

SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN ECO-TOURISM INDUSTRY IN PANGASINAN, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the sustainability of women's involvement in eco-tourism industry in coastal towns of Pangasinan along economic, socio-cultural and environmental activities, and their problems encountered. A descriptive study design was utilized using percentages and average weighted mean. There were ninety six respondents, of whom, majority belongs to adolescence and early adulthood, married, high school graduate, self-employed as vendors, stayed 19-25 years in their place, Roman Catholic, having monthly income of 11, 000 to 15,000, and no incentives received. Women's involvement in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspect is high and their problems encountered are moderately serious.

The local government is encourage to intensify its campaign in the promotion, protection and restoration of these eco-tourism sites and conduct training on solid waste management and tourism activity among women. Likewise, it may establish collaboration with other agencies of the government such as the DSWD,DOLE and DTI for livelihood programs and other beneficial activities and gainful work for women. Strict monitoring on the implementation of policies regarding natural resources is also encouraged.

Keywords: sustainability of women, women involvement in eco-tourism

Introduction

In 1991, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Development Program along with various organizations in the Philippines worked to make the nation a supporter of eco-tourism. According to *Ethics of Ecotourism in the Philippines*, around thirty percent of the people in the Philippines live in poverty, and nearly 25.5 million indigent and suffering people. It was not until 1999, however, that an executive order was approved that helped structure the development of ecotourism which the executive order reads:

...“ *The State shall develop and promote sustainable tourism while enjoining the participation of the Filipino people in enhancing the growth and competitiveness of the Philippine economy; and*

...“ *The State shall ensure the sustainable use, development, management, protection and conservation of the country's environment and natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the present and future generations”*

The formal organizational structure for the development of ecotourism in the Philippines was established by virtue of Executive Order 111 issued on June 17, 1999. This paved the way for the creation of National Ecotourism Development Council (NEDC) composed of the Secretaries of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources, Interior and Local Government, Trade and Industry, Finance, Education, the Secretary-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and representatives from the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Under the NEDC, Steering and Regional Ecotourism Committees (RECs) as well as Ecotourism Technical Working Group (ETWG) were established to implement programs and activities and to provide technical and administrative support to the NEDC and the NESC.

As expressed in EO 111, the following policies served as bases for proposing a system to promote and develop ecotourism in the Philippines: the State shall develop and promote sustainable tourism while enjoining the participation of the Filipino people in enhancing the growth and competitiveness of the Philippine economy; and the State shall ensure the sustainable use, development, management, conservation of the country's environment and natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the present and future generations. The EO 111, therefore, provides for the formulation of a national ecotourism strategy and program for the promotion and development of ecotourism in the Philippines. Spreading tourism benefits to rural areas not only for employment generation and poverty alleviation but also for the sustainability of the tourism industry (NES, 2002). Eco-tourism is a form of sustainable tourism within a natural and cultural heritage area which promotes community participation, management and protection of environment including the economic aspect wherein residents are benefited, and visitors are satisfied. (www.treehugger.com, 2014). The Department of Tourism and Department of Environment and Natural Resources set criteria for designating an area as an ecotourism designation, to wit. The country had a following objectives in ecotourism these are; to regulate the implementation under ecotourism projects and to make a sustainable and viable mechanism; to provide mechanism for the accreditation of developers, investors and other concerned individuals and groups who will engage in the implementation of ecotourism projects; to ensure multi-sectorial participation in ecotourism development and implementation; the site also for ecotourism be considered like area should have unique and natural /cultural features which will provide enjoyment and educational benefits to visitors; area should be accessible, with stable peace and order condition and with highly receptive and cooperative local community.

President Benigno C. Aquino III's "Social Contract with the Filipino People" recognizes the role of the private sector as an important partner in attaining the Philippines' national development objectives of inclusive growth and poverty reduction. The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) "as a cornerstone strategy of the national development plan to accelerate the infrastructure development of the country and sustain economic growth as reflected in Executive Order (EO) No. 8 series 2011. The legal and regulatory framework for PPP expanded its coverage to

include non-traditional infrastructure and development projects. Creation of ecotourism development in a micro enterprises will supports the local tourism industry. In order for communities to have an active role in ecotourism, they should have the capacity to provide various services to visitors. They can be trained as guides, caterers, producers of souvenirs or camp managers. Training/capacity building and the implementation and core standards are important in order to ensure that products are viable and marketable. Exploring income streams for communities is one of the key towards increased economic benefit and the inclusion of several members including women, out of school youth, fisher folks, farmers and local craftsmen.

