

AM I GOOD ENOUGH?: SELF-WORTH AMONG URBAN-BASED FISHERMEN; A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

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ABSTRACT

Self-worth is widely discussed momentarily in different domains. This study aims to know the involvement of environment specifically in fulfilling with the presence of trials, judgments, achievements that will serve as encouragement in gaining self-worth of fishermen. For good measure and profound understanding about self-worth, researchers conducted a semi-structured interview. Findings suggest through descriptive phenomenology that there are levels in achieving the self-worth of fishermen such as self-advocacy wherein they develop their individuality. Followed by self-identity in which they recognize their selves with the influence of others and lastly, self-actualization where they feel valued by achieving something that will give them satisfaction. It was determined that achieving and providing for their family are something that a fishermen's self-worth measures. Briefly, the research conducted can not only aid forthcoming researchers interested in the field of self-worth but also providing a fill in the gap of knowledge in this phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

As globalization arises, researches about self-worth among different individuals are widely discussed in other countries. In the Philippines, there are hardly any researches on self-worth. Until today, researches about self-worth of fishermen remained in the blank spot. This study will focus on the perception of fishermen in regard to self-worth, unlike in preceding studies that focused more on self-worth in other fields.

Self-worth is a trait that pertains to the set of beliefs of a person and acts as the deciding factor stable across situation and social context (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013; Crocker, 1998). It forms a critical part of psychological human life as it has been distinguished as a predecessor to children with fears and anxiety (Grills & Ollendick, 2002) and facilitates self-regulation (Crooker, Brook, Niiya, & Villacorta, 2006). Both positive (Kamins & Dweck, 1975) and negative (as cited in Crooker & Parker, 2008) domains of person feedback heavily affects the sense of an individual's self-worth.

Furthermore, findings about self-worth suggest that it is strongly associated with acceptance, psychological control, firm control (Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 2013), and lower levels of anxiety and depression (McMahon & Watts, 2002). Researches also indicate that adolescents with high value of self-worth, both developed by themselves and other people, builds an affirmative view around their environment, self-growth of confidence, and a positive feeling about one's self (Davey, Eaker, & Walters, 2003; Borge & Fagermoen, 2008).

The value of self-worth is unprecedented as it also affects career be it in the lowest category of the country's socioeconomic structure with the prime example of being a fisherman. According to Britton and Coulthard (2012), fishermen are currently facing burdens that make them unable to sustain family needs and at the same time, handle the struggle of the system of the fishery sectors depending

on the difficulty fishing. This puts a huge statement regarding self-worth as is not only questions the decision you are making for yourself, but also for the decision that would impact other people.

The study aims to answer the central question: What self-worth means to urban-based fishermen. The qualitative research will open a path to understand the different perceptions on achieving self-worth. This could also be a reference for other researches regarding self-worth.

METHOD

Research Design and Sample

To put emphasis on the idea of self-worth among fisherman, this qualitative phenomenological study (Wojnar & Swanson 2007) was conducted using a semi structured interview and a robotfoto. Using descriptive phenomenology, the means of self-worth of fishermen was deeply viewed.

Nine fishermen have participated in this qualitative study. They were chosen through purposive sampling with the corresponding criteria: (a) 20-65 years old; (b) urban-based fisherman; (c) with 5 or more years' experience in fishing and above able to answer the following questions.

As indicated in the Table 1, nine or 100% of the participants are currently fishing for a living. All of the participants (100 %) are fishing 5 – 7 times a week and started fishing at the age of 8 (11.11 %), 12 (11.11 %), 13 (11.11 %), 15 (22.22 %), 18 (11.11 %), 20 (11.11 %), 37 (11.11 %) and 45 (11.11 %). The majority of the participants do not have their own fish pond (88.89 %) while only one (11.11 %) has his own. 3 out of 9 (33.33 %) are fishermen already before while one is security guard (11.11 %), one is house painter (11.11 %) and 4 out of 9 (44.44 %) have no previous job before pursuing fishing.

