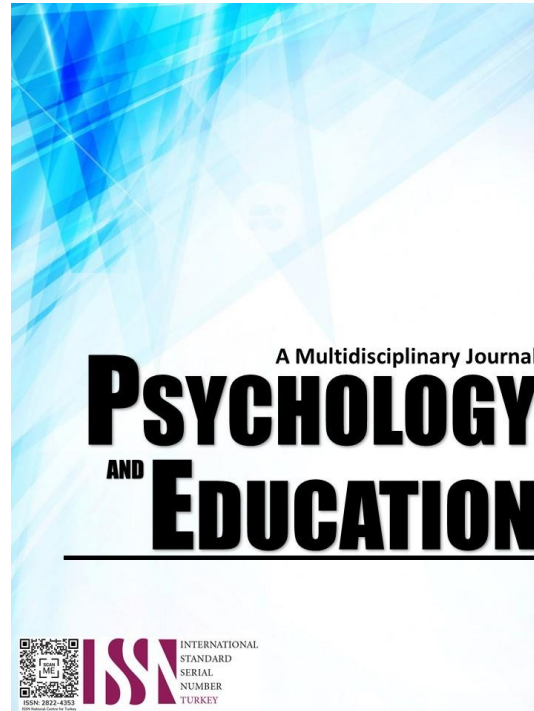


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Farmer's Life: The Psychological Well-being, Lived Experiences, and Challenges

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Abstract

With the rising poverty in the Philippines, Filipino farm workers in Agusan del Sur faced distinctive challenges in their homes and working environment. This study aimed to discuss Filipino farm workers' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Filipino farm workers shared their experiences that tapped into their psychological aspects. Mainly, the problem was stress, worry, and frustration centered on poverty and educational attainment. Some farm workers were likely unaware of the main problem that prolonged their hardships. Still, most have managed to fortify their mental health. This report indicates that most Filipino farm workers in Agusan del Sur have a healthy psychological well-being. However, this statement does not change the intensity of their struggle to survive.

Keywords: *motivation, stress, poverty, farm workers, worry, frustration, educational attainment*

Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of a country. It is the primary source of income for poor rural people and the only source for many of the poorest households here in the Philippines (Zafar, 2016). Most of them depend on a low level of farming for their livelihoods. In the context of the increasing price of rice in the Philippines, Carioso (2022) stated that without subsidies, Filipino farmers would suffer from the rising cost of unmilled rice (palay) production. In addition, Cainglet (2022) said that very few beneficiaries had received subsidies from the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program. Also, Filipino farmers fear that the PHP 6 per kilogram increase in the rice price may affect their livelihood negatively (Lagare, 2022). Moreover, limited diversification and low productivity are the two main challenges labeled by Brown (2018) which constrain the agricultural transformation of the Philippines.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2020), agricultural farmers posted the highest poverty incidence among the basic sectors in 2018 at 31.6%, respectively. This sector registered the highest poverty incidences in 2015 at 40.8%, respectively. Rice fields, piggery, fishery – regardless of which field these Filipino farmers spend their time and hands on, poverty incidence remains high (Canlas, 2021).

In recent studies, Filipino farmers struggle mentally, emotionally, and financially for lots of reasons, one of them being the crops having rotted (Rivas, 2020); the excess harvests that went unsold (Madarang, 2021);

and the salaries of Filipino farmers were affected negatively just as the farm machinery emerged, causing them to earn a lower wage than how much they made back when they used the usual methods (Calibuso, 2021). In 2019, male farmers were paid an average daily salary of PHP 335, that's at least PHP 10,000 per month (PSA, 2020). Thus, Dela Peña (2022) stated that if a family of five earns more than PHP 8,379 per month, they are not considered 'food poor.' The term 'food poor' was coined by PSA (2019), which refers to the state of a family that doesn't meet the basic food necessities for a month. Therefore, the Philippine government does not consider most Filipino farmers as food poor since they were said to be earning more salary (PHP 10,050) than the threshold (PHP 8,379).

