

## **Household Economics in the context of Women Contribution in Improving Family Income: The Case of the Fishing Villages in the Philippines**

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### **Abstract**

The paper delves with the discussion on the significant contribution of women fishers in augmenting family or household income in the fishing villages of Cortes, *Surigao* del Sur in the Philippines. It illustrated the significant contribution of the latter in improving and sustaining household or family income. Gender and development implications were illustrated in the study. The study used an ethnographic method or qualitative interview with the assistant of seven (7) key informants using a feminist model. Furthermore informed consent was secured from the said key informants.

**Keywords:** Women, , Livings, Standard, Gender, fishing, Communities

## Introduction/Rationale

The Philippines is an archipelagic country for this reason fishing is a dominant occupation. It is then one of its drivers for economic activity and growth. Moreover, fishing had always been considered “male” job or occupation. Albeit of the massive sociocultural changes. It has always been a male-dominated domain. The study revealed the changing norm in the seascape or terrain of the fishing sector in Cortes, *Surigao del Sur*. Where the women indulged in fishing in order to augment the family income. Hardship in life have motivated these women to directly indulge in fishing. So, in this end have greatly changed the used to be a “male” dominated area. Indulging in fishing does not only improved the household income but “improved” the role of the “mother” as income provider. Hence, the study.

This is an address to the fewer studies concerning the contribution of women in the near shore or coastal fishery sector. Thus, the present endeavor presents a construct of the latter role in augmenting family income and emancipates the traditional role of rural Filipino women as a homemaker or plain housewife. Subsequently, the paper ventured in its discussion using the emancipator paradigm which is akin or similar to liberation theology or egalitarian construct and in some extent aimed for equality of gender roles.

Indulging in fishing by the key informants does not only provides additional family income but somehow emancipates them from the traditional role as homemaker. In this view made them more productive and improves their psychosocial well-being and self esteem.

Fishery sector in the Philippines had always been considered a “masculine” in its portrait. Moreover, with the desire of the women in site to help their husbands. In so doing they have taken the role with the end of making economic needs answered through their involvement in fishing.

Women involvement in the fishery sector has several constraints such: limitation of their physical strengths limit them from joining in the open sea or deep-sea fishing. Cultural upbringing of the community that fishing is used to be a male dominated trade. Taking good care of the family while indulging in fishing had always been a strong motivation of these women. Hence, this study is presented to have the portrait of women involvement in the fishing sector in a coastal town of Cortes *Surigao del Sur* province of the Philippines.

Women contribution in the fishery sector had not been properly appreciated. Numerous reasons can be deduced from this such: the common perception in the fishery sector that the traditional role of women/wives as homemaker. Others, the common assumptions that fishing is men's domain. The risk associated of the job as fisherwomen are enormous due to the storms it encountered which is common in the sites as coastal frontier. Made the women more steadfast in the job. Consequently, it made them more appreciative in fishing as an occupation.

Due the desire of the women to contribute to household income indulging in fishing was a necessity. Moreover, adjusting to this job means or entails a lot of adjustments and coping mechanism in the part of women. For this reason the study was undertaken for a holistic construct of the role of women in the fishery sector.

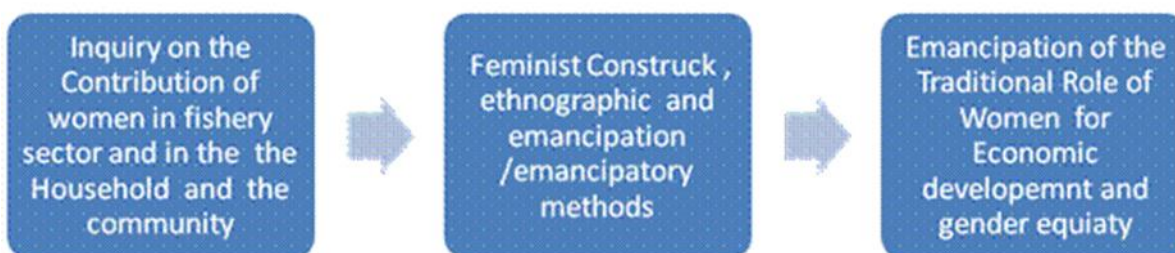
**The Research Inquiry:**

The following are the objectives of the study.

