

Understanding Poverty in the Perspective of Children, Adolescents and Elderly Folks from Marginalized Communities in Samar, Philippines

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Abstract

Poverty is a phenomenon that is brought by several factors which are further aggravated by social conditioning, behavior, and practices of these marginalized folks. A grounded theory qualitative research approach was utilized to distill information relative to understanding poverty among the adolescents and elderly participants using focus group discussions as data triangulation method. Results showed that adolescents had high hopes and aspirations to escape poverty given the proper education. Yet, their actions did not complement towards the attainment of such goal. The elderly, on the other hand, believed that young people when taken the right action could escape poverty, but admitted they had failed in their efforts when they were young due to wrong actions and habits. Moreover, their contradicting practices of poverty alleviation had a direct influence on the young ones, thus, might exacerbate this dire situation. Irene's understanding poverty theory is generated explaining the understanding of persistent poverty in Samar. It is a composite of several constructs such as conditioning, the low education, the felt helplessness and habits which were imbedded in the subculture of Samar people. A recommendation to adopt more mainstream behaviors, eradicate bad habits while policies should also be designed to move these marginalized communities towards an economic reform mindset is necessary.

Keywords: *Grounded theory, qualitative, poverty, Irene's theory*

I. INTRODUCTION

There are possible conditionings why poverty is prevalent in the Philippines. The mindset is instilled in the subconscious of the poor, and they have learned to live with it. The songs being taught and sang in elementary schools with lines such as "*Bahay kubo, kahit munti, ang halaman doon ay sari-sari,*" (My nipa hut is small, but it has a variety of plants) "*Magtanim ay 'di biro,*" (Planting is never fun..) and "I have two hands... clean little hands are good to see" are indications that social conditioning which aligns with poverty is very evident. A small nipa house of a poor farmer represents a simple yet happy home. Clean hands are better than the dirty, rugged hands of a construction worker. Social conditioning such as this is a process of conditioning the mindset of individuals to respond to what is expected by the society.

Bill Gates, Microsoft co-founder and Forbes' richest man in the world, also shared, "If you're born poor, it is not your mistake. But if you die poor, it's your mistake." To him, to be poor is a choice, but one can change that. However, this conditioning of being poor is

inculcated in the subculture of the society, and many are poor because they benefit from it as they are under welfare program from government and non-government agencies (Bradshaw, 2007).

Regardless of the causes, poverty alleviation remains an elusive dream in some parts of Samar, which is considered one of the poorest provinces of the country, because it is not completely understood in the context of the poor. Poverty as seen by the children, adolescents and elderly can give an authentic description of the poverty situation in Samar. Hence to understand poverty is to derive it from the context of those who have experienced it. Hopes and aspirations, and experiences and wisdom of adolescents and elderly, respectively would be extracted through qualitative method. The general aim of the study was to distill the feelings, sentiments, aspirations, and mind set of the participants along poverty situation in Samar.

Study Background

The Philippines is behind among Southeast Asian neighbors on poverty

reduction performance (Balisacan, 2010; Aldaba, 2009). Similarly, the Philippines ranked 90 out of 177 nations in the Human Development Index (Ahorro, 2008). These conditions impede growth and development.

Poverty incidence is very high on the island of Samar, the third largest island in the country. All three provinces of Samar Island are placed in the list of ten poorest provinces of the country in which Eastern Samar ranked 2nd (poverty incidence of 55.4%), with Northern Samar and Samar at the 9th and 10th places respectively (both with poverty incidence of 43.5%) in the data gathered from 2006-2012 (Sabordino, 2015).

The new Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) of the United Nations, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), emphasize on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. The MDG, which ended in 2015, had been found to have serious gaps in the attainment of Philippine poverty reduction goals (Asian Development Bank, 2009). The efforts continue but unless the context of poverty is deeply understood, anti-poverty programs cannot be in synch with the problem.