There are notable eco-tourism zones in the province of Pangasinan which are known, not only for their being beautiful sceneries, but known for their amazing geographical locations. The presence of these tourism sites has brought many significant changes in the lives of the people economically, socially and even their cultural values.

Pangasinan is one of the provinces gifted with potential and sustained natural resources that ensure its growing economy in the local and global market. However, being a highly urbanized locality, it poses challenges to the local government leadership along environmental protection, peace and order, socio-cultural change, among others. In spite of these threats to the province promising economic boom, the Department of Tourism of Pangasinan unceasingly look for opportunities, strategies, intervention programs and mechanisms in addressing these concerns. Records states that tourist and visitors in Pangasinan is now the undisputed top tourist destination in Region 1 (Espino. 2014). One of the interventions is to make advertisement efforts to promote Pangasinan as a choice tourist destination and suitable venue for convention, trainings and seminars, sports and other national and international events and sustained the economic concerns of the province. Restoration of heritage sites, preservation and promotion of local history, culture and arts among the populace, improve accommodation and services, facilities and infrastructure development and marketing local products and services.

The local government units of Pangasinan have likewise started to establish partnerships with private organizations and companies to achieve growth and development. Investments in Pangasinan will finally come in droves with the passage of a provincial code adopting a PPP approach towards economic growth and sustained development particularly women's participation in Pangasinan.

By virtue of R.A. No. 7192, the state recognizes the role of women in nation-building; hence, women in development would address the disparity between their role in poverty alleviation and their conventional role in the household. Engagement of women in tourism activities like capacity building may directly or indirectly transform them considering may it be economic, social, psychological and political

This study will look into the participation of women in the eco-tourism industry along economic, socio-cultural and environmental activities as well as the problems they encountered in the exercise of their roles in some of the coastal towns of Pangasinan

Objectives

To determine the sustainability of women’s involvement in eco-tourism industry in Pangasinan.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was utilized with the use of researchers’ made questionnaire administered to the respondents. It was supplemented with unstructured interview among individuals in the coastal areas of Pangasinan. The questionnaire was validated by the experts prior to the administration. Pre-testing or pilot testing was done to test the accuracy of the instrument. All suggestions and comments were noted to make the instrument more understandable. Permission was secured from the Barangay Captain thru a letter for the administration of the instrument to his jurisdiction. The questionnaires were administered to the 96 respondents from Bolinao, Alaminos, and Dasol. Purposive sampling was utilized in the selection of the respondents.

Treatment of Data

Weighted mean and percentage was used in the study.

Results and Discussion

On the personal and demographic Profile:

Age

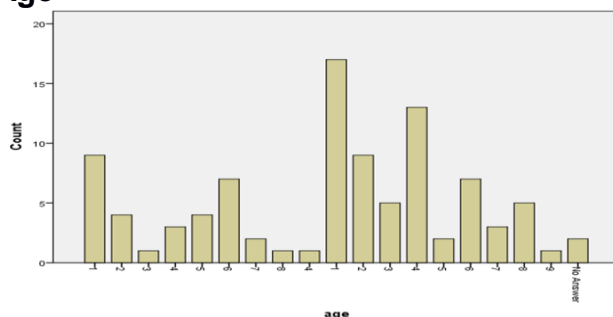


Figure 1. Age of the Respondents

Legend:

- (1) 18-23: 22 respondents (23%) 44-48 8 respondents 8%
- (2) 24-28: 16 respondents (17%) 49-53 11 respondents 11%
- (3) 29-33: 7 respondents (7%) 54-58 6 respondents 6%
- (4) 34-38: 13 respondents (13%) 59-64 2 respondents 2%
- (5) 39-43: 11 respondents (11%) No answer 2 respondents 2%

A great number of the respondents belong to 18 to 23 years (23 %), followed by 24 to 28 years old (17 %) and the least belongs to 59-64 years (2%). This shows that the respondents are still in their Adolescents and early adult period. According to Hurlock (1980), adolescents are active and easy to get along with others and easy to

train, have developed a sense of self, peer relationships are still important and they also engage in adult thinking and set clearly defined goals for the future.

