

Unraveling the Collective Vulnerabilities among Farmhand Mothers

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Abstract. Women in a male-dominated industry are plowing towards the mainstream, where women, in their own right, take part and play significant roles. However, for the most part, women have taken the backseat regarding socio-economic opportunities, as men predominantly hold positions in the agricultural labor force. This study focuses on the underrated agricultural laborers of Malaybalay, Bukidnon, Philippines. In particular, this paper accentuates the collective vulnerabilities of farmhand mothers and the power and gender relations in which they are involved. Literature has delved into farm women's diverse roles, barriers, and adaptive capacities. Still, some gaps can be observed in documenting the vulnerabilities intersecting the power and gender relations in which they were involved. To capture the stories of the 25 informants, qualitative narratives were chosen through snowball sampling from the collected KII and FGD. Findings revealed that farmhand mothers begin working at different farms at a young age; shaped by their habitus, they endure rigorous daily routines that extend from dawn until dusk, added to the motherly duties at home that perpetuate their collective vulnerabilities due to physical discomfort, heat exposure, financial strain, and environmental calamities they confront. Furthermore, the gender and power relations involved were: gendered division of labor at work and home, the gender pay gap, decision-making imbalances, and even harassment on the field; as a result, researchers recommend that farm owners must provide conducive workplaces where farmhands can have safety measures, receive work benefits and fair compensation. LGUs should assist and reinforce their policies on labor wages, discrimination, and harassment, and encourage women to work in male-dominated industries.

Keywords: Farmhand; Farm work; Gender equality; Vulnerabilities.

1.0 Introduction

The importance of gender equality has been one of the goals of Sustainable Development, which directly empowers women to be involved in all spheres of the economy with equitable opportunities as men. In this endeavor, women in a male-dominated industry are growing demographically. Farming is no exception; it plows towards the mainstream, where women, in their own right, take part and play significant roles. Women, relative to their male counterparts, demonstrate a complete range of activities on the farm while juggling household tasks. However, women, for the most part, have taken the backseat regarding social and economic opportunities, as men predominantly hold positions in the agricultural labor force. In some cases, women confront laborers or the so-called farmhands, which perpetuates their vulnerability.

According to Louder (2020), women's position in farming is not merely complementary to men's; instead, women are primarily their helpers and are out of place because they represent a different kind of farmer. Thus, women

are always ignored, not taken seriously, and feel cheated in the agricultural space, yet they perform labor-intensive work (Spangenberg, 2017). Moreover, women have been uninvited and excluded from services and programs and are invisible (Petrzelka & Filipiak, 2018). Perceived low benefits and feasibility (Anibalde et al., 2021), underrepresented in virtual images and publications (Fairchild, 2019) and in farming organizations that favor masculine farmers (Shortall et al., 2017). Further, these women lack a support system that prevents them from playing a fully active role on the farm and embracing their identity as professional farmers (Tsiaousi & Partalidou, 2023).

Women's gender-specific problems in the farm industry (Shirey, 2021) cannot hinder them from demonstrating greater involvement in various agricultural operations. Patil and Babu (2018) showed that these women contribute enormously to agricultural growth and development by working in crop production, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and natural resource management, wherein farmhand women do not run machinery but work manual labor farm tasks (Baker, 2019). Similarly, in the Philippines, women intensively plow and harvest rice fields, handling and planting seedlings, caring for and maintaining the growing rice, and harvesting (Barrot and Vedra, 2015, cited by Sharma et al., 2020). Along with fieldwork, women drive household responsibility and child care (Sharma et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, women share employment in agriculture for about 15.6% (Philippine Commission on Women, 2023), do more work than their spouses (Pogoy et al., 2016), and account for over 40% of farm women workers globally (Maurya & Mishra, 2023). The number may rise further (Fairchild, 2019). This high percentage of women engaged in farming results from feminization in this sector (Gomes et al., 2022). However, the farming community seldom addresses them as significant participants (Tapia, 2018). Farmhands play an essential role in agriculture. They are at the forefront of the farm yet remain undervalued (Pogoy et al., 2016).

Thus, this research echoes the often-untold stories of farmhand mothers to illuminate their plight as farmhands. Specifically, this study seeks to narrate the collective vulnerabilities and analyze the farmhand's mother's positions in the power and gendered context in which they are involved. Literature has delved into farm women's diverse roles, barriers, and adaptive capacities. Still, some gaps can be observed in documenting the vulnerabilities intersecting the power and gender relations in which they were involved. Farmhand mothers are among the sectors at the most significant risk of well-being (Yaman & Kilic, 2023). Thus, it must have greater attention because their well-being and quality of life are frequently overlooked and inadequately understood (Rashidi, 2004; Zafar, 2005, cited by Rehman et al., 2023). The Sustainable Development Goals target (5) aims to empower women, which is a crucial step toward reducing the vulnerabilities experienced by farmhand mothers to fully contribute to agricultural development without compromising their well-being, because, after all, life on the farm without them would be difficult.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized the qualitative research method to understand and explore the meaning of individuals and groups ascribing to a human or social problem (Creswell, 2023). To determine the farmhand mother's experiences in the farming industry, a narrative approach was employed, in which the researcher studies and provides stories of the individual, then restored into a narrative chronology (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000 as cited by Creswell, 2023). By utilizing the qualitative-narrative research design, it would be appropriate to understand the subjective experiences of farmhand mothers in a given situation. Moreover, it illuminates how mothers involve gender and relations as farmhands and mothers as an overlooked sector since qualitative research is well suited for examining tacit, taken-for-granted situations and direct understandings of culture (Tracy, 2020).

2.2 Research Locale

Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, was the chosen locale of the study, specifically, with the three (3) accessible barangays: Barangay San Jose, Barangay Linabo, and Barangay Kibalabag, which have agricultural farms. The city is in the central part of Bukidnon Province, with its borders in Misamis Oriental, Davao del Norte, Cotabato, Lanao del Sur, and Lanao del Norte. The province of Bukidnon has 464 barangays distributed in 21 municipalities and two cities, Valencia and the capital city, Malaybalay, which is composed of 46 barangays. Malaybalay City has a lot to offer; the place is not just a producer of farm products but also a home to a different group of Indigenous Peoples. It is also where farmers and often underrated farmhands are mostly found because of the massive agricultural industry and farm plots owned by smallholder families.

