

Lived Experiences of Fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, in the Changing Coastal Landscape

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Abstract. The study explored the experiences of fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, amid coastal changes due to both human activity and climate change, how these affected their lives, and which community-driven initiatives were initiated. Using a descriptive phenomenological research method, qualitative data was generated from semi-structured interviews on environmental and socio-economic factors related to these changes: climate impacts, adaptation measures at the local scale, and community initiatives to address them. Based on findings, fishermen indicated reduced fishing activity due to unpredictable weather conditions. Fishers cited an unstable income and, as a result, experienced food insecurity, accrued debt, and had to suspend their children's education due to these difficulties. Fuel costs, the use of fishing gear, and boat maintenance costs have risen, as have longer distances to fish, all making it harder to survive. Fishermen pointed to competition among fishers as compounding the challenges they face in their everyday survival. Fish stocks were being depleted by overfishing and marine pollution, undermining income generation and the sustainability of marine ecosystems. So, they have to wrestle with their financial situation due to the factors above. Fisherfolk borrowed money, changed their fishing methods, and sought temporary employment as coping strategies for these challenges. Participants have also raised concerns about the inequitable distribution of assistance and ineffective training programs. Participants encouraged more support and more uniformity in what they were offered. Along with providing evidence of resilience among fisherfolk, the research showed that better governance, especially when it comes to fairer distribution of aid after disasters, stricter enforcement of fishing rules, and greater access to safety equipment, would help support sustainable livelihoods.

Introduction

Philippines is one of the largest archipelagic nations in the world. It is home to millions of people whose livelihoods are directly dependent on marine resources. Small-scale fisheries have become the main source of food security and local economic development. In 2021, small-scale fisheries were the major contributors to the country's fish production, which is a clear indication that they are still the main source of rural livelihoods and socio-economies of the coastal areas (BFAR, 2022). The fishing industry is the socio-economic lifeblood of the municipality of Guiuan, Eastern Samar, a town with a long tradition of artisanal and medium scale fishing. Nevertheless, the coastal communities of Guiuan

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are gradually becoming very uncertain because of environmental and socio-economic crises. Climate change has resulted in more powerful typhoons, has accelerated coastal degradation, and has caused fish stocks to decrease, making the marine ecosystems and fishing activities that are traditionally dependent on the sea vulnerable (Rare, 2023). It is common among local fishers to come across their fishing gear being broken, reduced catch volumes, and the occurrence of dangerous sea conditions. The problems of the environment are made worse due to the community's lack of access to modern equipment, changing market prices, and limited financial capital (FAO, 2021).

The local laws and the community's actions are recent changes during the last year that have given a positive signal. One of the best instances illustrating how the local government is advocating for environmentally friendly fishing practices, tightening the rules, and motivating the fishermen to become co-managers of the sea is the 2022 Basic Fishery Ordinance of Guiuan (Municipality of Guiuan, 2022). Meanwhile, climate adaptation instruments such as ISDApp have alleviated fisherfolk's need for the latest weather updates, making their journeys safer (NFRDI, 2024). Also, the revival of the mangrove forest and the building of seawalls have become popular local strategies to protect the coast through the strengthening of community resilience (Climate Tracker Asia, 2022).

Although these changes have been made, the research gaps are still very significant. While various national and international studies have looked at policies of fisheries, production data, and environmental impacts, little has been done to figure out how single fisherfolk in small towns like Guiuan understand and experience these changes. Several studies have been done on the sustainability of fisheries; however, there are still several gaps that are vital for understanding the local fisherfolk community of Guiuan. For example, Pineda (n.d.) and Medenilla (2021) depict the problems and prospects at the national level in the fishing industry in the Philippines, but essentially, they only present the broad ideas and do not mention the local and community-specific experiences. Monteclaro et al. (2018) reveals the effects of Typhoon Haiyan on the marine industry but mainly depicts the loss of the area and the socio-economic changes of the fisherfolk that are less talked about. Likewise, worldwide research such as Imbwae et al. (2023) and Wintergalen et al. (2022) that discusses the resilience, and small-scale fisheries management is situated in different locations from the Philippines. Research that is local, highly targeted, and data-driven, such as the study of Atillo G. (2024) in Negros Oriental, deeply dives into the socio-economic systems of small-scale fishermen and lacks the aspect of the people's lived experience, their adaptation strategies, and how they recognize new opportunities at the community level. The majority of the publications that have been produced are still quantitative, policy-oriented, and generalized in terms of broad geographic contexts. These methods mainly fail to acknowledge the complexities of the daily lives of the local fishers who are the most affected by the changes in the environment (Mendoza, 2023).

