

TANGLAW LAUT: LENSING THE PLIGHTS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE BADJAO MOTHERS IN MABINI, SANTIAGO CITY

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Abstract

Badjaos are well known for their begging activities and people who supposedly care for them tend to turn their back and walk away instead of helping them genuinely. Hence, this phenomenological research examines Badjao mother's specifically lensing their plights and aspirations. The study utilizes qualitative phenomenological research and used self-made interview guide questions. The participants of this study were the Badjao mothers. 48 total Badjao mothers are residing in Mabini, Santiago city, 3 of them participated in the study. The findings were analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Findings revealed that all of them are Badjao mothers with two, six, and four children respectively. As to their age, one of the participants knows her age but the two other participants do not know exactly how old they are. Also, they rely on their husband and are unemployed they also don't know how to count because they never went to school. Furthermore, it shows that begging, selling and garbage picking are their means for survival considering that they don't have any other alternative. It was also identified that these Badjaos have these aspirations in terms of education, food and medicine, shelter/housing, and job opportunities.

Keywords: Badjaos, Plights, Aspirations

1. Introduction

Sama Badjao popularly known as the "Sea Gypsies" of the Sulu and Celebes Seas are dispersed along with the coastal areas of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, and some coastal municipalities of Zamboanga del Sur in the ARMM. They are forced to abandon their wandering and boat-dwelling life over the decades of wars, piracy, discrimination, fishing, and environmental issues (Lagsa, 2015).

The Badjao community was forced to flee their hometown and resorted to migrate to different parts of the Philippines. In the year 2010, the sudden establishment of houses of Badjao made of scrap materials under the Mabini Bridge in Santiago city was observed. Until now they are still seen around malls and in the public market mostly tugging passers-by begging for some coins or food. Some were giving entertainment through their improvised drums and jive with the tune in turn of some coins. If not, they had been cast away with those people who think it's nuisance and eye-irritants.

Badjao mothers lived by begging down the streets carrying their children from the older to the younger ones to be able to suffice their everyday food. They wake up every day thinking if they will be able to survive the day. The government cannot just turn a blind eye to the plight of the Badjao, poverty will become worse somebody has to make the move. Being a democratic country the development of the national government should be inclusive some sectors of the society should not be left out (Reyes, 2015). Hence, this research entitled "Tanglaw-Laut: Lensing the plights and aspirations of Badjao Mothers in Mabini, Santiago City" is conducted to propose a literacy program for Badjao mothers as well as their children to restore and uplift their dignity by having a stable source of income through the learnings they could get in the program and gradually eliminate their mindset that they can only survive by begging down the streets.



1.1 Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aimed to explore the plights and aspirations of the Badjao Mothers in Mabini, Santiago city, and eventually serve as a basis in conceptualizing intervention programs for the participants.

Specifically, this paper intended to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of Badjao mothers in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Number of children
 - 1.3. Occupation
 - 1.4. Educational attainment
2. Explore the plights and aspirations of the Badjao mothers.
3. Reflect on the findings of the study and eventually a benchmark in crafting programs of CVCITC with the support of the city government of Santiago in creating intervention programs for the participants.

2. Materials and Methods

The researcher utilized phenomenology as the research design of this qualitative research. Phenomenological research design focused on the experiences of an individual or group. It attempted to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation. In this study, the phenomenology research design was used in examining the plights and aspirations of Badjao mothers.

2.1. Participants

The researcher gathered three (3) participants of this study, specifically a Badjao mother. They served as the mainstream of this study as they become the most affected by carrying the burden of the family for their living situation. Since Badjaos in Mabini, Santiago city settled there for a long time they had already established relationships with their fellow Badjao people. So having referrals from them about the other household living within the area was a great help to the researchers.

2.2. Research Instrument

The researchers utilized open-ended interviews, the most effective method towards getting an authentic understanding of people's experiences. A voice recorder helped the researcher to record and gather all the answers of the respondents. The researchers observed the non-verbal responses of the respondents such as their expressions, posture, and gestures. With the help of pen and paper, they were able to note down all the non-verbal cues.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sent a letter request to the Barangay Captain of Mabini, Santiago City before the conduct of the interview among the Badjao in their Barangay. Before starting the interview, they explained the rights of the participant; the confidentiality of the data, and their anonymity. The researchers interviewed the informants three times to confirm the validity of their responses and to have a different perspective by penetrating and immersing into them at the same time, building a rapport in this way they would be more comfortable in sharing their stories. The data from the voice recording of the interview was transcribed and went through NVivo for further checking of the reliability of the interviewed questions. The analysis of the transcripts would be carried out by the researcher through the Collaizi method that would be categorized and identified similar themes.

