



Psychological challenges of coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile, cabuyao, Laguna

Jasmin T Batayen ^{1*}, Aira Jane V Cerino ², Kyle Abegail Maagma ³, Rosemarie M Miano ⁴, Jinky C Malabanan ⁵
¹⁻⁵ College of Education, Pamantasan ng Cabuyao, Philippines

* Corresponding Author: **Jasmin T Batayen**

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Abstract

This research informs readers with information about the psychological challenges of coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile, Cabuyao, Laguna. This study takes a phenomenological approach within a qualitative methodology, with the primary goal of explaining the current issue and attempting to determine, describe, or identify what it is through data collection. The researchers used a non-probability sampling strategy known as purposive sampling, in which researchers chose study participants based on their best judgment. The ten (10) coffee farmers were chosen based on their Basic Psychological Needs Scale scores. The data was collected through a face-to-face interview as well as a semi-structured qualitative interview with open-ended questions. To gather more information, the researchers also used "follow-up" questions to dig deeply into the coffee farmers' answers in the interview. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used in this study as a data analysis method. Three (3) superordinate themes were formed based on the data gathered which were the following: (a.) stress and related concern, (b.) lack of mental health awareness, and (c.) coping and management of coffee farmers.

Keywords: Psychological challenges, coffee farmers, qualitative research, interpretative phenomenological analysis

1. Introduction

Our society would not be what it is today without the farmers who play such an important role in it. They are the ones who give us all of the food we consume. As a result, farmers are the sole source of food for the enormous community. A country will always have a distinct identity, no matter how big or small it is. Coffee farmers are one of the important contributors to our community. They are the people who work on the farm to process and harvest coffee beans. They have the accountability to ensure the quality and consistency of coffee cherries, as well as their efficiency and effectiveness of their farming practices, which supports the entire supply chain (Earth-I team, 2022) ^[3]. Coffee farmers have been among the most useful people. In the Philippines, places like Ilocos, Bicol, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, and portions of Visayas are some of the places where coffee is farmed. In terms of the largest coffee-production areas in the country, Southern Tagalog and Northern Mindanao are very well-known. In the city of Cabuyao located in the province of Laguna, locals in Brgy. Casile started coffee farming only for their consumption. However, residents there soon realize the growing industry of coffee farming prompts them to make this their source of income.

Coffee farming is a difficult job and farmers can experience psychological challenges in their work. Psychological challenges are the difficulties and impediments to an individual's mental health (Igi-Global, 2022) ^[12]. Coffee farming can be an uncertain life filled with psychological challenges. One of the primary reasons harvest times can be so stressful is that farmers must frequently leverage a large amount of money upfront in order to pay for equipment, seeds, and so on, with the goal of recouping the money after selling their harvest (Friedman, 2019) ^[4]. Modern intensive agriculture has resulted in abnormal stresses, depression, and instability in the lives of farmers (Padhy & Raju, 2019) ^[8].

According to the article titled Rural Response to Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Rural Health Information Hub, 2021), farmers and ranchers in the United States have difficult jobs that are frequently exacerbated by economic uncertainty, vulnerability to weather events, and isolation.

Rural agricultural communities may also have constrained access to healthcare and mental health services, making it difficult for farm and ranch families to get help when they are suffering from extreme stress, anxiety, depression, or another mental health crisis. Farmers and ranchers have faced significant economic stressors in recent years, including falling commodity prices, natural disasters that have harmed crop yields and reduced herds and flocks, rising farm debt, labor shortages, and trade disputes. Whereas financial concerns are a significant factor influencing farmer stress, they are not the only ones. Addressing psychological challenges is critical so that farmers can successfully navigate other stressors in their daily lives. People who are under a lot of stress or who have psychological challenges may find it difficult to maintain healthy relationships, succeed at work, or manage the demands of their daily lives. In the Philippines, mental illness is the third most common disability. Suicide rates are estimated to be 3.2 per 100,000 people, though this figure could be higher due to underreporting or misclassification of suicide cases as 'undetermined deaths' (Martinez, *et al.* 2020).