Moreover, it is a must to have such community-centered and qualitative research to bring up the fisherfolk's lived experiences, emotional states, coping mechanisms, and knowledge. These stories are a great source of understanding, and they play a very important role in the development of intervention programs that are not only scientifically sound but also socially and culturally appropriate.

The change in the environment, the economic situation, and the social life of the fishermen are the primary concerns of this local research through the accounts of the fishermen of Guiuan, Eastern Samar. This is also how they understood the opportunities for the enhancement of their livelihood and the building of their resilience. The study, through these testimonies, aspires to be a significant input to the topics that are most pressing and require a human-centered, co-demanded approach, like sustainable coastal development and fisheries management, by delivering genuine personal narratives.

The research problem that is being addressed in this study is the need for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of fishermen in the small town of Guiuan, Eastern Samar facing challenges in the ever-changing coastal landscape. The objective of this research is to determine the environmental and socio-economic challenges faced by the fishermen due to coastal changes, examine how climate change and human activities impacted the fishing livelihood of the fishermen, identify coping strategies and practices the fishermen applied in response to coastal changes, and explore community-driven initiatives that promote the sustainability and resilience of the local fishing industry.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological research design using qualitative approach to delve into the lived experiences of fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, during the changes in the coastal landscape. The design of this study was a perfect match for the research goal that aimed at knowing how local fishermen perceived changes in the coastal landscape and how they adapted and reacted to these changes. Through semi-structured interviews, the study collected

detailed, first-hand narratives that helped it to penetrate the surface of the fishermen's daily challenges, their ways of coping, and their understanding of sustainable practices in the changing coastal environment, thereby getting hold of the fishermen's interpretations of their experiences.

Participants

This study used purposive sampling to select 10 participants who were residents of Guiuan, Eastern Samar and had the relevant experiences and could provide insights about the fishing industry in Guiuan. The number of the sample was considered enough because qualitative research generally achieves saturation within 6-12 interviews. It is also evidenced by the study of Cuñado and Ampo (2025), who engaged the artisanal fisherfolk in their phenomenological research; this number was considered enough to obtain deep and significant data.

The selection criteria for the participants are threefold: (1) The participants must be residents of Guiuan, Eastern Samar; (2) The Participants must be the ones who do small- or medium-scale fishing in the municipal waters and have at least five years of continuous fishing experience in the area; and (3) The participants must also be of legal age (18 years old and above). The participants met these criteria to ensure that they could provide relevant narratives about their lived experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research team got the consent in writing after their request from the Dean of the College of Business, Management, and Accountancy. To get the green light for the study, a letter of formal request was submitted. Following institutional approval, the researchers asked barangay officials in the coastal and island communities of Guiuan to give their endorsement and coordination. Taking this measure was to guarantee that the community would know about, be willing to, and work with the research process. Barangay officials and fisherfolk leaders were visited by the researchers in a friendly and informal manner prior to the actual study. After fisherfolk were identified as meeting the criteria for inclusion, the researchers were thus in a position to meet them and choose the appropriate participants from among them. In all these visits, the why, what, and how of the research were put across in an appropriate manner in order to gain the confidence of the people and ensure their participation after being properly informed.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The researchers took the interview sessions to community places that were both convenient and easily accessible, like barangay halls or other suitable public spaces. And after each session, the researchers also transcribed the conversations into written form and sent them back to the participants to confirm if the transcriptions were correct to make sure that the data is accurate and trustworthy.

The researchers committed to the ethical principles that guarantee the protection, dignity, and rights of all the people involved in the study. They got the approval from the local authorities before they started to collect data so that the whole process would be in line with the moral standards of research with human participants.