- Assess the contributions of women fisher's in improving household income;
- Provide recommendation for improving the earning differentials of the women in the coastal fishery sector;
- Determine the development interventions introduced by the varied government agencies to the women in the fishery sector;
- Determine the constraints of the women in the fishing trade;
- Determine the coping mechanism of women in the trade.

**Materials and Methods;**

The study used feminist , ethnographic methods and emancipation approaches . The three (3) methods were more or less complimentary in this inquiry. The method was aided by ethnographic or qualitative interview, site observation and fieldwork employing field diary in the narratives. The study used the thoughts of Babbie (2002) concerning the feminist method.



**Figure Number 1. The Research Model.**

**Setting:**

Cortes, a coastal town in *Surigao* del Sur of the Philippines. Besides fishing, farming is the second source of income. A scenic and a town where ecological protection goes hand in hand with its quest for sustainable development. A town with hospitable and industrious residents.



**Figure Number 2. A woman fisher who is active in community work.**

**Theoretical Frameworks:**

The following theories in sociology were reviewed by the researcher as cited by Tomaquin and Malong (2017):

- **Humanism.** Any system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/humanism>).
- **Symbolic Interactions.** Henslin ( 2005) discussed it as a Theoretical Perspective in which society is viewed as composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop their views of the world and communicate with one another ( Henslin, 2005).
- **Functional Analysis.** Henslin (2005) discussed it as a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of various parts, each with a function that, when fulfilled, contributes to society's equilibrium, also known as functionalism (Henslin, 2005).
- **Social Constructionist.** Sociologist argued that apparently natural or innate features of life are often sustained by social processes that vary historically and culturally (Brym and Lie, 2010).
- **Utilitarianism.** A doctrine that the useful is the good and that the determining consideration of right conduct should be the usefulness of its consequences. Specifically: a theory that the aim of action should be the largest possible balance of pleasure over pain or the greatest happiness of the greatest number (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/utilitarianism>).
- Emancipator research is a research perspective of producing knowledge that can be of benefit to disadvantaged people. It is an umbrella term that can include many streams of critical theory based research such as feminist, disability, race and gender theory([https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=emancipatory+paradigm&rlz=1C1GIGM\\_enPH755PH755&oq=emancipatory+paradigm&aqs=chrome.69i57.7064j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.](https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=emancipatory+paradigm&rlz=1C1GIGM_enPH755PH755&oq=emancipatory+paradigm&aqs=chrome.69i57.7064j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.))



**Figure Number 3. On-site Observation.**

### **Definition of Terms.**

The following term are hereby defined in this study.

1. "Bangsud". Fish cage.
2. BLGU. The Barangay local government unit. The smallest political subdivision of the Philippines.
3. "Tabo". Village Market in the township of Cortes.
4. Fish Sanctuary. A Marine area protected from coastal fishing by town ordinance or national legislation.
5. "Pantawid or 4 "P's". Livelihood intervention Program in the Philippines in fighting or lowering the poverty condition. It is also called conditional cash transfer.

6. " Pahumay". A form of business in the rural areas of *Surigao del Sur* where the payment usually in form of " Palay" ( rice).
7. " Purok" . A cluster of households organized into association but not usually a SEC registered. A quasi-political and community unit. It is under the jurisdiction BLGU.

### Assumptions

It was assumed in this study that the female fishers have contributed to the increase household income. On the other hand there were limitations and challenges encountered as female fishers .