2.3 Research Participants

The 25 mothers, ages 23 to 71, actively involved in farming in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, were the participants of this investigation through snowball sampling since this sample is often vital for investigating marginalized populations and organic social networks, where the sample size expands as one participant suggests another potential respondent that fits the study's criteria (Tracy, 2020). These informants worked as farmhands from one (1) year to more than 30 years in rice fields, vegetable farms, corn farms, sugar cane farms, rubber trees, and flower farms owned by a single family. Some farmhand mothers have another job apart from farming; others are solely farmhands as their primary source of income. Two (2) groups of farmhand mothers were chosen to have focus-group discussions (FGDs), and the rest of the mothers were selected to have key informant interviews (KIIs).

2.4 Research Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was employed as the main instrument to gather the data to obtain the narratives of farmhand mothers. The semi-structured interview guide questionnaire comprised two themes to foster relevant information and thorough answers from the participants' perspectives. The first theme consists of the portrait of the participants. The second theme was the open-ended interview questionnaire describing the overall experiences of farmhand mothers within the different agricultural sectors. Further, the guide questions were translated into Cebuano so the participants could fully delineate the data. The researchers also asked follow-up questions to explain the prepared questions further and obtain relevant information. The guide questions were referred to the adviser and the thesis panel for corrections and further validation. It also underwent a review from the Institution's Research Ethics Committee (REC). When approved, a pilot test was administered to the two (2) farmhand mothers who were not part of the study to ensure the suitability of the questionnaire before it was administered to the purposeful participants.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Before administering the interview, the researchers purposefully chose the 25 qualified participants involved in the study. It is through seeking diligently and asking friends of friends who knew the farmhand mothers actively engaged in the farm to complete the set of participants. When the thesis committee and the REC approved the recommendation to administer the interview, letters from the three barangays were handed to the Barangay Captains to inform them about the goals of the study, following the MSU-IIT consent form 13 IERC with an added mother tongue letter of consent that was given to the participants personally to let them aware of the aims and their participation in the study. After agreeing and complying with the substantial documents needed for the session, an interview was set in the most convenient location for approximately two (2) hours and beyond, guided by the interview protocol. Building a good rapport with the participants was done. Throughout the interview, the process was digitally recorded while taking down notes with the permission of the interviewee to assess the validity of the participant's responses and to ensure the data would be effectively documented.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency distribution and percentage were used to describe the demographic profiles of respondents. Mean values were calculated to evaluate the central tendencies in responses to performance appraisal and productivity items. A T-test was conducted to identify significant differences in the perceptions of productivity between employees and supervisors. Additionally, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between performance appraisal and employee productivity. All analyses were conducted using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The findings were presented in tabular form to enhance clarity and support interpretation.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Appropriate ethical concerns were rigorously monitored throughout the entire procedure. The necessity of anonymity, confidentiality, and risk management was given attention. Fairness and respect for the research participants were of the utmost priority. The researchers also provided complete and transparent information about the compensation and remuneration that farmhand mothers can expect from the study. The participants' benefits were likewise mentioned to enlighten them that their participation is beneficial. Before the interview, researchers applied for ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee. Afterward, researchers visited the community as participant observers to develop a rapport and observe first-hand the natural context of farmhands. Upon the REC approval, the participants were informed about the study before setting up interviews. Aside from

verbal permission, they received an institutional letter of consent (MSU-IIT Form 13) and the Cebuano informed consent to comprehend the study's goals. The researchers allowed the participants to be interviewed at their chosen time, date, and location. All interviews were conducted in private consultation through a sit-down interview in which the participants felt comfortable. During the interview, the researchers established proper procedures and informed the participants that their identities would remain anonymous. The researchers also handled all the information collected with sensitivity and discretion. After the data transcription, all forms were stored in a locked safe, with all vital information held in another, and once the whole process is done, all data will be destroyed to prevent future dilemmas.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Portrait of the Participants

Among twenty-five (25) farmhand mothers, there was one (1) who belonged to a senior citizen, the seventy-one (71) year-old farmhand mother who engaged as a tapir on a rubber farm for more than five (5) years despite her age. On the one hand, four (4) mothers have come to the age of fifty (the 50s), seven (7) mothers are in their forty's (40s), while ten (10) farmhand mothers are in their thirty's (30s), and three (3) young farmhand mothers who are in their twenty's (20s) with twenty-three (23) years old as the youngest farmhand mother whose age does not define the years of experiences she had in the farming domain, as this mother has ten (10) years experienced being a farmhand. On the other hand, farmhand mothers work on corn, rice, and sugarcane fields, while the others work on vegetable, rubber tree, flower, banana, and cassava farms. These mothers usually finished the elementary level of education, and few were in the secondary level. Only two (2) farmhand mothers completed a 2-year associate degree, but because they wanted to help with their spouses, they considered farming as an alternative. In terms of the children of the farmhand mothers, they have few children, ranging from 2-3 kids only, and others have 4-7 children; these mothers pursue work as farmhands despite the vulnerabilities they face to satisfy the needs of their children. More so, there was only one (1) participant who was not married but living with her partner. Further, all farmhand mothers have diverse ethnicities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural backgrounds.

3.2 The Beginning of Farm Work

From the onset, most farmhand mothers have been engaged in farming since their younger days. As can be seen from the data, some responses are relatively similar regarding how these mothers started as farmhands. When the researchers asked the mothers how they became farmhands, they were not reluctant to say that they taught it from their parents, as most of them have small plots of crops and vegetables. As stated by the participants,

"In high school, I always went with my mother. If I did not have class, I was with my mom, then I cultivated. That is how I learned harvesting, planting, and fertilizing." P1

"When I was 12 years old, I used to pull out the weeds, and I was young then; I helped my mother and father until I got married." P2

"My father taught me about farming, until my husband, since he is also a tapir (a worker on a rubber farm)." P3

Based on the responses, these mothers learned farming from their parents when they were young because they were also immersed in agriculture. Thus, these mothers are well-equipped in farming because they used to do it, such as stated by Iza, Maris, Lela, Nena, Angel, and Ara, in that they were into farming from elementary until high school and their parents have let them participate on the farm and learned the basic skills in agriculture like cultivating, harvesting, planting and even applying fertilizers. They grew up on the farm, helping their parents, especially when they did not have class, as Ara narrated; the same thing happened to Fena when she helped a lot with her parent on the farm until she married. This experience resonated with Julie when her father taught her farming skills until he met her better half on the farm, a tapir on a rubber farm, the same farm she used to work.