What intensifies the stated problem about the definition of 'food poor' is that this topic has become heavily controversial on different social media platforms (Now You Know, 2022; Anonymous [@Rco88], 2022; and Inquirer, 2022), the majority protest the Philippine Statistics Authority's declaration of the definition of 'food poor' is absurdly wrong.

Furthermore, local studies indicate that the climate crisis causes individuals to feel anxiety, including intrusive worrying, fear, and behavioral impairment (Reyes et al., 2021; Simon et al., 2022). Thus, severe tropical storms became the catalyst for the cries of these Filipino farmers begging for help as they lost crops and lands from the destruction caused by an unfortunate climate (Del Rosario, 2021). Also, Hickman et al. (2021) noted that the Philippines has the highest proportion of people who experience high

levels of climate anxiety and other negative emotions connected to climate issues, such as anger, hopelessness, frustration, etc. If these problems go on and on, it is expected to hurt the lives and, specifically the psychological aspect of Filipino farmers; Just like what Daghigh Yazd et al. (2019) agreed on in their study, farming is indeed an especially stressful occupation. Additionally, PSA has reported that over 1,700 Filipino farmers committed suicide from 2016 to 2020 (Cruz, 2022).

As aired on Radio Television Malacañang (2022) and published in Philstar Global (2022), President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. assured to cure the agricultural sector's problems by modernizing Philippine Agriculture by providing loans, financial assistance, and a one-year moratorium condoning the debts of farmer-beneficiaries. Although the media shows that the government's hand is full of agricultural matters, little attention has been paid to the reality of the lives of Filipino farmers.

Moreover, the researchers found that previous studies did not go into enough detail about Filipino farmers' psychological well-being, lived experiences, challenges, as well as their coping mechanisms. In this phenomenological study, the researchers will identify and describe the psychological well-being, lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of Filipino farmers to lead to a better understanding and provide a voice to unheard individuals. Hence, this study will be beneficial to readers as they understand the reality of the life of a Filipino farmer. Also, it will contribute to the general body of knowledge and more to the psychological construct of mental health problems (such as anxiety and depression) and coping mechanisms (the level of its effectiveness). The study will also contribute to social psychology as the study deals with lived experiences and challenges, and to positive and health psychology, as the study talks about coping mechanisms.

Research Questions

This study aims to explore Filipino farmers' psychological well-being by understanding their lived experiences, challenges faced, and coping mechanisms amidst the increasing rice price. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of a Filipino farmer?
2. What are the challenges faced by a Filipino farmer?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of a Filipino farmer?

Methodology

This study employed Heideggerian phenomenology to explore the participant's lived experiences.

Participants of the Study

The researchers selected 15 participants as Ellis (2016) suggested that the ideal sample size of phenomenology should be between 6-20. The participants were farmers that worked as laborers, including rice field farm workers, vegetable farm workers, and other agricultural farm workers, excluding fisherfolks, loggers, and livestock farmers. They were chosen from Agusan del Sur, Mindanao. Also, criterion sampling has been utilized as the study needs to narrow down the participants' profiles to get better and more specific results.

According to Adams et al. (2002; as cited in Schubotz et al., 2022), age should be considered in a social context as older individuals simplify stories in a way that the younger listeners would understand. Thus, the age was asked to keep the consistency of the gathered data. Moreover, the interviewers were accompanied by an elderly interviewer/translator to prevent participants from adjusting the complexity of their stories in a more straightforward form.

This study elicited participants' marital status to support statements such as those of Jordan and Zitek (2012) that, opposite to women, a man's job dedication and performance tend to rise when they are married or committed to a long-term relationship. The same reason why the study asked about the number of family members is to support studies such as those of Znidarsic (2021), that the number of family members affects a worker's job dedication and performance.