Their monthly income ranges from Php1,000 – Php5,000 (33.33 %), Php6,000 – Php10,000 (22.22 %), Php 21,000 – Php 25,000 (11.11 %) and some are varying (33.33 %). Some of them are fishing for 5 years (11.11 %), 8 years (11.11 %), 15 years (11.11 %), 25 years (22.22 %), 26 years (11.11 %), 30 years (11.11 %), 31 years (11.11 %) and 46 years (11.11 %). Most of the participants are married (88.89 %) and have a number of family members ranging from 1 – 2 (11.11 %), 3 – 5 (33.33 %) and 6 and above (55.55 %). Some of the participants only finished elementary (33.33 %) and while the others finished secondary (44.44 %) and tertiary (11.11 %) but one participant did not manage to go to school (11.11 %). Some of their fathers are fishermen (33.33 %) the rest are farmer (11.11 %), mechanic (11.11 %) and from the military (11.11 %) while few have no job (22.22 %) and deceased (11.11 %). Most of their mothers (77.78 %) are house wife while the others are farmer (11.11 %) and already deceased (11.11 %).

Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants (n=9)

Profile	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Age		
20 to 25 years old	1	11.11%
26 to 30 years old	2	22.22%
31 to 35 years old	0	0
36 to 40 years old	1	11.11%
41 to 45 years old	2	22.22%
46 to 50 years old	1	11.11%
51 to 55 years old	1	11.11%
56 to 60 years old	1	11.11%
61 to 65 years old	0	0
Civil Status		
Single	1	11.11%
Married	8	88.89%
Separated	0	0
Widowed	0	0
Number of members in the family		
02-Jan	1	11.11%
05-Mar	3	33.33%
6 and above	5	55.55%
Highest educational attainment		
Pre-school	0	0
Elementary	3	33.33%
Secondary	4	44.44%
Tertiary	1	11.11%
None	1	11.11%
Mother's occupation		
Housewife	7	77.78%
Farmer	1	11.11%
Deceased	1	11.11%
Father's occupation		
Fisherman	3	33.22%
Farmer	1	11.11%
Mechanic	1	11.11%
Military	1	11.11%
None	2	22.22%
Deceased	1	11.11%
Age when started fishing		
8 years old	1	11.11%
12 years old	1	11.11%
13 years old	1	11.11%
15 years old	2	22.22%
18 years old	1	11.11%
20 years old	1	11.11%
37 years old	1	11.11%
45 years old	1	11.11%
Number of years in fishing		
5 years	1	11.11%
8 years	1	11.11%
15 years	1	11.11%
25 years	2	22.22%
26 years	1	11.11%
30 years	1	11.11%
31 years	1	11.11%
46 year	1	11.11%
Owner of a fishpond		
Yes	1	11.11%
No	8	88.89%
Currently fishing for a living		
Yes	9	100%
No	0	0
Monthly income		
Php1,000 – Php5,000	3	33.33%
Php6,000 – Php10,000	2	22.22%
Php11,000 – Php15,000	0	0
Php16,000 – Php20,000	0	0
Php21,000 – Php25,000	1	11.11%
Php26,000 – Php30,000	0	0
Varying	3	33.33%

Frequency of fishing		
1-2 times a week	0	0
3-4 times a week	0	0
5-7 times a week	9	100%
Previous job before pursuing fishing		
Fisherman	3	33.33%
House painter	1	11.11%
Security guard	1	11.11%
None	4	44.44%

Study Site

The study took place in a fish port at Bulungan, Brgy. La Huerta, Parañaque City. It is the one and only fish port in Parañaque City. The fish port transfer goods across the country and sometimes it even export products. It is well known of its bidding process regarding their catch; there is a middleman, and the bidder has to whisper the bid to the middleman so the other buyers won't hear it; the highest bidder will get the goods hence the term "Bulungan" (whisper). The locus of this study was easily reached, conducive and most of the fishermen were proficient to be the participants. Hence, the fish port was selected as the locus of the study.

Instrumentation

To collect all the information about the subjects of the study and to seize the core of the phenomenon, a two-part research instrument was used. The first part is the robotfoto a Dutch term which means a cartographic sketch of the subject (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) which includes a checkbox and spaces with the following baseline information: age, civil status, number of members in the family, highest educational attainment, mother's occupation, father's occupation, age when started fishing, number of years in fishing, owner of a fish pond, currently fishing for a living, monthly income, frequency of fishing and previous job before pursuing fishing.

The second part is the semi-structured interview which aimed to reveal the subjects' perceptions on self-worth. The researchers used *aide memoir* to conduct the interviews and to gather needed responses and to follow up questions.

The interview guide is a set of questionnaires contains factual, experiential, procedural and perceptual questions and arranged accordingly from introductory, transitioning, key to closing questions (Creswell, 2007). It helped the interviewee on the flow of questions and to get the simple to complex information about the means of self-worth among urban-based fishermen.