Working on the farm in their childhood showed that farming was part of their social life. They need to help their parents with farming so they can also help raise their families. Also, they want to continue the legacy of their ancestors (Pagliarino et al., 2020), which led them to farm, where they developed various skills and knowledge since childhood. The need to help their parents with farming, so they can contribute to their family's financial needs, added to the reality that farming is an available job that they have to work on, since their family is into farming. By putting their little hands onto the farm, they are helping their parents and somehow gaining the farming skills to help them sustain their lives today. However, sometimes, working on their farms alone cannot

suffice the income of their family; thus, some mothers, even though they own small plots of farms, also have to engage in another farm, as expressed by Angel, Mera, Naty, Lela, and Emma; "Because it is not enough." This means that these mothers have to look for another way to sustain the needs of their families, even working for other farms to provide for them, especially if there are cases in which they lack some resources needed for their farm. How can they survive? However, to work for other farms as a farmhand, just like mentioned by Angel and Naty, *"especially if our farm would be a failure...or else we have no fertilizers, so immediately, we seek another means to have income."*

The situation of these mothers compels them to become farmhands because of financial scarce, in that they have to stop operating their farm and must find other ways or work the farms simultaneously, such as in the case of Angel and Naty wherein if someone is looking for farmhands, they grab this opportunity, until such time they are used to it, jumping to one farm to another to fuel their families. This is also the case with Jenny and Luna, who go over to the other farm if someone needs help on their farm, so Mera, Ivy, Lyka, Nena, and Maris go over to their neighboring farms and work. Mobility for farmhand mothers is a crucial strategy for those with resources to prosper (Pilgeram, 2019). Additionally, because of the financial constraints of helping raise their families alone (Gomes et al., 2022). Also, they want to continue the legacy of their ancestors (Pagliarino et al., 2020), which led them to farm, where they developed various skills and knowledge.

Meanwhile, there are also farmhand mothers who did not grow up on farms; instead, they work as farmhands because of the availability and the situation that they need for their families; even though they do not grow up on the farm, they are willing to be farmhands, and it seems they are destined to be on such arena. Just like what Evy narrated, it was not their (with her spouse's) intention to stay in Malaybalay because their plan was in Wao, but unfortunately, a fright happened in that place that made them decide not to go. Luckily, their godparent (at their wedding) offered them a new job as farmhands, which became their source of livelihood until recently. Like Emma, it is her destiny to be a farmhand or a maintainer on the rice field, as she came from another place and then set foot in Mindanao to go after her father. Since her father worked as a maintainer in a rice field, she decided to live with her father in Malaybalay until she met her soulmate, her husband now, who is also one of the maintainers in the same workplace as her father and taught her to be a maintainer. Farmhands are open to working in fields because of the opportunities. They are driven by their aspiration to get involved in agriculture (Tsiaousi & Partalidou, 2023), as it enables them to do all the things they did so they can master their farm skills (Leslie, 2017). In addition, these farmhand mothers have to work off-farm, as working on the farm cannot meet the needs of their families, as some laborers have mortgages. Thus, they must also work outside the farms (Sharma et al., 2020).

3.3 Experiences of Farmhand Mothers

Grounded on the actual stories of farmhand mothers, it is apparent that they have almost the same work routine from home to the farm. From the moment they wake up, they go to the field and do heavy farm activities until they return home. This justified that mothers who work as farmhands can work in the male-dominated field with manual work hand-in-hand, akin to the male farmhand. They are responsible for their daily farm endeavor and their commitments as parents, wives, and house managers in their respective households, making these mothers more exhausted throughout the day. However, they were still diligent in completing their multitasking.

"I wake up at around 3 am, then I cook food, after that, we will assemble at around 5:30, sometimes we walk for about half an hour, but we speed up so that we can arrive by that time...In the rice field, ma'am, we will, we were pulling out the seedling, after pulling it out planted it, the seedlings that were prepared earlier, then once it is ready to be planted, we pulled out again this, and then plant them, after that, our boss will tell us to proceed to the embankment, we clean those in the embankment ma'am, and remove the weeds. After that, we work on the corn. I have also tried planting bell peppers, string beans, and onions. We also plant vegetables, and then if they are ready to be harvested in about a week or so, we will harvest them again."
P4

"I wake up at 4 am, prepare the rice, and prepare food for the children who will stay behind. We leave around 4 or 5 am since we do not have a vehicle; we walk. When we arrived there, we immediately started our work, each with a flashlight, because it was still dark when we usually got there. This way, we can see what is ahead if there are snakes. We have breakfast around 6 am, then we start working. We estimate that we will finish by around 9 am. By then, it will get hot around 9 am or 10 am. We gather corn and put it in sacks to store it. We have lunch around noon, take a short break, and then go back to gather the things we collected near where the vehicle can reach. That is where you should put them. Sometimes, we can even go home at

night, around 9 pm. We still have to fetch water when we arrive home because we do not have water." P5

The story of Vera showcased the persistence within her when she had to wake up early at 3 am, prepare everything, and then walk a distance away. Since Vera had many employers, she worked rigorously in the rice fields, corn, and vegetable farms. Planting it, cleaning the embankment, pulling out the weeds, and once their task on the rice field is done, they proceed to another farm, and again, if it is already done, they go and find another employer for the consistency of their income. For example, on the various vegetable farms, they must wait for the following process, like the harvesting season, to begin working on the farm again.

Meanwhile, Evy had almost the same work pattern as Vera and other farmhand mothers, wherein she also wakes up early to prepare and settle everything necessary for their households before she leaves and departs the house at dawn since she has to walk a distance that takes her for about 30 minutes, together with her spouse, as her husband is also a farmhand. Also, they brought the necessary equipment: a flashlight to light up the farm and protect themselves against deadly animals. It was not easy for her; she had to make it fast so that by around 9 or 10 am, she had to finish working before the sun's heat came out. By then, all she had to do was put the corn she had harvested into the sacks so that after lunch, she could bring it into the truck, carry it all by herself, and then return to work again with a small quantity of rest.

