



## Exploring the Lived Experiences of Kasama Rice Farmers Amidst Urbanization

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### Abstract

Urbanization presents significant challenges to Kasama rice farmers in Cabuyao, Laguna, including limited farmland and socioeconomic difficulties. This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of these farmers amidst urbanization. Five participants from Barangays Mamatid, Gulod, Baclaran, Marinig, and San Isidro were interviewed using a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore their personal experiences and perspectives.

Upon examination using a thematic data analysis, it is revealed that urbanization has greatly impacted farmers, leading to farmland loss, livelihood uncertainty, depletion of natural resources, and reduced motivation to continue farming. These challenges highlight the tension between urban expansion and the preservation of agricultural land. The study also explored farmers' emotional connection to their land, how urbanization has reshaped their identity, and its effects on their cultural and economic roles.

Despite these challenges, the farmers demonstrated resilience and strong dedication to maintaining their way of life, which is vital for food security and cultural heritage. This research underscores the importance of sustainable urban development in safeguarding farmland and supporting farming communities. It calls for stakeholder collaboration to develop solutions that protect both the environment and the livelihoods of Kasama farmers.

**Keywords:** Kasama rice farmers, Urbanization, Sharecropping, Place Attachment, Lived experiences

### 1. Introduction

Urbanization has long been a driver of economic growth and societal transformation. Defined as the increasing movement of people from rural to urban areas, urbanization brings significant changes in land use, employment, and community structures (National Geographic Society, 2023). While it fosters economic development, infrastructure improvements, and modernization, it also introduces challenges, particularly for agricultural communities. The rapid expansion of urban areas has led to the conversion of agricultural lands into residential, commercial, and industrial zones, leaving farmers struggling to maintain their livelihoods (United Nations, 2019). Farmers, especially those who do not own the land they cultivate, face economic instability, urbanization encroaches on their traditional farming spaces (Olumba et al., 2021).

The Philippines, a country heavily reliant on agriculture, has witnessed significant agricultural land loss due to urban expansion. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2019) reported a steady increase in urbanization, with the proportion of the population residing in urban areas rising from 45.3% in 2010 to 51.2% in 2015. This urban growth has come at the expense of agricultural lands, forcing many farmers into economic uncertainty and pushing them out of their ancestral farming lands (Factura et al., 2022) <sup>[5]</sup>. The displacement of Filipino farmers due to land conversion has resulted in lower crop production, reduced income, and a weakened agricultural sector, posing a threat to the country's food security (Saavedra, 2023) <sup>[10]</sup>.

One of the most vulnerable groups affected by urbanization is the Kasama rice farmers, sharecroppers who cultivate land they do not own.

Sharecropping, a practice deeply rooted in Philippine history, has provided a means of survival for landless farmers since the Spanish colonial period (Causo, 2019) <sup>[3]</sup>. However, urban expansion has made this system increasingly unsustainable, as landowners sell their properties for urban development, leaving Kasama farmers with limited land access and dwindling economic opportunities (Camus, 2024) <sup>[2]</sup>. The loss of farmland not only threatens their livelihood but also disrupts their social and cultural ties to the land, a connection deeply ingrained in their identity as farmers (Beckers et al., 2020) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Cabuyao City, Laguna, is a prime example of a rapidly urbanizing area with a strong agricultural background. Once an area rich in rice paddies and farming communities, Cabuyao has undergone significant urban expansion, driven by industrialization and commercial development. As the city continues to urbanize, Kasama rice farmers face increasing challenges, including loss of farmland, lack of irrigation access, and financial instability (Olumba et al., 2021). The encroachment of urbanization into traditional farming spaces has forced these farmers to adapt, relocate, or abandon their profession entirely, leading to a significant decline in agricultural activity in the region (Factura et al., 2022) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Given the complex challenges faced by Kasama rice farmers, this study aims to explore their lived experiences amidst urbanization in Cabuyao City, Laguna. By understanding their struggles, coping mechanisms, and perspectives on land conversion, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and urban planners.

