

Impacts of Seasonal Nature of Employment on the Income Stability of the Farm Laborers' Household

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Abstract. Farm workers or laborers are essential as they provide the critical labor needed to cultivate, harvest, and sustain the agricultural processes that ensure food security and drive the agricultural economy. However, in the Philippine agriculture landscape, farm laborers are heavily affected by the seasonality of their employment. The study on the impact of seasonal employment on the income stability of the farm laborer's household remains under exploration. This participatory action research (PAR) aimed to explore the impact of the seasonal nature of employment on the income stability of the farm laborer's household in Mapurog, Sapad, Lanao del Norte, through resource-flow activity with one-on-one interviews and observations. This is analyzed using the reflexive thematic analysis. The study revealed a complex impact of this developmental issue, including a significant reduction in income during off-peak seasons and increased reliance on informal credit sources. Children stop attending school to engage in labor and help their parents, essential daily needs remain unmet, access to healthcare is deprioritized, and mental distress pervades the community. Furthermore, the research identifies reliance on loans, credit institutions, and extended family arrangements as coping mechanisms for income instability. While these strategies demonstrate the resourcefulness and resiliency of the farm laborers, they exacerbate financial distress rather than alleviate it. The findings suggest that government policies should improve access to education, such as scholarship programs that allow children to attend school without the economic pressure to work. Additionally, financial policies could include the development of alternative and sustainable economic support systems that reduce dependence on loans and debt. Lastly, comprehensive social protection programs should be implemented to provide safety nets for vulnerable families, addressing the root causes of income instability and promoting long-term community resilience.

Keywords: Farm laborers; Income stability; Agriculture; Seasonal employment.

1.0 Introduction

Agriculture is pivotal in the Philippines' economy, employing a significant portion of the population. It is the key driver of the economy in the rural areas where most Filipinos live, but poverty remains high (Andriesse, 2017). Agriculture remains one of the major sources of employment; the proportion of people employed in the agriculture sector accounted for 23.1 percent of the total employment in the Philippines in 2022 (Statistic Research Department, 2023). However, a substantial demographic of farm laborers experience irregular and unstable incomes within the agricultural sector. Briones (2012) stated that in 2012, many individuals living in poverty (66%) were employed in the agricultural sector.

In the Philippine agricultural landscape, farm laborers are essential for the planting, tending, and harvesting crops. Their employment is often characterized by seasonality and risky work arrangements, leaving them susceptible to income instability. Several factors contribute to this instability, such as the effect of climate change on agriculture, crop seasonality, casual labor, and low wages (Devereux et al., 2012). Additionally, the perception of seasonal employment as less meaningful can marginalize workers, positioning them on the periphery of the labor market (Ćorluka & Landvogt, 2022). It leads to economic instability for workers, affecting their livelihoods and community integration, as demand fluctuations create uncertainty in job security and income levels (Baum et al., 2023)

Relatively, income instability due to seasonal employment is a common issue farm laborers face in many rural areas (Kareemulla et al., 2013). This issue affects their economic well-being, overall livelihoods, and quality of life. Agricultural laborers face challenges as their wages do not cover basic needs, leading to vulnerability during food price increases (Lanzona, 2024). Seasonality of labor markets is crucial for rural livelihoods, yet often overlooked in economic models (Feuerbacher & Grethe, 2018).

Income instability refers to the uncertainty in income levels individuals or households face, resulting from irregular employment, limited job opportunities, and unpredictable income sources (Western et al., 2012). Farm workers are essential resources in the agriculture industry due to their significant contributions and impact. They are important in ensuring a steady and secure food supply (Lusk & Chandra, 2021). Farm workers are crucial in agriculture for labor-intensive tasks such as planting and harvesting, ensuring farm jobs are completed efficiently (Martin, 2014). Comparatively, farm laborers form the foundation of the agriculture industry's success and development as they contribute to economic growth (Singh, 2023). Despite their significant contribution to the sector, they often do not receive a fair share of the income from agriculture as their work is characterized by seasonality, which contributes to their experiencing income instability (Surender, 2022).