Civil Status

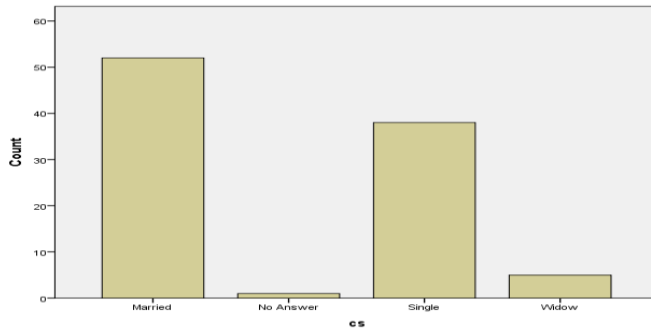


Fig. 2. Civil Status of the Respondents

Legend:

- Single: 38 (40%)
- Married: 52 (54%)
- Widow/s: 5 (5%)
- No answer: 1 (1%)

In terms of civil status, the majority of the respondents are married (54%) followed by those with single status (40%)

However, only a small number with only 5% are widowed. This means that in the tourism industry, everyone is capable to participate regardless of the status

Educational Attainment

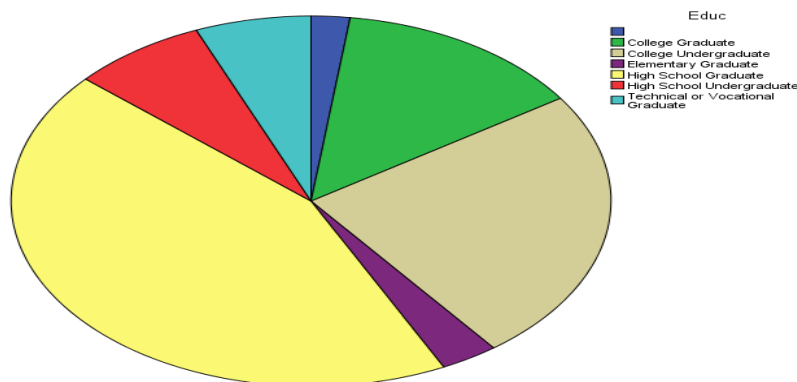


Fig.3. Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Legend:

- Elementary Graduate: 13(14%)
- High School Graduate: 37 (39%)

High School Undergraduate: 7 (7%)
 College Graduate: 13 (13)
 College Undergraduate: 18 (19%)
 Technical and Vocational Graduate: 6 (6%)
 No Answer: 2 (2%)

In terms of the educational attainment, a great number of the respondents (39%) are high school graduate, followed by college undergraduate with 19% and college and elementary graduates with 13% and 14% respectively. This means that the respondents are educated and can be trained.

Employment Status

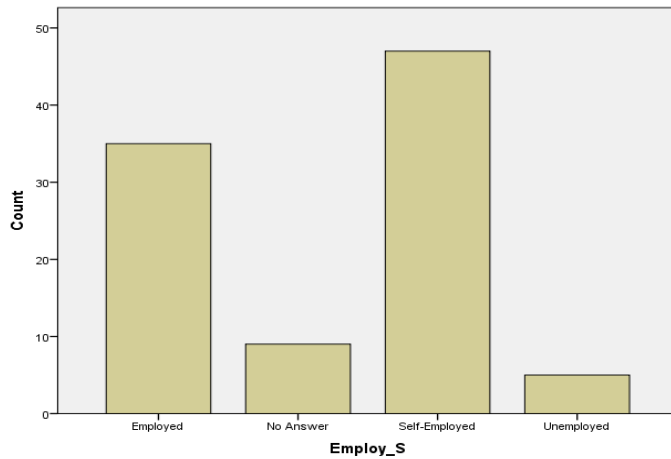


Fig. 4 Employment Status of Respondents

Legend:

Employed: 35 (37%)
 Self-employed: 47 (49%)
 Unemployed: 5 (5%)
 No Answer: 9 (9%)

Majority of the respondents are self-employed with a rate of 49% while 37% are employed. According to the interview conducted, those self-employed comes in different means to perform their participation as tourist guide, vendors of food, maintenance of the park, front desk and souvenir vendors.

