

Evaluating the Impact of Material Assistance on Poverty Alleviation: A Comprehensive Assessment of TUPAD, AKAP and AICS Programs in the 3rd District of Quezon City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the impact of three Philippine government material assistance programs—TUPAD (emergency employment), AKAP (financial aid for Overseas Filipino Workers), and AICS (crisis assistance)—on poverty alleviation in the 3rd District of Quezon City. Using a descriptive quantitative design, 100 beneficiaries were surveyed to assess program implementation, accessibility, and perceived effects on economic stability, social and psychological well-being, and long-term sustainability. Results indicate that beneficiaries generally agree on the adequacy of program implementation, with TUPAD rated highest due to its direct employment benefits. Poverty alleviation was most strongly perceived in economic stability, while improvements in social and psychological well-being and sustainability were moderate. Regression analysis revealed that AICS had the most significant positive impact on poverty status, followed by AKAP, whereas TUPAD's effect was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that direct financial and crisis assistance may yield more immediate poverty reduction benefits than short-term employment programs. The study recommends enhancing program responsiveness, transparency, and integration with broader development strategies to improve long-term outcomes and beneficiary empowerment. This evidence-based assessment informs policy refinement for more effective and inclusive social protection in urban Philippine contexts.

Keywords: AKAP program, AICS program, Material assistance, Poverty alleviation, TUPAD program

INTRODUCTION

Poverty alleviation remains a central challenge for the global community. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), more than 1.2 billion people globally are still experiencing multidimensional poverty, lacking access not just to income, but to education, healthcare, housing, and dignified employment. In response, nations worldwide have been implementing social protection programs that include material assistance such as cash transfers, emergency employment, and crisis support. These interventions are crucial, especially in times of economic downturns, public health emergencies, and environmental disasters, as they offer immediate relief and prevent vulnerable populations from falling deeper into the poverty trap. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, led to the expansion of social assistance coverage in over 200 countries, highlighting the global reliance on these programs as a frontline defense against poverty (International Labour Organization, 2021).

Notably, countries like Brazil with its Bolsa Família, Mexico with Prospera, and Indonesia's Program Keluarga Harapan have served as successful models in delivering targeted material assistance to poor households. These programs demonstrated that if well-designed and efficiently implemented, material support can reduce poverty, improve children's educational outcomes, enhance health indicators, and stimulate local economies. However, international experiences also warn against over-reliance on short-term interventions without linking them to long-term strategies such as job creation, inclusive

growth, and institutional reforms. Thus, while material assistance is important, it must be embedded within a broader development framework to ensure sustainability and empowerment.

In Southeast Asia, countries like Thailand and Vietnam have also expanded their social safety nets in response to internal inequalities. Material assistance has been integrated into disaster response, pandemic recovery, and community resilience frameworks. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to advocate for inclusive social protection systems that blend material aid with capacity-building, recognizing the limitations of one-time assistance and the importance of reducing intergenerational poverty. A growing number of studies emphasize the need to assess the impact, reach, and long-term influence of such programs, especially in urban areas where poverty is complex and dynamic.

In the Philippine context, poverty has long been a major development concern. Despite being one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia in recent years, the Philippines struggles with high levels of income inequality and urban poverty. As of 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that 22.4 percent of Filipinos lived below the national poverty threshold, with Metro Manila registering sharp disparities between affluent areas and informal settlements. Poverty in the Philippines is multidimensional, with factors such as lack of stable employment, poor housing conditions, inadequate access to healthcare and education, and vulnerability to disasters contributing to chronic deprivation. Recognizing this, the Philippine government has established multiple layers of social protection, ranging from conditional cash transfers (4Ps) to employment and crisis assistance programs administered through line agencies like DOLE and DSWD.

Three major national programs aimed at material support stand out: TUPAD (Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers), AKAP (Abot Kamay ang Pagtulong), and AICS (Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations). TUPAD is an emergency employment program that offers short-term work and income to displaced or underemployed workers, especially those in the informal sector. AKAP was developed in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provides financial aid to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) affected by job loss abroad. Meanwhile, AICS is a versatile assistance program that covers urgent needs such as medical treatment, funeral expenses, and educational support. These programs are part of the National Social Welfare and Development Reform Agenda and reflect the state's commitment to mitigating poverty and building adaptive capacities during periods of hardship.

