



PLIGHT OF FISHERFOLKS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN ANTONIO, ZAMBALES

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Abstract: This research study focuses on the plight of fisherfolks in the Municipality of San Antonio, Zambales. It employs a phenomenological qualitative research design to investigate the challenges faced by fisherfolks and explore potential solutions. The study's objectives include determining the profile of fisherfolks, narrating their difficulties during the fiscal year 2020-2023, assessing the support programs provided by the local government unit, proposing measures to address prevailing problems, and identifying the implications of the study to public administration.

Keywords: (Plight of Fisherfolks, San Antonio, Zambales, Public Administration, Local Government Unit)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

The Philippines as an archipelagic country with vast oceans, sea, and inland waters greatly depends on its maritime industry. As a maritime nation with 7,641 islands and 36,289 kilometers of coastline, our nation is heavily dependent on a healthy coastline ecosystem. Coral reefs, mangroves, shorelines, and a range of marine species are just a handful of the naturally abundant and economically essential coastal resources that the Philippine archipelago is bestowed with. For centuries, the nation's coastal regions and oceans have provided inhabitants with a means of subsistence. According to a Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) report, municipal fisheries have increased their contribution to the value of fish output in the Philippines, bringing in more than P100 million in 2019. The lives and means of support of the local fishermen are, however, in growing danger. This is a result of, among other things, depleting fish stocks and a general drop in catch per unit effort brought on by overfishing, illicit fishing methods, and several reclamation projects across the country.

The country has a population of roughly 103 million people in 2017, and the average per capita consumption of fish and fishery products was 40 kg per year, or 109 grams per day, with a 12.8% share of total intake coming from these sources. With nearly 1.6 million people employed in the fisheries sector, 85% of whom came from municipal fisheries and 1% from commercial fisheries, and 14% working in aquaculture, the fishing industry contributed 1.5% and 1.7% at current and constant prices, respectively, to the country's gross domestic products (GDP) in 2015. (Lamarca, 2017). The Philippine economy is heavily dependent on fishing, particularly for coastal towns living along the nation's fifth-longest (36,289 km) coastline, which employs 1.5 million people and generates PHP 196 billion in GDP. A territorial dispute with China threatens 20% of this, which comes from the WPS (Garcia, 2021). More than five million Filipinos make a living from fishing, while millions more rely on it for a food source.

San Antonio, Zambales a second-class municipality is one of the 14 municipalities in the province of Zambales. It has a total land area of 188 square kilometers which constitutes 5% of the total land area of Zambales. It has a population of 37,450, based from the PSA report as of 2021. The municipality has the coast

facing the West Philippine Sea three of these barangays namely Pundaquit, San Miguel, and San Nicolas are the adjacent to each other and shares common border near the coast and facing the controversial West Philippine Sea. These three barangays have a total population of 10,778 or a total 29% population percentage for the town of San Antonio. Local resident's livelihood aside from tourism and agriculture is fishing in the coastal areas of San Antonio up to the Bajo Masinloc wherein other foreign countries to include Chinese fishermen are thriving in the rich marine and aquatic resources found in the West Philippine Sea.

The research is intended to use the findings the study to find out the current status of the fisherfolks and the challenges the local fisherfolks of San Antonio, Zambales during the fiscal year 2022-2023. The research aimed to use the findings of this study to serve as a means to local leaders to further develop or enhance their assistance to depressed communities. Hence, this study focused on highlighting more on the conditions of the fisherfolks of San Antonio, Zambales. It sought to answer what difficulties and problems the fisherfolks encountered and what supports are being given to them by the Local Government Unit.

1. 2 Statement of Objectives

The study aimed to analyze the plight of fisherfolks in the Municipality of San Antonio, Zambales. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To determine the profile of the fisherfolks in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Quantity of Catch
 - 1.3 Civil Status
 - 1.4 Number of Children
 - 1.5 Equipment / Tools
 - 1.6 Other Means of Income
 - 1.7 Health Status
2. To determine the program offered to fishermen by the local government of SAZ.
3. To propose the measures to address the problems encountered by the fisherfolks.
4. To identify the implications of the study to Public Administration.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2. 1 Population and Sample

The research conducted was qualitative in nature, it administered the criterion purposeful sampling under the purposive sampling method. Since the researcher intended to delve into the plight of the fisherfolks of San Antonio, Zambales, an information-rich phenomena, criterion purposeful sampling was the most appropriate method of getting participants in terms of the depth of the information that would be yielded. Furthermore, in qualitative research, deliberate sampling is frequently employed to find and choose cases with plenty of relevant information on the topic under study. Although there are other deliberate sampling techniques, implementation research seems to use criterion sampling the most frequently. Alchemer (n.d.) described Purposive sampling, as sometimes referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling where researchers choose participants for their surveys by using their own judgment.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers use their own discretion to choose study participants in accordance with pre-established criteria (Jordan, 2021). According to the requirements of the study, a certain criterion is used to select participants using the criterion intentional sampling technique. The researcher was able to concentrate on the target group and collect the most important data necessary for the study's success using this non-probability sampling technique.

Non-probability sampling known as convenience sampling was utilized in this study, according to Stratton (2021) this sampling method is frequently employed and chooses cases or people that are nearby. The motivation of participants who took part in the research affects convenience sampling in qualitative research. This introduced bias due to motivation into the research. The urge to reinforce one's particular ideas, voice a dissatisfied point of view, or show interest in the research issue can all serve as motivation for participation. In this particularly study, the fisherfolks of San Antonio, Zambales were conveniently chosen.

