students. According to the partner agency, when the interns recognize their mistakes or difficulties, as well as the things they're doing right, it would be easy for them to address them accordingly.

[...] Ang taga-Argao, weekly man gyud kay labinaako-a man i-assign samga department samunisipyo. Nag-assign ko sa SB, nag-assign ko sa Tourism. Unyamaonangabisa'g weekly nakomonitoron, di man silamoingonngastrikto kay akoa man sila'ngi-guide ug tarong. (I always meet with the interns from Argao every week, especially because I assign them to the different departments in the town hall. I assigned interns at SB, and Tourism. Even if I did weekly monitoring, never did they claim that I was being strict because I always guide them properly.) -Participant F

For the theme completion of internship, the prevailing categories are successful interns and internship extension. Internships develop soft skills and interpersonal skills like professionalism, cultural sensitivity, time management and integrity (Holyoak, 2013). Hence, completing an internship means that the beneficiaries are thought, if not expected, to have developed these skills, which are highly important for future employment. The partner agency explained that the GIP beneficiaries, who have fully completed their internship, were issued a certificate of completion. In fact, it was the DOLE, the actual implementing agency of the GIP, who issued the said document. For the partner agency, having been certified by the DOLE as one of their interns under the GIP, the beneficiary certainly has a good chance at landing a decent job. The partner agency added that they, too, have endorsed successful GIP beneficiaries to employers and/or other organizations, who asked for their referral in looking for employees to hire.

[...] Kay akonggiingnan, "Kung kinsa'y maayomo-trabohoninyo, mao ra man pud among tabangan. Di man mi mamugosninyo kay dilina man gudmobata, dilinamomgaestudyante. Huna-hunaa, kini internship program 'ni, meaning gikanmo nag-eskwela, training nanininyo para trabaho. (I told them, "whoever among you performs well, are the only ones we will help. We will not force you since you are not kids nor students anymore. Bear in mind that this is an internship program, which means, from school you transition into a sort of training for actual work.") -Participant F

Finally, finishing a three-month internship under the GIP does not mean the end, at least for some of the beneficiaries. Based on DO 204, series of 2019, former GIP beneficiaries may be readmitted for a minimum of three (3) months to a maximum of six (6) months upon recommendation of the partner agencies, whether local or national. Their extension is, however, dependent if they will be given tasks that would enable them to acquire additional competencies that would make them merit a potential position in the government service.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that the implementation of the Philippine Government Internship Program met various challenges as the landscape of society changed due to the presence of COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges included the aspect of processing, schedule, turnout of applicants, withdrawal of beneficiaries, behavior and competency became evident in the hiring and monitoring & evaluation phases which are considered crucial stages of the program. In addition, the carrying agency of the government internship program navigated its way to implement effectively despite the circumstances by applying several strategies like target setting, proposal preparation, implementation, accomplishment report making, submission and collection of report, and internship completion. Finally, the facts demonstrated that in the implementation of a program such as this, resiliency along with professionalism and commitment remained critical for its

success despite the catastrophic calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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