

Bajaus at Work: Narratives of Motivations, Support Systems, and Aspirations

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to describe and understand the motivations, support systems, and aspirations of formally-employed Bajaus in Davao City, thus, enhancing the welfare of their communities. Qualitative research using interpretative phenomenology was employed in this study through in-depth interviews (IDI) with 10 formally-employed Bajaus across three Barangays: Barangay 23-C in Isla Verde, Barangay 75-A in Matina Aplaya, and Barangay 76-A in Bucana. Thematic analysis revealed that participants commonly face physical, economic, and social challenges, such as heavy lifting in extreme heat, discrimination from colleagues, and inadequate pay. Despite these obstacles, they remain motivated by aspirations for success and receive support from family, coworkers, the community, and government assistance. Their insights include personal and skills development through their work, encouraging fellow Bajaus to pursue education and seek employment, and taking pride in being among the few with formal jobs.

KEYWORDS : *Bajaus, employment, phenomenology, public administration, Philippines*

I. INTRODUCTION

Bajaus are considered an ethnic minority and a stateless tribe. They can be seen near the coasts of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Their approximate population is 1.1 Million, with more than half of the total population living in the Philippine Archipelago (Stacey, Steenbergen, Clifton, & Acciaoli, 2018). Their ethnic name varies depending on their place of living. For this reason, those land and boat dwellers are Bajau Simunul, Bajau Ubian, Bajau Tuaran, Bajau Kota Belud, and Bajau Semporna (Hassan & Peters, 2020). Nonetheless, they are widely known as Sama-Bajau or Bajau; "Sama," which is an autonym that means sinama in Tagalog word in the Philippines; and "Bajau," which is a Malay ethnonym for them tribe (Jun, Adelaar, & Himmelmann, 2005). However, this study shall only use Bajau for clarity and consistency.

Being minority and stateless, which according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014), the international legal definition of a stateless person is "a person who is not considered as national by any State under the operation of its law," they live in boats, and many have regarded them as sea gypsies or sea nomads. They are deprived of fundamental rights such as access to health, development, and employment services as no legal documents would support their nationality in a specific country (Hassan & Peters, 2020). As a result, they face the challenge of becoming vulnerable that is subject to oppression, prejudice, and discrimination, which affects how they live their lives (Loury, 2002). Our nationality, supported by our birth certificates and other legal documents, secures us protection, programs, and services from our attached nations. Thus, an absence of that would hinder our holistic and proper development.

Bajaus struggle to find livelihood and employment to feed their families. Wandering seas for a long time to seek food to survive, they face the possibility of expulsion from government authorities as they are stateless (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012). Able to pass through authorities and settle for a while inland and on coasts, they face the same struggle on seas as they tend to settle in underprivileged areas where access to any form of service is close to being none (Imai, Gaiha, & Kang, 2011). If able to get formally-employed, they still experience discrimination in the workplace (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), which is why almost all opted to be self-employed to avoid this (Inal, Al Ariss, & Forson, 2013). The situation above forms part of the external causes of why Bajaus cannot look for a stable and decent source of income.

Aside from the external causes, they also face internal causes which aggravate their situations more. As an ethnic minority, they have low to no educational attainment. This halted them from gaining skills to enter the world of employment. In turn, they always live below the set poverty thresholds of each country they are in (Nguyen, Tran, & Van Vu, 2017). Low educational attainment is one of many reasons Bajaus cannot find employment and lives poorly.

Despite their deficiencies, Bajaus are reported to have been skillful. They are skilled builders, craftsmen, and fishermen. They are experienced in making boats, jewelry, mostly made from pearls, and fish hunting. With most of their time living in boats, they are also considered peaceful and naïve people (Sather, 1997). These skills are a potent source of their entry to formal employment, adding to the increasing number of educated Bajaus across Southeast Asian Countries.

In terms of finding employment as one of the ethnic minorities is tough. In one instance, in understanding the employment inequalities between Ethnic Minority British Graduates and Non-Ethnic Minority British Graduates, the background of the schools they graduated in, their family status, including their cultures and traditions, and the employment opportunities present in their local areas are factors in securing employment. Thus, those Ethnic Minority British Graduates have fewer chances of employment than their rivals (Zwysen & Longhi, 2018).

In the Northern Mountains of Vietnam, ethnic minorities' primary sources of income are crops and livestock. They earn meager incomes from their full workdays on their farms compared to ethnic majorities who have secured better employment opportunities. This is mainly due to their lack of education and firm adherence to their cultures and traditions, leading to labor market discrimination (Nguyen et al., 2017).

In the case of Turkish and Moroccan migrants working in the Netherlands, health and employment issues relatively occurred. However, with the protective effect of social ties providing the former robust support system with the Dutch people, health and employment issues have decreased (Slootjes, Saharso, & Keuzenkamp, 2018). This is akin to the job order street sweepers in the Davao Region, who face uncertain job security, low pay, and no benefits. Consequently, they resort to taking out loans and seeking additional work to make ends meet (Lagura & Ligan, 2018).

In the United States of America, minority groups, particularly those with mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia, are vulnerable to health, education, and employment discrimination. However, with the innovative and tailored-fit programs and services provided by local and national agencies, minority groups can achieve higher employment opportunities in mainstream society (Algeria, Drake, Kang, Metcalfe, Liu, DiMarzio, & Ali, 2017).

However, in a different setting in the Swiss Labor Market, using a Correspondence Test, there is no employment discrimination against ethnic groups. Previous studies have only just focused on stigmatized groups. Believably, ethnic groups are more stigmatized than non-ethnic groups, but this does not mean they are discriminated against in employment. Kosovars, an ethnic minority in Switzerland, received the highest rate of callbacks for job interviews compared to the Germans and Turks (Zschrnt, 2019).

Historically, Bajaus were enslaved. They were captured and forced to be employed by various sultans to collect sea products such as pearls and shells to supply China's high demand. However, many Bajaus can now catch different marine products to earn a living independently. To name a few products, sea cucumbers, fish, and prawns are caught using indigenous and artisan fishing methods (Choo, 2012).

People have varying motivations for getting employed. In one instance, those who were 40 years old and above, biographical variables (e.g., gender, income, and age), motive and social variables (e.g., support systems and purpose for working), and self-evaluation variables (e.g., self-efficacy and retirement outlook) were among their job-seeking motivations (Loi & Shultz, 2007).

Two other essential classifications of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It was believed that when work is exciting and employees are happy, job performance increases. It will motivate employees to work harder and smarter. However, extrinsic motivation can play a considerable role when this is absent. The motivation should emanate externally, such as from the immediate family. Family support can motivate an employee to work harder and relieve him from stress (Menges, Tussing, & Wihler, 2017). In this context, external systems such as family, particularly employers and alike, should further use relevant theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to motivate their employees (Jonas, 2016).

Gender-wise, regarding the motivations for self-employment of both males and females, males see self-employment as a way of gaining more income to provide for the needs of their families. In contrast, females see self-employment as allowing them to play motherhood roles. Furthermore, males have multiple and unique motivations for seeking self-employment. At the same time, females are more concerned about what their families and relatives say and their opportunity to care for their family, aside from being entrepreneurs (Allen & Curington, 2014).

In Guangzhou, China, street vending is increasingly prevalent in the present scene. This is because street vendors are drawn to this job with varying motivations. They are either driven by high unemployment, poverty, low-wage jobs, difficulty entering formal businesses, or freedom and time flexibility. Generally, they opted for street vending to improve their economic status (Huang & Zhang, 2018).