Why poverty persists? Reports on the causes of poverty have stated that individuals are trapped in poverty because poor families pass on bad values and norms of behavior that prevent successful participation in mainstream social institutions (Aldaba, 2009). Poor places are also condemned to stagnation or deterioration, because they do not have the human or natural resources to sustain (Duncan, 1996). Escape from poverty is too burdensome to carry due to laziness, inherent competence and disabilities (Bradshaw, 2007). Others are contented and have got used to their dire situation (Galbraith, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2014) or by choice (Shah, 2010). This study aimed to understand poverty from the context of the poor people of Samar and to generate a theory to explain the condition of poverty in Samar better. From this, all interventions should be aligned and suited to the situation and could justify the community development programs (Bradshaw, 2007).

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design. Specifically, the researchers used a grounded theory qualitative research approach. In grounded theory, a protocol is observed that there is constant comparative

analysis between and among individuals with existing concurrent theories, emergent themes are checked and re-checked until theoretical saturation is reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Research Locale

The study focused on marginalized communities in Samar which are identified to have high poverty incidence (Balisacan, 2010). In Samar, Daram is placed 3rd and 1st among municipalities with the highest poverty incidence as conducted in 2009 and 2012, respectively. Daram, an island municipality, is a third class rural municipality with a population of 42,879 (Census, 2015), which primary source of income is fishing and farming. There are about 58 barangays covered by the municipality, and it is a 30-km boat ride from Catbalogan City, the capital of Samar (previously called as Western Samar).

Participants

The participants of the study were the seniors, adolescents, and children who dwelled in two poverty-stricken communities in Daram, Samar and who have experienced chronic poverty. The participants were sampled based on the inclusion criteria of the study: (1) a resident of the community for five years and more; (2) poor regarding average family monthly income; and (3) age bracket is within 55 years old and above for the elderly, 15-21 for adolescent-participants, and 6-14 for the children. They were interviewed based on the prepared interview guide using the local dialect. Their responses were recorded and transcribed in English. Themes were picked and used as focused themes for the focus group discussion.

There were ten participants from the adolescent's group who have expressed their aspirations, shared their experiences and perspectives towards poverty. Of these ten, six were females, and four were males. Average age was 18.6 years old. Only one was studying while the rest were out-of-school youth, and the majority finished elementary.

Participants in the FGD among the elderly group were drawn from the identified elderly folks in the said locale of the study. Among them were five males and five females, one village official, one 4Ps (a government program for the poor) coordinator, and others who were farmers or fishers and have been in the barangay for more than ten years.

Data-gathering

Informed consent from the participants was secured before data were gathered. The protocol from the municipal and barangay officials in the form of a letter of intent was observed.

The study had interviews with the participants and conducted focus group discussions with the adolescents and seniors. Data saturation was reached after the 10th participant among the adolescents and after the 12th participant for the elderly group. Coding and themes were utilized to generate patterns and to come up with an explanation of the derivation of their understanding of poverty. The children expressed their understanding of poverty through projective technique.

The discussion, which lasted almost an hour, was held at the village day care center. The participants were seated with the moderator in a circle. The moderator made sure that each participant had an opportunity to share ideas, and that no one monopolized the discussion.

Thematic analysis was conducted using the method of Abadiano, Bonotan & Makiling (2014). The transcribed data were checked and re-checked to pick the common emerging themes from the responses. These themes were grouped again to formulate a hypothesis until a generalization surfaced.

Instrumentation

Questions in the interview guide were translated to the local dialect, and responses were recorded using a voice recorder to capture the entire story. Transcription was done verbatim and was coded.

Below were the questions raised during the FGD.

1. What is poverty?
2. How do you describe a poor person?
3. How do you describe yourself? Does your description of a poor person fit you?
4. What are your experiences of "in a dire need situation"? When did it happen?
5. What are the causes of poverty?
6. In what way(s) can a person get out of poverty situation?
7. During your younger days, did you exert an effort to get out of poverty? Elaborate.

8. If it is difficult, what is/are the reason/s you were not able to escape from it?
9. Do you know persons who are poor before but now, they are no longer poor? What are their strategies?
10. Do you have any regrets/remorse/resentment about your current situation?
11. What advice/s can you give to the young people so that they can escape poverty?
12. What would you like the government to do/intervene to alleviate poverty?