### Results and Discussion

- 1) The contribution of female fishers includes the following:
  - a) Assisting the husband in the preparation of fishing implements;
  - b) Selling the fish harvest;
  - c) Securing the capital for fishing , indulging also in farming and making sure that the registration in the "Pantawid" (Conditional Cash Transfer from DSWD or the Department of Social Welfare and Development) is updated;
  - d) Preparation for the food to be used in fishing expedition.
  - e) Making salted fish, fish drying, taking good care of the " bungsud";
  - f) Taking good care of the sea weed culture;
  - g) Indulging in " Pahumay " business;
  - h) Availing assistance from NGP (National Greening program) of DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) in the coastal National Greening Program;
  - i) Including also the (SLP) Sustainable Livelihood Program for women sponsored by DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development);
  - j) Taking good care of the fishing nets;
- 2) K.Selling the fish harvest in the community and to the market and directly joining the fishing expedition;
  - a) The women ( wives or fisherwomen ) also actively involved in the management of fish sanctuary and mangrove conservation as volunteers but with a modest honorarium form the BLGU;
  - b) Likewise they are active in fisher folk cooperative ;
  - c) The three (3) female fishers also operate a small "sari-sari" store. This supplements the family income;
  - d) The assistance from DSWD in the SLP (Sustainable Livelihood Project) also contributed to increasing the earning differentials of women fishers;
  - e) Joining the Township of Cortes "Tabo "as a vendor also augment the income of female fishers;
  - f) The National Greening Program (NGP) assistance of DENR has greatly contributed to the income of women fishers;



**Figure Number 4. The fish cage on the site.**

- 1) R. The assistance of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) for the women fishers/coconut farmers had contributed to the increase in their income;
- 2) S. Besides on fishing, the married women respondents were also coconut farmers;
- 3) T. Two (2) of the women fishers indulged in “arawan” (loan to be paid daily) to augment their income;
- 4) U. The varied livelihood assistance received by the female fishers in the MLGU of Cortes also helps augment their income;
- 5) V. These economic endeavors of women fishers had greatly contributed to their morale not just a plain housewife but into a productive partner in the household. Hence, this is the changing norm in the terrain of the household economy in the site;
- 6) W. Other sources of income of the key informants include operating a fish cage (*bungsud*), selling seaweeds.
- 7) The following proposed measures/ recommendations are vital in improving the income of the women fishers :
  - a) The fishers cooperative shall venture into income generating activities to improve its portfolio. In that end will yield higher dividend in so doing beneficial to the members such the women fishers;
  - b) Trained the female fishers in fish canning . This can be a potential livelihood for them;
  - c) "Guso" ( seaweed ) production be improved by securing the assistance from BFAR;
  - d) Hence, the Fish Sanctuaries where the women fishers are members are SEC registered associations. Which means, has a legal personality. It is suggested that they can secure funding from foreign funding institutions. This propose intervention will be beneficial to the women fishers who are members in the fish sanctuaries;
  - e) Livelihood training from TESDA be secured in the likes of baking and pastries, tailoring for these has a huge potential in improving their income;
- 8) Among the livelihood interventions introduced in the coastal area of Cortes are: Pantawid ( 4 P's), SLP, NGP, Livelihood assistance from PCA and MLGU of Cortes. It greatly helped increase the women fishers income differentials;
- 9) The constraints in fishing encountered by women fishers were:
  - a) Lack of capital;
  - b) Climate condition in Surigao del Sur ( frequent occurrence of rainy season);
  - c) Dwindling fish harvest from the sea due to climate change;
  - d) Their "Guso" sea weed culture encountered pest which lowered sea weed production.
- 10) The following are the coping mechanism of the women fishers:
  - a) Sing along by " vedeo 3";
  - b) Indulging in Volley ball;

- c) Indulging in volunteer work in the "purok "and in the fish sanctuaries.
- d) Going to church every Sunday.



Figure 5. In the site with the help of research enumerators.

### Reflective Conclusions:

The women fishers had greatly contributed to the household income due to the varied economic activities. They had undertaken like: operation of “sari-sari” store, indulging in farming, selling the fish harvest, attending a livelihood sponsored activity of the different movement or government instrumentality and availing it.

The women fishers were indeed drivers in increasing the family or household income. Moreover, this shows the creativity of the women fishers in making both ends just contribute to the family income. Hence, they are economically productive. This does not only contributed to their morale but recognizes them as drivers in economic contribution in the household and the community level.

### Recommendation:

In light of the findings the following recommendations are formulated:

- The women fishers should update their livelihood skills by availing the assistance from TESDA;
- The women fishers may avail livelihood assistance from foreign NGO's to augment their income;
- More engagement with different government national agencies in the likes of DA, DTI in order to assist in livelihood training;
- The continuation of MLGU of Cortes in its varied livelihood programs for the women sector be continued or sustained .

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