



The fish folks of southern Cebu: Fishing for survival

Lloyd Matthew C Derasin¹, Marvin S Canque², Lloyd Vincent C Derasin³

¹ Lecturer, Graduate Studies, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines

² Instructor, Research Coordinator, Cebu Technological University - Naga Campus, Naga City, Philippines

³ Instructor, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines

Abstract

The study explored the lived experiences of fishermen in the southern province of Cebu. The study used the phenomenological method. The informants of the study were the ten fishermen residing in the different parts of Cebu Province which were selected using the purposive sampling method. The researcher was the main Research Instrument and data was gathered using the interview method and observation. The themes of the study were (1) poverty (2) money matters, (3) lop-sided income, (4) resiliency, (5) optimism, (6) education, (7) competing with big fishing vessels, (8) lack of support from the government and (9) Vulnerability, moreover the study has yielded that fishing is one of the poorest sector of the community and for years they are victims of the lack of a concrete government program to alleviate their poverty. However, they have a strong belief that by letting their children finish their school, their poverty will be alleviated.

Keywords: fish folks, phenomenological, poverty

1. Introduction

The Philippines is an archipelago positioned in the West Pacific Region, an area renowned for its marine biodiversity. It is composed of more than seven thousand islands which makes the Philippine economy favorable for the fishing industry. Moreover, the country has one the most overflowing and diverse water ecosystems in the world. The waters of the Philippines contain important marine habitats – coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove forests and the deep seas. Since the early days of the country, fishing has been one of the leading sources of income of its people.

The country's population is approximately a hundred million with an annual growth rate of more than two percent. Furthermore, it has two-thirds of its municipalities and many large cities are located in the coastline areas, which implies that more than half of the population resides in these areas. Likewise, Quicho, Mislang and Batay-an (1999) describe that almost a million are people involved in the fishing industry, which is a big percent of the country's labor force. A majority of these people are involved in municipal fisheries. Some studies have illustrated that there may be an even higher number of people dependent on municipal fisheries. The National Statistics Office reported that there are 500,000 families whose main source of income is fishing, this would imply that there are millions of people dependent on fishing. Millions of Filipinos depend on marine resources for survival. But the very seas that provide them with income and maintenance are under grave danger. Important delicate marine ecosystems around the country are being damaged at a distressing rate. Toxic chemical pollution from industries, human sewage and plastic garbage from cities suffocate what were once unspoiled waters. Destructive fishing activities such as dynamite fishing and muro-ami, bottom trawling and overfishing are exhausting our sea's resources without giving it time to recuperate.

During the past few decades there was a weakening on the small scale fishing industry of the different municipalities.

The revenues of these small scale fishermen are exceedingly striped by big scale commercial fishing businesses. Moreover, there is also an overexploitation of coastal areas which shows that there is always a dire need to control fishing programs of the government. The lifestyle of the Fishermen in the Philippines is trademarked with extreme poverty, making below the standard pay. Some of them could no longer afford a decent meal for their families and even send their children to school.

Poverty has been very rampant all over the country and is felt by majority of its citizen. It has become a culture for these impoverish fisher folks of this country. Poverty passed down from generation to generation without having a chance to have a better life.

It is the purpose of this study to describe the lived experiences of fishermen in the south of Cebu province, outline their problems, challenges and circumstances by describing their lived experiences the researchers hoped to recommend a proposal that would promote the well-being of these people. It is along with these views and opinions that the researcher is keen in undertaking this research study. Being passionate researchers by nature, the researchers would like to fulfill the true idea in pursuing any research study which is to develop and improve the lives people regardless of their economic status.

2. Methods and Materials

Research Design

This study is primarily a qualitative phenomenological research design based on individual in-depth interviews to fishermen hailing from the southern provinces of Cebu. The purpose of this study was exploring the lived- experiences of fishermen and described their problems and challenges.

Ethical Consideration

This research study is credited to the ethical considerations strengthened by the Belmont Report in 1974 which evaluate

the three rudimentary ethical principles important to researches involving human subjects which are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

The belief of Respect for Person consists of at least two ethical beliefs. First, individuals should be treated as independent agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are eligible to protection. In the study, the participants may or may not answer the queries according to their preference that is why there are no guidelines on how much they should answer; they are given the freedom to deal with the questions asked. Furthermore, there are no students or children involved since the main participants are the fisher folks of the southern province of Cebu and their significant others.

An informed consent was provided to the informants containing the purpose of the study, the potential risk and benefits of the study, contact persons in cases of emergency, the extent of how the data will be kept in confidential and a statement stating that the respondent participated in the study voluntarily.

Informants

The informants of the study are the 10 male fishermen of the south of Cebu province. Saturation of data was the basis in determining the number of respondents of the study. Triangulation of data was also applied to gather credible and reliable data.

