

Awareness and Implementation of Philippine Fisheries Code and the Challenges in the Fishing Industry during Covid 19 Pandemic



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ABSTRACT: The Visayan Sea had been the source of abundant fishes supplying Iloilo and nearby provinces. It is considered as the major fishing ground due to its abundance to different pelagic fishes, crabs and squids. The study was conducted in the coastal Barangays of Carles, Iloilo including Gigantes Island which was considered to be the center of Visayan Sea. Respondents of the study were the 900 residents of Carles including the Barangay Captains of the coastal barangays. Result shows that the coastal residents of Carles has a high level of awareness on the closed season policy however a significant difference is noted in their awareness when grouped according to their marital status and educational attainment. Covid 19 pandemic post challenges to fisherfolks and the biggest challenge is loss of income because they cannot catch pelagic fishes and alternative source of income such as crab and shrimp caught has no buyer. Increase in transportation cost due to limited number of trucking services operating during the pandemic is also considered as a major problem. Based on the results, it is recommended that a stable and unseasonal alternative source of income should be provided in the coastal community, especially in the island barangays. Revival of NIPSC extension program to the people of Gigantes Island is highly encouraged.

KEYWORDS: Fisheries Code, Awareness, Implementation, Closed Season, Covid 19 Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Fisheries value chains are experiencing greater demand from consumers coupled with a declining trend in the sustainability of some fish stocks; capture production has slowed and stabilized, and the proportion of fish stocks sustainably exploited has declined to below 70%-90%. The full range of activities that are required to deliver fish and fish products from fisheries and aquaculture production to the final consumers are complex, and technologies employed to manage these value chains vary from artisanal to highly-industrial. (FAO,2021).

In the outbreak of pandemic, new challenges has been faced by Fishing Industry. Social distancing and confinement measures have led to the closure of many fish markets globally, while trade has been further affected by border closures and significant declines in the availability, and increases in the cost, of global air-freight as passenger flights are cancelled. These impacts have created further challenges for the sale of fresh fish products, even where demand still exists domestically and internationally (OECD,2020).

The Visayan Sea had been the source of abundant fishes supplying not only Region VI but other regions as well. It is considered as the major fishing ground due to its abundance to different pelagic fishes, crabs and squids. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources had a moving result in their stock assessment of the Visayan sea that such abundance is now depleting due to prohibited fishing gears, blast fishing, use of fine mesh nets and the lack of concern and knowledge of the people of the laws and the current situation of the Visayan Sea. But before resolving the bigger picture of the Visayan sea, the researchers find it realistic to start first within the community hence, it became the subject the coastal barangays in the Municipality of Carles as it is covered by the annual fishing closure starting November 15 to February 15 to give time for spawns to grow especially for pelagic fishes.

Uncertainty continues to dominate the outlook for the fisheries and aquaculture sector, particularly with regard to the duration and severity of the pandemic (FAO,2020). The researchers therefore find it necessary to assess the level of awareness and the implementation of REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998 as amended by RA 10654, AN ACT TO PREVENT, DETER AND ELIMINATE ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING, of the

Awareness and Implementation of Philippine Fisheries Code and the Challenges in the Fishing Industry during Covid 19 Pandemic

resident in the coastal barangays of Carles during closed season and amidst the pandemic. Problems encountered in the fishing industry amidst Covid-19 pandemic was given attention and a viable livelihood program shall be designed in cooperation with the local municipality of Carles.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive design using the survey method. The study was conducted in the 18 coastal Barangays of Carles, Iloilo. Respondents of the study were the household heads living in the coastal barangays. Total respondents are 900 residents of Coastal Barangay in Carles, Iloilo . A modified researcher made questionnaire anchored on RA 8550 to collect the primary data was used. Interviews with the barangay officials and scanning of the vicinity was done to supplement data collected. Data gathered were compiled, summarized and categorized and analyzed using IBM SPSS v.23.

