

Education and Ethnicity: A Phenomenology from the Lens of the Indigenous Peoples of Camarines Sur

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article History:

Received: January 17, 2020

Received in revised form: August 18, 2020

Accepted: August 20, 2020

Keywords:

achieving success, education, ethnicity, Filipino phenomenology, Indigenous Peoples (IPs)

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous peoples (IPs) belong to the marginalized group for their unique ways of living, practices, beliefs, and physical characteristics. Stereotyped as uneducated and uncivilized discriminates them in the society. Looking into the Indigenous Peoples' recent situation, particularly in earning a college degree, is timely and relevant. This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted with purposely selected 10 Indigenous Peoples of Camarines Sur, as participants who underwent in-depth interviews. A conceptualization called Success Triad, consisting of (a) apprehensions (b) perseverance (c) acceptance emerged from the participants' insightful narration of their lived experiences. The findings in this research may serve as inspiration in achieving success despite challenges and obstacles. This paper highlights the role played by education in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. It may also serve as an empirical basis for future endeavors in understanding the plight of Indigenous Peoples and how to best address their needs in attaining education for self-determination.

Introduction

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2010), the number of Indigenous individuals across the globe is around 370 million. These Indigenous Peoples compose five percent of the world's population and account for 15 percent of the world's poorest individuals. From these population, an estimated 14 to 17 million Indigenous Peoples (IPs) belonging to 110 ethnolinguistic groups, are found

in the Philippines, making it a culturally diverse country. These indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) can be found in different areas where 33% are found in the Cordillera Administrative Region in Northern Luzon, 61% in Mindanao, and the rest in the Visayas area (UNDP, 2010). In 1997, the Philippines enacted Republic Act 8317 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) Law, which recognizes the rights and development needs of the IPs. IPRA Law dictates the protection of the IPs rights to ancestral

domain, social justice, self-governance, and cultural integrity. Moreover, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was created to promote IPs' beliefs, customs, traditions, and institutions (RA 8317, 1997). Such response to the IPs' needs are anchored on the 1987 Philippine Constitution Article XIV Section 17, recognizing, respecting, and protecting ICCs' rights in preserving and developing their beliefs, customs, traditions, and institutions through "non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs" (Article XIV Section 2.4, p. 43). Despite this commitment, IPs remain the poorest and most disadvantaged groups. They belong to one-third of the world's most impoverished people, suffering disproportionately in terms of health, education, human rights, and regular systemic discrimination and exclusion (UNDP, 2010).

Indigenous Education in the Philippines

One of the Republic Act 8317 directives is to provide an inclusive system of education appropriate to the needs of the youths of ICCs/IPs. Unfortunately, policy crafting and implementation relative to these commitments are dawdling. Despite the presence of IPRA law, rules that will cater to the indigenous peoples' education were not given immediate action for effective implementation in the national administration (Delfin, 2012). In 2004, the Department of Education released DepEd Order No. 42 s 2004, *Permit to Operate Primary Schools for Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Communities*, giving permits to operate a school in ICCs/IPs commonly found in mountain areas disabling their access to public schools and health services in the mainland. Indigenous communities were given freedom to design and develop their own educational curriculum. ICCs schools can adjust their school calendar based on weather conditions. Local tribe organization

is part of the management and disciplinary body of the school. Indigenous teachers are prioritized with support from experts or elders as resource persons for cultural topics. The community or ancestral domain is the learning space using indigenous materials, and indigenous teaching and learning methods.

Furthermore, DO No. 42 allowed non-government organizations (NGOs) like Indigenous Peoples Apostolates (IPAs) recognized by IPRA Law to establish community-based interventions with competencies complementing those required by the Department of Education. IPAs intervention include basic literacy-numeracy to children and adults to learn, read, write, and count for their daily interactions in the society as well as to exercise their right to suffrage. Adult-based training like livelihoods, health, and the like to expand livelihood options and access to health services; provision for school supplies, tutorials, scholarships and health services; and provision for facilities, resources, and infrastructure similar to mainstream education to facilitate IP education towards self-determination (Victor & Yano, 2018).