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding Poverty from Adolescents' Perspectives

The adolescents had a profound understanding of poverty for they had first-hand experiences and daily struggles to find sustenance and means to improve their living condition. Education was seen as the key to a bright future. However, the majority was not studying even though elementary and junior and senior high schools are available in the said municipality. Almost all finished elementary. Those who were attending high school were fond of making absences for most of their time was into fishing.

When asked why they were not studying, their common answer was that they had no daily allowance, and they could not pay for school expenses. They strongly agreed that the strategy to succeed was strong motivation and will, that with these one could finish studying despite lack of financial resources. Such attitude and willpower were not manifested in them. They just let fate decided what was best for them.

As one participant said, "*Bahala na, basta an importante maupay la an amon mga lawas*" (Come what may, what is important is we have a healthy body).

Poverty is not inherited. Adolescents believed that they could change their fate through high educational attainment. However, they averred that vices and "*pakikisama*" (getting along or camaraderie) could not be avoided for it is part of socialization. One participant added, "*Kailangan mo makisama kay api hiya ha trabaho. Diri ka ngani makisama bangin diri ka na paapihon ha grupo*" (You need to get along with people because it is part of the job. If you do not do so, you may be excluded in the group).

Most of the participants expressed the desire to finish schooling. However, female participants were also hopeful that marrying a foreigner would also elevate their condition. Once they found a foreign suitor, they were going to quit school and marry the foreigner. They made contacts through facebook, chatted and built relationships with their foreign friends. This interracial marriage was common on the island of Samar. Filipinas who married foreigners built concrete houses on the island, with a relative-caretaker or the

parents of the wife residing. The wives stayed there for vacation once in a while.

Understanding Poverty from Seniors' Perspectives

Farming and fishing were the occupations of the majority of the 12 senior-participants. Mean age was 59.33. All of them were married and had children. Like the adolescents, the majority reached an elementary level of schooling.

Table 1. Emergent Themes

Responses	Significant Meanings	Emerging Themes
<p>"Poverty is like us; we have nothing: big house, sufficient income; we can't even afford to send our children to high school." P2</p> <p>"Poor people do not have money especially during an emergency situation, e.g. when someone in the family has a serious illness, and you have to bring him/her to the hospital, there is nothing you can do about it." P1</p> <p>"We were not able to finish even elementary, so how can we find a good job?" P6</p> <p>"Even rich people who spend a lot of money in their vices (smoking, drinking, gambling) yet they are still rich." P8</p> <p>"Drinking is our pastime here after a day of hard work. We forget our problems when we are happy especially when we are drunk." P8</p>	<p>Poor people have no material possessions.</p> <p>Poor people have difficulty in coping poverty, especially in emergency situation.</p> <p>Poverty has caused poor people not to attain high education.</p> <p>Rich people who have vices do not get poor because of it.</p>	<p>Contextual understanding of poverty regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of material possessions - Lack of good jobs and sufficient income - Low educational attainment - Vices can exacerbate poverty situation, but it is not bad to have it for as long as you can control it and besides it is a source of happiness, too.
<p>"There was a time when there was a long drought. Then a typhoon came, the remaining plants were wiped out by the typhoon, we have no food at all. We scavenge for any root crops, unripe banana, and coconut as our food." P1</p> <p>"My child who has a rheumatic heart was rushed to Catbalogan for an emergency; we have no money at that time. I have to endure the insults and shyness, but I have to borrow money from anyone who can lend. We stayed at the hospital for more than a month. So imagine how you can survive like that without money." P2</p> <p>"I weep every time our children ask for an allowance for I have no</p>		<p>Experiences with poverty</p>