The data collected were analyzed using the following descriptive statistics: frequency count, mean and percentages, to describe the number of observations particularly for socio-demographic profile of the respondents and the level of awareness of coastal residents. To established significant differences a Mann Whitney U-test and Kruskal Wallis test was administered.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

REPUBLIC ACT NO. **10654**. AN ACT TO PREVENT, DETER AND ELIMINATE ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING, AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

SECTION 1. Section 2 of Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as "The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998", is hereby amended, as follows:

"SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State:

To ensure the rational and sustainable development, management and conservation of the fishery and aquatic resources in Philippine waters including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and in the adjacent high seas, consistent with the primordial objective of maintaining a sound ecological balance, protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment. The Philippines shall pursue its commitment to international conventions and cooperate with other states and international bodies, in order to conserve and manage threatened , aquatic species, straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and other living marine resources;

In the study *How is the pandemic affecting global fisheries and aquaculture, and what are the potential consequences?* Changes in food consumption and difficulties in reaching consumers are significantly impacting demand and prices Public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures, from confinement and social distancing to stricter border controls and reduced air traffic, are having significant and complex impacts on the demand and prices for fish products. Demand from the hospitality, restaurant and catering (HORECA) sector represents a significant share of fish consumption in many OECD countries. The closure of restaurants and cancellation of both public and private events has resulted in a collapse in demand for certain fish products, in particular high-end products, such as lobsters, oysters, bluefin tuna, and mahi-mahi. The loss of domestic demand has often been further compounded by a collapse in export markets. The cancellation of lunar new year celebrations in the People's Republic of China (hereafter "China"), for example, which are traditionally associated with the consumption of high value seafood, has had devastating impacts on lobster fisheries in Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, among others. Social distancing and confinement measures have also led to the closure of many fish markets globally, while trade has been further affected by border closures and significant declines in the availability, and increases in the cost, of global air-freight as passenger flights are cancelled. These impacts have created further challenges for the sale of fresh fish products, even where demand still exists domestically and internationally (OECD,2020).

Threatened Fishery Ecosystem and Coastal Resource Management Initiatives at securing the coastal and fishery resources have been a long struggle for many communities, local government units and concerned sectors. Issues and attempts at coastal resource management in the Visayan waters and islands are found below. The Visayan Sea Angel Alcala, former secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and well-respected academic, has aptly summarized the problem of one of the largest fishing grounds of the Visayas, the Visayan sea (enclosed by Panay, Negros, Cebu and Masbate islands). In his research on Negros and Northeastern Panay in 2004, Mr. Alcala notes : "The Visayan Sea was once a very fishery-productive inland sea of the Philippines. But 50-60 years ago, the sea was heavily fished by trawlers with the approval of the BFAR. The Visayan Sea also hosts some of the terrestrial species endemic to central Philippines, indicating its evolutionary importance... The overexploited more valuable fish species have been replaced by the less nutritious species of squids and cuttlefish, following the known trend in other similar depleted areas in the Philippines. There are no visible conservation measures, except for the 30,000-

Awareness and Implementation of Philippine Fisheries Code and the Challenges in the Fishing Industry during Covid 19 Pandemic

hectare Maka Reef complex off Sagay City, where reef and seagrass species are protected from fishing. Destructive fishing methods such as blast-fishing and compressor-fishing plus cyanide, are still used by fishers.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Level of Awareness of the coastal residents of the salient provision of RA 8550

Respondents has a high level of awareness on the salient provision of the Fisheries Code or RA 8550, with a grand mean of 4.12 interpreted as Aware.

Full awareness has been noted in provisions regarding existence of local Aquartic Resource Management Council, Closed Season Policy, using fine mesh net in fishing, collecting and selling of corals and using dynamite or electricity in fishing and marine protected area of Carles. This simply means that coastal residents are fully aware that the mentioned provisions are strictly prohibited and punishable by law.