Farmhand mother Iza experienced similar farm work with her mother since she spent her childhood days accompanying her mother to various farms and saw the different tasks in the field. In the same work activities as her mother, Iza also planted corn and rice and experienced harvesting and fertilizing, among others. Apart from that, she also managed to work on the sugarcane farm, wherein she mentioned the tedious activities of that particular farm, as it is pretty dangerous compared to the other farms she worked before because sugarcane, as she noted, was quite itchy than corn, especially during the cleaning season, as according to her, "*You went underneath the sugarcane plant because you cleaned up the weeds down there. It was very itchy, and sometimes it felt like we were struggling to breathe because of the heat down there, as if the air could not circulate, plus our clothing was very tight.*"

Iza's encounter on the sugarcane farm resonates with Ara, the daughter of Evy, as she also endures working on that particular farm because of the presence of the thorny weeds called *bulunsari* (a native term for the type of weeds), which are very itchy when they hit the skin. Like her mother, Evy, Ara did the farm work, such as cultivating, fertilizing, harvesting, and even slashing the weeds. She learned all those farming skills when she was young, going along with her parents in the field to help, and now it was her way to help with her own family, too. However, because of the emergence of machines and other innovations, Ara and her mother ventured into another side of living since they usually did manual work. While other farmhand mothers also did the same tasks as planting, cleaning the area, pulling out the weeds, cultivating the soil, fertilizing, harvesting, spraying the paddies and crops, carrying heavy farm products, landscaping the yard (for the farmhand mothers working on the flower farm), collecting the liquid sap (for the farmhands on the rubber tree farms), and among others.

The detailed account of these mothers working on different farms indicates their commitment to their role, as most farmhand mothers had to start early to prepare for their day, which is crucial for their work before heading out. They had to juggle multiple jobs on farms while also managing household and mothering duties, such as caring for their children. They also had to deal with potential hazards during early morning work in a remote farm area, endure walking to the farms for up to half an hour and beyond, and finish working late. Additionally, farmhand mothers shared that apart from being farmhands on various farms. They also take side jobs outside the farm. For instance, Ara is a babysitter, Naty is a house helper, Evy is a salesperson, and the others are on different farms.

These mothers had diverse responsibilities that required balancing their time between personal responsibilities and professional commitments in the fields, along with extra contracts and personal space work on their farms. This highlights that farmhand mothers undergo economic pressures and must be diligent in obtaining additional workloads inside and outside the farm to increase their finances so they can somehow supply their family's needs, even when bombarded with intensive activities on the farm. Thus, they must continue working for others while waiting for the next farm season, like harvesting, weeding, fertilizing, and planting, to avoid stagnating on one farm. Farming was not just a job for them but a way of life—a continuous cycle of labor that required cooperation and flexibility amidst challenging circumstances. As they prepared for another day in the fields, they were cultivating crops and nurturing their livelihoods.

Smith and McElwee (2021) assert that farmhand mothers have multiple domestic work tasks as wives, mothers, and reserve farm laborers. Most of their work is in remote open fields, where farmhands are usually separated from others, and their work is primarily short-term (Rehman et al., 2023). This resembles the journey of the farmhand mothers who had to walk for about 30 hours or more because of the isolated location of the farm. Moreover, as depicted by Patil and Babu (2018), farmhand mothers have numerous roles in the production of crops, animal husbandry, fisheries, and natural resource management, which they had to perform manually (Baker, 2019). Also, these mothers do not use farming skills alone but manage the household where they have to get up early every day (Gomes et al., 2022), where they are involved in all agricultural processes like handling and planting seedlings, plowing, harvesting, and caring the fields (Barrot and Vedra, 2015 cited by Sharma et al., 2020).

3.4 Collective Vulnerabilities of Farmhand Mothers

Mother, who works as a farmhand, has unique and diverse activities in the field while simultaneously having parental commitments at home. Their obligation is unstoppable as they hold the majority of work in the household and, simultaneously, have an intensive nature of farm work, which exposes them to a situation that contributes to their collective vulnerability. Several key informants responded that they face difficulties perpetuating their vulnerability, such as financial strain, extreme heat and exhaustion, environmental challenges, health issues, physical discomfort, etc. The subsequent remarks are the stories of farmhand mothers that animate their susceptibility:

Physical Discomfort

"There was a time I had fatigue for almost two weeks; I was lying on the bed. I also experienced collapse from exhaustion, especially when I tried to lift a sack of corn onto the elf truck. That is when I felt weak, particularly when the rain almost came out. The owner did not want the corn to get wet because it would spoil, and there were only a few men available, and we had already finished our tasks, but the men still had not completed theirs, so..." P5.

It is tiring; when I get home, it is work again. My body takes it anymore, but I push through. " P6

The abovementioned narratives shed light on the reality that farmhand mothers have had typical agricultural practices that make them vulnerable. For instance, Evy lost consciousness after lifting a sack of corn, especially when her employer insisted that she do it hurriedly because of the impending rain to prevent the corn from getting damaged. This made her body weak because after going through her tasks all day, she was asked to help the men, so, despite the tiredness, she moved quickly, but her body could not, as it can add physical challenges of the work, and that made her faint that she had to rest at home for two weeks because of fatigue. While Lyn specified how she got tired of doing farm work, she really could not take it, but for some reason, she pushed through.

Other farmhands carried whole sacks of corn and transported them to where they would be weighed, making them vulnerable. Some endured carrying heavy gallons of sticky sap from the rubber trees and then bringing them to the stockroom. According to them, it was very tiring; after collecting sap from several trees, they had to carry the gallons into the stockroom for further processing. Aside from that, they had to move from one tree to another and move around on the rubber farm to spend lots of gallons of sticky sap, which made them feel physically exhausted.

Some mothers revealed the impact of working on the farm, where they can feel physically vulnerable because of the itchiness of their bodies while cutting the weeds underneath the sugarcane, mainly during the rainy season. This is why Nena wore a mask and a bonnet to protect herself from the sharp leaves of the sugarcane. However, even though Nena concealed the itchiness, she still felt discomfort. Mera got wounds while weeding, so she sometimes skipped cutting the weeds underneath, especially if there were too many. Farmhand mother Iza got her hands cut after she pulled off the corn. This is the reality for farmhands, where it is unavoidable to be physically injured while working since farming involves demanding activities, and farmhands have to work for it intensively despite putting their lives at risk (Yaman & Kilic, 2023).

Farmhand mothers undoubtedly put so much effort and diligence into working on the farm, even though their physical body says no. Still, they keep working for different farms and simultaneously work at home on the house chores and their family's safekeeping; they may suffer physical and emotional tolls from being bombarded with various intensifying farm activities while working in the fields. Spangenberg (2017) stipulated that women in farming are responsible for agricultural tasks and the household; they have multiple roles on and off the farm while maintaining responsibilities for the well-being and survival of their family, which leads these mothers to be

exhausted. In congruence with the study by Sharma et al. (2020), farmhand women perform the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in the field daily while managing the household as mothers, taking care of their children, and completing domestic tasks.