<p>money to give them at all. Despite it, they were able to finish schooling through determination and sacrifices." P1</p>		
<p>"I went to Manila to find greener pastures but I met someone there, I got pregnant. We got married so we went back here in Daram." P5</p> <p>"I wanted to finish studying, but my parents did not support or force me to continue. Due to lack of money I was not able to finish high school." P2</p> <p>"When I was younger, I used to consume a lot of cigarettes, but now I stopped them. I would rather buy food for my family than cigarettes." P9</p> <p>"I wanted to finish schooling, but my parents wanted me to help them in fishing. When I was already earning, I became disinterested in going to school for I already have money. I learned to smoke and drink with my <i>barkada</i> at an early age." P8</p>	<p>Due to circumstances, efforts to escape poverty were in vain.</p> <p>Bad habits leading to poverty</p>	<p>Failed actions to escape poverty due to low educational attainment, habits, and vices.</p>
<p>"Finish schooling." P2</p> <p>"Avoid <i>barkada</i> and vices." P10</p> <p>"Parents should not let their children be engrossed in their fishing work to the point of not going to school anymore." P1</p> <p>"Make schooling their priority for once they become disinterested, it will be difficult to motivate them to finish their schooling, especially when they meet bad influences." P12</p>	<p>Schooling is the key to escape poverty.</p> <p>Avoid too much child labor for it means the child will be engrossed in their work, not in school.</p>	<p>Perceived measures of poverty alleviation</p>

Legend: P - participant

Theme 1, Contextual Understanding of Poverty

The understanding of poverty of the participants is similar to the accepted definition in the literature. In general sense, poverty is the lack of necessities like food, shelter, medical care and safety (Bradshaw, 2007). The participants looked at themselves as less fortunate than others who have bigger houses, money in the bank, permanent high paying jobs, plenty of food on the table, decent and branded clothing, and who can afford to send their children to school even college.

"Pobre gad la kami. Kay danay ngani naawan kami pangaon ha gab-i. Waray kami kwarta. Lalo na kun emergency" (We are poor. Because sometimes we skip our meals at

night. We don't have money. Especially during an emergency). P1

"Kami an sugad ka pobre kay waray-warayan kami. Waray ngani kami maupay na balay, pira la amon kita ha panagat. Diri ngani namon kaya pa eskwelahon amon mga anak ha high school" (We are really poor because we have nothing. We don't even have a good house; our income from fishing is very small. We can't even afford to send our children to high school). P2

"Mga 4Ps beneficiaries kami kay mga pobre kami base han amon pagtaga income. Maupay na la may sugad nga programa an aton gobyerno" (We are 4Ps beneficiaries because we are poor based on our income.

Good thing our government has a program like that). P7

“Nakakapobre han tawo kun panahon han kalamidad. Han bagyo nga Ruby nagkawash out an amon mga balay dinhi ha may baybayon” (Calamities can make people poor. During Typhoon Ruby, our homes located by the shore were washed out). P1

“Sugad man liwat kun bisyoso ka nga tawo, parag-inom, huygo ngan sigarilyo. An imo na la igpapalit hin bugas gin papalit mo pa inumon ngan sigarilyo” (It is also like that if you are a person with vices, a drinker, gambler, and smoker. The money for food, you used it to buy liquor and cigarettes instead). P11

Theme 2, Experiences with Poverty

There are two major types of poverty namely: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs such as food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information. It depends not only on income but access to social services (United Nations, 1995). Relative poverty, on the other hand, is the condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed to maintain the average standard of living as compared to others in the society (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1994). The latter type was evident among the participants of the study, while absolute poverty was experienced only during calamities such as typhoon.

“Nahinunumdom ako han pagka may-ada katsirak hadto na panahon, nagkamatay an amon mga tanom, waray kami pinanganganon. An nahisalin naman nga mga tanom, nagkalilimas pa han pag bagyo. Basta bisan ano na la an amon ginkakaon na tanom, pisot na saging, lubi basta may makaon la. Gulpi an amon kawarayan hadto na panahon” (I remember when there was a long drought, the plants died, and we had nothing to eat. Then the remaining plants were wiped out by the typhoon. We just ate any plant, young and unripe bananas and coconut, as long as we had something to eat. Our loss was extreme during that time). P1

“Han nagkasakit an akon anak ha kasing-kasing ngan gindara ha hospital, waray-warayan kami hadto na time. Nagpakapal na la ako han akon kahimo panhuram hin kwarta, bisan hino amon gindadaupan. Nagsobra kami bulan ha hospital. Basta diri ko mahunahuna kun

paano kami nakatalwas hadto” (When my child got sick with rheumatic heart disease and was rushed to the hospital, we had nothing at that time. I had to be shameless in borrowing money; I approached anyone. We stayed at the hospital for more than a month. I just could not think how we survived then). P2

Theme 3, Failed Actions to Escape Poverty due to Low Educational Attainment, Bad Habits and Vices

Participants had strong desire to get out of poverty as manifested in their responses on how they tried to find a solution to their dire situation. They were diligent in their livelihood, but the resources were scarce, so they had to find other means. Adolescents were most affected with their schooling since they had to skip classes to help their parents in fishing.