In a different case of Student Employment in Poland, students showed a significant difference in getting employed during their studies. This is because of the various motivations, such as aligning their desired job with their chosen course, developing and improving their new skills and capabilities, working with the same

employer soon after graduation, and the willingness of the employer to hire them soon after graduation (Ostoj, 2020).

In terms of support systems for getting employed. As discussed, it may motivate those lethargic employees for personal reasons (Ryan & Deci, 2000). An example is for visually impaired women looking for employment; their quest is challenging. Despite the laws protecting them, employers still choose to ignore them. Thus, it was believed that family and society's roles should come into play. Society should provide an accepting environment for these peculiar scenarios to promote inclusivity, particularly in the employment industry (Gyamfi, 2020). Moreover, the peer support will also help (Kim, Lorenz, Knopp, & Klimant, 2020).

Likewise, social networks should take an extensive role in seeking employment for underserved job-seekers. They need networks that teach them what they need to get employed, provide feedback on their application documents, and direct and promote the right career path. Inattention to these social networks, such as private and public companies, can act as a vital support system that will only help job-seekers remain underserved (Dillahunt, Lam, Lu, & Wheeler, 2018).

Furthermore, organizations should promote high productivity among their employees. In a recent study of 259 employee respondents in 34 organizations, hard rewards such as promotion, incentives, fringe benefits, and alike, and soft rewards such as personal development, high self-esteem, good human relationship, and alike can help support increase the welfare and efficiency of their employees (Wang & Hou, 2015). A significant takeaway is that companies should provide continuous improvement (CI) activities and opportunities for their employees (Jurburg, Viles, & Tanco, 2016).

In mainland China, the actual employment situation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is least attended to due to weak support systems. These supposed support systems include the official government, which does nothing but purely talk, the various organizations' rigid adherence to their performance assessment beyond the capacities of the PWDs, and the individuals whose primary concern is promoting their self-interest more than helping the PWDs (Ge, Chen, Tang, & Cong, 2021). This is contrary to the case of fisheries in Japan. The Japanese government strongly supports improving fisheries by providing services to interested fishers and students. They provide and develop job training opportunities for students wanting to enter this field (Kawasaki, 2016).

Lastly, in terms of the aspirations of getting employed, it also plays an integral role. The aspirations of ethnic minorities vary from person to person or profession (Toyama, 2018). One person may have low aspirations due to extreme poverty, and one may not (Frostick, Phillips, Renton, & Moore, 2016). A clear example is the case of devadasis in North Karnataka, India. They practice sex work and are employed in brothels to earn an income to provide a better life for their families (Aaron, 2016, p. 45). Nonetheless, aspirations may be driven by both social and personal needs. Social needs may result from the employee's goal of wanting a prosperous life for their family, and personal needs may result from their professional development goal (Dillahunt et al., 2018).

In Davao City, in the 2021 profiling conducted by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) on the Bajau Community, only 27 Bajaus reported as formally working with an employer, while 1,261 Bajaus are self-employed, over 3,108 total population. The number of officially employed Bajaus is deficient, evident in its number due to low to no educational attainment, lack of employment opportunities, presence of discrimination, and other factors. Further, though a lot of them are self-employed, they should be formally-employed due to concerns on security of tenure, stable income, work safety, and other factors than self-employed where most ply from one place to another to sell, taking risks in streets, unstable income, no security of tenure, and other factors. For these reasons, this study was urgently prompted to be conducted to know the motivations, support systems, and aspirations of formally-employed Bajaus, which can be a basis for implementing a policy or action plan for the Local Government Unit of Davao to increase their number and improve their general welfare (Acciaioli, 2001).

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to discover and understand the motivations, support systems, and aspirations of the ten formally-employed Bajaus in Davao City. Many studies have focused on the Bajaus, but more is needed about their employment, which this study may contribute to. In-depth interviews gathered unique, relevant, and accurate information.

Furthermore, this study aimed to answer the following qualitative questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of formally-employed Bajaus? (2) What are the coping mechanisms of the formally-employed? and (3) What are the insights and lessons shared of the formally-employed Bajaus?

In understanding the status with a high emphasis on the employment of the Bajaus in the Philippines, including its neighboring countries, the following theories are used, the Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Employment as anchor theory, and two support theories, Systems Theory, and Ecological Perspective.

In the Two-Factor Theory of Frederick Herzberg, employees may or may not be motivated to work due to two factors. When employees are driven by a sense of achievement, recognition, and interesting work and are promoted to grow and develop their jobs, they are more likely caused by 'Motivators.' When employees are dissatisfied with harsh working conditions, strict agency policies, low salaries, low sense of security, and poor

employer-employee relationships, they are more likely caused by ‘Hygiene Factors’ (Herzberg, 1993). Companies may look at this theory to better assess and address the employment conditions of the formally-employed Bajaus.

As to the Systems Theory as proposed by Whitchurch and Constantine (2008), system is composed of interrelated parts that interact and work as one. known as subsystems, the entire system is affected if any part dysfunctions. In the case of Bajaus, if the primary supporter of their family has little to no decent and formal employment, which can be a potential source of their daily needs, all the rest will be significantly affected, including the growth and development of their children. To further explain why they might have difficulty looking for formal employment, they might have adopted the closed system with strong adherence to their boundaries, thus leading to entropy. Closed-type systems do not interact with the outside systems because of their strong adherence to their culture, norms, and traditions that act as their identity or boundaries, thus leading to family disorganization or entropy. To avoid entropy effectively, the Bajaus should adopt an open system where inputs from the outside systems, whether from an individual, group, community, or organization, are well-taken and processed to lead to healthy and better family well-being.

Another support theory that can help explain the situation of the Bajaus is the Ecological Perspective. Germain and Knight (2021) purport that the Ecological Perspective centers on the interdependence and interconnections of living things with their environment. The interdependence and interactions happen on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The micro-level directly impacts our lives; ourselves is one of its clear-cut examples. The mezzo level operates in immediate environments such as our families and friends. The macro-level runs outside our immediate environments, such as the political structures we are in, the economic status we are experiencing, and the entire community we live in. In support of the aforementioned internal causes explained under system theory as to why the Bajaus are having difficulty looking for formal employment, the ecological perspective may explain the outside forces related to the issue. The problem may be partially due to the Bajaus instead of the pressures from their environment. They may be willing to capacitate and equip themselves to look for formal employment but need more opportunities to enter. Still, they are left pitiful.

Finally, this study held global significance as it aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) – Decent Work and Economic Growth. SDG 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, as well as full and productive employment and decent work for all. By focusing on the formal employment of the Bajau community—exploring their motivations, support systems, and aspirations—this study sought to provide insights into how both government and private sectors can better address the challenges faced by the Bajau in securing formal employment. This, in turn, supports the broader objectives of SDG 8.

The study also held significant social value. It addressed the lack of formal employment opportunities for the Bajau, providing a foundation for policy formulation and action planning aimed at improving their general welfare. This study is relevant for both government and private sectors, as it can help integrate the Bajau community into society, engage them in meaningful actions, and contribute to filling gaps in existing knowledge about them (Better Academic Research Writing: A Practical Guide - Wikiwijs Maken, n.d.).

II. Method

This section discusses the methodology used in this study, discussing the study participants, materials and instruments, and design and procedure.

2.1 Study Participants

A total of ten formally-employed Bajaus were selected through a purposive and snowball non-random sampling. They were chosen from qualifying the set inclusion criteria below to provide unique, accurate, and relevant information, to wit:

For the inclusion criteria, they must be; (1) currently formally-employed Bajaus working for at least six months from the date of interview; (2) either occupying a permanent or temporary employment status in government or private companies. They are but not limited to street educators, day care workers, construction workers, clerks, and more with an employer-employee relationship; (3) with income falling to any of the income bracket set by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) whether it be at lower-income, middle-income, or high-income classes; (4) within the ages of 18 up to 65 years old; (5) with any gender; and (6) living in Bajau Communities in Barangay 76-A, Barangay 75-A, or Barangay 23-C in Davao City.