Heat Exposure

"It gets hot, especially around 10 to 11 am; the heat is excruciating, and it seems like you are dizzy, so we hurry to finish so we can sack it right away." P5

"Over there in the field, it was exhausting. When we were harvesting sugarcane, it was so tiring. You could see others moving so fast while I was still far behind, stuck in the middle of the rows. I got left behind, and it was hot like I was going to faint; plus, the line was still very long; no matter how many rows you finish, that is all you earn... It is hot; it is already noon, ma'am, and I am hungry. After planting, when you get there, you have not eaten yet. When you arrive, the only dish is dried fish, ma'am; no proper meal is given to you. It is free as long as you plant, making you weak." P7

The responses of these mothers working as farmhands showed that working on different farms is quite tricky, especially when extreme heat places them vulnerable to heat-related circumstances. However, this situation is inherent in open space-related fields of work, such as agricultural work. Although farmhands are used to being exposed to the sun's heat while working, it cannot be denied that they can feel weak and sometimes get sick. If these mothers were exposed to the heat on the farm, they risked their lives, as Evy and Iza disclosed. Since she is constantly exposed to the heat on the farm, Evy learned to make her work faster so that by the time the heat is still bearable, or if it reaches 10 am or 11 am, all she has to do is put her harvested goods in the sacks. In that way, she can still carry all the tasks left in the field at a fair temperature.

Being exposed to the heat in the workplace added a burden to the farmhand mothers because they are not only exposed to the sun but can also get sick and suffer other heat-related illnesses. Although it is part of their job to be exposed to unpredictable weather conditions, farmhand mothers cannot help but become vulnerable when exposed to the heat, especially during the noon hour. She experienced this through Iza on the sugarcane farm she works on, which made her more vulnerable. After a tough day working in the sugarcane field, we have to endure the heat for how many hours, and then come along with unhealthy foods at lunch. This made Iza feel helpless, like she wanted to eat more with proper viands to relieve the pain and re-energize, but she got pale when she found out that the food they offered was dried fish, yet she endured with it and continued working for the rest of the day.

Vera narrated how hard it was to work, being exposed to the heat, in that she felt like dying, specifically when the farm was still woody and dense. She had to pull out all unnecessary weeds and grass that blocked the farm plot, which required prolonged exposure to the farm in the intense heat. This made Vera feel tired quickly, and farmhand mothers who experienced the same as Jenny and Ivy felt like giving up since they had body aches and soreness when exposed to the intense heat.

Farmhand mothers have been consistently exposed to the rigorous work on the farm in addition to their parental responsibilities, which has caused them physical exhaustion. Also, the mothers resist not just the physical pain but also the extreme heat while working in the fields, wherein they may suffer heat-related illnesses, are directly exhausted, feel dizzy, and are weak. Their lives are exhaustive as they face various challenges on and off the farm that make them even more susceptible to the farm work; this is why, for some reason, farmhand women have often been overlooked (Petrzelka & Filipiak, 2018) and underrepresented (Anibalde et al., 2021). Other male farmers do not welcome them, which discriminates against them because they lack confidence working on the farm. Some assumed them as incompetent (Shortall et al., 2017)- added to the description of Tsiaousi et al. (2023), that a farmhand's identity often involved "dirty" work, tedious, lengthy, and not pre-defined working hours.

Financial Strain

Farmhand mothers are vulnerable to exposure to the intense heat while working on the farm and financial instability, which may add an emotional strain. From the nature of their field of work, it cannot be denied that farmhands play a vital role in sustaining agricultural products for the people. Nevertheless, they receive little benefit for themselves (Anibalde et al., 2021) since they also have lower income, provided they have a strenuous and demanding job. These mothers' accounts about unstable finances highlight the social fact that farmhand mothers face struggles relating to the finances that perpetuate their vulnerability.

"We are short on finances, especially since my salary is monthly, and our work is like this, which is a minimal salary. That is

why we are working; even though we have corn to harvest, we can buy fertilizer because we have nothing." P8

"It is tiring, ma'am. If only there were money, we would not need to work daily, especially since our monthly income is minimal. That is why I feel so tired, so sometimes I work half a day to look for other sources of income. However, if I work half a day, I must finish my area because we have a schedule to follow." P9

The story of farmhand mothers proved that a lack of finances contributes to vulnerability on their end. It emphasizes how limited income affects their daily lives, as Angel told them that she managed to work as a farmhand despite owning a small farm because of insufficient finances. Their family's income is inadequate to meet the needs and resources for their corn farm; does she find alternatives by working on another farm? Still, it was not enough, which made Angel feel vulnerable. How can she supply all the necessities for their family if she only receives a little salary as a farmhand?

The question also arises in the minds of other mothers working as farmhands. The meager salary they received, which was not enough for their family, made farmhand mothers weary. This situation creates a sense of seeking additional resources, where the other farmhand mother, Rose, sometimes goes on half-day farm work to find another means to survive and suit the demands of her family. She was tired of providing for the daily consumption of their household, which made her emotionally weak. Naty and Jenny are the same. They practically mentioned how they were vulnerable when they had no finances, which conveys a sense of physical and mental exhaustion. So Julie did, especially when the rubber farm she worked on had to experience wintering- a season wherein the rubber sap is limited. Therefore, it also limits her income, which could also affect her family.

Farmhand mothers struggle with problems with money that make them vulnerable because of some overwhelming mental initiatives as to how and where they can get sources of income and resources to meet the basic needs of their family, which adds a burden on their part. The constant worries about finances exacerbate vulnerability that could impact their physical and mental well-being, as they are under pressure for financial survival. More mothers working on the farm revolve around borrowing money without even knowing when to pay it, because their salary on the farm is not enough to pay the debts (Ancheta et al., 2023). This posed the underlying determination of farmhand mothers to compromise additional work for extra financial income.