According to an article titled "Address farmers' mental health" (The Manila Times, 2022), Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat of the Magsasaka partylist introduced Resolution 2061, which directs the House Committee on Health and other committees to investigate the rising rate of suicide among farmers. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 1,722 Filipino farmers committed suicide between 2016 and 2020. Cagayan Valley, Central Visayas, Ilocos, Calabarzon, Western Visayas, and Central Luzon have seen a 7 to 11% increase in cases. Cabatbat regards this as a public health issue that must be addressed immediately. Furthermore, the Magsasaka party list seeks to develop a long-term program for the agricultural sector through a legislative agenda, a comprehensive strategy to provide psychological first aid training to selected village health professionals, and by making mental health services available, particularly in rural areas. One of the organizations working with the Magsasaka party list is the Medical Action Group (MAG). According to psychologist Edel Parducho of Medical Action Group (MAG), it is critical to bring health stress issues among farmers into the public eye in order to reduce stigma.

This study disseminates information to the readers with regard to the psychological challenges of coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile, Cabuyao, Laguna. With this line of thought, this study identifies what meaning may be formulated based on the coffee farmers' statements. This study identifies how coffee farmers handle their psychological challenges and aims to help address some of their psychological needs that will undoubtedly benefit coffee farmers' mental health.

2. Methodology

A. Research Design

This research employed a phenomenological approach within a qualitative method, with the primary goal of explaining the current issue and attempting to determine, describe, or identify what it is through the data collection process. This research design focuses on the problems that will be justified by the data gathered, resulting in a situation conclusion (Dudovskiy, 2018) [2].

A phenomenological method is most appropriate for investigating people's experiences and opinions and understanding the context in which they occur. This design

starts with a research question or a researcher's interest and then provides them with the intention of employing various strategies (such as interview diaries and written accounts) to gain a more visible understanding of this phenomenon. Finally, it perceives the coffee farmers' firsthand experiences, perspectives, and feelings (Wilson, 2015) [13]. To define the significance of people's life experiences of a concept or phenomenon, the researchers used a phenomenological research design, which focuses on identifying and analyzing respondents' responses as they experience a phenomenon.

B. Research Locale

The study is conducted at Brgy. Casile, City of Cabuyao in the province of Laguna. Barangay Casile is the farthest barangay located some twenty-three (23) kilometers uphill in the municipality of Cabuyao. It is located between two virgin tale rivers, Campana and Diezmo. Its terrain is mostly hilly, with abundant natural resources. Crops such as pineapple, banana, coconut, coffee, papaya root crops such as gabi (yam) and cassava, other leafy vegetables, and legumes grow abundantly. The richness of the soil in the area, combined with the cool climate, is very well complemented by hardworking and energetic community members.

C. Research Participants

Ten (10) coffee farmers from Brgy. Casile, City of Cabuyao, Laguna are the study's participants. The ten (10) coffee farmers were chosen based on their scores on the Basic Psychological Needs Scale. The researchers chose the farmers who had the highest and lowest scores at the mentioned scale as well as those who had been in the coffee farming at least 5 years.

D. Research Sampling

The researchers used a non-probability sampling strategy known as purposive sampling, in which researchers will use their own best judgment to select study participants. It is the deliberate selection of participants focusing on their ability to explain a particular theme, concept, or phenomenon. Rather than beginning with a predetermined sampling frame, purposeful sampling involves a systematic process of selecting research subjects. Purposive sampling is a technique used by researchers to select participants based on their specific knowledge of, and/or experience with, the topic of empirical inquiry (Robinson, 2014). It was chosen and used by the researchers to focus on and identify the specific individuals who are the coffee farmers which are the study's target participants.

E. Research Instrument

The Basic Psychological Needs Scale is a set of scales, some of which focus on overall need satisfaction and others on need satisfaction in particular domains (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The original scale, which was employed in this study, contained 21 items that related to the three requirements for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Interviews have been designed to gather more data from a smaller number of people, such as coffee farmers' attitudes, behaviors, and preferences. Thus, a semi-structured interview is conducted. The questions, nevertheless, are not in any particular order or word choice, which also include open-ended questions. It contained interview questions that are based on the research questions of the study. Open-ended questions give the coffee

farmers the independence to give the researchers any answer they want. It collects coffee farmers' opinions and thoughts, providing much deeper, more thorough, and often subjective information about the topic. This allowed the coffee farmers to elaborate as much as they wanted. Researchers also used "follow-up" questions to dig deep into the coffee farmers' answers in the interview to gather more information.