For the exclusion criteria, they must not be; (1) Bajaus in the informal sector. They are but not limited to vendors, fishermen, and more without employer-employee relationship; (2) ages below 18 years old (minor) and above 65 years old (retired senior citizen); and (3) living in Barangays other than Barangay 76-A, Barangay 75-A, and Barangay 23-C in Davao City.

For the withdrawal criteria, they must; (1) have initially signed up as study participant, qualifying the inclusion criteria, but for any reason became unwilling to keep on participating in the study; and (2) have initially signed up as study participant, qualifying the inclusion criteria, but immediate resigning from work.

Moreover, below are their basic information, and profile and coding were used to protect their identity, to wit:

Study Participants' Profile

| Code | Age | Gender | Civil Status | Educational Level | Occupation | Employment Status |
|------|-----|--------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| SP1 | 29 | Female | Married | Vocational Graduate | Government Employee | Job Order |
| SP2 | 42 | Male | Married | College Graduate | Government Employee | Job Order |
| SP3 | 29 | Female | Single | Vocational Graduate | Day Care Worker | Job Order |
| SP4 | 26 | Female | Married | Grade 8 Level | Day Care Worker | Job Order |
| SP5 | 38 | Male | Married | Unschooler | Construction Worker | Temporary |
| SP6 | 27 | Male | Separated | Elementary Level | Construction Worker | Temporary |
| SP7 | 23 | Male | Married | Kinder Level | Construction Worker | Temporary |
| SP8 | 22 | Male | Married | Unschooler | Construction Worker | Temporary |
| SP9 | 59 | Male | Married | Unschooler | Auxiliary Worker/Purok Leader | Temporary |
| SP10 | 25 | Male | Married | Kinder Level | Construction Worker | Temporary |

a. Materials and Instrument

As to the materials and instruments, a validated interview guide questionnaire – partly adapted and partly researcher-made, was used to conduct an in-depth interview in this study. The instrument was composed of Preliminary serving as informed consent together with the informed consent form, a Demographic Profile collecting vital information about the study participants, and the Interview Guide Questions with probing questions gathered the study participants' responses to the research questions for data analysis.

The research instrument was first checked by his adviser and then validated by five experts: four faculty members from the University of Mindanao—Professional Schools and one outside expert. Out of the five expert validators, three rated the research instrument as Good with 8-9 yeses per their evaluation. In contrast, two rated it as Very Good with ten yeses per their evaluation.

b. Design and Procedure

With regards to the design and procedures, this study employed qualitative research, which is an inquiry approach that underscores the empirical experiences of the study participants, asks the study participants predominantly open-ended questions, gathers detailed information, analyzes the results, and categorizes them through themes, draws insights from the study participants' responses, and reports the results (Creswell & Clark, 2004).

Qualitative research has various so-called 'traditions.' Specifically, the tradition employed in this study is phenomenological research. Phenomenological research focuses on the core experiences of the study participants regarding a specific phenomenon, analyzes the meaning of the experiences of the study participants, and involves more extended interviews (Creswell & Clark, 2004). Husserl's Phenomenology pointed out three essential elements of the approach: (1) the subjective opinions of the study participants in their phenomenon, (2) exploration of the 'inductive reasoning' of its study participants, and (3) employing a 'positivist' perspective. Moreover, this study adopted Colaizzi's Sequence of Events for Phenomenological Study: (1) actively listening to the responses of the study participants and transcribing them, (2) drawing relevant statements, (3) reformulation relevant into general statements, (3) reflection of meanings from general statements and validating those by experts, (4) organizing meaning into themes, (5) integration into relevant descriptive themes, and (5) concluding with final statements (Hallett, 1995).

Two phenomenological research approaches are the descriptive and the interpretative/hermeneutic approaches. The descriptive approach seeks to capture a 'near-real picture' of the study participants' experiences by describing their raw experiences without any preconceptions. In contrast, the interpretative/hermeneutic approach delves deeper, not only into the participants' experiences but also into understanding why they experience them in that particular way (Van der Zalm and Bergum 2000, McConnell-Henry et al 2009, Streubert and Carpenter 2011, van Manen 2011, as cited in Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). This study employs an interpretative/hermeneutic approach. Further, other methods of phenomenological research are in-depth

interviews (IDI), observations, action research, and focus group discussions (FGD) (Lester, 1999). For this study, an individual in-depth interview was conducted.

Now, data collection is essential as it produces results for the study. In qualitative research, data collection is done through written and verbal responses of the study participants. Its sources of information include interviews with the study participants, records, artifacts, and observations (Polkinghorne, 2005). Furthermore, Fink (2000) laid down the following steps in collecting data, which this study employed, to wit:

The research instrument, consisting of both close-ended and open-ended questions, was developed, validated, and administered with expert guidance. After receiving approval from the University, NCIP, and BLGUs, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants, who willingly participated in the interviews. Data collection involved building rapport to ensure accurate and relevant responses, recording interviews, and documenting them with photographs. Over the course of a month, the researcher transcribed the data in Cebuano, translated it into English, and sought the adviser's input to ensure accuracy. Similarly, a study conducted with the Bajaus in Davao City followed the same data collection process. The researcher secured permission to interview Bajau settlers in Barangay Isla Verde, supported by an endorsement from the University of Mindanao. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, given time for questions, and interviewed, with their living conditions observed to validate responses. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, and photos and videos were taken with the participants' consent (Acero, 2015). Thematic analysis, based on Castleberry and Nolen's (2018) five-step process, was used to identify and report key themes, with software assisting in coding and thematic organization. The findings were reviewed by the adviser and panelists, then published, ensuring research credibility.

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness requires a focus on credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability, unlike in quantitative studies where validity and reliability are key. Guba and Lincoln (1994) outlined these principles to ensure research trustworthiness. Credibility involves internal validity and can be assessed through techniques like triangulation; this study utilized a pool of 10 credible participants whose results were verified by experts. Transferability concerns external validity, ensuring findings are applicable to similar contexts; here, the study's findings were consistent with experiences of formally-employed Bajaus outside Davao City. Reliability pertains to dependability and consistency across studies, achieved by adhering to the university's research process and expert feedback. Confirmability addresses neutrality, ensuring findings are free from personal biases, achieved through a validated research instrument and accurate data analysis.

Ethical considerations are crucial in research, particularly in qualitative studies involving in-depth participant experiences. To ensure ethical integrity, the researcher first secured certification from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (Protocol No. UMERC-2022-402) on July 5, 2023. This certification required adherence to principles set by Arifin (2018): Informed consent and voluntary participation were ensured by discussing the study in the participants' vernacular and obtaining signed consent, with participants having the freedom to refuse or engage. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained by coding identities and storing data securely, in compliance with the Data Privacy Law. Participants were selected based on specific criteria from three Barangays in Davao City, with recruitment approved by BLGUs, NCIP, and tribal leaders. Risks were mitigated by following COVID-19 health protocols and ensuring no legal impediments. Benefits included potential policy impacts and tokens of appreciation for participants. The study adhered to academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism and fabrication, guided by the research adviser, data analyst, and experts, ensuring no falsification or conflicts of interest. Deceit was avoided by accurately reflecting participant responses. Permissions were obtained from relevant organizations, and authorship was attributed to the researcher and adviser, with contributions acknowledged from the data analyst and experts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study conducted including the relevant discussion to better understand the themes generated from each research question.

a. Lived Experiences of Formally-Employed Bajaus

The first research question focused on the study participants' lived experiences as formally-employed Bajaus.