Furthermore, educational attainment was included in the interview questions to determine the farmers' readiness for farming and life in general.

According to Laband and Lentz (1983; as cited in Dudek & Pawlowska, 2022), occupational inheritance in agriculture is widespread. With this evidence, the researchers have been interested in whether farm workers have willingly chosen to be farmers. Followed by years of farming to emphasize how long they have

been farming compared to their lifespan, as studies (Villa, 2002; Nye, 2021) suggest that most farmers were born farmers.

Instrument of the Study

The researchers provided a semi-structured interview guide explicitly designed to get Farmers' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. The interview contains questions that elicit their self-perception, motivation, satisfaction, frustration, quality time with family, burnout experience, and awareness about how foreign rice affects them as laborers. Additionally, the semi-structured interview guide was validated by a panel of professionals.

Data Collection Process

Researchers decided that the interview guide would consist of nineteen (19) questions that may run up to 13-15 minutes. The participants were encouraged to voice any confusion and concerns after every question. The interviewer was as prepared to give clarifications by asking different questions with the same essence. After the interview, a complete transcription and analysis were carried out to make sense of the information acquired. The interview transcription contains the precise verbatim responses of each participant to eliminate any uncertainty about the data collection's contents.

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, research ethics principles required informed consent based on Republic Act No. 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012), which states that a person's privacy shall be protected. The data and responses contained in this research should be kept confidential and only used in this research. The process is necessary to ensure that participants have sufficient information to consider before deciding to participate in the study voluntarily. However, the participants were limited to only giving verbal consent as the interviewers learned that the first three participants could not read and write.

Data Analysis Procedure

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized in this study as it allows researchers best to understand the innermost meaning of the participants' 'lived experiences' (Alase, 2017). Analyzing qualitative data can be crucial as it cannot afford biased interpretations. So, the researchers organized the interview transcripts, observational notes, and

other related data to deepen their understanding of the phenomenon (Crowther et al., 2017; Goble et al., 2022). According to Jacobs (2019), one of the most effective approaches is recording and transcribing to eliminate content errors in an interview. So, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to guarantee the accuracy of the content. The researchers ran an in-depth review of the transcripts (as it contains the participants' verbatim) to make an impactful conclusion. The first step was attaining an initial analytical insight into the data to develop themes that unite those data. Then, the key objectives were explored as the participants' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. The process ended in developing the subthemes and reports covering the themes. These methods were used to ensure that the data was accurate and trustworthy.

Results and Discussion

Based on the data collected, the following themes are (1) The Self-Assured, (2) The Restrained, and (3) The Fatalist. Likewise, the following subthemes were identified from the data-gathering based on their perspectives.

The Self-Assured

No doubt working in the farm fields is physically draining. According to the participants, farming is only one of the ways for them and their families to survive daily. It takes bravery and tenacity to obtain the strength that can be used in their situation. The concept of self-assurance is about having self-confidence in the process of doing a task guaranteed to do well (Maki, 2022). Additionally, self-confidence is the belief in oneself and one's abilities (Allobaney et al., 2022). Thus, a self-assured farmer is an individual who is confident that he can do great in his job.

I am a superhero

According to the data and responses, family is one of the sources of a farmer's confidence. When the interviewer asked about how participants see themselves as farmers, most participants had the same answers as Participant 3. He described himself as the family's superhero because he provided everything his family needed.

"Super hero sa pamilya, dahil yan ang nagbibigay ng kabuhayan."

As shown, Participant 3 perceives himself as the

family's 'Superhero'; with this, he can claim to be improving as a farmer because of his family.

“Dahil kapag wala rin ang pamilya, hindi ka magsisikap, hindi ka gagaling [sa trabaho]. Pamilya ang kinukunan ng lakas.”