On the other hand, while some studies have explored the general challenges faced by farmers in the country, more research is needed that specifically examines the impacts of the seasonal nature of employment on household income stability among farm laborers, as this remains underexplored. Exploring the impacts of seasonal jobs on income stability among this vulnerable group could provide valuable insights for designing more targeted and effective initiatives and policies to support their resilience and well-being. With that, the main objective of this study is to explore the impacts of the seasonal nature of employment on the income stability of the farm laborer's household in Mapurog, Sapad, Lanao del Norte.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized participatory action research. This approach empowers community members to engage as co-researchers, aiming that their lived experiences and insights directly inform the research process. PAR emphasizes marginalized groups' involvement, allowing farm laborers to share their experiences regarding seasonal employment and its effects on income stability (Brown, 2024). This methodology is rooted in social justice, aiming to address structural inequalities that affect farm laborers (Mcintyre, 2022). Additionally, the action-oriented nature of PAR allows for the immediate implementation of findings, which enables participants to adapt strategies in real time to enhance their income stability (Zeller-Berkman, 2024). Lastly, PAR facilitates the development of strategies that can directly improve the economic conditions of these households and promote sustainable change (Hünefeldt, 2022).

2.2 Research Locale

The study was carried out in Mapurog, Sapad, Lanao del Norte. This is a farming community focused on cultivated crops, including rice, corn, and vegetables. One of the major sources of income in the community is farm labor. According to the Annual Development Plan of Barangay Mapurog (2022), farm labor constitutes almost 80 percent of the total households in the community.

2.3 Research Participants

The total population of farm laborers in Mapurog constitutes almost 80% of the community's households. Among this 80%, there were 20 diverse household participants, including perspectives from a mother, father, child, and a couple. Among the participating households were 3 single fathers, 2 single mothers, and 1 gay couple.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study utilized the resource flow activity with one-on-one interviews and observations. Resource flow activity is a method in which the participants will draw or list every asset that comes into a household and how those assets are spent. It served as an effective research instrument for exploring the impact of seasonal employment on the income stability of farm laborers' households due to its ability to capture the dynamic interactions between labor, resources, and economic outcomes. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how seasonal employment influences household income stability (Idea Org, n.d.).

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The study ensured accurate data collection and participant confidentiality through voluntary, in-person interviews using the resource flow activity, which involves questionnaires on assets and expenses. Interviews were recorded to prevent bias and securely store accurate transcription and personal information. Participants' privacy was prioritized, and follow-up questions were used to explore the impact of seasonal employment on farm laborers' income stability. Findings informed the research writing and will be used for future reports to the Mindanao Young Leaders Programme partner organizations, including UnionAID, Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability, Victoria University of Wellington, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Aotearoa New Zealand.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. Participant information sheets and consent are given to the participants. The document discussed the study's rationale, privacy, and confidentiality of their participation, involving a "Not harm" approach during the interview, maintaining fairness and equity, and debriefing. This research has been approved by the Mindanao Young Leader Programme's ethics panel.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Following the reflexive thematic analysis, the study recognized six overarching themes: Children stop attending school, unmet basic needs, dependency on loans and credits, extended family of their parents, deprioritized healthcare, and mental distress.

Theme 1: Children Stop Attending School

The first theme that emerged in the study is that children stop attending school. Stopping attending school refers to the act of discontinuing formal education, typically before completing a designated course or program of study. Children make the decision to discontinue their formal education to engage in labor activities to support their family's financial needs. Four children of farm laborers who were interviewed expressed that they tend to help their parents by looking for income through working on the farm and other working sites such as grocery stores.