TABLE 1
Lived Experiences of Formally-Employed Bajaus

| Emerging Themes | Core Ideas |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Job hunting through connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding jobs through Bajau referrals. Obtaining employment via connections with government employees. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encountering challenges due to the formal application process. • Struggling with job application forms due to limited education. |
| Heavy and difficult workloads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles with heat, dust, heavy lifting, and physical labor. • Difficulty measuring at the construction site. • Challenges at work due to uncooperative Bajaus, especially during street rounds. • Daycare centers are not conducive for student learning. • Balancing work with personal and family commitments is difficult. |
| Salary delays and insufficient benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed salary payments in the government. • Insufficient salary in the company. • Lack of employee benefits. |
| Challenging and discriminatory environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some coworkers can be occasionally unproductive. • Some coworkers may think less of them due to their ethnic background. • Some coworkers resent them if they don't perform their duties well. |

In Table 1, the first emerging theme is "Job Hunting Through Connections." Study participants (SPs) indicated that they secured jobs through community referrals and connections established by government employees.

Nakasulod ko satrabahoatongniagi kay gipasulod ko sa among kailanga foreman, silinganrapudnamosiya (SP5).

"I got the job recently because I was referred by our acquaintance who is the foreman; he's also our neighbor (SP5)."

Nakakita ko ogtrabahokarongtuigatungodsakongmgakauban, gi-refer ko nila (SP7).

"I found a job this year thanks to my colleagues; they referred me (SP7)."

Atong January 2021, gianhi ko sa among social worker ug gipangutana kung willing ba ko mahimong Day Care Worker (Home-based). Wala ko nagduha-duha ug gi-grab gyudnako ang opportunity (SP3).

"In January 2021, our social worker came to me and asked if I was willing to become a Day Care Worker (Home-based). I didn't hesitate and definitely grabbed the opportunity (SP3)."

However, while seeking employment, SPs faced challenges in completing their job applications.

Lisodgyudmangitaogtrabaho kay moagipakasaproseso (SP1).

"It's really difficult to find a job because you have to go through the process (SP1)."

"... naglisod ko atongpag-fill out sa biodata kay dili man ko kabaloato (SP5)."

"... I had a hard time filling out the biodata because I didn't know how to do it (SP5)."

The second emerging theme is "Heavy and Difficult Workloads." SPs working on construction sites shared that they encountered numerous physical challenges.

Ang mgakalisdanannakosatrabaho kay bug-at ang semento, initkaayo, sogu-soguo ko sauban, ug grabe ang abog (SP8).

"The challenges I face at work are the heavy cement, the extreme heat, being bossed around by others, and the intense dust (SP8)."

Ang mgakalisudnakosatrabaho kay bug-at akonggina-alsa, initkaayo, ug dili ko kabalosamga measurements samasa height ug width (SP6).

"The difficulties I face at work are the heavy lifting, the extreme heat, and not knowing the measurements like height and width (SP6)."

Other SPs also shared different struggles at work, such as uncooperative clients, an unsuitable environment for learning, and difficulties in balancing work and personal life demands.

Gikapoy ko saakongtrabahokaron kay kung mag-rounds mi, magbalik-balikgihaponakongmgakaubanang Bajau sapagpanglimos. Usually, dili pa gyudtaga Davao City ang nagalimosdiridalan (SP1).

"I'm tired of my job right now because when we make rounds, my fellow Bajaus keep coming back to ask for alms. Usually, the ones begging on the streets here aren't even from Davao City (SP1)."

Ang mgapagsulayngaakongnasinatisamtangnagtrabaho kay kadtongsaunangawala pa ning Day Care Center, puli-puli lang mi oglamesa, initkaayo, daghankaayo documents i-prepare, laminajudi-give up (SP4).

"The challenges I've experienced while working were when there was no Day Care Center yet; we had to take turns with the tables, it was extremely hot, and there were so many documents to prepare—it really made me want to give up (SP4)."

Lisud kaayo ang area sapagtudloog bata kay wala mi Day Care Center. Sa unabagoninahimutangnga Day Care Center, didto ko nagatudlosabalaynamodiin 52 ka estudyanteakongginasulodsa among gamay ngabalay. Wala pud mi tables and chairs, diin isa ka chair, duha ka bata. Nagahulamanay lang sad mi ug school supplies. Kabahin sad samga bata, naglisod ko sa hygiene nila kay musulodsilanawalaymgaligo. Lisod sad ang pagligonila kay ginapalit man diri ang tubigsaamo (SP3).

"It was very difficult to teach the children because we didn't have a Day Care Center. When the Day Care Center was just starting, I taught in our house, where I squeezed in 52 students into our small space. We didn't have tables and chairs, so it was one chair for two kids. We also had to share school supplies. Regarding the children's hygiene, I struggled because some would come in without bathing. It was also hard for them to take a bath since we had to buy water (SP3)."

Ang dakonghagitnakokarun kay kung pilionbanakoakongmgakaubanang Bajau o akonganak. Ug sakaron, wala pa gyud ko kapili pa (SP1).

"The big challenge I'm facing right now is choosing between my Bajau colleagues or my child. As of now, I still haven't made a decision (SP1)."

The third emerging theme is "Salary Delays and Insufficient Benefits." SPs reported that their salaries are often paid late, are insufficient, and that they do not receive additional benefits.

Ang akongpagsulaysapagpanarbahomao ang... dugay sad kaayo ang sweldosaopisina... (SP2).

"My challenge in working is that the salary from the office takes a long time to arrive... (SP2)."

Kulangakongsweldo para saakongpamilya (SP1).

"My salary is not enough for my family (SP1)."

During the collection of their basic information, nearly all SPs shared that they do not receive any additional benefits from their companies, aside from the Christmas bonus for those employed in the government.

The final emerging theme in Table 1 is "Challenging and Discriminatory Environment." A few SPs reported experiencing difficulties at work with their co-workers, including issues with unproductive colleagues that upset their foreman, a perception of being undervalued due to their ethnic minority status, and resentment when they failed to perform their jobs correctly.

Kabahinsaakongmgakaubansatrabaho, usahaymasuko among foreman kay dilisilamolihok (SP10).

"Regarding my coworkers, sometimes our foreman gets angry because they don't do their work (SP10)."

Ang akongpagsulaysapaganarbaho kay naa man gyud nay mga lapses ug misunderstanding labinasamga social worker (SP2).

"My challenge in working is that there are definitely lapses and misunderstandings, especially with the social workers (SP2)."

b. Coping Mechanisms of Formally-Employed Bajaus

The second research question centered on the SPs' coping mechanisms as formally-employed Bajaus.

