

Socioeconomic Status of Workers in the Sugar Industry and Their Plight: The Case of the Northern Corridor, Cebu, Philippines

Glenn M. Ostia^{1*}, Judy Ann F. Gimena², Christopher Biore³, Eddie E. Llamedo⁴,
Yolanda C. Sayson⁵ and Jose Marie M. Anos⁶

¹Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges, Inc, Philippines, ³College of Business and Accountancy,
^{2&3}University of Cebu-Banilad, Philippines, ^{4&5}University of Cebu-Main, Philippines

⁶Cebu Technological University, Philippines

E-mail: jagimena@uc.edu.ph, cbiore@uc.edu.ph, ellamedo@uc.edu.ph, uc.sayson@gmail.com, josemarieanos@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author: glennostia@gmail.com

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Abstract - One significant issue in the Philippines today is widespread poverty, especially affecting individuals whose livelihoods depend on sugarcane. This problem is particularly pronounced in areas where large tracts of land, known as haciendas - a legacy of the Spanish land management system called *encomienda* - are owned by one or a few families. This study aimed to investigate the economic status of workers, known as *tapaseros*, in the sugarcane industry within the 4th District of Cebu, Philippines, to aid in the development of a proposed alternative livelihood program. This research employed a descriptive survey method, utilizing a researcher-designed questionnaire as the primary data collection tool to gather information on respondents' profiles and economic conditions. The questionnaire underwent content validation by experts, and its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.8121, indicating high reliability for administration. The study was conducted in three municipalities in the 4th District of Cebu Province: Bogo, Medellin, and Daanbantayan. Ethical protocols involving beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, voluntarism, and confidentiality were strictly followed. The study's participants included 205 respondents. Statistical analyses included frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, the Chi-Square test of independence, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that most respondents were aged 40-44 years, all were male, the majority were married, had an elementary-level education, had worked as *tapaseros* for 6-10 years, had 4-6 family members, and earned less than Php 7,890.00 per month. Additionally, respondents generally agreed that they were economically sustainable and practiced income management occasionally. However, they disagreed with statements regarding job satisfaction as workers in the sugarcane industry in the 4th District of Cebu Province. A significant relationship was found between respondents' average monthly income and their perception of economic sustainability. Moreover, significant relationships were also observed between respondents' educational attainment, family size, and monthly income, and their views on income management. Significant differences were noted in the respondents' economic status concerning economic sustainability, income management, and job satisfaction. Despite enduring the physically demanding nature of their work under the intense heat of the sun and carrying heavy bundles of sugarcane for milling, workers in the sugarcane plantations or haciendas remain impoverished and underpaid. Therefore, it is recommended that proposed livelihood programs for communities in the sugarcane plantation areas of

Bogo City and the municipalities of Medellin and Daanbantayan be implemented. These initiatives should be supported by local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and led by Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges (CRMC) in Bogo City, Cebu, as part of their community extension program.

Keywords: Poverty, Sugarcane Industry, Economic Sustainability, *Tapaseros* (Sugarcane Workers), Livelihood Programs

I. INTRODUCTION

One essential aspect of human existence is captured in the saying: "Live in order to eat, not eat in order to live" (Farlex, Inc., 2015). People who are food-dependent view food as more than just a source of energy; it can represent comfort, family, friends, happiness, lifestyle, or stress relief.

Hunger is deeply intertwined with poverty. Over 1.1 billion people live in households where daily income is less than P50.00 per person. Many of these individuals struggle to access enough food due to a lack of resources - such as land, seeds, and tools - to grow their own or the financial means to purchase it. Hunger and malnutrition hinder their ability to perform well in school or work, trapping them in a persistent cycle of poverty. Those living in poverty are heavily dependent on natural resources for essentials like food, water, and firewood. However, their reliance on these resources is increasingly unsustainable, as over-farming and poor land management deplete the land on which they rely for survival.

Sugarcane is one of the Philippines' key agricultural crops, grown across 19 provinces nationwide. Most sugarcane farms are small, averaging about five hectares in size. Thousands of sugarcane workers in the Philippines endure poverty, unpredictable weather, and economic instability. They describe a difficult period known as *tiempo muerto* or the "dead season," which occurs between planting and harvesting when there is no work available in the fields. Traditionally lasting from April to September, this season may now extend indefinitely. During these lean months, both *dumaan* (resident farm workers) and *sacadas* (seasonal

workers) experience considerable hardship, a reality that has affected their families for generations. Locals refer to this as *tingkiriwi* (pain) and *tinggulutom* (hunger). On average, sugarcane workers earn just over \$3 USD per day - less than half of the government-mandated minimum wage - while seasonal workers make around \$2 USD per day.

Global economic pressures are intensifying challenges for the sugar industry, leading to a decline in job opportunities. Landowners have exploited this situation by implementing a system called “wholesale jobs,” which forces entire families, including children, to complete tasks across a set number of hectares on the hacienda’s plantation, compensating them with just \$1 USD per day. Despite these dire conditions, many workers view low-wage labor as a better alternative to unemployment. However, during the *tiempo muerto* period, which lasts four to six months, all work halts (Velasco, 2014).

Sugar once served as a gateway to prosperity in the Philippines, but this changed by the 1970s. Historically a key pillar of the Philippine economy, the sugar industry created a culture of privilege among hacienda owners. Even though the sharp drop in sugar prices in the early 1980s severely impacted the industry, the haciendas maintained an illusion of wealth.

According to the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (2014), the influx of inexpensive imported sugar has further threatened local sugar production. This challenge is largely beyond the reach of Sugar Regulatory Administration Chief Gina Martin-Bautista and the “sugar bloc,” a political faction of hacienda-owning families elected to various positions at the local and national levels.

In response to these challenges, there have been efforts to shift to more lucrative crops, such as ornamental flowers, or convert sugarcane land into prawn or fish ponds. However, these initiatives have yet to significantly improve the economic situation in Negros. Farmers who continue cultivating sugarcane also face additional struggles, such as land reform issues.

The relationship between farmers and millers is governed by sugarcane contracts that divide both risks and rewards. Many farmers, however, feel they are being taken advantage of, as millers profit from by-products while farmers are paid only for the sugar itself. Contracted farmers face a disadvantage, often lacking the bargaining power to negotiate fair terms with sugar companies (Mosoti, 1997). Farmers have no recourse when payments are delayed after harvest and cannot negotiate when their crops fail to meet quality standards. Additionally, millers impose costs for seed cane, transportation, harvesting, and fertilizers, further diminishing farmers’ earnings.

Working in this industry is grueling, requiring labor under all weather conditions for meager wages that barely cover daily family needs. Most children of sugarcane plantation

workers forgo education and marry early, only to become plantation workers themselves, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Only a few workers manage to support their children’s education long enough for them to obtain a college degree.

