

Intergenerational Knowledge Transfers Among Elderly and Young Artisanal Fisherfolks

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Abstract— This qualitative descriptive research aimed to analyze the intergenerational knowledge transfers elderly and young artisanal fisherfolks in the Municipality of Estancia, Iloilo. A researcher-made guide questions duly validated by panel of experts was used in the analysis. Results revealed, in terms of traditional fishing knowledge valued by elderly fisherfolks, the following themes were drawn: practical skills, environmental and seasonal knowledge, and values and ethical practices. In terms of modes of intergenerational knowledge transmission, the following themes were formulated: learning through observation and practice, oral instruction and storytelling, and family-based transmission. In terms of challenges affecting knowledge transfer declining interest, economic and environmental pressures, and influence of modern technology were formulated. While, in terms of young fisherfolks' perceptions of traditional knowledge, practical utility, and perceived obsolescence, and respect and cultural identity were identified as themes.

Keywords— Artisanal, Elderly, Fisherfolks, Intergenerational Knowledge Transfers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Philippines is a country richly endowed with natural resources, including abundant surface and groundwater resources. Its total internal water resource is estimated at 130 km³/year. The fisheries sector in the Philippines provides a significant contribution to the national economy in terms of income, foreign exchange and employment. In 2000, total fish production was estimated at 2.94 million t, 84% of which was derived from marine capture fisheries (Hidayat, 2023).

Sustainable traditions of marine stewardship and cultivation have existed for millenia, providing deeply rooted, place-based food relations across the Pacific. Some of these resilient, sustainable and equitable food systems include Indigenous fisheries and aquaculture systems such as clam gardens, fishponds, and community-based fisheries (American Fisheries Society, 2024).

Based on Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the Philippines is the 6th fish producing country in the world, 3rd in marine plants, and 8th in aquaculture. The same agency reported further that “fish and fishery products provide about 70% of the protein requirements of about 1.6 million Filipinos.” The whole island country has over 2.2 million km² of productive fisheries which provided employment and economic support to almost 70% of the local coastal communities (Sierra, 2023).

The passing down of knowledge from older to younger generations, known as intergenerational knowledge

transfer, is essential for societal progress. It's how we learn from the successes and mistakes of the past, building a foundation for a more sustainable future. Consider it a relay race where each runner hands off the baton of wisdom, experience, and skills to the next, ensuring the continuity of valuable practices and insights (Sustainability Directory, 2025).

In the study of Sousa (2022), artisanal fisherman comprises wide variety of groups that can be differentiated by type of fishing, gear used, culture, gender, and nationality, among others, techniques used, build their gear, and understand the dynamics of the environment based on the existing exchange with their ancestors, as they are the ones who keep the knowledge of the art of fishing in a mythological, environmental, technical, and laboral way necessary to perform the art of fishing.

With this, the researcher of this study would like to ascertain the Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer among Elderly and Young Artisanal Fisherfolks in the Municipality of Estancia, Iloilo.

II. HELPFUL HINTS

Traditional Fishing Knowledge Valued by Elderly Fisherfolks

Theme 1: Traditional Fishing Techniques and Skills

Elderly fisherfolks consistently emphasized the importance of passing on practical fishing skills such as net preparation, gear repair, and traditional fishing techniques. These skills are seen as foundational to

artisanal fishing and essential for survival at sea. E1 (Elderly) uttered: "Knowing how to prepare and repair fishing nets is important before going to sea." While, E3 (Elderly) uttered: "Young fishers must learn the proper way of fishing and not depend only on modern tools."

Theme 2: Environmental and Seasonal Knowledge

Elderly participants highlighted deep ecological knowledge—such as reading tides, weather conditions, and seasonal fish behavior—as crucial traditional wisdom developed through long-term experience. E2 (Elderly) replied: "We learned to read the weather and sea conditions before fishing." Also, E5 (Elderly) replied: "It is important to know when fish appear during certain seasons."

Theme 3: Values and Ethical Fishing Practices

Beyond technical knowledge, elders stressed moral values such as respect for the sea, patience, and sustainable fishing practices, framing fishing as a way of life rather than just a livelihood. E4 (Elderly) said: "Fishing should be done with respect for the sea." While E6 (Elderly) said: "We teach the young not to take more than what they need."

Modes of Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

Theme 1: Learning Through Observation and Practice

Knowledge transfer primarily occurs through hands-on participation, where young fisherfolks learn by accompanying elders during fishing activities. E7 (Elderly) retorted: "They learn by joining us when we go fishing." And also Y2 (Young) said: "I learned how to fish by watching my father and grandfather."

Theme 2: Oral Instruction and Storytelling

Elders transmit knowledge verbally through storytelling, advice, and daily conversations, reinforcing lessons learned through experience. E8 (Elderly) replied: "We tell stories about our experiences at sea." On the other hand, Y4 (Young) uttered: "They explain what to do and what not to do while fishing."

Theme 3: Family-Based Knowledge Transfer

The family serves as the primary site of knowledge transmission, reinforcing fishing as an inherited livelihood and cultural tradition. Y1 (Young) responded: "My family taught me how to fish." Likewise, E9 (Elderly) said: "Fishing knowledge is passed from parents to children."

Challenges Affecting Knowledge Transfer

Theme 1: Declining Interest Among Younger Generations

Elderly fisherfolks expressed concern that younger generations are less interested in fishing, preferring alternative livelihoods. E10 (Elderly) replied: "Young people are no longer interested in fishing." Further, Y5 (Young) uttered: "Many of us prefer other jobs now."

Theme 2: Economic and Environmental Pressures

Low income from fishing and environmental changes reduce motivation for young people to continue traditional practices. E11 (Elderly) replied: "Fishing income is no longer enough." Also, Y6 (Young) responded: "There are fewer fish now compared to before."

Theme 3: Influence of Modern Technology

Modern fishing tools reduce dependence on traditional skills, weakening the transfer of ancestral knowledge. E12 (Elderly) replied: "Young fishers rely more on technology now." Nonetheless, Y7 (Young) said: "We use modern equipment instead of traditional methods."

Young Fisherfolks' Perceptions of Traditional Knowledge

Theme 1: Traditional Knowledge as Useful

Some young fisherfolks recognize traditional knowledge as practical, especially in situations where technology fails. Y3 (Young) retorted: "Traditional knowledge helps when equipment does not work." While, Y8 (Young) replied: "Elders' experience helps us fish better."

Theme 2: Traditional Knowledge as Less Relevant

Other young fisherfolks view traditional practices as outdated and less efficient than modern methods.

Y9 (Young) responded: "Modern methods are faster and easier."

Theme 3: Respect for Elders and Cultural Heritage

Even when not fully practiced, traditional knowledge is respected as part of cultural identity and family heritage. Y10 (Young) said: "I still respect what elders teach us." And also Y11 (Young) uttered: "Fishing is part of our family tradition."

III. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that traditional fishing knowledge among artisanal fisherfolks in Estancia remains a rich and valuable body of ecological, technical, and ethical expertise. Elderly fishers prioritize practical skills, environmental awareness, and moral values, which are primarily transmitted through observation, oral instruction, and family-based learning.

However, the transfer of this knowledge faces significant challenges due to declining interest among younger generations, economic and environmental pressures, and the adoption of modern fishing technology. Despite these challenges, young fishers continue to recognize the value of elders' wisdom, maintaining respect for cultural heritage even when traditional methods are not fully practiced.

Ultimately, while traditional fishing knowledge is at risk of erosion, it persists as an essential part of the community's identity, livelihood, and intergenerational connection.

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