This view on acquiring education influenced the proliferation of scholarships and supports to indigenous youths to navigate their way in mainstream education. As a result, individual success stories proliferated in communities, despite an increased drop-out rate referred to by Victor and Yano, (2018) as "hidden barriers". Indigenous students continue to experience discrimination from teachers, students, and schools due to ethnicity. There were more prejudice teachers than caring teachers. Discrimination from peers and classmates were also condoned and not reprimanded. School systems' policy like wearing uniform and shoes becomes additional burden to the financial capacity of most indigenous families. Indigenous students were also labelled slow learners due to differences

in the language and context learned in the community compared to the context learned and taught in the formal school. The mainstream education system was also limited to associating indigenous peoples with things like clothes, songs, and blood affinity, but not with history and cultural heritage of the community. Hence, graduates influenced with *mainstream* knowledge and skills become alienated from their own communities, culture, heritage, and history. Schooled youths live and work in urban communities. They failed to return to their ancestral domains to empower their communities because of cognitive dissonance between the way of life in the community that is considered primitive and backward in the mainstream school. As a result, ICCs became more marginalized, their culture and tribe spirit were also dying. Elders were worried on the future of their culture when it is not transferred due to broken generational ties or widened gaps between them and the youths (Victor & Yano, 2018).

Elders asserted for an education that will ensure the continuous emergence of their tribe and community. They believe it will happen if the youths will develop a deep sense of cultural identity and commitment, develop self-determination and consciousness as heirs and heiress of the future communities. Hereafter, more culturally sensitive interventions as mandated in the IPRA law were introduced to indigenize formal education and reverse the impact of formal education to the indigenous communities. Moreover, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education, now the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), drafted the *Alternative Learning System (ALS) curriculum for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) education* (DO No. 101, s. 2010) aimed to attain functional literacy such as communication skills, problem-solving and, critical thinking skills, sense of self and community, practice of ecological sustainability, and the fostering of a global worldview for IPs who want to study at

their own pace, and place. With such an end view, the DepEd Secretary Armin A. Luistro signed the *Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework* (DO No. 62 s. 2011) on 8 August 2011 that intended to promote strong collaboration and partnership among IP communities and stakeholders in implementing “basic education that is sensitive of their context, aspirations and concerns” (Victor & Yano, 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, it contains the engagement and approaches to ‘rights-based approach which gives primary importance to the principles of participation, inclusion, and empowerment’ (p.10) of IPs to self-governance under IPRA law. These rights successfully enjoyed for life-long learning will eventually enable IPs to become contributors to nation building.

The recently legalized Republic Act 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 identified Indigenous peoples as beneficiary as well. The act includes a basic education curriculum that is inclusive and developmentally appropriate, relevant, culture-sensitive, contextualized, and flexible (DepEd Order No. 43, 2. 2013). It enables and allows schools to localize and indigenize based on their educational and social context within the national competencies required in formal and non-formal education for all learners regardless of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the implementing rules and regulations under this law include the institutionalization of Indigenous People’s Education (IPED) in DepEd. Programs relative to IPED shall support various modalities that would reinforce Indigenous Learning System (ILS) in nurturing the youths’ knowledge and articulation of indigenous systems and practices.

Achieving Success

Inculcating knowledge, skills, and values are the main goals of education. Ensuring fulfilling learning experiences are

being delivered to students with varied demographics is a global thrust of education for all movement. Education is a fundamental right, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, religion, ethnic/cultural background, or parents' educational attainment. Most modern and developing societies, including the Philippines, are concerned in involving everyone in the development and growth of their nations and economy (Wa-mbaleka, 2013). Unity in diversity, the DepEd theme for commencement exercises 2019, is a global human concept which seeks to transcend that an ideology or ethnicity should comprise the notion of an ideal nation. It suggests that people from all walks of life regardless of various cultural strands, the country can be made stronger by acceptance of many contributions made by its constituent parts.

The Philippine educational policy (DepEd Order No. 62 s. 2011) on IPEd was a fruition of the years after year's assertion of ICCs rights for a culture-based, responsive, and relevant education for indigenous children and youth. Arguably, Education for All (EFA 2015) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has driven the country to a committed action to advance the education of its indigenous students. Likewise, efforts made are reflection of the reformulated DepEd mission stating, "to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to quality, equitable, culture-based, and complete basic education" (DO No 8, s. 2015, p. 20). As it is, in 2013, Carcamo stressed that 15 regions in the Philippines had been identified to receive targeted funding for capacity building of teachers from the Department of Education.