Data Collection & Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the interview, a letter of consent was given to the main office of the fishport to schedule the interview and to allow the fishermen fitted in the criteria to participate in the study. The interview was conducted during the time availability of the participants. As the letter of consent was signed by the participants which indicate their willingness to participate, confidentiality of data gathered was guaranteed. The robotfoto was given thereafter. Using an *aide memoir*, the researchers inquired into the interview. Given their permission, a one-on-one interview was conducted on the participants. Along with the key questions and the follow up questions were asked to be able to probe in the subjects' responses during the interview (De Guzman & Tan 2007). Each interview lasted for one hour and was tape-recorded with the approval of the participants.

Mode of Analysis

The data gathered from the robotfoto and tape-recorded interview was reviewed, tallied, and analysed using Collaizi's Procedure (1978). Transcriptions of the experiences, accumulated from the interview were completed (Easton, McComish, & Greenberg, 2000). The transcribed experiences were scrutinized thoroughly to construct a repertory grid. The grid was reviewed using cool and warm analyses (De Guzman & Tan 2007). In the cool analysis, categorizations of significant statements were included. By means of the statements gathered via the cool analysis, data categories were conveyed to conceptualize themes during the warm analysis. Using the collected field text, text analysis was done by determining the themes and categories, sorting them to a manageable few, building hierarchies, and associating them into theoretical models (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through these data analyses, techniques, and processes, three themes were developed and approved using member checking procedure wherein all members agreed upon the themes and the adviser as well. These served as the core of the study.

FINDINGS

Through series of interviews, comparison of statements, and analysing the data gathered from the cool and warm analyses regarding the phenomenon self-worth, three conceptual themes accumulated that etidetically describes the concept of self-worth among urban-based fishermen. These are (a) self-advocacy, (b) self-identity and (c) self-actualization.

The study constructed a three-step stair to represent the three distinct concepts of self-worth in attempt to understand the means of self-worth among urban-based fishermen. Notably, the model (Figure 1) is arranged in such way that each step is connected to each other. Each step is involved to different aspects of what self-worth means to them. The first step self-advocacy is the part wherein fishermen cultivated their individuality. Followed

by the next step – self-identity in which how they recognize their selves in relation to social context. To finish, the last step is the self-actualization where they felt their significance by reaching a goal that will give them sense of

fulfilment. Their concept of self-worth is brought out the three primary facets of the study – self-advocacy, self-identity and self-worth.

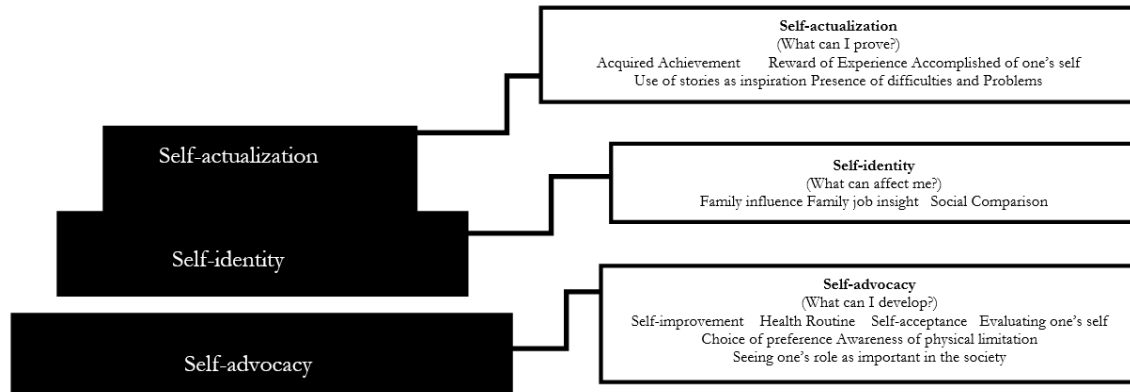


Figure 1. Self-Worth Stair Diagram of Filipino Fishermen

Self-worth as self-advocacy: Developing individuality

Developing one's individuality is important to fishermen. To begin with, fishermen selected their job as mentioned by fisherman 8, "I do not have the knowledge so this is the only work I can do."

Being healthy is a good way to keep the body going into everyday activities and making it a routine everyday functional. Taking care of the body and not letting it get addicted to drugs is a great help to keep it healthy, and as stated by fisherman 3, "I avoid using drugs and other chemicals that can affect my body and I also do daily activities." But physical limitations sometimes may affect their ability to do on daily activities in fishing. Pushing some unnecessary actions knowing that having a weak body and eye sight may affect their job. As verbalized also by fisherman 3, "Sometimes my body gets affected on what I do and I have blur eye sight as well."