F. Data Gathering Procedure

In gathering data, the researchers first obtained written permission from the coffee farmers to perform this study. The researchers gathered data using an open-ended semi-structured interview, which offers coffee farmers the freedom and space to answer the questions in as much detail as they want, using recorders as a research tool that was subjected to validation to expertise. A face-to-face interview was conducted with the coffee farmers to assure the accuracy of the data collected from them. This takes into account their individual time constraints. The interview lasts approximately 10-20 minutes per participant. The researchers guarantee that the method used to collect data is accurate, consistent, and reliable. Following the selection of coffee farmers, the researchers conducted an interview to gather pertinent information. In addition, they provide coffee farmers with an informed consent form in order to obtain permission to collect data and information for the study. The interviews are conducted one at a time to protect the privacy of the selected coffee farmers and to avoid the spread of personal data. Researchers respectfully asked permission to record the entire interview, and after gathering the data, they evaluated, assessed, confirmed, and debriefed the interview to ensure its accuracy.

G. Data Analysis

The information from the interview was transcribed based on the data obtained. The researchers used interpretative phenomenological analysis to provide an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of the study's participants, which are coffee farmers. It creates an account of lived experience in its own terms as opposed to one that is dictated by theoretical preconceptions already in place, and it acknowledges that this is an interpretative endeavor because people are sense-making beings. It is explicitly idiographic in its dedication to thoroughly analyzing each case's experience before moving on to more general assertions. Examining complicated, ambiguous, and emotionally charged subjects is where IPA is really helpful (Smith & Osborn, 2014) ^[11].

H. Ethical Considerations

These interviews take place in Brgy. Casile, Cabuyao, Laguna, in the year 2022, with 10 coffee farmers as participants, the researchers adhered to the ethical standards to prevent data fabrication or falsification. They also elevate and secure the confidentiality and anonymity of the subjects. The researchers also allow individuals to withdraw from the study.

3. Result and Discussion

This chapter discusses the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered from the validated questionnaires administered to coffee farmers. In this study, ten (10) coffee farmers' from Brgy. Casile, City of Cabuyao, Laguna were chosen as participants. The involved coffee farmers were selected based on the results of their scores on the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (BPNS). The coffee farmers who had the highest and lowest scores on the mentioned scale were chosen, as well as those who had been working as farmers for more than twenty (20) years.

Table 1: Superordinate and Subordinate

| Superordinate Themes | Subordinate themes |
|---|--|
| Stress and Related Concern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental and Physical Stress Natural Disasters as Contributory of Stress |
| Lack of Mental Health Awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Knowledge Concerning Mental Health Absence of Mental Health Seminars |
| Coping and Management of Coffee Farmers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Market Exposure of Coffee Products Local Cooperative's Agriculture Support Family and Social Support |

In this research, there are three (3) clustered superordinate themes which discuss the psychological challenges encountered by coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile, Cabuyao, Laguna which are (1) stress and related concerns, (2) lack of mental health awareness, and (3) coping and management of coffee farmers. The theme defined mental and physical stress as one of the psychological challenges experienced by coffee farmers. It also described natural disasters as the main cause of stress according to the coffee farmers. The second

superordinate theme discussed the lack of mental health awareness of coffee farmers. Despite this, the coffee farmers stated that they have the willingness to learn more about mental health. Lastly, the third superordinate which is the coping and management have been identified as methods of stress management. It also shows the limited exposure of coffee products and the agricultural support of local cooperatives. It also described the coffee farmers' family and social support.