The poor working conditions of sugarcane laborers in the towns of Bogó, Medellín, and Daanbantayan in Cebu, Philippines, have led to significant social and economic stigmas for these vulnerable groups. Therefore, this study aims to examine the actual socioeconomic conditions of these workers to develop an alternative livelihood program. This initiative seeks to mitigate the lack of income during the lean season and address the enduring issues of hunger and poverty that economic planners in Cebu’s 4th District have overlooked for years.

II. FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the theory of distributive justice, which explains how the social contract in the original position would mandate an income distribution that maximizes the welfare of society’s poorest members (Case et al., 2009). Distributive fairness influences performance, especially when efficiency and productivity are at stake (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Performance tends to improve when justice is perceived more favorably (Karriker & Williams, 2009). Additionally, during the Middle Ages, the church, led by St. Thomas Aquinas, championed distributive justice, which refers to the equitable distribution of goods, as well as compensatory justice, which pertains to the fair exchange of goods and services (Fajardo, 1995).

In social psychology, distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness in how group members share costs and rewards. There are five distinct distributive norms. The first norm states that all group members should receive an equal share of benefits and costs, regardless of their contributions. According to this definition, a member contributing 20% of the group’s resources should receive the same amount as someone contributing 60%, reflecting equality. Another norm suggests that members’ outcomes should correspond to their inputs, meaning those who contribute more time, money, and effort should receive greater rewards. Larger groups often favor equity-based cost and reward distributions.

The third distributive norm is power, which posits that individuals with more authority, status, or control within the group should receive more than those in subordinate positions. The fourth norm, need, argues that resources should be provided to those who are most in need, regardless of their contribution. This norm implies that those who need more should receive more than those who already have sufficient resources. The final distributive norm is responsibility, which asserts that group members with greater resources should share with those who have less (Forsyth, 2006).

The social contract theory, or Rawlsian justice, posits that, as members of society, individuals are in contact with one another. In the theoretical framework imagined by Rawls, an original social contract is established, to which all parties agree without knowing their identity or position within society. This state is referred to as the “state of nature” or “initial posture.” In this state, individuals make unbiased decisions based on risk aversion, as they have no entrenched interests to protect. It is determined that any agreement originating from this initial position would mandate an income distribution that optimizes the welfare of the most disadvantaged individuals in society (Case *et al.*, 2009).

Rawls proposed a coherent framework for reconciling equality and liberty within the structure of a well-ordered society (Follesdal-Mertens, 2005). His two principles of justice are as follows: The first principle asserts that each individual should have an equal right to the most extensive system of basic liberties, provided it is compatible with a similar system of liberties for others. The second principle contends that social and economic inequalities should be arranged to benefit the least advantaged, in line with the just savings principle, and that positions of power should be accessible to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. These principles are lexically ordered, with Rawls stressing the primacy of liberty. The first principle is commonly referred to as the “greatest equal liberty principle,” while the second is known as the “difference principle,” with the added “equal opportunity principle” (Voice, 2011).

Economics focuses on the equitable distribution of goods and services and the efficient utilization of scarce resources to maximize benefits and meet the needs of all members of society. The key objectives of economics include fostering economic growth, ensuring full employment, maintaining price stability, promoting economic freedom, achieving equitable wealth and income distribution, and providing economic security. While some countries have successfully met these objectives, the gap between the rich and the poor remains wide: wealthy nations continue to prosper, while poorer ones face growing poverty.

This disparity is also evident within poorer countries, where a small number of wealthy families amass more wealth while many low-income households become even more impoverished. The allocation and use of resources demand substantial reform. The poor, who lack ownership of productive resources, remain trapped in poverty, just as their ancestors were. Clearly, the main economic goals have not reached the most disadvantaged members of society. Despite long-standing efforts by governments in poorer countries to uplift the economically disenfranchised, many individuals still do not experience a dignified standard of living. For the majority of low-income individuals, social justice remains an unfulfilled aspiration (Fajardo, 1995).

Case *et al.*, (2009) further explained that any society bound by such a contract would allow for inequality, but only if that inequality improved the condition of the very poor. If

inequality incentivizes individuals to work hard and innovate, such inequalities should be tolerated as long as some benefits are extended to those at the bottom. The labor theory of value posits that the value of a commodity depends solely on the amount of labor required to produce it. According to Marx’s theory of labor value, the value of any commodity depends exclusively on the amount of labor needed for its production. The owners of capital extract profit or surplus value because labor produces more value in a day than it is compensated for. Like any other good, labor power is valued only at what it takes to produce it. Simply put, this means that under capitalism, labor is compensated with a subsistence wage.

Once the extreme limit is reached, even the smallest increase in food prices, the briefest work stoppage, or the slightest illness can cause significant distress for a worker and ultimately lead to illness. Debts accumulate, credit fails, essential clothing and furniture are pawned, and, eventually, the family must request to be added to the list of paupers. If this is a typical consequence of the operation of the capitalist law of value accumulation, then the necessity for capital to continually expand the market stands in stark contrast to the deteriorating conditions of social reproduction. The repression of wages and the subjugation of the majority of the population to the status of destitute paupers are the true causes of capitalist crises. Value does not exist without a market. From the perspective of social reproduction theory, there are several inconsistencies regarding market-realized values (Harvey, 2018).

The demand for labor, like the demand for goods, is inversely related to wage rates. Businesses are more willing and able to hire additional workers when wage rates are lower and less willing when wage rates are higher. When wage rates increase due to government regulations, inefficient firms may be forced to shut down or reduce their workforce. In economics, a firm’s decision to hire an additional worker is based on the difference between the marginal revenue product of that worker and the marginal resource cost. The marginal product of labor refers to the additional output generated by employing one more person-hour of labor, while the marginal revenue product of labor is the additional revenue earned from selling that extra output. Marginal resource cost is the cost of hiring that additional person-hour of labor, as well as the cost of other resources, such as land and capital.

The labor supply curve typically shows that more individuals are willing to work as wage rates increase, which is generally true in economies with abundant job opportunities. In such societies, people can choose from a variety of jobs and wage offers. Firms that provide the highest wages, the best working conditions, and attractive fringe benefits tend to attract the most qualified workers. However, in poorer economies, job opportunities are limited, and individuals often have little choice but to accept low-paying, unsuitable jobs to survive. In the Philippines, some individuals are even willing to accept wages below the

legal minimum to secure employment. Many college graduates, for instance, end up working as factory workers, sales associates, or office clerks. The oversupply of labor has led to exploitation by employers who take advantage of the surplus workforce (Fajardo, 1995).

The goal of an economic system is to distribute products and services to the populace as fairly and efficiently as possible. Therefore, equality or fairness is just as important as efficiency. However, different economic systems approach these two aspects of allocating goods and services differently. Based on extensive experience with their social and economic circumstances, countries have developed unique ideas and practices. Nations exploited by capitalism or economic imperialism have often chosen socialism or communism (Fajardo, 1995).

