

Child Labor Practices in the Coastal and Island Villages of Samar

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Abstract

With the use of key informants, questionnaire and interview schedule for 191 respondents in the coastal and island communities in Catbalogan City, the study, conducted in the year 2010, revealed that children were actively involved in domestic and hazardous-related jobs as means to sustain their families' socio-economic survival. The condition of child laborers in the city has worsened in the past six years as shown in the younger average age of the respondents, as well as the reducing income earned from child labor. One of the major probable reasons cited is the dwindling catch from fishing in Samar. The typical child laborer is a male of 14 years, underweight, a 3rd child of a family of 8, a Roman Catholic, and earns an average monthly income of P844.63 by working during daytime, or sometimes at night for 7 hours without parental supervision. The child has an elementary level of education with average scholastic rating. His parents have attained elementary level of education as well, with a father engaged in fishing and a mother as housekeeper. Their family income can hardly provide for even the basic needs of their family. Out-of-school children lose interest and are deprived of schooling as they are more attracted to the income derived from child labor to support their families.

Keywords: child labor, poverty, coastal villages, Samar, Catbalogan

I. INTRODUCTION

This is a follow-up study of Casiño (2004) about child labor practices in Catbalogan. The Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) reported that the volume of production of commercial fishing in Samar Province has since the year 2007, tremendously reduced by an annual average of 8.33% (BAS). In the study of Casiño (2004), majority of parents of children doing labor came from the marginalized sector such as fishing. The dwindling catch may have worsened their state, thus this study.

The objectives of the study were the following: 1) What is the profile of the respondents as grouped into (a) in school (b) not schooling and (c) drop-out exposed to child labor relative to their bio-physical and socio-economic characteristics? 2) What types of child labor activities are practiced? 3) What is the attitude of the three groups of respondents towards schooling? 4) What are the reasons or causes of child labor practices? 5) What are the problems encountered by the respondents?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational method of research, particularly using the survey technique as well as some key informants. It used a purposive sampling technique as children would either stay at their workplace or linger around the locale. Del Rosario (2001) pointed out that studies on child labor tended to be hidden, seasonal, multiple, and migratory. Thus, it would be difficult to ascertain the population of the respondents, nor determine the sample size. A developed and validated questionnaire, weighing scale, and steel tape facilitated in obtaining data from 173 child respondents. Analysis through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software computed the mean, standard deviation, Spearman's rho and chi-square of the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that younger children are getting more engaged in labor nowadays than 6 six years ago. This implied that the economic difficulty of the recent times is becoming more severe as to suffer even younger children to find means for their survival. Sakellariou (2004) earlier confirmed that the average age of child laborers in Eastern Visayas was 13.6 in the year 1999. The overall mean BMI of 17.01 indicates that the children are malnourished. BMI is a indicator of the health status of the child where children with a BMI of 18 and below are considered underweight or emaciated (Tan-Ting and Lido, 2010).

Respondents' overall average income derived from child labor was peg at Php844.63 (or Php506.78 per NSO computation of the periodic purchasing power of the peso [PPP]) that is lower than Php511.43 in 2004. The respondents' average family income of Php3,382.15 or Php2,749.35 (per NSO's

PPP) is considered very low compared to the national average family income at Php17,166.66 (Ericta, 2011). Thus, poverty family poverty causes child labor incidence (Del Rosario and Bonga, 2001; World Bank 2003).

The average family size of 7.72 is considered above the average size of a Filipino family which is currently 5 (Yu, 2011), and such a big family can overburden a family's breadwinner and therefore would compel other members, including children, to share in the responsibility in feeding the whole family. The birth order of the three groups of respondents was 3.38 or 3. In Casiño's study, it was the 2nd child. This change implies that younger children in the siblings are gradually pushed into child labor in the recent times.

The average number of hours/day spent by the respondents in working was 7.18, which means that they could already work almost full time (i.e. 8 hours). Further, being an out-of-school child could have more time for work, than being a drop-out or in-school. This implies that engaging in child labor is the possible reason for children to leave school. Almost half of the children suffer to work in the evening, a time when they are supposed to be with their families at home and to have a rest overnight.

Forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents have reached elementary level of education, and 40% high school level. It implied that child laborers have fairly low educational attainment. Their average scholastic rating was 82.09.

Most of the respondents' fathers reached elementary level of education with 82 or 48.2%. A father's educational attainment declines from the elementary down to the college level, wherein only 4 or 2.4% able to finish college degree while mothers educational attainment reaches only to

Table 1.
Distribution of the Respondents Selected Profile Along the Three
Groups of Respondents

Variable	Out-of-School	Drop-out	In-School	Mean	SD
Age	15.03	14.43	12.80	13.73	2.75
BMI	18.24	17.03	16.21	17.01	3.83
Personal Income*	1229.50	743.57	614.03	844.63	1024.62
Average Rating	81.65	84.91	81.93	82.09	3.77
Family Income*	4164.26	3837.5	2885.41	3382.15	3046.87
Family Size	7.68	7.71	7.76	7.72	2.72
Birth Order	3.25	3.21	3.49	3.38	2.04
No. Work-hours/day	9.89	5.92	5.55	7.18	4.46

elementary level of education with 69 or 39.4%. This data gradually declines to college where only 2 or 1.1% can graduate. It implied that both parents of the child laborers do not have enough education, a condition that deprives them of access to better economic opportunities. This may also have contributed to the poverty of their family and, thus, forced the children into child labor. Sakellariou found that education of both parents has strong effect on both schooling and work decisions for the children, where the more educated the parents are, the more the children would attend school and less working.

Fathers' occupation of fishing (35.6%), farming (24.3%), tricycle driving (10.2%), and such other marginal occupations are not sustainable and cannot provide a stable income to the households. Likewise, mothers' occupations as housewives (38.4%), farming (17.1%), and laundering (11%) do not provide sufficient income to sustain such a family size, and therefore, could be a factor contributing to the indigence of the family of the child laborers.

Majority of the respondents belong to the Roman Catholic religion with 177 or 93.7%. The rest subscribe to Born Again with 8 or 4.2%, Baptist with 2 or 1.1%, Iglesia ni Cristo with 1 or 0.5%, and Islam

with 1 or 0.5%.

Sixty-one point thirty-six percent (61.36%) of the respondents from the three groups had no parental supervision while working, compared to those that had (37.8%). This data indicates that the majority of the children are working, left alone by their parents or elders. This situation is considered perilous to the child laborer who, being of tender ages, could be exposed to hazards in their working environment. This, in effect, violates the Anti-Child Labor Law (Philippine Republic Act 9231).

Child labor activities were mostly concentrated in New Mahayag with 41 or 21.1%, Downtown area—30 or 15.5%, Public Market—29 or 15%, and at the sea where they go fishing—24 or 14%. Child laborers were also found in the barangays of Sierra Islands (Bagongon, Cinco, Monbon, and Rama)—25 or 12.9%, Barangay 3—1 or 0.5%, Barangay 7--1 or 0.5%, Capitol Park--1 or 0.5%, Downtown and Bunuanan--1 or 0.5%, Estaka--1 or 0.5%, Guindapunan—4 or 2.1%, Pier 1—6 or 3.1%, San Andres—3 or 1.6%, San Pablo—1 or 0.5%, San Roque—6 or 3.1%, San Vicente—1 or 0.5%, Silanga--1 or 0.5%, and Sto. Niño—3 or 1.6%.

New Mahayag is the Barangay where the filthy garbage dumpsite of Catbalogan is located, and where children work

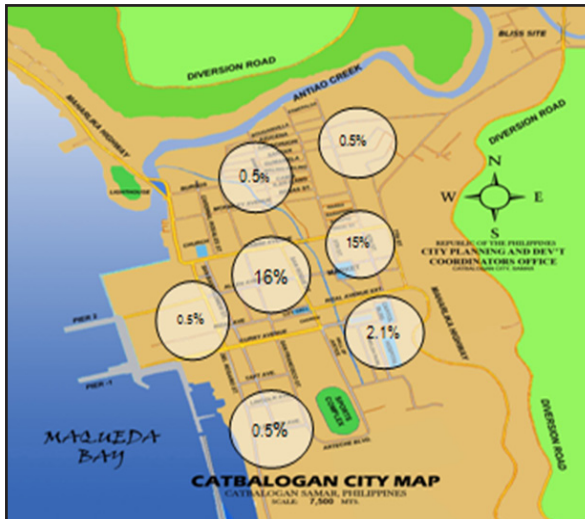


Figure 1. Map locating the workplace of respondents (Catbalogan City)

scavenging for recyclable materials such as plastic, bottle, metal, paper, and even discarded food.