TABLE 2 :Coping Mechanisms of Formally-Employed Bajaus

| Emerging Themes | Core Ideas |
|---|---|
| Handling demands and resource limits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking leave when tired but working if attendance is required. • Doing side jobs to supplement the limited primary income. • Utilizing available resources to support students' education. • Seeking shade to avoid excessive heat on the construction site. • Covering the mouth in dusty conditions on the construction site. • Asking coworkers for help with heavy lifting on the construction site. • Understanding resentful coworkers. |
| Driven to support themselves and their families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working to buy a personal boat. • Working to secure a better position for the company. • Working to prepare for labor and delivery. • Working to address personal needs. • Working to support the family's needs. • Family prepared meals for them. • Family provided transportation fare to work. • Family assisted with work preparations. • Family encouraged persistence despite work challenges. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Strong colleague support and work benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues and supervisors offered motivation and support at work. • Jolly coworkers make the work environment light and enjoyable. • Grateful for the company's opportunity, which provides financial stability and personal growth. • Appreciative of government support in processing aid program documents and enrollment. • Thankful to the government for the opportunity to attend seminars at hotels. |
| Motivated by community support and overcoming discrimination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated by experiences of bullying and discrimination. • Performing tasks to assist fellow Bajaus, who are mainly their clients. • Encouraged by fellow Bajaus. • Inspired to work by the support and service expectations of fellow Bajaus. • Students motivate them and alleviate their stress. • Fellow Bajaus help by cooking, repairing the daycare center, and fetching water for students. |

The first emerging theme in Table 2 is "Handling Demands and Resource Limits." All SPs shared various personal strategies for managing their challenges at work. A few SPs mentioned that they take breaks when they feel tired but are willing to work when necessary.

Kung adunayadlawnganaglainakonglawas, dili ko mosulod, magpahuwayrako (SP5).

"If I have a day when I feel unwell, I won't go in; I'll just take a rest (SP5)."

Kung naayadlawngikapoy ko, dili ko mo-duty ug magpundo lang ko sabalay (SP7).

"If there's a day when I'm tired, I won't go to duty and will just stay home to rest (SP7)."

To supplement his meager income from work, one SP shared that he opts for sideline jobs.

"... mangitaog sideline jobs... (SP2)."

"... looking for sideline jobs... (SP2)."

Regarding the daycare workers, they make the most of the resources available to them at work.

Gisagubangnako ang mgasapagsulaykabahinsa area diingina-divide nako ang students by schedule, katungakaron ug ang katungaugmanapud. Kabahinsa hygiene, ginapasalodnakosilaogpiso-piso human naa man sad nagahatagogsabonnga NGO diridiinmao among ginapagamitsaila (SP3).

"I face challenges by dividing my students per schedule to fit them in our house, we share the available materials we have, and I asked those who haven't taken bath yet to fetch water at our house and use the soap donated by an NGO for them to take a bath (SP3)."

Gisagubangnako ang mgapagsulaydiingisaktonalangnakosaunasa among balay ang mga bata ug walanakaayo mi naglisudkaron kay naa naman ni ang center (SP4).

"I face those challenges where I needed to fit in my students in our small house before but it's better now with this new center (SP4)."

As for the SPs working at construction sites, they address their physical challenges by seeking shaded areas, covering their mouths, and asking their co-workers for assistance when lifting heavy objects.

Gisagubang to nakongapagsulaysatrabahopinaagisapagtabonsaakong ulo o magpalandongusahay (SP5).

"I face that challenge through covering my head or staying in a shady place (SP5)."

Gisagubang to nakonamgapagsulaysamasapag-mask kung mag-mix na ug sementoogmagtinabangay lang mi saakongmgakauban kung mag-alsaog bug-at (SP7).

"I faced those challenges by wearing a mask when mixing cement and by helping each other with heavy lifting along with my coworkers (SP7)."

Gisagubang to nakonamgapagsulaysamasapagpalandong kung initkaayo, mangayo ko ogtabangpag-alsa kung bug-at, mag-mask ko ogsanina kung grabe ang abug, ug motumannalang ko samga sugo-sugo (SP8).

"I face those challenges by staying at a shady place, asking my co-workers in lifting up heavy objects, wearing mask if there is too much dust, and complying with my co-workers (SP8)."

Regarding resentful co-workers, SPs shared that they simply try to understand them.

"Giatubang to nakongamgapagsulay by understanding my co-workers... (SP2)."

"I face those challenges by understanding my co-workers... (SP2)."

The second emerging theme is "Driven to Support Themselves and Their Families." One SP shared that he works to save for his own boat and secure a better position within the company.

"... saakongmga personal needs samasabangka... (SP6)."

"... my personal needs such as owning a boat... (SP6)."

Madasigon ko saakongtrabaho kay naako'yanlantawnamagka-position ko sapag-construction (SP6).

"I'm motivated in my work because I have a vision of getting a position in construction (SP6)."

One SP shared that she works because she is about to start her labor.

"Ang naga-push saako kay need nakoogkwartalabinakarunngabuntis ko... (SP4)."

"What pushes me is that I need money, especially now that I'm pregnant... (SP4)."

Most of the SPs also work because they want to support their other personal and family needs.

Gusto ko magtrabaho kay para makatabangsapamilya, makakaon mi, ug mapalit among uban pang panginahanglanon (SP6).

"I want to work to help my family, so we can eat and buy our other necessities (SP6)."

Nangita ko ogtrabahoaronnaa mi makaon ug ma-provide ang uban pang needs namo (SP8).

"I'm looking for a job so we can have food and provide for our other needs (SP8)."

Nangita ko ogtrabahoaronmakatabang ko saakongpamilyaaronnaa mi makaon ug makasulbad-sulbadsa among problema (SP9).

"I'm looking for a job to help my family so we can have food and find solutions to our problems (SP9)."

In terms of the practical and emotional support from their families, SPs manage their challenges at work and are motivated to continue working because their families prepare their meals, provide transportation fare, accompany them to work, and encourage them to persevere.

"... saakongpamilya kay gina-encourage pod ko nila, ginalutuan, ogginahatagan ug kwartapamplete. (SP10)."

"... my family also encourages me, cooks for me, and provides my fare (SP10)."

"Gisuportahan ko nilasamasapaghatagopamasahahe kung walakoykwartasaakongpamilya... (SP2)."

"They support me by providing me money for fare if I don't have any by my family... (SP2)."

"Ang natabanganingmgatigisuportanako kay mohatagsilasaakoopamasahasamasaakonglola, gina-prepare saakongasawaakongpagkaon ug ginalabhanniyaakongmgasanina... (SP7)."

"My support systems help me as my grandmother provides me fare for work, my wife prepares my food and wash my clothes... (SP7)."

Motabangsilasahaysapaglistaogbalay-balaysamga Bajaus kung naayayuda, gina-encourage sad ko nilangamagpadayon (SP1).

"They sometimes help me list the Bajau households when there's assistance, and they also encourage me to keep going (SP1)."

The third emerging theme is "Strong Colleague Support and Work Benefits." Most of the SPs shared that their colleagues motivate and support them in their work.

"... paghatagopulong o encouragement saakongmgakaubanansatrabaho... (SP2)."

"... they give me words of encouragement by my co-workers... (SP2)."

"... ang akongmgakauban kay gina-encourage ko nilangamopadayongyudogtrabaho (SP7)."

"... my co-workers encourage me to continue working (SP7)."

"Ang natabangsaakongmgakaubanansatrabaho kay tabangan ko nilasapag-alsa (SP10)."

“My co-workers help me in lifting (SP10).”

One SP shared that his new work environment makes his tasks feel lighter.

Nakatabang sad ogdako ang akongmgakaubandirisaakong new assignment kay pirme mi sigeogkatawa, makawalasaproblema (SP2).

"My coworkers here in my new assignment have also helped a lot because we always laugh together, which takes our minds off the problems (SP2)."

SPs shared that they are grateful to their employers for hiring them.

Nalipay ko ug nadasig ko nganaa ko nagtrabahasagobyernoisipusa ka Bajau (SP2).

"I am happy and motivated to be working in the government as a Bajau (SP2)."

“Pasalamat sad ko sagobyernosailangsweldongaginahatagsaako (SP4).”

"I'm also grateful to the government for the salary they provide me (SP4)."

SPs expressed their appreciation for the government's various aid programs and for the opportunity to attend seminars at hotels.