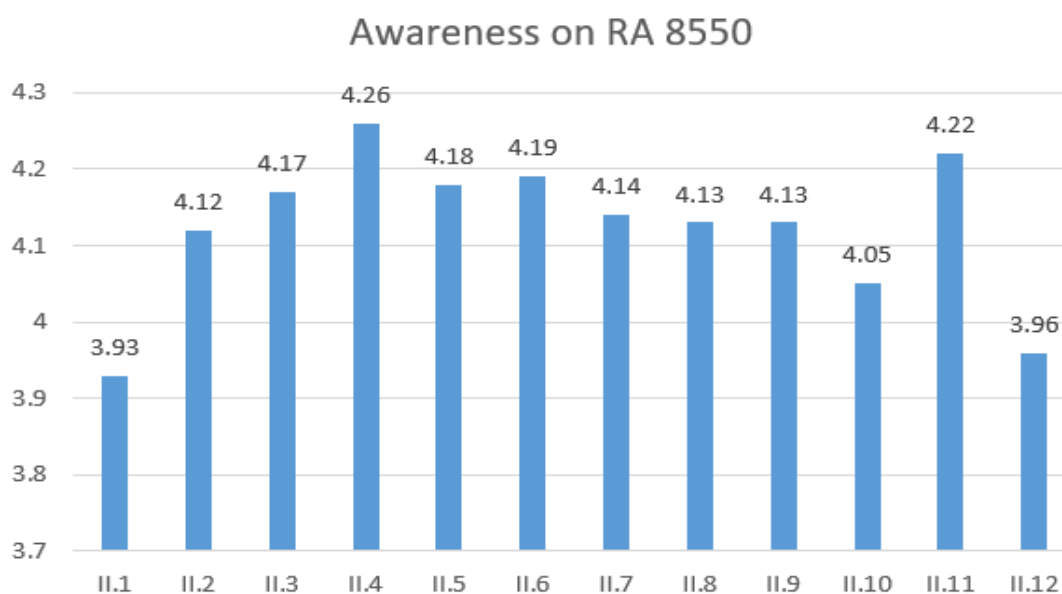


Figure 1. Level Of Awareness Of Of The Coastal Residents Of The Salient Provision Of RA 8550

Significant Difference in the Level of Awareness of the coastal residents in the salient provision of RA 8550

Result shows that there is a highly significant difference in the level of awareness of the coastal residents in the salient provision of RA 8550 when grouped according to their educational attainment, age, civil status ,sex and household size. This simply implied that the level of awareness of the coastal residents in the salient provision of RA 8550 is highly influenced by their demographic profile educational attainment, age, civil status, sex and household size.

Table 1 Significant Difference In The Level Of Awareness Of The Coastal Residents In The Salient Provision Of RA 8550

VARIABLE	TEST	RESULT	SIGNIFICANCE
Educational Attainment	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant
Age	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant
Civil Status	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Significant
Sex	Mann Whitney	0.000	Highly Significant
Household Size	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant

Awareness and Implementation of Philippine Fisheries Code and the Challenges in the Fishing Industry during Covid 19 Pandemic

Level of Implementation of the salient provision of RA 8550 to the coastal residents of Carles

Result shows that municipality of Carles has high level of implementation towards the salient provisions of Fisheries Code or RA 8550, with a grand mean of 4.15 verbally interpreted as Implemented. Provisions that were fully implemented includes Closed Season Fishing Policy and catching of pelagic fishes during the closed season. Full implementation on no dynamite and cyanide fishing is also noted. This simply means that the Local Government Unit is strictly implementing the RA 8550 and the penalty clause of the said provision.