Capitalism perpetuates a widely held belief - often unconscious - that wealthy countries, companies, and individuals have achieved their success because they are more intelligent or work harder. This assumption, though unspoken and unverified, is commonly shared not only by the rich but also by many middle-class, poor, and uneducated individuals. Those who hold this view tend to believe that the poverty of nations is due to the lack of intelligence or effort among their citizens. However, the reality is far more complex. For centuries, wealthy countries have exploited resources and people in less affluent regions. While the global capitalist system has evolved over time, it remains fundamentally unjust, driven by profit, selfishness, and greed, benefiting a few while excluding the majority. Today, nearly half of the world's population continues to suffer and die in poverty.

Global capitalism is now facing terminal decline, riddled with inherent contradictions such as increasing inequality, wealth concentration, an over-reliance on speculation rather than productive activity, and unsustainable levels of debt. With an unrelenting focus on growth at any cost, global capitalism has become like a cancer - out of control and ultimately destructive to the world it inhabits. It plays a significant role in climate change and the degradation of the planet's ecosystems. Its current trajectory is unsustainable, and it is crucial to understand why this is the case while exploring viable alternatives. This knowledge is key to preparing for a future beyond capitalism (Maheshvarananda, 2012).

People's perceptions of their community's status are influenced by their personal experiences as residents. If individuals' personal status and quality of life improve, a greater degree of growth and development within the community will also be realized (Micabalo, 2022).

With numerous economic goals in mind, the five fundamental goals reflect Filipinos' aspirations to be alleviated from extreme poverty. The first goal is to strengthen economic freedom, including consumer choice, occupational choice, the freedom to consume or save,

property ownership, and freedom of enterprise. These freedoms are valid only if individuals are allowed independence and have complete control over what to consume, where to work, or which business to undertake. Moreover, a competitive market should protect the freedom and rights of consumers, workers, and producers.

One key goal is to promote economic efficiency, which focuses on maximizing output while minimizing resource usage. Another goal is economic stability, defined as the absence of significant fluctuations or volatility in the economy. The third objective is to enhance economic security, which involves providing individuals with greater financial stability. The sustainability of a market economy relies on economic security, as individuals derive their incomes through participation in the market. Those with the necessary skills, capital, and assets engage in market activities to earn income, with the value of these inputs linked to the value of the final goods and services they help produce. The final goal is to achieve robust economic growth, characterized by an increasing capacity to produce goods and services at a rate that outpaces population growth (Gabay *et al.*, 2007).

However, challenges remain within the workforce. Despite advantages over many developing countries in Asia and Africa, severe underemployment persists. Although approximately 50 million Filipinos can work, not all are willing to work for remuneration. Many people are forced to take any job for subsistence, despite low compensation, when unable to secure a position that matches their educational attainment. This situation differs from unemployment, which refers to those willing and able to work but facing severe difficulties in finding employment. Underemployment, or disguised unemployment, is also a significant issue in the farming sector, where 40% of the labor force is employed. Many agricultural workers do not work year-round due to the seasonal nature of the occupation. Another symptom of underemployment is the widespread need for supplementary income sources in rural areas because existing family income is insufficient. Some economists estimate underemployment in the rural sector to be close to 35%, a problem that dwarfs the underemployment situation overall (Villegas, 2001).

According to *AmBisyon Natin 2040* (2016), by 2040, Filipinos will lead stable, comfortable, and secure lives, knowing they have enough money for both unforeseen expenses and daily necessities, which allows them to plan for their own and their children's futures. A clean, effective, and just government should protect and enable families to live together in their homes and travel freely. Both the public and private sectors should focus on providing opportunities for Filipinos to enjoy *matatag, maginhawa, and panatag na buhay*. The government must leverage fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policy tools to guide development toward enabling Filipinos to achieve *AmBisyon Natin 2040*. This vision encompasses all

dimensions of development: economic, human and physical capital, institutional, social, and cultural.

By 2040, the Philippines aspires to become a prosperous middle-class nation free of poverty. Its citizens will be educated, innovative, and enjoy long, healthy lives. Families will thrive in culturally diverse and resilient communities within a society based on trust. Economic growth will be inclusive, sustainable, and relevant. Over the next 25 years, per capita income must at least triple. Economic progress should focus on improving the quality of life for the majority of Filipinos, emphasizing overall well-being rather than just income growth. Achieving *AmBisyon Natin 2040* requires fostering competitive businesses that offer affordable, high-quality goods and services. The government must promote investment in these sectors by enhancing market connections, simplifying procedures, and improving access to finance. These efforts should be backed by appropriate human capital development, as well as advances in science, technology, and innovation (National Economic and Development Authority, n.d.).

Poverty and inequality have long been persistent issues in the Philippines. However, following the 2008 spikes in food, fuel, and commodity prices, as well as the ongoing global financial crisis, these challenges have gained renewed focus. Over the past four decades, the percentage of households living below the official poverty line has declined slowly and unevenly, with poverty reduction occurring at a much slower pace than in neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and the People's Republic of China. The economy has been marked by boom-and-bust cycles, and recent modest economic growth has had little effect on reducing poverty. High levels of disparity across income groups, regions, and sectors, along with unchecked population growth, have further hindered progress in alleviating poverty (Asian Development Bank Report, 2009).

Most low-income individuals in the Philippines reside in rural areas, where they work primarily in agriculture, including farming and fishing. According to Micabalo *et al.*, (2024), the lack of financial support and limited resilience to climate change significantly hinder sustainable agricultural production. Additionally, extreme poverty is prevalent in areas affected by conflict. The ten poorest provinces in the country are either directly impacted by conflict or are highly vulnerable to it. Low-income households typically consist of six or more family members, with a higher number of dependents, including both children and elderly members. The majority of household heads in these families have only an elementary education or less. These families often have minimal or no assets and limited access to basic services such as electricity, clean water, sanitation, and healthcare and education. Low-income Filipinos are particularly susceptible to financial and price shocks, as well as natural disasters. Efforts to cope with these shocks - such as compensating for lost livelihoods - often result in deeper indebtedness. The main obstacles to

eradicating extreme poverty in the Philippines are the same issues that impede the country's overall development, including weak governance, a lack of fiscal space, and pervasive corruption. These problems are exacerbated by elite and state capture and insufficient education and healthcare services. The country's long-standing policy distortions have led to growth patterns that fail to create good jobs for the majority of Filipinos (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2014).

Land regulations significantly influence good governance, sustainable growth, and the availability of economic opportunities for both urban and rural residents, including the poor. Consequently, land policy research and the analysis of specific interventions related to land have long been a focus for the World Bank's Research and Development department, as well as other academic and civil society organizations. However, the dissemination of research findings to policymakers and key stakeholders has often been ineffective. This has resulted in land policy discussions being influenced more by preconceived notions and ideological views rather than by a thorough examination of how land policies can contribute to broader development goals. It also hinders the understanding of the extent of regional interventions and the mechanisms necessary to achieve social and economic objectives (Deininger, 2003).