Environmental Calamities

Environmental challenges are inevitable on the farm. No matter how healthy and stable the crops are, they may experience problems, especially calamities that would affect the workers' livelihoods and cause the vulnerability of the farmhands. When calamities happen, farmhand mothers often face various consequences for reviving the farm to survive daily, specifically when crops fail. This situation weakens the other farmhand mothers who experience environmental vulnerability, leading to feelings of helplessness. Below are some of the responses of key informants:

"When the fields fail, we become weak due to the calamities. When the rice is damaged, it is incredibly exhausting to keep working manually; we are the only ones doing the harvest, and our backs hurt so much." P10

"The flood... There are diseases and pests in the rice fields because when there are too many insects in the rice fields, they weaken the rice. We will be weak if there is a failure." P11

Farmhand mothers faced weakness when their farms experienced failure due to natural disasters, and when these happened, they put much effort into getting things back to normal. Emma, who suffered from rice damage, worked very hard to harvest all the remaining rice that she found useful, even working it manually. She had a hard time working for it because their family depended on the farm; as a maintainer, she relied primarily on the farm's consumption. Although she had another job, it was not enough, so when calamities hit their farm, Emma felt devastated and weak. Eva also experienced failure on the farm due to the flood and the pests, just like Emma. Eva is also a maintainer, and how can she surpass all of the pests surrounding the farm when she has no money to eliminate all of those insects? Thus, to work the farm again, she has to make plans to improve the farm.

The same sentiments were also experienced by some farmhand mothers who likewise felt vulnerable when flood and insects devoured their farm, as postulated by Elen and Rose: "... I felt like I am weak if a flood comes as it lets the rice fall," and Fena and Gege added that insects seem to be the cause of their weakness, "...because it also affects our livelihood, then what will we do." Meanwhile, Juvy struggles with the length of the summer season. With this problem, many

farms failed, and Juvy was left with no choice but to discharge herself from farm activities because some of her employers faced a farm crisis. This part of the season is one of the weakest points in Judy's life, as this makes her vulnerable, seeing that her family is hungry, and that one thing she can offer her family is wild vegetables. If she has meager money, she only preserves it by buying seasoning to add flavor to the vegetables because she cannot afford fish and meat.

Failure on the farm can happen anytime, primarily if it is caused by calamities such as drought, typhoon, and endemic pests. These can lead to damage to crops and the loss of livelihood for farmhands and the entire farm community, which affects their vulnerability because of the losses they invest, and in return, makes them lose assets and their value, hence, having food insecurity, as vulnerability is greater when poverty threatens to be more severe (Gallardo, 2020). Added to that, since these mothers have been uninvited and excluded from programs and services, they are less likely to receive help from local extension, which was made accessible for all, specifically on the environmental conditions of the farm (Petrzelkaa et al., 2018), and when this farmhand has limited resources, it contributes to their vulnerabilities (Tapia et al. (2018).

3.5 Power and Gender Relations in which Farmhand Mothers Are Involved

Farmhands who are women experienced hard work working on the farm, but working on it provides opportunities for women, especially for mothers with dual roles: child caring and being a provider. Although farming offers resources for them, it could be an avenue for the gendered problems that are faced by the farmhand mothers, such as sexual harassment, gender pay gap, gendered division in labor and even in the household, as well as the decision-making power at work, and in their homes.

Gendered Division of Labor

In the agricultural space, the gendered division of labor manifests based on the social expectations of men and women. Most of the time, men are associated with physically demanding and/ or heavy tasks. At the same time, women are often seen as helpers (Louder, 2020) and are relegated to tasks that are considered less critical. This segregation of work constrained women from advancement within the farming domain, while more farm opportunities were available for the men. This perception is still visible for most until this post-modern era, such as with the experience of some farmhand mothers working on different farms. The following quoted statements showed the division of labor on the farm and even in the households where some farmhand mothers were involved:

"There is a difference between the work of men and women. The men cut down trees, while women only apply fertilizer and carry buckets when fertilizing." P5

"When I get home, I still have to do all the work – cooking, laundry, and all the household chores for women. According to my husband, since I am a woman, I should do the laundry and cooking, even though we both work." P6

The gender disparities faced by farmhand mothers highlight the challenging situations of most mothers in their daily endeavors at home and work. This indicates that gender biases are still occurring even though women nowadays are already informed about gender equality when it comes to roles. This signifies that some women continuously encounter gendered labor elsewhere. The same was the case with Evy, wherein she observed the gender role standard on the farm she worked on. She narrated that all farmhand boys were into heavy tasks, such as cutting the trees, while women fertilized. Evy also testified that even at home, she had to work all the household chores, such as "... cooking and all the chores at home, " even though she and her husband were both working.

This was also the case with farmhands Lyn and Julie, in that when they got home from the fieldwork, they still did the house chores because their husbands told them they were women. Thus, they should do what a woman is supposed to do -and that is do all the chores at home. Ali also had the same sentiment, in that she said that her husband let her do the household tasks alone, such as what Vera experienced in their home, that there is inequality regarding their role. This is also the fact given by some of the farmhand mothers in FGD; as such, there is a difference between the tasks given by the farmhand men and women at work and even at home, where these mothers are assumed to be resting. However, like other farmhand mothers, Mera and Nena revealed that their husbands relied on them, and sometimes Nena cried and helped her husband do the household activities.

The cultural norms and expectations about gender roles often constrain women's actions (Anibaldi et al., 2021).

This division of tasks implies that even in this contemporary generation, men still mostly hold power in the workplace and the household, regardless of their status. Therefore, some men can still manipulate women in various ways, especially in the male-dominated industry, where women are sometimes seen as invisible and undervalued (Pogoy et al., 2016). Since men are usually the standard because they represent the masculine farmers (Shortall et al., 2017), who are strong and dominant, they are mostly favored by some of the farming industry. However, even though other women occupy the subjugated position, they also have the right to have space in various environments, whether on the farm or in their own homes.

Gender Pay Gap

Farmhand mothers also experienced a disparity in pay. Some farmhand mothers have manifested this disparity since then, but because of their status and situations, these mothers did not question at all; instead, they just had to drive with it, so long as they had a job to feed their children. Nevertheless, this gap sometimes has significant consequences for some working mothers, directly affecting their financial security and their families, which can increase women's vulnerability to poverty. The following quote highlights the stories of farmhand mothers who experienced gender pay and the working conditions on the farm.

"When it comes to planting, the pay is the same. However, the pay is different for plowing because they bring their tools. For example, if our pay is 120, theirs would be 150... There is no rest if you work daily. You start planting at 6:30 am and stop at 11:00 am. Then, you start again at 1:00 pm and work until 4:00 pm. That is your lunchtime break – only one hour of rest. It is tough work, but it is different from my husband's. Even though our work is equally exhausting, their daily wage is fairer." P7

"For one hectare, we are paid by the task. It takes two days to finish, and only two of us are working. We only get paid once we finish everything. We start walking at 4:00 am because we have to start early when it is piecework. We already have a flashlight, and even when it is still dark, we begin cutting grass, crawling if needed, even if we get wet from the morning dew. When daylight comes, we eat, then continue cutting grass until 6:00 pm. Our work is challenging, but our pay is enough to buy food supplies. It is different from what men earn." P5

The gender pay gap on the farm creates an additional burden for the participating farmhand mothers, as they see the consequences of wage inequality despite performing the same intensive tasks. Farmhand mother Iza affirmed the distinction of salary of men and women farmhands, especially that men have to carry tools with them on the farm, such as in plowing; however, for planting crops, according to her, both men and women have the same wage, but sometimes, these biases depend on the employers' pattern within their workplace. Maris also remarked that other employers followed the fair wage, "...sometimes we have the same salary as men, especially when it is piecework."