The study will examine the economic, social, and emotional impacts of urbanization on these farmers, shedding light on the broader implications of urban expansion on agricultural communities.

Thus, the research aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the essence of the lived experiences of Kasama rice farmers amidst urbanization in Cabuyao City, Laguna?
- How do Kasama rice farmers describe their lived experiences amidst urbanization?
- What key themes emerged from the lived experiences of Kasama rice farmers?
- What can be developed based on these experiences to aid farmers in navigating urbanization?

Through qualitative analysis, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of how urbanization is reshaping the agricultural landscape in Cabuyao City and how Kasama farmers struggle, adapt, and persist in the face of these changes. The findings will serve as a foundation for future policy recommendations, aiming to strike a balance between urban development and agricultural sustainability in rapidly urbanizing regions.

## 2. Methodology

### A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which aims to understand human experiences and social phenomena through an in-depth exploration of personal narratives and perspectives (Ugwu & Eze, 2023) <sup>[12]</sup>. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating how individuals interpret their experiences, making it an ideal approach for analyzing the lived experiences of Kasama rice farmers amidst urbanization

in Cabuyao City, Laguna.

This research focused on gathering rich, descriptive data through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to openly discuss their experiences while providing flexibility for researchers to explore emerging themes (Stewart, 2024) <sup>[11]</sup>. The study aimed to identify patterns, emotions, and coping mechanisms among Kasama rice farmers affected by urban expansion. To ensure reliability and validity, multiple data sources—including field observations and interview transcriptions—were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives (Kiger & Varpio, 2020) <sup>[7]</sup>.

The barangay officials of Cabuyao City were formally contacted, and authorization was granted to conduct research in the community. Before proceeding with data collection, the informed consent process was carried out to ensure that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, potential risks, and confidentiality measures. The research process included participant selection, initial interviews, thematic analysis, and follow-up discussions to refine and validate the findings.

### B. Research Locale

This research was conducted in Cabuyao City, Laguna, Philippines, a rapidly urbanizing city with a long history of rice farming. The city comprises 940.56 hectares of rice land, nearly half of its 43.30 square kilometers total land area (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022). Despite its agricultural background, Cabuyao has undergone significant urban development, leading to the displacement of many farming communities.

The study specifically focused on the barangays of Mamatid, Gulod, Baclaran, Marinig, and San Isidro, where Kasama rice farmers continue to cultivate land despite increasing urban pressures. These barangays were selected because of their historical reliance on rice farming and their proximity to urban expansion projects.

### C. Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was Kasama rice farmers in Cabuyao City, Laguna. The researchers employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where participants are deliberately selected based on specific criteria. The selection criteria for this study were as follows:

1. Participants must be actively engaged in rice farming within Cabuyao City.
2. Participants must be Kasama farmers (i.e., landless sharecroppers working on leased land).
3. Participants must have at least five years of farming experience in the area.
4. Participants must be willing to share their lived experiences through interviews.

A total of five (5) participants were selected, one from each of the barangays included in the study. This sample size was deemed sufficient for qualitative saturation, ensuring that no new themes emerged beyond the collected data.

### D. Research Participants

The participants of this study were Kasama rice farmers who rely on sharecropping as their primary livelihood. These farmers were chosen because of their direct experiences with land displacement, economic hardship, and adaptation

strategies amidst Cabuyao's urbanization.

The age range of the participants varied, with most being middle-aged or elderly farmers who had been cultivating rice for decades. The participants also included both men and women, as farming in the Philippines often involves family labor dynamics (Factura et al., 2022) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### E. Research Instrumentation

The primary research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, developed to explore key themes related to urbanization's impact on Kasama farmers. The interview guide contained nine (9) open-ended questions, allowing for flexibility and depth in participants' responses.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, the interview questions were reviewed and validated by agricultural experts and social science researchers. Additionally, audio recordings and field notes were used to capture non-verbal cues, such as tone, facial expressions, and gestures, providing deeper insights into participants' emotions and perspectives.