Sampling Design

Being a qualitative research, the researcher will have utilized the non-probability sampling method specifically the purposive sampling design. Informants must be of legal age and must be a fisher man in the southern province of Cebu for more than Five (5) years.

Gathering of Data

Before interview was conducted targeted informants received a consent form and were it was signed and approved by the informants, the researcher scheduled an interview with each of the informants. All interviews done were scheduled by the researcher and it was in a private quiet area of the informant's house or a place that is convenient to the informant. Individual in-depth interviews were made to 10 informants. At this point, the researcher advised the informants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview. The interviews were recorded and each interview lasted for an hour on average. Moreover, after the completion of the interviews, it was transcribed word for word into Cebuano dialect and then translated into English. Furthermore, confidentiality of the informants was maintained throughout the study by categorizing them with fabricated names so that only the researcher was able to identify the informants.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was done through the following steps: first is the detailed reading and interpreting of transcripts to identify the initial themes; second is the defining and redefining of the themes codes; third is modifying of the themes through matching and differentiating and verbalizing themes as the expression of the concealed content of the transcript.

3. Results

During analysis nine (9) themes emerged in the study namely; (1) poverty (2) money matters, (3) lop-sided income, (4) determination, (5) optimism, (6) education, (7) competing with big fishing vessels and (8) lack of support from the government and (9) vulnerability

Theme 1 Poverty

The first theme that arose in the study is poverty. The informants have verbalized that they do not have enough income to meet their basic and personal needs.

"pobre intawn kay mi. usahay di ka igo ang among kita para ipalit sa among kinahanglanun matag adlaw" – informant 1
Moreover, one of the informants had voiced out that because their income is too low, there family is luck to eat three times a day

"Ang akung kita gamay ra gyud, swerte na kaayo nga maka kaun mi katulo sa us aka adlaw" – informant 4

Theme 2 money matters

The second theme of the study is money matters. The informants have emphasized the important of earning money. One of the informants verbalized that being a fisherman it is hard to earn money to provide for the needs of the family.

"lisud ang kwarta kung mangisda, usahay naa, usahay wa gyud, paet lagi ni maglisud ta ug palit sa kinahnglanun sa pamilya" Informant 3

Furthermore, another informant had said that sometime it is hard to bare seeing his child going to school without her allowance.

"sakit sa dughan usahay nga makit an nimo imung bata musud sa eskuylahan nga way bawn" – informant 5

Theme 3 Lop sided income

The third theme of the study is the lop-sided income, which is about the unpredictability of the income of the fishermen. One of the informants noted that sometimes there is good money to be earned in fishing but other times less.

"usahay dako ug kita nya ushay gamay rapud" – informant 8

Another informant noted that their income in fishing is not stable that is why his wife is running a "sari - sari" store business.

"dili gyud stable among kita aning pangisda, maong akung asawa naninida nlang ani among gamay nga tindahan" – informant 7

Theme 4 resiliency

The fourth theme of the study is resiliency, which describes the informants' firm resolve to earn a living for their family. One of the informants verbalized that even though fishing is hard, he has to do it for his family.

"lisud gyud ang pangisda, pero maninguha gyud kug maayo para ikabuhu sa akung pamilya" – informant 3

Another informant expressed that he is working so hard to provide for his children's needs"

"maninguha gyud kug maayo kay para kapalit sa mga kinahanglanun sa akung mga bata" informant 5

Theme 5 Optimism

The fifth theme of the study is optimism, this entails the informant's hopefulness and confidence about their future.

One of the informants had said that he works hard every day so he could put his children to school, and hoping someday that they could have a better life than he has.

“mo kayud gyud ko ug maayo para akung mga bata makahuman ug skwela para naa silay nindut nga kaugmaun”
– informant 6

Another informant noted that if his children will be able to finish schooling and become professionals, then they will be able to help him.

“Kung makahuman ug skwela akung mga bata nya ma propesyonal na sila, aw makatabang naman sila namu nya”
_informant 1

Theme 6 Education

The sixth theme of the Study is education, this theme entails how the informants value education. One of the informants noted that he is regretful for dropping out in his education.

“nagbasul kayo ko nganung nagbinuang ko sauna sa klase, nagpadalas mga classmate nga way mga klaro” -informant 10
Another informant explained that although he did not finish his education, he wants his children to finish theirs so that they will be able to have a good future.

“ako man ko kahuman ug eskwela maong gusto gyud ko makahuman ug eskwela ang akung mga anak para nindut ilang kaugmaun – informant 4

Theme 7 Competing with big fishing vessels

The seventh theme of the study is competing with big fishing

vessels. This theme implies that the participants are difficulty in having a good catch because of big fishing vessels. One of the informant verbalize that the big fishing boats from can sardines companies catches a lot of fish, living them too few.
“kanang mga dagkong barko ba sa sardinas kay hutdun ug kuha, gamay nalang ibilin nig panagat namu. – Informant 4

Theme 8 lack of support from the government.