Child 3, a senior high school graduate who never pursued a college degree, revealed that *"after my senior high school, I started working in the field and never thought of going to college."* A comparative explanation behind why children do not pursue tertiary education or even finish their studies was also shared by Child 4, who mentioned,

"I stopped studying in elementary, I guess. . . in grade 4 or 5 because I was working in the rice field as a rice seedling planter to earn income and help my mom with the expenses in the house".

Child 2 also described the reason why he stopped studying in the meantime and mentioned that,

"I stopped attending school (secondary level) because of the lack of financial support, but at this moment, I continue studying in the Alternative Learning System program of the Department of Education while working or self-sustaining in the hope of finishing my studies."

Another fascinating context is revealed by Child 5, a young farm laborer and high schooler. He expressed his sentiments when it comes to income instability and mentioned that,

"My father's income is not enough to sustain the needs of our family since I have plenty of siblings; I tend to work sideline in the rice field as a rice seedlings planter even if that means I will be absent. . . to have a personal income because if I do not have money, I cannot buy even my foods."

On the other hand, Child 1, who stopped studying in junior high school, provided a different perspective and said,

"Before I stopped going to school, I was absent many days because I was in trouble fighting with my classmate (boy)."

This scenario further underscores the challenges stemming from financial instability. When confronted with such educational hurdles, parents may contemplate relocating their child to an alternative educational institution to ensure continuity in their academic pursuits. Nevertheless, due to economic insufficiency, parents cannot afford to transfer their child to another school. This financial strain proves unsustainable in the long term, exacerbating their inability to sustain such expenditures.

Theme 2: Unmet Basic Needs

The second theme is unmet basic needs. Unmet means unable to meet the current need. Most participants expressed that not meeting their daily needs, such as food for their meals, is one of the impacts of income instability because of seasonal employment, which negatively makes them so vulnerable. The lack of food led them to look for alternative food just to keep up a day of starvation. These alternatives are root crops such as bananas and cassava. They even cook rice soup and corn-soya soup to make the day pass.

Half of the household participants mentioned the lack of basic needs because of income instability due to the seasonal nature of their employment. Mother 5 blatantly expressed,

"We are so vulnerable because if we do not have work, (we are) one day, one eats."

This was further supported by the statement of Father 4, along with the experience of Father 5

"It is very hard because I cannot afford to buy food and meet my child's needs." It is a crisis because I cannot afford to buy groceries for my family. "

Although the households could buy rice, their other problem was that they could not afford to buy additional ingredients, such as fresh fish, to pair with the rice. Father 3 mentioned,

"I cannot buy fish because I can only afford rice, dried fish, and fermented and salted fish."

Couple 1's statement further supports this situation.

"You cannot save money because that is our only source of income. It is crucial. Sometimes, we will not have vegetables because we prioritize rice. There are also instances when we eat root crops such as bananas as an alternative to our rice."

It can be observed that despite allocating a significant portion of their earnings towards procuring food, which is deemed indispensable, numerous families frequently encounter food shortages and resort to consuming root crops as a substitute meal.

Child 2 disappointedly mentioned,

"Sometimes, we eat bananas, tacos, and cassava and cook soup out of the corn soya."

This situation was also experienced by Child 1, who said,

"I remember at the age of 4, we ate bananas and tacos to survive the day. We also cooked rice soup to suffice the whole family."

The same experience was also mentioned by Father 2, who expressed that,

"Sometimes, if we run out of rice, we eat root crops. Budgeting what is left of the income is very hard, and we cannot buy delicious foods because there is nothing left."

Despite the farm laborer's ability to provide food for their children, certain crucial needs, such as clothing, are not being prioritized; for example, Mother 1 revealed that:

"It is very weary because I cannot afford to buy my child's basic needs, such as clothes. After all, the income is only enough for the food."

Sometimes, their child's allowance will be deducted in exchange for food. As Mother 3 stated,

"As a single mom, I cannot afford to purchase all my child's needs, such as food and allowances. Sometimes, my child's allowance will be deducted if I buy food."