Implementation of RA8550

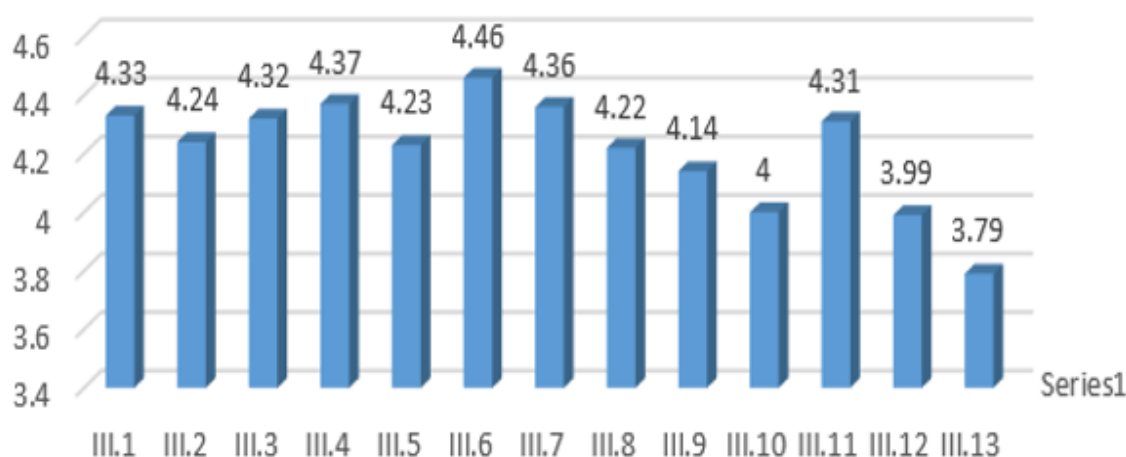


Figure 2. Level Of Implementation Of The Salient Provision Of RA 8550

Significant Difference In The Level Of Implementation Of The Salient Provision Of RA 8550

Result shows that there is a highly significant difference in the level of implementation of the salient provision of RA 8550 to the coastal residents of Carles when respondents were grouped according to educational attainment, age, sex and household size. This implied that implementation of RA 8550 is influenced by respondents' educational attainment, age, civil status, sex and household size.

Table 2 Significant difference in the level of Implementation of the salient provision of RA 8550

VARIABLE	TEST	RESULT	SIGNIFICANCE
Educational Attainment	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant
Age	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant
Civil Status	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant
Sex	Mann Whitney	0.000	Highly Significant
Household Size	Kruskal Wallis	0.000	Highly Significant

Respondents Need For Alternative Income

Result in table 3 shows respondents need for alternative income during close fishing season, almost all 885 out of 900 respondents or 98.3% says they needed additional income especially during closed season. As to their willingness to be trained for a livelihood program, 96.2% said they are willing to be trained.

Awareness and Implementation of Philippine Fisheries Code and the Challenges in the Fishing Industry during Covid 19 Pandemic

Table 3. Respondents Need for Alternative Income

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Do you need an alternative source of income during closed fishing season?	900	100
Yes	885	98.3
No	15	1.7
Are you willing to undergo training on livelihood and economic upliftment?	900	100
Yes	866	96.2
No	34	3.8
Preferred trainings		
Food Processing	426	47
Household Products	309	34.5
Shellcraft Making	150	17
Others	15	1.5

Problems encountered by the Fishing Industry during Pandemic

Covid 19 pandemic post challenges to fisherfolks and the biggest challenge is loss of income because they cannot catch pelagic fishes and alternative source of income such as crab and shrimp caught has no buyer. Increase in transportation cost due to limited number of trucking services operating during the pandemic is also considered as a major problem. Other problems aired were strict quarantine protocols that limit number of fishermen in pumpboat and lack of support/ programs to fisherfolks to help them during pandemic.

CONCLUSION

There is a significant difference in the level of awareness of the coastal residents when they are grouped according to their educational attainment, age, sex and household size and civil status.

The coastal residents of Carles has a high level of implementation on the salient provisions of the Fisheries Code of the Philippines or RA 8550. There is a significant difference in the level of implementation of the coastal residents when they are grouped according to their educational attainment, age, sex and household size , however, there is no significant difference in the level of their compliance when they are grouped according to their marital status. Problems encountered by the residents should be addressed and given attention especially the need for the alternative source of income.

Based on the results, it is recommended that a stable and unseasonal alternative source of income should be provided in the coastal community, especially in the island barangays. Revival of NIPSC shell craft extension program to the people of Gigantes Island is highly encouraged. Introduction of household products such as Do-it-Yourself liquid dishwashing, hand soap and alcolgel is highly recommended specially demand for such items have increased amidst this pandemic.

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