Ang natabangsagobyernohinuon kay katongpagpatukodsa coastal road, pagpasulodsaamosa 4Ps, Cash for Work, lingap, oguban pa (SP6).

“The government quite helped us by constructing the coastal road, enrolling us in the 4Ps, enrolling us for Cash for Work, letting us avail Lingap, and more (SP6).”

“... Dugang pa nako, nakatabang ang gobyernoakongpagpanarbaho kay mihatagsilaog PPAs para gamitonnamosa construction site. Naghatag sad og 12,000 financial assistance ang DSWD last time (SP8).”

“... Additionally, the government has helped my work by providing us with PPAs to use at the construction site. They also gave 12,000 in financial assistance from DSWD last time (SP8).”

“... pagpaapilsaamosamga seminars sagobyerno... (SP2).”

“... the government also gives us opportunities to attend seminars at hotels... (SP2).”

The last emerging theme is “Motivated by Community Support and Overcoming Discrimination.” One SP shared that she is motivated to work because of the discrimination she experienced before.

Nahimonakonga inspiration saunakadtongnabully ko. Ginatawagko'g "Bajau! Bajau!" ug labayan ko ogbato. Sa karon, naa man gihapon ang pag-pangbullyperodapat strong lang gyudgihapon (SP3).

"I became inspired after being bullied before. They used to call me 'Bajau! Bajau!' and throw stones at me. Even now, bullying still exists, but I have to stay strong (SP3)."

Most of the SPs shared that they do their jobs to assist and support their fellow Bajaus, who encourage, inspire, and provide them with various forms of practical support.

Gina-encourage ko saakongmgakaubanang Bajau ngamopadayon kay gusto nilangakaubanang Bajau lang gihaponnila ang motabangsaila (SP1).

“I am being encouraged by my co-workers and my fellow Bajaus to continue working especially the latter as they prefer their fellow Bajau to help them more (SP1).”

Madasigon ko sapagpanarbahotungod kay gusto ko makatabangsaakongmgakaubanang Bajau. Wala ko nangandoyngamadatosapagpanarbaho (SP1).

"I'm motivated to work because I want to help my fellow Bajaus. I'm not aiming to get rich from my job (SP1)."

Ang naga push saako kay ang mgaginikanansamga bata kay positive kaayo ang ilang feedback (SP3).

"What pushes me are the parents and guardians of the children because their feedback is very positive (SP3)."

Ginatabangan ko saakongmgatigsuportasapagsagubangatongkongmgapagsulaysamasasilana ang nangita ug nagbuhatogmgalingkuranan, gipakuhanakosilaogbalde-blade ngatubig (SP3).

“I am being supported by my support systems in dealing with my challenges at work by helping me look and make chairs, fetching water, and more for my students (SP3).”

Ang akongkadasignaggikansamgabatangongginatudloan, makitanakona mas ganahansila mu-eskwela kung kami magtudlo (SP4).

"My motivation comes from the children I teach; I can see that they enjoy school more when we're the ones teaching (SP4)."

c. Insights and Lessons Shared of Formally-Employed Bajaus

The last research question centered on the SPs’ insights and lessons shared as formally-employed.

TABLE 3
Insights and Lessons Shared of Formally-Employed Bajaus

| Emerging Themes | Core Ideas |
|---|---|
| Learning job roles while fostering positive attitudes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning field enumerations, office tasks, and people skills. • Mastering proper interview techniques. • Learning to file hollow blocks and install PVCs. • Learning to mix cement. • Developing patience, positive mindset, humility, and respect with colleagues and clients. • Understanding the value of hard work and dedication. • Recognizing teamwork’s role in efficient work across cultures. |
| Dedicated and resilient Bajau community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bajaus are engaged, culturally sharing, and understanding at work. • Bajaus are honest, hardworking, and kind people. • Bajaus are helpful at work. • Bajaus are determined despite limited education. • Taking pride in overcoming discrimination and representing their community. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Empowering and motivating fellow Bajaus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging fellow Bajaus to be more hardworking, understanding, and responsible. • Motivating fellow Bajaus to pursue their dreams and education despite challenges. • Encouraging fellow Bajaus to consider construction work. • Advising jobless fellow Bajaus to seek employment due to life's difficulties. • Urging fellow Bajaus to shift from street begging to overcome stigma. |
| Fulfillment through service and leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilled by helping fellow Bajaus, not just by salary. • Satisfied with the experience gained at work. • Grateful for working in government as an ethnic minority. • Proud to see students succeed. • Happy to lead at the construction site. • Proud to be a formally employed Bajau, serving as a role model. |

The first emerging theme in Table 3 is "Learning Job Roles while Fostering Positive Attitudes." One SP shared that she has gained new skills at work, including conducting enumerations and doing office tasks.

Nakat-onannakosapagpanarbaho ang pag-identify samgabeneficiaries para saayuda, trabahosa office parehasa computer, pagtudlo ug pag-deal samgatawo (SP1).

"I have learned in my job how to conduct enumerations for beneficiaries for any government assistance, how to do office-works such as using computer, and teaching and dealing with people (SP1)."

One SP shared that he has learned how to conduct interviews properly in the workplace.

Nakat-onannakosapagpanarbaho ang pag-interview og persons ug approaches ug strategies unsaonpag-deal samgatawo (SP2).

"I have learned in working how to properly conduct interviews, and the approaches and strategies I need to employ on in dealing with people (SP2)."

SPs working on construction sites learned how to file hollow blocks, install PVCs, and mix cement.

Ang nakat-onannakosapagpanarbaho kay nakabalo ko unsaonpag-file sa hollow blocks, pagtaudog PVC sa CR, ug pagbuhatogbangka ug pana (SP6).

"What I've learned from working includes how to file hollow blocks, install PVC in the bathroom, and make a boat and a bow (SP6)."

Ang nakat-onannakosapagtrabaho kay ang pag masa sasemento ug pag-file ug hollow blocks (SP7).

"What I've learned from working is how to mix cement and file hollow blocks (SP7)."

In addition to the new skills they learned at work, SPs also shared that they were able to develop positive attitudes, such as patience, optimism, respect and hard work.

Ang nakat-onannakosapagpanarbaho kay mitaasakong patience compared before ug na-positive akong mindset (SP3).

"What I've learned from working is that my patience has increased compared to before, and I now have a more positive mindset (SP3)."

Ang nakat-onannakosapagpanarbaho kay aside sa construction, nakakat-on sad ko namaging-humble, makisalamuha, ug morespeto. Kani nakabag-o saakoogdako (SP8).

"What I've learned from working is that aside from construction, I've also learned to be humble, socialize, and show respect. This has greatly changed me (SP8)."

Ang nakat-onannakosapagpanarbahongadapat ma-hard working ko (SP9).

"What I've learned from working is that I need to be hardworking (SP9)."

Kaningmgnakat-onannako, nakatabangsiyangadapatakongsabton ang behavior sangatawobisanogunsailangtribo. Ginabag-o nakoakongmga strategies time-to-time (SP2).

"What I've learned helps me understand people's behavior and their backgrounds. I adjust my strategies from time to time (SP2)."

A few SPs also expressed their appreciation for teamwork in the workplace.

Ang dapatuntanaasaatongpagpanarbaho kay magtinabangaygyud para dali lang mahuman ang trabaho (SP1).

"What should be present in our work is teamwork so that the job can be completed more easily (SP1)."

"... nagatinabangay mi saakongmgakauban (SP6)."

"... we help each other among my colleagues (SP6)."