Nevertheless, Calunsod (2013) noted that only 5.7 percent or close to 1.2 million students belong to indigenous groups from the 20.8 million students enrolled in elementary and high schools in the country. Furthermore, a study revealed that IP access to education and essential services show that social inequality

persists until today within and between ethnic groups in the Philippines (Reyes, Mina & Asis, 2017). As articulated in their paper, Galindo, Reginio, Liguind, Sancon and Advincula (2018) believed that financial capacity, marginalization, and fear of being discriminated, oftentimes verbally, hinder IPs towards achieving their full academic potential.

Nevertheless, a good education, dependent on factors like curriculum, instructional strategies, teachers' competency, school context, and facilities (Andaya, 2016), teaches the creation of quality life to create opportunities and engage in self-development (Singh, 2013). In the pursuit of knowledge, everyone has his or her unique phase. Hence, the primary purpose of this qualitative study is to understand and describe the process of realizing success in acquiring a college education as viewed by selected Indigenous Peoples from Camarines Sur, Bicol, Philippines. Specifically, to answer the following questions:

1. What meaning do the 10 Indigenous Peoples ascribe to their success in education?
2. What are the barriers and facilitating factors that led the Indigenous Peoples to be successful in finishing school?

The collective descriptions generated by this qualitative inquiry may provide significant information in the improvement of the Philippine policy that will ensure the constant delivery of accessible, quality, relevant and liberating education. The processes IPs went through to get over the challenges and managed to attain success by acquiring a college degree are inspiring experiences that will provide learning not only for the IPs but to every individual as well.

Methodology

The study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological approach. It seeks to understand, describe, and elucidate meanings on the viewpoints of group of individuals (particularly IP in this study) by exploring on their individual experiences in obtaining their full academic potential (Creswell, 2014; Galindo et al., 2018). The study anchored on the post-positivism paradigm was conducted following logical steps for obtaining multiple perspectives of the participants, for data collection, and for analysis on the IPs pursuit for college degree.

The study took place in Camarines Sur, Bicol, Philippines. There are five Agta ethnic groups in Bicol region, namely: Agta-Taboy in Rapu-Rapu, Albay; Agta-Cabihug and Agta-Dumagat in Camarines Norte; Agta-Tabangnon and Agta-Cimarron in Camarines Sur/Sorsogon. The National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP-V) Regional Office is in Iriga City, Camarines Sur, hence, due to time constraints, the selected participants were

members of Agta-Tabangnon and Agta-Cimarron in Camarines Sur, Bicol. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants in this study.

Participants

Ten IPs were purposively selected for an in-depth interview (Table 1). The participants are first-hand sources to obtain reliable information about the phenomenon under study. The participants were all college graduates who enjoyed the Special Government Educational Assistance Program (SGEAP) and Educational Assistance Program (EAP). The hardship and struggles they have gone through to obtain education provided enough information for a full description of the phenomenon investigated. They are all currently employed in government agencies.

Instruments

The study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol (Table 2) for the narrative accounts of the participants.

Table 1

Matrix of the Distribution of Participants

| Participants | Age | Sex | Ethnic Group | Educational Attainment | Affiliation/Position |
|--------------|-----|-----|----------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | 33 | F | Agta-Tabangnon | BS in Social Work | DSWD - Buhi |
| 2 | 25 | F | Agta | BS in Office Administration | NCIP V Tribal Affairs Asst. I |
| 3 | 29 | M | Agta-Tabangnon | BS Criminology | PNP, Ligao, Albay |
| 4 | 48 | F | Agta-Tabangnon | BS in Commerce (Management) | NCIP V Admin Aide I |
| 5 | 51 | F | Agta-Tabangnon | BS in Business Administration | NCIP V, In-charge of IP Registration & IPMR |
| 6 | 32 | F | Agta-Cimarron | BEED | DepEd, Iriga City |
| 7 | 29 | F | Agta-Cimarron | BEED | DepEd, Iriga City |
| 8 | 54 | M | Agta-Tabangnon | General Radio Communication Operator | NCIP V Tribal Affairs Asst. I |
| 9 | 25 | F | Agta-Tabangnon | BS Nursing | NCIP V - Nurse |
| 10 | 52 | F | Agta-Tabangnon | BS in Electrical Engineering | NCIP V CAO II, In-charge of Education, Projects & Activities |