Table 2: Description of Stress and Related Concern

| Statements | Exploratory Comments | Emerging Themes | Subordinate Themes |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>"Syempre may mga negative na ano minsan kasi kapag ikaw ay stress... ang isip mo pa rin ay hindi kalmado, pati pisikal mo medyo apektado. tapos kung ikaw ay stress pa, kung ikaw ay ano hindi ka... komportable lalong pag-iisipan mo syempre apektado iyong kalagayan."</p> <p>"Minsan malungkot kasi wala kang aanihin."</p> <p>"Nakakadismaya kasi minsan sa loob ng isang taon ha ang daming bunga yung isang sanga niya talagang marami kang makukuha kapag inani m unti ang makukuha mo."</p> <p>"Kapag ka halimbawa dumating yung di inaasahan na kalamidad, bagyo, syempre ano ka non mai stress ka non kasi nga yung pananim mo."</p> | <p>They claimed that stress affects physical health.</p> <p>Feels frustrated due to lack of harvest.</p> <p>Feels disappointed.</p> <p>They experience stress because of natural calamities.</p> | <p>Stress affects physical health</p> <p>Frustration</p> | <p>Mental and Physical Stress</p> |
| <p>"Aba'y syempre kapag may ano, mga kalamidad, mga bagyo, ayang isang malaking hamon yan sa mga magsasaka ng kape, syempre nasisira, iyon."</p> <p>"Ah.. ang mga hamon, ay syempre pag magsasaka ka ang pinaka unang hamon diyan yung kakaharapin mo na problema yung mga sakuna. Tulad halimbawa bagyo."</p> <p>"Ah marami. Maraming... marami kasing challenges ang ano... kahit ganyan lang tignan natin ang pagsasaka. Sa ngayon marami talagang ano, marami talagang kalaban, may peste, may kalamidad, andoon e. Tapos ang market andyan din."</p> | <p>Occurrence of calamities like storms acts as a challenge for the coffee farmers.</p> <p>Storms are one of the problems.</p> <p>Pests and calamities.</p> | <p>Occurrence of Natural Disasters</p> <p>Calamity</p> | <p>Natural Disasters as Contributory of Stress</p> |

Farm-related stress, also known as farm stress, is experienced by coffee farmers due to the unique challenges they face in agriculture. Factors such as long working hours, exhaustion, and emotional strain contribute to their stress. Natural disasters like typhoons and volcanic eruptions worsen the situation by destroying crops and reducing harvests. Farmers try to remain optimistic and find immediate solutions to

alleviate their stress. Climate change, pests, pesticides, price volatility, and crop losses also negatively affect farmers' mental health. Physical symptoms like headaches and back issues, as well as emotional symptoms such as restlessness and worry, are common. The absence of a market for their products adds to their stress. Farming, which was once enjoyable, has become increasingly difficult for farmers.

Table 3: Description of Mental Health Awareness

| Statements | Exploratory Comments | Emerging Themes | Subordinate Themes |
|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| <p>"Ideya? Wala."</p> <p>"Ay wala naman akong ano e, malaano sa ganyan e."</p> <p>"Ano ba, parang wala. Wala akong maisip."</p> <p>"Wala na akong nalalaman, yun laang konting ang alam ko na dahil di na ako makapasok ng paaralan."</p> <p>"Sabagay, hindi naman akong ano... kung kalusugang pangkaisipan..."</p> | <p>Has no idea of what mental health is.</p> <p>Unaware and cannot give any idea about it.</p> <p>Cannot really think of anything about it.</p> <p>They do not know anything about it because he can't go to school anymore.</p> <p>For them, they had no idea about it.</p> | No Awareness me | Lack of Knowledge Concerning Mental Health |
| <p>"Hindi pa, wala pa. Kalimitang nadadaluhan ko ay agricultural session."</p> <p>"Ahh hindi pa, panay... sa pagkakape lang ang naaattendan kong seminar, sa mental health wala pa."</p> <p>"Ay hindi pa po mam yun lang po yung sa seminar ng pagtatanim pagano ano pag dito saamin sa may dito sa casile sa samahan ng magsasaka ayan meron kaming mga ano, paano pagtatanim ng mga mushroom."</p> <p>"Ah hindi pa."</p> | <p>They have never been to a mental health seminar, and usually they attend agricultural sessions.</p> <p>They only went to coffee farming seminars; nothing about mental health yet.</p> <p>They only attend seminars about farming.</p> <p>Have not yet attended a mental health seminar.</p> | Farm-Related Seminars | Absence of Mental Health Seminars |