### F. Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process followed a systematic approach to ensure accuracy and ethical compliance:

1. **Official Authorization:** A formal request was submitted to barangay officials for permission to conduct research.
2. **Participant Selection:** Farmers meeting the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate.
3. **Informed Consent:** Participants were briefed on the study's objectives, confidentiality policies, and voluntary participation rights.
4. **Initial Interviews:** Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a conversational format, encouraging participants to share their experiences freely.
5. **Thematic Analysis:** Interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns in farmers' responses.
5. **Follow-up Interviews:** Additional interviews were conducted to validate themes and clarify any ambiguous responses.
6. **Final Data Coding:** Themes were categorized into subthemes and superordinate themes, ensuring consistency and accuracy in data interpretation.

### G. Ethical Consideration

To uphold research ethics and participant rights, the study followed the principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation (Data Privacy Act of 2012). Participants were fully informed about the nature of the study and had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Additionally, personal identifiers were removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities. The data were stored securely and were accessible only to authorized researchers.

### 3. Results

This chapter presents the results of findings, analysis. Additionally, personal identifiers were removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities. The data were stored securely and were accessible only to authorized researchers.

**Table 1:** Emerging Themes

Main Theme	Subtheme
Negative Effects of Urbanization	Loss of Farmland
	Uncertainty in Livelihood
	Loss of Natural Resources
Positive Effects of Urbanization	Agricultural Assistance and Support
Loss of Identity of Farmer	Loss of Community Role
	Structural Changes in Farmland
Access to Support and Services	Support and Services from the Government
Barriers to Agricultural Continuity	Lack of Motivation for Farming
	Uncertainty About the Future
Attachment to the Land	Love for Family
	Desire to Fight for the Land
	Sadness Over the Loss of Land
	Acceptance of Reality
Confronting the Challenges of Urbanization	Resilience of Farmers
	Dedication to Family
	Acceptance of Lack of Control
Emotional Connection	Crop Care
	Sacrifices for Family
	Challenges Brought by Pests
	Acceptance of Inspiration from Farming Reality
	Stress and Emotional Hardship
Loss of Rice Fields	Lack of Support from the Government
	Waning Hope
	Changes in Livelihood of Rice Farmers in the Community
Effects of Urbanization	Water Scarcity
	Loss of Farmlands
	Changes in Farming System
	Effects of Environmental Changes
Pride in Being a Farmer	Sacrifices and Perseverance
	Knowledge and Skills
	Farmers' Association
	Dignity of Farming

Our study focuses on understanding the lived experiences and realities faced by Kasama rice farmers as urbanization continues to reshape the city of Cabuyao. Recognizing the significant role these farmers play in sustaining local agriculture and food security, we sought to uncover how urban expansion affects them. Guided by a qualitative phenomenological approach, we conducted in-depth interviews with Kasama farmers from various barangays, including Mamatid, Gulod, Baclaran, Marinig, and San Isidro. Through thematic analysis, we identified key themes that capture the profound impacts of urbanization on their lives and their responses to these challenges. Upon analysis, eleven (11) main themes and thirty-one (31) subthemes emerged.

#### 1. Negative Effects of Urbanization

In response to the first interview question, researchers were able to identify a two-sphered theme. This first sphere of the theme encompasses the negative effects of urbanization as expressed by the participants. This theme demonstrates how rapid urban expansion has significantly impacted farmers. The subtheme Loss of Farmland, as expressed by the participants, shares their frustration over agricultural lands being turned into residential and commercial spaces, leaving them with little to no space for farming. The subtheme Uncertainty in Livelihood, as expressed by the participants, conveys

that as cities grow and agricultural lands are turned into industrial or residential areas, farmers' traditional ways of life become increasingly fragile, and so do the participants' growing sense of insecurity regarding their livelihoods. The subtheme Loss of Natural Resources, as expressed by the participants, reveals their concern over the depletion of essential resources like water and fertile soil, forcing them to either adapt or let go of their livelihood.