Everyone claims to speak for the interests of poor farmers, but ultimately, the farmers need help. The facts are clear: the farmers are deeply entrenched in poverty. It is so severe that the children of farmers would rather risk uncertainty in urban areas than follow in their parents' footsteps. No wonder the average age of farmers is now about 57 years old. Helping farmers is often seen as a motherhood statement. Indeed, it has been used as justification for a number of failed policies that have caused severe damage over the years. Related to this "help the farmers" mantra is the policy advocating for rice self-sufficiency (Chanco, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, rural and agricultural areas - especially on the island of Mindanao - are the poorest in the nation. For many years, government soldiers and Muslim rebels have fought each other in this impoverished area. According to reports, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has the highest poverty rate. Furthermore, *The Borgen Project* (2017) reports that 30.1% of its 3,781,387 inhabitants live in extreme poverty, and 53.4% live below the poverty line.

The Philippines' midterm progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlights several positive achievements, including a reduction in the percentage of people living in extreme poverty, improvements in household and population poverty indicators, stable net enrollment rates by sex in both elementary and primary education, a decrease in infant mortality rates, HIV/AIDS prevalence below the national target of 1%, advancements

in environmental protection, and active participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, significant challenges remain, particularly in achieving goals related to maternal mortality rates, access to reproductive healthcare, and primary education. The goal of further reducing extreme poverty is at risk due to the ongoing global economic crisis and rising poverty levels. Additionally, regional disparities persist across all goals and targets (Asian Development Bank Report, 2009).

The difficulties the Philippines faces in achieving higher and sustained growth have been attributed to factors such as a prolonged decline in domestic investments (Bocchi, 2008), weaknesses in institutions and social infrastructure (Alba, 2007), institutional uncertainty (Pritchett, 2003), and historical and cultural factors that have hindered progress (Nelson, 2007). However, it is also possible that poverty itself is impeding economic growth. The impact of poverty on growth can be seen through various channels, including limited investment capacity due to lack of access to credit and underdeveloped financial markets, constraints in human capital due to insufficient education, healthcare, and nutrition, repeated risks and shocks that perpetuate poverty traps, and conflicts arising from inequality, which discourage investments and undermine social capital (Asian Development Bank Report, 2009).

According to classical traditions, people are largely in charge of their own fate and can choose to become impoverished (for example, by starting lone-parent households). The concept of poverty subcultures suggests that inadequacies could persist over time, for instance, because there aren't enough suitable role models. State assistance should be restricted to modifying personal capacities and dispositions (the *laissez-faire* tradition). Neoclassical theories are more comprehensive and acknowledge causes of poverty that are outside the control of individuals. These include the absence of both private and social assets, market failures that keep low-income individuals out of credit markets and make bad decisions seem reasonable, obstacles to education, immigrant status, advanced age, poor health, and employment barriers for single-parent households.

Looking at the classical and neoclassical approaches, their main advantages lie in using (quantifiable) monetary units to measure poverty and the readiness to implement policy prescriptions. They also draw attention to how incentives affect people's behavior and how income and productivity are related. These approaches are criticized for focusing only on material means to end poverty and placing too much emphasis on the individual, without considering, for example, ties to the community (Davis & Sanchez-Martinez, 2015).

Different schools of economic thought offer varying perspectives on poverty. Over time, definitions of poverty have evolved, shifting from a focus on monetary factors to more holistic concerns, such as social exclusion and

political engagement. Classical economics advocates for *laissez-faire* policies, suggesting that individuals are ultimately responsible for their poverty. In contrast, neoclassical or mainstream economics adopts a more diverse view, explaining poverty as the result of factors beyond individual control, such as market failures. Both classical and neoclassical approaches tend to place excessive emphasis on monetary aspects. Keynesian and neoliberal schools, on the other hand, highlight macroeconomic forces and the role of government in ensuring economic stability and providing public goods. In these schools, poverty is largely seen as involuntary, often linked to unemployment. Social exclusion and social capital theories take into account both social and economic factors, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the root causes of poverty and its persistence over time, thereby enhancing insights for poverty reduction (Davis & Sanchez-Martinez, 2015).

According to a 2016 *Social Weather Stations* (SWS) survey, the number of Filipinos who considered themselves poor dropped to an annual average of 44 percent, the lowest since 1987. The survey, conducted from December 3 to 4, 2016, revealed that 44 percent of 1,500 respondents rated their quality of life as "poor," a decrease of 9 percent from the 53 percent in the previous quarter. Additionally, 45 percent said their quality of life had improved, with 42 percent reporting it had stayed the same. These trends are reflected in the household sector, where poverty is most pronounced. A nationwide survey from the *National Statistics Office* (NSO) recorded that poverty incidence in 2015 was highest in the *ARMM* region at 53.4%, followed by the Eastern Visayas region at 40.5%. Conversely, Metro Manila had the lowest poverty incidence at 14.4%, significantly below the national average of 21.6%.

A. Income Sufficiency

The perceived mobility of a nation has a significant impact on how economic disparity affects happiness. Because people prefer to believe that they will eventually earn more money, income disparity is typically positively correlated with reported well-being in countries with high income mobility, such as the United States. The converse is seen in low-mobility nations, which are mostly in Europe, where people tend to believe that achieving a higher income level is unachievable (D'Hombres *et al.*, 2012).

B. Income Management

A strong understanding of personal financial management and the marketplace enables individuals to better manage their family's financial resources. With the right knowledge, people are more likely to reach their financial goals. In contrast, a lack of financial knowledge can hinder personal financial management and lead to financial difficulties, ultimately resulting in lower financial well-being (Godwin, 1994). Personal financial management involves managing personal and family resources to achieve financial success, which is defined as "the achievement of financial

aspirations that are desired, planned, or attempted” (Garman & Fogue, 2000). Effective financial management requires disciplined, systematic thought and action. It includes planning, implementing, and evaluating behaviors related to how a family allocates its income and wealth to meet its financial goals (Godwin & Koonce, 1992). Researchers have used various measures to assess financial management, including who makes financial decisions, attitudes toward credit, the presence of financial problems, and overall satisfaction with financial status. Additionally, behavioral measures such as planning, budgeting, and record-keeping are often used to evaluate financial management (Godwin, 1994).

C. Satisfaction with Living Standards

Approaches based on income and wealth have been utilized to assess living standards (Burholt & Windie, 2006). This approach conceptualizes the standard of living as the ability to access resources, such as money, that improve the quality of material circumstances. Defining living standards in terms of available resources offers advantages, as resources like income or wealth can be objectively measured. This makes them a practical and standardized way to assess living standards both within and between countries (Robeyns, 2006).

To gain deeper insights into the context of poverty reduction, this study explores various strategies employed to address poverty in many countries worldwide. According to Craig and Porter (2003), poverty reduction strategy represents both a primary policy device of international development institutions and an instance of a broader international convergence of public policy around global integration and social inclusion. Charting the emergence of these approaches, they argued that this convergence has a number of structural predilections that favor the technical and juridical over the political and economic, as well as the disciplinary framework over practical contest. Fraser (2011) argued that Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) can be understood as a technology of social control that seeks to shape domestic political space. In contrast, they suggested that international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bilateral donors work with international financial institutions (IFIs) through participation.