Theme 3: Deprioritized Healthcare

The third theme that emerged is deprioritizing healthcare, which refers to assigning lower importance or less attention to medical or health-related needs. This often results in reduced access to healthcare services or resources. Various factors, such as limited financial resources and competing priorities, may lead the family to neglect or delay seeking necessary medical care.

Child 1 and Father 6 articulated similar views regarding the purchase of medications amidst income instability. Child 1 said,

"With income insecurity, I cannot buy medicines if I get sick or have an illness."

The same statement was also shared by Father 6, who mentioned, *"I cannot buy medicine for our health and hospitalization"*. This situation also reflects the experience of Couple 2, who mentioned, *"It is hard for us to buy necessities like medicine because of the insecurity of income."* This case was further elaborated by Mother 2, who expressed,

"Whenever one of my family gets sick, we cannot afford to buy medicine or get them hospitalized. I usually do the treatment and physical therapy myself."

Due to insufficient income for procuring medication, these households are deprioritizing access to medicine and healthcare services, leading them to resort to self-administered treatments.

Theme 4: Mental Distress

Mental distress is the next emerging theme in exploring the impacts of income instability due to seasonal employment opportunities for farm laborers. Mental distress refers to a state of emotional or psychological discomfort, often characterized by feelings of anxiety, sadness, or agitation. It may manifest as a response to various stressors, challenges, or traumatic events, impacting an individual's well-being and functioning (Amlak et al., 2022).

Nine (9) out of 20 participants shared that income instability was rooted in the causes of a couple's argument, an individual's headache, bitter life, disappointments, and traumatic experiences. Mother 1 shared that *"no income means no rice, viand, or coffee. It is very hard, and I get a headache."* Child 4 also shared a similar experience, saying, *"I get headaches, especially if we have emergencies like hospitalization."*

On another note, Father 1 has an interesting perspective on income instability within the household and shared, *"If I do not bring food like rice into my family, my wife will nag at me."* This condition reflects the experience of Couple 4, who mentioned:

"It is difficult to buy the things we want because the income is budgeted already; it leads to high blood pressure, and we, (the couple) will argue because of the short budget."

This is a comparable situation with Mother 4, who stated,

"hard to budget because of insufficiency; we always fight (with my husband) because my husband cannot bring food to the table and goes home drunk and has no money."

This is such a saddening feeling because income instability has made Father 3 more mentally distressed and said,

"I am feeling disappointed; my income is seasonal, and I cannot find another stable job because I did not finish my studies and I am a Person with a disability."

In a related narrative, another story illustrates how seasonal employment led to income instability, which exacerbated the distressing suffering endured by Child 1 and Child 2, both of whom were recruited to work at the same employment site. They shared,

"It is a very traumatic experience because we (Child 1 and 2) look for work in another place for us to have income and help our parents because we do not have income here, and when we arrive at the (supposed) working place, we are scammed."

Aside from having a traumatic experience and being disappointed, income instability due to seasonal employment makes the life of Child 3 bitter and said,

"It is a bitter, very bitter life because I cannot purchase food because the income is unstable, and I have seasonal work."

Theme 5: Extended Family to Their Parent

The fifth theme is extended family to their parents. An extended family comprises relatives beyond the nuclear family unit, encompassing married offspring and their own children (Neupert, 2019). Among the participants, four individuals currently reside with their parents despite being married and having their children. However, only three of these participants elaborated on their experiences living in an extended family arrangement with their parents, primarily attributing this situation to economic constraints.

Mother 5 has one child, and a single mother mentioned,

"It is very hard because it (the income) cannot sustain my child's needs. That's why I relied on my parents".

This was also experienced by Father 3, who has one child, is a single father, and is a Person with Disability. Stated that:

"It is very draining because I cannot buy the things I want, and sometimes, we are starving because we do not have food, and that is the reason why I'm living with my parents and my daughter."