As the day goes by, fishermen start to appraise their job. As articulated by fisherman 4, "I think that everyday we do is important because without us, fishermen they have nothing to buy or eat." Making oneself better is ultimately the raising point on following any dreams of a fisherman. Learning new things and making mistake as an advantage to improve make them improved. Regretting something to the past and wanted to improve is also one way to develop their individuality. As added by fisherman 4, "Even though I did not finish my education, I still wanted to correct my mistake."

By means of understanding their true self-identity and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, it allows them to be comfortable and be honest with themselves. In return, fishermen will accept their selves. It is not all about what they have but it is about their good attitude. As mentioned by fisherman 4, "We are so hardworking and happy on our job that people notice us and praise us on what we do." In the society, various roles are all important. Each and every one has a role in the society, even the fishermen. Give and take happens. As stated by fisherman 2, "We are a big help to the

society because without us their will be no fish in markets and we do get money in return." For instance, each fisherman continues to cultivate their individuality, it will nurture their means as a person.

Self-worth as self-identity: Recognizing self by the society

There are consequential evidences to a fisherman's life to develop his value as an individual. Many factors can affect on how they distinguish their selves. To start with, fishermen can be pushed down if they not work for their self. This claim can be supported as fisherman 1 said, "Those who have a higher education are different; they look down to fishermen because they think that without a fish, there is no income."

Family shapes the perceptions of different employment option even if they are finding the job that fits their profession. As fisherman 9 verbalized, "I saw my parents when I was young, every day they are working hard so it marked in my mind that this is the only job." Insights from other family member give them way to understand what they want for the family. As fisherman 4 said, "I will send them to school to finish study, if what he/she wants, we'll support them." According to these statements no matter how life gets hard the most important is a fisherman would able to sustain his child's need.

But there are times that some fisherman obtains different views from the society. These interpretations are just an obstacle to test their strength to push through their work no matter how hard or easy it acquires. As said by fisherman 2, "Sometimes we hear a humor that other people are looking down on us but were just ignoring it. Most of the people that look down on us are those who have a higher income. There are times people will tell us we smell like fish. They only say that because they already got what they want."

Those aforementioned statements explain that even if there is a problem it is just a challenge to fishermen even how hard it gets. It explains situations that they have been pulled down by others but they have to fight; It is an act that they have to do whatever to survive from all of the challenges that come. As said by fisherman 4, *"It is in you if you will get affected on other says in your work."*

Self-worth as self-actualization: Fulfilling one's self

Having achievements, experiences, and difficulties are significant to an individual's life and it helps mold his or her self-worthiness as a person. Firstly, fishermen can accomplish some triumphs because of their job. As mentioned by fisherman 2, *"I got to buy my boat because of the job I am in."*

According to the participants, accomplishing an achievement because of their job is very special to them that give them a sense of fulfillment. As stated by fisherman 1, *"Of course I'm happy. My kids got to finish studying. They will not find it difficult to look for a job."* These are the fruits of their labor. These are evidently stated by fisherman 1 and 3, *"I got my own boat."* *"I sent one of my kids to college"* Based on these statements, they can either be material things or non-material things.

As fishermen encounter different difficulties and problems, their strength and how they cope up it is tested. As verbalized by fisherman 4, *"Yes, such as red tide, typhoon, and fish kill, we caught lesser fishes than the usual. Sometimes, we got nothing. It's really hard because we don't have any income when those days come that fish kill occurs."* But no matter how hard it gets, fishermen still push through their job. *"I sometimes wish not to fish anymore because some say that sometimes you will not have any income and sometimes you have."* fisherman 1 said. As they continue to live their lives as fishermen, they continue to inspire people to do better and to keep fighting no matter what happens.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the interviews conducted, the researchers had an insight into what self-worth means to urban-based fishermen. Specific means were identified such as self-advocacy, self-identity and self-actualization.

According to the data gathered, the researchers found that self-advocacy among fishermen is taking care of themselves, accepting who they are and developing themselves. Based on the participants, they played a big role to the society because without them there will be no fish in the markets. As stated by Van Reusen et al., (1994), it is an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. However, developing self-knowledge is the first step in self-advocacy skills. Learning about one's self involves the identification of learning styles, strengths and weakness, interests, and preferences (West, et al. 2018). The results of the current

study determined that fishermen chose who they are today; accept who they are right now. They have a big contribution in our society; it means they need to take care of their health for them to perform well in fishing.