These were submitted for review by four qualified experts for content validity and reliability. Part I refers to participant's preliminary sketch or robotfoto characterizing the demographic profile of the participants. It included their name, address, age, sex, religion, ethnic group, status, current affiliation and or position. Part II was an aide-memoire utilized to gather insights on the education of the participants' lived experiences as member of indigenous peoples. It comprises of interview questions fixated on the participants' struggles to reach full academic potential. To facilitate the retrieval of information, the experiences were divided into three segments: objectives for studying, experiences, and plans after pursuing a college degree.

Table 2

Interview Protocol

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| I. Respondent's Roborfoto | |
| II. Interview Question | |
| A. | Objectives for studying |
| | <i>How do you describe yourself as IP before studying? What drive you to pursue your studies?</i> |
| | <i>What previous educational and life experiences influence your decision to study?</i> |
| B. | Experiences |
| | <i>How would you describe your interactions with people around you in school?</i> |
| | <i>Are there any dilemma/s that you went through while studying?</i> |
| | <i>Could you please elaborate and share some of your experiences as a student?</i> |
| C. | After Graduating |
| | <i>What were your plans after finishing your study?</i> |

Gathering of Data and Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the National Commission

on Indigenous Peoples, Region V (NCIP-V) Regional Director. Upon approval, the next step was identification of participants for the face-to-face interview. Bracketing of the researchers' biases before data collection safeguarded data accuracy. Using the prepared and validated interview protocol, the interview with six NCIP-V employees was conducted right at the office during their breaks so as not to hinder their office work. The meeting with the four IPs employed in other agencies was done in a mutually agreed location and time for a casual gathering of data about their experiences as students. Follow-up questions were asked during the interview for elaboration and clarification of responses.

Participants signed informed consent before the interview. The researchers clarified the different aspects of the study. Furthermore, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the report of the study stressing their rights to stop the interview when deemed necessary. The interviews lasted for about 30 minutes to 45 minutes upon saturation of data where no new information for the understanding of the phenomenon was obtained from each participant. The interviews went spontaneously using Rinconada dialect and Tagalog. These were audio-recorded using digital voice recording upon participants' consent.

Analysis of Data

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to complete the field test. These were translated into English and subjected into language expert checking. Cool and warm analyses of data were facilitated for thematic analysis. The cool analysis part involved highlighting of both anchors (words, statements, quotes, and phrases) and unique referents (specific experiences). Repeated manual coding and analysis of categories for similarities and relationships led to the emergence of themes. The emergent themes

were utilized in coming up with a collective description of the participants' experiences. Member checking for the coding and themes guaranteed trustworthiness and accuracy of the shared narrative of the phenomenon under study. The recorded and transcribed interviews were kept privately in an organized folder in the computer.

Findings

A triad of concerns, labeled as Success Triad (Fig. 1) emanating from the experiences in pursuing a college education emerged from the saturated individual and collective narratives of the IP participants. The model provides an explicit nature and dynamics of the concerns that became part in the realization of success by the IPs, particularly in achieving their full academic potential. The spectrum encompasses aspects that are related to fear and inferiority (Apprehensions), sacrifice and determination (Perseverance), and pride and self-worth (Acceptance).

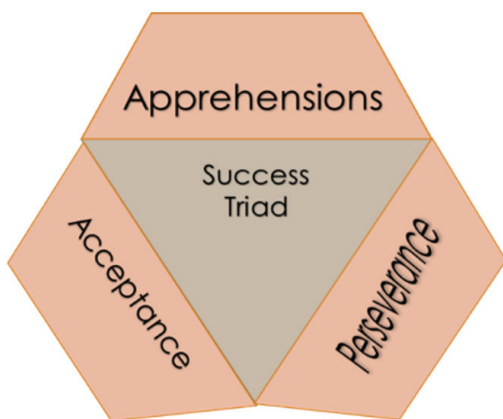


Figure 1. Success Triad

a. Apprehensions: Fear and Inferiority. The experiences occurred when their apprehensions started to unfold in their elementary years as they deal with classmates, teachers, and other people in the school community. As a member

of an ethnic group, bullying frequently occurred based on their physical looks (such as color, size, hair), origin, and uniqueness. Prejudice teachers added to the fear and inferiority experienced by the participants. Students' ability to communicate and express oneself is hindered as well. They are different compared to most students which add up to perceiving themselves as inferior over the others (non-IP's) that made them feel less about themselves. Hence, they developed denial of their ethnicity especially when their physical appearance does not totally reveal their origin. As participants recalled,