## 2. Positive Effects of Urbanization

This second sphere of the theme encompasses the positive effects of urbanization as expressed by the participants. The theme reveals that despite the difficulties, urbanization has provided some benefits. The subtheme Agricultural Assistance and Support, as expressed by the participants, tells that despite the problems an increasingly urbanized environment faces, Kasama rice farmers have received various forms of agricultural assistance. As urban development reshapes their environment, the participants express gratitude for assistance and resources from government bodies, especially the Department of Agriculture.

## 3. Loss of Identity as a Farmer

This theme reflects the impact of urbanization on the Kasama rice farmers in Cabuyao City, Laguna, capturing the challenges of losing their traditional role. This primary theme encompasses specific sub-themes that delve into the complexities of the farmers' experiences and perspectives. The subtheme Loss of Community Role, as expressed by the participants, reflects their feelings of being less valued in their communities as farming becomes less central to the local economy. The subtheme Structural Changes in Farmland, as expressed by the participants, shares their disappointment as farmlands are transformed into urban developments, forcing them to abandon or modify traditional farming practices, which distances them from their deep-rooted connection to the land.

## 4. Access to Support and Services

This theme has emerged, emphasizing the critical role of external assistance in the lives of Kasama rice farmers amidst the challenges brought about by urbanization. The subtheme Support and Services from the Government, where participants convey their appreciation for government assistance, such as agricultural subsidies, training, and infrastructure projects, which help them continue farming despite the pressures of urbanization. Participants highlighted how urbanization has led to improvements in agricultural support through government initiatives, such as the establishment of the Department of Agriculture (DA), which provides assistance and resources to farmers.

## 5. Barriers to Agricultural Continuity

As perceived by Kasama rice farmers amid ongoing urbanization in Cabuyao City, Laguna. This theme covers the various challenges farmers face that impact their ability to sustain agricultural activities within an increasingly urbanized environment. Within this theme, several key subthemes are identified. The subtheme Lack of Motivation for Farming, as expressed by the participants, reflects their growing discouragement as urbanization makes farming more difficult and less rewarding. The subtheme Uncertainty about the Future, as expressed by the participants, conveys their fear and

doubt about whether farming will still be a viable livelihood in the coming years. Participants highlighted the severe sense of instability and uncertainty that urbanization has brought to farming where they compared the past, when land tenure was secure and farming was regarded as long-term, steady employment, to the current situation, in which farmers suffer perpetual uncertainty.

## 6. Attachment to the Land

The emotional bond farmers have with the land they cultivate significantly influences their determination to keep farming, even in the face of urbanization. For many farmers, the land represents more than just a source of livelihood; it symbolizes tradition, history, and a sense of belonging. Despite the growing pressures of urban expansion, their emotional ties compel them to resist selling or abandoning their farms, fueling their commitment to preserving their way of life for future generations.

7. The subtheme Love for Family, as expressed by the participants, drives many farmers to persevere through tough times, working long hours and enduring hardships to provide for those they care about. This selfless dedication often involves prioritizing the needs of their children, grandchildren, and loved ones over their own, fueled by a desire to offer safety, stability, and a brighter future. The subtheme Desire to Fight for the Land, as expressed by the participants, reveals their strong determination to hold on to their farmland, seeing it as more than just a source of income but as a legacy to protect. The subtheme Sadness over the Loss of Land, as expressed by the participants, conveys the deep emotional and practical consequences farmers face when they lose their land, which represents far more than just a physical asset. The subtheme Acceptance of Reality, as expressed by the participants, shares how farmers, despite their emotional connection to the land, confront and adapt to the inevitable changes brought about by urbanization. Their reflections revealed a willingness to embrace situations beyond their control, such as the potential loss of farmland or shifting agricultural opportunities.