Although millions of Filipinos have benefited from these initiatives, there is growing concern about their long-term impact and sustainability. Critics argue that these programs often suffer from bureaucratic bottlenecks, uneven targeting, political interference, and limited monitoring and evaluation. While government reports focus largely on the number of beneficiaries and the total amount disbursed, there is limited research on the actual outcomes of these interventions—especially in terms of improving livelihoods, enabling self-reliance, or reducing dependence on aid. Thus, there is a critical need to go beyond input and output indicators and focus on the transformational potential of these material assistance programs.

Locally, this issue is magnified in Quezon City, particularly in its 3rd District, which consists of highly populated barangays with a significant proportion of urban poor families. Many residents in this area engage in informal labor, are at risk of eviction, and face daily struggles related to food security, transportation, healthcare, and employment. Given the strategic importance of this district and the scale of material assistance programs implemented there, it becomes a vital site for empirical assessment. While there are reports of widespread program reach, stories from the ground reveal gaps in service delivery, limited follow-up, and varying levels of satisfaction among beneficiaries.

This study seeks to address that critical gap by evaluating the actual impact of TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs on poverty alleviation in the 3rd District of Quezon City. It will examine the extent to which these programs have improved the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries, enhanced their ability to cope with crises, and contributed to more stable livelihoods. More specifically, the research will assess program effectiveness in terms of accessibility, implementation efficiency, short-term relief, and longer-term benefits. The voices of beneficiaries will also be central to this study, allowing a grounded perspective on how assistance is experienced, perceived, and utilized.

This research aims to inform local government units, national agencies, and policy institutions on how to enhance program design, ensure more equitable access, and align material assistance with broader poverty reduction strategies by undertaking a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment. In doing so, it contributes not only to academic knowledge but also to the practical development of more responsive, resilient, and inclusive social protection mechanisms in the Philippines and beyond.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a descriptive and quantitative research design to assess the impact of material assistance programs, TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS, on poverty alleviation among beneficiaries in the 3rd District of Quezon City. A total of 100 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation from each program. Data were gathered using a validated modified questionnaire covering demographic profile, program implementation, accessibility, perceived benefits, and poverty alleviation indicators such as income changes, access to basic needs, and financial coping ability. The instrument was pre-tested for reliability, with internal consistency confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha. Data were collected through face-to-face survey administration while observing ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation, to summarize perceptions and levels of program implementation. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive relationship between the implementation of material assistance programs and the extent of poverty alleviation experienced by the beneficiaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How do the beneficiaries evaluate the implementation of the TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs?

The data in Table 1 reveal that the beneficiaries generally agree with the implementation of the TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs, as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.13 with a standard deviation of 0.48. Among the three programs, TUPAD received the highest mean rating of 3.21, followed by AKAP with 3.14, and AICS with the lowest at 3.06. These findings suggest that while all three assistance programs are perceived positively, TUPAD is slightly more favorably evaluated, likely due to its direct provision of temporary employment, which may offer more tangible and immediate benefits compared to one-time financial or crisis-based support. The relatively moderate standard deviations indicate a consistent perception among respondents, pointing to uniformity in service delivery or program experience. The implication is that although the programs meet minimum expectations, there is still room for improvement in delivery, adequacy, and responsiveness, especially for AICS, which deals with critical individual crises. Policymakers and program implementers should consider enhancing program transparency, follow-up mechanisms, and support services to elevate beneficiary satisfaction and maximize long-term poverty alleviation outcomes.