Coffee farmers lack knowledge and awareness about mental health due to the stigma and absence of government-sponsored seminars. The Lusog Isip mobile app was developed to address mental health concerns, but face-to-face seminars are still necessary, especially for older farmers. Despite the lack of awareness, coffee farmers express willingness to learn about mental health and attend seminars. Prioritizing mental health education is crucial for helping

farmers cope with stress and improving their outlook on work. Promoting awareness of farm-related stress and providing tools to manage it are important for enhancing mental health in agricultural communities. Additionally, there is a reciprocal relationship between the economy and mental health, as mental health problems can impact economic activity in a country.

Table 4: Description of Coping and Management of Coffee Farmers

| Statements | Exploratory Comments | Emerging Themes | Subordinate Themes |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>"Aba ay unang una pag ika'y magsasaka lalakas ang katawan mo... at tsaka talaga yung health benefits mga nakakakin mo walang halong chemicals... yan ang unang una."</p> <p>"Ah... unang una kung kaya ka nagtatanim para... may makain diba? Pagkain nga e, ikaw magpo-produce ng pagkain... ah... lalo na sa kape... yun lagi pagkagising mo kape, kailangan ng tao ang kape."</p> <p>"Para lang mam ano di ka na lagi bumibili ng kung ano ano may tanim ka na at di mo na kailangan ng ano ng perang pambili mo na aanihin."</p> | <p>He shared what kind of benefits that he can get as a farmer.</p> <p>Explaining that they continue farming for personal consumption as well as for the welfare of others.</p> <p>They do not need to buy because they have their own.</p> | <p>Coffee Farmers as Producers</p> <p>Consumer</p> | <p>Limited Exposure of Coffee Products</p> |
| <p>"Aba'y syempre kapag ano, kaya naman aming napag-anohan sa pagtatanim ng kape noon, mahal na mahal, mahal ipag-benta ang kape noong una. Tsaka hanggang sa ngayon naman, lalo pang ngayong kailangan dito sa kooperatiba ang mga kape."</p> <p>"Sa isang banda ay malaking tulong ang pagkakape dahil nagkaroon dito ng kooperatiba syempre di na kami nagdadala sa malayo nandito na kami nagdadala ayun ang kagandahan ng pagtatanim ng kape dito, noong araw wala yun."</p> | <p>Coffee has become increasingly expensive since then, so they have continued to expand, partly due to the cooperative's need for it.</p> <p>Coffee farming results in the formation of a coffee cooperative, which has the advantage of being located nearby.</p> | <p>Creation of Cooperative</p> <p>Trust in Cooperative</p> | <p>Local Cooperative's Agriculture Support</p> |
| <p>Syempre e yung, ang nagiging epekto nya sakin... manatili akong... may interes at hangarin para ano... para... mapaunlad ang kapehan dahil andoon nga yung</p> | <p>Keeping the interest and desire for developing the coffee farm to help them particularly in the livelihood aspect.</p> | <p>Optimism</p> | <p>Family and Social Support</p> |
| <p>pananaw ko na masaring mas malaking may naitulong ito sa amin kung sakali, lalong lalo na sa pangkabuhayang aspeto kung paguusapan."</p> <p>"Iyon, yon ang parang nagbibigay pa rin sa akin na... o sige kahit mahirap tuloy lang baka sakaling... baka sakaling magtatagumpay sa huli o kaya kumbaga sa ano para ka ring tumataya dyan e."</p> <p>"Doon maligaya sa pagtatanim ih, mas maganda ang pagtatanim kasi ang magsasaka ang kalaban ay bagyo lang pero pag patuloy kang nagtatanim patuloy ang iyong aanihin."</p> <p>"Yan... syempre kailangan din nga natin ang suporta nila, yun ang mga pangunahing ano natin suporta ng pamilya e."</p> <p>Wala, dinadamayan lang ako kapag malungkot.</p> <p>"tumululong, tulong tulong, paghahanap buhay yun lasang pagkatumulong, tulong, pasaka may depression tulong tulong din."</p> <p>"E di tinutulungan na lang nila kami sa ano... bago minsan sinasabihan nila "Hwag kang sa masayadong... ano pagtatrabaho, baka naman ang katawan e bumagsak". Ayon."</p> <p>"Sasabihin ano mama pagod ka nanaman, aba hindi eko napapagod bat kayo naguutos kung di kayo pagod edi ano kayo na gumawa, Ganun lang parang lang kayong magkakapatid."</p> | <p>Coffee farming gives them the fortitude to continue and still hope for success.</p> <p>Being happy as a result of planting, in addition to the belief that when something is planted, something will be harvested.</p> <p>Comforting when feeling sad.</p> <p>Assisting one another when one is feeling depressed.</p> <p>Must be balanced in work and to have an ample of rest.</p> <p>Telling individuals to take breaks and not force themselves to go to work when they're not feeling well.</p> | <p>Self-Actualize</p> <p>Family gives support</p> <p>Recommending That They Should Take a Break</p> <p>Acceptance of Reality</p> | |