Information gathered through semi-structured interviews with fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, was examined by the researchers by means of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This is a method that is particularly suitable for understanding their lived experiences. Using this method, the researchers were able to recognize, analyze, and interpret the fisherfolk's descriptive patterns expressing their interaction with the changing coastal landscape.

This research adhered to the four major principles of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability according to Lincoln & Guba. Credibility was achieved by honestly portraying the actual fishermen's experiences in Guiuan. Researchers had extensive conversations with the participants and also verified their responses from time to time so that their stories were rightly known. Transferability gave descriptions that are clear and detailed about the fishing communities, their environment, and the problems that they experience as a result of the changes in their environment. Such details provide other researchers and policymakers with a view of whether the findings of this study can be their area of work in other coastal regions with comparable conditions. Dependability and confirmability of the study's trustworthiness consisted in a thorough and charted method for data gathering and data analysis. The investigator documented the interviews, transcripts, and the procedures of the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1. Environmental and Socio-Economic Challenges

The small-scale fishermen of Guiuan, Eastern Samar, are primarily confronted with environmental disruptions and economic pressures. These two aspects, natural hazards and livelihood instability, have a double impact on their way of

living. The fishery is not a regular source of income with an assured return; it is the sea's way of giving that dictates the fishermen's earnings and the expenses for the vessels and fuel. So, when nature and the market go against each other, fishermen have no protection.

Subtheme 1.1. Weather and Natural Hazards as Disruptors of Livelihood

All the participants agreed that bad weather and storms were the things that most severely disrupted their lives. These, in fact, are not infrequent interruptions of the participants' lives but rather are recurring realities that decide if families will eat, if children will go to school, and if debts will increase. Participant said: *"The biggest challenge for us during storms is that our livelihood becomes very difficult...we can't work, and we don't have money to meet our needs."* (P2). And one stated that: *"Waves, rain, heat, strong wind, it's difficult out at sea. We can't go out to sea when the waves are big, so the family is struggling, and we don't have money to buy food and rice."* (P6). These words underline a direct chain of vulnerability: no fishing trip means no catch; no catch means no income; and no income immediately threatens the family's ability to eat or send children to school. Unlike other professions where salaries might still be paid during times of upheaval, fishermen are in a precarious daily existence where a single day without going to sea can be the cause of a lack of security in their homes. The fishermen's testimonies indicate the effects that follow one another. In the periods when typhoons come, these tempests are said to be of a duration of days or weeks, and thus, families are left without the means of living for a long time. The first is the exposure to physical harm due to storms, but what is more, the fishermen speak of the emotional and psychological quietness of a distress that is present in each fishing family at the time of the coming of storm clouds.

These findings are in line with the opinion of Roy et al. (2023), which states that the consequences of extreme weather conditions are the most severe for those who depend on daily wages for their livelihoods. The ocean for the fishermen in Guiuan is, on the one hand, the source of their life and, on the other, a threat that is always there, a duality that not only their strength but also their terror is continuously shaped by.

Subtheme 1.2. Fishing Materials

One of the repeated themes among the answers is the ever-increasing and quite unpredictable pricing of necessary fishing items like fuel, nylon, fishing lines, and boat repairs. These are not areas in which one can choose not to spend money, but they are necessary requirements for fishing itself. Consequently, it is the rising prices that decide, in a very direct way, whether fishermen can go out to sea at all. One participant said that: *"We are hesitant to go out fishing due to the high cost of materials and fuel, as we might incur losses."* (P1). While others added that: *"Fishing equipment and materials such as nylon, fishing lines, and gasoline don't have a permanent price... as every month it increases."* (P3).

These responses reflect the situation that Atilo G. (2024) referred to as a "hidden poverty trap" in small-scale fisheries. Thus, in the case where fishermen are able to catch fish, they eat up most of their money with the rising expenses for the repair of fishing gear and fuel. As a result, fishing is not always a means of household welfare. The greatest part of the time, the profit is so unstable that it vanishes before the families can actually get to see it.

For the fishermen, which is the main economic resource for these people, it has brought them some losing situations that they find hard to believe logically, and it is also somewhat cruel. That means, as one of the community members expressed, there are days when it is more profitable to avoid the sea and remain on the ground.