The last theme of the study is the lack of support from the government. This theme implies the lack of program implemented by the government to help the participants. One of the respondent described that the government in not reliable, they have forgotten about them.

“Ang gobyerno di kasiligan, kalimtan lang intawn ming mga mananagat” – informant 8

Another informant expressed that there is no program by the government to help address the needs of poor people like him”

“wa may programa ang gobyerno nga mutabang naming mga kabus” – informant 7

Theme 9 Vulnerability

The ninth theme of the study is the is vulnerability. This implies susceptibility of the informants to mistreatments. One of the informants said that being poor, he has experienced a lot of mistreatment from others.

“kay pobre man ta, dali rakay ta daug daugun ta sa isig ka taw” –informant 6.

Another informant noted that they are treated unfairly because they are poor.

“Abi pobre man, mubo ilang pagtan aw nimu, lahi ilang tartar naming MGA pobre” – Informant 2

Framework of the themes of the study

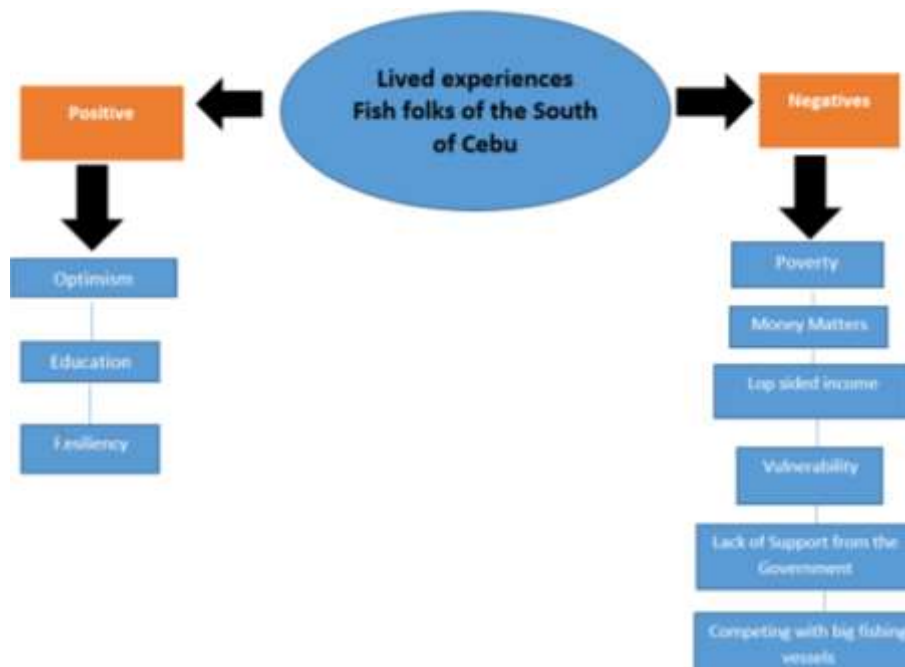


Fig 1

4. Discussion

The study reveals lifestyle drench in poverty of the fisher folks of the south of Cebu. Poverty is a circumstance of not having adequate earnings to meet the fundamental needs like food, clothing, and shelter.

pobre intawn kay mi. usahay di ka igo ang among kita para ipalit sa among kinahanglanun matag adlaw” – informant 1
Poverty and inequity have been persistent challenges in the Philippines and have again come to the forefront in the wake of the current worldwide financial crisis which includes the

of rising food, fuel, and commodity prices. Moreover, Poverty majority resides as a rural occurrence though urban poverty is on the rise. The majority of the underprivileged are still found in rural places and are mostly affiliated in the agricultural division and they are mostly farmers and fishers. (ADB, 2015).

According to the world health organization (WHO), the poor have the worse health condition and higher death percentage. They have higher levels of illness and disease, more limited contact to health care and social security services, and gender inequality that further takes its toll in the health of poor women and girls. For poor people especially, health is also a crucially important economic asset. Their livelihoods depend on it. When a poor or socially vulnerable person becomes ill, the whole household can become trapped in a downhill curved of lost income and high health care costs.

“Kung masakit mi, mo adtu mis ospital pa huwat huwaton mi, nya Kung nay tambal ipapalit, gamay ra among ma palit, kay di ka igo ang among kwarta” – informant 4

The findings of the study evidently revealed the importance of the financial aspect as shown in the second and third themes which is money matters and lop sided income. Poverty in the family threatens the mental health and income efficiency especially on the children (Nadeau, Lecompte, Johnson-Lafleur, Pontbriand and Rousseau, 2018).