Akanji (2006) mentioned that microfinance is a strategy for poverty reduction. He established that poverty is indeed increasing in Nigeria. He further indicated in the introduction that the World Bank and the IMF are focusing on poverty reduction as a prerequisite for debt relief. Looking ahead to the future of the microfinance program in Nigeria, he noted that there is significant room for improvement within the current dispensation. The severe issue of supervision must be addressed and discussed thoroughly with the financial sector regulating authorities for the new merger of formal and informal credit institutions. Training must be built into the microfinance program, and budget provisions should be made during the

fiscal year to assist the program in transferring resources to people experiencing poverty.

Human capital deficits and limited work opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups hinder low-income families from improving their earnings. A lack of education prevents individuals from accessing higher-paying jobs and increases the likelihood of experiencing poverty at some point in their lives (Carnevale & Rose, 2001).

Quimbo *et al.*, (2008) introduced the concept of “poverty webs” to illustrate the complex cycles and pathways linking poor health, limited education, and poverty, which can persist across generations. These interconnected factors impact labor productivity, human capital investments - particularly in health and education - and the synergies between these investments. Poor parents may pass on poverty and disadvantage to their children during their formative years. If a parent is too unhealthy or unskilled to earn a sufficient income to support the family, the children may be forced to work instead of receiving an education. This pattern can continue when the children reach adulthood, as they may have to send their own children to work.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study explores the socioeconomic status of workers in the sugarcane industry in the 4th District of Cebu, Philippines. The results will be used to develop a proposed alternative livelihood program. Specifically, the study aims to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, family size, years of employment, and average family monthly income. It also examines the respondents’ socioeconomic status in terms of income sustainability, income management, and job satisfaction.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed the descriptive survey method to determine the socioeconomic status of the respondents, with data gathered through a researcher-made survey questionnaire. This study was conducted in three towns in the 4th District of Cebu Province: Bogo, Medellin, and Daanbantayan. The participants consisted of 205 respondents who completed the self-made questionnaire, including 65 respondents from Bogo City, 60 from Daanbantayan, and 80 from Medellin, Cebu.

The researcher used a self-made questionnaire and interview guide as the primary sources of information and data regarding the socioeconomic status of the workers. Content validation was conducted to ensure that the items were appropriate for the target participants and aligned with the research topic. The questionnaire was translated into the local dialect, Cebuano Binisaya, to ensure full comprehension by the participants. A pilot test was conducted with 10 respondents from Bogo City, Medellin,

and Daanbantayan in the 4th District of Cebu to test the reliability of the researcher-designed instrument. These respondents were excluded from the actual administration of the questionnaire. The survey was administered over a period of two weeks, with the researcher personally distributing the questionnaires. The Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.8121 indicates that the researcher-made tool was reliable for administration.

The researcher obtained permission from the hacienda owner, Cabo, or team leader to conduct the study with their workers. The questionnaire was administered during their free time.

Frequency counts and simple percentages were calculated to analyze the respondents’ profiles. The weighted mean was used to analyze the respondents’ economic status. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was applied to determine the significant relationship between the respondents’ profiles and economic status.

The researcher provided potential participants with a thorough explanation of the study’s objectives and the anticipated benefits, both direct and indirect, to ensure they understood the purpose of the research. Additionally, the researcher ensured that participation was entirely voluntary. Voluntary participation meant that individuals could freely decide to participate without coercion. Once the participants agreed to cooperate, they were asked to sign a consent form. The data collected were treated with the utmost confidentiality. If a participant chose to withdraw, they were free to do so at any time, and no further participation would be required.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets data on the economic status of the workers in the sugarcane plantation in the 4th District of Cebu Province, Philippines, based on the responses of the tapaseros.

A. Profile of the Respondents

This section presents the profile of the workers in the sugarcane plantation in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, family size, years of work experience, and monthly income.

The survey results reveal that the dominant age group of the respondents was within the 40-44 years old bracket, comprising 21.46% of the 205 respondents. This data suggests that most workers in the sugarcane plantation belong to the middle adulthood stage. These individuals find contentment in living in their rural community, which is their place of birth, despite the prevailing poverty and limited income. Generally, they choose to remain in their area of origin, as they already have a place to stay, even if they are merely caretakers or tenants of the landowners’ (or hacienderos’) land.

TABLE I PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS (N = 205)

Profile Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
A. Age (in years)		
Less than 25	2	0.98
25 - 29	5	2.44
30 - 34	15	7.32
35 - 39	11	5.37
40 - 44	44	21.46
45 - 49	43	20.98
50 - 54	43	20.98
55 - 59	36	17.56
60 and above	6	2.93
Mean	46.434	
StDev	8.725	
B. Gender		
Male	205	100.00
Female	0	0.00
C. Civil Status		
Single	16	7.80
Married	174	84.88
Separated	16	7.80
Widow	5	2.44
D. Highest Educational Attainment		
High School Level	6	2.93
Elementary Graduate	57	27.80
Elementary Level	104	50.73
Illiterate	38	18.54
E. Family Size		
1	6	2.93
2 - 3	13	6.34
4 - 6	114	55.61
7 - 9	64	31.22
Ten and above	8	3.90
F. No. of Years as Workers (Tapaseros)		
1 - 5	12	5.85
6 - 10	59	28.78
11 - 15	51	24.88
16 - 20	27	13.17
More than 20	56	27.32
G. Monthly Income (in PHP)		
Less than P 7,890.00	145	70.73
P 7,890.00 - P 15,780.00	60	29.27

On the other hand, only two (2) workers were aged under 25 years, accounting for just 0.98%. This indicates that a minimal number of respondents belong to the early adulthood stage. Based on the current behavior of the

younger generation, when they finish secondary school, they are more likely to move to cities to attend college or find work. The exodus from rural areas to urban centers is primarily driven by the lack of job and livelihood opportunities in their communities.

The effects of age on productivity have been a long-standing concern for employers. A commonly held stereotype is that worker productivity declines with age. It is often observed that older people fail to perform specific tasks as effectively as younger individuals. This result is typically attributed to age (Gelderblom, 2006). Older individuals' bodies are generally less reliable than those of younger workers in performing tasks with the same efficiency. However, there are notable psychological differences between older and younger people. Older individuals often outperform younger workers in specific tasks due to their experience. For example, older workers may provide better advice than younger ones (Warr, 1994).

All workers, like other individuals, are aging, and the body naturally undergoes age-related changes. It is commonly observed that, in general, a person in their 70s has less physical health than a person in their 30s. For instance, 70-year-olds tend to have poorer eyesight than 30-year-olds (Margrain & Boulton, 2005).

Additionally, all (100%) of the tapaseros who served as respondents in this investigation were male. Since the work as a tapasero is physically intensive and typically suited for men, this may explain the gender distribution. However, in reality, some women do work in this physically demanding job due to the limited sources of livelihood in areas with sugarcane haciendas. Despite the presence of women in the study environment, only men responded to the survey questionnaire, which explains why the result shows 100% male participants.