Years of Residency

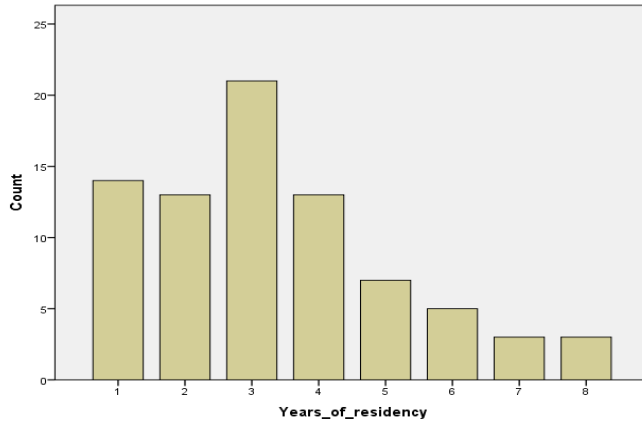


Fig. 5. Years of Residency of Respondents

Legend;

- (1) 4-10: 14 respondents (15%)
 - (2) 11-18: 13 respondents (13%)
 - (3) 19-25: 21 respondents (22%)
 - (4) 26-32: 13 respondents (14%)
 - (5) 33-39: 7 respondents (7%)
 - (6) 40-46: 5 respondents (5%)
 - (7) 47-53: 3 respondents (3%)
 - (8) 54-60: 3 respondents (3%)
- No Answer: 17 respondents (18%)

The respondents in terms of residency stayed at about 19 – 25 years with 22% and followed by those respondents with “no answer” 18% , the reason of not filling out the information maybe because they have forgotten and nor sure of their residency and some were just new to the place.

Religion

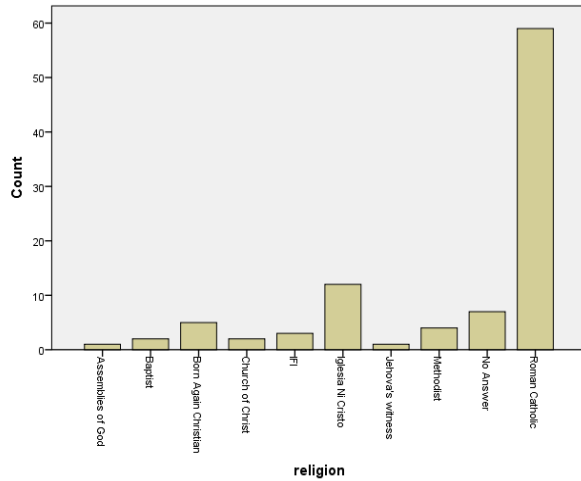


Fig.6. Religion of Respondents

Legend:

Roman Catholic: 59 (61%)	Church of Christ: 2 (2%)
Jehova's Witness: 1 (1%)	Born Again Christian: 5 (5%)
Iglesia ni Cristo: 12 (13%)	Assemblies of God: 1 (1%)
Methodist: 4 (4%)	Baptist: 2 (2%)
IFI: 3 (3%)	No Answer: 7 (7%)

Majority of the respondents are Roman Catholic with 61% , those belonging to Iglesia ni Cristo is 13% , while others, with minimal number of respondents belong to the different religious sect.. It signifies that Pangasinan is predominantly Roman Catholic where it covers 80% of the population in Pangasinan as according to Philippine Statistics Authority.

Status of Employment

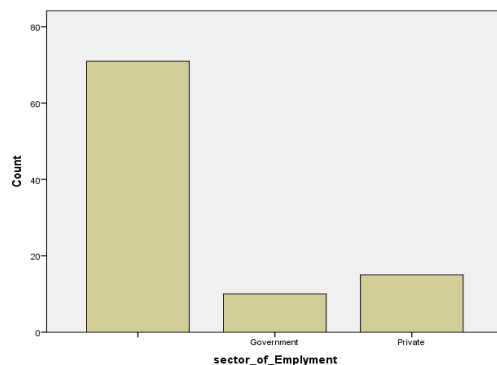


Fig. 7. Status of Employment

Legend:

Private: 15 (16%)

Government: 10 (10%)

No Answer (students, self-employed, unemployed): 71 (74%)

In the sector of employment the respondents with no answer may classify as private because it described those students, self-employed and unemployed despite they are not engage in private busines or iindustry they still participate in the tourism industry.