The second emerging theme is "Dedicated and Resilient Bajau Community." SPs shared that there's so much Bajaus can offer in the employment world. According to them, Bajaus are engaged, culturally sharing, and understanding individuals who demonstrate honesty, hard work, and kindness in the workplace.

Ang mapasigarbosamga Bajau sakadaghanan kay kami mgakugihan (SP9).

"What we Bajaus can offer is that we are hardworking (SP9)."

Ang mapasigarbosamga Bajau sakadaghanan kay kami kugihangyud (SP6).

"What we Bajaus can offer is that we are truly hardworking (SP6)."

Ang ika-offer sa Bajaus kay honest, hardworking, ug naaymaayongpamatasan (SP2).

"What Bajaus can offer are honesty, hard work, and good values (SP2)."

One SP also shared that Bajaus are always willing to lend a helping hand.

Ang mapasigarbosamga Bajaus sakadaghanan kay mahinabangon mi (SP7).

"What Bajaus can mostly offer is that we are helpful (SP7)."

One SP also shared that Bajaus are determined despite facing limited education and take pride in overcoming discrimination while representing their community.

Ang mgaikapasigarbosamga Bajau kay kugihan ug pursigedopag-abotsatrabahobisan pa ogdili mi kabalomanulat (SP3).

"What Bajaus can offer is that we are hardworking and persistent at work, even if we don't know how to write (SP3)."

The third emerging theme is "Empowering and Motivating Fellow Bajaus." A few SPs shared that they encourage their fellow Bajaus to be more hardworking and understanding.

Sa akongmgakaubanang Bajaus, maningkamotsapagpapanarbaho, sabton ang mgabutang, asking questions samgatawo, ug responsible (SP1).

"My fellow Bajaus strive to work hard, understand things, ask questions, and be responsible (SP1)."

Sa akongmgakaubanang Bajau, padayon lang gyudsapagpanarbaho ug pagkugi (SP5).

"To my fellow Bajaus, just keep working hard and being diligent (SP5)."

One SP urged her fellow Bajaus to pursue their dreams.

Sa mgakaubanannakong Bajau, dilisilamoundangpagkugi ug dilimo-give up, para may mararatingsilasabuhay. Ila sab pa-eskwelahonilangmgaanakaronmaoilapasunodsaila (SP4).

"To my fellow Bajaus, my advice is to never stop being hard working and never give up for us to achieve our goals in life. We should also enroll our children in school because that is one legacy we can give for them (SP4)."

Additionally, several SPs encouraged their peers to consider entering the construction field or seeking employment.

Mao to akongtambag kay gusto nakomakabalo ug mosulod sad silasa construction (SP6).

"That is my advice because I wanted them to learn and enter construction (SP6)."

"Ang matambagnakosaubang Bajaus kay mag-trabahoog construction... (SP7)."

"My advice for my fellow Bajaus is to work under construction... (SP7)."

Sa mgawalaytrabaho, mangunabuhigyudsila o mamaligya (SP1)

"For those without jobs, they really strive to make a living or engage in selling (SP1)."

Ang matambagnakosaubang Bajaus kay mangitagyudogtrabaho kay tungodsakalisodsapanahon, aronnaataypampalit ug bugas (SP9).

"What I can advise other Bajaus is to really look for work because of the hardships we face, so we can buy rice (SP9)."

One SP also urged her fellow Bajaus to stop begging.

"Sa akongmgakaubanang Bajau, dilinauntasilamangayosamgakadalan... (SP1)."

"To my fellow Bajaus, I hope they stop begging in streets... (SP1)."

The final emerging theme is "Fulfillment Through Service and Leadership." Most SPs shared that they find fulfillment in serving their fellow Bajaus, rather than in the salary they receive.

Molambo ko saakongpagpanarbahosabutangngamakatabang ko saakongmgakaubanang Bajau apandilisakwarta (SP1).

"I will thrive in my work by helping my fellow Bajaus, but not in terms of money (SP1)."

Dili gyud ko malambuonsaakongpagpanarbaho kung hisgutan ang kwartaapan okay naman ko basta lang makakaon mi (SP7).

"I won't really succeed in my work when it comes to money, but I'm okay as long as we have food to eat (SP7)."

Malambun ko sapagpanarbaho kay nakatabang ko saakongmgakaubanang Bajau ug saGinoopandili ko malambun kung hisgutan ang kwarta, tama-tama lang gyudmakakaon mi (SP9).

"I am successful in working because I got to help my fellow Bajaus and God but, I am not successful if we talk about money, just enough for us to eat (SP9)."

One SP shared that he feels fulfillment through his experiences at work.

Malambun ko satrabahosa punto nga naga-gain ko og experience (SP2).

"I am successful and fulfilled in my job in terms of the experience I gained (SP2)."

A few SPs shared that they feel happy and fulfilled to work in the government, despite being Bajaus.

Nalipay mi nanakasulod mi sagobyernobisan Bajau mi ug gidawat mi nila kay ginadiscriminategyud mi sakadaghanan which is masakitan mi (SP1).

"We are happy to have entered the government, even as Bajaus, and to be accepted by them because we are often discriminated against, which hurts us (SP1)."

Nalipay ko ognadasig ko nganaa ko nagtrabahasagobyernoisipusa ka Bajau (SP2).

"I am happy and motivated to be working in the government as a Bajau (SP2)."

One SP shared that she feels fulfilled whenever she sees her students succeed.

Ug makakita ko nganaaymakahumansaakongmgaestudyante, happy nako (SP3).

"When I see my students graduate, I feel happy (SP3)."

One SP shared that he feels fulfilled by leading his team at the construction site.

Ang ginabatinako run kay nalipay ko kay nakakat-on ang ubang Bajaus tungodnakosapag-construction kay ako man ilang leader satrabaho (SP6).

"What I feel now is happiness because other Bajaus are learning from me in construction, as I am their leader at work (SP6)."

A few SPs shared that they feel happy when their fellow Bajaus see them as role models.

“... sapanarbahokaron kay gusto ko mahimong model ug mamotivateakongmgakaubangasundon ko (SP2).”

“... I wanted to be a role model and motivate them to follow my footsteps (SP2).”

“... mahimokong model ug makitasaakongmga ka-tribungabisanog Bajau mi, naa mi mgapangandoy (SP3).”

“... I wanted to become a role model for my fellow Bajaus that even though we are Bajaus, we still have dreams (SP3).”

Conversely, the following section discusses the interpretation of the preceding results in light of related literature.

In addressing the first research question—the lived experiences of formally employed Bajaus—most study participants reported no significant challenges in finding jobs. However, they faced difficulties in complying with document requirements, primarily due to low educational attainment. Almost all secured employment through referrals and community connections. Their labor is in demand, particularly as society, especially the government, is increasingly focused on inclusive community development. Furthermore, companies tend to prefer them because they are perceived as hardworking; only a few actively seek formal employment, as most sell thrifted clothes and shoes on the streets. This observation is supported by a study on Kosovars, an ethnic minority in Switzerland, who received the highest rate of callbacks for job interviews compared to Germans and Turks (Zschrnt, 2019). In contrast, these findings contradict a study of ethnic minority British graduates, who face fewer employment opportunities compared to their non-ethnic minority counterparts due to factors such as educational background, family status, cultural traditions, and local employment prospects (Zwysen& Longhi, 2018).

Regarding their work environment, many study participants work in construction companies, where physical labor presents significant challenges. They struggle with lifting heavy objects, enduring extreme heat, and coping with excessive dust. Those employed in government positions encounter various issues, such as uncooperative clients, inadequate classroom conditions, and difficulties in balancing work with personal responsibilities. These challenges align with a study of Turkish and Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands, where health and employment issues are common (Slootjes et al., 2018). Moreover, all study participants reported struggles with insufficient and delayed salaries, with no additional benefits. This situation mirrors that of job order street sweepers in the Davao Region, who experience job insecurity, low wages, and lack of benefits. Consequently, many resort to taking out loans and seeking additional work to make ends meet (Lagura& Ligan, 2018).