The activity always engaged by child laborers were fishery-related (4.37), followed by hazardous-related (4.3), third by business-related, fourth by domestic-related, and lastly by agriculture-related (3.73). The fishing type of occupation reflects the geo-economic characteristic of the locale of the study. Hazardous-related activities include scavenging, begging and prostituting.

On the hypothesis whether significant differences exist among the three groups of respondents along the five child labor categories, Chi-square test results show that there were no significant differences among the three groups of respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis was hereby accepted. This implies that the respondents had fairly similar attitude towards child labor practices.

Family income of parents, their level of education, occupation, and coupled with large family size do not have significant relationships with the extent of child labor practices. Thus, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted. However, a significant relationship exists between personal income and the extent of child labor

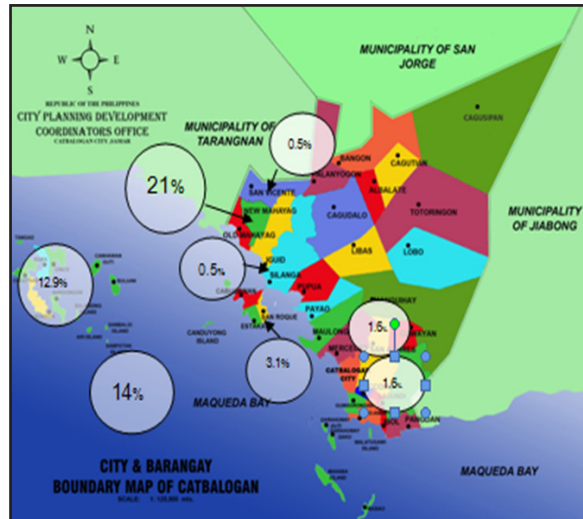


Figure 2. Map locating respondents at Catbalogan and coastal island communities

practice, which implies that the more the child goes to work, the higher would be his/her income.

An out of school group had low attitude toward schooling because of the higher income it derived from child labor. Conversely, the in-school group receives lower income but has higher attitude towards schooling (Fig. 2). Thus, the interest toward schooling declines among child laborers from the in-school group down to the out-of-school group. This supports the finding on the higher income of the out-of-school group which spends more time working rather than schooling. Thus, the attitude toward schooling was favorable for those who had lower income, for those with higher educational attainment, and for those with lesser workhours/day.

The primary reason or cause of child labor in Catbalogan is poverty. This phenomenon is characterized by contributory factors of low level of education of the respondents, their parents, and the kind of occupation their parents are engaged in. Likewise, other factors that could lead to child labor are lack of programs from concerned institutions of society with regards to the provision of access to education to the indigent children. Access to education is not only a means of geographical

access, but also economic support for children who are unable to go to school, e.i. Provision for school materials, books, uniform, transport fare, and allowance for snacks.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Child labor in Catbalogan has worsened and were younger in ten years. Most of the child laborers are engaged in domestic type including hazardous-related jobs. Child laborers are mostly doing scavenging specifically in the city's dumpsite. There are also juvenile fishers, however, would always engage in their occupation rather exclusively, compared to the other child laborers. They earn less than PhP 1000 per month. Their parents are engaged in fishing while the mother is a housewife and together has family income of a little more than PhP 3000. Children are working to augment their respective family income but are still short to live a decent life. Children who earn more are more encouraged to work.

The local government and local authorities should formulate a comprehensive development program particularly targeting the families of the child laborers. In lieu of having children engaged into labor activities, the City Government should prioritize the inclusion of them and their families in the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) of the government.

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