"Ku elementary ako, kadipisil, oro-aldow babaoyon ako Agta ku mga kaklase ko. Ia-apon gamit ko, babatuhon ako, tapos ngangayamnan adi buhok ko ta ka-kinky kaya sige ko paturo kadto sa luwa. Ona ku kadto a Agta ilang kaya abo ka mga tagasadi baba. Su maestra ko kadto sa likod ako pauulaon. Pag agko gigibohon sa klase, rarayuan ako ka mga kaklase ko. Sa ngayamnan, iba a itatao kanako. Anggan high school arog kan kya uda ako kusog boot anggan nakatapos. (when I was in elementary, life was tough. Every day, they call me Agta. My classmates will throw my things. I cry while picking my things. They hit me with stone and play with my kinky hair. I always end up crying. They bullied me emotionally and physically. As a child, I thought of Agta as an illness and something unacceptable for the lowlanders. My teacher would assign me to the farthest seat at the back. During group activities, my classmates would not choose me. During playtime, I am given toys different or separate from my classmates. I finished high school without the courage to stand for myself as an Agta)" (P2).

"Aapihon kami ku pamilya ni tatay, diri kuno kami mig-asenso ta Agta. Sa eskwelahan naman baoy kanako

amerikanang layas ta medyo maputi ako maski kulot buhok ko, mauuyam ako pero di ko na sna iintindihon. Maski su mga maestra ko di maniniwala. Isi kaya nira ka Agta, ababa, kulot, maitom kaya dapat baguhon na a nasa libro. Silong ko ngani kadto ka Agta makanos, kaya sabi ko ngowan ka mga elders, magagayon palan kita, tatawa sana sira (we were bullied within the family (father side) as Agta. They told us we will not succeed. In school, they call me “amerikanang layas” (run-away American) because I have a fair complexion though my hair was curly. I get annoyed and I end up not minding them. My teachers did not believe me that I am an IP because of my color and hair. People know that IPs are small with sturdy body built, dark skin, and curly hair. Therefore, IP descriptions found in many of our books must be changed and updated. I even told Bicolano elders that my perception of IP is ugly but on the contrary, we are all beautiful, and with this they all laughed)” (P6).

Notably, the apprehensions faced by the participants in the school had its impact on their personal outlook as a student. It drives them to aspire and strive harder in their studies as stated by another participant, *“kadipisil ku buway kadto. Maglalawig ako damulag pagluwas klase tpos magtatanom mais at patatas pag-sabado pra agko balonon, minsan di ako loloog. Lang supog balonon. Minsan di ako loloog, lang pag magdadara ako nilagang batag o kamoteng-kahoy. Magbabaklay kami 5 km. Lang bato, pag nag-uran, ma-alnas kya mas dipisil, kaya di na sana ako loloog. Kaya nagdisidir ako magtapos dahil ku hirap sa buway (Our life was hard. I had to tend the carabao after class, and plant corn and sweet potato on weekends. Sometimes, I do not go to school because I have no allowance. I am shy when I bring boiled banana and cassava to eat. Our place was 5 kilometers away from school, it takes hours to walk because of the rough terrain.*

When it rains some rocks were exposed at the surface making it more slippery and difficult to walk so, I rarely go to school on rainy days. I pursue my studies because of the hardships I encountered in life)” (P3).

b. Perseverance: Sacrifices and Determination to Succeed. The struggles (i.e. discrimination, prejudice) in life faced by the participants pressed them to strive harder. Seemingly, the participants shared how these challenges motivated them and pushed their determination to achieve their goal of finishing school and earning a college degree. The hardships they experienced paved the way in shaping their views on education as an opportunity that will make their lives better. They looked at education as a scapegoat to improve and change the present life or situation they were in. Earning a college diploma was as a vehicle to success and to thereby improve their status in life. The IP participants also shared instances wherein they must convince themselves to continue despite of the challenges. Acquiring a college degree was also a way to fulfill their parents’ dream of a better future, as verbalized,

“Nagdesidir ako magtapos dahil ko pinagdaanan ko (I persevered to study because of what I went through)” (P1).