Finally, an emerging theme is the challenge of collaborating with coworkers. Some study participants expressed feelings of discrimination in the workplace. Their experiences resonate with those of ethnic minority groups in the United States, particularly individuals with mental illness, who also face discrimination (Algeria et al., 2017). However, the situation differs in the Swiss labor market, where a Correspondence Test has shown no evidence of employment discrimination against ethnic groups. While it is true that ethnic groups may be more stigmatized than non-ethnic groups, this does not necessarily indicate discrimination in employment (Zschrnt, 2019).

In addressing the second research question—coping mechanisms of formally employed Bajaus—all study participants employed a variety of unique strategies to manage their work-related challenges. They reported taking leave when tired, securing side jobs to supplement their meager income, utilizing available resources, understanding resentful coworkers, seeking shade, covering their mouths, and asking for help from colleagues at construction sites. Some of these strategies are also employed by street sweepers in the Davao Region (Lagura& Ligan, 2018).

Additionally, the study participants’ personal motivations and support systems from their families, neighbors, coworkers, and government assistance help them confront challenges and maintain their employment. They expressed motivation to meet personal needs, such as purchasing a boat, securing a more stable position within the company, and preparing for upcoming labor and delivery. These motivations can be classified as intrinsic. Furthermore, they cited extrinsic motivations, including the desire to provide financially for their families, serve their fellow Bajaus, receive encouragement from coworkers, and take advantage of opportunities in government employment (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Menges et al., 2017). Their employers must gauge these, knowing what motivates their employees to stay in their jobs despite the struggles that come through (Herzberg, 1993; Jonas, 2016).

The support systems available to the participants offer material, financial, and emotional assistance. Families serve as their primary support network, encouraging them to work, assisting with daily tasks, preparing meals, and providing transportation fare. Coworkers also contribute by offering assistance when needed and making the work environment more enjoyable. Fellow Bajaus provide support by reminding each other of their importance and offering practical help. The government extends assistance through employment opportunities and various programs, including enrollment in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the TulongPanghanapbuhaysaAting Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program of the Department of Labor, issuance of birth certificates, and salaries and incentives received while working. Studies have shown that peer support can be beneficial (Kim et al., 2020), and society can foster an accepting environment that promotes inclusivity, particularly in the employment sector for visually impaired women (Gyamfi, 2020). One study even highlighted that the Japanese government strongly supports the fishing industry by providing services to aspiring fishers and students, including job training opportunities for those interested in this field (Kawasaki, 2016). Without government assistance, individuals may have remained trapped in their previous circumstances (Gyamfi, 2020).

Systems Theory (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2008) and the Ecological Perspective (Germain & Knight, 2021) explain that support systems play significant roles at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, enabling individuals to continue working despite challenges.

In addressing the third research question—insights and lessons shared of formally employed Bajaus—most study participants have learned to perform their jobs effectively, including conducting enumerations and interviews, completing office tasks, filing hollow blocks, installing PVCs, and mixing cement. These tasks differ significantly from their previous sources of income, such as vending thrifted clothes or fishing. This finding contradicts a study suggesting that many Bajaus can now independently catch various marine products, such as sea cucumbers, fish, and prawns, using traditional and artisanal fishing methods (Choo, 2012).

Additionally, study participants reported that they have developed positive attitudes at work despite facing stigma and low social status. They described themselves as patient, optimistic, humble, respectful, hardworking, and committed to teamwork.

The study participants also highlighted the qualities that Bajaus bring to the workforce. All indicated that they are open, understanding, honest, hardworking, determined, kind, and helpful, taking pride in having secured formal employment despite societal stigma. One study participant shared her experience of being bullied, which motivated her to seek formal employment and prove to her detractors that she would remain steadfast and hopeful for a brighter future. They expressed gratitude that society is becoming more inclusive and accepting of them (Gyamfi, 2020).

In this context, they urged their fellow Bajaus to pursue education, as opportunities expand for those who complete their studies. They encouraged their peers to stop begging on the streets and to seek employment to support their families, emphasizing the importance of understanding and compassion. While many study participants acknowledged their own illiteracy for various reasons, they noted that a few are beginning to enroll in and complete their studies, inspiring many children to follow suit (Chester & Smith, 2015). They stressed the necessity of seeking formal employment rather than relying solely on income from vending thrifted clothes, shoes, or fishing. When employed, they could stop begging on the streets, which is illegal in Davao City due to the Anti-Mendicancy Campaign. Lastly, they emphasized the importance of being understanding toward others, both in and out of the workplace, and always showing kindness regardless of circumstances.

The final emerging theme related to the last research question is the study participants' sense of fulfillment and satisfaction at work. Almost all respondents indicated that they measure success not by their salaries but by their ability to provide for their families and contribute to their communities. They expressed happiness and contentment with their employment and hope for a better future for their families and communities. They aspire to improve their lives and serve as role models for their fellow Bajaus, helping to integrate them into mainstream society. This is supported by research suggesting that individual aspirations can be shaped by extreme poverty (Frostick et al., 2016). A clear example is the case of devadasis in North Karnataka, India, who engage in sex work in brothels to earn an income that supports their families (Aaron, 2016, p. 45). Similarly, Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore often migrate abroad due to financial difficulties (Yeoh, Platt, Khoo, Lam, & Baey, 2017). In the United States, upward mobility is often referred to as the "American Dream," where the possibility of improving one's circumstances is particularly emphasized in rural areas (Krause & Reeves, 2017).

IV. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARK

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, using in-depth interviews with 10 participants to explore the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights and lessons shared of formally-employed Bajaus. The researcher faced challenges during data collection, such as study participants' limited understanding of Cebuano, which necessitated the hiring of a Bajau interpreter. Despite these difficulties, the

researcher was deeply moved by the study participants' stories of bullying, love for family and community, and their enduring humility despite facing stigmas and prejudices.

The results reveal that most participants face physical, economic, and social challenges, such as lifting heavy objects under extreme heat, experiencing prejudice from co-workers, and being paid less for their services (Slootjes et al., 2018). However, they remain motivated by aspirations for success and are supported by their families, co-workers, community, and the government, which offers help in various ways (Herzberg, 1993).

Based on the findings, the study suggests that the LGU of Davao City should prioritize policies or action plans that advocate for more job opportunities with secure tenures and improved work benefits, such as higher wages, leave entitlements, and mandatory government contributions. Additionally, campaigns should be launched to eliminate the stigma attached to Bajaus, enforce anti-street begging measures, implement adaptive learning systems for Bajau children, and create more programs to empower them (Saguin, 2021). These initiatives could lead to long-term improvements for Bajau communities and serve as a model for other LGUs and NGAs, enhancing their reputations in promoting the welfare of marginalized groups.

This study also contributes to public administration literature, providing insights into how government programs and services operate on the ground. It offers a valuable reference for future researchers interested in studying Bajaus or other ethnic minorities. The researcher encourages exploring alternative research designs and methods to elicit unique responses, noting that passion and commitment are essential for successfully studying vulnerable populations.

Finally, the researcher's decision to focus on Bajaus for his thesis stemmed from his previous work with them, where he grew to admire their hardworking nature and culture. Despite challenges in finding related literature, his dedication to highlighting their needs remained steadfast, with hopes that the LGU of Davao City would use the study to better address the Bajaus' needs.

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