These times of economic hardship have made it necessary for many to take loans from ship proprietors or intermediaries, thus deepening their dependence and exposure to risk. After the long days of fishing, fishermen sit down to reflect and tell their stories, among which is how their primary source of income is not only threatened by nature but markets as well and that in this particular case, they are facing a double whammy. The continual increase in the prices of fishing inputs is like a quiet wind that gradually eats away at their pockets of money, and this is happening even in the absence of typhoons or rough seas.

Subtheme 1.3. Restricted Access to Fishing Ground and Conflict in Terms of Territorial Rights

The local fishers pointed out that the limitation of access to fishing areas and the rising competition are the main socio-economic problems causing them difficulties. With limited and sometimes overcrowded fishing spaces, the sea has become a contested arena where fishermen struggle not only against nature but also against one another. One stated that: *"...in areas where there are plenty of fish, but fishing is prohibited, it affects us because we must look for further fishing grounds to catch fish..."* (P7). And another stated that: *"...fighting over fishing grounds with our fellow fishermen, because we are afraid that if they get ahead of us in the area, we are fishing, we won't be able to catch anything."* (P8). These experiences show how scarcity fosters social tension. Instead of cooperating, fishermen are forced into silent competition over limited resources. This scenario resonates with the findings of Pita et al. (2020), who noted that the exhaustion of resources usually leads to

the escalation of competition in small fishing communities; thus, relationships are affected, and rifts appear among neighbors.

Yet the fishermen's thoughts mirror at least a little understanding: they see that the competitors are not foes but comrades-in-arms who are also seeking ways to feed their families. Such a realization lowers the chances of clashes, but it does not remove the social pressure and the emotional tension that results from having to compete for the small fish to catch. What becomes visible is a scenario of common suffering where the concepts of support and competition being side by side without a proper balance are implied.

Theme 2. Impacts of Climate Change and Human Activities

Beyond economic problems, which are the fishermen's daily struggles, the fishermen that live in Guiuan are forced to fight against the changes in nature and the behavior of the people that influence their living to a great extent. The sea is no longer the reliable giver that it used to be. The weather changes are the last thing these fishermen would expect, and yet they see it for themselves. Besides that, they watch bigger fishing vessels taking over the ocean while the water that is their lifeline is getting polluted both by garbage and by other sources of waste. All of these things, thus, mean fish stocks are being depleted, the security at sea is becoming more difficult, and the vulnerability of small-scale fishing households is getting higher.

Subtheme 2.1. Unpredictable Weather and Risk at Sea

A major theme throughout the interviews was the idea that the weather had become less predictable than before. Fishermen described how sudden weather changes at sea jeopardize their lives and, therefore, turn each sea trip into a game of chance. A participant stated that: *"Sometimes it's hot when we venture out, but suddenly, the weather changes instantly as if there was a storm, which is very risky for us."* (P3). These stories portray the fishermen's uncertainty of the ocean that they have to work with. In the past, fishers have been able to use the knowledge handed down from their ancestors about winds, tides, and even the look of the clouds to predict the weather. But the participants have pointed out that these traditional signs are becoming less and less trustworthy. Sudden squalls and rapid changes of the sea leave fishermen exposed to danger, especially if they are in small boats with limited safety equipment.

For families, this unpredictability is like a double-edged sword. Besides the risk that the lives of fishers going out to sea are endangered, it also threatens their ability to be able to plan for the daily needs of their households. The families become the ones who have to wait, and they do so in a state of anxiety, not knowing whether the breadwinners will return with the catch or not and if they will come at all. The emotional burden caused by uncertainty aggravates the already fragile economic situation of the households.

This discovery is in line with the IPCC (2021) report, which pointed out that climate variability and extreme weather events are the main reasons why small-scale fisheries are suffering most. For the fishers in Guiuan, unpredictability is not a scientific concept but their everyday reality that changes each fishing trip into gambling with their lives.

Subtheme 2.2. Declining Fish Stock and Overfishing

Another recurring grievance expressed by the participants was overfishing in municipal waters. They felt that overfishing not only reduced their daily catch but also threatened the long-term viability of their livelihood. A grievance from a participant said that: *"We are affected by some of our fellow fishermen, especially if they overfish, because other fishermen use big nets, so they catch more fish than us, which also affects our catch."* (P2). And another commented that: *"Overfishing also affects our livelihood; this is almost depleting the fish in the seas, so there are hardly any fish left for us to catch."* (P6). The frustration here is palpable. For small-scale fishers using modest gear and small boats, overfishing results in depleting fish stocks, leaving little for municipal fishers who depend on smaller catches for daily survival.