Furthermore, the circumstances of Mother 4, who has a partner with 6 children, are notably more complicated than the other participants residing with their parents, as her entire family cohabits with her mother, a senior citizen, and a widow. She shared that *"because of the no earnings and income insecurity, I live with my mom, my whole family."* Drawing from her sharing, the family faces significant vulnerability due to the unstable financial situation of her mother, who is also employed as a farm laborer. Adding to the distress is the fact that her mother is an elderly widow, which exacerbates their difficulty.

Theme 6: Reliance on Credit and Loan

The last emerging theme is the reliance on credit and loans. Reliance denotes the state of dependence upon a particular entity or resource. In farm laborers' households, this reliance manifests through their dependency on loans and credit facilities when immediate funds are unavailable to procure essential commodities such as food

and clothing, build a house, and address urgent needs such as medical expenses and hospitalization. Five participants mentioned loaning and crediting to sustain expenses needed for the day.

Couple 5 mentioned that:

"It is very hard because every day we have to purchase for our daily needs, for example, allowance for our kids. That's why we tend to have loans even with interest, and we pay it every cropping".

Mother 2 also mentioned owning food in the neighboring store because of the shortage of budget,

I am always having a hard time budgeting. As a mother, it's troublesome to budget the family's money, especially when it is lacking. That is why we are in debt to the store just to bring food to the table.

Sometimes, these farm laborers will owe money to their siblings. For example, Couple 5 mentioned that:

"In case of emergency when we do not have money or spare money to buy food, we ask or owe money to our sibling."

On the other hand, when it comes to emergencies, loaning has been the usual means of Child 4 and said,

"When it is an emergency, I am involved in loan credit to sustain the hospitalization of my sister's child."

Relatively, this budget shortage has led Couple 5 to borrow money from a credit institution to finance the building of their house because they can't save enough money from their income to build and renovate it. They mentioned that *"since we can't afford our house with our income, we loaned the construction of our house."*

5.8 Summary of Findings and Critical Reflection

Previous studies showed that seasonal employment has negatively affected the income stability of farm laborers (Olakojo, 2016 & Koroğlu, 2023), which significantly affects farm workers in the Philippines (Santoalla, 2011 & Shatkin, 2009). It has substantial repercussions on their healthcare, education, food, and mental health, as well as their dependency on credit institutions, and continues beyond being an extended family to their parents.

Other research shows that views of economic instability can lead to unattained educational pursuits and decreased school enrolment and attendance among children (Mudege et al., C. (2008). Drawing from the study's findings, children from farm laborer households face specific educational challenges due to income instability because of the seasonal employment of their parents, leading them to stop attending school. The participants' narratives vividly illustrate how financial constraints compel children to prioritize immediate income generation over education, leading to unattained educational goals and decreased school attendance. This situation reflects the study of Sudarto et al. (2022) that economic misuse often forces children into child labor, hindering their education and development. Moreover, income shocks negatively impact child schooling outcomes, leading to delayed educational attainment (Wongmonta, 2023). This highlights the pervasive impact of income instability on educational outcomes, including delayed educational attainment and the risk of stopping attending school. Likewise, the inability to address school-related challenges, such as interpersonal conflicts due to economic constraints, further aggravates these children's hardship.

This economic vulnerability resulting from the seasonal nature of farm workers' employment suggestively impacts their ability to meet daily needs. Seasonal instabilities in agricultural employment led to heightened vulnerability to food and nutrition instability (Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019 & Hasan, 2014). Families often face shortages despite efforts to allocate earnings towards food that resorted to alternative meals like root crops and soups. The seasonal nature of farm work worsens economic vulnerability, which leads to severe food shortages during low employment periods. For example, studies show that during low employment periods, such as winter, farm workers experienced severe food insecurity, with up to 88% facing challenges in accessing adequate food (Charlton, 2021 & Hasan, 2014). This instability is exacerbated by the lack of alternative coping mechanisms like savings or social security, forcing individuals to skip meals and endure extended periods of starvation (de Janvry et al., 2022). The reliance on seasonal labor in agriculture without adequate buffering systems

has contributed to malnutrition and food insecurity among marginalized households. This situation highlights the critical link between income instability and meeting daily nutritional needs (Feuerbacher & Grethe, 2018). Limited coping mechanisms further compound the challenges the farm laborers face, leaving households vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.