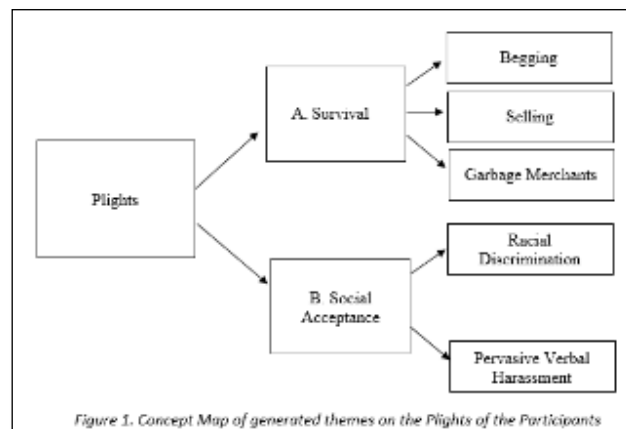


3. Results and Discussion

There were three (3) participants considered in this study. All of them are mothers with two, six, and four children respectively. As to their age, one of the participants (informant 2) said she is 30 years old but the two other participants (informant 1 and 2) do not know exactly how old they are. According to them, they do not know how to count because they never went to school.

Plights

The themes identified were described according to the extent of meaningfulness and relatedness for a more accurate representation of the plights of the participants. Thus, the following figure presents the themes generated particularly the plights of the participants.



A. Survival

The Badjaos persistently a self-reliant and free people of Santiago City who were primarily dependent on begging, selling, and garbage picker to survive.

Theme #1. Begging

There has been a scenario that a member of the indigenous Badjao tribe – begging in the streets and more visibly in the market of Santiago City, reflects an impoverished family. The researchers tried to dig out why these individuals are doing such. The informant shared:

Ehh... andoon sa palengke (tinuro ang daan papuntang palengke) ikot-ikot manghihingi sa mga bahay bahay hingi pagkain (Uhm... We usually go to the market or to nearby houses begging for food ...)

Indeed, the above-mentioned scenario is supported by Conde (2016), wherein he pointed out that the Badjao, like many of the Philippines' indigenous peoples, is a neglected tribe. They live in extreme poverty – often beyond the reach of state assistance due to their nomadic existence. The result is that many of them join the ranks of beggars in the Philippines' urban centers or dive for coins thrown by boat passengers.

Theme #2. Selling

There's an instance that some Badjao men were seen roaming around and offer their products some of them went into faraway places when the sales from the vicinity cannot suffice their food needs. The researchers tried to know what're they selling. They found out that their husbands were selling fake earrings, *sampaguita*, candies, etc. If their husband were not able to sell, the informants mentioned that they borrow food from their neighbors.



Certainly, the above-stated situation is defended by Bautista (2015), wherein the Badjao women commonly stayed at home while selling fruits and foods in their community to support the source of income of her family. Their husbands were fishermen or pearl vendors their supply was from Palawan and Mindanao. He further highlights those women settlers in Santiago city were most persistent, independent, goal setter, risk-taker, and being inclined with innovations these signify an extent in their entrepreneurial characteristics.

Theme #3. Garbage Merchants

The Badjaos hardly get their meals every day they ate two times a day unluckily if their husbands have no earnings at all the children takes the responsibility and went to the market to beg and pick something to eat like vegetables and fish. Poverty hinders the children to go to school and study so they spend their daily lives coping with the situation. They sell bottles and jars in turns of coins. They lived by picking garbage and exchanging it for food or money.

Certainly, in the preceding circumstances was endorsed by Sanchez & Maldonado (2015) in their study that scavenging is an emergent occurrence in big cities around the world. Aside from being the source of everyday income for those unfortunate people, it also helps the environment by recycling waste and extending the lifespan of the dumping site.

B. Social Acceptance

Our fellowmen, the Badjaos were the most neglected indigenous people in the country most of us ignore them and walk away as if they're not part of us. They suffered too much from the cruelty of the people that were supposed to be helping them. Instead of welcoming them through an open arm they constantly receive racial discrimination and pervasive verbal harassment.

Theme #4. Racial Discrimination

A job opportunity must be achieved by every one of us despite race and ethnicity. Stereotyping was the main reason why a Badjao mother refuses to try applying again. Some of them were not hired when the employer learned that they are indeed Sama Badjaos. Aside from discrimination, they get when they were applying for a specific job they're also teased for being stinky.