“Nagpa-Manila ako pamiling hin pangabuhi-an. Pero naburudan man ako kaya nag-asawa kami ngan umuli kami nganhi ha Daram” (I went to Manila to find greener pastures. But I got pregnant, so my husband and I got married, and we returned to Daram). P5

“Gusto ko gad makatapos han pag-eskwela an kaso la waray man mag-interes an akon mga kag-anak na pa eskwelahan ako. Sanglit waray ako makatapos pag eskwela han high school” (I wanted to finish schooling, but my parents were not interested in sending me to school. So I was not able to finish high school). P2

“Gusto ko gad umeskwela an kaso la ginpapa-upod ako pirme han akon tatay panagat kay waray man hiya kaupod. Han nakakakwarta na ako waray na liwat ako gana na umeskwela. Nahibaro ako manigarilyo ngan inom upod an akon mga barkada hadto” (I really wanted to study, but my father always brought me to fishing because he had no company. When I earned money, I lost interest in studying. I then learned to smoke and drink with my friends). P9

Theme 4, Perceived Measures to Poverty Alleviation

Diligence in their livelihood and interest in education were the most common answers on poverty solutions among the participants. They disliked a lazy person, and diligence was an ideal attribute of the poor to rise from poverty. However, it contradicts Shah (2010) that no matter how diligent a person is, if the resources are limited and

educational attainment is low, one is still at the bottom of the economic hierarchy regardless of gender, race and social class (Shah, 2010). Education then was the only way to improve their condition. Participants had observed that family members, who had finished their studies, landed a good job and were supporting their families. In the island, when one got a good-paying job, he/she would be able to build a concrete house, buy new appliances, and send his/her siblings and relatives to school. Life in the island was simple, and when one was good in managing the income, he/she could improve his/her economic condition.

“An pag eskwela ngan edukasyon an himo-on nga prayoridad. Kay an bata pag nawarayan na interes pag-eskwela, makuri na. Lalo na kun napa-barkada hin mga waray liwat interes pangiskwela” (Schooling and education should be made priority. If a child loses interest in schooling, it would be difficult. Especially if they have friends who are also disinterested in schooling). P12

“An mga kag-anak diri nira pag-pipinauporon an ira mga anak ha pangisda kay napapabay-an an pag eskwela” (Parents should not let their children accompany them in fishing because the schooling is neglected). P1

The following beliefs were extracted from the emerging themes during the interview and FGD:

1. Poor people believed that vices could aggravate poverty but doubted that it was the only factor that can cause poverty.
2. It was difficult to remove vices such as smoking and drinking for these were their pastimes. Gambling, through lottery, was seen as hope to get lump sum money.
3. Poor people were contented with their situation. They might have few material possessions, but they were happy. That was what mattered to them.
4. Education was the key to escape poverty for when one has a good education, he/she can find a good job.

Hypotheses

Based on the derived themes, the researchers came up with their hypotheses. These hypotheses were validated in the next FGD session with other participants in another barangay.

1. Most of the poor communities were bereft of resources and social services from the government and non-government agencies because of their geographical distance.
2. Even if financial and social services were available, people would still be poor because of the vices such as drinking and gambling that became social norms in these communities.
3. Children and adolescents lacked ideal role models that would guide them in exiting poverty.
4. Many people are poor because they are not well-educated. Even though basic education is within reach, yet, fishing as their main livelihood is more prioritized than education. Adolescents when captivated by their livelihood left their schooling.
5. There are bad practices of the poor that hinder poverty alleviation such as work ethics which are not inculcated in them.

Validation of Findings

Data triangulation was conducted through another set of FGD sessions both for elderly and adolescents, and projective technique session with children. The sessions were conducted in the same locale, to participants of similar characteristics and attributes. This method was employed to validate the existing hypotheses and serve as the basis of theory generation as that of Abadiano et al. (2014); and to deepen the researchers' understanding of the issues and strengthen the research design because a single method inadequately solves the problem (Patton, 1990; De Vos, 1998).