This data could imply that having a clear self-concept leads to better self-confidence and self-esteem. According to Safitri (2022), self-esteem is one of the basic psychological constructs that determines an individual's readiness to perform one's task. Additionally, people with strong self-esteem often perform their best in what they do. In support, Chen et al. (2022) shared the same view; that the two constructs (self-concept and self-esteem) are positively correlated.

I am valuable to the community

Based on the data and responses, knowing one's value to the community may help build an individual's self-esteem. According to Daniels (2020), self-esteem is developed through interactions with those who are around you. These actions are said to play a crucial role, as Participant 6 said that helping people fills his heart with joy.

“Pag wala sa iba, bibigyan ko kung meron sa akin. Kahit [ako ang mag] bibigay, bibihin nila [ng kusa]. Masarap sa pakiramdam [na nagtutulungan kami].”

This evidence shows a glimpse of Filipino culture, where people give goods in the act of kindness, then the recipient offers something else to show gratitude. In support, Roberts (2017) has said that helping others improves an individual's self-esteem and sense of purpose.

Furthermore, Participant 5, a farmer with strong observable self-esteem, said that as a farm worker, he knows his value as employers could not do the farm work alone.

“Mahalaga [ako], dahil ako yung binibigyan ng trabaho. Kung wala yung mga farmer, wala rin mag ta-trabaho sa mga farm. Hindi rin nila [farm owners] kaya mag isa.”

Participant 5 knows what he is saying, living mentally healthy despite the challenges. However, only a few farmers have shared the same lived experience compared to the whole population in this study. Moreover, Self-assurance powerfully enhances motivation (Benabou & Tirole, 2001; Aamodt, 2010;

Fan et al., 2022). Thus, the interviewers elicited responses from the participants regarding their motivation. This statement leads to the next question, which asks about the farmers' biggest dream, their definition of success, and significant energizer.

My Family First!

According to studies (Tus, 2022; Pekrun & Marsh, 2022; Huitt, 2011), motivation refers to the internal state that energizes behavior and gives it direction, or in simple terms, the willingness of an individual to do a particular task. A motivated farmer has his very reason to pursue his goal, which in this study referred to their families. The elicited responses to the topic of 'motivation' were altruistic as it revolves around their children's future, neglecting their personal needs and wants.

As the study proceeded, the interviewers visited a house of 9 family members. They came across a persistent and tenacious farmer (Participant 15) of 40 years, who is also the father of the house. With his excellent dependability, he has said that family comes first in everything, especially in education.

“Ang priority ay yung mga ano- estudyante ko, makatapos. Hahanapan ko talaga ng paraan. Mangutang ganun. Katulad kay Janna. College na ngayon. [Halimbawa,] hihingi ng pera saken, hahanap talaga ako ng paraan para may maibigay lang. Basta hindi mahinto sa pagaaral.”

He added that there was a time when one of his children had to be admitted to hospital, and without a second thought, he sold his farmland for the hospital bills.

“Di naman natin maiwasan, may magka sakit sa pamilya. Dinadala sa ospital, malaki ang gagastusin, tapos yung lupa mo kahit masangla mo, kahit ano nalang. Nadaanan ko yan kasi meron samin nagka asthma. Kahit saan ako aabot niyan, sa ospital. Wala pa namang pera, kanya kanyang diskarte, nahihinto yung saka mo.”

Moreover, Menges et al. (2017) have found that family motivation remarkably enhances job performance when intrinsic motivation is low. However, Menges et al. (2017) noted that family motivation focuses more on emotional and mental energy provision rather than stress reduction. Family motivation is the type of motivation that comes to the desire to spend effort for the benefit of one's family (Menges et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the researchers found that quite a several farmers rely on family motivation as they share the same sentiments with Participant 13's response. He said that his family is his only energizer, his only source of strength to keep himself motivated and to work as a farmer.

"Ang ako rang gihugutan og kuan [motivation to work], ang aking pamilya ra, nga makakaon sila."

In addition, Participant 3 said that it is because of his family that he keeps on striving and improving in his job.