There are notable physical and psychological differences between men and women, which might affect the way they function at work. For example, an average woman may not work at the same efficiency level as an ordinary man in labor-intensive tasks. Studies indicate that men and women differ psychologically (Goleman, 1995).

The majority of the respondents, 84.88%, were already married. This indicates that most of the workers in the sugarcane plantation were married. These individuals are observed to exhibit maturity and a serious approach to their work due to their responsibilities within their families.

Furthermore, 104 respondents, or 50.73% of the participants, had only completed elementary education. This data suggests that, over the years, people who have stayed in communities with large sugarcane plantations are generally content with their lives. The work as laborers in the sugarcane industry does not require high educational qualifications, so many individuals do not pursue further education beyond elementary school. For them, the most

important goal is to work and earn a living for daily subsistence, and pursuing a college degree is not part of their ambitions or long-term plans.

Only six (6) respondents, or 2.93%, had completed high school as their highest level of education. Based on observations, those who finished secondary education often serve as leaders among the group of workers or tapaseros, as their level of understanding is considered above the rest.

Farm workers and their families encounter distinct challenges in accessing education. According to the National Farm Workers Ministry (2018), many farm workers have limited formal schooling, with the average level of education completed being only eighth grade. Furthermore, only 10% of migrant farm workers finish high school, a trend that reflects, in part, the lack of educational opportunities in their countries of origin.

Education is considered a vital asset for individuals, as it provides the knowledge needed to understand society, assert one's rights, and claim their fair share. Beyond improving awareness, education transforms attitudes and values, modernizes perspectives, and elevates social status. In many societies, economic benefits and social respectability are often linked to formal education, and those who are educated are granted greater respect. Educational literature highlights its role in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, fostering critical thinking, and exposing individuals to diverse values and norms (Kendre, 2011).

Another aspect considered is the family size of the workers or tapaseros. Among the respondents, 114 individuals, representing 55.61%, had families with 4-6 members. This finding indicates that these families typically consist of 4-6 children. Given the current economic situation and the limited income of workers on the hacienda, this number of family members requires higher daily food expenditures, which such an income level can scarcely sustain. This observation suggests that this group of laborers experiences hunger and faces imminent poverty due to limited income opportunities within the rural economy of the hacienda.

Additionally, six respondents, or 2.93%, did not have a family or lived alone, with some being single. This living arrangement is common in rural communities, often being a personal life choice. These individuals generally have the option to seek assistance from relatives residing nearby.

Furthermore, 59 respondents, or 28.78%, had been working in the sugarcane fields as tapaseros for 6-10 years, while 12 respondents, or 5.85%, had worked as laborers for 1-5 years. The data reveal that most respondents had been employed in the sugarcane hacienda for 6-20 years, or even longer. This finding suggests that these individuals have consistently relied on their income as laborers within the sugarcane industry, particularly under BOMEDCO, despite enduring significant hardships and poverty. It also indicates a persistent cycle of poverty, with children of tapaseros

likely to follow a similar path, as higher education is not prioritized to improve their standard of living. Moreover, the data indicate that tapaseros cannot afford to sustain their children’s education due to inadequate income and the seasonal nature of their work.

Lastly, the majority of workers, or 70.73%, reported earning a monthly income of less than Php 7,890.00, while the remaining 29.27% earned between Php 7,890.00 and Php 15,780.00. This finding reveals that most laborers on the hacienda earn below the minimum wage for Region 7.

According to Albert *et al.*, (2015), individuals with a per capita income of less than Php 7,890.00 fall below the

poverty threshold. Those classified within the lower-income class (but not classified as poor) make up a significant portion of the population. Households with low incomes and those within the lower-income class constitute more than half (52.7%, or 11.3 million households) and account for a quarter (23.1%) of total household income in the country.

B. Socioeconomic Status of the Respondents in Terms of Economic Sustainability

This section presents the socioeconomic status of the tapaseros in the 4th District of Northern Cebu Province in terms of economic sustainability.

TABLE II ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS AS TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY (N = 205)

Sl. No.	Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
1	The sugarcane plantation provided me and my family with a steady source of income. (<i>Ang katubhan nakahatag ug makanunayong panginabuhian naku ug sa akong pamilya.</i>)	2.32	0.737	Agree
2	The income derived out of working at the sugarcane plantation can sustain the family’s daily needs. (<i>Ang kita gikan sa among pagpanarbaho sa katubhan ensakto ra para sa adlaw adlaw napanginahanglan.</i>)	2.09	0.688	Agree
3	I am contented with the amount of my salary/wage from farm worker. (<i>Kontento ra ko sa ako kita/suweldo gikan sa isip usa ka empleyado or tapasero.</i>)	2.09	0.673	Agree
4	I receive enough benefits like SSS, Pag-ibig, Philhealth, 13 th month pay, and hazard pay. (<i>Nakadawat ko ug ensaktong benepisyo isip trabahante sa masa SSS, Pag-ibig, Philhealth, 13th month pay, and hazard pay</i>)	2.82	0.753	Fairly Agree
5	During the off-season, I can have an alternative work where I can earn and sustain the daily need (<i>Kung walay trabaho sa tubuhan naa koy lain kapangitaan ug trabaho para sa inadlaw nga panginahangalanon.</i>)	2.49	0.808	Agree
	Aggregate Mean	2.36		Agree

The highest weighted mean of 2.82 signifies that the respondents moderately agreed that they received benefits such as S.S.S., Pag-Ibig, PhilHealth, 13th month pay, and hazard pay. This data indicates that some hacienda workers, or tapaseros, receive statutory benefits as mandated by existing laws in the Philippines, but not all of them. Not all workers are given these benefits by the owners or managers of the hacienda.

On the other hand, the two lowest means of 2.09 indicate that the respondents agreed that the income derived from working at the sugarcane plantation is sufficient to sustain their family’s daily needs. This result suggests that these individuals are satisfied with their pay and feel that it supports their daily expenses.

Additionally, they are content with the amount of their salary or wage as farm workers. This suggests that these workers depend heavily on their livelihood from the sugarcane plantation or hacienda and strive to allocate their limited income to meet their family’s daily needs. However,

their income level would hardly cover the household expenses required for a comfortable life.

Likewise, the aggregate mean of 2.36 indicates that the respondents, or tapaseros, in a few instances, considered their life as laborers to be economically sustainable. Even though they indicated contentment with their income or wage from their work at the sugarcane plantation, they acknowledge the difficulty of their lives. Despite this, they find contentment in their current livelihood and are not empowered to make decisions about farming activities on the land owned by the haciendas.

Many authors implicitly assume that continuous and long-term sustained growth is a key component of sustainable economic development. Growth is often seen as a necessary condition for social improvements, although this assumption is somewhat problematic: while economic growth is empirically linked to employment, it does not necessarily correlate with fair distribution or justice (Alber, 2002).