On Geographical Distance and Livelihood

The study site is only reachable by boat that passengers' vessel travel once a day. When the sea is rough, only big motorized boats can transport passengers to and fro. Most of the time, constituents stay in their village since the fare is quite expensive. Tourism was virtually nil; and trade and commerce were conducted in the town which is also distant from the village of the respondents. Livelihood and source of income of non-government workers were farming and fishing. There are some who were married to foreigners and built concrete mansion-type houses. The foreigners lived in the foreign land and sent money to their relatives in the island. Once in a while, they came home for a visit or vacation.

Government employees like village and municipal officials, and soldiers also resided in the barangay, sustaining their living through their salaries and small neighborhood sundry store. Most of the villagers were 4Ps beneficiaries who received cash subsidies of Php2000-Php3000 per month and given every three months.

Since the majority were fisherfolk, it can be inferred that their income from fishing was fluctuating as it depends on the condition of the sea. However, yield has declined that some had shifted to another livelihood as their income was no longer enough (Irene, 2017). They were able to provide for their daily expenses because of the 4Ps. Since it is given in lump sum on a particular day of the month, some beneficiaries had sold their subsidies, while others had unpaid loans for groceries from small sundry stores.

On Vices

Smoking was a common vice among the respondents, especially males. Their favorite pastime, however, were binge drinking and occasional gambling. The latter was banned through an ordinance, so it was already prohibited when done in the open. The village officials informed the researchers that binge drinking affected the financial and credit management of the 4Ps beneficiaries. Parents engaged in binge drinking forgot their responsibilities to their children that even schooling materials were not provided as the subsidies were spent on drinking. Binge drinking became a social conditioning that camaraderie among them was important even to the point of spending the whole monthly allowance. They had been conditioned that it was okay for there would be another subsidy in the following month. However, children were left helpless and neglected.

An operator and once who owned a big motorized boat or trawl fishing admitted that drinking was a bad habit to quit among his workers. During Sundays, it was customary for the workers to call it a day-off, instead of resting, they engaged in binge drinking, starting with one liter of *tuba* (coconut wine) and adding more until intoxicated. They would have hangover on the next day which prevents them from working. This eventually led the informant to quit his trawling business.

Children's Learned Helplessness

Children already had a clear understanding of poverty. They believed that

they were poor because their poor parents could not afford to build big and concrete houses and buy appliances. Oftentimes, they had less and unpalatable food. They blamed the sea for being poor since their parents did not get enough catch to sell. On the other hand, they had a strong aspiration of escaping poverty if they could get proper education and land a good job. They looked up to their parents and siblings as their source of inspiration and strive to help their family when they grow up. Children do not blame their parents' lifestyles, behavior, and vices as causes of their poverty. There got used to it and saw nothing bad about it except when it was too much and when drunkenness turned to violence and irresponsibility. Sawhill (2003) saw this as a manifestation of bad behavior that would exacerbate poverty. Adults should be seen as ideal role models for children to follow and change society's antagonistic approach to poverty reduction.

Parents of a poor family were not lazy as the children narrated. Through a projective technique by Donoghue (2000) applied by the researchers, the sad faces in the drawing of children signify emptiness but not laziness. Resource scarcity was the reason why poor families had limited, if not nothing, to eat. They worked possibly hard to feed their children. But due to limited resources, they resorted to alternative income generation. Wives would contribute to the household income by farming or doing the laundry of their neighbors. Because children were attending school, they had the notion that they could elevate their current situation if they finished their studies and land a stable job to help provide the needs of their families. At a young age, they already felt helpless in the situation.

On Adolescents' Aspirations

Adolescents had very high aspirations that they, through their interest and dedication, would be able to elevate their economic condition. They agreed that education was the key to escape poverty. However, the majority admitted that they skipped classes sometimes especially when they do not have allowance. The males would be absent when they were asked to help fish with their parents, having no choice.