"Dahil kapag wala ang pamilya, hindi ka magsisikap, hindi ka gagaling [sa trabaho]. Pamilya ang kinukunan ng lakas."

This story implies that despite the hardships, some farmers can still work just fine because they find satisfaction in the happiness of their families. Indeed, a happy and understanding family affects job satisfaction positively (Znidarsic and Bernik, 2021). The same goes for the farmers in this study, as Participant 15 shared that he is pleased when his family is considerate and thoughtful.

"Pag nagiintindihan ang pamilya, kung anong problema, magtulungan para masaya. Yun lang ang kuan ko [kasiyahan]."

With a heartfelt wish, Participant 13 added that seeing his children happy and physically healthy gratifies him.

"Masayang pamilya, pag dating mo sa bahay, makita mo ang mga bata, masaya, walang sakit, okay na."

This data implies that farm life is indeed challenging in a way that a farmer is glad and wishes to have an understanding family, that simple sympathy and attention is very much appreciated. In short, there are farmers with healthy psychological well-being regarding their self-concept and motivation. The next theme (The Restrained) shall give this study much more color and texture as it discusses the opposite of the self-assured.

The Restrained

Opposite to the self-assured farmers who show mental stability, some are mentally and emotionally challenged. In this theme, farmers are labeled as "The Restrained." They are the ones with holdbacks restraining themselves from having stable and healthy

psychological well-being, such as farmers who experience climate anxiety (Peñalba, 2019) or those who experience stress, loneliness, and illness as they lack quality time with their families (Braun, 2019).

In this study, the researchers have found that farmers were exposed to overwhelming stress, disappointment from delayed salaries, social stress, and inevitable suffering such as starvation.

I am super-duper stressed!

Just enough stress can be good. However, too much of anything could lead to many awful situations. According to Lunney (2006), stress overload is a human's natural response after exposure to extreme amounts and types of demands that require action. Moreover, participant 3 confessed that he is suffering from stress overload as he shared that sometimes he is bothered by too much stress. Such as when there is a conflict in the house where his spouse scolds him because they have no money to buy food for the children, while he is also time-pressured to attend to work in the morning without having breakfast.

"Yung may alitan sa pamilya, tapos may trabaho ka, maapektuhan ang trabaho mo. May kulang sa bahay tulad ng bigas, inaaway ako [ng asawa ko] dahil yung mga bata naghanap ng pagkaen tapos wala ka pang masaing dahil naubusan ka ng pera, tapos may trabaho ka pa, di ka pa nakapag agahan. Gulong gulo ang isip mo mapipilitan ka magtrabaho."

The duty to provide for the family, the weight of hearing a frustrated wife, a hungry stomach, and the pressure to go to a job are draining. Furthermore, Elsafty and Shafik (2022) have stated that job stress (stress overload's universal form) could decrease work performance and the quality of labor. This data concerns the psychological well-being of farm workers because low work performance increases their chance of getting dismissed from work (Power, 2022), decreasing their chance of getting hired by the same employer. Additionally, this concerns the psychological well-being of farm workers because they will more likely be worried about where to find another source of income aside from farming. Thus, Zafar (2016) stated that most poor rural areas in the Philippines rely only on farming.

Alongside job stress, it was discovered in the interview that farmers are also mentally challenged by their "bosses" when they are at work, as their boss sometimes irritates them. Irritation is one of the common emotions that contributes to stress (Eske and

Legg, 2019). As Participant 13 revealed, several farmers have agreed that sometimes they get irritated when their employers scold them and talk to them with a demoralizing tone without apprising the primary concern or at least telling them why they are wrong. So, they end up repressing as a coping mechanism.

“Mainis ka kasi, pinagalitan ka [ng boss mo] na di mo alam ang mali mo. Tinanggap ko lang dahil nagtatrabaho ako sa kanya pero kung maka-realise siya na nagkamali siya, manghihingi siya [sana] samin ng sorry.”