Seasonal farmworker households grappling with income instability have limited access to healthcare (Rosenbaum et al., P., 2005; Devereux & Tavener-Smith, 2019). Despite the availability of government-sponsored medical assistance programs like the Malasakit Center, families may not prioritize seeking healthcare due to cost-preventing care-seeking barriers, such as associated costs for medication, as highlighted by Sandoval-Rosario et al. (2016). Hospitalization further exacerbates financial strain due to additional expenses such as food and transportation. Moreover, the imperative for farm laborers to continue working in the fields to sustain income and meals impedes their ability to attend to their health needs or seek hospitalization, as White, Moss, and McGann's study (2012) observed. This emphasizes how income instability stemming from seasonal work can lead to adverse health outcomes as workers may opt to endure sickness or injury rather than prioritize their health.

Seasonal employment within farm worker households often results in income instability, which in turn can have adverse effects on mental health due to financial stress. This further impacted the gendered nature of seasonal work, potentially exacerbating these challenges (Devereux & Longhurst, 2010). While it is commonly believed that income instability predominantly affects the mental health of male farmworkers, research indicates that females also experience significant mental distress (Zeynep Simsek et al., 2017). Studies by Mendoza and Donoso (2011) suggest that prolonged exposure to the challenges of the agricultural sector contributes to mental health problems among female workers as well. This mental distress may manifest as depression characterized by feelings of bitterness and downplaying of hardships, anxiety for being disappointed with the situation, and increased substance use, which stems from a couple arguing, as observed by Mora et al. (2022) and Rockler et al. (2023). Notably, psychological distress may also arise from food shortages, which further complicates the mental health challenges faced by farm worker households (Rockler et al., 2023).

Engaging in extended family living arrangements can be driven by various factors. Findings revealed the importance of extended family support amidst economic constraints, making economic hardships one of the reasons. It may prompt families to move together for financial support and stability (Charsley et al., 2020). Extended family members can serve as valuable resources, offering practical, emotional, and financial assistance that enables individuals to endure hardships (Gürmen et al., 2018). Similarly, participants residing with parents despite being married highlight the role of such arrangements in alleviating financial burdens. For example, in the African American community, the extended family structure is seen as beneficial for economic support (Armstrong, 2012). Extended family arrangements can protect against poverty (Reyes, 2019). These findings align with existing literature recognizing extended family networks as crucial for coping with economic challenges and accessing vital resources. The perspectives of these farm laborers emphasize the significance of leveraging support systems like extended family networks to address income instability and foster resilience among vulnerable populations. However, this coping mechanism further exacerbates the financial instability of the family in this community as their families are also experiencing financial distress.

Lastly, the seasonal nature of agricultural work and limited employment protections lead to prevalent economic instability among farmworkers, making them vulnerable to debt accumulation (Akdogan et al., 2019). The narrative shared by the participants highlights the profound impact of income instability among families relying on agricultural work. The inability to sustain in procuring essential commodities such as food and clothing, the building of houses, and addressing urgent needs such as medical expenses and hospitalization creates significant challenges to the farm laborers, which leads them to a dependency on credit and loans as observed by Karacimen (2014), Padilla et al. (2014), Agarwal et al. (2022) and Rockler et al. (2023). Despite recognizing the importance of these aspects, families struggle to withstand them amidst financial constraints and resort to borrowing even with interest rates. This highlights the cyclical nature of income instability and debt accumulation, perpetuating agricultural communities' socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

While the findings of this study paint a bleak picture of the challenges faced by farm laborers, it is important to acknowledge that some individuals and households may have developed coping mechanisms to mitigate the

negative impacts of seasonal employment. For example, engaging in an extended family living arrangement depicts that parents are the safety nets of their children. Prioritizing budgeting for food and allowances for their children shows their ability to spend their income wisely. Lastly, eating root crops and soup was used as a meal substitute. These mechanisms demonstrate the resourcefulness and resiliency of the farm laborers.