The findings from Table 1, which show that beneficiaries generally agree with the implementation of the TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs, with TUPAD receiving the highest mean rating, are consistent with recent studies from 2023 onward. Research by Garcia et al. (2023) and Lopez & Reyes (2023) highlights that employment-based social assistance programs like TUPAD tend to garner higher satisfaction due to their immediate and tangible income benefits, which promote empowerment and sustainable poverty alleviation. This preference aligns with Mendoza et al. (2023), who emphasize the long-term advantages of integrating employment opportunities within social protection schemes. Meanwhile, the relatively lower rating for AICS reflects challenges noted by Delgado et al. (2023), who found that crisis-based assistance programs often face issues in timely delivery and adequacy, underscoring the need for improved responsiveness. The moderate standard deviations indicate uniform perceptions that resonate with Tan & Cruz's (2024) findings that consistent service delivery reduces variability in beneficiary experiences. Moreover, Santos & Villanueva (2024) and Garcia & Lim (2023) stress the importance of transparency and robust feedback mechanisms to enhance trust and satisfaction, supporting the recommendation to strengthen program follow-up and communication. Reyes & Bautista (2024) further suggest that supplementing financial and crisis assistance with support services such as skills training can improve outcomes, particularly for programs like AKAP and AICS. Additionally, Villamor et al. (2025) highlight the critical role of timely and adequate crisis support during emergencies, reinforcing the need to enhance AICS responsiveness. Finally, Luna & Cruz (2023) advocate for integrated social protection approaches that combine employment, financial aid, and crisis support to maximize poverty alleviation impact. Collectively, these recent studies affirm that while the three programs meet baseline expectations, there remains significant potential to improve delivery, adequacy, and responsiveness to raise beneficiary satisfaction and long-term effectiveness.

Table 1.
The summary of the beneficiaries evaluates the implementation of the TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs

Items	Mean	SD	Description
TUPAD	3.21	0.49	<i>Agree</i>
AKAP	3.14	0.46	<i>Agree</i>
AICS	3.06	0.50	<i>Agree</i>
Overall Mean	3.13	0.48	<i>Agree</i>

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 (Strongly Disagree), 1.76 – 2.50 (Disagree), 2.51 – 3.25 (Agree), 3.26 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree)

2. To what extent is poverty alleviation measured through economic stability, social well-being, psychological well-being, and long-term sustainability?

Table 2 presents a summary of the level of poverty alleviation across four key dimensions: economic stability, social well-being, psychological well-being, and long-term sustainability. The overall mean score of 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.68 indicates that respondents generally agree that poverty alleviation has been moderately achieved in these areas. Economic stability received the highest mean rating of 3.27, categorized as “Strongly Agree,” reflecting the significant positive impact of material assistance programs in addressing beneficiaries’ basic financial needs, such as income security and daily subsistence. In contrast, social well-being (3.18), psychological well-being (3.15), and long-term sustainability (3.06) were rated as “Agree,” suggesting that while some improvements are noted, the effects on mental health, social support, and future resilience are less substantial. This pattern aligns

with recent studies emphasizing that although direct financial aid and material support effectively alleviate immediate economic hardships, their influence on deeper, multidimensional aspects of poverty remains limited. For instance, research by Santos and Villanueva (2024) and Reyes and Bautista (2024) highlight the importance of integrating mental health services and community engagement initiatives within poverty alleviation programs to address psychological and social well-being. Furthermore, Lopez and Reyes (2023) and Luna and Cruz (2023) advocate for embedding sustainable livelihood opportunities to enhance long-term resilience among beneficiaries. These insights suggest that government programs should expand beyond material assistance to incorporate holistic development strategies that foster mental health, social cohesion, and sustainability, thereby ensuring more comprehensive and enduring poverty reduction outcomes.

Table 2.

The summary of the level of poverty alleviation measured through economic stability, social well-being, psychological well-being, and long-term sustainability

Items	Mean	SD	Description
Economic Stability	3.27	0.70	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Social Well-being	3.18	0.72	<i>Agree</i>
Psychological Well-being	3.15	0.63	<i>Agree</i>
Long-term Sustainability	3.06	0.67	<i>Agree</i>
Overall Mean	3.16	0.68	<i>Agree</i>

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 (Strongly Disagree), 1.76 – 2.50 (Disagree), 2.51 – 3.25 (Agree), 3.26 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree)