Moreover, farmers are suffering from climate stress, as Participant 6 has said that he worries that they could not do anything to mend the damage to their crops that have been dealt with by a particular calamity.

“Naapektuhan [ako] dahil sa klima, may mga pananim nang hindi na maayos.”

However, only a few farmers shared the same sentiments compared to the population.

Frustration is one of the common negative emotions that is experienced when an individual is distressed because of the inability to change something (Park and Ramirez, 2022). Another restrained farmer (Participant 15) shared his frustration when his investments did not return as expected because of pests and calamities.

“Yung mangungutang ako ng financing, tapos mag failure lang dahil sa daga. Tapos tag-init naman, masusunog yung humay, palay. Tsaka yung sa mais naman, ano [vulnerable] sa sakit yung tawag na burnok, maliliit na insekto. May 18 thousand yung ano [investment] ko eh lugi sa mais. Hanggang ngayon babayaran ko pa yon. Yung kinuhanan ko ng pera, sinisingil paren ako hanggang ngayon. Hindi ko talaga malimutan yan.”

Another challenge farmers face is that their lives primarily revolve around borrowing money without a clear plan of how and when to pay it. Participant 3 expressed that there is a conflict about their salary not being enough to clear their debts.

“[Ang kinikita,] kulang pang bayad sa utang. Sa utang lang yan, wala nang bigas. Bayad, tsaka utang nanaman, bayad utang nalang.”

My hard-earned money?

There could be several people who are desperate enough to show that they need immediate money to live. Thus, it may be hard for humble farmers to demand their salary significantly if it is delayed for an unreasonable amount of time. In this study, Participant 3 shared an experience where his boss requested to pay his salary next week for whatever reason, and sometimes they are not paid in full. So, sometimes they skip meals because they are short on money.

“Ngayon yung sahod mo, pabalalikin ka pa sa sunod na linggo, tapos di pa full, unti-unti. Dahil diyan minsan di kami nakaka-kain.”

Participants 2 and 4 shared the same sentiments with this story. Moreover, the employer's irresponsibility could be the last straw that will break the camel's back. As Oruh et al. (2021) show, delayed salary can lead to many psychological problems (such as stress, fear of job insecurity, and concern about work overload), restraining individuals from having a healthy psychological well-being.

Kill for Survival

Back in 2018, nine sugar cane farm workers in Negros Occidental were killed by a group of armed men as they were occupying a plantation of land (Gutierrez, 2018). According to Hoffman (2017), one of the reasons why people kill is their urge to retaliate for the abuse that they experience from their victims. It is the same with the rural setting in the Philippines as Participant 3 said there are many thieving farmers in his vicinity, and he added that he is prepared to kill whenever other farmers steal crops from his farm.

“Hindi lang suntukan, patayan. Dahil sa bukid ka tumira kailangan may pusil [armas] ka dahil maraming masasamang loob. Nanakawin yung tanim mo. Di ka pa nakaunang maka harvest, sila na umuuna.”

Furthermore, these thieving farmers risk their lives to fill a stomach, dealing with death for as essential as food. This story represents many farmers as Participant 3 mentioned that the theft happened many times already based on his experience.

We were Starving

According to Kueper et al. (2015), starvation describes the most intense level of malnutrition. Because of poverty, some individuals were left with a choice to endure starvation. Like in the study by Robinson (2018), many Filipinos struggle to survive on very

little food. Without the proper attention from those in power, this remains a threat to the Philippines, especially to the Filipino farmers, the country's backbone.

Furthermore, Participant 5 shared a memory he said would be the most unforgettable. Back in his childhood, he experienced coming to watch his father cut logs deep in the forest. They have nothing to eat or drink, the hunger is prolonged to the point where he cries with his siblings, and his father is trying to calm them down by saying that they just have to walk faster and eventually they will get home to have something to eat hopefully.