Self-identity of fishermen is influenced by their family member and others experienced comparing their work to other fellow fishermen. According to Lehmann & Konstam (2011) cited by Joseph (2012), career decidedness at early stages produces positive effects on student performance, college completion, and professional development. Emerging adults are taking 5 to 10 years longer to make career decisions than non-emerging adults. A family systems perspective, in contrast, posits that families are complex units composed of individuals with different experiences and needs (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1985 cited by Mchale et. al, 2009). Other fishermen experienced social comparisons. Based on the participants, they experienced people looking down on them because they think there is just a little income in fishing. Dunning & Hayes (1996) cited by Mussweiler et. al (2011) stated that there are comparisons between the self and others influencing people's judgments, experiences, and behavior. People constantly engage in social comparisons. Whenever they are confronted with information about how others are, what others can and cannot do, or what others have achieved and have failed to achieve, they relate this information to themselves. Likewise, whenever they want to know how they are or what they themselves can and cannot do, they do so by comparing their own characteristics, fortunes, and weaknesses to those of others (Festinger, 1954 cited by Mussweiler et. al, 2011). They will not push their child/ children to follow their steps instead follow their hearts. Some fishermen experienced social comparison like judging their job as a fisherman.

Self-actualization involves the attainment of achievements, fulfillment of one's self, rewards of one's experience, the presence of the difficulties and presence of individuals and the use of stories as an inspiration to others. As stated by Maslow (1970), a firm foundation for a value system is automatically furnished to the self-actualizer by his philosophic acceptance of the nature of his self, of human nature, of much of social life, and of nature and physical reality. These acceptance values account for a high percentage of the total of his individual value judgments from day to day; what he approves of, disapproves of, is loyal to, opposes or proposes, what pleases him or displeases him can often be understood as surface derivations of this source trait of acceptance. These people perceive reality efficiently and can tolerate uncertainty, accept themselves and others for what they are, able to look at life objectively, Capable of deep appreciation of basic life-experience, establish deep satisfying interpersonal relationships with a few people, and peak experiences. The result of the current study determined that there are stages that fishermen need to experience to fulfill themselves such as psychological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and the last stage self-actualization. In the last stage fishermen can be satisfied on what they have when they experience self-actualization.

Findings of the study point out different steps that mold the perception of fishermen on their self-worth. Their responses state their life as a fisherman, on how they take care of him or herself and how they develop as a person. The importance of fishermen in our society is truly immeasurable; fishermen serve as the backbone of the economy. These helped the researchers to understand the importance and the social life of a fisherman; on how they face the difficulty of fishing, how they take care of themselves, and their positive and negative experiences in fishing.

Fishermen have to experience fulfilling themselves psychologically with belongingness, safety, and self-actualization. As soon as fishermen experience most of those aforementioned factors, they would feel satisfied and as a final point those would identify their worth.

CONCLUSION

Through a series of interviews, the researchers attempted to explore and describe the self-worth on a fisherman's perspective. Three themes arose from the experiences shared and articulated by the fishermen; self-advocacy, self-identity, and self-actualization, these themes produced the stair of self-worth.

The researchers can now conclude that there are different factors that can change a fisherman's perception in their own worth. As cited in the research family is one of the biggest factors that can greatly motivate a fisherman, because of the need to sustain their families' wants and needs. They tend to do a greater job just to make them feel satisfied or comfort in the life they have. Their self-worth maximized because of the thought that his family needs him to support them. Another factor is their desire to prove something to the people around them, since we're living an era full of judgmental people they tend to work harder just to be praised by other people, just so that they could avoid having to receive negative looks from others and because of those negative looks that people gives, they may have a lower self-worth because they keep trying to prove themselves to people who gives a blind eye.

This study had been able to abide onto new understandings on the means of self-worth among urban based fishermen which continue to be in the blank spot. The researcher would assure the new insights towards the means of fishermen regarding self-worth. With the study being remained in the blank spot, researchers propose for further study to determine more factors on the means of self-worth.

The self-worth of a fisherman can be utilized as a foundation that is mindful in capturing the essence of the phenomenon; furthermore, the research conducted can not only help future fishermen but also other people that have a problem with realizing their self-worth. Future researchers may also use this paper as a guide to conduct a deeper and more meaningful research about the self-worth of a fisherman.

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