Such an imbalance is what gave rise to the feeling of powerlessness, which was a recurring theme in the interviews. They are aware that though they are doing their part, it is the big players who are rapidly emptying the sea, and their activities are hardly being regulated. Besides being an ecological issue, it is a moral one as well: fishermen say that they have been denied the right to use the sea, which is still theirs.

Suh & Pomeroy (2020) identified similar trends in the Philippines, pointing out that overfishing is the main factor that causes the reduction of the municipal fishers' supply of the sea to maintain their livelihoods. The testimonies of the fishermen in Guiuan corroborate the researchers' findings in the field at the grassroots level, where overfishing means going hungry, getting into debt, and falling into despair for small-scale families.

Subtheme 2.3. Water Pollution

Though it was mentioned less frequently, pollution was also identified as a concern by the participants. A fisherman, in particular, pointed out that the way in which waste is disposed of is the reason for the reduction of fish stocks. A participant voiced out that: *"Throwing waste into the sea destroys the fishing grounds, so the fish move to other areas."* (P8). It was mentioned only once in a straightforward manner by a participant, the comment is quite revealing. It reflects a local understanding that human activities are destroying marine habitats causing fish to leave the area. As the sea is the source of life for the community, even tiny changes in water quality or habitat can have immediate livelihood impacts.

The problem raised by the single participant reflects the global research concerning fisheries and marine ecosystems. Roy et al. (2023) pointed out that pollution and habitat loss are the main factors that lead to resource decline, thus making coastal communities less resilient. In Guiuan, waste disposal is not considered as a remote environmental problem but as a primary reason for the decreasing of the catches.

Theme 3. Coping Strategies and Adaptive Practices

The stories of fishermen in Guiuan not only unveil the difficulties that they endure but also the methods that they use to live through them. Although fishermen find themselves in a triple trap of environmental degradation, economic insecurity, and social injustices, they are not lifeless characters. In fact, their reaction is a gamut of different measures, even though enormous sacrifice is most often on their side so that their families will live. The ways in which they cope with the situation revolve around three dominant strategies: borrowing and depending on debt, changing fishing methods and places, and branching out into non-fishing-related activities.

Subtheme 3.1. Credit Utilization and Financial Indebtedness

Borrowing money, mostly from boat owners or patrons, to pay for the daily fishing activities is the most common coping mechanism that the participants have talked about. The loans taken are to meet the expenses of fuel, fishing gear, and repairs, but the loans make the fishermen bound to repayment schemes that take up their future income. A participant narrates that: *"Sometimes, we borrow money from the owner of the boat for whatever our fishing needs are."* (P1) and another sad reality answer from a participant said that: *"If our income is not enough on that day, we borrow money from the boat owner so that we can support our family's needs."* (P3). The stories reveal a picture of survival that is dependent on borrowing. Borrowing is the means fishermen use to keep their boats running and their nets in the water, but it also deepens their dependence in a vicious cycle. Not all of their catch belongs to them, as some of it is already pledged to the lender. This is in line with the description given by FAO (2021) of patron-client systems where small-scale fishers become dependent on local financiers, making their freedom limited.

For the households, the situation becomes one of instability: during bad weather or periods of fish scarcity, debts accumulate, and when catches are good, repayments take over the earnings. Therefore, borrowing is becoming less of a way to engage in activities that will bring them more income and more a means of avoiding the risk of going hungry by selling tomorrow's catch for today's survival.

Subtheme 3.2. Adapting to Different Fishing Methods

Adaptation is also reflected in the flexibility that the fishers have in terms of their fishing methods and the areas where they fish. The participants explained that they alternate fishing near the shore and going farther at sea depending on the weather, and they also stated that they sometimes get new methods from other fishermen and imitate them. An experienced participant said that: *"We're also upgrading. Now, we're using squid ink, or what we call 'ata' in our dialect. Before, the fish took the bait during the day; now it's at night."* (P6). Such adaptability is a sign of the resilience that is based on social knowledge-sharing: even under the condition of a competition there is still a certain level of communal exchange of strategies. The resolve of fishermen to make changes reflects their resourcefulness in confronting the limitations. Wintergalen et al. (2022) also found that the adaptability of fishing practices is the resilience feature of the coastal communities that are affected by climate change.