“Nung bata ako, nag to-troso kami tapos wala kaming makaen tapos tubig. Malayo paren, kaya umiyak nalang kami. Sabi ng tatay ko, bilisan niyo lang [mag lakad] aabot din tayo. Pero wala na yung tiyan, wala nang laman.”

Furthermore, the researchers aroused a suspicion that starvation could have an impact on an individual's psychological well-being, negatively or positively; this area needs to be delved in.

Without a diploma, I have no life

Around the world, there is a growing list of studies on how a lack of educational attainment negatively affects an individual's life (Njong, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2014; Childhope, 2021). Furthermore, Drew (2022) stated that education is crucial to getting ahead in life as he talks about educational attainment.

In this study, the participant's response proves that Drew's (2022) statement was more likely to be correct; that lack of education removes the ease in life. Participant 13 said he is on a farm doing labor work because he could not find a well-paying job because he lacks educational attainment.

“Wala ma'y pangita, kay wala ka namang natapos na pag aaral, tsaga nalang sa pag uma [ang kailangan].”

Respectively, most of the participants are graduates of the elementary level, as elicited in the interview. This data explains why they could not get ahead in life with ease.

Moreover, poverty causes people to feel negative emotions, mainly frustration with their lives (Ravet et al., 2015; Erhart et al., 2019). In this study, some farmers were unfulfilled with their life, as participant 6 confessed that he was frustrated that he could not have

a child graduate from college because of poverty.

“Dahil sa kahirapan, hindi kami nakapag pa-graduate [ng mga anak]. Hanggang ngayon mga anak ko, naiwan sa kahirapan. Ayan talaga yung ano [frustrated] ako.”

As said in the above statements, some farmers experience various challenges restraining them from having healthy psychological well-being. Despite the presence of farmers with psychological concerns, most came up with ways to endure challenges easier with their coping mechanisms. This statement directs us to the next and final theme, “The Fatalist.”

The Fatalist

Acceptance is a coping mechanism that can help people create a life worth living despite exposure to pain and difficulty (Katalinic, 2015). Furthermore, an article by Waters (2021) stated that the awareness of one's weaknesses without having an emotional attachment to them could also help individuals improve their behavior and therefore build better habits.

Among the participants, several farmers are left to accept the indigent life as their way to cope with psychological challenges (such as worry and frustration). In this study, the fatalist farmer refers to those exposed to an uncomfortable situation that threatens their life status and psychological well-being. However, they managed to keep their psychological well-being intact through ‘acceptance’ or tolerating unpleasant thoughts and happenings.

This is my life!

There are farmers interviewed in Agusan del Sur who is aspired to overcome the hardships in farming and are not afraid to take steps to success. However, this does not hide the fact that there are still farmers living a simple underprivileged life, such as the ones that participated in this study, and most suffer from poverty. A fatalist farmer (participant 6) has said that he has voluntarily chosen to be contented because life was so hard for him to take another step forward.

“Kuntento [na lang, kasi] sanay na kami sa mahirap [na buhay].”

Other participants are also discouraged from doing more rewarding actions. They believed that these actions were too risky (such as working far from their homes or investing in a farm project) in a way that

they could not afford to lose another important aspect of their lives (such as quality time with family and money) because of it.

Participant 15 added that people in rural areas, such as themselves, have no other choice but to do farming to sustain their lives.

“Wala namang choice, yun naman ang magawa ko para sa pamilya ko, wala namang iba. [kaya] yun nalang ang ginagawa ko hanggang ngayon.”

Participant 13 shared the same sentiments that he could not do anything other than farming because he claimed to be contented.

“Kuntento na lang kay wa namang magawa.”

In this study, acceptance as a coping mechanism has helped several farmers mentally and emotionally. However, as observed in their stories, it forbids farmers to strive for the betterment of their lives. An example is how Participant 15 talked about his frustration that he was discouraged after failing in his farming projects multiple times. He added that it was the main reason he does not want to try to do projects anymore and that he's fine settling with only working as a farm laborer.