Despite this, the idea of growth remains largely unchallenged, with little discussion about which types of growth may be truly sustainable. The rate of growth is often considered the only relevant factor, with little focus on its quality or impact (Spangenberg, 2002). According to Micabalo *et al.*, (2024), economic sustainability and resilience are also dependent on community collaboration and support from both public and private sectors.

However, this view contradicts the true definition of economic sustainability, which is the ability of an economy to maintain a certain level of production over the long term.

Sustainability refers to the capacity for systems or conditions to endure over time. Ultimately, contentment and satisfaction are crucial for everyone. Life requires balance, and in many societies, it is clear that most individuals are seeking a better work-life balance (Harich *et al.*, 2016).

C. Socioeconomic Status of the Respondents with Respect to Income Management

This section presents the economic status of the workers, or *tapaseros*, in the 4th district of Northern Cebu Province in terms of income management.

TABLE III ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS AS TO INCOME MANAGEMENT (N = 205)

Sl. No.	Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
1	I save some amount of money out of my salary/wage as farm worker (<i>Akog ipundo/tipigan ang uban nakung suweldo gikan sa akong pagpanarbaho isip tapasero</i>).	1.90	0.637	Agree
2	My income is enough to compensate for the children's expenses. (<i>Ang akong kita sigo ra sa ibayad sa skwelahan sa mga bata</i>).	1.91	0.636	Agree
3	During off-season I use my savings to cover my family expenses. (<i>Sa panahon nga walay trabaho, akong magamit ang akong natigom nga kwarta para sa gastuhanan sa akong pamilya</i>).	1.87	0.613	Agree
4	I have the money for the disaster/emergency. (<i>Naa koy magamit nga kwarta sa panahon nga nay kalamidad</i>).	1.86	0.590	Agree
5	I plant crops and raise farm animals that will give me additional income. (<i>Nagtanom ko ug mga lagutmon ug nagbuhi ko ug kahayopan para naa koy lain nakakitaan</i>).	2.19	0.856	Agree
	Aggregate Mean	1.95		Agree

The highest weighted mean of 2.91 indicates that respondents agreed with the statement that they plant crops and raise farm animals to generate additional income. This finding suggests that only a few workers engage in alternative ways to earn extra income aside from their work as *tapaseros*, as they do not own the land they till. However, through other forms of farming, the *tapaseros* can earn additional income by selling vegetables and fruits from the trees they cultivate on the landowners' property.

They can also save money on food by consuming their farm harvests or produce from their gardens. Conversely, the lowest mean of 1.86 indicates that respondents, in some instances, agreed they save money for disasters or emergencies. Generally, the *tapaseros* do not have savings for emergencies and rely solely on their income from the hacienda or sugarcane plantation. This finding implies that, during calamities that impact the respondents, they do not have sufficient funds for expenses such as hospitalization or medication. Despite understanding the importance of saving for unforeseen circumstances, they can hardly set aside any money.

Moreover, the aggregate mean of 1.95 suggests that, in terms of the respondents' economic status, they agreed, in

some instances, that they could practice proper income management given their limited earnings as workers in the sugarcane industry. Additionally, it is unreasonable to expect these workers to have financial literacy, considering that the majority of them did not complete elementary school.

Financial literacy is basic knowledge necessary for navigating modern society. Individuals should understand the importance of saving and investing for the future. According to Garman and Fogue (2000), financial literacy refers to understanding the facts and terminology needed to manage one's finances successfully. Comprehending personal financial management and the marketplace demonstrates an exceptional ability to control a family's financial resources (Godwin, 1994).

D. Socioeconomic Status of the Respondents in Terms of Job Satisfaction

This section presents the economic status of the workers, or *tapaseros*, in the 4th district of Northern Cebu Province with regard to job satisfaction.

TABLE IV ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS AS TO JOB SATISFACTION (N = 205)

Sl. No.	Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
1	Our involvement as worker in the sugarcane plantation has given us chance to live a descent and contented life. <i>(Ang ako panarbaho sa katubhan nakahatag naku ug kahigayunan nga makapanginabuhi na desente ug kontento na kinabuhi.)</i>	1.72	0.668	Disagree
2	My job makes a difference in the lives of others. <i>(Ang akong trabaho naghimo usa ka kalainan diha sa mga kinabuhi sa uban.)</i>	1.72	0.640	Disagree
3	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment. <i>(Ang akong buhat naghataw kanako ug usa ka pagbati sa personal nga kalamposan.)</i>	1.76	0.656	Agree
4	My job as a Tapasero provided me a secured life. <i>(Ang akong trabaho isip tapasero nakahatag naku kasiguraduan sa kinabuhi.)</i>	1.63	0.601	Disagree
5	At the overall, I am satisfied with my job. <i>(Sa kinatibuk-an nakontinto rako sa akong trabaho.)</i>	1.42	0.634	Disagree
	Aggregate Mean	1.65		Disagree

Based on the highest weighted mean of 1.76, respondents agreed that their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment. This finding indicates that the workers in the hacienda on the sugarcane plantation were only satisfied in a few instances with their current life situation and still aspired to achieve a better standard of living to escape poverty.

The workers faced significant challenges, especially during the off-milling season when there was no work in the hacienda, making it difficult to earn enough for their daily household sustenance. Their only solace was finding some satisfaction in living within a familiar community, close to family and relatives, and being able to seek help from them during times of need.

Furthermore, the lowest weighted mean of 1.42 indicates that respondents disagreed with the notion that they would be satisfied with their jobs. It is evident that the workers, or *tapaseros*, were dissatisfied with their work on the sugarcane plantation, as their income was insufficient to provide a comfortable life. Additionally, their earnings were only seasonal, with no job security or assurance of future income, particularly given market fluctuations in sugar prices and the looming threat of El Niño or intense heat, which can destroy crops, including sugarcane.

Moreover, the weighted aggregate mean of 1.65 indicates that respondents disagreed with being satisfied with their work in the sugarcane industry in the 4th District of Cebu Province. This result reflects the fact that the *tapaseros* have low incomes and lack adequate benefits, such as health insurance, despite the physically demanding nature of their work under the sun and the associated health risks. It also signifies that these workers still hope to live a decent, secure, and contented life.

Job satisfaction is the extent to which one feels happy with their job and is therefore willing to perform at an optimal level (Hoffman-Miller, 2013). Additionally, Aziri (2011) argued that, while there is no universally agreed-upon

definition of job satisfaction, it is important to consider the nature and significance of the work.

E. Results of the Test for Significant Relationships

This section presents data on the results of the test for significant relationships between the profile of the workers, or *tapaseros*, and their socioeconomic status in the 4th District of the northern part of Cebu Province, Philippines.

There is a significant relationship between the average monthly income of the respondents and their responses regarding socioeconomic status in terms of economic sustainability. This finding indicates that the workers, or *tapaseros*, rely heavily on income from the sugarcane plantation or hacienda, as their payment is based on the piece-rate system. In practice, Bogo Medellin Milling Company, Inc. (BOMEDCO) employs the *pesada* method, which involves actual cane weighing and juice analysis before issuing payment to the planters. This serves as the basis for the pay of the *tapaseros* under the piece-rate (*pakyaw*) system.