Fishermen participants were selected from the residents of Barangay San Miguel in San Antonio, Zambales with the following criteria: First, a resident in the Barangay for at least 2 years; primary livelihood is fishing; must be at least 20 years of age.

2.2 Data and Sources of Data

The researcher utilized two instruments in gathering data, namely: (1) Interview/interview guide and (2) documentary analysis. However, majority of the instrument used was the Interview/interview guide via video or face to face to gather the information needed.

Focused Group Discussion. The focus group approach according to Gondumugula and Gondumugula (2020) is a qualitative way to gather data on the chosen topic with an organized and concentrated discussion in a small group of people. The quality of data gained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is heavily dependent on suitable design and facilitation. Focus groups are particularly helpful as a supplement to other data collection techniques since they may deliver in-depth information in a reasonably quick amount of time.

Documentary Analysis. The researcher obtained necessary copies of the needed documents in completion of this study, such as Fisheries Laws and Local Government Code.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The study aimed to analyze the plight of Fisherfolks in the Municipality of San Antonio, Zambales. Out of the 14 barangays of San Antonio, three barangays namely: Nicolas, San Miguel, and Pundaquit covered by the study.

The researcher conducted a case study on the fisherfolks of these barangays in order to describe and understand their current condition which includes the prevailing problems in their communities.

The input from the participants in San Antonio, Zambales was utilized to verify or validate what support is being extended by the local government to the local fishermen in their area of responsibility.

Through this, measures and recommendations were provided for the improvement of the delivery of basic support of the national government through their LGU.

The findings of this study were instrumental in the further improvement of the academic field of Public Administration.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 Profile of the Participants

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Participants Profile (N=20)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
30 years old and below	5	25.0
31 - 40 years old	3	15.0
41 - 50 years old	3	15.0
51 years old and above	9	45.0
Civil Status		
Single	5	25.0
Married	15	75.0
Number of Children		
At most 1 child	7	35.0
2 - 3 children	6	30.0
4 - 5 children	7	35.0
Health Status		
Healthy	20	100.0
Number of times Fishing		
Depends	20	100.0
Amounts of Fish Catch		
Depends	20	100.0
Boat Owner		
Yes	6	30.0
No	14	70.0
Tools for Fishing		
All Materials/Tools	3	15.0
Lambat	7	35.0
Kawil	10	50.0
Other Livelihood		
None	5	25.0

Pawicare	2	10.0
Construction	13	65.0

As a result of the data gathering, the research was able to get the five emergent themes namely:

3.1 "Environmental Challenges" referred to the different natural occurrence which affected the fisherfolks daily lives and income. The Philippines is prone to typhoons and other extreme weather events. Fishermen have faced challenges due to changes in weather patterns, which can affect fishing conditions and safety at sea. They have also experienced the impacts of coral bleaching and dwindling fish stocks caused by warming ocean temperatures.

3.2 "Hostile Waters" referred to the territorial dispute involving China. South China Sea has been a subject of territorial disputes involving several countries, including the Philippines and China. Fishermen operating in this area may have experienced tensions arising from territorial claims and occasional encounters with foreign vessels or coast guard units.

3.3 "Depleted Fish Stocks" Overfishing and destructive fishing practices lead to the depletion of fish stocks, making it harder for fishermen to catch an adequate number of fish. This challenge was compounded by illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, which can further strain fish populations and undermine the efforts of responsible fishermen. This also be resulted from the fisherfolks lack of knowledge, skills and resources to practice proper and legal fishing within the borders of the law.

3.4 "Call to Government" referred to the fisherfolks' cry to the Philippine government to heed their call for support and protection. Fisherfolks urged the government to seriously consider their concerns to help the dying fishing industry to thrive.

3.5. "Sustainability" referred to the long-term projects and programs that will help fisherfolks to ensure a secure livelihood which is better than providing them with short term aides such as "ayuda" or food packs.

The Philippine government must implement various fishing regulations to ensure sustainable fishing practices and protect marine resources according to the fisherfolks who were interviewed. Fishermen may have encountered changes in regulations, such as fishing season restrictions, catch limits, and the establishment of marine protected areas. Compliance with these regulations and enforcement efforts by authorities could have affected their fishing activities.

However, this claim was contradicted by the government, the creation of a social protection system that includes an income support program for fishermen whose livelihoods are negatively impacted by calamities, lean or typhoon months, closed fishing seasons declared by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and other events, is another effort made by the government through the DSWD, which is mandated by the 2022 General Appropriations Act.

Fishermen in the Philippines often rely on close-knit communities and local cooperatives for support and information sharing. In the past two years, there may have been initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of fishermen, providing training programs, and fostering sustainable fishing practices. The fisherfolks who were interviewed firmly believe that illegal fishing greatly affects their livelihood. The results were reflected in a study conducted by Balajadia (2021) who said illegal/unregulated fishing can lead to other problems like depletion of fishes, and disappearance of crabs.

Another concern that the fisherfolks wanted to air to the government concerns their safety when at sea. Being a third country, the Philippines' fishing industry lacks on many aspects like high end technology a knowledge in fishing as well as the capacity of its coast guard to keep the fisherfolks safe. The Armed Forces of the Philippines states that the exercises are coordinated with the local government units (LGUs), including addressing issues and concerns. The provincial government advises coastal towns and cities to take precautionary measures for safety during the exercises.

Finally, participants emphasized the significance of a sustainable program that will be implemented by the local government. This will greatly be aided the fisherfolk specially during the times that there will be typhoons and other unprecedented events that will prevent them from fishing.

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