Monthly Income

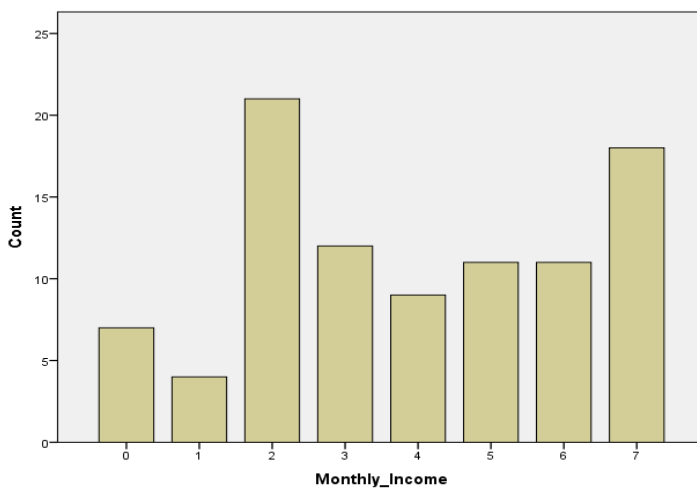


Fig. 8. Monthly Income

Legend:

Below – 3,000: 14 respondents (14%)

3,001 – 5,000: 13 respondents (13%)

5,001 – 7,000: 14 respondents (14%)

7,001 – 9,000: 10 respondents (10%)

9,000 – 11,000: 11 respondents (11%)

11,001 – 15,000: 21 respondents (21%)

15,001 – 25,000: 4 respondents (4%)

Above Php 25,001: 7 respondents (7%)

No Answer: 2 respondents (2%)

The monthly income of the respondents is between 11, 001 to 15,000 21% and 5001 to 7000 and below 3,000 with 14%. It implies that some were government employee and finished college so they have work while below 3000 are those unemployed with occasional work only.

Years of Involvement in Eco-Industry

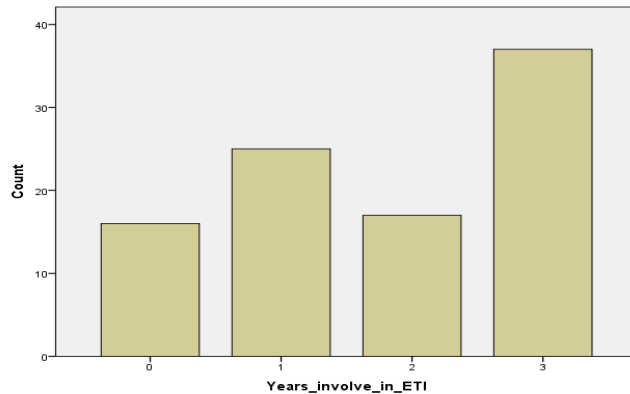


Fig. 9. Years of Involvement in Eco.-Industry

Legend:

- 1 year and below – 14 respondents (15%)
- 2 to 3 years – 26 respondents (27%)
- 3 to 4 years – 17 respondents (17%)
- 5 years and above- 39 respondents (40%)

About 40% of the respondents have been involved in the industry for 5 years and above, while 27% are involve in eco tourism industry within 2 to 3 years, 17% are involve within 3 to 4 years and 1 year and below is 14%. As per interview with the respondents, their number of years of involvement in the eco-tourism industry can be attributed to the establishment of the eco-tourism sites. There are eco-tourism sites that has been established a long time ago, and there are some which were just newly-established ones..

Role

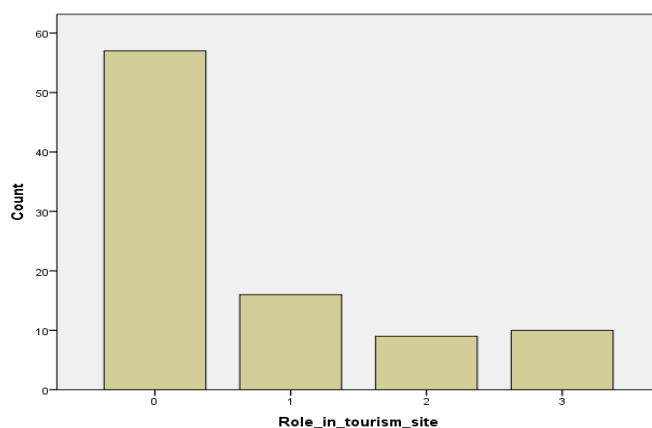


Fig. 10. Role of the Respondents

Legend:

- Vender: 60 (63%)
- Tour Guide: 14 (15%)
- Information Officer: 9 (9%)
- Tourism Staff: 2 (2%)
- Caretaker: 2 (2%)
- Collector: 2 (2%)
- Staff: 2 (2%)
- No Answer: 5 (5%)

In terms of their role (involvement) majority of the respondents are vendors with 63%, as tour guide 15%, followed by 9% as information officer, however, 5% did not answer because according to them there is no fix role played by them. Others serve as caretaker 2%, collector 2% and office staff 2%.

Incentives

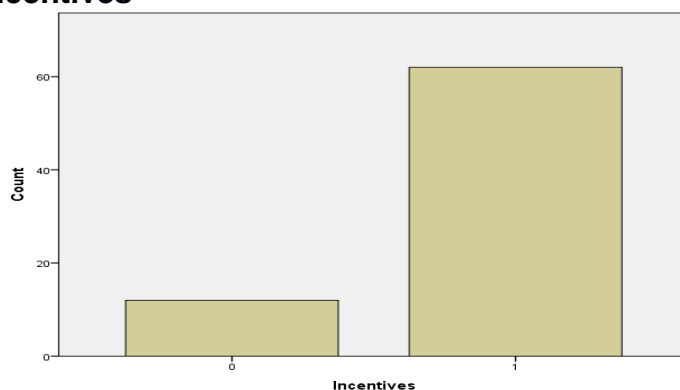


Fig. 11. Incentives of Respondents

Legend

- Yes: 12 (12%)
- No: 60 (63%)
- No Answer: 24 (25%)

In terms of incentives majority says none 63%, while 25% answered “no”, and 12% said “yes”. This means that because most of them are vendors, having incentives is not an issue for them while “no answer” means they are not aware of whether they receive or not. They don’t have regular bases as having incentive, while “yes” 12%, means some of them really comes on regular bases.

Table 1. Summary of the Economic, Socio-cultural and Environmental Involvement of Women in Eco-Tourism Industry

N-96

Table 1. 1. Economic

a. Employment	WM	DA
Demands for women participation for employment potential and skills requirement	2.47	HI
Women were provided opportunities to own small business and be self-employed for tourist	2.45	HI
Women served as tour guides, maintenance officer, information officer brought about by small and big establishment in the community.	2.40	HI
b. Income		
Augmentation of economic income due to eco-tourism participation	2.47	HI
Creation of additional sources of income like renting of parking lot, small stall, sari-sari stores and ambulant vending	2.45	HI
Creation of revenues like transportation, business permit business operations were increased	2.29	MI
c. Commercialization		
Women advertise eco-tourism zone to visitors/travellers	2.57	HI
Women established and managed food stalls or other products like salt, souvenir shop and spa as supported by the municipality	2.55	HI
Women assisted in the promotion of eco-tourism industry through broadcasting, print and social media.	2.51	HI
AWM	2.46	HI

Legend:

Scale Scale Mean – Descriptive rating

3 2.37-3.0 High Involvement - HI

2 1.67- 2.36 Moderate Involvement - MI

1 1.0- 1.66 Fair involvement- FI

The over- all weighted mean of economic, socio-cultural and environmental Involvement of Women in Eco-Tourism Industry is 2.49 with a descriptive meaning of High Involvement.

On **economic** involvement of women with 3 parameters, namely: employment, income and commercialization, the respondents rated this indicator with the average weighted mean of 2.46 which means **High Involvement**

in terms of employment, the respondents rated the following indicators as **high involvement** :“demands for women participation for employment skills requirement, 2.47 , “women were provided opportunities to own small business and be self-employed for tourist 2.45; and “women served as tour guides, maintenance , information officer brought by small and big establishment in the community” 2.40. It

implies that in their profile, majority of them are engaged in vending, ones the local government provide a capital and encourage entrepreneurship training among them most likely the business they have now may prosper in the future. As according to Honey (2008) he found out that ecotourism provides many jobs which could help revitalize local economies.