Subtheme 3.3. Diversified Livelihood Strategy

Some fishermen reported supplementing their income with alternative forms of livelihood, particularly when fishing is impossible due to weather or when stocks are low. Two of wise participants stated that: *"...we engage in alternative*

livelihoods such as small-scale retail or buying and selling of fish products." (P4) and another said that: *"...we do sell cooked food to make ends meet and cover our daily expenses."* (P7). While another participant resort to another way of earning for his family voiced out that: *"When the sea is too rough, some of us look for part-time work on land, like construction work or tricycle driving."* (P8). While not widespread, these accounts show an awareness that dependence on fishing alone is risky. Engaging in small-scale retail or fish trading, selling cooked food, and doing part-time work as a construction worker or driving a tricycle provides a cushion against total loss of income during lean seasons or stormy weather. Such diversification strategies align with the global findings (Watson et al., 2021), where fishermen generally resort to small businesses or side jobs to make their household incomes more stable.

Yet adaptation has its limits. Small-scale retail needs some money at the start; most of the time it is gotten again by borrowing, and markets can be unstable. Besides, these kinds of work hardly ever become the main ones from which fishing is abandoned, but they are most often used as a means of a household's survival to be supplemented with other activities.

Theme 4. Support Systems and Requests for Change

Besides the environmental and economic factors, fishermen in Guiuan also looked at the social and institutional structures that are supposed to give them support. Their statements uncover that they have a feeling of being left out and irritated, and that their expectations have not been met. Although there are programs of the government, NGOs, and associations of the community, the access to advantages is very irregular and is most of the time politicized. As far as the participants are concerned, help is only scantily provided, wrongly planned, or in some cases, certain groups are the only ones who have the privilege to get it.

Subtheme 4.1. Limited and Politicized Aid

Fishermen repeatedly expressed among their most clear frustrations the issue of help distribution in such a manner that it was selective. Aid was not entirely out of the question; on some occasions, items such as fishing lines or nylon might have been given; however, these instances were scarce, and it was thought that the association members or those who had political connections were the ones that benefited from them. Irritated participant responded that: *"The selection is not clear. If you are a member of the association, you will receive assistance, but if you're like us, who are not members, you don't receive help..."* (P2). Statements of fishermen show there is a repeated pattern in that they are being excluded and that things are being done unfairly. Fishermen who are not in any association feel that they are invisible and unrecognized, even though they are going through the same struggles as those who receive support. The feeling of injustice is further enhanced by the fact that help is usually given at irregular intervals so that many people must take care of themselves most of the time.

This trend matches the results of the research done by Imbwae et al. (2023), who found that aid in small-scale fisheries tends to be politicized and selective, thus resulting in the disintegration of the community. In Guiuan, the fishermen's testimonies are a mirror of the situations in which support systems, instead of being a means to equalize, sometimes deepen the disparities.

Subtheme 4.2. Inadequate Practical Training

Fishermen characterized the training opportunities as insufficient, monotonous, and irrelevant to their needs. Although a few seminars were held from time to time, these did not result in practical skills that could enhance their living. A frustrated participant said that: *"We had a seminar, but there was no actual training provided..."* (P1). This thought process points out the difference between the disconnect of program design and the local realities of the fishermen. They are not resistant to learning new skills; rather, their previous statements about copying techniques from others are evidence that they are open to adaptation. Unfortunately, they said that the formal training programs hardly gave them any new knowledge, as they were repeated in recycling the information they already knew.

This is in line with the research of Medenilla (2021), who observed that most of the fisheries training programs in the Philippines are more focused on the theoretical part rather than the practical side of the instruction. In the fishermen of Guiuan, this is a loss of potential: proper training could have made them more efficient and skilled in fishing, and they could have acquired post-harvest skills or even ventured into the production of sustainable aquaculture, but the program has only made them discontented.