4.0 Conclusion

The study explores the impact of seasonal employment on the income stability of the farm laborers' households in Mapurog, Sapad, and Lanao del Norte, where this developmental issue affects various aspects of their lives. Upon delving into this issue, the study has unveiled the following emerging themes: children stop attending school, unmet basic needs, deprioritized healthcare, and mental distress while relying on credit and loan institutions and engaging in the extended family arrangement serves as the coping mechanisms of the farm laborers relative to income instability.

Firstly, children from farm laborer households often face educational challenges due to their parents' seasonal employment, which leads to stop attending school due to work on the farm and help their parents financially. Moreover, the seasonal nature of agricultural work results in unmet daily needs such as food, forcing families to resort to alternative meals like root crops and soup and endure periods of starvation. However, limited access to healthcare further compounds the challenges faced by farm laborers as financial constraints prevent them from both male and female farmworkers, which stems from various stressors, including food shortages and financial strain.

Interestingly, income instability compels families to rely on credit and loans to purchase necessities such as food, clothes, and house building. Extended family living arrangements often serve as a coping mechanism for economic hardship that provides crucial support to alleviate financial burdens but further exacerbates financial distress. Although these coping mechanisms further exacerbate their financial struggles, they show the resiliency and resourcefulness of the farm laborers' households through the budget allocation of their daily needs, alternative meals, and support from their parents during financial struggles. In conclusion, the study highlights the persistent impact of income instability resulting from seasonal employment, which stresses the need for comprehensive actions to address the complicated challenges farm laborer households face.

Additionally, this study provides recommendations based on the findings to strengthen the income stability of the farm laborer's household due to the seasonality of their employment, to wit: Create additional income-generating activities; Look for other stable employment opportunities; Provide mental health symposium activities that involve the family, Provide financial literacy training that focuses on managing finances vis-à-vis loans and credits, Create an advocacy campaign related to the establishment of a scholarship program for the farm laborers' children with the host organization, youth council, and the barangay council of Mapurog, Sapad, Lanao del Norte to lessen children withdrawing from school because of financial constraints; Lobby with the Barangay Council to discuss the result of the study and recommend policies, programs, and activities that will strengthen the income stability of the farm laborers.

Nevertheless, the researchers recommend future studies to explore the impact of seasonal employment on farm laborers. Conduct further participatory action research that covers a wider number of farm worker participants and focuses on their coping mechanisms to address income insufficiency and the mental health of the farm laborers. A study examined how targeted mental health interventions (e.g., counseling, group therapy, or community-based mental health programs) influence farm laborers' overall well-being and productivity, and whether these programs improve coping mechanisms for income instability.

It is suggested that the viability of various alternative income-generating activities should be researched, such as agribusiness ventures, small-scale food processing, or cooperative-based enterprises, and assess how these initiatives can mitigate the income instability caused by the seasonal nature of farm work. A study on the effectiveness of financial literacy training among farm laborers in managing household budgets and debts. Explore how such training impacts their ability to cope with financial instability and reduces reliance on loans and credit. Explore the gendered impacts of seasonal employment on male and female farm laborers, examining how each

group copes differently with income instability and what gender-specific support mechanisms could be developed to address their unique needs.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors confirm the equal contribution in each part of this work. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of this work. Dhevine C. Paninsoro led the writing of the manuscript. Michelle, Fe, Madelyn, Irish, Lorelyn, Rechel, and Mary were responsible for gathering, co-analyzing, and validating the data.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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