## 8. Confronting the Challenges of Urbanization

Urbanization introduces multifaceted challenges that compel Kasama rice farmers in Cabuyao City, Laguna, to adapt to significant transitions in their lives and livelihoods. These experiences are reflected to which highlights how they navigate and respond to the pressures of urban development while continuing their roles and responsibilities as farmers.

9. The subtheme Resilience of Farmers, as expressed by the participants, tells how resilience is at the heart of the farming life in Cabuyao, Laguna, as it is a quality that enables farmers to overcome the various challenges brought about by both natural and societal changes. The subtheme Dedication to Family, as expressed by the participants, shows how their struggles are driven by their desire to give their children a better future, often through education. Participants highlighted how this deep commitment to providing for their loved ones drives farmers to persevere through difficult circumstances, often prioritizing the needs of their family over personal comfort. The subtheme Acceptance



of Lack of Control, as expressed by the participants, shares their understanding that urbanization is beyond their power, but instead of resisting it completely, they find ways to cope and move forward.

#### 10. Emotional Connection

This theme emerged as participants spoke about their strong bond with the land they cultivate. It becomes a place where years of hard work, dedication, and care are invested, forming a deep, emotional connection. The subtheme Crop Care, as expressed by the participants, farmers discussed the deep sense of responsibility and emotional attachment, they have to the crops they nurture. Participants emphasized that crop care goes beyond routine tasks; it is a continuous process that demands focus, effort, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions. The subtheme of Sacrifice for Family became evident as farmers shared their deep sense of responsibility toward their loved ones. Many expressed how the desire to provide for their children and grandchildren drives them to continue farming, even in the face of physical challenges brought on by aging. The subtheme Challenges Brought by Pests, as expressed by the participants, conveys their distress when pests ruin their hard work, making them feel helpless. The subtheme Inspiration from Farming, as expressed by the participants, conveys the profound sense of fulfillment that comes from working closely with nature, nurturing growth, and supporting local communities. Many farmers draw motivation from their deep connection to the land and the crops they cultivate. The subtheme Stress and Emotional Hardship, as expressed by the participants, reveals their struggles with the unpredictable nature of farming, from financial worries to the physical toll of their labor.

#### 11. Loss of Rice Fields

The future of rice farming in Cabuyao, Laguna, is marked by uncertainty and change as farmers face the gradual loss of their fields. This shift is reflected in this theme, which highlights the concerns of farmers regarding the decline of their agricultural lands. The subtheme Lack of Support from the Government, as expressed by the participants, conveys their frustration over the insufficient policies and resources to protect farmlands and their livelihood. The subtheme Waning Hope, as expressed by the participants, tells of their growing uncertainty about farming's future, as they feel that urbanization is pushing them out of their way of life. The subtheme Changes in Livelihood, as expressed by the participants, shares how many have been forced to seek alternative work, even if it is unstable, just to make ends meet. In this, participants emphasized that while the shift towards industrialization could bring new job opportunities, it also represents a loss of the cultural and economic foundation that farming once provided.

#### 12. Effects of Urbanization

As urban areas expand, farmland is increasingly transformed into residential, commercial, or industrial zones, which creates various challenges for farmers. These challenges range from the direct loss of farmland to more indirect effects such as water scarcity, changes in farming practices, and broader environmental shifts linked to urban development. The subtheme Water Scarcity, where participants shared their experiences of declining water resources, which directly threaten their

ability to sustain farming. With growing competition for water from expanding cities and factories, farmers are left with limited access to this essential resource. This scarcity not only hampers their productivity but also underscores the broader challenge of balancing urban growth with the needs of rural farming communities.