Subtheme 4.3. Financial and Other Assistance during Typhoons and Lean Seasons

Fishermen are most adversely affected by typhoon seasons and low fishing seasons since their daily income is entirely dependent on the weather being good and their getting access to fishing grounds. Their ability to meet household needs becomes so restricted during these months; however, the expenses for food, medicine, and schooling continue. Fishing, unlike jobs with salaries, does not offer wage security or paid leave, thus making fishermen the most susceptible to sudden disruptions. Because of this, they demand support at times of the year when it would be difficult to keep their families going during these difficult periods. One voiced out that: *"I hope, like other livelihoods, we will be provided with financial and other support."* (P3). The appeal mentioned here describes the highly risky situation of fishing that is being done on a daily-wage basis. The fishermen are not demanding to be given a hand for a long period of time, but they want safety nets to be put in place that will acknowledge their condition during times when they are not allowed to fish. They say help in the form of cash support, food packages, educational subsidies, or the provision of fishing materials would be a way of enabling them to cope with a temporary loss of income. According to global evidence (Roy et al., 2023), such specifically targeted support is the only way to come out of the recurring indebtedness and food insecurity, which is aggravated by storms and climate variability and which these people have been caught in for a long time.

Subtheme 4.4. Stricter Enforcement against Overfishing

Another frequently mentioned argument small-scale fishermen raise is that overfishing in municipal waters is done without any control. According to them, overfishing is an environmental problem that eventually turns into a real nightmare for them, as their meager catch is being reduced, thereby making it harder for them to survive. Moreover, they assert that municipal waters are intended, both legally and traditionally, to be a source of sustenance for all fishermen. A humble participant said that: *"I kindly request that the government enforce stricter regulations and monitor the operation of overfishing..."* (P4). A requirement is a loud protest of the fishing community against weak local government and law enforcement authorities. More severe regulation is regarded as a question of justice and honor: they want the sea areas controlled by the municipality to be their oxygen tank. As documented by Suh and Pomeroy (2020), it is crucial to have proper surveillance of large-scale overfishing operations to preserve not only the environment but also the rights of small-scale fishers. To the fishermen of Guiuan, law enforcement is a way of securing their current livelihood while making sure that fish stocks will still be there for the coming generations.

Subtheme 4.5. Safety Equipment and Rescue Support

Fishing is a dangerous job, and the factor of climate change has escalated the risks of this profession that is already very dangerous. In addition, fishermen do not have access to safety equipment. A participant stated that: *"We need sea rescue assistance, life jackets, and help to replace damaged boats or lost equipment."* (P9) and another commented that: *"There should be programs to give fishermen life vests and first aid kits."* (P10). These testimonies make it clear that there is an immediate and desperate need for support systems that save lives. The basic safety equipment is what could separate survival from a death occurrence in case of an accident or a sudden storm. In addition to their safety, the fishermen are also concerned about the loss of their boats and other equipment that will eventually take away their only source of living. Filling this void will need a coordinated action of LGUs, NGOs, and fisherfolk organizations to deliver life vests, emergency kits, and community-based rescue programs. FAO (2021) is very clear that occupational safety should not be considered as an option but rather a fundamental feature of sustainable fisheries development.

Conclusion and Implications

The fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, are a community that has for a long time been a target of various disasters from both nature and humans. Because they are mostly reliant on the sea, they are the ones to suffer when a storm comes, the weather is volatile, or the costs keep on rising. Such situations often lead to lack of food, indebtedness, and the insecurity of their livelihoods. They try to be resilient by means of borrowing, changing the fishing methods, and engaging in some alternative activities for a few pesos, but these coping strategies are not enough, and most of the time, they deepen their dependence. The problems of overfishing, pollution, and unfair support systems make their sufferings double, and thus, they have very few viable options left.

However, they aren't defenseless or inactive fishermen. Their statements provide a very clear guide of the necessities they require monetary support in times of disruptions, more rigorous conservation of local waters against overfishing, and allowing fishermen to obtain the needed safety equipment. Their determination to live through these difficult times, as their testimonials articulate, is still not enough to hold on without significant changes in the management of fisheries, fair distribution of aid, and readiness for calamities.

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Competing Interests Statement

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are included in this article.