“Dahil sa kahirapan ku buhay kaya ako nagdisidir makatapos. Ako kurang kaya obligado magtrabaho at tabangan su opat kong ngod para makatapos man (Poverty was my driving force. I am the eldest among five siblings, and I am the breadwinner. I had to help my siblings and support them to finish school)” (P10).

“Kadipisil ku buhay. Si tatay namo nagsikap maray mapa-eskwela kami para pag makatapos su sunod naman

tatabangan. Kaso, namundo iya sa maray ku mamabros si ate bago maggraduate. Magsasabi iya miggalin na iya kaya ku mauda iya di namo isi kin adto aksidente o nagpakamatay iya. Kaya pinangako ko sa sadiri ko migtapos ako at maging successful dawa uda na iya. Na buko kami ngamin arog ki ate. Kaya ngowan, ako at su ikalimang ngod ko nakatapos na dahil sa pagsisikap namo (Life was hard, my father strived to send us to school hoping that after graduating the elder siblings will support the younger ones to finish schooling as well. But, he got disappointed when my eldest sister got pregnant before graduating in college. He was disoriented up to the point of telling my mother he will leave us. So, when he died, we cannot tell whether the cause of his death was an accident or a suicide. After that, I promised myself to finish school even if he is not with us anymore. I want him to see that not all his children are the same, and that I can be able to succeed. After my eldest, my 5th sibling and I were able to finish college on our own perseverance)” (P2).

c. Acceptance: Pride and Self-worth.

The participants were fully aware that majority of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) seldom completes a college degree because of poverty and other constraints. In fact, being able to read and write is enough for most of them. The fact that earning a degree will make life better, not only for their family but for their children and future children, had driven the participants' eagerness to finish their schooling. Acquiring a college diploma brought them a sense of pride. They had proven that being an IP does not make them less competitive. They earned the respect and acceptance of the society they are in. Remarkably, the participants were able to reflect and developed a sense of self-worth the moment they accepted their identity as IP. Their acceptance along with pride

relative to their ethnicity served as the catalysts for them to be able to overcome the challenges in their education.

Dapat proud kita dawa sari o ono man pinagmulan ta. IP man ika o buko, buko an basihan kin ono ika pag-abot ka panahon. Kita a miggibo ka kinabukasan ta ipinangigin man kitang IP o pobre. IP man kita habambuhay, pwede tang mabago a pagiging pobre. Napondo ako magklase ta dipisil pero pinili ko magsikap (nagpasweldo ako, kin ono-ono) para makatapos pag-eskwela. (what is important is for you to be proud of who you are and where you came from. Whether you are an IP or not, it will not be a determinant of who you will be. The future will depend on how you decide for yourself. Being born as an IP, or born poor, does not mean that you will be poor for the rest of your life, you can change it. Like me, I almost quit schooling before yet, I chose to strive harder and finished schooling)” (P10).

Based on the accounts given by the participants, it was evident that the definition of success means to finish school and the acquisition of a college diploma. A right to personal development, to keep abreast of recent developments without forgetting their origins, beliefs, customs, and traditions. For them, holding a degree made their lives better, making them capable of obtaining better job and earnings that helped their families and even the whole of the community. This success leads the participants to accept their roots fully and with the hope that discrimination to IP will end. One narration includes,

“Bilang IP, lang baba ku tiwala ko sa sadiri ko. Ku high school, sinikap ko lingawan na Agta ako ta iba pagsilong ko sa mga Agta. Bagana ko suso na gusto pirmi magtago sa shell. Grabe supog ko, di ko isi paono makiiba sa mga tawo. Pagmati ko lang kanos ko. Pero ku natanggap

ko na IP ako at nabago pagsilong ko sa mga Agta, pig-trace ko su family history namo. Naging bukas na ako sa tao at ngayong teacher na ako, pino-promote ko ang IP education. Naa-identify ko mga eskwela namo na nasusupog na IP sira. Ini-encourage ko sira na diri masupog na sira Agta (I had low self-esteem as IP. In high school, I tried to forget being “agta”. My impression of “agta” was not good. I was like a snail who wants to hide in its shell. I became shy. I did not know how to mingle with others. I felt ugly. But now, I fully accepted my roots and is proud of being an IP. I started to trace our family history and changed my perceptions towards Agta. I came out of my shell and now an advocate of IP education and I share my experiences. I help identify IP students and encourage them to not be ashamed of themselves being agta)” (P6).