13. The subtheme **Loss of Farmlands**, as expressed by the participants that there is a growing concern over the decreasing availability of farmland due to urbanization and land development. With less fertile land, farmers struggle to produce enough food to support their families and maintain their income. The subtheme **Changes in Farming Systems**, as expressed by the participants, reveals how they have had to change or let go of traditional farming methods to adjust to shrinking farmland. The subtheme **Environmental Changes**, as expressed by the participants, tells how urbanization has negatively affected farming conditions, making it harder to produce good crops. That these environmental disruptions complicate their ability to maintain healthy crops and threaten the stability of their livelihoods, making it harder for them to sustain traditional farming practices and their communities.

#### 14. Pride in Being a Farmer

The profession of rice farming in Cabuyao, Laguna, is a source of immense pride for its farmers, a sentiment that is deeply embedded in their daily lives and struggles. This sense of pride is captured in this theme, which reflects the dedication and hard work that define their approach to farming.

15. The subtheme Sacrifices and Perseverance, as expressed by the participants, conveys their pride in enduring the physical and emotional hardships of farming to provide for their families and communities. The subtheme Knowledge and Skills, as expressed by the participants, shares how they take pride in their deep knowledge of agriculture, seeing it as a valuable expertise that defines their identity. The subtheme Farmers' Associations, as expressed by the participants, tells of the sense of community they find in these groups, where they support and uplift each other. These kind organizations empower farmers to actively participate in decision-making processes that shape their livelihoods, address shared issues, and improve agricultural practice. The subtheme Dignity of Farming, as expressed by the participants, reflects on the pride farmers take in their essential role as providers of food and contributors to society's well-being. Despite economic challenges, many farmers uphold their work with respect, seeing it as a profession rooted in hard work, sustainability, and a profound connection to the land. For them, farming is not only a livelihood but a legacy passed down through generations, instilling pride in their contributions to the community and national food security.

#### 4. Discussion

The study found out how urbanization significantly impacted *Kasama* rice farmers in Cabuyao City, Laguna, disrupting traditional farming methods as industrial and residential developments took over farmlands. This shift not only affected their financial stability but also their deep emotional connection to the land, highlighting a broader narrative of struggle, adaptation, and resilience. Participants expressed common concerns, including the loss of farmland,

uncertainty in livelihood, diminishing identity as farmers, lack of motivation, stress, pest infestations, and insufficient government support. The dwindling farmland not only threatened their way of life but also put the future of local agriculture and generational farming at risk, as shifting cultural values and alternative job opportunities made farming less viable. Additionally, the study shed light on the emotional toll of farming, particularly the devastation farmers felt when pests ruined their crops, erasing months of hard work in an instant.

Additionally, it is also revealed that despite these challenges, *Kasama* rice farmers demonstrated resilience, deeply rooted in their commitment to providing for their families and preserving their livelihoods. Their determination pushed them to explore new farming techniques and income-generating strategies to secure their financial future. While the emotional burden of farming was significant, moments of perseverance and adaptation emerged, particularly through government initiatives that provided agricultural training and support. These findings underscored the urgent need to balance urban expansion with the protection of farmland and the well-being of farming communities.

Moreover, the farmers' connection to their land was not just practical but deeply tied to their identity and cultural heritage. Their experiences emphasized the importance of sustainable urban planning and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to ensure that urban growth does not come at the expense of agriculture, food security, and the farmers who sustain it. This is evident in the study by Giller et al. (2021), which emphasizes that as the global population continues to rise, the fight against hunger requires a sustained commitment to improving food production. Beyond simply growing nutritious crops, farming must also provide farmers with a stable livelihood while preserving the ecosystems that sustain agriculture. However, one of the most pressing challenges is ensuring the economic sustainability of farming, a concern that affects both local communities and nations worldwide. With increasing urbanization and shrinking farmland, making agriculture a viable and profitable profession is becoming increasingly difficult. Addressing this issue requires the adoption of sustainable farming practices that enable farmers to secure their livelihoods while adapting to shifting economic and environmental conditions. Achieving a balance between food production, farmer welfare, and environmental conservation is crucial in building a resilient and sustainable food system for future generations.

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