Coffee farmers employ coping strategies to manage farming stress, such as accepting situations without solutions and finding alternatives. Mental stress can impact their physical health. Cooperatives and family support play a role in farmers' resilience. Seeking assistance from trusted sources is important. Awareness and education can help farmers handle stress. Positive thinking and active coping are effective strategies. Understanding the farming context is crucial, and support from families and professionals can provide comfort and inspiration.

4. Analysis

A. Conclusion

The main objective of this qualitative research was to find out the psychological challenges of coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile, Cabuyao, Laguna. The researchers wanted to gain more insight and knowledge regarding this topic because there is very small information about it. The results showed that coffee farmers experience mental and physical stress with natural disasters as their main stressor. The study also discovered that coping and managing have been applied by coffee farmers as a method on managing their stress. Furthermore, it was discovered that some of them are passively accepting their current situation because they have no other option for addressing their issues.

A lack of mental health awareness was also determined. The majority of the coffee farmers also stated that they had not been able to attend any seminars regarding it, since only agricultural seminars had been present in their area. Therefore, there is a big need for seminars and training pertaining to mental health to inform and guide farmers regarding their psychological well-being. The majority of the participants stated that they are willing to attend such seminars since they acknowledge the importance of taking care of one's mental health. Lastly, coffee farmers indicated that it will be better if the seminars are conducted near them. This study also discovered the influence of coffee farming on farmers. It is important to them because farming gives them stronger bodies and allows them to eat healthy, chemical-free foods. This study also discovered that coffee farmers found their self-worth in the coffee they produce, that they value what they do, and that they continue to farm coffee because they believe they are needed. Farming provides farmers with happiness and satisfaction. Lastly, this research concluded that coffee farmers need farming assistance that will greatly benefit their mental health. Support from family members and national and local governments are greatly needed.

5. Discussion

The results revealed three (3) superordinate themes and seven (7) subordinate themes. The superordinate and subordinate themes are briefly outlined here.

Stress and Related Concern. This study identified that coffee farmer's experience mental and physical stress. Natural disasters are found to be the main source of stress for coffee farmers. Most coffee farmers were stressed when natural disasters destroyed their crops, drastically reducing their harvests and negatively impacting their livelihood.

Lack of Mental Health Awareness. The study also found out that the majority of the participants lack mental health awareness and that they had not been able to attend any seminars since only agricultural seminars are conducted in their area. However, many of the participants are willing to be educated regarding mental health and they also somehow

understand its importance.

Coping and Management of Coffee Farmers. The majority of the coffee farmers claimed that in times of distress, they immediately search for other alternatives to somehow solve their problems. Others are just accepting the situation they are in because they have no choice or options on how they will solve their problems as their way of coping and managing. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers proposed a mental health intervention program that aims to provide mental health activities to address the psychological challenges of the coffee farmers in Brgy. Casile covering Physical, Behavioral, and Emotional. Further areas such as Environmental, Livelihood, and Transportation/Mobility were also included. Information such as objectives, time frame, budget requirement, person involved, and success indicator are also elaborated.

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