The male adolescents also engaged in occasional binge drinking and smoking for these were needed in their work. Boys smoked to drive mosquitoes at night. They drank *tuba*, believing that it gave them strength and endurance at work. Girls, on the contrary, admitted that when an opportunity such as marrying a foreigner opens, they

would leave the island and even quit schooling. Generally, they wanted to improve their living condition by any way possible. They were very optimistic that they could achieve it, but as to how, they were still uncertain.

On Work Ethics

Society taught people that work should be regarded as a priority, working long hours and obeying authority. The researchers agreed on the same as exemplified by Singaporeans, Koreans and Japanese who possess ideal work ethics and who were able to sustain their budding economy. The reverse, though, exists among Filipinos. According to some notion, the Filipino indolence prevents us from rising towards growth and development. For the poor, however, they worked to live instead of living to work. This deviation from the social conditioning may be good for them, but when they went beyond the limit, they became too irresponsible and unprofessional.

One example is during Sunday, day off. For most religious Filipinos, Sunday is the day of worship to God, the Sabbath. They usually spend the day attending mass at the church and bonding with the family. In the island, however, some priests could not celebrate mass due to bad weather or unavailable marine vessel that lay ministers were left to carry out religious activities. Most parishioners especially the not-so-religious ones had a different treatment toward the communion service officiated by the lay minister. So the villagers spent the day idle, and since they had nothing to do, they would drink and sing karaoke. The frolicsome

attitude most of the time compromised their work the following day.

IV. CONCLUSION

Poverty in Samar is a circumstance that is brought by several factors. The poor people of Samar were aware of their condition, but their lackluster efforts indicated that conditioning towards anti-poverty goals exists. Individualism and behavior are crucial factors to improve the condition of Samareños (locals). While the rich people are ideally creating strategies that would increase their richness, the poor surprisingly are doing the reverse. Behavior matters for without the proper mindset coupled with action and full idealism, the poor will remain in their destitute condition. Furthermore, learned helplessness is already felt among children and adolescents in the marginalized communities. This hindered the willingness to pursue economic alleviation.

Government subsidies cannot also guarantee a solution to the problem for any dole-out solutions is doomed to fail if it is not aligned to conditioning and orientation of right practices. Unless the Samareños change their ways and adopt more mainstream behaviors and public policies are designed to move them to this direction, poverty in Samar remains.

Hence, the theory on persistent poverty in Samar states that “the understanding of poverty in Samar is compositely marked by the conditioning mindset, the low education, the felt helplessness and the habits of the marginalized people.”

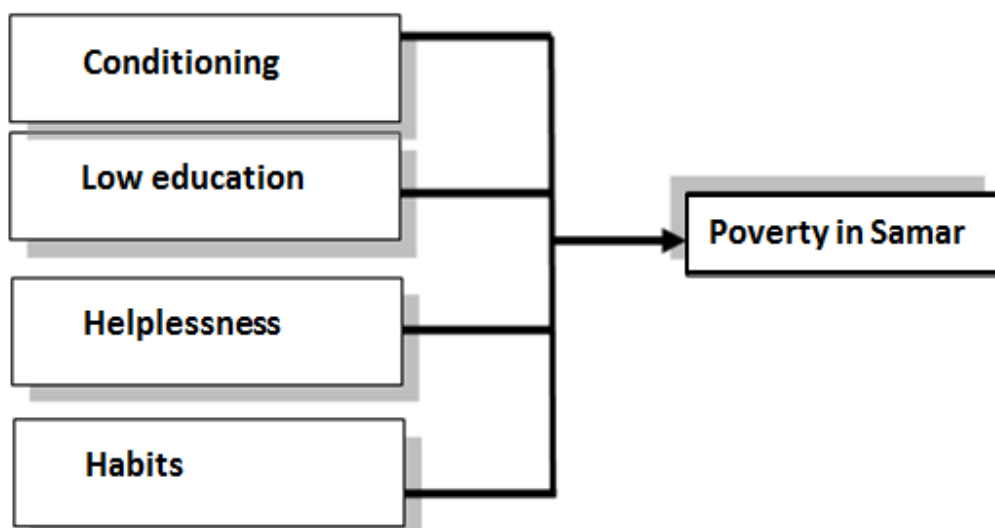


Figure 1. Irene’s Theory on Understanding Poverty in Samar

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