This *padawan* system on the farm is likewise overseen by farmhand mother Evy, and the task pays for this system. Her employer paid Evy once the task was done, and usually, it takes two days to finish cutting the grass for one hectare. Since it is a *padawan* system, Evy had to leave at dawn to arrive early on the farm and start working even if it was dark and she got wet from the morning dew. When the sun rises, Evy and her peers have breakfast and continue working until 6:00 in the evening. Evy had a long routine working on the farm, yet her pay was not enough, unlike Maris in a *pakyawan* system, who receives a wage similar to that of men. For Evy, it is pretty different; women have not been given the same pay as men.

This was also the status of Iza, as she worked intensively on the farm every day from 6:30 am to 4:00 pm, with less time for leisure, yet she paid less, as compared to her husband, who also worked the same as both had a tough job, but her spouse paid fair than she did with her employer. The same happened with Vera, who worked hard on the farm from 6:00 to 11:00 am with no proper lunch; she just had to eat bread and water and then continue working to finish at 3:00 pm. Some farmhands practice this strategy to finish early because, mostly at noon, there comes heavy rain; thus, farmhand mothers used to do this mechanism.

This pay gap is not a simple issue for equality of wages and the equal work of both men and women. Instead, it reflects a more profound barrier that challenges women in various dimensions, such as economic factors, access to resources, education, formal land rights, and agricultural technologies (Spangler & Christie, 2019). Further, this issue could label women as incapable of producing valued knowledge about farming (Shortfall, 2014, as cited by Tourtelier et al., 2023), making them lag in accessing agricultural productivity because of the gender-specific problems that women encounter in the farm industry (Shirey, 2021). In return, they suppress their rights to be

significant farmers (Tapia et al., 2018).

Decision-Making Imbalances

In every workplace, making the right decision that contributes to the industry and the whole team, including those in a marginal position, is necessary. Women are sometimes hardly recognized as part of the team (Tourtelier et al., 2023) because society describes them as assistants rather than leaders (Fairchild, 2019), affecting women's participation in various roles. This imbalance is rooted in the workplace and their home; women also refrain from making decisions. Most of the time, their spouses hold more power and control over decision-making. Few of the farmhand mothers experienced these decision-making inequalities.

"I do all the work here at home, but the decision-making is up to my husband. I follow because he gets angry if I do not." P12

"The owner makes all the decisions. It is nice to speak up, ma'am, but it will not do much because we are just employees." P4

The majority of farmhand mothers in the study narrated that they have no arguments when it comes to the decision-making on the farm, as well as to their families; for them, there is equality in the decisions made, especially in their homes, because they practice the so-called give and take with their spouses. However, other farmhand mothers experienced it differently; Ali, for instance, shared that she did all the work at home, but the decision-making inside the house was really up to her husband. There is nothing she can do but follow, or else her spouse might get angry, which may cause commotion between them. Thus, Ali chooses to be silent rather than argue the decisions made by her spouse at home.

Vera, on the one hand, has different concerns about the decisions made by one of her employers on the farm, whom she finds to be strict. Still, she has no choice but to keep her voice unheard, as she remarked, saying that she is just a worker there and has no right to speak up. Evy somehow has a similar story to Vera, where she also underwent a strict employer, in that whatever her employer instructed them, they must follow, or they all had to face consequences, like firing the worker immediately. On the other hand, Evy mentioned that she already had co-workers who had not returned to work after not following her employer's command. This situation is equivalent to having no voices and decisions on the farm, like whatever demands of the employer must be complied with by all means, or someone else's job might end.

Leaning toward having a stable job is what farmhand mothers are in search of; for them, more opportunities in many farms mean having resources to accommodate their family's needs without depending on their spouses. However, in cases of having strict employers, farmhand mothers have to be tough for them to stay on the farm; they have to abide by all the specific rules to impose a legitimate recognition in the field since it is designed mainly from the positions based from the volume and capital (Mangez, 2015 cited by Oppong and Bannor, 2022) of these people who hold power, in which it can influence other people through their promises or threats (Oppong & Bannor, 2022). Considering that farmhand mothers did not possess sufficient capital, they had to place themselves as the way they are – the laborers (Maurya & Mishra, 2023) and continue to do so, as this shapes their habitus despite confronting risk to their well-being (Yaman & Kilic, 2023).

Harassment on the Field

In an agricultural field where men are prevalent, women often find themselves subjected to a situation that places them at a disadvantage, especially when women have no means and relations in the field are competitive, where some are vying for positions. Mostly, women are hardly recognized (Tourtelier et al., 2023) and excluded from essential tasks because they do not meet the standard of a good farmer (Louder, 2020). Worse, they suffer from various forms of harassment in the field. Farmhand mothers Evy, Ivy, and Mera face this in their field.

"...When we plant tomatoes, most of our companions in the tomato field are men because they harvest. When we plant tomatoes, they pour the animal manure, and we follow by placing the seeds -those to be planted- and then they gather the seeds. Our companions are boys; they tease us, disrespect us, and make sexual advances." P13

"There was a time when, after we harvested, I was harassed. He made me drink beer and then poured beer on me." P5

"I have also heard of other fellow workers in the field, those who are envious, who say, 'Do not give her that because she is not from here.' Some fellows tend to overpower, even harass you, and create stories about you." P14

The account of farmhand mothers revealed the harassment that is steeped in not just on the gender-based power dynamics but on the peer level, and this affects both the safety and dignity of the farmhand mothers, especially since women workers are more vulnerable when it comes to cases like this, much more on the gender-based harassment like the story recounted by Mera, a young farmhand mother. On the tomato farm, she encountered the disrespectful acts of the male farmhands, such as sexual jokes, showing sexual desire, and unfavorably teasing them. Mera could not escape from this harassment since these male farmhands were handling tasks like tomato harvesting and manuring, whereas men were always on the side of the women's farmhands to assist them after every task they had done. Mera could not help but express disgust at those men upon remembering her experiences, especially when someone from the boys courted her even though she was already married: "*So, disgusting, he flirted, even though he knew that I was already married.*" However, Mera continued working on that farm wherever her employer called her to assist.