“Yun ang dahilan na hindi na ako nag tanim ng mais, palay. Sabi ni manong Primo [nagpahiram ng lupa], ‘ikaw na muna mag trabaho diyan’, sabi ko ‘ayaw ko na manong, ikaw na mag trabaho kasi mag i-invest nanaman ako diyan’.”

We are here enduring poverty

Every participant had different stories and perspectives, but they all agreed that their salary could not buy their needs because necessities such as meals and rice are way too expensive for them to afford daily. In support, Participant 15 said that his salary is not enough for his family's needs and that they endure when they do not get to eat.

“Kulang sa gastusin, mahirap kasi mababa yung sahod – tiis tiis nalang”

Moreover, participant 13 expressed that they tend to force fit their salary up to how much food it can buy.

“Gastusin lang, ang palitun karon grabe kamahal – kung pila ra ang kinita, yun na lang pagkasyahun.”

The best I could do was live a deprived life

Filipino farm worker life is mentally challenging. However, these workers come up with coping methods, such as when they are stressed with their spouse scolding them. Participant 13 said that he wakes up early in the morning to compensate for the lack of quality time with family and to help his family with the household chores such as doing laundry and cooking breakfast. He added that it is because of his lack of educational attainment that he could not have quality time with his family because his time is spent on making a living on the farm.

“Maaga ako nagising, para kung halimbawa ano–naglalaba ako, para matulungan ko [yung pamilya], nag sasaing ako. Kasi may maliit na bata yung asawa ko. Kaya aagahan ko, alas tres gising na 'ko. Hanggang dun nalang kay wa mang magawa, di naman ako makapag bigay ng madaming oras kay na ubos na sa pagiging pagod sa palayan, wa man natapos [na pagaaral].”

This story relates to farmers' psychological well-being because studies (Badri et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2022) have shown that quality time with family positively affects an individual's happiness and satisfaction. The story shows that farm workers' quality time with the family is one of the costs of getting their basic needs, such as their salary. This revelation has exposed that farm workers are given a choice to only pick one of the two: money or quality time with family.

In contrast, Participant 15 claimed that he perfectly balances his time with family, work, neighborhood, and God because he believes it will not be suitable for him to work on the farm the whole day.

“Dini-divide ko na yung oras sa pamilya, sa trabaho, sa panginuon. Sa isang lingo, hindi lang puro trabaho, makisama ka naman sa mga kapitbahay mo, sa mga kaibigan mo. Kaysa na diyan ka lang sa sakahan. Hindi ko naman pinoproblema mga yan.”

Summing up, Farmers' stories are a wild ride. Not everyone gets to experience their ventures.

Conclusion

Based on the summary of findings, the following conclusions are derived:

1. Farm workers do not usually tell their employees when annoyed by how they receive instructions and corrections with an enslaving voice. Furthermore,

thieving neighbors threaten hard-working farmers as they trespass and steal crops unpredictably. Also, the family is the main motivation of farm workers, and the family's happiness dictates satisfaction as defined by the self-assured farmers.

2. Farmworkers in rural areas put all their effort and resources into their children's education because their challenges are mainly focused on their income, which they believe to be reliant on their educational attainment. So, they try to compensate for their parent's shortcomings at any cost to ensure their children's future. Furthermore, farmworkers in rural areas of the Philippines (such as Agusan del Sur) are in deeper trouble than they think because of the increasing value of commodities and necessities.

3. Farm workers' acceptance of problems and status as a coping mechanism is helpful in their psychological aspect. However, it negatively affects their life's progression, making them settle for less.

4. The ignorance of farmers about the global and national trends in agriculture and farm business (such as the rice tariffication law) narrows their view into believing that they are only capable of farm labor.

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