In terms of income , "creation of additional source of income like renting of parking lots, sari-sari store, vending with mean of 2.45 and also "augmentation of income due to eco-tourism participation with a mean of 2.47, while "creation of revenues like transportation, business permit operations were increased, with a mean of 2.29 which means moderate involvement. As supported by Orilla (2009), he stated that these ecotourism zones could be an alternative source of income to people involve in this industry.

In terms of commercialization, the respondents rated all the indicators as highly involved. These indicators are: "advertise eco-tourism zone to visitors/travelers 2.57,"women established and managed food stalls or other products like salt, souvenir shop, spa as supported by municipality with a mean of 2.55 and "women assisted in the promotion of eco-tourism industry through broadcasting, printed and social media 2.51. Accessibility in social media through blog, and some printed material greatly help in the promotion of ecotourism to the potential local and foreign tourists and travellers.

Table 1.2 Socio- cultural

The socio-cultural involvement of women is categorized along bonding and kinship and peace and order with an over-all average weighted mean of **2.44** which describes as High **Involvement**.

Along **bonding and kinship**, "family members helped in the household upkeep thus strengthened family bonding and unity with a rating of 2.57; "establishment of cooperatives, association of vendors and transportation group were created" with a rating of 2.47; and "women led in the observance of cultural activities like festivals, camping, for and other recreational activities rating of 2.43. Victorio (2015) said that ecotourism zones become a link among the community members and people learn to live in harmony and support the livelihood of the people in the community.

Along **Peace and Order**, "strict implementation of the ordinance of the local government" with a rating of 2.49,"provides additional security in the community" with a rating of 2.39 while "women's involvement as volunteers in the peace and order system in the community" with a rating of 2.31 describe as "**moderate involvement**". This means that women were not so much involve in this because peace and order in the community were given as mandate to the Barangay Tanod under the Local Government Code.

a. Bonding and Kinship	WM	DA
Through women involvement family members helped in the household upkeep, thus it strengthened family bonding and unity	2.57	HI
Establishment of cooperatives, association of vendors and transportation group was created due to women's involvement	2.47	HI
Women led in the observance of cultural activities like festivals, camping, fora and other recreational activities in which family members are involved.	2.43	HI
b. Peace and Order		
Women asserted in the strict implementation of the community ordinances like curfew hours and others	2.49	HI
Women's involvement In eco-tourism increase thereby provides additional security in the community by the local government	2.39	HI
Women's involved as volunteer in the peace and order system in the community	2.31	MI
AWM	2.44	HI

Table 1. 3. Environmental

a. Governing Policies in the Community	WM	DA
Women participated in the thorough campaign on environmental awareness, conservation and restoration of natural resources.	2.57	HI
Women assisted in the conservation program and projects like 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle).	2.56	HI
Women led in the clean-up drive organized by the community. .	2.55	HI
AWM	2.56	HI

The environmental involvement of women, the over-all weighted mean is **2.56** which are described as **High Involvement**. With all the indicators, it can be seen that their ratings are almost similar "**Governing policies in the community**". "Women participated in the thorough campaign on environmental awareness, conservation and restoration of natural resources" with a rating of 2.57; "Women assisted in the conservation program, projects like 3Rs" with a rating of 2.56; and "Women led in the clean –up drive organized by the community" with a rating of 2.55. This means that the respondents are very much involve in every environmental activities initiated by higher authorities. Likewise, according to them, environmental protection is the priority concern in their own locality and every policy governing environmental is strictly monitored.

Table 2 . Summary of the Problems Encountered by Women in their Involvement in Eco-Tourism Industry

Table 2. a. Economic

a. Economic	WM	DA
Potential labor force in the locality become contended with the availability of the employment opportunities in community	2.25	MS
Local residents lack trainings and skills to meet the demand related to ecotourism enterprise	2.18	MS
Prices of different goods and services in the area were not regulated or monitored that led to higher price	2.17	MS
Inadequate promotional activities of local government to support entrepreneurs.	2.14	MS
Big business establishments do not prioritize residents in the community for possible employment	2.01	MS
AWM	2.15	MS

The overall weighed mean of problems encountered by the respondents in terms of their involvement in economic, socio-cultural and environment is **2.01** which is describe as **Moderately Serious**. Along economic the average mean is 2.15, socio-cultural 1.99 and environmental 1.91 all of which describe as “moderately serious.” Along economic problems, the average weighted mean of 2.15 is describe as moderately serious, “big business establishments do not prioritize residents in the community for possible employment got the lowest score of 2.01 , which means that the employer of big business establishments shows a little support from the local residents. This can be attributed to the observations made by the respondents that most of the employees/staff of these industries are members of their family, relatives and nearest kins.

