

DIMENSIONS OF THE PARTICIPATION OF GENERATION Z IN COCONUT FARMING: BASIS FOR INTERVENTION SCHEME**Rodelia Yecyec – dela Cruz*¹*****¹Rodelia Yecyec – dela Cruz (College of Development Management, University of Southeastern Philippines, Davao City, Philippines)****ABSTRACT**

This research paper identified the dimensions of the participation of Generation Z in coconut farming, developed a framework from the extracted factors that has a strong relationship and positive correlation to coconut farming, and proposed an intervention scheme based on the findings. This paper employed a quantitative research design, utilizing exploratory factor analysis. The study surveyed 150 individuals aged 18 to 26 who are children of coconut farmers from the provinces of Davao de Oro, Davao Oriental, and Davao del Sur. The result of the study revealed four (4) dimensions of the participation of Generation Z in coconut farming. This includes activities on post-harvest, negotiation and marketing, crop management, and coconut (re)planting and maintenance. Attributes under post-harvest activities include de-shelling (or removal of the coconut meat from the shell), copra drying processes such as loading/unloading and spreading of the coconut meat on the dryer, monitoring the drying process, de-husking, and splitting of whole nuts. The negotiation and marketing dimension include participation in price negotiation, identification and negotiation with farm laborers and workers, and identification of and negotiation with transport facility service providers. On the other hand, attributes under crop management cover activities, particularly asking for guidance on proper and appropriate fertilizers to be used and fertilization methods, buying fertilizers, ring weeding in preparation for fertilization, and the actual fertilization activity. Attributes under coconut (re)planting and maintenance include helping parents monitor unwanted trees and replanting activities such as hole digging and choosing viable seedlings for replanting.

Keywords

Generation Z, coconut farming, youth in agriculture, coconut post-harvest

INTRODUCTION

The youth have pessimistic perceptions of agriculture's capability of improving their living standards. This could be attributed to the minimal youth involvement in agricultural activities and the youth's shared understanding of the agricultural sector's contribution to general economic growth [1]. A lot of perspectives on youths employed in this sector show a lack of interest [2].

Forbes Insights [3] suggests that agriculture has the potential to offer job possibilities for young people if it is backed by increasing investment and an enabling institutional and governmental framework. According to Geza et al. [4], enhancing the involvement of youths in agriculture requires policy implementation in the area of integrated agricultural-based interventions that are context-specific and promote meaningful youth participation.

Several nations have created policy frameworks, strategies, and National Action Plans on Youth Employment (NAP) in conjunction with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to address challenges, with particular emphasis on youth involvement in agriculture and agribusiness. Attracting youth and retaining them in the agriculture sector remains a global challenge [5]. Sustaining agricultural productivity is critical to addressing global issues such as food security and sustainable agricultural practices and policies to feed the growing world population [6].

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The Philippine Government has approved and launched the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Program (CFIDP), through which it intends to revive the coconut industry in the country [7]. This multi-billion-peso program seeks to increase coconut productivity and provides investments that alleviate the lives and livelihoods of the coconut farmers and their families. One of these investments is the planting and replanting of up to 100 million coconut trees in the next five years [8]. However, one of the obstacles to the sustainability of these programs is the aging Filipino farmers, and many young Filipinos don't perceive agriculture as a lucrative career [9].

Accordingly, the younger generation can also be trained and tapped as agriculture extension agents [10], particularly those who have hands-on experience paired with training and capacity building that would help other farmers and communities in their areas with limited access to knowledge and good agricultural practices. The youth's contribution to sustainable development is critical, and the low participation of Filipino youth in various agricultural-related activities and the recurring problems threaten the sustainability of Philippine agriculture [11]. Hence, a young workforce is required for agriculture now and in the future.

In the Davao Region, the Regional Development Council (RDC) XI cited various agricultural challenges in terms of agricultural development, and among these that need urgent attention is the declining interest of youth in agriculture. Aging farmers necessitate the re-engagement of youths in agriculture [13]. Being the top producer of coconut in the country, Davao is continuously working on improving coconut productivity.

Given scenarios of the growing population of Generation Z [14], the lack of involvement of the younger generation in agriculture, and the threat of the coconut industry's future, it prompted the researcher to investigate the dimensions of Generation Z's participation in coconut farming and determine which areas of this particular sector could be tapped by industry stakeholders. This study proposed an intervention scheme that may guide stakeholders to re-engage in an intentional endeavor on the crop's sustainability through the participation of the Generation Z youth sector.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research design was employed to investigate the study's problem statements. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to explore the underlying factors in the dataset.

Sources of Data/ Respondents

The study targeted the children of the coconut farmers who belong to the Generation Z population, consisting of individuals in the age range 18 to 26 years old. A total of 150 participants were surveyed through a simple random sampling technique from the three provinces in the Davao region, namely, Davao Oriental, Davao de Oro, and Davao del Sur.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Technique

Data collection was enumerator-assisted, where trained enumerators administered the survey tool to the identified respondents. The collected quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to identify latent factors within the dataset. Data reduction analysis was used to reduce a dataset containing many variables down to one or more manageable sizes.

Data Gathering Instrument

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The survey tool has 30-item questions designed based on actual coconut farming activities and cycles. The enumerator reads each item and asks the respondent to rate the statement to determine the level of participation per activity. The rating is based on the 5-point scale with the descriptive equivalents shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Participation using 5-point scale

Scale	Interval	Level	Interpretation
5	4.50 - 5.00	Very High	The item stated is always observed and practiced
4	3.50 - 4.49	High	The item stated is often observed and practiced
3	2.50 - 3.49	Moderate	The item stated is sometimes observed and practiced
2	1.50 - 2.49	Low	The item stated is rarely observed and practiced
1	1.00 - 1.49	Very Low	The item stated is never observed and practiced

CONCLUSION

The study revealed four dimensions of the participation of Generation Z in coconut farming. These are (1) post-harvest activities; (2) negotiation and marketing activities; (3) copra management activities; and (4) coconut (re)planting and maintenance. Attributes that have strong relationship and positive correlation under post-harvest activities include de-shelling (or removal of the coconut meat from the shell), copra drying processes such as loading and unloading and spreading of the coconut meat on the dryer, monitoring the drying process, de-husking, and splitting of whole nuts. Attributes under negotiation and marketing of coconut products include participation in price negotiation, identification and negotiation with farm laborers, and identification and negotiation with transport facilities. On the other hand, attributes under crop management cover activities, particularly asking for guidance on proper and appropriate fertilizer and fertilization methods, buying fertilizers, ring weeding in preparation for fertilization, and the actual fertilization activity, while attributes under coconut (re)planting and maintenance include helping parents in monitoring unwanted trees and replanting activities such as hole digging and choosing viable seedlings for replanting.

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