Having a lopsided income is also a profound phenomenon for the fisher folks. The unpredictability of their income due to different reasons has been detrimental for them. According to the Asian Development Bank (2015) unfair income dispersal and its persistence over the years is another cause of poverty in the Philippines.

“dili gyud stable among kita aning pangisda, maong akung asawa naninida nlang ani among gamay nga tindahan” – informant 7

A feeling of vulnerability is also being experience by the informants because of being poor, the fisher folks are vulnerable to abuses and mistreatments.

abi pobre man, mubo ilang pagtan aw nimu, lahi ilang tartar namung mga pobre” – informant 2

Dercon (2005) ^[2] emphasizes that vulnerability can even be ground for poverty. In addition, Narayan *et al.* (1999) ^[5] described that the antagonistic psychosomatic influence of transferring their way through the exploitation and ill-mannered treatment that is rampant in the government can leave poor respondents feeling powerless, voiceless and excluded from state services to which they are entitled *“Ang gobyerno di kasiligan, kalimtan lang intawn ming mga mananagat”* – informant 8

The poor are challenged with numerous risks and for the prevalence of poverty to be diminish, the government must convey an operational social protection system (ADB, 2015). Another problem found in the study is that the small scale fisher folks of the south of Cebu are forced to compete with other larger commercial fishing vessels

“kanang mga dagkong barko ba sa sardinas kay hutdun ug kuha, gamay nalang ibilin nig panagat namu. – Informant 4 Juntarashote and Chuenpakdee (1991) ^[3] inferred that it is usually comprehended that the notion of small-scale fishery is the area in need of assistance from government, as fishermen who engage in this type of fishing are largely

poor.in addition, Paynes (2000) explained that small scale fishing is often one of the few livelihoods exposed to the landless and frequently becomes the default employment.

Positive themes have also emerged in the study as implied by the themes on optimism, resiliency and education.

The virtue of optimism was exhibited by the informants of the study as shown by their hopefulness and confidence about their future even on the midst of their poverty.

“Kung makahuman ug skwela akung mga bata nya ma propesyonal na sila, aw makatabang naman sila namu nya” – informant 1

Scheier and Carver (1985) ^[6] explained that optimism effects individuals to come into terms with the present, past and future in life. Optimistic people are positive about events in life. Positive associations have been found between optimism and well-being. Optimistic folks tend to have some more protective outlooks and are more resilient to stress.

Moreover, the informants of the study also have exhibited resiliency in facing the challenges they are currently experienced.

“lisud gyud ang pangisda, pero maninguha gyud kug maayo para ikabuhu sa akung pamilya” – informant 3

Walsh (2006) noted that impoverished families are resilient and has a high resolve to achieve success. They serve as cradles of motivation to other families. Resiliency refers to a family’s abilities to accomplish specific goals despite the demands and risks associated with living in poverty.

And lastly the informants had exhibited the value of education as seen by their persistence in letting their children finish their schooling as they believe it will alleviate them from poverty.

Tilak (1994) ^[7] explained the occurrence of income poverty is the largest among the illiterate households, and it declines consistently by increasing levels of education in developing countries. This implied that the higher the level of education of the population, the lower the division of poor people in the total population, as education conveys knowledge and skills that are connected with higher wages.

5. Conclusion

The fishing sector is one of the poorest sector of our country, they are a victim of the lack of programs from the government, although they have a strong resolve and optimistic that by letting their children finished their education, they can help them be alleviate from poverty.

6. References

1. Asian Development Bank. Poverty in the Philippines: Causes, Constraints and Opportunities. Asian Development Bank, 2015.
2. Dercon S. Vulnerability: A Micro Perspective, Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Development Economics, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 23-24, 2005.
3. Juntarashote K, Chuenpakdee R. In JD. Durand J. Lemoalle, & J. Weber (Eds.), Research and small-scale fisheries. Paris: Ifremer/OR-Stom, 1991.
4. Nadeau L, Lecompte V, Johnson-Lafleur J, Pontbriand A, Rousseau C. Collaborative youth mental health service users, immigration, poverty, and family environment. Child and adolescent mental health. 2018; 23(2):92-98.
5. Narayan D, Patel R, Schafft K, Rademacher A, Koch-

- Schulte S. Can anyone hear us? Voices from 47 countries. Washington, DC: World Bank, Poverty Group, PREM, 1999.
6. Scheier MF, Carver CS. The Self-Consciousness Scale: A Revised Version for Use with General Populations 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 1985; 15(8):687-699.
 7. Tilak JB. Education for development in Asia. Sage Publications, 1994.
 8. Walsh F. Strengthening family resilience (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford, 2006.