Table 2.b. Socio-cultural

b .Socio-cultural	3	2
The existence of the ecotourism industry led to the incidence of crimes like thief.	2.25	MS
The establishment of eco-tourism resulted to threats to local culture because of the influence of foreign and modernization	2.09	MS
.The establishment of ecotourism may open doors for prostitution and slavery in the locality	1.89	MS
The ecotourism have high incidence of child labor and maltreatment	1.87	MS
The presence of the ecotourism increases incidence of mendicants and street children in the locality	1.86	MS
AWM	1.99	MS

Along socio-cultural problems met by the respondents in their involvement in ecotourism industry, the over-all mean is 1.99 which means Moderately Serious.

However, despite its being moderately serious, it can still be gleaned from the table that the indicator “the existence of the ecotourism industry led to the incidence of crimes like thief” got the highest rating. This means that the respondents still believe that eco-tourism industry still a possible avenue for crimes like the presence of thieves, and other criminals.

Further, the indicator “the presence of the ecotourism increase incidence of mendicants and street children in the locality” got the lowest rating of 1.86 despite all of the items described as “moderately serious.” This indicates that the respondents are aware of the rules and regulations of their municipality as far as loitering and the presence of mendicants within the vicinity of the place is concerned.

Table 2.c Environmental

c. Environmental	WM	DA
The emergence of commercial establishments produce wastes like non-biodegradable that cause malfunction of sewerage system.	2.04	MS
The area became crowded which resulted to solid waste management problems.	2.02	MS
Continues development of ecotourism threatens formation of vegetation and landscaping including the natural structures like mountains, hills, etc..	1.98	MS
Eco-tourism created pollution in all forms that affects the livelihood of the locality	1.90	MS
Eco-tourism led to the exploitation of natural resources due to different economic activities in the area.	1.67	MS
AWM	1.91	MS

Legend:

Scale Scale Mean – Descriptive rating

3 2.37-3.0 Very Serious - VS

2 1.67- 2.36 Moderately Serious- MS

1 1.0- 1.66 Not Serious NS

Along environmental problems encountered by the respondents, the average weighted mean is **1.91** which is described as **moderately serious**.

As can be gleaned from the table, the indicator “The emergence of commercial establishments produce wastes like non-biodegradable that cause malfunction of sewerage system” got the highest rating of 2.04 which is moderately serious. This explains that commercial establishments found within the area of the eco-tourism sites are still contributory to the malfunctioning of sewerage system due to non-biodegradable wastes as cited by the respondents.

Likewise, the indicator “Eco-tourism led to the exploitation of natural resources due to different economic activities in the area” got the lowest rating of 1.67. It means that respondents are guided by the continuous campaign of keeping the

environment safe, sound, clean and protected every time activities are conducted within the eco-tourism sites.

Summary of the Findings

Majority of the respondents are in their early and late adolescent stage, married, high school graduate, self-employed, stayed in the community at about 19 – 25 years , Roman Catholic, employed in private sector, with a monthly income between 11, 001 to 15,000, and have been involved in the eco-tourism industry for 5 years and above as vendors, with no incentives received.

Economic, socio-cultural and environmental involvement of women is high and problems encountered by the respondents in terms of their involvement in economic, socio-cultural and environment are moderately serious.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings in this study, the following conclusions were deduced:

1. The respondents are active, trainable and self -employed.
2. Women's involvement in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspect is high.
3. The problems encountered in terms of economic, socio cultural and environmental is moderately serious.

Recommendations

1. The local government will enhance their campaign or promotion on ecotourism through Facebook or blog for easy access of the tourist.
2. Training on solid waste management and tourism activities among woman is greatly encouraged.
3. The local government units shall coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development for livelihood and other beneficial activities for the youth particularly women or girls.
4. The policies regarding natural resources shall be strictly monitored by the Barangay officials.
5. Incentives and other benefits shall also be given to these women to become more productive in their own respective community.

Acknowledgement:

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