The aforementioned occurrence was assisted by Macalandag (2009) where she emphasizes the social exclusion confronting the Badjao people, the sea nomads of the Philippines. Power relations are being highlighted in the geopolitical upon the term "Badjao" which lies in the dynamics and between physical, social, and symbolic spaces where state and society conceptualize the Badjaos into a socially excluded spot.

Theme #5. Pervasive Verbal Harassment

Since Badjaos were one of the most unfortunate families in Santiago city they were treated differently. Thus, informant 1 said that they were treated differently just because they are poor. On the other hand, a participant told the researchers how they were treated in public transportations; they were not allowed to ride jeepneys and busses because they were told they are stinky and dirty. The Badjao people suffered so much and tend to avoid arguments as they're known to be peaceable kind of person. They carry the burden through themselves.

The above-listed circumstances were aided by Veloso (2017), the stated that gender-based violence was in a continuum process from private to public violence at the community and state levels. The violence that the internally displaced people (IDPs) experienced in Zamboanga confront in their private lives is a reflection of the pervasiveness of violence in the society. The link between gender and other locating factors such as race and ethnicity, social class, age, and



many more shapes the experience of gender-based violence.

Aspirations of the Badjaos

The themes identified were described according to the extent of meaningfulness and relatedness for a more accurate representation of the aspirations of the participants. Thus, the following figure presents the themes generated particularly on the aspirations of the participants.

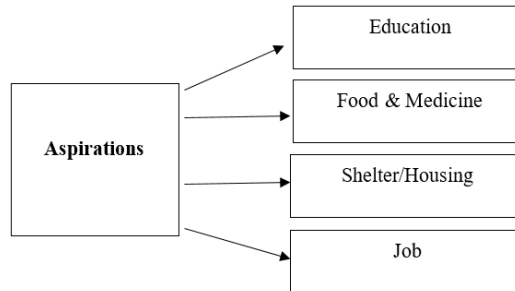


Figure 1. Concept Map of Generated themes on the Aspirations of Badjaos

Theme #6. Education

Lack of education of Badjaos was also one of the factors that hinder them to get a stable source of income. Also, lack of finance was the reason why they cannot send their children to school. The possibility of having a stable job of uneducated and socially exclude people through their ethnicity was impossible for them.

Indeed, the previously mentioned scenario was supported by Panelo et al. (2016), as he highlights that in developing their learning abilities, they agreed that sharing their ideas confidently with their classmates was their main struggle. The majority of the Badjao learners were afraid to socialize with others. They felt inferior because of their looks and status in life.

Theme #7. Food & Medicine

The Badjao lacks on their primary needs they can't even suffice the everyday needs of their children, so they have this simple demands of their necessities. They received food and medicine and hoping for more benefits and support from the local government. Badjao mothers were reliant on their husbands so they were thankful if somebody gave them food supplies they often had coffee in the morning and cook when their husbands arrived in the afternoon.

Theme #8. Shelter/Housing

Fear was dominant in the statement of the participants that they would be demolished if somebody offers them something. As this was not their property and they could be expelled to this place anytime the fear in her heart bothers her. To stay in their place and not to be demolished was one of their wishes also to have an identification card and to have some financial assistance from the government.

Theme #9. Job

A stable job is a must to suffice all the necessities of a particular family without it the members automatically adjust by searching for a dependable source of income either temporary or a permanent one. Just like how informant 3 adapts herself when her husband has no earnings. Lack of education also hinders them to be hired and it bothers them.



All of the participants having this kind of answer saying that their earnings every day is enough for their food but sometimes it's not. They also have nothing to spend during emergencies when one of the family members got sick. So it's really necessary to have a stable source of income and a dependable one because they can't live like this forever.

The aforementioned occurrence was assisted by Navarro (2015) highlights that the loss of access and control to fishing grounds made the Badjaos of Bongao leave their boats and fishing nets and got integrated into the wage-labor system some of the homes were offering cleaning and laundry jobs.

4. Conclusion

All of them are Badjao mothers with two, six, and four children respectively. As to their age, one of the participants knows her age but the two other participants do not know exactly how old they are. They rely on their husband and are unemployed they also don't know how to count because they never went to school.

Begging, selling and garbage picking are their ways to survive considering that they don't have any other alternative. Moreover, they were also experiencing racial discrimination and pervasive verbal harassment from the people around them. It's also identified that Badjaos Mothers have aspirations in terms of education, food and medicine, shelter/housing, and job opportunities.

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