Evy also had a harassment scene with her fellow farmhand, wherein she was publicly humiliated. This happened after their harvest, and after their work, her colleagues had to drink some alcohol to ease their tiredness. Evy does not have alcoholism, and one of the male farmhands forces her to drink beer, but when she refuses, she pours beer on her body. Evy felt harassed during that time, and all she did was cry out of anger, as she remarked, "*I cried out of anger.*" The experience of Evy and Mera describes a situation that asserts power over men to women, in that men simply exploit and oppress women (Vijayaraj, 2017), and this is a common issue faced by women who work on the farm in that they may experience sexual injustices, other forms of violence (Duncan, 2020) sexual harassment, assault, and other gender discrimination, particularly to those women in low status (Rehman et al., 2023).

On the other side, Ivy experienced a sense of exclusion based on insider and outsider status on the farm, where some farmhands who have been in a particular field for years exploit their authority over the newbie farmhands. As such, some farmhands dominated the field despite having the same status as farmhands. Ivy heard some lying stories that belittled her and hurtful words that excluded them from the rest since she was a new farmhand on that farm, and others did not want to be involved in another farm as a worker. This is not easy for Ivy since all she wanted was to have a job on many farms, but this toxic environment exists, and she cannot keep away from envious colleagues who treat her differently and have no respect (Duncan, 2022). She let those people say what they wanted to say, even surpassing extreme harassment, because she needed the job badly.

The narratives of farmhand mothers paint a picture of the realities of some agricultural settings, where harassment and other forms of exploitation exist, intersecting with social hierarchies and gender inequalities (Gomes et al., 2022). This systemic power-gender relationship in the agricultural context undermines the confidence and role of these farmhand mothers, where women can be leaders in protecting the environment (Vijayaraj, 2017) because they have this nurturing character (Duncan, 2022) and have significant contributions to various ways on the farm, but this can be destroyed because of men's dominance. Still, ecofeminists advocate ending this male/female and culture/nature thinking (Aziz, 2021) because ecological feminism regulates all forms of inequality (Ozturk, 2020). So farmhand mothers, just like any workers, have opportunities to access the masculine farming industry since women, as ecofeminism pointed out, are more inclined toward the welfare of the environment rather than males (Vijayaraj, 2017) who usually utilize unsustainable innovations (Aziz, 2021) to alter the natural environment for their personal preferences (Vijayaraj, 2017).

Furthermore, the agenda for 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which is based on the principles of universality and inclusion reflected by the "leaving no one behind" motto—and integrality (Tremblay et al., 2020) directs for all individuals suffering exclusion not just in gender alone, as well as in race, class, and in knowledge. SDG goal number 5, particularly, targets women to have equality for socio-economic development (Annan, 2000), cited by (Filho et al., 2022). This ensures that women throughout the globe have (5.4) effective full participation and opportunities in all aspects at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life equally, as well as equal rights, accessibility to ownership as well as authority over land and other types of property, inheritance, financial services, and natural resources (Asian Development Bank & United Nation Women, 2018).

4.0 Conclusion

Drawing on the findings, the study concludes that various activities of farmhand mothers on the farm, such as weeding, planting, manuring, harvesting, and even carrying heavy sacks of crops, added to their household

duties at home before and after work project a complex range of vulnerabilities environmentally, financially, as well as physically. These factors highlight that their everyday practices are demanding and that it is difficult for them to juggle all their multiple responsibilities and overcome their susceptibilities without support from their significant others (family, peers, etc.). Thus, it is critically important to give social support and provision to these mothers from the different social networks such as the local government, the NGOs, or even the farming community since their precarious working conditions can marginalize them because it impacts farmhand mothers and their families (Shaukat, 2016, cited by Rehman et al., 2023). Addressing such vulnerabilities contributes to the general welfare of the families and the entire agricultural community.

Moreover, farmhand mothers face the kinds of power and gender disparities that run throughout their lives because of exposure to harassment, unevenness in decision-making, the ever-present gap in pay, and the unequal sharing of labor. These aforementioned structural inequities make it harder for women working on the farm to thrive and also prove they can work within such a dominantly masculine sector. To create a more balanced environment for them, their plight should be subject to the assessment of the policies of the local government units (LGUs) and the farm owners. Also, farmhand mothers should amplify their voices concerning gender equality; after all, their struggle was supported by the SDG through their goal number (5) on empowering all women and girls inclusivity within public and private environments, reinforced by ecological feminism to end women injustices, and therefore, uplifting their quality of life.

On the other hand, the study will capture the essence of gender and society in the field of Sociology in Gender; this will also aid the community in broadening their perspectives and understanding concerning the journey of farmhand mothers in that the farm owners should at least provide these mothers with conducive workplaces, they should also take into consideration the hazardous conditions on the farm, like providing them with protective gear and regulating working hours during extreme heat and or rainy season. They should also ensure that these mothers receive work benefits like healthcare, fair compensation, and a salary based on their work performance. Farm owners should look to implement clear policies and actions against harassment in the workplace to ensure legal action against perpetrators. They should implement policies to break gender biases and promote equal treatment in the workplace. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) should also strengthen the labor laws regarding wage discrimination for all types of industries; this is to ensure that all workers receive equal pay for equal work; they should have regular inspections for the industry owners, as well as the small farm owners, to prevent the wage gap between males and females.

Future studies might delve into the collective vulnerabilities of all farmhands, regardless of their gender (e.g., male and LGBTQ) and age in the small—and large-scale farming industry, using different approaches such as quantitative or mixed-methods to assess the quantity of their status and the quality of their narratives. Further, it is recommended that various organizations (private and public spheres) provide opportunities for this sector, skill development, and other alternative income sources to help the farmhand mothers break the poverty cycle and enhance their livelihood.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

The author declares this paper to be original work. The corresponding author contributed to the writing of the manuscript, the development of the theoretical paradigm, the study's design, the gathering of sufficient data, and the presentation and analysis of the data, with all the in-text citations and sources properly acknowledged. Meanwhile, the co-author, Dr. Josefina M. Tabudlong, served as the thesis adviser, reviewed and edited the entire manuscript thoroughly, and added insights for improving the paper.

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