Discussion

A model labeled as Success Triad conceptualized the experiences of the IP participants in this phenomenological inquiry. The model affords a precise picture of the nature and dynamics of the concerns that became part in the realization of success by the IPs, particularly in pursuing a college Peoples’ degree. The Indigenous peoples’ milieu circumscribes facets associated with fear and inferiority (*apprehensions*), sacrifices, and determination to succeed (*perseverance*) and pride and self-worth (*acceptance*).

In this study, *apprehensions* or the experiences of the participants relative to their fears and inferiority were accounted. The participants observed that their classmates ill-treated them because of their physical look. Bullying transpired in the school, and to avoid this, the participants make their identity hidden from their classmates, peers, and even teachers. They

developed the fear of rejection and the idea that they do not belong with the other students in the mainstream schools. Majority of the issues on Indigenous Peoples were still relative to discrimination as articulated in the study of Galindo et.al. (2013). Moreover, the participants felt that they are inferior compared to their classmates and they were considered not fit in the modern society. Across the country, occurrences relative to the IP’s fear and inferiority due to discrimination can be circumvented. IP students in mainstream schools should receive enough support and protection from teachers and the whole of the school community to ensure that there will be no discrimination and thus their identity will be preserved resulting to the development of the IPs full potential.

Outlined as *perseverance*, refers to the difficulties and challenges in life (such as earning for daily needs and travelling) faced by the participants that pushed them to study harder. They were able to develop coping mechanisms in dealing with the struggles. They saw education as an opportunity for growth and personal enhancement. The outlook of the participants to acquire education paved way to have a better life for themselves and for their family, such as to escape life in the mountains and live in suburban areas. The participants shared similar struggles and hardships. But it did not discourage them from stopping, instead, they made it as motivation to pursue their studies and acquire a college diploma. The struggles faced by the participants made them inferior at first, yet it catalyzed their determination to achieve their goal (Galindo et al., 2013). The result of this study showed how IPs participants had given importance to education, for they believe that it will serve as their deliverance from the constant discrimination against them.

Moreover, the participants verbalized that in moments of adversities, they turned into the anticipation of how their lives will

be uplifted by acquiring a college education. The success of the participants after finishing their college education is synthesized in *acceptance*, encompassing their pride and self-worth. The participants considered finishing school and acquiring a college diploma helped them earn respect and acceptance in their family, and community. Having a college diploma made their tribe proud of them. It was a powerful way to remove stereotypes among Agta. Their success motivated them to fully embrace their roots and accepted their true identities as Indigenous Peoples. Hence, they enlisted themselves as registered IP not only for the benefits/privileges associated with it. The participants succeeded in eliminating the discrimination and stereotyping of Indigenous Peoples. Their determination in acquiring education showed others that their perception of Agta is wrong. To encourage IP students to trust in the Creator and to embrace the IP culture were vital for the teachers to pave the way to holistic approach to human development and community development (Wa-Mbaleka, 2013).

Lessons Learned

This phenomenological paper as naturalistic inquiry to research, claimed to capture and describe the experiences of the Indigenous Peoples of Camarines Sur that paved the way towards success in their acquisition of a college diploma. Impliedly, the emerged model labelled as Success Triad presents an erudite description of the changing aspects of achieving success in college education. The researchers asserted that IP have the optimism to attain full potential and to be professionals in the face of the long cycle of IP discrimination. The IPs gave importance to education to improve their lives and the whole of the community as well.

Future Direction of the Research

While the result of this study may not give generalizable accounts that can manifest

local and international Indigenous Peoples' milieu, this paper aims to advance the current literature by highlighting the experiences of Indigenous Peoples of Camarines Sur concurring with previous international investigations though not previously cited. It is suggested that the emerged Success Triad serves as a fecund source of information to future research action such as policy development and modeling. Furthermore, this study intends to increase academics' understanding of problems relative to Indigenous Peoples' education and the best possible ways to support them on their plight specifically in attaining college education.

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