3. Which among the three programs has the most perceived impact on the poverty status of the respondents?

The regression analysis in Table 3, which shows an adjusted R^2 of 0.58, indicating a strong predictive relationship between government assistance programs and poverty alleviation, is supported by multiple recent studies from 2022 to the present. The finding that AICS has the highest and most significant impact ($\beta = 0.424$, $p < .001$) aligns with evidence emphasizing the critical role of crisis-targeted assistance in improving beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions, as highlighted in DSWD's stringent validation processes to ensure aid reaches the most vulnerable during emergencies (DSWD, 2024). Similarly, the significant effect of AKAP ($\beta = 0.322$, $p = 0.043$) corresponds with survey data showing that 81% of Filipinos perceive AKAP as positively impacting financial stability, particularly for OFW families (Business Mirror, 2025). However, critiques such as those by PhKule.org (2025) caution that AKAP's one-time financial aid may sometimes perpetuate patronage and short-term relief rather than sustainable poverty reduction. Meanwhile, TUPAD's positive but statistically insignificant impact ($\beta = 0.191$, $p = 0.188$) is consistent with findings from Maalihan and Conchada (2022), who demonstrated through propensity score matching that TUPAD improves interim income by about 18% and supports labor force participation, yet its effects may be more gradual and less immediately visible compared to direct cash transfers. This is further supported by DOLE reports emphasizing TUPAD's role in providing emergency employment to displaced workers, which helps stabilize livelihoods but may require longer-term adjustments to maximize effectiveness. Policy analyses from the CPBRD (2024) suggest that while employment programs like TUPAD are vital, crisis and financial assistance

programs such as AICS and AKAP often yield more immediate poverty alleviation impacts, underscoring the need to enhance their scalability and targeting mechanisms. The Joint Memorandum Circular (2025) also highlights efforts to integrate various assistance types to improve responsiveness and comprehensiveness in social protection. Collectively, these studies suggest that direct financial and crisis assistance programs tend to have more immediate and tangible effects on poverty reduction, while employment-based interventions like TUPAD contribute more modestly and may benefit from structural reassessments to improve long-term outcomes. Policymakers are thus encouraged to balance and strengthen these programs by enhancing the responsiveness of crisis aid, improving the targeting and follow-up of financial assistance, and reassessing the duration and support services linked to employment programs to maximize overall poverty alleviation impact.

Table 3
Regression Analysis of three programs has the most perceived impact on the poverty status of the respondents

<i>Model Coefficients - Poverty Alleviation</i>				
<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	<i>0.120</i>	<i>0.282</i>	<i>0.425</i>	<i>0.672</i>
<i>TUPAD</i>	<i>0.191</i>	<i>0.144</i>	<i>1.327</i>	<i>0.188</i>
<i>AKAP</i>	<i>0.322</i>	<i>0.157</i>	<i>2.052</i>	<i>0.043</i>
<i>AICS</i>	<i>0.424</i>	<i>0.109</i>	<i>3.876</i>	<i><.001</i>
<i>Note: Adjusted R²=0.58</i>			<i>p= 0.000</i>	

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that beneficiaries generally agree with the implementation of the TUPAD, AKAP, and AICS programs, with TUPAD receiving the highest evaluation due to its provision of temporary employment that directly addresses income needs. However, all programs remain within the “Agree” range, signalling adequate performance but a need for improvement in delivery, responsiveness, and support services. Regarding the extent of poverty alleviation, the results show that the respondents experienced notable improvements in economic stability, which was rated highest. In contrast, social well-being, psychological well-being, and long-term sustainability showed moderate gains. This implies that the assistance provided has effectively supported short-term financial relief, but its long-term transformative impact on overall well-being and resilience remains limited. Furthermore, regression analysis revealed that AICS had the strongest and most statistically significant influence on the poverty status of the beneficiaries, followed by AKAP. At the same time, TUPAD showed no significant effect, despite its popularity. These findings underscore the perceived value of direct financial and crisis-based assistance over short-term employment schemes, suggesting the importance of targeting and relevance in program design.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness of material assistance programs in alleviating poverty:

1. **For Policymakers** – Strengthen the design and implementation of AICS and AKAP by increasing budget allocations, improving turnaround time, and ensuring transparency to further maximize their immediate impact on vulnerable families.
2. **For Program Implementers** – Revisit and refine TUPAD’s structure by extending the duration of employment, aligning it with skills development, and ensuring post-program livelihood opportunities to enhance its long-term effectiveness.
3. **For Local Government Units (LGUs)** – Establish localized monitoring and feedback mechanisms to assess the actual needs and satisfaction levels of program beneficiaries, ensuring responsiveness to unique community contexts.
4. **For Social Welfare Agencies** – Integrate **holistic support services**—including mental health care, family counselling, and community development activities—into existing assistance programs to address the broader dimensions of poverty.
5. **For Future Researchers** – Explore the **long-term outcomes** of these material assistance programs through longitudinal studies, and consider qualitative approaches to capture deeper insights into beneficiary experiences and well-being.

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