Another significant relationship is observed between the respondents' educational attainment and their responses regarding their economic status in terms of income management. This result suggests that the perspectives of the workers, or *tapaseros*, are linked to their level of education. It is part of Philippine culture that workers with lower levels of education - such as illiterate, elementary-level, or high school graduates - typically earn lower wages compared to those with higher educational attainment.

There is also a significant relationship between the workers' economic profile, specifically their family size, and their perceptions of their socioeconomic status in terms of income management. This result implies that the workers' views on their current economic situation are influenced by the number of family members sharing the household income. Families with fewer members may have a better economic condition compared to those with more members.

TABLE V RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THEIR SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Variable	Computed Chi-Square	Df	Critical Value	Significance	Result
A. Economic Sustainability					
Age	26.058	24	36.415	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Civil Status	8.650	9	16.919	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Educational Attainment	7.986	9	16.919	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Family Size	12.240	12	21.026	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Years of Working	20.274	12	21.026	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Average Monthly Income	16.287	3	7.815	Significant	Reject Ho
B. Income Management					
Age	18.775	24	36.415	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Civil Status	7.488	9	16.919	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Educational Attainment	42.405	9	16.919	Significant	Reject Ho
Family Size	32.203	12	21.026	Significant	Reject Ho
Years of Working	14.905	12	21.026	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Monthly Income	19.852	3	7.815	Significant	Reject Ho
C. Job Satisfaction					
Age	32.576	24	36.415	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Civil Status	3.805	9	16.919	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Educational Attainment	5.989	9	16.919	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Family Size	10.803	12	21.026	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Years of Working	5.886	12	21.026	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Monthly Income	13.347	3	7.815	Significant	Reject Ho

According to the National Research Council (1995), there is considerable debate about how well the official poverty measure captures a family's needs. The number of children in a family likely affects the family head's ability to work, and it can be expected that low-income families with more children may be less likely to be high-work families compared to those with fewer children.

Additionally, a significant relationship was found between the respondents' average monthly income and their perceptions of their economic status in terms of income management. This finding suggests that the workers' views on the sustainability of their income from the sugarcane plantation or hacienda are related to how much they earn from their jobs. Therefore, those with higher incomes tend to have a more positive outlook on their life's comforts.

Lastly, there is a significant relationship between the average monthly income and the respondents' perspectives on job satisfaction and the economy. This finding indicates that salary substantially influences job satisfaction. Pay is one of the fundamental components of job satisfaction, as it plays a critical role in determining whether workers are happy and content with their work life. The increasing living costs and growing needs of people push workers to seek higher incomes that can ensure their future well-being and life satisfaction. Moreover, if individuals believe they are not adequately compensated, emotional dissatisfaction

may develop. These emotional discrepancies can accumulate over time, leading to lower morale and decreased job satisfaction. Greenberg and Baron (2008) noted that a perceived low salary contributes to job dissatisfaction and significantly influences employee turnover.

F. Results on the Test of Significant Difference on the Respondents' Perception of their Socioeconomic Status

This section presents the results of the test for significant differences in the socioeconomic status of the workers, or *tapaseros*, in the 4th District of Cebu Province, Philippines. There is a significant difference in the responses of the workers, or *tapaseros*, regarding their perceptions of their economic status from the perspective of their economic sustainability as laborers. This result indicates that there is variation in the respondents' answers about how much they earn, the benefits they receive, and how well this income sustains their household expenses. Additionally, the workers and their co-workers occasionally have disagreements with the management of the hacienda.

Furthermore, there is another significant difference in the views of the workers, or *tapaseros*, regarding their economic status in terms of income management. This result reveals that the way the respondents manage and allocate their meager income as laborers differs from one

another and is dependent on their experience of the sufficiency of such income for their sustenance. Some

workers find other means of earning, especially during the off-milling season.

TABLE VI SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE ON THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THEIR SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Grouped By	df	Sum Square	Mean Square	F- value	P- Value	Significance	Results
A. Economic Sustainability							
Between Group	4	78.484	19.621	36.49	0.000	Significant	Ho Rejected
Within Group	1020	548.507	0.538				
Total	1024	626.991					
B. Income Management							
Between Group	4	15.600	3.900	8.60	0.000	Significant	Ho Rejected
Within Group	1020	462.449	0.453				
Total	1024	478.049					
C. Job Satisfaction							
Between Group	4	14.777	3.694	9.01	0.000	Significant	Ho Rejected
Within Group	1020	418.185	0.410				
Total	1024	432.962					

Their perceptions of their economic status in terms of job satisfaction significantly differ from their colleagues' views on how content and happy they are with their life as *tapaseros*. This data reflects the actual situation in which the workers feel that their pay does not correspond to the value of their hard work. They also do not experience a comfortable life due to the poverty and hunger they endure.

Job satisfaction is crucial because it is relevant to the physical and mental well-being of employees and has implications for job-related behaviors, such as productivity. Work is an essential aspect of people's lives, and most spend a large part of their working lives at work. Understanding the factors affecting job satisfaction is important for improving the well-being of many people (Oshagbemi, 1999).

VI. CONCLUSION

The sugarcane workers in the 4th District of Cebu Province continue to live in poverty, earning meager wages despite enduring harsh weather conditions and the physically demanding work of harvesting and carrying heavy bundles of sugarcane for milling. Yet, *tapaseros* receive no social protection beyond their low wages. Aware of their difficult situation, they endure their struggles in silence, lacking any collective organization to advocate for improved working conditions. With limited education and few employment options in their community, they have resigned themselves to their circumstances, feeling powerless and disempowered. This is due to both personal limitations and the unfavorable economic environment, coupled with the lack of institutional support from the barangay and higher government agencies. Although they live in poverty, their only comfort is that they can at least afford three meals a day and secure regular income during their six to seven months of work each year.

VII. TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The proposed livelihood programs for people living in the sugarcane plantation communities or haciendas in the City of Bogo, Municipality of Medellin, and Daanbantayan, Cebu, with the support of local government units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), will be implemented and spearheaded by Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges (CRMC) in Bogo City, Cebu, as part of their community extension program. The CRMC Community Extension Program Department will assist in the implementation of the livelihood programs through seminars, training, workshops, and consultations with other partners who will support these programs for the workers or *tapaseros*. This project consists of several livelihood programs designed for the *tapaseros* in the three towns of the 4th district of Cebu to enhance and sustain their lives, especially during the off-season in the sugarcane industry, which lasts for six months. The project's impact aims to improve the standard of living for the *tapaseros* or sugarcane workers, who face economic challenges during the off-season. The expected outcome of the project is to ensure sustainable livelihood programs that will replace the income lost during the off-season in the hacienda and help reduce poverty. The project will generate sustainable work and self-employment opportunities for the *tapaseros* and facilitate livelihood activities to improve their quality of life.

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